UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY

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The Guarneri String Quartet

Arnold Steinhardt, Violinist
John Dalley, Violinist
Michael Tree, Violist
David Soyer, Cellist

Sunday Afternoon, April 25, 1993, at 4:00
Rackham Auditorium, Ann Arbor, Michigan

PROGRAM

Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 74 ("The Harp") . . . . Beethoven

Poco adagio - Allegro
Adagio ma non troppo
Presto
Allegro con variazioni

Quartet in G major, Op. 18, No. 2 . . . . Beethoven

Allegro
Adagio cantabile - Allegro
Scherzo: Allegro
Allegro molto quasi presto

INTERMISSION

Quartet in F major, Op. 135 . . . . Beethoven

Allegretto
Vivace
Lento assai, cantante e tranquillo
Grave ma non troppo tratto - Allegro

This concert is a benefit for Chamber Music America and The University Musical Society.

Special thanks to this afternoon's Philips Pre-concert Presentation speakers: David Bury, Chamber Music America; Kenneth Fischer, UMS; Andrew Jennings, U-M School of Music; Maury Okun, Chamber Music Society of Detroit; and Deanna Relyea, Kerrytown Concert House.

Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 74
("The Harp")
Beethoven

Beethoven wrote this Quartet in the summer and autumn of 1809. There is no record of its first performance, but it probably took place shortly after the composition was completed, at the Vienna palace of Prince Lobkowitz, to whom it is dedicated. On the back pages of the autograph manuscript of the Quartet, which was once in the possession of the Mendelssohn family, there are some sketches of the incidental music that he later wrote for Goethe's tragedy, *Egmont*, but the major compositions that still occupied Beethoven while working on this score were two other pieces in the same key of E-flat: the "Emperor" Concerto, which was not yet quite complete, and the *Lebewohl* ("Farewell") Sonata, Op. 81a.

1809 was a difficult year for Beethoven and for all Vienna. For months, Napoleon's army blockaded and bombarded the city. For a while, Beethoven hid in a cellar, hoping to escape further damage to his hearing. The Imperial Court fled from the capital and even Lobkowitz' means were strained by the expense of raising a company of riflemen. Beethoven had another problem, too, in the separation from his beloved Thérèse von Brunsvik, and he faced an artistic crisis as well as these personal and political crises.

It was becoming clear that very soon his imagination would outgrow the classical musical forms that he was now stretching as far as they could go, and he would then have to discover or invent new musical shapes in which to cast his creations. It was only a few years since his last quartet and he would write another in 1810, but after that there was to be a gap of fifteen years before he returned to this difficult medium. Despite all this, there is no sign of earth-shaking thunder or of emotional turmoil in Op. 74. It is a calm, lyrical, fluent, even intimate work.

Sometime during the nineteenth century, it acquired a nickname, the "Harp" Quartet. The explanation commonly offered is that it came from the frequent passages in which the strings are played pizzicato, plucked as the harp's are. This explanation, based on the mechanics of playing the instruments, is not altogether satisfactory, since the sounds do not resemble each other very closely. It is more likely that it originated in Beethoven's use of what musicians call arpeggio figures: broken, spread-out chords that are the principal characteristic of harp music.

The Quartet opens with a long, slow introduction, *Poco adagio*, that establishes the mood of the whole work and hints at the coming *Allegro* main section. A measure of chords – immediately suggesting a slow and forceful arpeggio – calls for attention, and a flowing phrase is heard. There is a brief second subject, and then Beethoven devotes most of his energy to the development of the opening material.

The slow second movement, *Adagio ma non troppo*, is based principally on a long melody, as noble and serene as any from the great works to come in his last years. It returns twice, in alternation with contrasting musical material, making an extraordinary slow rondo with a delicate, mysterious, quiet ending.

Third is a great, expanded scherzo, *Presto*. The principal theme is a rhythmic figure like the one that pervades the Fifth Symphony, and Beethoven uses it in countless ways – even as mere accompaniment to a great leaping melody. There is a rushing, contrasting section, played twice as fast as the rest of the movement, that functionally resembles the central trio section of the old, classical scherzo. However, Beethoven does not use it only as a centerpiece but brings it, and the opening music, back another time before the movement is over. In the later nineteenth century, it was not uncommon for players to omit this "unnecessary" second recapitulation, thus cutting the movement back to classical size and shape, but this kind of musical violence has happily disappeared now.

The finale, *Allegro con variazioni*, follows without pause. It is a theme with six

contrasting variations, the last of which is extended by a huge coda. After a powerful rushing passage for the four instruments in octaves, the Quartet closes quietly.

Quartet in G major, Op. 18, No. 2
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Beethoven wrote his first six string quartets between 1798 and 1800, and when they were published, in 1801, the title page bore the legend "composed [for] and dedicated to His Highness, My Lord the Reigning Prince de Lobkowitz etc., etc." Franz Joseph Lobkowitz, who was born two years after the composer, had ascended the throne of his Czech principality in 1784 at the age of twelve. His father had been an accomplished musician, the employer of Gluck and a good friend of the composer Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, Johann Sebastian's son. Prince Lobkowitz's seat was a country castle at Radnice, but he also had grand palaces in Prague and Vienna. He played the violin and cello, was a talented singer and maintained a complete musical establishment: a full orchestra and chorus.

Soon after Beethoven's arrival in Vienna from Bonn in 1792, the two young men became close friends despite the great gap between their social classes. In 1809, Lobkowitz and two younger men, Archduke Rudolph, the Emperor's son, and Prince Ferdinand Kinsky, joined to guarantee Beethoven a generous income for life so that he would remain in Vienna and could give up other work that distracted him from composition. Beethoven, in return for his many acts of kindness, dedicated to Lobkowitz the six Quartets of Op. 18, the Op. 74 Quartet, Symphonies No. 3, 5, and 6 (the last two jointly with Count Andre Razumovsky, who commissioned the three Op. 59 Quartets) and some shorter works.

The G-major Quartet may have been the first of the six that Beethoven started and the third he finished, but when he assembled a first group of three for publication, he made this No. 2. In German-speaking countries it is often called the "Compliment" Quartet, a nickname that English-speakers, happily, have resisted. It sprang from some imagined likeness between the sweeping musical gesture of the opening phrase and that with which a gentleman of the time might have removed his hat and bowed in greeting – paying his compliments – to a lady.

The Quartet's *Allegro* opening theme, in just eight quick and short measures, has three distinct melodic elements that Beethoven works over thoroughly and develops richly. In fact, this bright and happy work almost overflows with musical ideas, and the first movement alone has more material – some of it heard just in passing – than many other composers could dream up for an entire four-movement work. Second is a long and beautiful slow movement, a grave but warm *Adagio cantabile* with a contrasting central *Allegro* that buzzes quickly and almost always quietly. The third movement is a scherzo, *Allegro*, after the classical model of the minuets in the quartets of Haydn and Mozart, but with a forceful and dramatic quality, especially in the middle Trio section, that is entirely characteristic of Beethoven. The finale, *Allegro molto quasi presto*, rushes through the classical sonata form. Contrasting themes are developed and then recalled with different key relationships.

Quartet in F major, Op. 135
Beethoven

On October 30, 1826, after only three months of work, Beethoven finished this, his last extended composition, but it was not the last chamber music he wrote. That was a new finale for the Op. 130 Quartet, a dancing rondo to replace the great, weighty *Grosse Fuge* ("Grand Fugue"), which was later published as a separate piece, Op. 133.

With Op. 135, Beethoven gave up the gigantism of his preceding quartets and returned to a compact four-movement structure. The new work surprised his friends and almost disappointed posterity. Even in the early twentieth century, some scholars and critics seemed to feel that Beethoven had let them down by abandoning his colossal forms and earthshaking style for the simple charm, subtle clarity, and gentle wit of this work. The absence

of solemnity from all but the slow movement was thought to be an offense against the future, a sin against history. For Romantic critics, the idea that Beethoven could even insert a private joke into his last work – whether or not he knew it to be his last – was incomprehensible. The truth is that the terrible troubles of Beethoven's last year did not destroy his sometimes bitter wit, and may even have enlivened it.

The most famous frivolity of this Quartet is in the heading of the finale, where Beethoven wrote, as though giving it a title, "The Difficult Decision." Below this is a line of music consisting of the movement's two principal pieces of melodic material, each with a few words written under the notes, as in a song. First is a question, gravely put, *Muss es sein?* (literally, "Must it be?"), and then comes the quick reply, *Es muss sein! Es muss sein!* ("It must be! It must be!"). To understand some of the explanations of this curious inscription, it is better to translate it idiomatically as "Must I?" "You must! You must!"

During Beethoven's last years, his friends competed with one another to get their hands on the music of his latest works before they were published, and they were also expected to demonstrate their fidelity to the master by missing no opportunity to hear these pieces performed. One friend, a businessman who hired musicians to give quartet parties at his home, boasted that he could always get any music he wanted from Beethoven. However, he had failed to attend the first performance of the Op. 130 Quartet in March, and when he asked to borrow the music in April, the composer refused. An intermediary said that he could restore himself to Beethoven's good graces by paying the full price of a concert-series subscription ticket to the musicians who had played it. "Must I?" he is reported to have asked. In reply, Beethoven quickly composed a canon on the *Es muss sein* phrase, almost exactly as it was to appear in Op. 135 a few months later. It is set for four male voices, to be sung "fast and angrily" with the text "You must! Yes, you must! Take out your purse!"

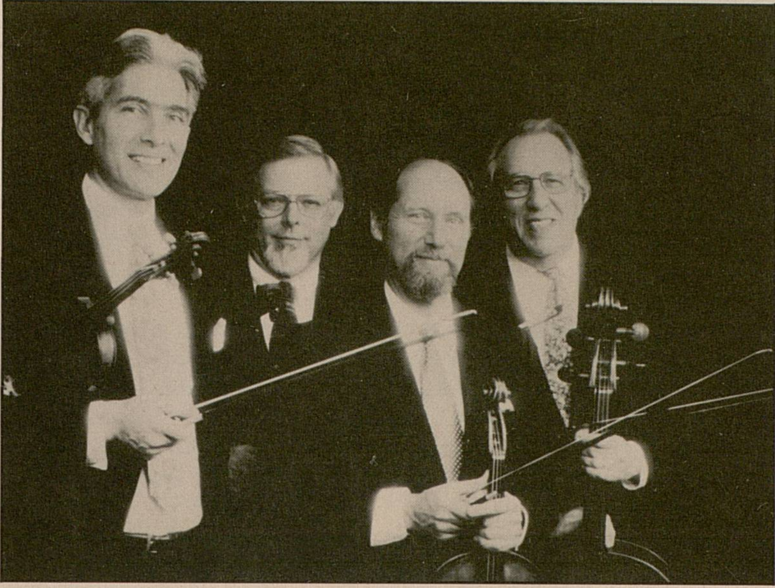
Beethoven found this question and answer useful in a variety of situations. He wrote to his publisher that he had written the Quartet only because he had been paid in advance for it and therefore knew that *es muss sein* ("he must"). Other Beethoven intimates later told different stories based on the "Must I? – You must!" exchange. Perhaps they are all true. Beethoven evidently enjoyed mixing truth and fiction and making little games out of his work.

The first movement of the Quartet, *Allegretto*, opens with a long principal theme that also consists of a question figure, hesitatingly asked, and its answer. The second subject is a simple direct theme that would not have been out of place in one of his earliest quartets or in one by Haydn, except that it is distributed among the instruments and is later developed in ways that belong entirely to this time of maturity. Even the simplest and most basic connecting passages here are so richly tuneful that, in development, the movement seems to have not just two subjects but a half-dozen. Next is a scherzo, *Vivace*, of great rhythmic freedom, with a central trio section that is a rustic dance recalling the Pastoral Symphony.

The third movement, *Lento assai, cantante e tranquillo*, is a brief elegy, only fifty-four measures long, that Beethoven described as a sweet song of calm and peace. In form, it is a simple set of variations on a short theme that becomes, among other things, a recitative, a smooth and elaborately polyphonic long phrase and a complex fragmented texture. The finale begins with the difficult question, *Grave*, "Must I?" in the viola and cello. It will be asked again later, even more forcefully, but most of the movement is devoted to the answer, *Allegro*, "You must!" or, in the end, perhaps "What must be, must be!"

– by Leonard Burkat

About The Artists



The Washington Post said it well (March 26, 1992):

> When you hear a group like the Guarneri String Quartet, this is what you don't hear: You don't hear anything but impeccable intonation and a silken, radiant sound; you don't hear the tiniest hint of imprecision in the ensemble playing; you don't hear anything but sheer perfection, born of 25 years of collaboration by four world-class string players. Saturday night at George Mason University, the Guarneri presented their usual conservative program rendered with their customary flawlessness and vibrant emotional involvement.

Now into its second quarter-century, the **Guarneri String Quartet** is the most senior string quartet in the world. With no changes in personnel since its founding in 1964, it represents the longest surviving artistic collaboration of any quartet in the United States.

Consistently hailed as the world's premier Quartet, in 1991-92 the Guarneri made its 32nd European tour, including four recitals at the Israel Festival in Jerusalem, continued its regular subscription series at Lincoln Center and at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York plus several transcontinental tours of the United States and Canada.

The anatomy of a string quartet is best summed up by violinist Arnold Steinhardt, in a paper he wrote on his memories after twenty years with the Quartet:

> There will be hours and hours of brute labor involved in the technical problems of intonation, ensemble, and the critical shadings of four like-sounding instruments. More important will be the unchartered process in which four people let their individual personalities shine while finding a unified quartet voice. There will be endless musings, discussions, criticisms that will finally end up as an interpretation – that almost mystical amalgam of the four players that hovers somewhere in between their music stands.

The Quartet has been featured on many television and radio specials, documentaries and educational presentations both in North America and abroad. A full-length film entitled *High Fidelity – The Guarneri String Quartet* was released nationally, to great critical and public acclaim, in the fall of 1989. The ensemble is also the subject of several books.

The Guarneri String Quartet's recordings, several of which have won international awards, are on RCA Red Seal and Philips. Among the recordings are collaborations with Arthur Rubinstein, Pinchas Zukerman, and Boris Kroyt and Mischa Schneider of the Budapest Quartet. It was Kroyt who suggested the Quartet's name, not because it was the name of a famous Italian instrument maker, but because Kroyt himself had been a member of a German string quartet, active in Europe after World War I, named Guarneri.

This afternoon's concert marks the Guarneri String Quartet's twenty-sixth appearance in Ann Arbor, which ranks among the very few American cities to have enjoyed so many Guarneri performances.

Violinist **Arnold Steinhardt** was born in Los Angeles where he began his studies with Peter Maremblum and Toscha Seidle. At the Curtis Institute of Music he studied with Ivan Galamian and later under the sponsorship of George Szell with Joseph Szigeti in Switzerland. Bronze medalist of the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels, Mr. Steinhardt also won the Leventritt Competititon in 1958. At the age of fourteen he made his debut with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and has subsequently appeared with many major orchestras and in recital.

Violinist **John Dalley** made his debut at the age of fourteen. Formerly on the faculty of the Oberlin Conservatory, a member of the Oberlin String Quartet and artist-in-residence at the University of Illinois, Mr. Dalley has since concertized extensively in the United States, Canada, Europe, Japan, Australia and New Zealand in recital and as soloist with orchestra.

Michael Tree, violist, was born in Newark, New Jersey, and received his first violin instruction at the age of five. Later at the Curtis Institute of Music he studied with Efrem Zimbalist, Veda Reynolds and Lea Luboshutz. At the age of twenty he made his Carnegie Hall recital debut as a violinst. Mr. Tree has appeared as violin and viola soloist with major orchestras, in recital, and at leading festivals.

Cellist **David Soyer** was born in Philadelphia. His distinguished cello teachers include Diran Alexanian, Emanuel Feuermann and Pablo Casals. As a youngster he won the Youth Competition of the Philadelphia Orchestra and appeared as soloist with Eugene Ormandy conducting. He was later a member of the Bach Aria Group, the Guilet String Quartet and the New Music Quartet. His association with the musicians of the Marlboro Festival led to his becoming a founding member of the Marlboro Trio.

The University Musical Society and Chamber Music America are grateful to the men of the Guarneri Quartet for making this benefit concert possible. This concert recognizes the special relationship between the University Musical Society and the Guarneri Quartet that has developed over twenty five engagements spanning more than a quarter of a century. This concert also acknowledges the commitment the quartet has to the work of Chamber Music America, the national service organization for the chamber music field. Guarneri violist Michael Tree and UMS executive director Kenneth Fischer serve together on the CMA Board of Directors. Proceeds from the concert will be shared equally between the University Musical Society and Chamber Music America. Thank you for your attendance and support.

CHAMBER MUSIC AMERICA

The National Association of Professional Chamber Music

Chamber Music America's mission is to make chamber music a vital part of American culture. In pursuit of this goal, CMA has designed programs and services to help those who perform and present professional chamber music. CMA is also committed to the advancement of chamber music education. CMA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation serving 4,292 members. CMA's primary constituents are its 533 professional chamber ensemble members located in communities from coast to coast. CMA's membership also includes 217 concert presenters, festivals and training institutions, and 314 allied business members. Participating as individual members are the 3,229 others, including independent professional and amateur musicians.

What is chamber music? Chamber music encompasses virtually all performances by instrumental or vocal music ensembles in which each musician performs an individual part, generally without a conductor.

Historically, chamber music ensembles operated on a small scale incompatible with many of the support systems typical of larger music institutions. Ensembles functioned not as organizations – with boards of directors, friends associations, fund raising campaigns or marketing plans – but rather like solo artists, as private entities competing for a limited number of paid performance opportunities. The absence of institutional support structures limited ensembles' access to philanthropic funding.

Chamber Music America was created in 1977 in response to a growing need for unification, and for institutional representation within the national music community. In thirteen years, this national service organization has grown from 35 founding members to over 4,000. CMA currently is governed by a 35-member volunteer Board of Directors, and administered by a nine-member professional staff.

CMA has played a pivotal role in the development of the field of chamber music in this country by creatively addressing the needs of what is largely a non-institutional constituency. Through skill-building and the implementation of incentive-type grant programs, CMA has helped ensembles and presenting organizations to become more self-sufficient. The sponsorship of these grant programs highlights the fact that CMA is not limited to the traditional functions of arts service organizations.

Chamber Music America plays a direct role in supporting artistic pursuits, including performances, touring, educational programs and the commissioning of new repertoire. These expanded and strengthened programs and services will help CMA achieve its mission.

Chamber Music America welcomes into its membership not only the professionals in the field but those who, like the members of this audience, simply love to listen to Chamber Music. An individual membership in CMA is $35 per year and includes a subscription to *Chamber Music Magazine*, the membership directory, and many benefits and discounts. For more information, pick up a brochure in the lobby or write to CMA, 545 Eighth Avenue, New York, NY 10018.

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