

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

For over thirty years **THE ALBAN BERG QUARTET** has performed regularly in music capitals and major festivals throughout the world. They have their own concert series at the Vienna Konzerthaus (where they made their debut in 1971 and where they are now Honorary Members), at the Royal Festival Hall London (where, Associate Artists for over 15 years, they became Quartet Laureate in 2005), at the Opera Zurich, the Theatre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, the Philharmonie in Cologne and at the Alte Oper Frankfurt.

The name 'Alban Berg' symbolizes the quartet's commitment to giving the most harmonious interpretation of the works they perform, and of extending their repertoire from the classical to the avant-garde. This mission drives both their concert performances and recordings, and they have been prolific recording artists garnering over thirty major international awards, including the Grand Prix du Disque, Deutsche Schallplattenpreis, Edison Prize, first International Classical Music Award, Japan Grand Prix, and the Gramophone Magazine Award. The public and critics alike regard many of these recordings as definitive.

Among their many projects have been the complete quartets by Beethoven, Brahms, Berg, Webern and Bartok, the late Mozart and late Schubert quartets, Haydn, Dvorak, Schumann, Ravel, Debussy, Stravinsky, von Einem and Haubenstock-Ramati, and live recordings from Carnegie Hall, the Opera Comique in Paris, Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, and particularly from the Konzerthaus in Vienna: their Beethoven cycle there (during the Vienna Festival in 1989) has been released on CD, video and DVD. Other live recordings include many works dedicated to the quartet by Lutoslawski, Berio, Schnittke, Urbanner and Rihm; and recordings in partnership with artists such as Philippe Entremont (Schumann quintets), Sabine Meyer (Brahms clarinet quintet), Alfred Brendel (Mozart piano quartet and quintet) and most recently, also live, with Per Arne Glorvigen on bandoneon (works by Piazzolla and Kurt Schwertsik).

In 2005 the quartet suffered a painful loss with the death of their violist Thomas Kakuska. The Alban Berg Quartet continues its concert activities with Isabel Charisius, both out of conviction and in the spirit of Thomas Kakuska. In October 2006 they performed a commemoration concert for Mr. Kakuska in the Vienna Konzerthaus, together with singers and musicians Magdalena Kožena, Thomas Quasthoff, Angelika Kirchschrager, Simon Rattle, and Claudio Abbado.

Cornell Concert Series presents

## ALBAN BERG QUARTET

**Günter Pichler, violin**  
**Gerhard Schulz, violin**  
**Isabel Charisius, viola**  
**Valentin Erben, cello**



### PROGRAM

HAYDN  
(1732-1809)

Quartet in G Major, Op. 77, No. 1  
*Allegro moderato*  
*Adagio*  
*Menuet: Presto*  
*Finale: Presto*

BERG  
(1885-1935)

Quartet for Strings, Op. 3  
*Langsam*  
*Mässige viertel*

~ INTERMISSION ~

BEETHOVEN  
(1770-1827)

Quartet in A minor, Op. 132  
*Assai sostenuto; Allegro*  
*Allegro ma non tanto*  
*Heiliger Dankgesang eines*  
*Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der*  
*Lydischen Tonart: Molto Adagio;*  
*Neue Kraft fühlend: Andante*  
*Alla marcia, assai vivace*  
*Allegro appassionato*

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**Exclusive management:**

**Opus 3 Artists, 470 Park Avenue South  
New York, New York 10016**



**BAILEY HALL, CORNELL UNIVERSITY**  
**Wednesday, February 20, 2008 at 8:00 pm**

## PROGRAM NOTES

- from Cornell Department of Music Graduate Students -

### Joseph HAYDN

#### Quartet in G Major, Op. 77, No. 1, Hob. III:81

Joseph Haydn transformed, and in a certain sense actually created, the genre of the string quartet. String quartets before Haydn had showcased the first violin, with the second violin, viola, and cello usually playing a humble accompanimental role. In most of Haydn's 70-odd string quartets, however, all four instruments participate equally in musical dialogue. In fact, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe described Haydn's quartets as "a stimulating conversation between four intelligent people." And, thanks to Haydn's playful, intelligent sense of humor, the four instruments, or "people," engage not only in thoughtful, serious discussion, but sometimes also in witty banter.

Commissioned in 1799 by Prince Lobkowitz, an amateur violinist to whom Beethoven's Op. 18 string quartets (completed the following year) were also dedicated, Haydn's Op. 77 was to consist of three or six string quartets. Owing to declining health, however, he completed only two — perhaps he was reluctant to compete with his former student Beethoven, whose Op. 18 was published in 1801.

Op. 77 no. 1 embodies salient features of Haydn's style: picturesque evocation of folk music; witty surprises; motivic economy; multi-movement unity; and, at times, playful exuberance. The first movement establishes a lively, even jaunty, mood from the outset. The opening theme, perhaps based on a type of Hungarian folksong, has a lilting, marchlike character, while the repeated notes that accompany the theme create a bucolic, drone-like effect. The middle section features a quintessentially Haydnesque passage in which he teasingly presents a false recapitulation, trying to trick the listener into thinking that the final section has begun.

The emotional intensity of the second movement, an adagio in the relatively remote key of E-flat major, forms an effective contrast with the lightheartedness of the first movement. The

The devout slow movement finds its counterpoint in the boisterous *Alla marcia, assai vivace* (IV). The quirky, self-assured march hardly gets moving, however, before it comes to a close, at which point a short transition leads into an emotionally charged wordless recitative in the first violin. This, in turn, leads without pause into the final movement, *Allegro appassionato* (V), the main theme of which was originally considered for the finale of the Ninth Symphony. While the tempestuous finale of the quartet remains within the confines of the instrumental realm; like that of the Ninth, it, too, reaches a kind of apotheosis in song: after the turn to a furious *Presto* in the coda, the major mode at last reappears and the violin and cello intone a hauntingly beautiful melody in unison octaves, a glimmer of hope for even the most hopeless.

~ by Mark Ferraguto, third-year graduate student in Musicology.

With special thanks to Dr. James Webster,  
Goldwin Smith Professor of Music at Cornell.

- Cornell Concert Series next event -

### **CAMERATA NORDICA** Friday, March 7<sup>th</sup>, 8 p.m. at Bailey Hall

*an ensemble standing on stage and playing without a conductor*  
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*a camerata of extraordinary musicianship and unity of voice*

**\*Note: program repertoire change posting to website\***

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### **CORNELL CONCERT SERIES**

Yvette L. Lucente, *Audience and Public Relations Coordinator*  
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*and took off his coat, the room being warm and crowded. A staccato passage not being expressed to the satisfaction of his eye, for alas, he could not hear, he seized Holz's violin and played the passage a quarter of a tone too flat. I looked over the score during the performance. All paid him the greatest attention.*

The *Assai sostenuto* (I) opens with the princely instrument, the violoncello, which quietly introduces a slinking, chromatic figure made up of two pairs of semitones (g-sharp/a, f/e). The figure spreads eerily through the rest of the parts before a sudden outburst by the first violin, *forte*, propels the music forward into the agitated *Allegro*. Before long, however, an oasis emerges: a heartwarming lyrical theme in the major mode, marked *dolce* (sweet) and *teneramente* (tenderly). Though this lyrical theme functions as a calming agent throughout the movement, it is ultimately swept away in the final coda as the movement rushes toward an intense, fiery close.

The semitone motive returns in four-part unison at the start of the playful *Allegro ma non tanto* (II), in which gentle dance-like rhythms are cloaked in a tightly-woven fabric of motives. The trio section, calling to mind the ethereal tones of the glass harmonica, makes use of resonant open strings, shimmering high notes, arpeggiations and double stops. A quotation of one of Beethoven's German dances (WoO 13, No. 11) serves as a kind of bridge — metrically displaced by a beat, it sounds like a slightly tipsy waltz.

Beethoven's recovery from a serious illness in the middle of April 1825 inspired the highly personal slow movement for the quartet (III), which he titled "Hymn of thanksgiving to the divinity, from a convalescent, in the Lydian mode". This overtly programmatic movement alternates varied repetitions of the modal "hymn" tune in F major (*Molto adagio*) with a second, contrasting section entitled "Feeling new strength" in D major (*Andante*). In many ways the apex of the quartet, the "Heiligerdankgesang," with its authentic titles intended for publication, provides a rare glimpse into the interrelationship of Beethoven's life and music.

second movement opens with a slow, stately theme, which implies the key of C minor as well as E-flat; the resulting tonal ambiguity imbues the opening phrase with a questing, yet tragic, tone. Combining aspects of sonata form and a theme and variations structure, Haydn then presents the main theme in increasingly florid, elaborate guises.

The ensuing minuet, scherzo-like in its speed, is a boisterous romp. Haydn plays with the metrical structure, introducing several extremely high notes on weak beats, which helps to create a humorous portrait of a dancing country bumpkin. But despite its rustic character, this movement is also a vehicle for virtuosic display for all four instruments, showing Haydn's tendency to treat the instruments as equals. The trio, like the second movement, is in the key of E-flat major with a strong secondary emphasis on C minor, thereby forging a tonal link between two otherwise disparate movements. Maintaining a fairly consistent texture throughout, the trio is nonetheless marked by extreme shifts in dynamics every few measures.

The vivacious finale, perhaps based on a Croatian dance tune, begins with an animated unison passage that furnishes the motivic material for the whole movement. In other words, Haydn's penchant for motivic unity is evident throughout the fourth movement, which enthusiastically pursues various recombinations and permutations of its opening motives.

~ by Tekla Babyak, fifth-year Ph.D. candidate in Musicology

### **Alban BERG** **Quartet for Strings, Op. 3**

Written in 1910 when the composer was only twenty-five, Alban Berg's String Quartet, Op. 3 was the last piece of music Berg completed while studying under the tutelage of composer Arnold Schoenberg. Schoenberg, who is perhaps most well known for his development of atonality using the twelve-tone technique, was also a rigid instructor and one who insisted on having his students compose, at least to begin with, using traditional forms. It is no surprise, then, that Berg's Op. 3 quartet has a very tight sense of traditional architecture, making use of variation and sonata form structures.

On the surface, the most compelling aspect of Berg's Op. 3 is its deployment in an uncommon two-movement configuration. Both movements share thematic material and a modernist language, yet a romantic spirit also prevails throughout. Berg is often cited as being the most romantic of the three Second Viennese School composers (the other two members being Schoenberg and Anton Webern), and the Op. 3 quartet is a good example of this description, as it contains many unpredictable mood changes, ranging from aggressive sounds to more subdued moments, to sections of longing, and even flashes of playfulness. Also, tempi are pushed and pulled constantly throughout both movements. Indeed, the score is full of varying stylistic and tempo indications for the performers.

Having chosen an atonal melodic and harmonic language for the quartet, Berg bases his musical structure on thematic material instead of focusing on the traditional tonal polarity between tonic and dominant found in classical sonata forms. The work's opening six-note motive propels the first movement forward and continues to be omnipresent throughout both the first and second movements. At the time when the Op. 3 quartet was composed, Berg was using a compositional process of expansion and contraction — a technique noticeable also in his one-movement Piano Sonata, Op. 1. The method leads to the piling up of thematic material vertically, as opposed to expansion and contraction occurring linearly in time. This accounts for the frequent contrapuntal congestion in the music, produced by Berg's exhaustive imitative counterpoint, especially at times of climax.

At the end of the rapidly changing quartet, when it seems that the piece might finally come to some sort of stable close, a descending tritone is heard in the cello part, creating a continuous feeling of unrest. Berg is deliberately denying the listener any sort of firm resolution, and the work ends abruptly on a cluster sonority, adding an unresolved level to the quartet's conclusion.

Many idiomatic string techniques are called for throughout the piece. Aside from common sounds heard, like harmonics and pizzicato, the work makes extensive use of *sul ponticello* bowing, an indication to the performers to bow close to the

bridge of the instrument. This technique creates a glassy and high-pitched eerie sound. Another technique called for by Berg is *col legno*, in which the notes are played by bouncing the wooden part of the bow against the string, creating a brittle, pizzicato-like sound.

Berg's String Quartet lasts approximately twenty minutes in duration, and is dedicated to the composer's wife, Helene Nahowski, whom he married just before the work's publication in 1911.

~ by Ryan Gallagher, first-year DMA student in Music Composition

### **Ludwig van BEETHOVEN Quartet in A minor, Op. 132**

The Quartet in A minor, opus 132, is the second in a series of three quartets commissioned by the Russian prince and accomplished cellist Nikolaus Galitzin. Beethoven began working on these quartets in 1824, just shortly after the premiere of the Ninth Symphony, a work with which the present quartet shares a special kinship. Not only do both pieces seem to dramatize the journey from minor into major, darkness into light, but both also contain scherzo movements with sparkling, Elysian trio sections, tender slow movements in double-variation form and multipart finales, each of which includes instrumental recitative and a characteristic "*Alla marcia*" section.

The piece received its premiere in Vienna on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1825 by the Schuppanzigh Quartet, in a rented room at the tavern "Zum Wilden Mann." Beethoven, in poor health, had relocated to Baden to recuperate at the spas but returned to Vienna for the performance. Sir George Smart, an Englishman on the Grand Tour who would later conduct the London premiere of the Ninth Symphony, was present at the premiere:

*There was a numerous assembly of professors to hear Beethoven's second new manuscript quartette. The four performers were Schuppanzigh, Holz, Weiss, and Lincke. [Beethoven] directed the performers,*