


**THE BRENTANO STRING
QUARTET**

**MARK STEINBERG, VIOLIN
SERENA CANIN, VIOLIN
MISHA AMORY, VIOLA
NINA MARIA LEE, CELLO**

**WITH
KWANG-WU KIM, PIANO**

**GUEST ARTIST SERIES
KATZIN CONCERT HALL
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2008 • 7:30 PM**

MUSIC

 **Herberger College
of the Arts**

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

Program

Four Madrigals (from Book VI)

Lasciatemi morire
Ohimè il bel viso
Ditelo voi
Zefiro torna

Claudio Monteverdi
(1567?-1643)
arr. by Mark Steinberg

String Quartet in E-flat minor

No. 15, Op. 144 (1974)

Elegy: Adagio
Serenade: Adagio
Intermezzo: Adagio
Nocturne: Adagio
Funeral March: Adagio molto
Epilogue: Adagio - Adagio molto

Dmitri Shostakovich
(1906-1975)

****There will be a 10 minute intermission****

Piano Quintet in F minor, Op. 34

Allegro non troppo
Andante, un poco adagio
Scherzo: Allegro
Finale: Poco sostenuto - Allegro non troppo - Presto, non troppo

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

The Brentano String Quartet appears by arrangement with
David Rowe Artists, Marblehead, MA
The Brentano String Quartet record for AEON
(distributed by Harmonia Mundi USA)
www.brentanoquartet.com

Out of respect for the performers and those audience members around you,
please turn all beepers, cell phones and watches to their silent mode. Thank you.

The Brentano String Quartet

Since its inception in 1992, the Brentano String Quartet has appeared throughout the world to popular and critical acclaim. "Passionate, uninhibited and spellbinding," raves the London Independent; the New York Times extols its "luxuriously warm sound [and] yearning lyricism"; the Philadelphia Inquirer praises its "seemingly infallible instincts for finding the center of gravity in every phrase and musical gesture"; and the Times (London) opines, "the Brentanos are a magnificent string quartet...This was wonderful, selfless music-making." Within a few years of its formation, the Quartet garnered the first Cleveland Quartet Award and the Naumburg Chamber Music Award; and in 1996 the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center invited them to be the inaugural members of Chamber Music Society Two, a program which has become a coveted distinction for chamber groups and individuals ever since. The Quartet had its first European tour in 1997, and was honored in the U.K. with the Royal Philharmonic Award for Most Outstanding Debut. That debut recital was at London's Wigmore Hall, and the Quartet has continued its warm relationship with Wigmore, appearing there regularly and serving as the hall's Quartet-in-residence in the 2000-01 season.

In recent seasons the Quartet has traveled widely, appearing all over the United States and Canada, in Europe, Japan and Australia. It has performed in the world's most prestigious venues, including Carnegie Hall and Alice Tully Hall in New York; the Library of Congress in Washington; the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam; the Konzerthaus in Vienna; Suntory Hall in Tokyo; and the Sydney Opera House. The Quartet has participated in summer festivals such as Aspen, the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, the Edinburgh Festival, the Kuhmo Festival in Finland, the Taos School of Music and the Caramoor Festival.

In addition to performing the entire two-century range of the standard quartet repertoire, the Brentano Quartet has a strong interest in both very old and very new music. It has performed many musical works pre-dating the string quartet as a medium, among them Madrigals of Gesualdo, Fantasias of Purcell, and secular vocal works of Josquin. Also, the quartet has worked closely with some of the most important composers of our time, among them Elliott Carter, Charles Wuorinen, Chou Wen-chung, Steven Mackey, Bruce Adolphe, and György Kurtág. The Quartet has commissioned works from Wuorinen, Adolphe, Mackey, David Horne and Gabriela Frank. The Quartet celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2002 by commissioning ten composers to write companion pieces for selections from Bach's Art of Fugue, the result of which was an electrifying and wide-ranging single concert program. The Quartet has also worked with the celebrated poet Mark Strand, commissioning poetry from him to accompany works of Haydn and Webern.

The Quartet has been privileged to collaborate with such artists as soprano Jessye Norman, pianist Richard Goode, and pianist Mitsuko Uchida. The Quartet enjoys an especially close relationship with Ms. Uchida, appearing with her on stages in the United States, Europe, and Japan.

The Quartet has recorded the Opus 71 Quartets of Haydn, and has also recorded a Mozart disc for Aeon Records, consisting of the K. 464 Quartet and the K. 593 Quintet, with violist Hsin-Yun Huang. In the area of newer music, the Quartet has released a disc of the music of Steven Mackey on Albany Records, and has also recorded the music of Bruce Adolphe, Chou Wen-chung and Charles Wuorinen.

In 1998, cellist Nina Lee joined the Quartet, succeeding founding member Michael Kannen. The following season the Quartet became the first Resident String Quartet at Princeton University. The Quartet's duties at the University

are wide-ranging, including performances at least once a semester, as well as workshops with graduate composers, coaching undergraduates in chamber music, and assisting in other classes at the Music Department.

The Quartet is named for Antonie Brentano, whom many scholars consider to be Beethoven's "Immortal Beloved", the intended recipient of his famous love confession.

Kwang-Wu Kim served as president of the Longy School of Music in Cambridge, Massachusetts from 2001-2006. The Longy School of Music, unlike more traditional conservatories, commits itself to preparing musicians to make a difference in the world.

Kim's prior experience includes artistic and administrative director positions with El Paso Pro-Musica and the El Paso Chamber Music Festival, which he co-founded. He has held teaching positions with the Longy School of Music, the University of Texas at El Paso, the Peabody Institute and Dickinson College. Kim holds a doctor of musical arts degree from the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University and a bachelor's degree in philosophy, magna cum laude, from Yale University.

Kim's other professional activity includes guest faculty and speaking engagements at Stanford University and the Harvard Graduate School of Education, juror and panelist positions with the International Piano Competition for Young Musicians in the Netherlands, the National Association of Schools of Music, and in Boston, at the New England Conservatory, the Boston Conservatory, and the Boston Arts Academy. A student of legendary pianist Leon Fleisher, Kim gave his debut at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and was presented at the Marlboro Music Festival by then Artistic Director Rudolf Serkin.

Program Notes

Four Madrigals (from Book VI)

Claudio Monteverdi (arranged by Mark Steinberg)

Claudio Monteverdi, the father of the modern opera who wrote on the cusp between the Renaissance and the Baroque, was the composer of nine books of madrigals. In these astounding works he painted in sound the images and thoughts suggested by his selected texts. So it might seem strange to hear these works in a text-less setting, as a string quartet. What can I say other than I was overcome with jealousy towards those who get to live with this music? I recently saw a movie, *Reprise*, directed by Joachim Trier, in which there are some scenes where a conversation is heard in the background but one sees only gazes and glances between the characters involved. The import of the words is there even in their absence. Here, in this string quartet setting, Monteverdi's reflections of the words remain intact and the music is suffused with emotion every bit as specific as words allow. Rhetoric present in inflection can sometimes convey emotion even more honestly than the words it carries. We would like to think that much of the tenor of the text is still present here, and that the strengths of the string quartet medium closely parallel those of a vocal ensemble. We aim to give a convincing performance with shadow puppets.

This group of four madrigals is taken from the sixth book, a group of pieces that perhaps has autobiographical import as it follows the deaths of two women in Monteverdi's life: his wife and his favorite pupil, who had lived with him. Death and separation flavor the entire set.

Lasciatemi morire is the opening section of Ariadne's Lament, the text of which is "Let me die. How should I find comfort in this cruel fate, in this great suffering? Let me die." The painful yearning for oblivion is contrasted with the hope of peace.

Ohimè il bel viso is a setting of a text by Petrarch. The text reads "Alas, the fair face, alas, the gentle grace. Alas, the graceful and noble bearing. Alas, the voice that humbled arrogance and cruelty, and made all cowards brave. And alas the sweet smile, whence issued that dart which was my greatest joy in this world: regal spirit, most worthy of an empire, but that it came down to us too late. I must burn with love and sigh for you, for I was yours, and having lost you cannot be grieved by any other misfortune. With hope and desire you filled me when from my highest bliss I parted, but the wind carried away my words."

Ditelo voi is the second section of the group of madrigals entitled Tears of a Lover at the Tomb of his Beloved. The text is "Tell, O rivers, and you who heard Glaucus rending the air with cries upon her tomb, deserted meadows, Nymphs and Heaven, you know that grief has been my food, tears my drink, and since the ice-cold earth covered my beloved, your fair bosom, O blessed stone, has been my bed."

Zefiro torna is also on a Petrarchan text. "Zephyr returns and brings back the sweet season and grasses and flowers, his sweet companions, and twittering swallows and lamenting nightingales, And Spring, white and rosy. The meadows smile, the sky is blue once more. Jove gazes upon his daughter with delight. Earth, air and water are filled with love; every creature renews its courtship. But for me, alas, the heaviest sighs return, rising from the depths of my heart, drawn by the one who took its key with her to heaven. And birdsong and the meadow flowers, and the sweet actions of fair and honest women are as a wilderness and cruel wild beasts." Of special interest is the way in which the tempo and affect shifts as the poem speaks of the poet's inner world in contrast to his surroundings. The setting of the final line is of particular beauty and pathos.

– 2007 by Mark Steinberg

Dmitri Shostakovich String Quartet No. 15

Common perception of Shostakovich's music is deeply rooted in the external, in the relationship of his art to the asphyxiating political climate in which he had to survive. Without a doubt, irony and bitterness in response to the repression of Stalinist Russia inform the music. Yet so much of the response to calamity and pain winds up being an external reflection of internal states common to all mankind: anger, fear, mistrust, caution, alienation. Because of this we find that a great artist such as Shostakovich, even if he may write in response to his immediate personal situation, creates music which is also universal, which touches and moves us through an empathy born of our common knowledge of suffering.

The Fifteenth Quartet, Shostakovich's final work in this form, comes from the end of his life and takes on the quality of a personal requiem. A glance at the movement titles (including, among others, an *Elegy* and a *Funeral March*) immediately suggests such an idea. The composer's final period postdates Stalin's death and thus the music is in a sense freed to focus inward at long last. The work is in six connected slow movements, reminiscent of Haydn's *Seven Last Words of Christ*, which is similarly meditative in spirit. However, whereas the Haydn work deals with suffering as a source of eventual redemption, this bleaker work offers only a blossoming of doubt as it nears its conclusion.

The opening *Elegy* has the severity of an etching rather than the opulence of a painting. Spare and cold, one hears here the traditional chanting of the Russian Orthodox church, intoned more than sung. This is mourning without self-pity, a sense of loss that is ancient and eternal. The length and monotony of the movement oppress us with a Chekhovian ennui.

When the music progresses at long last to the *Serenade* we may expect the change to bring with it a sense of relief, of lightening. Yet whatever more casual song may be yearning to be heard, it is utterly obscured by twelve throat-tearing screams, such as might escape the mouths of figures in Picasso's *Guernica*. When a waltz-tune does arrive, its accompaniment is mechanistic and inhuman; so often in Shostakovich we are made aware of the brutality of an uncaring response to heartfelt wishes.

The following *Intermezzo* picks up on the idea of a painful dichotomy between utterance and response and takes it to its extreme. A wild cadenza for the first violin, almost rent asunder by its own turbulence, is met by frigid indifference in the cello. It is a powerful juxtaposition, perhaps the sense of the individual not understood by society, perhaps the extreme tension between what is felt and what it is safe to express. The well-known words of Dylan Thomas come to mind here: "Do not go gentle into that good night / Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

The ensuing *Nocturne* gives a relative sense of crepuscular serenity, featuring a haunting viola theme adorned with glistening spider-web-like arpeggios. Still, there is unease beneath the surface, an inability to release into the potential calm. Perhaps this is a nocturnal rest such as is invoked in Chekhov's story *Sleepy*, where a sleep-deprived nanny finally experiences restorative slumber after strangling the screaming infant in her care.

Announcing a movement together for the first time in the piece, all four instruments proclaim a heavy dotted rhythm at the start of the *Funeral March*. These statements alternate with individual recitatives which build toward a sense of wailing. If this were a film, these interspersed meditations might be portrayed as internal emotional experiences of the pallbearers, alternating and contrasting with the solemn, inevitable procession.

The *Epilogue* bursts out with a passage which is an expansion, even an

explosion of a trill. This trill becomes the major player in this final movement, used as an obfuscating veil. There are many glances backward, reminiscences of the Elegy and the Funeral March, yet they are enshrouded in a fog of trills. This is an anti-cathartic piece. Whatever solace, whatever certainty may have been felt in the chanting of the Elegy and in the inexorable tread of the Funeral March is now infected with doubt and trembling.

Among Shostakovich's never-to-be-fulfilled projects were plans for an opera on Gogol's tale *The Portrait*. At the conclusion of this story a man reveals to the crowd gathered at an auction that he must destroy the painting on display. It is a diabolical portrait painted by his father, bringing torment and misery to all who own it; his father has exhorted him to eradicate the painting at all costs. As the man, nearing the conclusion of his tale, turns to gaze upon the painting again he sees that it has been stolen. Here, too, in Shostakovich's final quartet we are left feeling our chance to face the mysteries revealed has been thwarted. Any hope of resolution is stolen away; all is emptiness. – 2005 by Mark Steinberg



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