

The Endellion String Quartet

Andrew Watkinson, Violinist
Ralph de Souza, Violinist
Garfield Jackson, Violist
David Waterman, Cellist

Sunday Afternoon, March 7, 1993, at 4:00
Rackham Auditorium, Ann Arbor, Michigan

PROGRAM

Quartet in D minor, Op. 76, No. 2 ("The Fifths") Haydn
Allegro
Andante più tosto allegretto
Menuetto – Allegro ma non troppo
Vivace assai

Quartet No. 2 Tippett
Allegro grazioso
Andante
Presto
Allegro appassionato

INTERMISSION

Quartet in F major, Op. 59, No. 1 Beethoven
Allegro
Allegretto vivace e sempre scherzando
Adagio molto e mesto
Theme Russe – Allegro

The Endellion String Quartet appears by arrangement with The Aaron Concert Management, Boston,
in association with Hazard Chase Artists' Management, Cambridge, England.

PROGRAM NOTES

String Quartet in D minor, Op. 76, No. 2 ("The Fifths")

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

In 1795, Joseph Haydn returned from his second visit to London and settled in Vienna to live out his years as music's grand old man, the greatest living composer. Mozart, whom he had so greatly admired, had died four years before, and Beethoven, who was to be the leader of the next generation and of the entire next century, in 1795 was only the musical season's best debutant. England had showered wealth and honors on Haydn, and he had lingered there for two months after his last concert before going home.

At sixty-three, he was an old man by the standards of the time. What no one knew was how different the work of his last years would be. He had written more than a hundred symphonies, but after the dozen masterpieces that he had composed expressly for his London audiences, he never wrote another. Yet with the new knowledge of Handel's oratorios that he had acquired in London, he modernized and revitalized that form, in *The Creation* and *The Seasons*. He also wrote six masses for the princely family that he had served as staff conductor and composer for thirty years, and some other sacred works.

Haydn's greatest music until this time had been found in his instrumental works, but in his last years he wrote almost none except a few string quartets, music that sums up a lifetime of invention of the highest order. In 1797 he wrote the six we know as Op. 76, and in 1799 the two of Op. 77. He started another in 1803 but stopped after two movements, which he allowed to be published in 1806 with the apologetic message, "All my strength is gone; I am old and weak." The last eight completed quartets have the kind of controlled freedom that comes only with great maturity, and their rich instrumental texture looks far into the future, perhaps as far as Brahms.

The works in Op. 76 are sometimes called the Erdödy Quartets, after the Hungarian Count who commissioned them. For a fee of 100 ducats, Haydn withheld them from publication until 1799 so that the Count could have exclusive use of them for two years. The Erdödy's, who were related by marriage to Haydn's employers, the Esterházy's, were a family of great music lovers. A generation later they were closely involved with Beethoven and also helped launch the career of a ten-year-old Liszt.

The D-minor Quartet that is the second of the set takes its nickname, "the Fifths," from the opening motive of the *Allegro* first movement, whose first and second pairs of notes are spaced five steps apart. Haydn uses this simple interval of a fifth rather than a fully-formed melody as the principal theme of the movement. With so highly concentrated a subject for musical discussion, he allows his imagination to roam far and free, fully exploiting his contrapuntal wizardry and the virtuosity of the players he was writing for. Next is a three-part slow movement that is in reality not very slow, *Andante più tosto allegretto*, whose third part is a brilliant variation on the first.

The main section of the Minuet, *Allegro ma non troppo*, is a canon for two instrumental "voices," with two instruments playing each "voice." The contrasting central section used to be called "The Witches' Dance." The Quartet ends with a Finale, *Vivace assai*, in the Gypsy style that Viennese composers often used so brilliantly in music written for their Hungarian benefactors. In its course, Haydn recalls the motive in fifths with which the Quartet began.

String Quartet No. 2

Michael Tippett (b. 1905)

Sir Michael Tippett is an important English composer whose works are performed in the United States with increasing frequency. His musical education was informal and

irregular until he reached his twenties, when he undertook a rigorous program of study to prepare himself for a professional career as a composer, conductor, and teacher. In 1940, he became Director of Music at Morley College, a secondary school for working people, where music had long held an important place. In 1951, he left the College to devote all his time to composition and performance, and to occasional writing about music. He has written several symphonies, concertos, and operas, an important oratorio, *A Child of Our Time*, which is a kind of modern Passion, and a great many more works of high spiritual and poetic aims. His music is purposeful and powerful, rich in ideas, often of great complexity, and always rewarding to the attentive listener.

This Second String Quartet is one of Tippett's earliest mature works, although he was already in his late thirties when he completed the score in 1942. It is a highly original work for the time, looking ahead to the neatly balanced structures of Béla Bartók's last works and to the intricate poetic conversations in the quartets of Elliott Carter, yet it is, in fact, music of subtle simplicity.

The first movement, *Allegro grazioso*, is built in six sections that fall into something like the 3 x 2 structures of the classical sonata form: first, a statement of two structural elements; then, their development; and finally, their somewhat varied recall. At the same time, the richly textured part-writing is derived from the Renaissance madrigal, in which each of the vocal lines may often have its own independent rhythms and accents, propelling the whole. The second movement is a fugue, *Andante*; the third, a scurrying scherzo, *Presto*; and the finale, *Allegro appassionato*, a solid classical sonata.

String Quartet in F major, Op. 59, No. 1

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

The three quartets that make up Beethoven's Opus 59 were completed in 1806 for Count Andre Kirilovich Razumovsky, the Russian Ambassador to Vienna. Razumovsky was also an amateur musician who kept three of Vienna's best string players on retainer so that he could play second violin in quartets with them. These new works show such radical advances over Beethoven's previous quartets, the six he had published five years earlier as his Op. 18, that conservative musicians wondered about the future course of his development.

Even Beethoven's friends were puzzled by his departures. Some laughed when they played the opening of this Quartet for the first time, thinking it some kind of joke. From London to Moscow, serious and experienced cellists considered the repeated-note figure that starts the second movement to be an absurdity. Some called the Quartet "crazy music." An Italian violinist who helped Beethoven with some fingerings reported that when he questioned certain passages, the composer told him, "They are not for you, but for a later age."

Beethoven's contemporaries were troubled by his "willful" writing, by the technical difficulties, and by the great dimensions of the Razumovsky quartets. Op. 59, No. 1 is almost twice as long as any of his earlier quartets, longer than five of his nine symphonies. The structure of every one of its four movements – not just the first – is basically a huge sonata form. Where convention would allow the statement of a single relatively compact theme, Beethoven's are great, expansive, and grouped, and they seem to be under constant development.

The first movement, *Allegro*, starts with what is now considered one of Beethoven's most noble opening themes. The second, *Allegretto vivace e sempre scherzando*, is not in the conventional form of a scherzo but only in the character of one. The slow movement, *Adagio molto e mesto* ("very slow and sad"), one of the most richly expressive in all of Beethoven's chamber music, may have been associated in the composer's mind with the death of one of his brothers. The *Allegro* finale follows without pause. Beethoven's use of a Russian tune as its first theme may have been requested by Razumovsky or it could have been a simple gesture of friendship.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Now in its fourteenth year, the **Endellion String Quartet** has earned a reputation as one of the finest quartets on the international scene. It has toured in the Far East and North and South America, and regularly visits major European cities. In March of 1992 the quartet completed a highly successful coast to coast tour of the U.S.

In Britain the Endellions have appeared at nearly all the major series and festivals and are regular broadcasters on BBC radio and television. Their presence in London has been marked by several series including four concerts in the 1990 South Bank Haydn Festival, five in the 1988 South Bank Summerscope Festival, and six in their 1991 Wigmore Hall complete Beethoven cycle. In the 1991 South Bank "Quartet Plus" series, the quartet members were Artistic Directors, joined by distinguished guests including former members of the Amadeus Quartet, Robert Tear, and Artur Pizarro. The success of this project led to an invitation for the Endellions to direct a South Bank series in 1994.

In 1987, to coincide with the Britten cycle given by the quartet at the Wigmore Hall, EMI released the first ever complete recordings of the composer's string chamber music, played by the Endellion Quartet and colleagues. These records were chosen as Chamber Music Recordings of the Year for 1987, by both the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Guardian*, and the Endellions' account of Britten's three string quartets was the recommended version in Radio 3's Record Review.

In 1988, the Quartet began a recording project with Virgin Classics. The first recording of this collaboration, Haydn's Op. 54 quartets, was the only quartet record in BBC Radio 3's Critics' Choice of Records of the Year in 1988. Recordings of Bartók, Mozart, Dvorák, Walton, Bridge, Smetena, and Haydn (Op. 74) have also been released.

This afternoon, the Endellion String Quartet makes its Ann Arbor debut.