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Jewel Box Series: Jan. 18, 2008

Jewel Box Staff

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Northeastern

ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Northeastern Illinois University, Jewel Box Series
Friday, January 18, 2008
Recital Hall
Salme Harju Steinberg Fine Arts Center

THE AVALON QUARTET

Blaise Magnière, *Violin*
Beverly Shin, *Violin*
Anthony DeVroye, *Viola*
Cheng Hou Lee, *Cello*

BEETHOVEN String Trio in G Major, Op. 9, No. 1
Adagio; Allegro con brio
Adagio, ma non tanto, e cantabile
Scherzo: Allegro
Presto

BARTÓK String Quartet No. 1, Op. 7
Lento
Allegretto
Introduzione-Allegro vivace

— INTERMISSION —

RAVEL String Quartet in F Major
Allegro moderato—Très doux
Assez vif—Très rythmé
Très lent
Vif et agité

THE AVALON QUARTET



Hailed as "one of the most exciting young string quartets in America" (The Washington Post) the Avalon String Quartet has established itself as one of the country's leading chamber ensembles and has earned international acclaim for the bold musicality and passionate intensity of its performances.

Formed in 1995 at the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, the Quartet came to the fore after participating in Isaac Stern's Chamber Music Workshop at Carnegie Hall in 1997. As a result, Mr. Stern invited the Avalon Quartet to perform in the Isaac Stern Chamber Music Encounters in Jerusalem and in March 2000 presented the ensemble's Carnegie Hall debut at Weill Recital Hall. The Quartet made its New York debut on the Alexander Schneider Series at the New School in 1998. The quartet won First Prize, the Channel Classics Prize, and the Rockport Chamber Music Festival Prize at the 1999 Concert Artists Guild Competition, which led to the critically acclaimed recording "Dawn To Dusk". In 2000 the quartet won top prize at the ARD Competition in Munich, Germany.

The quartet is in residence at Northern Illinois University, a position formerly occupied by the distinguished Vermeer Quartet. As a part of their residency, they perform four programs annually in DeKalb and Chicago, and the members teach individual studios and coach chamber music at the school. This follows previous residencies at the Juilliard School and at Indiana University South Bend.

The Quartet has performed in many of the major halls, including Alice Tully Hall in New York, 92nd St Y, Carnegie Hall, the Library of Congress in Washington DC, Wigmore Hall and Herculessaal in Munich. Other performances include appearances at the Caramoor Music Festival in NY, La Jolla Chamber Music Society, NPR's St Paul Sunday Radio, Mostly Mozart Festival at Lincoln Center, Isabella Gardner Museum, Barge Music, Dame Myra Hess and the Ravinia Festival.

Dedicated educators, the Avalons have taught at the Interlochen Quartet Institute, the Green Lake Music Camp in Wisconsin, the Britten-Pears School in England and the Juilliard School. The quartet is also dedicated to outreach in various communities, including working with the Center for Abused Children in Hartford and also with the Music for Youth Organization that works with the Bridgeport and Trumbull School Systems.

The Quartet's live performances and conversation have been featured on Chicago's WFMT-FM, New York's WQXR-FM and WNYC-FM, National Public Radio's Performance Today, Canada's CBC, Australia's ABC and France Musique.

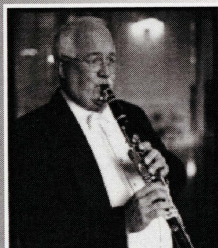
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featuring

Larry Combs, clarinet & saxophone
Travis Heath, trumpet



Mayo Tiana, director

Friday, February 22, 2008
8:00 p.m.
NEIU Auditorium

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Stevie Wonder
Benny Goodman
& a new arrangement
by Bill Holman



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PROGRAM NOTES

Notes on the Program by Dr. Brian Torosian

String Trio in G, Op. 9, No. 1

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Beethoven's String Trio in G, Op. 9, No. 1 is one of five works that the great master composed for string trio. His *Gran Trio* in Eb, Op. 3 is in six movements and in all probability was modeled after Mozart's Divertimento K. 563 for the same instrumentation. The Beethoven work may have been composed as early as 1792 and was first published in 1796. This piece is among others from Beethoven's early period in Vienna that show the composer appropriating current musical forms and applying his personal stamp on them. Beethoven's *Serenade*, Op. 8 is more frequently associated with his *Serenade for flute, violin and viola*, Op. 25 than with his string trios. The serenades Opp. 8 and 25 are the only compositions of Beethoven that were specifically entitled serenade, although several other works were composed (during the 1790's for the most part) in the form of the five- or six-movement serenade or divertimento. These include Beethoven's Sextet, Op. 81b, the Sextet, Op. 71, the Wind Trio, Op. 87, the Septet, Op. 20, and the aforementioned divertimento-like Gran Trio in Eb, Op. 3.

The three trios that comprise Op. 9 represent Beethoven's greatest chamber music up until 1797 when they were first published. The composer himself remarks in 1798 to Count Johann Georg von Browne, the dedicatee of the work (as well as the Piano Sonata, Op. 22 and the Six Songs, Op. 48) that Op. 9 is "la meillure de (mes) oeuvres." The Op. 9 trios are all in four movements and begin with a movement in sonata form, followed by a slow movement, then a scherzo (or as is the case with no. 2 a minuet), and a concluding *allegro* or *presto finale*, two of which are in rondo form, the finale for the remaining trio (No. 1) is in sonata form. After Op. 9, Beethoven never returned to the string trio, perhaps, as suggested by Maynard Solomon in his book *Beethoven* "because of the tonal superiority and greater expressiveness and flexibility of the string quartet, which ultimately superseded other chamber music genres for him."

The piano trios of Op. 1, first published in Vienna by Artaria in 1795, demonstrate Beethoven's penchant for the four-movement sonata cycle as opposed to the three-movement cycle, the string trios of Op. 9 continue exhibit this preference as well. These formal experiments also include the use of a slow introduction to begin the work and casting the final movement in sonata form. The use of the slow introduction to the initial sonata-form movement was not a set convention as of the time of composition of Op. 9 (1797-1798), which yields to an expansive first movement *Allegro con brio*. The second movement, marked *Adagio, ma non tanto e cantabile*, takes on the guise of a Mozart aria, with suggestions of recitatives and operatic duo writing. Beethoven innovated the scherzo as a movement to replace the courtly and aristocratic minuet. Like the minuet, the scherzo is juxtaposed with a *Trio*, a contrasting section to the scherzo proper, two of which are included in the String Trio, Op. 9, No. 1. The "jest" of this scherzo comes from rhythmic motion, particularly the pickup notes, here akin to the rocket themes of the Mannheim School composers, and by use of duple against triple meter allusions in the B section of the scherzo. Both trios feature writing that is more melodically based than rhythmic, the second trio employing the cello initially for the principle melodic material, with a "sawing" accompaniment in perpetual motion. Playful hints of the scherzo pickups welcome the *da capo* of the scherzo. The perpetual motion passage work in the third movement features prominently in the finale, at times suggesting the elfin string textures for which Felix Mendelssohn was to become famous.

String Quartet No. 1, Op. 7

Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

Bartók's String Quartet No. 1, Op. 7 dates from 1908-1909 and is the first of six works for this instrumentation, the final quartet being composed in 1939. The formal treatment of Bartók's string quartets are individual and peculiar to each work, exercising a freedom of formal design not present in the 19th-century traditions. Bartók's quartets are also noted for their supreme use and development of highly virtuosic and idiomatic string writing, giving way to numerous novel treatments of timbre and instrumentation, pushing the boundaries of tone coloring in the string quartet genre. The first quartet is a rare example of Bartók's incorporation of personal life with his musical work, cataloging the despair that beset the composer from his love for Stefi Geyer, a violin student at the Budapest Academy of Music. Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967), a friend and compatriot of Bartók, described the quartet as a "return to life," alluding to the progressive reconciliation and self discovery in the work, most evident in the folk-like character of the final movement, replete with Hungarian dance rhythms and melodies.

If one had to limit description of the first Bartók quartet to a single word, "seamless" might suffice. It is suggested most clearly in the composer's indication to perform all three movements *attaca* (without pause) but manifested in numerous other manners. These procedures towards seamlessness include irregular and unpredictable phrase lengths, overlapping phrases, part writing that veils the instrumentation and imitation, and a complete mastery of Palestrina's equilibrium of voices and fluent weave of polyphony. Along with the quartets of Debussy and Ravel, the first quartet of Bartók bears a resemblance to the D major string quartet of César Franck (1822-1890), completed in 1889, in its use of cyclic form. The aforementioned progression from despair to reconciliation is brought to light in the continual hastening of the tempo of the three thematically-linked movements, and the quotation and development of folk material in the final movement. The seamless nature of the work is most prominent upon a complete performance, as the listener is transported to various

regions of Bartók's musical landscape, aware of the arrival to a destination, without realizing its antecedent journey.

String Quartet in F Major

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

The French Post-Impressionist composer Maurice Ravel received his formal training from the Paris Conservatoire under the tutelage of Gabriel Fauré and others. After unsuccessfully competing for the coveted Prix de Rome at least five times, Ravel embarked on a career that was to yield some of the most important French music of the 20th century. There was somewhat of a rivalry between Ravel and Claude Debussy (1862-1918) regarding who appropriated various innovations from whom, but Ravel's music features many elements distinguishing it from that of Debussy and his contemporaries. Indeed, the Debussy/Ravel connection was strongly suggested in light of Ravel's string quartet by French music critic (and son of composer Edouard Lalo) Pierre Lalo (1866-1943) who remarked "Its harmonies and chord progressions, its richness in tone and its form, all the elements it contains and the emotions that it evokes have an unbelievable similarity to the music of Debussy." Ravel often worked with Neoclassical ideals, particularly applying structural and rhythmic idioms of the 18th and 19th centuries, and also employed virtuosic Lisztian elements. In addition to his mastery of the piano and composition, Ravel was a greatly skilled orchestrator. Illustrating this clearly are the orchestrated versions of some of his piano music (including *Le tombeau de Couperin*) and the piano versions of some of his orchestral works. Most famously, Ravel provided an orchestrated version of Modest Mussorgsky's piano suite *Pictures at an Exhibition* (1874) which until recent years eclipsed the original.

Completed in 1903, Ravel's string quartet surely does have much in common with Debussy's quartet, which preceded it by a decade. Both composers composed only one work in this genre, their overall structure of four movements, tempo scheme, melodic writing, and harmonic conventions withstand close comparison. The plaintive solo melodies beginning each composers' slow movements also bear resemblance, notice also the exotic appearances of Spanish

idioms, beloved by both composers, in the present quartet unveiled in the guitar-like textures of the punctuated accompaniments of the slow movement, and the frequent use of the characteristically Spanish phrygian mode, featuring a half step above the keynote, practically essential to flamenco music.

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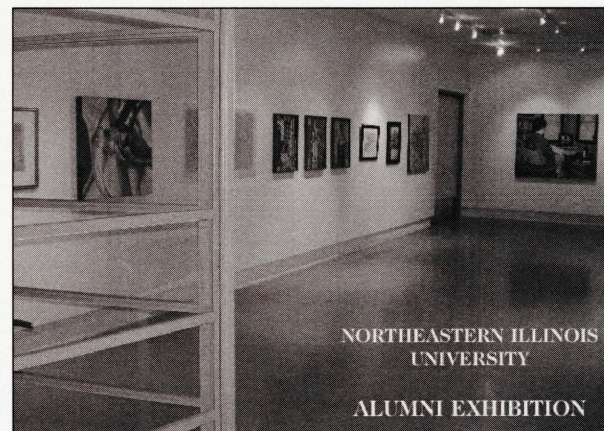
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Monday, February 18, 7:30 p.m.

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Faculty Recital: Kevin Keys, Baritone

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Saturday, February 23, 10:00 a.m.

Recital Hall

Clarinet Master Class: Larry Combs

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Thursday, February 28, 7:30 p.m.

Auditorium

Wind Ensemble - R. Shayne Cofer, Conductor

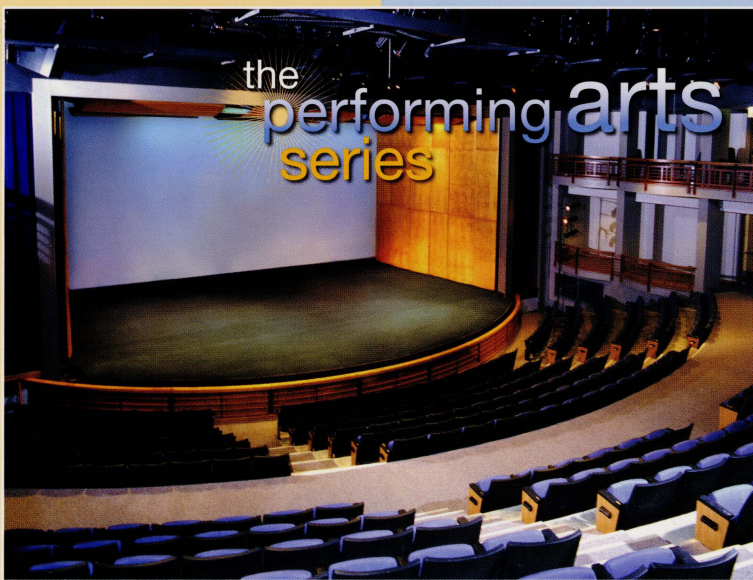
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