

#15 - Sunday, September 2, 2012

The Shanghai String Quartet: Weigang Li, Violin; Honggang Li, Viola; Yi-Wen Jiang, Violin; Nicholas Tzavaras, Cello; Assisting Artist: Haochen Zhang, Piano

THE ARTISTS

THE SHANGHAI STRING QUARTET

"The whole performance was superb" -The New York Times

"A wonderfully ferocious and illuminating performance." - Washington Post

Renowned for its passionate musicality, impressive technique and multicultural innovations, the Shanghai Quartet has become one of the world's foremost chamber ensembles. Its elegant style melds the delicacy of Eastern music with the emotional breadth of Western repertoire, allowing it to traverse musical genres from traditional Chinese folk music and masterpieces of Western music to cutting-edge contemporary works.

Formed at the Shanghai Conservatory in 1983, the Shanghai Quartet has worked with the world's most distinguished artists and regularly tours the major music centers of Europe, North America and Asia. Recent performances have ranged from the International Music Festivals of Seoul and Beijing to the Festival Pablo Casals in France, Beethoven Festival in Poland, Yerevan Festival in Armenia and Cartagena International Music Festival in Colombia, as well as numerous concerts in all regions of North America. The Quartet has appeared at Carnegie Hall in chamber performances and with orchestra; in 2006 they gave the premiere of Takuma Itoh's Concerto for Quartet and Orchestra in Carnegie Hall's Isaac Stern Auditorium. Among innumerable collaborations with noted artists, they have performed with the Tokyo, Juilliard and Guarneri Quartets, Yo-Yo Ma, Lynn Harrell, Menahem Pressler, Peter Serkin, Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Wu Man and Chanticleer. They have been regular performers at many of the leading chamber music festivals in North America including Santa Fe and Ottawa.

The Quartet has a long history of championing new music and juxtaposing Eastern and Western sounds. Important commissions and premieres include works by Lowell Lieberman, Sebastian Currier, Lei Liang, Marc Neikrug and Zhou Long. The 2011/12 season brought premieres of Bright Sheng's Dance Capriccio for Piano Quintet with pianist Peter Serkin and Sweet Suite, a piano quintet by Stephen Prutsman. Dan Welcher's Museon Polemos for double quartet will premiere in September 2012 with the Miro Quartet at the University of Texas at Austin. A concerto for string quartet and symphony orchestra by Korean composer by Jeajoon Ryu will premiere in 2013 as part of the quartet's 30th Anniversary season.

The Shanghai Quartet's 25th anniversary season in 2008-9 featured world premieres from the three continents that comprise its artistic and cultural worlds: Penderecki's String Quartet No. 3: Leaves From an Unwritten Diary, Chen Yi's From the Path of Beauty, jazz pianist Dick Hyman's String Quartet, and String Quartet No. 2 by Vivian Fung. Penderecki's String Quartet was premiered at a special concert in Poland honoring the composer's 75th birthday, followed by U.S. Premieres at Montclair State University and the Modlin Center, University of Richmond and numerous subsequent performances worldwide. They will perform it again in Poland for the composer's 80th Birthday celebration in November 2013. Chen Yi's From the Path of Beauty, commissioned with Chanticleer, was premiered in San Francisco, with performances at Tanglewood and Ravinia and in Beijing and Shanghai.

The Shanghai Quartet has an extensive discography of more than 30 recordings. Releases range from the Schumann and Dvorak piano quintets with Rudolf Buchbinder to Zhou Long's Poems from Tang for string quartet and orchestra with the Singapore Symphony (BIS). Delos released the Quartet's most popular disc, Chinasong, in 2003: a collection of Chinese folk songs arranged by Yi-Wen Jiang reflecting on his childhood memories of the Cultural Revolution in China. The Shanghai Quartet recorded the complete Beethoven String Quartets for Camerata, a seven-disc project that was completed in 2009.

The Quartet has participated in a diverse and interesting array of media projects, from a cameo appearance playing Bartok's String Quartet No. 4 in Woody Allen's film Melinda and Melinda to PBS television's Great Performances series. Violinist Weigang Li appeared in the documentary From Mao to Mozart: Isaac Stern in China, and the family of cellist Nicholas Tzavaras was the subject of the 1999 film Music of the Heart, starring Meryl Streep.

The Shanghai Quartet currently serves as Quartet-in-Residence at Montclair State University in New Jersey, Ensemble-in-Residence with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, and visiting guest professors of the Shanghai Conservatory and the Central Conservatory in Beijing.

HAOCHEN ZHANG

Nancy Lee and Perry R. Bass Gold Medalist
Thirteenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition.

Since his gold medal win at the Thirteenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in 2009, 22-year-old Chinese pianist Haochen Zhang has captivated audiences in the United States and abroad with a rare combination of deep musical sensitivity and virtuosity. Earning praise for "dazzling virtuosity where wanted and astonishing sophistication elsewhere" (Dallas Morning

News), he has also been lauded for "a combination of enchanting, sensitive lyricism, and hypnotizing forcefulness... a phenomenon encountered very rarely" (The Jerusalem Post).

An insightful programmer and passionate musician, Mr. Zhang continues to cultivate his reputation through major performances and debuts every year. In the 2012-13 season, Mr. Zhang will make his debut appearance with the Singapore Symphony; tour with the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Lorin Maazel; join the Shanghai Quartet at Music Mountain and Texas Performing Arts; and make recital and concerto appearances across Europe, Asia, and the United States.

In past seasons, Mr. Zhang has performed with The Philadelphia, San Francisco Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, Colorado Symphony, Pacific Symphony, Israel Philharmonic, Vienna Chamber, and Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestras, among others. An enthusiastic chamber musician, he has performed with the Tokyo, Takács, and Shanghai String Quartets. He has performed as recitalist in the music capitals of the world including Boston, Philadelphia, Paris, Berlin, Beijing, Tokyo, and Tel Aviv, among other cities in the United States, Europe, and Asia. Festival appearances have included the Santa Fe Chamber Music, Istanbul Music, Ravello, and La Roque d'Anthéron International Piano Festivals.

Recordings of Mr. Zhang's Cliburn Competition performances of Stravinsky's *Trois mouvements de Pétrouchka*; Chopin's *Twenty-Four Preludes, Op. 28*; Mason Bates's *White Lies for Lomax*;

and Liszt's *Spanish Rhapsody* were released to critical acclaim by *harmonia mundi usa* in 2009. He is also featured in Peter Rosen's award-winning documentary chronicling the 2009 Cliburn Competition, *A Surprise in Texas*.

Mr. Zhang graduated from the Curtis Institute of Music in May 2012. He previously trained at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and the Shenzhen Art School, where he was admitted at the age of 11 to study with Professor Dan Zhaoyi. Born in Shanghai, Mr. Zhang now makes his home in Philadelphia.

PROGRAM

HAOCHEN ZHANG PLAYS FOUR CHOPIN MAZURKAS Frederick Chopin (1810-1849)
-OPUS 17 # 4 (1834)
-OPUS 24 # 2 (1836)
-OPUS 59 # 2 (1846)
-OPUS 59 # 3 (1846)

STRING QUARTET IN B FLAT MAJOR, K.589 (1790) Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)
-Allegro
-Larghetto
-Menuetto Moderato
-Allegro assai

PIANO QUINTET IN A MAJOR, OPUS 81 (1887) Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904)
-Allegro, ma non tanto
-Dumka: Andante con moto; Vivace
-Scherzo (Furiant): Molto vivace
-Finale: Allegro

PROGRAM NOTES

HAOCHEN ZHANG PLAYS CHOPIN
Frederic Chopin (1810-1849)

Chopin combined a gift for melody, an adventurous harmonic sense, an intuitive and inventive understanding of formal design and a brilliant piano technique in composing a large body of piano music. One of the leading 19th century composers he began a career as a pianist. He abandoned concert life early, but his music represents the quintessence of the Romantic piano tradition and embodies more fully than any other composer's the expressive and technical characteristics of his instrument. . . . Arthur Hedley, Maurice J. E. Brown: The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 1980.

STRING QUARTET IN B FLAT MAJOR, K. 589
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

In April of 1789, Mozart's friend and patron, Prince Carl Lichnowsky, invited Mozart to accompany him on a trip to Berlin. At the end of the trip, after stops in Dresden and Leipzig, Mozart arrived in Berlin where he performed at the Royal Palace for the King and Queen of Prussia. As a result of this performance, the king commissioned Mozart to compose six easy piano sonatas for his daughter and six string quartets for himself. The king was an excellent cellist and had recently employed Boccherini as his court composer.

The first of the quartets for the king was completed in June 1789. The second, the B-flat, was completed in May of 1790 and Mozart invited his friend, Michael Puchberg (who was helping the composer financially) to hear the first two quartets in a performance at the Mozart home.

The B-flat Quartet begins with melodic material that is shared equally by the upper and lower instruments. The cello announces the second theme. Imitation plays an important role in the development section, including a fugal treatment of the first theme. The cello is given the main theme of the slow movement, while the violin is given secondary material. Again, there is much contrapuntal elaboration. The most interesting section of the Menuetto is its Trio that is quite lengthy and highly chromatic. The

Finale is a rondo that, again, is filled with polyphonic development. - Music Mountain Program Notes, September 11, 1988 by Albert C. Sly.

It was first played at Music Mountain on August 30, 1931 by the Gordon String Quartet, Music Mountain's founding quartet.

PIANO QUINTET IN A MAJOR, OPUS 81
Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904)

Antonin Dvorák was a happy man in 1887. He had risen to international renown as a composer, and thanks to the influence of his champion and friend Johannes Brahms, had developed a very fruitful relationship with the Berlin music publisher Simrock. Experiencing financial success for the first time in his life, he had recently bought a country house some forty miles outside Prague where he spent his summers relaxing, composing, and indulging in his hobby of raising pigeons. It was here that Dvorák, early in 1887, attempted to revise an early piano quintet (his Op. 5, written in 1872) for publication. Dissatisfied with his efforts, however, he decided to start afresh. The result was the Piano Quintet in A Major (the same key as the earlier work), Op. 81 certainly one of the three greatest works for that combination (along with the quintets of Schumann and Brahms) as well as one of Dvorák's finest compositions. This piece has all the great "Dvorákian" hallmarks: soaring melodies, a strong rhythmic character, the full range of expression from soulful melancholy to bubbling exuberance, and an exquisite sense of pacing.

The Allegro, ma non tanto opens with a sweetly expressive cello solo, which darkens just before the other strings enter. The mood swings back and forth between ferocious and triumphant, agitated and peaceful, as the harmonies change from major to minor and back throughout the movement.

The second movement is an Andante con moto with the subtitle "Dumka" which is a pensive, melancholy style of Slavic song. The viola brings the lament low on the C string while the piano plays a high countermelody. A contrasting second section is somewhat more flowing and features sensuous cross-rhythms (perhaps a little tango-like), and a third is a Vivace based on the piano's opening material.

The whirling Scherzo is inspired by the Furiant, a lively Bohemian dance. In the trio section, the Scherzo theme is slowed down and combined with a simple chorale in a kind of magical suspended animation. The Finale is an exuberant Rondo with tremendous rhythmic energy and a singularly satisfying ending.

This piece was first played at Music Mountain by the Gordon String Quartet, Music Mountain's founding quartet, and Felix Fox, piano, on July 26, 1931. Ruth Laredo, Music Mountain's great friend and supporter, played this Quintet here no less than 5 times.

The broadcasts of these Music Mountain concerts throughout the United States and worldwide on the Internet are underwritten by Edward R. Hamilton Bookseller Company, Falls Village, CT www.HamiltonBook.com