

Classical Voice of North Carolina

Friday, October 8, 2010

Daedalus Quartet Dazzles in Asheville Season Opener

By LAURA McDOWELL

Named for Daedalus, the mythical creator of the Labyrinth of Crete and creature of perfect flight, the Quartet which bears his name opened the 58th season of the Asheville Chamber Music Series at the Unitarian Universalist Church with an exciting program of exacting quartets. The buzz about this young and vibrant aggregate of graduates from the Juilliard School, Curtis Institute, Cleveland Institute, and Harvard University is really true — they are accomplished, fearless, and deeply inspiring. Founding members are Min-Young Kim and cellist Raman Ramakrishnan; violist Jessica Thompson and violinist Ara Gregorian are more recent additions. Kim and Gregorian take turns as first violinist.

The program began with Mozart's String Quartet No. 23 in F, K. 590 (1790), the last of the so-called "Prussian Quartets" written by Mozart in a desperate bid to garner a commission from Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm II. As is true with so many of the composer's works, the piece does not reflect the angst of the man, but rather an amazing and experimental response to trying days in a medium he knew so well. The Quartet gave this four-movement piece an exquisite performance, with finely balanced voicings, and an expressive range that suited the piece. Especially impressive was their cohesiveness of interpretation, executed with such clarity that one could easily follow the elements of dialogue, motivic development, and what was foreground and what was background. The second movement, a siciliana-like Andante, takes the form of a rather simple theme upon which a series of variations are developed. The third movement, a Menuetto with attitude, is by far the most

unusual movement of the quartet. Its quirkiness unfolds in irregular phrase lengths, comical outbursts of dotted rhythms, an uneven heavy-handedness, and some surprising harmonies. The Trio section manages to get it together, but as the movement ends with the opening material, we're left with a suspicion that the prankster may still lie in wait. The final Allegro begins with Haydnesque lightness and speed, only to morph into a more serious movement with profound developmental processes and ample room for virtuosic display.

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Next on the program was the String Quartet, Op. 3 (1911) by Alban Berg (1885-1935), the last piece written during the composer's studies with Arnold Schoenberg. The work had its genesis in his fifth piano sonata, a tonal work, which partially explains the quartet's hybrid quality of tonal and atonal elements. The quartet is written without a key signature, leaving the composer free from commitment to any one key, and hinges on the presentation of motives in the first movement "Langsam," itself in sonata form, which are further developed in the second and last movement "Mäßige viertel." Central to the work is a vast palette of string colors which are achieved through the playing techniques of col legno (with the wood of the bow), sul ponticello (playing close to the bridge), and the use of mutes. It is kaleidoscopic and multi-dimensional, much like a Cubist painting, with blocks of sounds that unfold in a series of unpredictable gestures, intensities, harmonies, and melodic fragments. The

Quartet's performance, one of sustained concentration and high seriousness, exhibited a profound understanding of the piece.

The work after intermission, Beethoven's String Quartet No. 12 in E-flat, Op. 127 (1825), was performed with Ms. Kim as first violinist. Commissioned by Prince Nikolai Galitzin, a cellist, this was the first of a series of late quartets, Beethoven's crowning achievements in the genre. Though plagued by this time by illness, total deafness, and numerous family problems, the work's melodiousness exhibits a quality of direct appeal that belies the myth Beethoven was by now writing only for himself. The first movement begins with a series of heavy chords played Maestoso, a familiar attention-getting device, before the presentation of the tender, lyrical theme. This movement which develops these two ideas is as short as the second slow movement Adagio ma non troppo e molto cantabile is long. This outsized movement of a theme and five free variations dominates the work as a whole and suspends us in time; while the Quartet's interpretation of the movement was superb, Kim's playing here and elsewhere was simply thrilling. The third movement Scherzando vivace, sprightly and much shorter brings us back to the world of time, and Beethoven's mischievous metric displacements are central to the fun. The Finale began with an uncanny and exquisite ensemble start to the movement, as though the four musicians were but a single player. The movement is tuneful and in places folksy, as though Beethoven is telling us he's not lost touch with real life.

B E S E N  A R T S

Robert Besen, Director | 508 First Street, Suite 4W | Hoboken NJ 07030-7823
T 201-386-8565 | F 201-386-8564 | Robert@BesenArts.com | www.BesenArts.com

The New York Times

Wednesday, October 15, 2008

MUSIC REVIEW | DAEDALUS QUARTET

At Noon, Haydn's 'Sun,' a Brown-Bag Lunch and Thou

By Anthony Tommasini

It is hard to imagine a more inviting place to hear a Haydn string quartet than Philosophy Hall at Columbia University, especially at noontime with your lunch on your lap.

On Monday the excellent Daedalus Quartet, in residence at Columbia, opened the second season of free Lunchtime Concerts at the university by playing Haydn's Quartet in C (Op. 20, No. 2), one of the six "Sun" Quartets from that opus. The performance was insightful and vibrant, and the setting ideally intimate.

The hall is like a comfortable reading room in an old library. With people in rows of wooden chairs or sitting atop low bookcases that line the walls, and some standees squeezed in, about 200 listeners were accommodated. As indicated by the title of the series, sponsored by the Miller Theater and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, the audience members are invited to eat their brown-bag lunches while enjoying the music.

And as with last year's lunchtime series, when the Pacifica Quartet surveyed the 16 string quartets of Beethoven, each concert is devoted to a single work. So there is time for the musicians to discuss the piece before performing it and keep the concerts to an hour maximum. The Daedalus will play all six "Sun" Quartets, one per concert. (The name comes from the first published edition of the quartets, which had a picture of a rising sun on the cover.)

To begin Monday's program, the violinist Kyu-Young Kim offered comments on the C

major quartet. He and his quartet mates (Min-Young Kim, violinist; Jessica Thompson, violist; Raman Ramakrishnan, cellist) played excerpts, starting with the final movement, an elaborate fugue with four subjects.

Mr. Kim demystified the piece and had fun in the process. Referring to a passage in the slow movement when he and the first violinist play an alluring theme in double thirds, he said, "It's like, well, I don't want to say like two lovers, since Min is my sister."

With his "Sun" Quartets, composed in 1772, Haydn was determined to lift the form to a new level of sophistication and ingenuity. Like a due-process revolutionary, he accomplished his goal. The deceptively calm surface of the first movement hardly masks the shifts of harmony and sudden flights that jostle you. The unconventional slow movement, a Capriccio, evokes an operatic scene, complete with stern dramatic recitative phrases played in unison and stretches of beguiling arioso.

Hearing such an excellent, up-close performance made this Haydn piece seem even more monumental. In January and February the Chiara String Quartet will play Mozart's six "Haydn" Quartets, dedicated by that composer to his revered older colleague. In April the Pacifica Quartet returns, this time with six quartets by Mendelssohn.

The series puts the chamber back into chamber music. And what a splendid way to spend your lunch hour.

B E S E N  A R T S

Robert Besen, Director | 508 First Street, Suite 4W | Hoboken NJ 07030-7823
T 201-386-8565 | F 201-386-8564 | Robert@BesenArts.com | www.BesenArts.com

The New York Times

Friday, January 19, 2007



Hiroyuki Ito for The New York Times

The Daedalus Quartet performing at Alice Tully Hall on Wednesday.

MUSIC REVIEW | DAEDALUS QUARTET When the Visitors Are From Home

By Steve Smith

Most concerts presented by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center rely on players from the organization's standing roster. The society's International String Quartet Series, on the other hand, usually offers a steady supply of visiting groups. But at a recital by the Daedalus Quartet on Wednesday night at Alice Tully Hall, the society had it both ways: Daedalus, founded in 2000, is part of the organization's CMS II program for young musicians. But it also enjoys a busy career independent from its work at Lincoln Center.

Debussy's String Quartet in G minor (1893), which opened the concert, was intended to demonstrate the nascent (at the time) Impressionist's ability to handle Classical forms, or so the story goes. Ravishing swells in the third movement presaged the voluptuous sound world of his "Prélude à l'Après-Midi d'un Faune," a benchmark work well under way when Debussy wrote his sole quartet.

The Daedalus players — the sibling violinists Kyu-Young Kim and Min-Young Kim, the violist Jessica Thompson and the cellist Raman Ramakrishnan — underscored the work's formal elegance with impeccable balance and articulation, while also empha-

sizing its elusive passion and wit through imaginative management of phrasing and dynamics.

Henri Dutilleux's "Ainsi la Nuit" (1976), heard in its Chamber Music Society premiere, evoked nocturnal mysteries with a moon-drunk vocabulary of twitters, rustles and glassy slithers that drew upon the innovations of Webern and Bartok. Now and again, four independent flurries suddenly coalesced into striking ensemble statements. Even in the most hushed passages, the players maintained a riveting focus.

Beethoven's String Quartet in A minor (Op. 132) got off to a promising start; the musicians embraced the episodic strangeness of the opening movement and frolicked in the rustic bagpipe impressions of the second. The famous "Heiliger Dankgesang" hymn of the central movement initially seemed too chaste, but grew to an impressive intensity by the end. Ebullient renditions of the two final movements were occasionally blemished by shaky intonation; still, over all this was a respectable account.

An encore was certainly warranted. But the work chosen, Wynton Marsalis's clever "Rampart St. Row House Rag," was an anticlimactic trifle in the wake of Beethoven's towering edifice.

B E S E N  A R T S

Robert Besen, Director | 508 First Street, Suite 4W | Hoboken NJ 07030-7823
T 201-386-8565 | F 201-386-8564 | Robert@BesenArts.com | www.BesenArts.com



Tuesday, January 26, 2010

Slee Cycle strikes a serious note

By Mary Kunz Goldman

Ordinarily, the Daedalus Quartet looks young and fresh-faced. But on Monday, when they sat down to play Beethoven's Op. 131, they seemed to take the weight of the world on their shoulders.

Min-Young Kim, playing first violin in this cryptic, meandering piece, began by closing her eyes, her forehead furrowed. The other musicians, too, sat with eyes downcast, preparing themselves. They had turned, before our eyes, into four old souls.

Finally Min-Young Kim took a deep breath. And they were off.

The intensity lasted throughout the performance. Concentration never wavered. The communication among the musicians was so complete that they barely had to glance at each other. And it was catching: The listeners, too, found ourselves caught up in this schizophrenic, puzzling composition. Everyone sat silent and rapt.

Founded in 2000, the Daedalus Quartet comprises a brother-and-sister team, Min-Young Kim and Kyu-Young Kim, who alternate on violin; violist Jessica Thompson; and cellist Raman Ramakrishnan.

The quartet is one of six stellar ensembles playing the Slee Beethoven Quartet Cycle, a lineup that this year is being repeated at Lincoln Center. Monday's performance was seamless and deeply satisfying.

The "Harp" Quartet, which began the night, shone with color and light. The pizzicato effects in the first movement

came off with just the right light touch, and the bewitching Adagio was especially entrancing with its long sensuous lines. Beethoven can be ravishingly beautiful. Sometimes people forget that.

It was fun to observe the quartet's leadership — who was holding the reins. In the "Harp," cellist Ramakrishnan seemed to be in charge. He is the most dynamic of the four, alert and expressive, and his playing was assertive and extroverted. Several times I saw him cuing the first violin.

Though the leadership shifted throughout the evening, whatever the quartet was doing consistently worked. The Quartet in G, Op. 18 No. 2, sparkled. Kyu-Young Kim was at the helm for this one. The balance was good, and the music transparent and witty.

Speaking of witty, the group brought out the light side of the imposing Op. 131, which ended the evening. The Presto movement, with its effervescent folk rhythms, was irresistible. Heartfelt though the other movements were, they never sagged or dragged. Min-Young Kim, on first violin, played with unflagging enthusiasm and depth. The others fell into line behind her.

It was playing that commanded your attention, and it said worlds for the group's communication that the timing of this complicated piece was so elastic, yet always so together. This is not an easy piece to pull off. The way the Daedalus did it, it brought the crowd to its feet.

Lincoln Center is in for a treat.

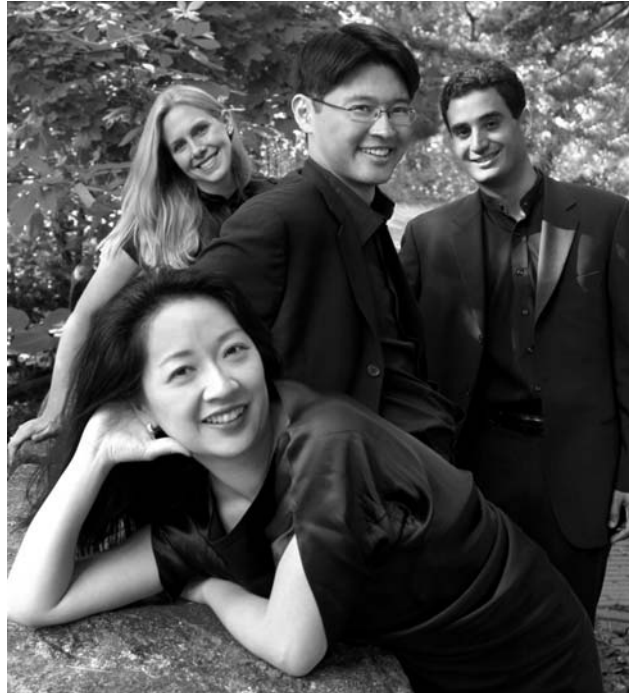
Musical America International Directory 2008

Young Artists: More Thrills of Discovery

By Harris Goldsmith

Daedalus Quartet

Only a year after its formation, the Daedalus Quartet won the Grand Prize of the 2001 Banff International String Quartet Competition. The



foursome — whose members are brother and sister Kyu-Young and Min-Young Kim (who alternate on first violin), Jessica Thompson (violist), and Raman Ramakrishnan (cellist) — participated in Carnegie Hall's ECHO (European Concert Hall Organization) Rising Stars program. Debut concerts followed in the 2004-05 season in Amsterdam, Athens, Paris, Salzburg, Vienna, and New York. Appointed to the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center Two for 2005-06 and 2006-07, the ensemble has been Columbia University's quartet-in-residence since 2005. The group's perfect intonation, lustrous tone, and brilliantly perceptive interpretations emerge magnificently on a recent Bridge CD of quartets by Sibelius ("Intimate Voices"), Stravinsky (Three Pieces), and Ravel. Equally memorable, too, was the Daedalus version of Beethoven's Op. 132 at a recent Tully Hall concert.

B E S E N  A R T S

Robert Besen, Director | 508 First Street, Suite 4W | Hoboken NJ 07030-7823
 T 201-386-8565 | F 201-386-8564 | Robert@BesenArts.com | www.BesenArts.com

THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

Wednesday, October 8, 2008

Chamber Season Opens Vividly

By Kyle Werner

The Chamber Music Cincinnati season opened Tuesday with a marvelous performance by the Daedalus Quartet and pianist Awadagin Pratt. The concert was held in Corbett Auditorium at CCM. Classic works of Haydn and Brahms were juxtaposed with a recent work by David Horne.

The quartet consists of four outstanding young musicians: violinists Min-Young Kim and Kyu-Young Kim (who are sister and brother), violist Jessica Thompson, and cellist Raman Ramakrishnan. They have performed in several prestigious venues, including Carnegie Hall, the Concertgebouw of Amsterdam, and the Musikverein of Vienna.

The concert opened with Haydn's String Quartet in F minor, Op. 20, No. 5. This work explores a slightly darker side of Haydn's personality than we hear in most of his chamber music. The Daedalus musicians brought out the emotion in this work while demonstrating smooth, elegant phrasing and incredible lightness of tone.

Next on the program was David Horne's Flight from the Labyrinth (String Quartet No. 3). Horne, a Scottish composer born in 1970, composed this work for the Daedalus Quartet, who gave its premiere in 2004. Although the group's name and its accompanying Greek legend provided the initial inspiration, Horne says his work is more

or less abstract. This piece offers many challenges, including writhing thematic lines, several varieties of pizzicato, and intricate textures involving harmonics. The musicians played this thorny work with agility and sensitivity.

The breathtaking summit of this concert was the Brahms Quintet for Piano and Strings in F minor, Op. 34. Awadagin Pratt, world-renowned pianist and CCM faculty member, joined the quartet for this gorgeous masterpiece.

Pratt's deep, sonorous tone was a nice complement to the quartet's more pure, bright sound. They launched into the opening movement with fervor. Their balance was excellent and they connected Brahms' organically developing lines with fluidity. Pratt made restrained use of the sustain pedal, giving the piano sound a clear, linear quality to blend with the strings. In the second movement, they achieved a lyrical, passionate quality that almost seemed operatic. The scherzo was emphatically joyful and exhilarating. The finale showcased the tremendous emotional power of these musicians, from the swelling, sobbing opening to the ecstatic conclusion.

Unfortunately, this concert does not repeat. Chamber Music Cincinnati's next concert will feature pianist Joseph Kalichstein performing solo works by Schumann, Mendelssohn, and Chopin.

The Boston Globe

Wednesday, June 18, 2008

In Rockport, glimpses of a future Daedalus Quartet

By Jeremy Eichler

The Rockport Chamber Music Festival, now in its 27th season, seems to have an extra spring in its step these days. Concerts are well-attended, the artistic level appears to be high, and momentum is building toward the construction of the festival's new performance center scheduled to open in June 2010. A lawsuit over zoning that had threatened to derail the project has been settled, and work is scheduled to commence in October.

On Sunday afternoon, before the scheduled performance by the Daedalus Quartet, curious passersby were invited to view the site of the future Main Street concert space overlooking Sandy Bay. The new hall will seat 330 — that's 90 more than the current venue at the Rockport Art Association — and the festival plans to expand its season, which, interestingly, could force it to compete for audiences with a wide range of festivals that start up in the month of July.

Still, while organizers were eager to discuss their ambitious future plans, Sunday's program had a more immediate

agenda: the music of Haydn, Shostakovich, and Elgar, delivered by an up-and-coming string quartet. Founded in 2000, the Daedalus has held a coveted residency at Lincoln Center's Chamber Music Society Two, and this summer it is making the rounds to summer chamber music destinations in New York and New England.

Its Rockport program, the second of two, took some time to hit its stride. Haydn's Quartet Op. 20, No. 1 was full of clear and sure-footed playing in the outer movements, but more distinctive character was needed to bring Haydn's signature wit and charm to the surface. Still, a warm-toned and richly drawn slow movement hinted at the expressive resources this capable group has within its reach.

Any doubts about those resources were put to rest by a hair-raising rendition of Shostakovich's Third Quartet. The group — with sibling violinists Kyu-Young Kim and Min-Young Kim, violist Jessica Thompson, and cellist Raman Ramakrishnan — dispensed both finesse and fury in the right proportions, and

showed an intuitive feel for Shostakovich's idiom, with its acid sarcasm, its tongue-in-cheek banality, and its explosive outbursts of emotion. Many groups excel at this music's expressive extremes, but the Daedalus also did a fine job tracing moments of ambiguity, in which certain instrumental lines or dance figures hover in a strange, multivalent netherworld somewhere far beyond tragedy and farce.

The evening ended with a big-boned, big-hearted performance of Elgar's Piano Quintet, with Judith Gordon as the sensitive guest pianist. This unusually textured three-movement work is somewhat of a rarity on concert programs, but these players were equal to its demands, both in its surging stormy passages and its many moments of swelling, sighing lyricism. The work was completed just after World War I, yet there is something poignant in the way the music seems to cling to an older tradition of 19th-century Romantic chamber music, as if the world that tradition described could live forever, as if it had not already disappeared.

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Robert Besen, Director | 508 First Street, Suite 4W | Hoboken NJ 07030-7823
T 201-386-8565 | F 201-386-8564 | Robert@BesenArts.com | www.BesenArts.com

International Record Review

(London)

January 2008

Daedalus Quartet

Ravel String Quartet in F.

Sibelius String Quartet in D minor,

Op. 56, 'Voces intimae'.

Stravinsky Three Pieces.

Daedalus Quartet (Min-Young Kim, Kyu-Young Kim, violins; Jessica Thompson, viola; Raman Ramakrishnan, cello).

Bridge BRIDGE0202 (full price, 1 hour 6 minutes). Website www.bridgerecords.com. Producer/Engineer Adam Abeshouse.

Date 2006.

Comparisons:

Ravel/Stravinsky:

Alban Berg Qt (EMI Classics) 5 67551-2 (1983-84)

Ravel:

Cleveland Qt (Telarc) CD80111 (1985)

Guarneri Qt (RCA) 09026 60909-2 (1973)

Sibelius:

Guarneri Qt (Philips) 426 286-2 (1989)

Here is the début recording of this ensemble, which was founded in the summer of 2000. The members of the Daedalus Quartet ('pronounced DED-a-lus', Bridge helpfully explains) are Americans with a diverse ethnic heritage. Their educational backgrounds are impeccable — Juilliard, Curtis, the Cleveland Institute of Music and Harvard — and as a group they have appeared at many prestigious music festival and in the most important recital halls, and won several awards. In other words, they have achieved astonishing success in fewer than eight years.

This is a fine, unexpected programme, too. The works contained herein were composed within a period of only 12 years, yet represent a wide variety of styles and influences. The Sibelius, which opens the CD, was composed in the years between his Third and Fourth Symphonies, around the time that he began to be troubled by what eventually was diagnosed as a benign throat tumor. As a result, it is usual to describe this work as the composer's reflections on mortality. Perhaps this is so, but the results are less morbid than one might predict. No doubt Sibelius had multiple

'intimate voices' inside of him, and not all of them talked about death.

The first thing one notices about the Daedalus Quartet is how resplendent is their sound; on a surface level, this is absolutely gorgeous playing, and not even the Guarneri Quartet can produce such attractive sounds. (Bridge's outstanding engineering also helps.) Fortunately, if you peel back that outer layer, you find that the musical argument is given its due, and that there are brains to go with the beauty. If Sibelius's Quartet sounds less dour than usual, that is not a bad thing, and the Daedalus Quartet score points for imagination by playing up the gypsy-like elements in the last movement. These musicians seem to have little interest in being imitators.

Interesting, albeit valid decisions are also made in the Stravinsky miniatures. The Alban Berg Quartet, perhaps in reaction to their usual diet of Beethoven and Schubert, play them like clucking, wheezing grotesques. The Daedalus Quartet, on the other hand, soften the outlines a little, and the result is almost touching. There are no disappointments in Ravel's early yet wholly characteristic Quartet either. Compared to the Cleveland Quartet, the Daedalus Quartet are less refined, but there's a youthfulness to the playing and a sense of discovery that more than compensate. The second movement is particularly impressive; the *pizzicati* are spot-on together and I love the subtlety of the hesitation at 0'44". Surprisingly, even the estimable Guarneri sound comparatively coarse in this Quartet!

The Kims alternate playing first violin on this CD. Min-Young does the honours in the Sibelius and the Stravinsky and brother Kyu-Young does so in the Ravel. Either way, there's no cause for concern! The booklet notes are above par too — I was not surprised to read that they were written by members of the quartet!

This is a very fine début and I look forward to more from this group.

Raymond S. Tuttle

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Robert Besen, Director | 508 First Street, Suite 4W | Hoboken NJ 07030-7823

T 201-386-8565 | F 201-386-8564 | Robert@BesenArts.com | www.BesenArts.com

The Virginian-Pilot

Wednesday, September 17, 2008

Feldman Season Opens on a High Note

By Lee Teply

The Feldman Chamber Music Society opened its season Monday by bringing back the Daedalus Quartet, which first played here in early 2005. Heard at the Chrysler Museum of Art, it is among the best of the national and international ensembles that the Feldman has brought in recently.

Without even a hint of technical insecurity to hold it back, the quartet delved into every aspect of the music, bringing out the smallest details, even if they were hidden in the texture. But the ultimate goal was to put these details together, keeping a perfect balance between the instruments to build a powerful musical and emotional experience.

Formed only eight years ago, the Daedalus is still quite young by string quartet standards. Its members are Min-Young Kim, violin; Kyu-Young Kim, violin; Jessica Thompson, viola; and Raman Ramakrishnan, cello. They are unusually well matched – in tone color, in dynamic range and in temperament.

The program opener, an early Haydn quartet from 1772, was much more than a warm-up exercise.

Staying within the boundaries of Classical period style, the musicians made the most of the four movements, playing with the timing of the composer's characteristic surprises.

Although Haydn is not considered the deepest of composers, the rather long slow movement of this quartet has a genuine inner beauty. The changes the Daedalus made in the repeat of the exposition – something few quartets do – were fascinating, with a softer approach that captured every ear.

One might guess that the Leos Janacek String Quartet No. 2, composed in 1927-28, would have the same kind of introspective mood, given its subtitle – “Intimate Letters.” A musical expression of the love he confessed in more than 700 letters to a woman who was not his wife, the piece instead explodes with unrepressed emotion.

The Daedalus widened its dynamic range to the extremes, increasing power with its amazing precision.

Less traditional sonorities had their effect, which could be unsettling. Solo passages from all four players were particularly personal. The piece is certainly troubling, which this superb performance did not attempt to hide.

Back in the early 19th century, Felix Mendelssohn was experiencing a less conflicted love when he wrote his Op. 13 String Quartet at the age of 18. Still, there was plenty for the listener's heart to feel, even as there was some sophisticated technical detail for the mind to consider.

The fugal writing of the second movement was not just correct; it also had emotional impact on the structure of the whole work. The contrast of the third movement's combination of simple melody and light scherzo cleared the air before the finale.

With its drama framed by recitative-like solos, it built to a strong climax before fading in peaceful resolution. The audience could only react to such a fine performance with a well-deserved standing ovation.

Houston Chronicle

Wednesday, December 6, 2006

Daedalus Quartet: Climbing the Heights of Beethoven's Late Music

By CHARLES WARD

By standard criteria, the Daedalus Quartet is too young to make the wise musical decisions exhibited in its return to the Houston Friends of Music chamber series.

Its first big success occurred only in 2001: winning the influential international string quartet competition in Banff, Canada. Since then, the players have attracted lots of support. They are resident artists at Columbia University and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in New York City.

Re-engaged as soon as feasible after the Friends of Music debut in January 2005, the ensemble Tuesday brought a weighty program to Rice University.

In introducing *Ainsi la nuit* (Thus is the night) by the contemporary Frenchman Henri Dutilleux, violinist Kyu-Young Kim talked about the group's afternoon visit to the Rothko Chapel and its experience of art that was "larger than yourself." The music on the evening's program was similar, he suggested.

The Daedalus members had obviously thought carefully about the opening work, Debussy's *Quartet in G Minor*, Op. 10. They offered a distinct view and, for the most part, it succeeded splendidly.

The group began with mellow, well-stroked music that gave way to glistening, wispy flights. Two things quickly became evident: the members wouldn't be trying to impress by sheer intensity of sound, and they made decisions for musical rather than theatrical reasons.

The players weren't afraid to let go: In the surging middle section of the first movement, the unabashed freedom made Debussy's music sound a little like Schoenberg's in his voluptuous *Verklärte Nacht* (Transfigured Night).

Predominantly, though, the Daedalus delivered Debussy's music with gorgeous sound, thoughtful phrasing (excepting a few clunky moments) and muted spirit.

The tendency to restraint served the group well in Beethoven's *Quartet in A minor*, Op. 132.

It is typical of the composer's late music in which he seemed to be straining to unleash all the ideas that filled his mind. (Or, for me, it seems in many places that he needed a strong-willed editor to chop some of the never-ending movements down to reasonable size.)

The centerpiece is the middle movement of five. It's lengthy (clocking

in at just under 20 minutes Tuesday). Beethoven described it as a hymn of thanks from a convalescing soul.

Its mood is elevated and its style largely serene, with a lighter-hearted gait alternating with the main theme. The Daedalus brought the serenity off elegantly, without the string-bursting straining of other ensembles.

Throughout the rest of the piece, the Daedalus played with flexible elasticity that gave the music strong movement but also freedom.

The new work for much of the audience was Dutilleux's *Ainsi la nuit*. Anchored by recurring chords, it seemed a series of half-conscious flights of imagination, where snippets were stretched and mutated using all the technical tricks string players have (starting with the simple pizzicato).

The music was imaginative and the delivery excellent — and just when a listener might think Dutilleux had gone on too long, he wrapped up stylishly with a flurry of repeated chords sounding a bit like a signature moment in Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*.

The Washington Post

Monday, May 15, 2006

Daedalus Quartet

By Stephen Brookes

Despite the name, the Daedalus Quartet seemed it was flying Friday not on wings of waxy feathers, but rather on jet-propelled rockets of blistering virtuosity.

Since bursting onto the scene six years ago, this young ensemble has been making a name for itself as one of the hottest quartets around — and at its Corcoran Gallery performance, it showed why.

The program opened with the first of Mendelssohn's string quartets, Op. 44, No. 1, in D. It's a light work that critics love to dismiss. Sure, the drama gets a little high sometimes, the gestures a little too sweeping, but there's so much pure pleasure in it that you forgive the indulgences and yearn for more. The Daedalus gave it a heady reading: The Allegro exploded out of the gate, the Menuetto

ached with bittersweet longing, and the Presto con brio — well, refer back to those “rockets of blistering virtuosity.”

While Mendelssohn sweeps you off your feet, Béla Bartók would rather just pull the rug out from under you — and then hit you with it. His Quartet No. 3 is a wild and unfettered masterpiece, a storm of ear-bending sonorities and inventive, edgy rhythms.

The Daedalus dove into it with fearless abandon — the music rang gloriously, and the audience emerged wowed and grateful.

But that was mere prelude to Mozart's String Quintet in E-flat, K. 614, which the Daedalus (joined by Roger Tapping on viola) gave a full-blooded, magnificent reading — one so hot you could almost smell wax in the air.

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Robert Besen, Director | 508 First Street, Suite 4W | Hoboken NJ 07030-7823 |
T 201-386-8565 | F 201-386-8564 | Robert@BesenArts.com | www.BesenArts.com

The Seattle Times

Thursday, April 20, 2006

Daedalus Quartet: dynamic, exuberant, insightful

By Melinda Bargreen

There are so many fine new string quartets and chamber ensembles today that it can be hard to keep them straight — but there's no fear of the Daedalus Quartet getting lost in the shuffle. This outstanding young foursome, winners of the 2001 Banff International Quartet Competition, is already charting a secure course through the world's leading concert halls, from Carnegie to the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Salzburg Mozarteum to the Vienna Musikverein.

The Daedalus made a stop in Meany Theater Tuesday evening for an International Chamber Series program that spanned three very different musical styles, all expertly realized. Seattle pianist Byron Schenkman was the guest artist in one of the great, burnished chestnuts of the repertoire, the Dvorák Piano Quintet.

The four Daedalus members — sibling violinists Kyu-Young Kim and Min-Young Kim, violist Jessica Thompson and cellist Raman Ramakrishnan — made an immediate impression with their exuberant playing in the Mendelssohn D Major

String Quartet (Op. 44, No. 1), which was full of verve and energy. Equally effective, however, were the perfectly controlled dynamics, including an elegant pianissimo that was achieved with no loss of intensity or focus. It was a beautifully detailed, finished performance.

The Bartók String Quartet No. 3 that followed was a study in contrasts, and here the Daedalus' precision ensemble playing was especially noteworthy: both incisive and unified. Kyu-Young Kim's commentary before the Bartók was well-judged and insightful.

The Dvorák brought in the partnership of pianist Schenkman, who has made his earlier career as a harpsichordist and brings to the modern instrument a clarity and articulation that illuminated the score. He made the piano sparkle in the speedy Scherzo. Balances were excellent with the Daedalus players' warm sound and smooth blend, as the five musicians wove their way through abundant tempo changes and knit together a solid, stylish performance. Encore, encore.

B E S E N  A R T S

Robert Besen, Director | 508 First Street, Suite 4W | Hoboken NJ 07030-7823 |
T 201-386-8565 | F 201-386-8564 | Robert@BesenArts.com | www.BesenArts.com



The Sun

Monday, March 13, 2006

A Young Quartet Whose Moment Has Arrived

By Fred Kirshnit

In the West, Sergei Prokofiev is best known for his ballets, piano music, and symphonies — well, actually he is best known for “Peter and the Wolf” — while in Russia he is equally revered as a great composer for the operatic stage. He is not known for chamber music, but he wrote a few pieces of note, including one that premiered right here in the United States.

The String Quartet No.1 was commissioned by the Library of Congress and first performed in Washington in 1931, while Prokofiev was touring as a pianist in America, Canada, and Cuba (this was before he made the disastrous decision to return to the sheltering arms of Uncle Joe Stalin). Immediately thereafter, apparently, it was consigned to one of their dustiest and most inaccessible shelves — revivals have been virtually nonexistent. But Prokofiev was so enamored of its Andante that he twice tried to resurrect it, first in a piano version that became part of his Six Pieces, Op. 52, and then in a siring-orchestra arrangement that he never actually published.

On Thursday evening at the Rose Studio, the Daedalus Quartet, under the auspices of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, presented the work in its original form. This fine group — Kyu-Young Kim and Mm-Young Kim, vio-

lins; Jessica Thompson, viola; and Raman Ramakrishnan, cello — caught the spirit of the enfant terrible right from the outset.

Prokofiev did not infuse his pieces with jazz like his contemporary Ravel, but he did adopt the kicky rhythms of the idiom in the late 1920s and early '30s. The ensemble this evening was brash in the opening Allegro, reminding of the performing style of the composer himself in those few recordings extant of his piano concertos.

The quartet produces a very well-blended sound, and the Kims, who alternated as first violins, have superb tone. In the Andante molto — Vivace, Prokofiev experiments with legato bowing in the violins and pizzicato in the two lower instruments. Mr. Ramakrishnan complimented his burnished tone with strong-handed plucking; this was almost exaggerated in spots, but highly effective. The group also emphasized the wild dissonance of the movement, the composer's thumbing of his nose at what he perceived as the bourgeois musical establishment of the time (he soon would become its most eloquent spokesman, although most likely under duress).

That beautiful Andante was thought out impressively by the Daedalus foursome. They built a labyrinth of sound out

of the most delicate of materials. Overall, this was splendid music-making, made all the more pleasurable by the intimate setting of the studio.

The next piece reminded me of my mother-in-law, who refused to attend chamber music concerts on the pretext that they reminded her of the music in a hotel lobby. The quartet dredged up a piece of flotsam from the stagnant Mendelssohn pond, the String Quartet No. 3 in D major. Do you know this piece? Of course not, but you have still heard it all before.

Mendelssohn is most important in music history for his role as an interpreter and discoverer of great music, his founding of the orchestra in Leipzig, and his championing of the concept of a “classical” music. Yes, Felix wrote some beautiful music, but the bulk of his writing for piano and for chamber ensembles is just puffed-up fluff.

These dedicated musicians gave the piece a fabulous performance, though I kept waiting for melodic inspiration that simply never came. It was difficult not to like this performance a lot: It was infectiously buoyant and exuberant. For young musicians, the journey matters, not the arrival. Now, at just the right age, these people have arrived.

B E S E N  A R T S

Robert Besen, Director | 508 First Street, Suite 4W | Hoboken NJ 07030-7823 |
T 201-386-8565 | F 201-386-8564 | Robert@BesenArts.com | www.BesenArts.com

The Washington Post

Monday, October 3, 2005

Daedalus: Glorious Playing on Glorious Instruments

By Joe Banno

The members of the Daedalus Quartet are clearly first-rate musicians. Their program at the Library of Congress on Friday — Prokofiev's First String Quartet, Haydn's Quartet Op. 33, No. 1, and (with guest violist Donald Weilerstein) Mozart's String Quintet K. 593 — was dashed off with such security, technical finish, interpretive unity and sheer gusto it sounded as if these young string players had somehow been performing these works together for a good 50 or 60 years.

But clearly, the instruments they were playing didn't hurt matters either. When the musicians spoke after intermission of their acquaintances with these instruments feeling like intense love affairs, it was no small wonder. The recital featured a splendid array of 17th- and 18th-century Amati, Stradivari and Guarneri instru-

ments from the library's collection, all of them sweetly incisive in their upper reaches, mellow and resonant in the middle, and boasting rich carrying power at the bottom.

The cannily selected program showed three composers' takes on emotional ambivalence. Mozart's Quintet is so suffused with sunlight and serenity that fleeting moments of despair are quickly subsumed back into the glow. Haydn plays his usual musical sleight of hand, making 180-degree mood swings, sometimes within a single phrase. And Prokofiev manages the trick of being, at once, buoyant and uneasy, wry and tragic, aloof and heartfelt. The Daedalus members were so at-one with their composers, we were happily caught off-guard by every emotional surprise they sprang.

B E S E N  A R T S

Robert Besen, Director | 508 First Street, Suite 4W | Hoboken NJ 07030-7823 |
T 201-386-8565 | F 201-386-8564 | Robert@BesenArts.com | www.BesenArts.com

LAWRENCE JOURNAL-WORLD

Lawrence, Kansas
Tuesday, October 4, 2005

Mythical Strings Daedalus charms Lied Center audience

By Dean Bevan

A young and spirited Daedalus Quartet opened the Swarthout Chamber Music Series at the Lied Center Sunday afternoon. Making its only stop between the East and West coasts, this ensemble, formed five years ago, showed why Carnegie Hall chose it for the "Rising Stars" program of the European Concert Hall Organization. Playing with intelligence and energy, the players commanded the audience's attention throughout the afternoon's program.

The group's spokesman, Kyu-Young Kim, explained that it was altering the usual string-quartet template of classical-modern-romantic to a sequence of modern-classical-romantic, adding that for the opening work "we like to feel that we've been shot out of a cannon." Thus the concert began with Prokofiev's String Quartet No. 1 in B minor, Op. 50, one of only two by the composer in this genre.

With Mr. Kim as first violin, the group moved nimbly from Prokofiev's elegant dissonances to unexpectedly lush and romantic passages and then back to harsher tonalities. Its playing was clean and precise, whether echoing a melodic line in each of the instruments or pursuing together the demanding scherzo of the second movement. Cellist Raman Ramakrishnan showed here and throughout the program a delicate touch on the bow and a superb velvety tone.

The quartet established its credentials by dealing with the difficult Russian composition, but the audience seemed relieved when the afternoon's second work began, Haydn's String Quartet in B minor, Op. 33, No. 1. In its short Scherzo second movement, entrances were a little less crisp than at any other time, perhaps a

let-down from the challenges of Prokofiev.

But the Haydn quartet charmed the audience, with Min-Young Kim (Kyu-Young's sister) taking over as first violin. The Andante third movement was played sweetly, with delicacy and feeling, and Ms. Kim produced a lovely tone in its soaring melodic lines. The ensemble played the lighthearted but very demanding Presto fourth movement with a nice sense of urgency.

The quartet's excellent program notes point out the "virtuosic writing" of the first and fourth movements of the final number, Mendelssohn's String Quartet in D major, Op. 44, No. 1. And indeed the opening Molto allegro vivace movement produced a splendid torrent of liquid sound, with Ms. Kim's spirited lyric line rising above the others.

In the two middle movements, it was evident the group had included some of Mendelssohn's more classical treatments, just as they had earlier selected some of Haydn's more romantic sounds. The Menuetto once again exhibited the artistry of Min-Young Kim, the feather-light touch of her bow gracefully setting forth the movement's quieter moments. The final Presto con brio was rendered with the energy and thoughtfulness that marked the whole afternoon's performance.

A string quartet as accomplished as this young group will become stronger and even more in demand in years to come, and Sunday's Lied Center audience would doubtless be glad to see it return. The players are now in their first full year of touring the U.S., and like their namesake Daedalus, this quartet intends to fly.

B E S E N  A R T S

Robert Besen, Director | 508 First Street, Suite 4W | Hoboken NJ 07030-7823 |
T 201-386-8565 | F 201-386-8564 | Robert@BesenArts.com | www.BesenArts.com

Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger

Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger

(Cologne, Germany)

Tuesday, May 10, 2005

Noisy Applause

The Daedalus Quartet takes flight in the
Kölner Philharmonie in crystal clear sound

Sometimes one does not trust one's ears in the Philharmonie. But the young American Daedalus Quartet, in which siblings Kyu-Young and Min-Young Kim alternate playing first violin with glowing equality, and Jessica Thompson and Raman Ramakrishnan let their wonderful blossoming viola tone and cello tone flow, allowed the crystal clear sounds of Haydn's Quartet Op. 20, No. 2 to ascend in the air — and after every movement there was noisy applause that broke the concentration. Still worse was what happened during Beethoven's Opus 74, when that barbarity occurred even before the closing of the Adagio.

The way this "Rising Stars" ensemble was able to maintain its virtuosic, intense playing, with its humorous asides, without losing anything from its exalted sound truly deserves a five-star recommendation. The same held true in their performance of Elliot Carter's monothematic twelve-part Fifth String Quartet. And luckily the delicate harmonic colors, capricious pizzicatos, and the nuance-filled yet impulsive musicianship were not interrupted by senseless applause this time. Although the guests were clearly dismayed by the interruptions, they chose to thank the audience by playing the "Allegretto pizzicato" from Bartók's Fourth Quartet and the Finale from Mozart's Quartet, KV 387.

B E S E N  A R T S

Robert Besen, Director | 508 First Street, Suite 4W | Hoboken NJ 07030-7823 |
T 201-386-8565 | F 201-386-8564 | Robert@BesenArts.com | www.BesenArts.com

The Mercury News

San Jose, California
Saturday, January 29, 2005

Quartet connects the centuries Daedalus Foursome Points Out Relationships Between Schubert, Ligeti

By RICHARD SCHEININ

The classical music world is loaded with good string quartets. Many are emotionally ferocious. Some would like to bowl you over with hyper-displays of virtuosity. But the Daedalus Quartet is about clear, refined musicality, drawing an audience into a performance through understatement. Pretty soon, the hall is stock-still as the quartet goes about exposing the delicate inner workings of the music.

At least that's what happened Wednesday at Stanford University's Dinkelspiel Auditorium, where the quartet, a 4-year-old ensemble that has won some big awards, made its Stanford Lively Arts debut. The performance wasn't perfect; the quartet is still coming into its own. But in its best moments — and there were a lot of them — the performance of works by Schubert, the tortured Romantic, and György Ligeti, that harrowed soul of contemporary composition, was pretty extraordinary. It felt like a tour through hidden worlds.

Commonalities

Better than that, the evening was so intelligently programmed and the music so thoughtfully played that it was hard not to make connections between the two composers, whose methods might seem to be worlds apart. Not so, the quartet showed.

Here's an example: In the mournful second movement of Schubert's String Quartet No. 15 in G major, there are brief nightmarish interludes — scary, tremulous flares of sound. Listening to the quartet play them, it was hard not to leap forward a couple of centuries to Ligeti, whose music grows out of the bundling together of such flaring or buzzing micro-

sounds. In fact, if it were possible to slice off a segment of Schubert, place it in a petri dish, culture it and grow it, you might get something that sounds a lot like Ligeti: 19th-century Sturm und Drang transformed into a 20th-century nightmare.

That was the sort of meaty lesson that emerged, in a natural way, from the quartet's performance.

*Finely cultured,
authoritative yet relaxed,
the group is a string
quartet to keep an eye on.*

The program didn't congeal at first. There were some off-pitch notes and rhythmic insecurities during Schubert's String Quartet No. 12 in C minor ("Quartettsatz"); the music was still caramelizing. Even so, the poetry of this brief, single-movement work was showing. The quartet's careful attention to finely wrought textures and colors — including more of those tremulous, a-storm's-a-comin' passages — was making an impression.

'Wonderland'

On Ligeti's String Quartet No. 2, written in 1968, the quartet succeeded in going "down the rabbit hole," as first violinist Min-Young Kim put it in introductory remarks, "and into Ligeti's wonderland." What a place. The music sounded like the faint scratch of a finger on a pane of glass, then a faraway swarm of insects, wings beating. In the second movement, there was a quivery, sinister sense of calm: the wriggings of deep-sea

life, perhaps? Movement 3: faint machine taps, snaps and squeaky, deflating chords, barely audible. Have you ever wondered what your dog hears when her ears perk up and you can't hear a thing? This could be it.

In the fourth movement, there were raucous, sawing chords and high-whistling harmonics, combining in sounds of varying thicknesses, the layers overlapping and protruding. The fifth brought faraway buzzings, more swarming wings and a faint storm of shimmering, glimmering trills. The quartet seemed to be dialing in music from another planet as the audience sat rapt in Dinkelspiel.

After intermission, the quartet took on Schubert's 15th and final quartet, a 50-minute wonder, composed in 11 days in 1826. It's full of extreme gestures and emotions — truly a forerunner to Ligeti — and quickly introduces the faintest shimmering, glimmering trills and buzzings, raising a couple of questions: Did Ligeti borrow the effects from Schubert? And if Schubert were alive today, would he write like Ligeti?

The quartet — now with Kyu-Young Kim, brother of Min-Young, on first violin — played the piece beautifully, especially its first two movements. The first was flickering candle music; you could imagine Schubert composing late at night in his study. The quartet was now dialing in music from another century: urgent melodies and counter-themes handed around, interlaced, practically hanging in the air, or turning slowly like a carousel. Finely cultured, authoritative yet relaxed, the group is a string quartet to keep an eye on.

B E S E N  A R T S

Robert Besen, Director | 508 First Street, Suite 4W | Hoboken NJ 07030-7823 |
T 201-386-8565 | F 201-386-8564 | Robert@BesenArts.com | www.BesenArts.com

Houston Chronicle

Thursday, January 20, 2005

Daedalus Quartet takes flight at Rice

By CHARLES WARD

The Daedalus Quartet's Houston debut pretty much guarantees the group's return in the Houston Friends of Music chamber music series.

Founded in 2000 at Vermont's world-famous Marlboro Music Festival, the ensemble has surged into the forefront of young chamber ensembles. A crucial boost came in 2001 when it won first prize in Canada's Banff International String Quartet Competition, a top North American contest. The current season includes a European tour with debuts in major concert halls.

The clinching moment Tuesday at Rice University was the performance of Ravel's String Quartet.

The ensemble of Korea-born violinists Min-Young and Kyu-Young Kim (sister and brother), American violist Jessica Thompson and India-born cellist Raman Ramakrishnan played with a beguiling sweetness that could melt the heart of even the most experienced chamber music fan.

With no pretense or ostentation, the group offered a wash of gorgeous sound

produced by polished technique and applied with care and sensitivity.

The peak came in the third movement. Led by viola and cello solos, the group created a magic that hushed the audience.

The ensemble played with a beguiling sweetness that could melt the heart of even the most experienced chamber music fan.

In other movements, the group played with exuberant but relaxed pleasure. Even at places where other ensembles bite deeply into the music, the Daedalus respected the limits of their supple style, never playing with harsh, grating intensity.

Overall, the Daedalus' program continually highlighted its strengths.

Schubert's Quartet No. 12, D. 703 *Quartettsatz*, opens with restless energy, but mostly it is light and buoyant music that the Daedalus played with assurance.

The silvery beauty of the upper strings still ricochets in the mind.

Rice University faculty member James Dunham, for eight years violist in the Cleveland Quartet, joined the Daedalus for Brahms' Quintet No. 2 in G Major, Op. 111.

With prominent use of the two violas, the piece was again perfect for Daedalus. Even at its darkest moments, and even when Dunham wasn't totally attuned to Daedalus' sweetness and flexibility, the music floated with joyous beauty.

But there also was a subtle shift in character — an extra jolt of buoyancy suggesting the young musicians were juiced up by appearing with a seasoned veteran.

The Brahms quintet reminded listeners that the Daedalus is still refining its interpretations. Throughout the evening, large, assertive moments, plus the development sections where composers explore key ideas in detail, needed more tightening and rationalization to integrate them into the group's otherwise impressive performances.

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Robert Besen, Director | 508 First Street, Suite 4W | Hoboken NJ 07030-7823 |
T 201-386-8565 | F 201-386-8564 | Robert@BesenArts.com | www.BesenArts.com

The Virginia Gazette

Williamsburg, Virginia

Sunday, March 26, 2005

Talented Quartet

The Chamber Music Society of Williamsburg presents the Daedalus Quartet, with Min-Young Kim and Kyu-Young Kim, violin; Jessica Thompson, viola; and Raman Ramakrishnan, cello; in the Haydn String Quartet in E-flat, Op. 20, No. 1; Ravel String Quartet in F; and Beethoven String Quartet in E-flat, Op. 74 (The Harp); in the Williamsburg Library Arts Center Theater, March 15.

The Daedalus Quartet is relatively new in the world of chamber music, having been established in the summer of 2000. Within its first year, it was grand prizewinner at the prestigious Banff Competition, and from there, like its namesake, it took flight. Its reputation quickly found the Daedalus being named by the prestigious Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center as its Chamber Music Society Two ensemble for the next two seasons. This is big stuff.

Unquestionably, the performance by this excellent ensemble easily illustrated the reason for its rapid growth and growing reputation. On all accounts, it was a superior moment in musical time. Although the group had been under the weather, the musical output was about as energized and electric as one could have desired.

The Daedalus offered a wonderfully sonorous sound that lent a richness and

elegance to each work, resulting in a pitch perfect and perfection-plus product. Perfect also describes the technical and artistic matching of each member of this fine quartet. That they're so young and talented and so on the rise is reason expect significant things from them in the major world of chamber music.

While the program opened with a spontaneous reading of the Haydn E-flat and closed with a superbly done and engaging Beethoven "Harp" quartet, it was the highly impressionistic, tonally and texturally rich Ravel that defined the Daedalus.

Theirs was an amazing interpretation and performance that captured every musical nuance inherent in the opus. The group's mature, artistic understanding and application of dynamics, its ability to craft shimmering images, and its extraordinarily expressive delivery made this one of the best, most total and most sumptuous performances heard live or on recording.

And so it was in this most musical of evenings with the Daedalus Quartet, an ensemble with the potential to soar the heights. A return visit would be delightful.

—John Shulson

Arkansas Democrat Gazette

Little Rock, Arkansas

March 11, 2005

Young quartet plays with craft, enthusiasm

By Eric E. Harrison

Like its namesake, the mythical Greek inventor, artist, craftsman and architect, the Daedalus Quartet creates gorgeous and innovative structures. And like Daedalus' son Icarus, it likes to play a little close to the edge.

The quartet — Min-Young Kim and Kyu-Young Kim, violins; Jessica Thompson, viola; and Raman Ramakrishnan, cello — gave one of the richest and most charming performances in my experience of the String Quartet No. 10 in E-flat major, Op. 74, "Harp," by Ludwig van Beethoven to close out a Chamber Music Society of Little Rock concert Thursday night in the Parish Hall of Little Rock's St. Mark's Episcopal Church.

This is a foursome that, though young, understands ensemble playing. Tempos, balance and musical interpretation were all fantastic.

They deliberately subdued the dynamics in the first movement to make the sforzandi (sudden loud outbursts) more dramatic, and the hymnlike slow movement was particularly lovely. I also liked their fierce, take-no-prisoners approach to the scherzo, particularly the trio portion.

The Daedalans also gave a particularly forceful performance of the String Quartet No. 4 by Bela Bartok, handling with

authority the particularly tricky rhythms of the first movement, the rather manic glee of the two scherzo movements (second and fourth) and the folksong melodies accompanied by string shimmer in the third movement. The wild ride they gave the finale earned them warm applause and a second curtain call.

Too many musicians treat the chamber music of Franz Josef Haydn and his contemporary, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, with such mannered delicacy that it becomes dull and bloodless.

Not this ensemble. They played Haydn's String Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 20, No. 1, the first of the so-called "Sun Quartets," with a light touch but plenty of good cheer and brio. They gave it as much passion and vigor as they did the Beethoven or even the Bartok, for that matter.

They played the slow third movement gorgeously, and took Haydn's fourth movement rhythmic tricks — the kind with which he loved to trap unwary musicians and keep audiences guessing — with ease.

The Kim siblings alternated in the first violin chair, with Kyu-Young playing first for the Haydn and Min-Young for the Bartok and Beethoven.



Monday, April 18, 2005

Daedalus Quartet Shines

By Mary Kunz Goldman

The 2004-05 Slee Beethoven Quartet Series concluded Friday with a very enjoyable performance by the Daedalus Quartet. Named for the figure in Greek mythology, the group has been creating a lot of buzz.

The musicians recently made their debut at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, and they'll soon be off to Europe, where they'll perform at the Musikverein and Concertgebouw.

Leading the Daedalus Quartet is a sister/brother team of violinists, Min-Young Kim and Kyu-Young Kim. Rounding out the group are violist Jessica Thompson and cellist Raman Ramakrishnan. Their sound reflects their youth. The Daedalus is highly spirited, occasionally on the wild side. They can be rambunctious.

These attributes served them well, especially in the last quartet, the second "Razumovsky." You could almost imagine Beethoven's patron, the Russian Count Razumovsky, smiling at the folkish Russian themes, especially the tune in the trio of the Scherzo, the melody

Moussorgsky used as the hymn to the Czar in "Boris Gudonov." The Daedalus dug into the theme, tossing it back and forth, giving it life.

Their togetherness is close to flawless. They brought a good feeling of concentration to the early Quartet in C Minor, Op. 18 No. 4, which according to the Slee tradition began the program. Kyu-Young Kim played first violin for this piece, displaying a style that was light, fluid and vigorous.

He switched places with his sister for the Quartet in F, Op. 135, and the dynamics changed somewhat. She's more stolid than he is, though her tone can be lovely. The slow movement gave cellist Ramakrishnan a chance to shine. His played the piece's sublime theme with deep feeling.

Kyu-Young Kim played first violin again for Op. 59, No. 2. Maybe it was because the challenging Op. 135 was behind them, but the group seemed looser and more relaxed. The finale was especially lilting and uplifting, and the ending was a riot of joyful noise.

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Robert Besen, Director | 508 First Street, Suite 4W | Hoboken NJ 07030-7823 |
T 201-386-8565 | F 201-386-8564 | Robert@BesenArts.com | www.BesenArts.com

San Francisco Classical Voice

Tuesday, April 27, 2004

Versatile Virtuosity

By BENJAMIN FRANDZEL

When I first read the Daedalus Quartet's planned program for their Sunday concert at Kohl Mansion — Kurtág, Purcell, and two of the less common Haydn and Beethoven quartets — I jumped at the chance to hear it, wondering how this young quartet would address their unusual program. Unfortunately, neither I nor the rest of the audience got to find out, due to a last-minute substitution for that with three pillars of the repertory. I suspect the earlier program would have been handled expertly, because their performances of Haydn, Beethoven and Bartók suggested they could play anything quite well. In fact, they could certainly rise to the upper echelon of American quartets and stay there for the foreseeable future. I hope their evolving identity will incorporate their most imaginative instincts.

The emotional centerpiece of the program was a very fine reading of Beethoven's Op. 59, No. 2 Quartet. This was the evening's most mature performance, with thoughtful pacing and a considered approach to the most dramatic

moments in the piece. The work's dynamic architecture, the clear sense of foreground and background and of the moments that anchor the progress of the music, were all outstanding elements. Most of all, the quartet deserves recognition for a performance that embodied the unsettled quality of the music while still emphasizing focus and momentum.

The ensemble's first violin duties are handled alternately by the brother and sister duo of Kyu-Young and Min-Young Kim, both first-rate players. Kyu-Young, who took the first chair for the Beethoven, has a slightly thinner and purer tone than his sister, which helped contribute to the elevated quality of their interpretation. Min-Young played first for the program's opening half, and her tone, more brilliant and less sweet, helped give the quartet a hotter sound, first in Haydn, then Bartók.

Their reading of Bartók's Fourth Quartet was also well worth hearing. The requisite intensity of the outer movement was there to an ample degree, and even within the savagery of the final move-

ment there was an exceptional balance among the parts. This was also true of the second and fourth movements, with clear counterpoint and rhythmic drive at a whispery volume. The quartet also brought out the mystery of the middle movement, with its sense of dusk moving to darkness, adopting a slightly grainier collective tone and exploring its lyricism.

The evening began with a bang, with a searing performance of Haydn's G Major quartet, Op.77, No.1. The Daedalus captured both the flash and substance of the piece, with high energy and tempos that were often breathless but still felt organic. There were beautifully delineated contrapuntal passages, with excellent work by violist Jessica Thompson and cellist Raman Ramakrishnan, and a real quality of surprise in Haydn's most harmonically inventive moments.

For an encore, the group chose one of the four-part Fantasias by Purcell that had originally been planned for the program, and played it with a transporting clarity and grace.

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Robert Besen, Director | 508 First Street, Suite 4W | Hoboken NJ 07030-7823 |
T 201-386-8565 | F 201-386-8564 | Robert@BesenArts.com | www.BesenArts.com



Albany, New York
Monday, March 29, 2004

Stormy to delicate, quartet gets it right

By JOSEPH DALTON, Staff writer

The young Daedalus Quartet gave an impressive performance Saturday night in the Union College Concert Series. The group came together at the Marlboro Music Festival in 2000 and the following year took the grand prize at the Banff International String Quartet Competition.

They play with a bright, clean sound that served each of the three pieces on the program well. Haydn opened and Brahms took up the second half, but the highlight was Paul Hindemith's String Quartet, Op. 22.

Its dark, turbulent and questing music comes right out of its time and place — Germany in 1921. Though it conveyed both psychological angst and political pressure, it was also quite beautiful.

The advanced harmonies, never overly dissonant, came mostly near the beginning yet melody almost always dominated. For all the passages of assertive fury, each movement contained numerous consoling passages. Hints of a Jewish fiddler kept appearing but never fully blossomed as they do in Shostakovich.

The third and central movement, a nocturne, felt like an escape to the country from too much city life. The simple walking theme was tentative at first but ultimately became full voiced.

Clearly the Daedalus is fond of the Hindemith and brought to it the same

warmth and precision they give to more traditional repertoire. It brought to mind last year's concert of the Pacifica Quartet, another young group, which gave a gripping performance of Elliott Carter's String Quartet No. 5 amid more standard fare.

Both groups show a natural commitment to 20th-century music that is admirable, not for its bravery but for its beauty.

During intermission, one usually hears some mild grousing among the faithful Union College audience members because a piece doesn't fit the comforting character of typical classics. But defenses of the new and unusual can also be heard and ultimately it all leads to healthy discourse on the music and not just the performances.

Part of the appeal of 20th-century repertoire is its broad diversity of language, which can sometimes be arresting. Contrast this to the Haydn String Quartet Op. 77, No. 1. The program notes talk about its debts to the young Beethoven, but they seemed subtle at best.

Brahms' String Quartet No. 1 in C minor, on the other hand, was a remarkably light and warm statement for the composer. The second and third movements were practically love songs.

The Birmingham News

Saturday, October 18, 2003

Daedalus Quartet's sound detailed, well-blended

By MICHAEL HUEBNER

With 50 concerts a year, the Daedalus Quartet has no doubt encountered places like Reid Chapel. The hard surfaces and cavernous surroundings of the Samford University facility create a resounding echo that amplifies the softest pianissimo to well past mezzoforte.

Rare is the ensemble that can come off the road and readily adjust. On Thursday, the young string players from New York not only overcame the lively environs, they mastered them.

After a mere three years together, this ensemble has honed a big, well-blended sound that for most groups matures only after a decade or two. It's clear they've worked hard at it, and their efforts were manifest in music from three towering figures of the quartet repertoire.

Haydn's String Quartet in C major, Op. 20, No. 2, contains some of the composer's most innovative scoring. Alternating dolefulness with whimsy, it helped establish the medium in the

classical era with its egalitarian scoring and bold discourses.

Nearly devoid of vibrato and playing with period-performance sensibilities, the Daedalus set each phrase in relief, moving from soft to loud at a whim, breathing and sighing as the music dictated.

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Moving ahead 156 years, they catapulted into Bartok's String Quartet No. 4 with wide-eyed exaggeration. Bartok's six quartets, which have become standard fare for many foursomes, often get standard readings as well. The Daedalus wasn't about to let that happen.

Its gutsy sound and attention to details contributed to an animated, nearly orchestral performance. The musicians drew from a storehouse of timbres, from the ghostly, muted sounds of the second movement to the pulsating pizzicato of the fourth and driving rhythms of the finale. Cellist Raman Ramakrishnan added a passionate solo in the slow third movement.

Violinist Min-Young Kim and her violinist brother, Kyu, switched places as first violin for Beethoven's Quartet, Op. 59, No. 2, further flaunting the ensemble's versatility. The Molto adagio overflowed with pathos; the Allegretto bristled with energy. The Presto finale moved at a torrid pace, punctuated with huge accents and a majestic final theme statement.

The Birmingham Chamber Music Society sponsored the event.

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Robert Besen, Director | 508 First Street, Suite 4W | Hoboken NJ 07030-7823 |
T 201-386-8565 | F 201-386-8564 | Robert@BesenArts.com | www.BesenArts.com

The New York Times

Sunday, April 25, 2010

A Concert With Students and Their Virtuoso Mentors

By KARIN LIPSON

“**T**HINK of the lanes of a highway,” Min-Young Kim told a class at Bay Shore Middle School recently. “You want to control which lane you’re in, or you start bumping into things.”

Good advice, though Ms. Kim wasn’t teaching driver’s ed. A classical violinist and one-fourth of the Daedalus Quartet, she was actually explaining proper bowing technique to the school’s young string instrumentalists.

With her were the quartet’s other members: Kyu-Young Kim, who is Ms. Kim’s brother and a fellow violinist; Raman Ramakrishnan, the group’s cellist; and Jessica Thompson, the violist. Their day in Bay Shore, which started at the high school and continued at the middle school, was part of a residency program that has taken them to various Suffolk County school districts and communities since 2007. With about three days a year in each district, they have been coaching classes, giving performances and otherwise spreading the gospel of chamber music.

On May 2, the three years will conclude, appropriately, with a concert, at the YMCA Boulton Center for the Performing Arts in Bay Shore. The Daedalus Quartet will perform Mozart and Hindemith with students from Bay Shore, North Babylon and Bellport High Schools, while members of the Boys and Girls Club of the Bellport Area, with whom they have also been working, will demonstrate an improvisational game that should result in an on-the-spot composition. On its own, the quartet will play works by Beethoven, Stravinsky and the contemporary composer Lawrence Dillon.

The presence of the Bellport contingent has special meaning for the quartet: The Kims — Kyu is 37 and Min is 40 — and Mr. Ramakrishnan, 33, grew up in East Patchogue and are graduates of Bellport High School. (Ms. Thompson, 32, is from Minnesota.)

The quartet had been paying an annual one-day visit to Bellport schools since 2002, but after a while, that felt inadequate, Mr. Kim said. “It was a limited amount of time. It just didn’t feel like we could get under the surface,” he said.



“This is the time when a lot of them are going to decide whether to take music seriously,” Mr. Ramakrishnan said, referring not only to potential musicians but also to a range of music activities. (Mr. Ramakrishnan’s name may be familiar for reasons beyond his own accomplishments; his father, Venkatraman, was a winner of the 2009 Nobel Prize in chemistry.)

Hoping to expand its activities on Long Island, the quartet turned in 2006 to Chamber Music America, a nonprofit organization whose services include residency grants.

The quartet won a \$45,000 grant, over three years; the first year’s \$15,000 award was designated the Guarneri String Quartet Residency — a prize given annually to a single string quartet “of the highest artistic quality,” said Margaret M. Lioi, the chief executive of Chamber Music America.

Grants from Chamber Music America cover 50 percent to 80 percent of residency costs, with community organizations making up the difference. The supporters this year include the Islip Arts Council, which is presenting the May 2 concert, the South Country Education Foundation, the North Babylon School District and the Bay Shore Schools Arts Education Fund.

The opportunity to interact with musicians of this caliber “was a golden moment,” said Susan Barbash, the chairwoman of the Bay Shore fund.

While a three-day residency is unlikely to produce a crop of professional musicians in a district that is economically “very, very mixed,” Ms. Barbash said, “it might mean that in college they’ll go see a chamber music concert.”

“And frankly,” she added, “not all affluent kids get exposed to classical music either.”

Ali and Maggie Colbert, sisters from Brightwaters who play viola, are two students who found the sessions eye-opening. For Maggie, 13, an eighth grader in the Bay Shore Middle School, it meant not thinking about lunch and other distractions during orchestra practice. “Having that full hour with them showed us what magic comes when you actually focus on the music,” she said.

For Ali, a 15-year-old sophomore at Bay Shore High School, it meant being reminded, again and again, not to slouch in her seat. “I definitely noticed that when I sat correctly my sound was better,” she said. She hopes to bring her new awareness of posture to the May 2 concert, where she plans to perform.

The event may in some ways be bittersweet for the quartet. It’s the next-to-last concert with Mr. Kim, who will be leaving the group later in May. And of course, it’s the end of the residency.

The idea has been “to plant seeds,” said Min-Young Kim, “and hopefully water the seed a little bit over the three years.”

The New York Times

Sunday, October 6, 2002

Youthful Quartet Is a High School Reunion

By BARBARA DELATINER

THE DAEDALUS Quartet, a chamber ensemble that has scored impressively in string quartet competitions, has been around for only two years, but its origins can be traced to 1988 and a music practice room at Bellport High School.

That was where Min-Young Kim and her brother, Kyu-Young Kim, met Raman Ramakrishnan.

The Kims, both violinists, were members of the school's Baroque Ensemble, which was in need of a cellist. When another violinist, Tania Ramakrishnan, suggested that her brother, Raman, then a sixth grader, could do the job, the ensemble members agreed to give him a chance despite his young age.

Mr. Ramakrishnan auditioned and won a seat in the group, beginning a relationship that eventually blossomed into the Daedalus Quartet.

Despite the difference in their ages — Ms. Kim is 32, Mr. Kim 30, and Mr. Ramakrishnan is 26 — the three had more in common than music. They were children of Asian professionals who expected them to excel at everything they did — and become doctors or scientists like their parents.

Music entered the scene when "my mother decided I had musical talent because of how I reacted to the music on her TV soap operas," said Ms. Kim during a phone conversation from St. Paul, where the quartet had gathered to prepare for its coming tour.

"So at 8 I started studying the violin at a Suzuki school, and of course, Kyu had to take lessons, too," she continued. "Pretty soon, Dad was showing us off, having us play Bach's Double Concerto at medical functions."

They eventually attended the Juilliard pre-college program. But when the Kims' parents realized they were serious about careers in music, they were concerned.

"My mom wanted us to play, but she felt we got carried away," said Ms. Kim, who earned an undergraduate degree at Harvard and a master's degree from Juilliard.

"But they were supportive," said Mr. Kim, who attended the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, and earned undergraduate and graduate degrees from Juilliard. "Especially



after we had a little success and they were relieved that we weren't starving."

Mr. Ramakrishnan's decision to concentrate on music came later. While he knew that music was "a major part of my life," he said, his bachelor's degree from Harvard is in physics. (Tania, his sister, became a physician.) His master's degree, though, is from Juilliard.

Over the years, the musicians went their separate ways. Based in Manhattan with her husband, Michael Lampson, a biologist at Rockefeller University and their 3-month-old daughter, Hana, Ms. Kim, a winner of the Artists International Competition, toured with Musicians from Marlboro, the American Chamber Players and the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. She is on the faculties of Columbia University and the School for Strings in New York.

Before joining the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, where he is a soloist and associate concertmaster, Mr. Kim, who lives in St. Paul with his wife, Pitnarry Shin, a cellist, had been a member of the Pacifica Quartet, which won a Naumburg Chamber Music Award.

Mr. Ramakrishnan, a New York resident, has performed with ensembles that include the

Metamorphosen Chamber Orchestra, the International Sejong Soloists and Proteus 5.

But the world of music is relatively small, and the three met repeatedly at competitions and music festivals.

In 2000 at the Marlboro Festival, after meeting Jessica Thompson, a violist and Minneapolis native who like Mr. Ramakrishnan is touring with Musicians from Marlboro this season, the trio decided to become a quartet. "It was a pretty easy fit," Mr. Kim said.

After winning the grand prize at the Banff International String Quartet Competition, the group found management and this year will give more than 20 concerts throughout the United States, Canada and Japan.

But why the name Daedalus? Why not the Bellport Quartet?

"We didn't want to be associated with a specific place," Mr. Kim said.

The name Daedalus comes from Greek mythology. "He was the father of Icarus, you know, an inventor and artist, a pioneer in flight," Mr. Kim said. "That's what we want to do. Make music that will enable us and our audiences to fly higher."

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Robert Besen, Director | 508 First Street, Suite 4W | Hoboken NJ 07030-7823 |
T 201-386-8565 | F 201-386-8564 | Robert@BesenArts.com | www.BesenArts.com