

and the
**Linda and
Maurice Binkow
Philanthropic Fund**
present

Guarneri String Quartet

Arnold Steinhardt, *Violin*
John Dalley, *Violin*
Michael Tree, *Viola*
Peter Wiley, *Cello*

Program

Sunday Afternoon, January 11, 2009 at 4:00
Rackham Auditorium • Ann Arbor

Ludwig van Beethoven

String Quartet No. 12 in E-flat Major, Op. 127

Maestoso—Allegro
Adagio, ma non troppo e molto cantabile
Scherzando vivace
Finale

I N T E R M I S S I O N

Beethoven

String Quartet No. 15 in a minor, Op. 132

Assai sostenuto—Allegro
Allegro ma non tanto
Molto adagio—Andante—Molto adagio—Andante—Molto adagio
Alla marcia, assai vivace—Piu allegro—attacca
Allegro appassionato

28th Performance of the
130th Annual Season

46th Annual
Chamber Arts Series

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This afternoon's performance is sponsored by the Linda and Maurice Binkow Philanthropic Fund.

Special thanks to Christopher Kendall, Dean and Paul Boylan Collegiate Professor of Music, Theatre & Dance, U-M School of Music, Theatre & Dance, for participating in tonight's post-concert dinner.

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The Guarneri String Quartet appears by arrangement with Herbert Barrett Management, New York, NY.

The Guarneri String Quartet records for Surrounded by Entertainment, Arabesque, RCA Victor, and Philips Classics.

Large print programs are available upon request.

String Quartet No. 12 in E-flat Major, Op. 127 (1825)

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born December 15 or 16, 1770 in Bonn, Germany

Died March 26, 1827 in Vienna

Snapshot of History...

In 1825:

The 16-year-old Felix Mendelssohn writes his first masterpiece, *Octet for Strings* (Op. 20) in Berlin

Greece is in the middle of its eight-year War of Independence against Turkey

The world's first modern railway, the Stockton and Darlington Railway, opens in England

The Erie Canal opens, connecting the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean

Alexander Pushkin writes his drama *Boris Godunov* in internal exile in Russia

Johann Strauss Jr., the future Waltz King, is born in Vienna

In the fall of 1822, Beethoven received a letter from a Russian aristocrat and amateur cello player, Prince Nikolai Galitzin. The Prince commissioned Beethoven to write three string quartets and urged him to name his own price. Beethoven accepted the proposal and promised to deliver the first quartet within a month. However, more than two years passed before the *String Quartet in E-flat Major*, the first one in the set, reached the Prince, even though it seems that Beethoven had begun to make sketches for a new string quartet even before receiving Galitzin's letter. (He had not written a string quartet since the f-minor work, Op. 95, of 1810.)

Let us for a moment imagine the Prince and his three companions in St. Petersburg as they put the parts of Op. 127 on their music stands. They start playing the opening "Maestoso," thinking it is a slow introduction; yet after only six measures, they see with surprise that the introduction is cut short and an "Allegro" theme begins in a new meter. After a few minutes (during which time two distinct musical ideas appear, more or less like in a classical sonata exposition), the opening "Maestoso" returns in a startlingly distant key. It is brushed aside once more by the "Allegro" music, now

taking on the distinct features of a development section (frequent modulations, fragmentation of motives). Another set of slow measures—shorter than the previous ones—again propels the music in unexpected harmonic directions, with the home key in E-flat Major eventually returning and bringing the music to a soft and somewhat inconclusive conclusion.

After this enigmatic opening, the players encounter a slow theme-and-variation movement of unprecedented complexity (they must have been exceptional players indeed if they could make it to the end!). A lyrical melody of otherworldly beauty is followed by five variations: the first largely ornamental; the second playful; the third, suddenly moving to a distant new key, extremely slow and intense; the fourth seemingly returning to the style of the first yet introducing many fascinating surprises; and the last one developing a "free fantasia" on the theme.

At one point, the harmony seemed so confusing that the Prince had to ask Beethoven in a letter whether he meant a certain note in the viola part to be a C- or a D-flat. Beethoven went to great lengths to explain why it had to be a D-flat, and added: "If I had written C, the melody would have been destroyed." There is no record, however, to tell us whether Galitzin and his partners felt, as many modern commentators have, that Beethoven contemplated the starry heavens in the central E-Major variation.

The remaining two movements are no less extraordinary. The "Scherzando vivace" uses an extremely simple rhythmic pattern to generate uncommon dramatic energy. That pattern is developed and transformed in ways that recall the scherzo of *Symphony No. 9*. The trio, or middle section, is a breathless *Presto* in the minor mode, later switching to the major and suddenly interrupted by a general rest and the return of the "Scherzando." At the end of the movement, the trio section is briefly recalled; another general rest separates this reminiscence from the abrupt ending, again similarly to what happens in *Symphony No. 9*.

In the finale, Beethoven let go of all the dramatic tensions that had weighed so heavily on the first three movements. Joseph Kerman,

one of the most influential musicologists of our time, described this finale (which bears no tempo marking) as a “medley of folk-like phrases... square and ingenuous, jogging along in all-but-continuous quarter-notes.” The contrast with the rest of the quartet could not be greater. Yet Beethoven reserved a final surprise to those players and listeners who thought he was simply writing a folk-dance finale in homage to his one-time teacher Haydn. He added a mysterious Coda in a new meter (6/8 replacing cut time) in which the harmonic adventures of earlier movements suddenly reappear. The tempo designation is *Allegro comodo* (a comfortably fast motion), not *con moto* (with motion) as some editions suggest. Kerman finds the harmonic progressions to be “sheer dream”—a dream that is followed by an awakening, a consolidation of the home key, and a sudden yet resolute ending.

String Quartet No. 15 in a minor, Op. 132 (1825)

Beethoven

With its “Holy Song of Thanksgiving of a Convalescent to the Deity in the Lydian Mode,” the *String Quartet in a minor* is in a category all by itself, not only among Beethoven’s quartets but in the entire music literature as well. Nowhere else did Beethoven take such a bold step outside the style that Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven himself, had done so much to develop. The same claim could possibly be made of the *Great Fugue* (originally the finale of the string quartet in B-flat, Op. 130, later published separately), but while in that work Beethoven expands an existing framework almost beyond recognition, in the “Holy Song” he does the opposite: he reduces his means and retreats into a newly-invented archaic world that no one knew existed.

The patient who gives thanks for his recovery was, of course, Beethoven himself. In April 1825—when he was in the middle of writing the a-minor quartet—the composer became gravely ill with an inflammation of the bowels. His physician, Dr. Anton Braunhofer, prescribed a strict diet, and

wrote in one of the deaf composer’s conversation books: “No wine, no coffee; no spices of any kind. I’ll arrange matters with the cook.” Beethoven’s condition improved; soon he was able to return to work and finished the quartet in July 1825. But with a slow movement that had obviously not been planned from the start, this was no longer the same work that Beethoven had begun before his illness.

If there is one word that occurs more often than any other in discussions of this quartet, it is *contrast*—contrast both *within* movements and *between* movements. The contrasts begin immediately at the beginning, where a mysterious slow introduction is suddenly interrupted by an “Allegro” flourish in first violin. “The conflict revealed here casts a shadow not only over the first movement but over the quartet as a whole,” William Kinderman writes in his insightful monograph on Beethoven. In fact, the anguished half-steps of the introduction and the agitated rhythms of the “Allegro” determine much of what follows, along with the lyrical second idea played by the second violin. The first two elements are contrapuntally combined in the development section and further elaborated in the subsequent sections of the movement. In a significant departure from conventional sonata form, Beethoven brings not one recapitulation but two. The first of these resembles the exposition more closely but is set in a key other than a minor, the home key, while the second treats the material with much more freedom but re-establishes a minor in the movement’s vibrantly dramatic coda.

To say that the second movement is a minuet with trio is both true and untrue. The 3/4 time and A-B-A form are certainly present, and the drone effects of the trio have a long ancestry in movements of this type. Yet the movement doesn’t *sound* like a minuet. Commentator Michael Steinberg has described this movement as “an always surprising mixture of the gentle and the acid,” with harmonies that are “a bit tart.” The frequent half-steps are audibly related to those from the slow introduction of the first movement. Of the trio section, Steinberg writes: “A country dance tune, with bagpipe drone and

all, becomes transfigured at a great height into something distant, mysterious, free of the pull of gravity." This ethereal dance is, however, suddenly interrupted by a unison passage where even the meter changes briefly from triple to duple. Thus, even this lyrical intermezzo is not spared from the dramatic contrasts that fill the entire work.

Beethoven took pains to specify that the "Holy Song of Thanksgiving" was in the Lydian mode, which is one of the old church modes upon which Gregorian chant and much early polyphonic music was based. The name itself is even older, going back to ancient Greece. We know that Beethoven studied some examples of Renaissance music and also theoretical writings from the period, and thus he was well aware that the Lydian mode was associated with healing in some ancient writings. According to theory books, this mode consists of the white keys of the piano starting with the note F; in other words, it is an F-major scale with a B-natural instead of a B-flat. This poses a grave problem, however, in that the interval F-B is an augmented fourth or "tritone" that was called the "interval of the devil" in medieval times and usually avoided. All chant melodies notated in Lydian are actually sung with a B-flat, an alteration that was routinely applied to the music. In Op. 132, Beethoven used B-natural, and it is very likely that his use of the "Lydian mode" is the first in history not to correct the offending interval. Thus, while seemingly reviving an old musical element, Beethoven actually created something quite new. (The Lydian mode with B-natural does exist in Eastern European folk music.) The entire song of thanksgiving is harmonized with only "white keys," which—in conjunction with the extremely slow tempo—makes the sound eerily transparent. In addition to ancient sources, Beethoven also drew on the Protestant chorale tradition in this movement—a tradition he was familiar with in

spite of his Catholic background. The uniform rhythms and clear-cut cadences (line endings) turn the Holy Song into a chorale of sorts, though this chorale has five lines instead of the usual four.

At the end of the fifth line, the second violin plays the first altered note (a C-sharp) in the movement, giving the signal for the next section, marked *Neue Kraft fühlend* (Feeling new strength). As a total contrast to the preceding Lydian music, this section is in a bright and confident D Major. In Steinberg's words: "The *staccatos*, the wide leaps, the exuberant upbeats in scurrying thirty-second notes, the jubilant violin trill that rides across the top of the music, the breathless excitement in the accompaniment, all contribute to the joyful atmosphere."

The hymn returns with some fascinating changes in the texture. The static, almost frozen chords of the first appearance are softened by a more complex rhythmic interplay among the voices, giving the music a more flowing character. Then the second section returns, lavishly ornamented. With the third and final return of the Lydian chorale, we understand the form as A-B-A-B-A (as in the slow movement of *Symphony No. 9*), but this final "A" is more intimate and transcendent than any of its previous incarnations. It is also much longer. At first, only one instrument at a time adds ornaments to the melody, the others play the long notes from the beginning. As a result, each player comes forward—an individual singing his own personal hymn of thanksgiving. Then, the four instruments join forces again to play the otherworldly harmonies of the movement's final measures.

The brief march that follows confirms the convalescent's return to life. Beethoven wanted a simpler and more lighthearted movement after the "Holy Song," and according to his sketches, he first intended a *ländler*-type dance at this point.

Beethoven also drew on the Protestant chorale tradition in this movement—a tradition he was familiar with in spite of his Catholic background.



Guarneri String Quartet

He later decided otherwise, and the *ländler* found its home as the “Alla danza tedesca” movement of Op. 130.

We might think that when we hear the march in Op. 132, the trials and tribulations are finally over. Not so. A dramatic recitative interrupts the happy music, leading into the “Allegro appassionato” finale. Despite the waltz-like lilt of the main theme, there is significant tension under the surface. The rondo theme is quite close to the agitated melody of the first movement. The first episode provides momentary relief; the second even intensifies the “storm and stress.” But eventually, the tonality shifts from a minor to A Major; the tempo increases to *Presto*, and a new lyrical melody helps to give this monumental work a happy ending.

The a-minor Quartet was first performed by the Schuppanzigh Quartet at a Viennese tavern named *Zum Wilden Mann* (The Wild Man), on September 9 and 11, 1825. The concert hall première followed two months later, in November of the same year.

Program notes by Peter Laki.

The renowned **Guarneri String Quartet** “is among the most revered and enduring ensembles of its kind in the world” (National Public Radio) and has circled the globe countless times since it was formed in 1964, playing in the most prestigious halls in North and South America, Mexico, Europe, Asia, and Australia. The Guarneri String Quartet has announced its retirement at the completion of the current season. In their final season the Quartet will celebrate by doing what it does best—touring extensively throughout the US as they have for nearly 45 years. Performances include their annual Metropolitan Museum of Art concert series, instituted in 1965, as well as a collaboration with the Johannes String Quartet. The ensemble also makes its annual tour to Europe this winter.

The Guarneri has been featured on many television and radio specials, documentaries and educational presentations both in North America and abroad. They have been interviewed by Charles Kuralt on CBS’s nationwide television program, *Sunday Morning*. A full-length film entitled *High Fidelity—The Guarneri String*

In 1992, the Guarneri String Quartet became the only quartet to receive the prestigious Award of Merit from the Association of Performing Arts Presenters in New York City.

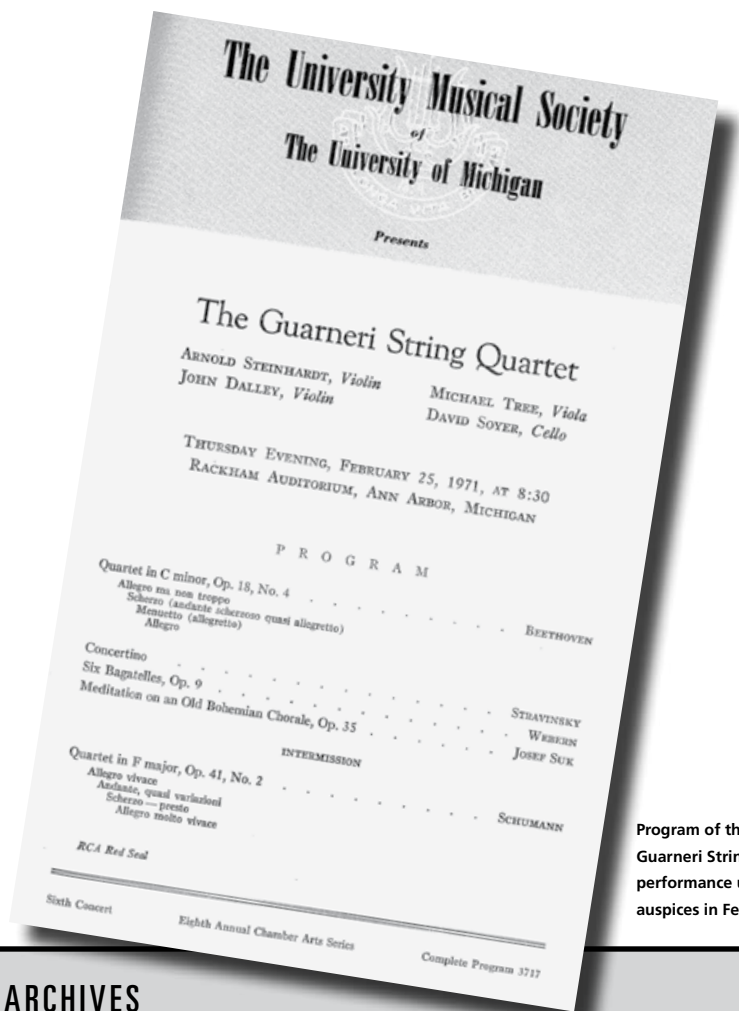
Quartet was released nationally, to great critical and public acclaim, in the fall of 1989 (the film was directed and produced by Allan Miller who was also the director/producer of the Academy Award-winning documentary, *From Mozart to Mao*, which dealt with Isaac Stern's visit to China). The Quartet is also the subject of various books including *Quartet* by Helen Drees Ruttencutter (Lippincott & Crowell, 1980), *The Art of Quartet Playing: the Guarneri in Conversation with David Blum* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), and Arnold Steinhardt's *Indivisible by Four: A String Quartet in Pursuit of Harmony* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998).

In addition to mastering the finest works in the existing quartet repertoire, the Guarneri String Quartet is committed to performing and popularizing works by today's foremost composers. In the spring of 2008 the quartet, in collaboration with the Johannes String Quartet, premiered new works by acclaimed American composers William Bolcom and Derek Bermel, a program which appeared on the 07/08 UMS Chamber Arts series. In the 03/04 season, they gave the first performance of *String Quartet No. 5* (In Search of La Vita Nuova) written for them by the award-winning American composer, Richard Danielpour. Mr. Danielpour had previously written a *Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra*, commissioned by the National Symphony Orchestra and written expressly for the Guarneri String Quartet. It was premiered with the NSO at the Kennedy Center under the direction of Leonard Slatkin in January 2000, followed by its New York premiere at Carnegie Hall later that same month. In the 01/02 season, the Guarneri gave the first performances of *String Quartet No. 5*, written for them by Lukas Foss.

In 1982, Mayor Koch presented the Quartet with the first New York Seal of Recognition. The Quartet was awarded Honorary Doctorate degrees

by the University of South Florida (1976) and the State University of New York (1983). In 1992, the Guarneri String Quartet became the only quartet to receive the prestigious Award of Merit from the Association of Performing Arts Presenters in New York City. The Quartet continues their longstanding series and residency at the University of Maryland where they are on the faculty. In 2004, the Guarneri received the Richard J. Bogomolny National Service Award from Chamber Music America. This is CMA's highest honor, given annually to an individual or ensemble for a lifetime of service and achievement in the field. In 2005, Guarneri received the Ford Honors Award from the University Musical Society of the University of Michigan (UMS) where they have performed 31 times over the past 38 years.

The Guarneri has recorded for Surrounded by Entertainment, which released a CD in spring 2001 of quartets by Ravel, Debussy, and Fauré. Several of its recordings on both RCA Red Seal and Philips have won international awards, including its recent recording of Juan Crisostomo de Arriaga's *String Quartets Nos. 1-3* (Philips), which won the 1996 Deutsche Schallplattenkritik Award in Germany. Among its other award-winning recordings are collaborations with such artists as Artur Rubinstein, Pinchas Zukerman; and Boris Kroyt and Mischa Schneider of the Budapest Quartet. They have also recorded on the Arabesque label Mendelssohn's *String Quartet No. 3* and its first-ever recording of the great Mendelssohn *Octet*, Op. 20, in collaboration with the Orion Quartet.



Program of the first Guarneri String Quartet performance under UMS auspices in February 1971.

UMS ARCHIVES

For over 40 years, the musicians of the Guarneri have been among the highest-ranking aristocrats in the chamber music world. The Guarneri String Quartet made their UMS debut on February 25, 1971 in Rackham Auditorium in a program which included works by Beethoven, Stravinsky, Webern, Josef Suk, and Schumann. During the past 38 years, the Quartet has performed 19 stand-alone concerts in Ann Arbor as well as two complete Beethoven quartet cycles: the first cycle spanning five performances during the 1976/77 UMS season, and a second complete cycle spanning six performances over three successive seasons beginning in the 1984/85 season. During the 1981 winter season, the Guarneri appeared twice on the UMS Chamber Arts Series in programs consisting entirely of compositions by Béla Bartók. In November 1999, the Guarneri appeared alongside the Orion String Quartet in a program featuring Mendelssohn's *Octet*, Op. 20. Tonight we celebrate the Guarneri String Quartet in the Quartet's 32nd appearance under UMS auspices.