



CHAMBER
MUSIC
SOCIETY
of Louisville



School of
music
UNIVERSITY of LOUISVILLE
dare to be great

**The Chamber Music Society
and
The University of Louisville**

present the

70th Season

**Three Hundred Twenty-Seventh Concert of the Society
Trio con Brio Copenhagen
November 4, 2007, 3:00 p.m.
Margaret Comstock Concert Hall**

**Three Hundred Twenty-Eighth Concert of the Society
Juilliard String Quartet
November 18, 2007, 3:00 p.m.
Margaret Comstock Concert Hall**

The fall programs of the Louisville Chamber Music Society feature two ensembles recognized for their brilliant interpretation of established works of the chamber music repertoire. First we will hear the Trio con Brio from Copenhagen, Denmark, winner of the KalichsteinLaredoRobinson International Trio Competition Award and new to Louisville audiences, and then the Juilliard String Quartet, a longtime LCMS favorite. Both programs include “standards” and less familiar works. It will be a treat to hear the Juilliard play Beethoven’s first Rasoumovsky quartet, op. 59, and the Trio con Brio play Haydn’s Trio, No. 27. The Juilliard will also bring string quartets by Elliott Carter and Verdi, and the Trio con Brio will perform trios by Ravel and Shostakovich.

In contrast and in keeping with the change of season, the programs in the spring are more varied as are the ensembles which include the Diaz Trio, string trio with guest pianist performing two works fresh to the concert series; the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center with compositions by 20th century English composers, part of the “English Music Renaissance,” that will include Elgar’s Piano Quintet, a work never before played for the LCMS; and, the Artemis String Quartet from Berlin, also performing two works new to the Louisville Chamber Music Society concerts, one by Tchaikovsky, the other by an Austrian composer, Thomas Larcher. As the materials for preparing the commentary for the spring portion of the concert series are not yet wholly accessible (two works have only recently been completed) the program notes for those concerts will be made available later in the year.

Trio con Brio Copenhagen

Trio in C Major, Hob. XV: 27

Josef Haydn (1732-1809)

Allegro

Andante

Presto

Starting a season of chamber music concerts with a composition by Haydn seems particularly appropriate given his role in the development of this genre, and it is especially appealing to contemplate hearing a piano trio, as his trios are the least wellknown of any of his extended series of works. This is an unfortunate state of affairs, as they are frequently rich and interesting. The writing for the piano and the violin is often brilliant, always spontaneous and congenial, and even the writing for the cello, the least prominent instrument in the ensemble, is usually more interesting than that found in Mozart's trios. Rosen's comments about these works in *The Classic Style* are pertinent. For one thing, the growing notion of virtuosity was nurtured in this style and became integral to the genre. These trios were mostly written for amateurs (whose ability then was not far from that of the professionals) for whom serious and learned forms or textures would have been out of place; virtuosity was quite the element needed to entertain both the performers and their audiences. Rosen also explains that, because the piano of the last eighteenth century could not satisfy the demands of composers like Haydn and Mozart, their writing for solo piano was often not as progressive or virtuosic as it was for the piano in the trio combination. The addition of the strings released their imaginations to more imaginative and expressive play in the piano part because of the greater capability of the stringed instruments to sustain lines. This brings us to one more related consideration: the problem of obtaining a good performance with today's instruments, which is more complex than simply playing softly to compensate because they are louder. The change in the integrity of the sound is also very much involved. The sonority of our instruments is more obtrusive, "mushier," and weightier; they no longer produce the thin and metallic, lively and piercing sound for which Haydn composed so that working with these alterations require an extra dimension of sensitivity from a modern ensemble.

The Trio in C Major, no. 27, is one of three that Haydn composed after his second and last visit to London and are dedicated to a very accomplished pianist by the name of Theresa Jansen. The work is especially rich in the development of rhythmic flow which becomes progressively faster in both the first and last movements. The ease with which Haydn contains the profusion of his motifs speaks to a masterly control of the improvisatorylike flow of his musical imagination. The first movement is an interesting treatment of sonata form. Here he tauntingly extends the opening statement of the theme with repeats of the little falling second that rounds it off, and at such length that he eventually omits composing a consequent altogether. In the transitional passage that follows in the place of the consequence, he introduces the element of virtuosity that continues throughout the rest of the movement. The undercurrent of "play" and contrast, between the gentle enticement from the opening of the movement with its repeated falling seconds, and the challenges that are introduced with the octaves, fast moving accompaniment figures and quickened pace, in the transition and carried on in the second theme, are the main features of the first movement.

The second movement is a richly detailed slow andante. The opening notes of the theme, though marked *dolce* on first appearance, shocks a sensibility that has become very comfortable with key of C Major in the first movement as a decorated and prolonged, dissonant Csharp (in the right hand of the piano) opens the movement. Its role in the drama of the movement is clarified later when an eloquent *minore* introduces a dramatic moment redolent of Haydn's much earlier *Sturm und Drang* period; driving, pulsing accompaniments, persistent figurations, and loud outbursts alternate quickly with soft retorts. Slowly the display of temperament subsides through a gradual return and restoration of the andante theme. Elaborate ornaments enhance the flow and buoyancy, making the return of the opening section more than just a simple repeat.

Probably too much verbal elaboration would be required to capture the charm and humor of the Presto finale. It is sufficient to recall that Rosen compares it to a symphonic rondo and to expect a *tour de force* of unexpected takes with offbeat accents, harmonic twists, surprising rhythmic jokes, and unconventional use of register and melodic design. Catch it if you can!

Trio con Brio Copenhagen

Trio No. 2 in E Minor, Op. 67

Dmitri Shostakovich (1908-1974)

Andante; moderato

Allegro con brio

Largo

Allegretto

It always seems pertinent when writing or thinking about Shostakovich to remember his difficult and changing relationship with Soviet Russia. Throughout his career, which was launched in the early 1920s, he was buffeted by the government's trials and tribulations, and fell into and out of favor throughout his life because of the evaluation of his music *vis à vis* socialist realism. It is generally accepted that in order to survive as an artist working in the limited context of communist "supervision," needed to project a powerfully affirmative spirit and conceal anything that resembled its opposite. Shostakovich's deliberately ambiguous style enabled his audience to experience complex emotions—fear, loss, and loathing—without risk. And, taking this risk apparently caused him much anxiety.

The Second Piano Trio, op. 67, was composed in 1944, during the second phase of WW II that followed the 1943 defeat of the Germans at Stalingrad. The first devastating critique that the composer had suffered at the hands of the regime in 1936 was in the past, and the musical scene in Moscow where he had settled was active and varied despite the pervasive difficulties. The Trio is an intense work in four movements and in it any number of musical turns of phrase that can be easily associated with this composer coexist with elements that might have been a response to the idealized and stylized realism expected by official policy. Already the fact that the work is in four movements indicates a certain formality, a "comfortable" observation that is immediately dispelled when it opens with a tense, eery tune, pitched high in the cello's treble register with a rhythmic motif that will reappear throughout the movement: longshortshortlong (or sometimes, just shortshortlong). As all the parts enter one by one in canon, drawing down the strangeness the mood begins to shift and segment by segments it becomes more animated and when it eventually calms back down the (initially disturbing) atmosphere created by the brilliantly conceived and disconcerting opening has been dispelled, pushed aside for the time being. Underneath it all, the opening rhythmic pattern can often be heard; it never goes completely away and survives—greatly augmented—in the final cadence: shortshortlong.

The second movement is a fast galop. Full of raucous fun, it lopes along in a heavy triple meter with lots of interplay between the instruments, each one of which jockeys in turn for top position. Contributing mightily to the high spirits is the key signature of Fsharp major which contributes a certain "edge" to the overall sound; constantly shifting harmonic movement slips and slides (even if briefly) into distantlyrelated key areas like Bflat major or G minor; and a triolike section in E Minor sounds quite like a square dance. Pure Shostakovich, it sounds like the genuine article. There is so much much packed into the movement that it seems much longer than its (not quite) three minutes!

The third movement is a passacaglia, a variation movement with the harmonized bass line in the piano supplying the foundation: the bass line circles slowly through an eightmeasure phrase, the last harmony serving as the first one for the next reiteration. As the chords of the theme trace, one to a measure, a complex but smooth harmonic curve up the scale, the fifth one in the series jolts the senses. Listen for a bitter, jarring note in the succession of chords, even as the it marches on without taking any apparent notice, the message is clear. After five very plain variations in the strings over the same unrelenting and unreconciled chord progression in the piano, and a short coda later, the last chord—the prime mechanism for continuity—leads directly into the last movement, an Allegretto in E Major, the parallel key to the E minor of the opening movement.

The fourth movement starts as a jaunty, innocent dance in 2/4; each instrument trades off playing major parts of the simplistic, banal tune. The accompaniment, a little umpah, changes into an endless variety of guises: now silly, then aggressive, grim or tragicomic. Suddenly, midmovement, the cello rises out of the melee in an impassioned cry, its threenote lament wails as the piano accompaniment, repeats over and over the tones of a broken chord, as though frozen or emotionally drained. What follows is a struggle for power that reaches a frenzied high point; passages in 2/4 trade off, reaching the highest point of intensity, when the lament returns in both

strings, *fff*, doubled at the octave, with the accompaniment, the same arpeggios, in doubled octaves in the piano, *ff pesante*. The struggle is renewed with the 2/4 tune interrupting again until finally it gives way and collapses into streaming 32 notes in the piano that in turn instigates an intense review of earlier themes: the opening tune of the first movement, the violin again muted but *ff*, in canon with the cello, also muted, high and very loud, *espressivo*. When the tempo at last slows, the now notquite innocentsounding steady eighths return one last time in the strings, and the piano turns again to the droll 2/4 tune.

Shostokovich might have ended the Trio here, but he does not. Instead he brings the passacaglia theme for one last pass at its series of chords, its “structural” flaw still plainly evident but left, an unchangeable, unalterable fact of life. A brief recap of the 2/4 tune serves to cadence the work.

Trio pour violon, violoncelle et piano

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Modéré

Pantoum: Assez vif

Passacaille: Très large

Final: Animé

Composed in 1914 and premiered in 1915, Ravel’s Trio balances technical demands with musical ones in four highly distinctive movements. It is a large work in which contrasting moments abound; limpid classicism, broad themes, delicate lighteningquick figures, slowmoving chorales all serve the composer’s creative imagination. Though often associated with the development of neoclassicism because of his opposition to overt sentimentality, many of Ravel’s works are richly expressive. On the other hand, even the most exotic of them, like *Shéhérazade* and *Rapsodie espagnole*, are marked by clarity and understatement. One of his biographers stressed his desire to remain independent of artistic manifestos and creeds. Preferring to use complex triadic harmonies enriched by free dissonance, he avoided the ambiguity of the impressionists as much as the outward display of “sentiment.” This music breathes/exalts with an exploration of color and contrasting articulations that are both resources and a challenge in this instrumental combination. Ravel’s cool poise, notwithstanding, this work has a wonderfully romantic quality about it.

In the first movement one is immediately struck by pristine sensibility of the opening theme heard first in the piano: a repetitive phrase of mostly triadic chords in the right hand, a bare accompaniment in the left hand. Practically unmatched as a composer for the piano, Ravel captures an unforgettable color–belllike–in the instrument, and sustains its weightless quality with an odd meter that floats on a metric pattern of five eighthnote beats followed by three. With a elongation on the second count of each group (try counting: 12345, 123 and repeating it) the division into 5 + 3 provides a wonderful rhythmic lilt that easily complements the marvelous harmonic rhythm and melodic lyricism. In working out his ideas in this first movement of his monumental work, the composer draws on all the resources of the instruments; tremolos, harmonics and florid virtuoso passages require consummate musicianship and exquisite technique. What is true here, as in all of Ravel’s music, virtuosity only serves the musical purpose. The second theme, a slow diatonic tune, provides short calm moments that bring a measure or two of contrast into the whirl of ideas engendered by the first one.

In the second movement Ravel develops an idea modeled on a Malaysian poetic form called “Pantoum,” which was introduced to French literary circles in the nineteenth century and adopted by a number of poets, notably, by Victor Hugo in his *Orientales*. It comprised fourline stanzas arranged in a pattern in which the second and fourth lines of the first one are repeated as the first and third lines in the next stanza. To complete the cycle, the second and fourth lines of the first stanza are repeated in the last one. Ravel transfers this idea to his work by alternating a rapid scherzo that chatters away in eighthnotes in a 3/4 meter, with an expressive chorale that moves in a stately succession of half and whole notes in a 4/2 meter. The ideas are traded off; one section in one style is followed by another in the alternative one. Then, following a definitive exposition of these ideas, he combines them, as contrasting as they are, into a whole. First the strings play one theme in one meter and the piano the other, then he completes the section by reversing these roles. Unlike the poem in which the lines have to follow each other down the page, Ravel uses the unique potential of musical expression, the simultaneous rendering of two apparently oppositional musical ideas.

All other considerations aside, the third movement, a Passacaille with its stately motion and a theme that conveys an image of a stately oldfashioned Spanish Don, couldn't contrast more deeply with the passacaglia in Shostakovich's Trio than it does. Ravel's treatment of the form is unconcerned with formality, and once he has introduced the broad, eightmeasure line in all the instruments—first low in the bass of the piano, then in the cello and finally in the violin—he invents a continuation by reaching into the resources of its character and mood. The waves of eighthnotes in measured 3/4 time eventually climb out of the lower ranges; ringing, resonant chords eventually give way to tender, more delicate moments as the warmth dissipates. Only more delicate high pitches are left, momentarily suspended, before the last pale statements of the tune are played in the reverse order of the opening: violin, cello and finally the piano.

Before the last tones of the tune subside completely, the next movement begins and the atmosphere sparkles with a treble “moment.” Animated arpeggios of harmonics in the violin, and a double tremolo in the cello's highest register set the stage in a 5/4 (felt as 3+2) meter for the entry of the piano's exposition of the opening segment of the first theme of a sonata form. Instead of a consequent, Ravel introduces a second, contrasting, idea in 7/4 (or, 4+3). Beginning low in the piano with intense tremolos in both strings, it builds quickly in an exciting crescendo as it returns to the high register of the first part of the theme. Making the most of the propulsive character of asymmetrical measures, the composer plays off these two ideas against each other, until he reaches a climax and with a change of key brings a new idea. Rich, stentorian chords in the piano accompanied by a *ff* trill with both strings high in the stratosphere on the same. In the ensuing development section it is these chords that suddenly ring with an unmistakable “call to arms,” a startling reminder that the Trio was composed at a time of national crisis. The coda that completes the work is quite grand, requiring great skill from the performers to satisfy the final challenge of the composer's creative imagination in a work that is, to the end, quintessentially one of his finest efforts.

Pre-Concert Lecture
2:00 P.M.
Malcolm Bird Recital Hall

Juilliard String Quartet

Quartet in E Minor, Op. 68

Giuseppi Verdi (1813-1901)

Allegro

Andantino

Prestissimo

Scherzo. Fuga. Allegro assai mosso

The appearance on the fall series of a string quartet by Verdi comes as a pleasant surprise. On a program in the company of Elliott Carter's Second String Quartet, a work intimately associated with the Juilliard Quartet, and one of Beethoven's masterworks, the first Rasoumovsky, Verdi's quartet has quite a challenge to hold its own.

In late 1872, preparation for performances of *Don Carlos* and *Aida* in Naples was delayed by the illness of Teresa Stolz, the leading soprano in both productions. While waiting for rehearsals to resume Verdi composed his only instrumental work, the String Quartet in E minor. At this time he was an established success and could do just about anything he wanted to. It received the first of several private performances in 1873, and though Verdi originally opposed public performance and publication, he eventually relented. One possible reason for Verdi's interest in composing a chamber work might have been the resurgence of composition of Italian chamber music that began in the 1860s mostly in Bologna and Florence. In any case, it is evident that he was intimately familiar with the works of the Viennese classical composers, especially Haydn (whose works he reportedly had at his bedside) and Beethoven, and it is known that he had a special fondness for Mendelssohn.

The historic detail that the String Quartet was composed after *Aida* (1871) and the Requiem, and before *Otello* (1886) and *Falstaff* (1892), might persuade us not to think of it as an occasional piece—a bagatelle—but rather to look for clues about the direction the composer was to take in his late compositions. One of these might be the consistent use of contrapuntal elements which Verdi learned as a student by composing numerous canons and fugues as exercises. Indeed there is so much imitative writing in the String Quartet that it is tempting to see it as an important factor in the subtle change that takes place already in the texture and form in *Otello*, and more especially in *Falstaff* with its numerous chamber music-like ensembles and the great and wonderful fugal finale.

The Quartet follows convention with four movements. The first features several thematic ideas, two of which typically contrast in style and key. One is a brooding minor tune cast low in the instrumental ranges (one can almost visualize an operatic character standing aside from the crowd and musing), the other is a full-voiced chorale in a major key and every bit as melodious as a vocal quartet. These two tunes are cast into an unconventional form that evokes a sonata with an exposition and a recapitulation. However, a real development section just never truly emerges as a substantial factor, notwithstanding a number of short, episodic developmental segments, with interesting modulations and exciting rhythmic and harmonic features. Instead we have a cast of persona projected in the melodic, rhythmic and harmonic features, each with its moments of self-expression, played out with evocative timbres. Melodic turns that alternate with frequent shifts of rhythm and phrasing, imbue the work with a certain kind of vocal realism that does not, however, override or conflict with its instrumental quality. In spite of Verdi's even-handed treatment of the four instruments he manages to dramatize familiar human oppositions even without benefit of a scenario; he evokes the kind of musical symbolism that can be associated with psychological or physical traits of characters on stage. In this movement and throughout the remainder of the work, one can almost hear the familiar oppositions: male and female, innocent and conniving, young-impetuous and old-wise, willful and reasoned.

The second movement, beginning as a wistful waltz, develops into a quite interesting rondo with contrasting sections providing the opportunity for some sudden temperamental changes, forceful dynamic outbursts and suggestive modulations. This is a movement in which modesty is victorious against unreasonable force. The prestissimo scherzo is quite in the vein of Mendelssohn—light and a bit fantastic—but in the central trio-section the cello “sings” a weightless serenade that floats effortlessly to the accompaniment of pizzicato strings; it is unmistakably Verdi. The delightful fugal finale begins delicately as it traces through the first expectations of a fugal exposition, but here again Verdi is not constrained to follow convention and manages to convert this most instrumental of genres into a drama that—even if not vocal in nature—seems to be played out in terms of human passions.

Quartet No. 2

Elliott Carter (1908-)

- Introduction
- I. Allegro fantastico
- II. Presto scherzando
- III. Andante espressivo
- IV. Allegro
- Conclusion

A relatively early work of Carter's maturity, the Second String Quartet was completed in 1959. It is one of a group of highly regarded compositions that followed two works generally acknowledged as important turning-points in the composer's career, the Cello Sonata (1948) and the First String Quartet (1950). In its time, the Second String Quartet brought wide recognition to the composer. It was premiered by the Juilliard Quartet and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1960, as well as the New York Critics Award in 1960 and the UNESCO First Prize in 1961.

One of the crucial elements of Carter's turning point around 1951 was that he lost all interest in working with traditional forms. He once said that this was not about "being modern," but had more to do with what he thought "music was all about." It might also have had to do with his declaring his independence from earlier influences. As a student of Nadia Boulanger in the 1930s, Carter was exposed to a powerful teacher (if there ever was one) who was a stickler for disciplined control of traditional musical means. Even Charles Ives, another early influence, made a point of needing to know the rules so that he would know when he was breaking them. Sometime in Carter's early development he seems to have arrived at a deeply personal and critical moment with this aspect of composition, for he was definitive and quite simply was convinced that "traditional methods hinder the creative process." Having once reached that conclusion he struck out on his own.

In the first String Quartet, which still has elements of a theme, Carter began to work with the idea of identifying and segregating layers in his work. He accomplished this partly by associating each instrument with a particular layer. He carried this idea even further in the Second Quartet, the first work in which there are no thematic recurrences. In this composition the instruments are independent of each other, which means that instead of working to create an audible structure from parts that collaborate with each other, each instrument works with its own set of intervals, its own range of expressive ideas, its own repertoire, and its own assortment of articulations. Each one moves at its own tempo and speed.

To clarify: generally speaking, in this work, the first violin tends to be quick, reactive and to manifest changing characteristics associated with such an active character: it is rhapsodic, whimsical or fantastical and sometimes rather impetuous. Its particular set of intervals includes the perfect fifth and minor third. The viola tends to be slower moving, even ponderous. But because of its contemplative nature, its melodic lines are often warmly expansive. Its interval set includes the augmented fourth, minor sevenths and minor ninths. The second violin maintains a steady tempo and regular rhythms throughout, and provides a reference point for pinpointing shifts, delays or changes. It plays major intervals: thirds, sixths and sevenths. Rather often, Carter gives this instrument strong, stand-out articulations. For instance, in the second movement it plays pizzicatos of all types (delicate, harsh, loud, soft, combined with sustained tone). The composer treats the cello as a virtuoso and gives it the most varied assignments. Sometimes he launches it into the highest range of the instrument where it demands, pleads or cajoles, and at other times it is sent down to the bottom of its voice where it is humorously pompous or dangerously aggressive. It plays perfect fourths, and minor sixths and tenths.

Trying to imagine how such a work "goes" is to contemplate the possibility of a work in which there is continuous change and very little organizing repetition. This situation calls for a revised approach to listening, for there is no *subjectivity* in a work where there are no climactic moments for tempo, rhythm or melody to coalesce at any time. Paul Griffiths explains it by saying that "nobody is thinking this music." It is, itself, more like "thinking."

As with all of Carter's music, the Second String Quartet has a typically strong profile and a "no-compromise" character. It purposefully follows its own logical process—one that does not depend on the usual points of orientation. For the listener, rather than focusing on singular melodic ideas, it is useful to focus on the whole sound event in somewhat the same way as, for instance, watching traffic in a complex mix of patterns—each purposeful and

independent of the other but moving in similar directions, if not all at once or in the same way. As the vehicles move forward, they obey any number of different rules and follow a variety of patterns, and certain motifs are present (repetition of automotive design, make or color) but not planned. Sometimes the vehicles come to a halt; otherwise, they constantly speed up and slow down.

Instead of listening for something familiar, one has to open one's ears to hear how each of the four instruments is working simultaneously but independently of the others, and listen to all of them at the same time. This is a conversation between four equally-minded, independent characters who can "say" anything they want—even to the point of contradicting each other or, for that sake, keep silent. There is no continuous and elevated discourse and time passes with no clearly defined movements. At the end there is no conventional closure or final orientation for the listener—no rounded form for easy satisfaction and confirmation.

As indicated in the program, the four movements of the quartet are framed by an introduction and a conclusion. Though not indicated, each movement is preceded by a special segment, a cadenza, that features one of the instruments: the cadenza for the viola precedes the second movement, *Presto scherzando*; one for the cello precedes the third movement, *Andante espressivo*; and one for the first violin precedes the fourth movement, an *Allegro*. As there are no pauses between these segments, and no indications to signal changes in tempo, character or meter in a conventional manner, it is a challenge to follow the progress of ideas as indicated by the program. One clue to tracing the progress of the work is to listen for the characterizations of each movement. After the Introduction and before the Conclusion (each of which project their own kind of expectations) the score specifies *Allegro fantastico*, *Presto scherzando*, *Andante espressivo*, and finally, *Allegro*. In the first two movements the emphasis is on the progressive individualization of each instrument, while in the third and fourth movements there is more exchange and collaboration. In the conclusion, the instruments are again on their own.

The Introduction starts with a short dramatic idea in the cello (a call), immediately answered by the first violin (a response—at some length). The others also come forward: the second violin (cryptically, with pizzicatos), then the viola (laconically, with a falling fourth). In the second call/response that follows immediately, the second violin and viola answer the cello first, while the first violin simply comments briefly, albeit with a short repeated-note motif that will become one of the few recognizable elements in the whole work. As the Introduction proceeds, double stops move outward in both directions, in a grand expansion of the range—before the tempo slows and brings on the first movement. Here the first violin takes off, its active line is at times whimsical and demonstrative; at others, it is antic and unpredictable. Eventually the violin draws the other instruments into the fray, leading to a skittish high point: light, elegant, volatile and all over the fingerboard.

The cadenza for viola connects the first and second movements. The other instruments are somewhat subdued as the viola etches out a long melodic line—almost as though talking to itself. Toward the end the tempo changes; it even becomes regular and pulses regularly before moving on to the second movement, *Presto scherzando*. Here all four instruments become equally active. The second violin effects strong pizzicatos while the rest scramble about persistently.

Another cadenza, this time for the cello, reduces the high level of activity and dissipates the frantic energy for a transition into the third movement, *Andante espressivo*. Here all the instruments, but especially the viola and cello, are highly expressive and dramatic. Communication is heightened by a somewhat thinner texture. Dramatic utterances pass from one instrument to another in patterns of continual exchange. In this highly expressive segment, where the thin texture suits the heavy drama, the individual voices briefly dominate, but one at a time. As things continue, the rhythm stretches out; progressively longer tones maneuver about, and again stretch the range in both directions. At first they disagree, then they collaborate. When the musical space is opened up, the dynamic level falls, and the first violin is left alone, *ppp*, on a high E-flat to begin its solo cadenza that leads to the final movement. By now it might be possible to hear that each instrument has small identifiable characteristics: in the first violin one hears many double-stopped open fifths, racing lines that start high and skitter down and back up, and a nervous repeated note-chatter (the little "riff" heard on the first page of the quartet reappears); it is "in its element," so to speak. Toward the end of the cadenza it draws the other instruments into its sphere and prepares for the last movement, an *Allegro*. With its energy and heavy swing in pitch, this segment is probably—after the opening introduction—the one with the clearest profile. Toward the end a big-time *accelerando molto* stretches for many

many measures and reaches the apex in an explosive, brief segment, *tempo giusto*, after which it edges toward the conclusion where a tempo that is about one-fifth of what it was earlier, neutralizes the individualities; they are almost brought to a standstill.

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

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Allegro

Allegretto vivace e sempre scherzando

Adagio molto e mesto

Thème russe. Allegro

Commissioned in 1806 by Count Rasoumovsky, the Russian ambassador to Vienna, the three quartets of Op. 59 come from a momentous period in Beethoven's career. In the short space of two or three years, ca.1803-1806, Beethoven produced a number of extraordinary works in which he extended the dimensions of classical form far beyond those of his predecessors. In the *Waldstein* and the *Appassionata* sonatas for piano, the first version of *Fidelio*, the Fourth Piano Concerto and Violin Concerto, and the *Eroica*. the dynamic qualities gained from his expanded treatment of the harmonic field supported a new level of developmental techniques. The free flow of thematic and rhythmic motifs takes on an aspect that seems close to improvisation. Charles Rosen captures this moment when he writes that Beethoven combined "Haydn's technique of [creating] dynamic growth from [working with] the smallest details, with Mozart's feeling for large harmonic masses and for tonal areas."

Of the three quartets in opus 59, the first, in F Major, is the most expansive. Its first two movements are marvels of creative thought. Considered as a whole, these two movements and the third and fourth movements pair off in a manner of speaking; the first two are large and pose similar demands on concepts of formal structure and the process of working out compositional ideas. They are complimentary expositions on ideas that have comparable expectations of what can be done creatively. The last two movements are closer to earlier models and are not as inventive and challenging; however, they are a unit by virtue of the trill that connects the extended written-out violin cadenza at the end of the third movement, the hymnic Adagio, with the boisterous sonata Allegro, the fourth movement. As such they can be felt as a balance or a complement to the first two movements.

In the opening antecedent phrase of the first movement, an unprepossessing tune in the cello steps up four notes then returns for an elaborated turn on the note where it began. A simple tune, it is given some urgency by the pulsing eighth notes in the second violin and viola that accompany it, and in the fourth measure the cello lands back on the dominant, its starting point. In the next four measures of the phrase Beethoven continues in the same vein, pushing the cello up another four steps, to land on the supertonic. The eighth-notes continue to throb; in response and moving abruptly to a treble range, the first violin takes up the four-note step-wise tune, and repeats it three times, each time moving higher, the last time played out in slow motion to arrive in a climatic cadence on the tonic F Major *in alt*, that is, on an F more than three octaves higher than where the cello began and a full 19 measures after the opening downbeat of the first measure. This bare description of the extended opening of the work should convey some of the expectation that is built into this passage and which clearly calls for equally expansive measures in the harmonic move that must take place in the exploratory process that is at the foundation of such a work with formal expectations.

What Beethoven starts in this movement, he continues: small ideas are only small when they exist in a compressed space. The extraordinary expansion of harmonic thinking is nonrestrictive, and within the generous boundaries he forges, Beethoven pursues every small detail, one after another, and follows one idea with another. The three principal themes—those of the opening, the secondary key area and the closing of the exposition—share common elements, among them the rising step-wise line. Other themes that spring up—apparently at least—have no obvious relationship to the others, yet none of them is just a willful indulgence. In an on-going developmental commentary they complement the movement's brilliant symphonic-like adventure with chamber-like intimacy and introversion. Toward the end of the exposition and again at the end of the recapitulation, listen for how when the music has broadened to the point of a standstill. Unable to go no further the violins arrive at a simple place, an ordinary minor tenth. Poised there on a half-note they provoke an exchange of chords with the viola and cello in slow-moving half notes: wide-spread, high answered by low, back and forth in an uncertain standstill, shifting slowly to restore tonal rectitude, and with it the by-now familiar tune. A magical moment both times it happens: effortless, expansive, conclusive.

The second movement is unusual on more than several counts. First of all, if it were to be considered a scherzo, it is not in the key of the first movement as would be usual for a dance movement in a multi-movement work. Furthermore, unlike most scherzos it comes right after the first movement, not after the slow second movement. As for its form, while having some characteristics of a sonata, such as a certain tonal instability and an unspecified tendency to develop, it is hardly that. Rather it is an odd sort of quixotic treatment of an idea that isn't really up to being a sonata allegro. As the composer indicates, it is an Allegretto, both "vivacious" and in a "scherzando" mood. To summarize: it is neither a fast allegro nor a scherzo, but something that partakes of both, something in between.

As a whole, an intricate weave of delicate ideas unfolds from the beginning of the first theme, which is a subtly robust, tuneless rhythm: Played softly by the cello, it is answered by a sweet and idyllic tune in the first violin. Always *scherzando*, it has the unexpected turns typical of a Beethoven scherzo: phrases dealt out in uneven numbers of measures, as in the minor variant of the second thematic segment when two three-measure phrases follow a neat eight-bar phrase, or when the cadence comes at the end of a phrase that has only seven bars. Unexpected harmonic ideas are frequent, as when the consequent phrase follows the initial statement on B-flat with one (unexpected) on A-flat, or when we reach the second key area we find a melancholic tune in the dominant minor instead of the dominant major. And with respect to melodic

The second movement is unusual on more than several counts. First of all, if it were to be considered a scherzo, it is not in the key of the first movement as would be usual for a dance movement in a multi-movement work. Furthermore, unlike most scherzos it comes right after the first movement, not after the slow second movement. As for its form, while having some characteristics of a sonata, such as a certain tonal instability and an unspecified tendency to develop, it is hardly that. Rather it is an odd sort of quixotic treatment of an idea that isn't really up to being a sonata allegro. As the composer indicates, it is an Allegretto, both "vivacious" and in a "scherzando" mood. To summarize: it is neither a fast allegro nor a scherzo, but something that partakes of both, something in between.

As a whole, an intricate weave of delicate ideas unfolds from the beginning of the first theme, which is a subtly robust, tuneless rhythm: Played softly by the cello, it is answered by a sweet and idyllic tune in the first violin. Always *scherzando*, it has the unexpected turns typical of a Beethoven scherzo: phrases dealt out in uneven numbers of measures, as in the minor variant of the second thematic segment when two three-measure phrases follow a neat eight-bar phrase, or when the cadence comes at the end of a phrase that has only seven bars. Unexpected harmonic ideas are frequent, as when the consequent phrase follows the initial statement on B-flat with one (unexpected) on A-flat, or when we reach the second key area we find a melancholic tune in the dominant minor instead of the dominant major. And with respect to melodic and rhythmic ideas that are drawn from the first unpromising tune, it's as though the composer almost suffered from versatility: melodic diversions, dramatic pauses, contrapuntal combinations, a mysterious digression or two, and unexpected, lovely lyrical moments.

The third and fourth movements are united both tonally (the third is in the parallel minor key, the fourth in the major mode), and in truth, for there is no break between them: the coda of the third is extended by a cadenza in the first violin and ends with a trill that connects literally—and without a pause—to the fourth movement. For some commentators the third movement is one of Beethoven's most sublime achievements—the slow unfolding of a tragic mood completely sustained throughout with generous proportions—and for others the sentiment feels exaggerated or somewhat superficial. Perhaps it will depend on the performance, the time of day and the energy it embodies, as to how it is perceived.

The last movement, a sonata form, begins with the Russian theme when the cello turns the trill that continues from the end of the violin cadenza into its accompaniment. The tune's rising interval of a fourth brings to mind the first movement inspiring a question: did this simple tune provide the starting point (even as it was a starting point for the composition of the quartet) for the shape of the quartet's first theme—and consequently all that eventually subsequently flows from it? Or (as Kerman suggests) is it the other way around, a subtle parallel, a comment or a parody of that first Allegro?

Energetic and brilliant, the structure of this last movement benefits from Beethoven's freedom in treating form and in some aspects demonstrates a connection with the first movement. Perhaps it's only high spirits, that causes him to twice recall the first violin's cadenza at the end of the third movement; to refer to the harmonic uneasiness at the beginning of the first movement by sliding into the wrong key at the beginning of the recapitulation; to insert imitative and fugal writing at the end of the movement that harks lightly back to the fughetto at the end of the first movement; and lastly, to suddenly slow the forward motion at the end for a mock-serious presentation of the theme in slow motion just before the final burst at the end, a curious parallel to the slowing of the tempo in the first movement mentioned above.