

ABOUT THE FRY STREET QUARTET

Winners of the Millennium Grand Prize at the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, the First Prize at the Yellow Springs Competition, and prizewinners at the prestigious 2004 Banff International String Quartet Competition, the FSQ performs nationally and internationally. At Isaac Stern's invitation the quartet performed their 2001 Carnegie Hall debut in a performance that "spoke of precision, preparation, excitement, profound heritage, and ultimate satisfaction" (*New York Concert Review*.) Their performance earlier that season at the 92nd Street Y in New York was hailed by the *New York Times* as "a triumph of ensemble playing." The FSQ made their European debut with a concert tour of the Balkans sponsored by Carnegie Hall and the U.S. State Department. The quartet is Faculty Quartet in Residence at Utah State University.

www.frystreetquartet.com



THE FRY STREET QUARTET

William Fedkenheuer, VIOLIN
Rebecca McFaul, VIOLIN
Russell Fallstad, VIOLA
Anne Francis, CELLO

BEETHOVEN

STRING QUARTET IN C MINOR, OP. 18, NO. 4

(c. 1798-1800)

- I. Allegro ma non tanto
- II. Scherzo: Andante scherzoso quasi allegretto
- III. Menuetto: Allegretto
- IV. Allegro—Prestissimo

STRING QUARTET IN B-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 130, WITH THE *GROSSE FUGE*, OP. 133 (1825)

- I. Adagio ma non troppo—Allegro
- II. Presto
- III. Andante con moto ma non troppo
- IV. Alla danza tedesca: Allegro assai
- V. Cavatina: Adagio molto espressivo
- VI. Grosse Fuge:
Overtura: Allegro—Meno mosso e moderato—Allegro
Fuga: [Allegro]—Meno mosso e moderato—Allegro molto e con brio

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BEETHOVEN

STRING QUARTET IN C MINOR, OP. 18, NO. 4

STRING QUARTET IN B-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 130,
with the *GROSSE FUGE*, OP. 133

THE
FRY STREET
QUARTET

STRING QUARTET IN C MINOR, OP. 18, NO. 4

Opus 18 is clearly in the realm of Mozart and (especially) Haydn, and Beethoven obviously had his great contemporaries in mind. The first violin takes the conventional leading role in the sonata movement, which features a Haydn-esque balance between related motifs. The development uses orchestration to signal change: the cello steps out of its supporting role to claim a share of the melodic

material. As the movement goes on the main motifs are more ornamented, and the forceful chords that punctuate the exposition are used more frequently to heighten the drama.

Beethoven eschews a slow movement; both the second and third movements are triple-meter dances. This creates overarching symmetry: triple meter dances framed by duple meter outer movements. The second movement scherzo resembles the first movement: a few simple melodic motifs are deftly spun out across the entire movement in canons and imitative duets. Change and development is subtle: deft pauses where the melodic flow had been continuous,

tangier harmonies in place of consonance, lower voices to add weight. Like the scherzo, the minuet is built up of short repeated sections. But this symmetrical structure is countered by offbeat dynamic accents that give the meter an exaggerated swing.

The finale balances the slight, graceful dance movements with sawing four-square meter and robust 'gypsy' style. But the dance character remains, including the elegant balance among short, repeated sections, fuelled by the edgy energy of the melody's repeated notes. As the movement approaches the apparent final cadence, the music veers into a set of fragmented variants on the main

melodic themes—a very Beethovenian strategy. A furious coda brings the quartet to an emphatic close.

STRING QUARTET IN B-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 130, ORIGINAL VERSION (1825)

Opus 130 is from the very end of Beethoven's life, when he was focused on innovative treatment of the string quartet. Its form is willful and strange: almost a suite or set of divertimentos, concluding with the *Grosse Fugue*, the most challenging piece yet written for string quartet.

The bare opening texture harks back to the earliest quartets of Haydn. The apparently conventional phrases seem about to develop into a canon—but instead head into a standard-sounding allegro. Rather than launching into the exposition, the adagio and allegro alternate, as if unwilling to carry on the normal business of sonata form. The development is diffident and

distracted, echoing the alternation between allegro and adagio of the opening. This abrupt, scattered treatment of sonata form continues, as if Beethoven were deliberately treating the form as casually as possible. Instead of a slow movement, we get a drastically brief presto, a hushed racing dance, with a stomping trio designed to disrupt the listener's sense of meter. There isn't time to get used to its racing tempo and seesaw phrasing before it gallops offstage, leaving the listener breathless.

The third movement seems to be a slow movement, but the tempo marking hints that this movement is not so straightforward: *Andante con moto ma non troppo*,

a have-it-both-ways tempo if ever there was one. The first measure is marked *poco scherzando*—a little joke. The violins may sound sweet and singing, but the cello's burbling line is in on the joke, humoring the more gemütlich lines, all the while knowing not to take the whole thing too seriously. Eventually the violins get caught up in the ironic mood, playing games of catch with snatches of melody, mincing and echoing, ending with a just-slightly-over-dramatic final chord.

Now another dance, this one as jolly and bumptious as the second movement was frantic. The off-kilter meter, chopped up melody, and surprising dynamic changes intensify as the movement goes on, and eventually the melody is chopped up into single measures that get passed among the four voices (sometimes out of order!)

The fifth movement is a grave aria. There is no single singer in this cavatina: the subtle orchestration unites all four voices, creating a rich, seamless texture. The lyricism is interrupted once, towards the end, when the first violin stammers a few anxious, broken phrases over crepuscular tremolos, bringing the music up short. But the other voices soon subsume the first violin into their embrace.

The *Grosse Fugue* is a finale like no other, a third as long as the rest of the quartet. It shadows a four-movement quartet within itself: a fast double fugue; a free-flowing slow section; a second, dance-like fugue; and a fragmentary coda. It opens with a collage of linked fragments,

each a version of the same melody: placid, strident, lyrical, hesitant. This unsettling opening leads into a massive double fugue. The metric disjunctions, intricate cross-rhythms, and strident harmonies are of the idiom nurtured by Haydn and Mozart, but just barely: it sounds like something that Bartók or Stravinsky would have been proud to have written.

In the relaxed slower section, the melodic material sounds quite different. The theme is stated lyrically, surrounded by murmuring ornamentation. This section builds slowly to a rich climax then slides away to make room for a second fast fugue. Again the main melody appears in a different guise: this one bounces and flutters, breaking up into short, imitative phrases tossed between voices. As the fugue builds in intensity, trills become more prominent, generating buzzing tension.

The climax of the second fast section drops into an echo of the slow section, which is abruptly halted by what sounds like a few measures from the opening. The rest of the movement jumps restlessly from one reminiscence to another: a bit of the trill-laden fast fugue here, a snippet of the first fugue there, then back to the slow section, all punctuated by the fragments from the opening. The music seems to wander: often it sounds as if a final cadence is coming yet the movement can't quite end. It is as if Beethoven wants to consider each important gesture in turn—yet there is no grand conclusion. The vast movement ends with a brusque cadence gesture. Having arrived at the *Grosse Fugue*, Beethoven leaves the questions it raises open for future musicians.

—Mary C. Francis

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Pyramix DSD Workstation
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www.superaudiocenter.com

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ABOUT THE ISOMIKE™

Isomike™ ("Isolated Microphones") is an experimental acoustic baffle system, to address the interference of intrachannel sounds that results in compromised fidelity. For these 4-channel recordings, the microphones were suspended on four arms, separated by **Isomike** baffles. Most baffles absorb sound from mid- to high-range frequencies; lower frequencies are more difficult to absorb. Here, the unique shapes of the **Isomike** baffles are advantageous. As lower frequencies flow around the heart or egg-shaped baffles, they are scattered, effectively dissipating their energy. Eliminating line-of-sight between the microphones seems to lower some fidelity-robbing cancellations, this reveals a layer of extreme detail and a sense of increased sensitivity. As such we took great care, therefore, to reduce the noise level within the auditorium during the recordings.—Ray Kimber

CD Jacket Design: Terril Neely. Recorded in the Austad Auditorium, Val A. Browning Center for the Performing Arts, Weber State University, Ogden, Utah.

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