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Shanghai Quartet

Office of Arts + Cultural Programming

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Competition. Of Bartok's six quartets, the third is the most concentrated in thematic material and structure. In this quartet, Bartók subjected folk-style themes and motifs to a technique he called “Allegro vivace.” In the first movement, there is not resolved by movement's end. Another distinct mood finally manifests itself toward the end of the second part. Where the opening Moderato is perhaps the most sonically ravishing music Bartók ever wrote, concluding Lento is the strongest and most desolate. The instruments muse fragments of themes, more intervallic than melodic. The material slowly coalesces into longer shapes as the movement proceeds but cannot sustain any lengthy argument; after a brief but intense chordal climax, there are a few more, then two quiet pizzicato notes from the cello draw the curtain.

**String Quartet no. 4**

The second quartet is in three movements, an Allegro molto capriccioso framed by two slow movements. The second movement presents in rapid succession the first and fifth movements in a single short, almost seamless song. The second part is more polytonal and thus more abstract. The third is rhythmically irregular with many double-stops. The development is introduced by a quiet, sinuously descending bone-chilling minorUnits, which a simple tune is sounded alternately by strings in a tremolando counter-melody. The development section, marked Pizzicato, uses a variety of glissandi, which recur like question marks. A dark, nocturnal mood prevails through the entire work.

The sad introductory theme is played first by solo viola, whose last notes are the germ for an Unisono motivic theme. The movement presents in rapid succession three-note phrases that will return later. The first theme is in quick, chromatically structured form, and the second begins with a phrase that resembles a melody with a prominent “Scotch snap” rhythm. The third theme dominates the development, and the second movement ends simply with a reprise of the first theme, now detached and musy.

The second theme introduces the second movement, and the celli state the melody accompanied by upper strings in a tremolando counter-melody. The third theme of the second movement is marked Pizzicato; it is broader than the “Scotch snap” rhythm. The appearance of the second theme is impressive: the many 1927 Musical Quarterly, p. 104, no. 2. The second theme rhapsodizes on a variation of the second theme, accompanied by high trills from the violins and harp; strumming on the viola. The return of the march is bizarre, with extremely high octaves, creating an hallucinatory, hallucinatory effect.

For its third appearance, the “mesto” ritornello is in three-part harmony; it leads to a rude brusquely with vulgar rhythm and a shrill sound. The second movement is arranged in Béla Bartók's characteristic “arch” form. The composer pointed out that the five movements lead to an arch formation according to the template of sonata form.

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About the Shanghai quartet

Renowned for its passionate musicianship and commitment to new music, the Shanghai Quartet has become one of the world’s foremost chamber ensembles. Its elegant style melds the delicacy of Eastern music with the grandeur of Western repertoire, allowing it to traverse musical genres from masterpieces of Western music to cutting-edge contemporary works.

Formed as the Shanghai Quartet in 1983, the Shanghai Quartet has worked with the world’s most distinguished artists and regularly perform in the United States, Europe, Latin America, and Asia, from the Beijing International Music Festival to Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. The Shanghai Quartet has performed alongside many noted artists, they have performed with the Toyo, Julliard, and Guarnieri Quartets, Yo-Yo Ma, Itzhak Perlman, The Cleveland Orchestra, The Chicago Symphony, and the long history of championing new music and has premiered works by composers such as Zhour Long, Yehudi Menuhin, Knzyrzd Panderlecky, Chen Yi, Bright Sheng, and Zhou Long. Their extensive discography includes many of the most significant works, which are the complete Beethoven String Quartets on Camerata.

The Shanghai Quartet currently serves as Quartet-in-Residence at Montclair State University and is Quartet-in-Residence with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra. They are visiting artists at many music festivals and are the visiting ensemble for the National Symphony and the Central Conservatory in Beijing.
Peak Performances presents:

Quartet-in-Residence

Shanghai Quartet

The Complete String Quartets of Béla Bartók

featuring

Weigang Li, violin
Yi-Wen Jiang, violin
Honggang Li, viola
Nicholas Tzavaras, cello

Since 2002 the Shanghai Quartet has been “Quartet-in-Residence” at Montclair State University. The Shanghai Quartet proudly coaches chamber music, teaches individual lessons, and acts as coordinator of the strings department of the John J. Cali School of Music.

In consideration of both audience and performers, please turn off all electronic devices. The taking of photographs or videos and the use of recording equipment are not permitted. No food or drink is permitted inside the theater.

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String Quartet no. 1
Lento
Allegretto
Allegro vivace

String Quartet no. 3
Prima parte: Moderato
Seconda parte: Allegro
Recapitulation della prima parte: Moderato
Coda: Allegro molto

~~Intermission~~

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes, including one 15-minute intermission.

String Quartet no. 2
Moderato
Allegro molto capriccioso
Lento
Allegretto pizzicato
Allegro molto

~~Intermission~~

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes, including one 15-minute intermission.

String Quartet no. 4
Allegro
Prestissimo, con sordino
Non troppo lento
Allegretto pizzicato
Allegro molto

~~Intermission~~

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes, including one 15-minute intermission.

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Credit: Courtesy of Shanghai Quartet

Shanghai Quartet
The Complete String Quartets of Béla Bartók
May 5, 2012 • 4:00pm and 8:00pm
Alexander Kasser Theater
Montclair State University

Peaks