

The Firm presents

THE LANGREIN STUDING CHARTER

Michael Milton, Violin

Hilary Bruer, Violon

Katie McGowan, Viola

David Sharp, Cello

Programme

Prologue

Andantino

Two Caprices for Violin and Viola

Concerto for Violin and Viola

Violin Solo: Through the stars, with dancers

Concerto for Cello

Three Caprices for two Violins and Viola

Concerto for Violin and Viola

Concerto for Cello

Concerto for Cello

Four Caprices for String Quartet

the firm 2004

CONCERT NINE

The Firm presents

THE LANGBEIN STRING QUARTET

Michael Milton Violin
Hilary Bruer Violin
Rosie McGowran Viola
David Sharp Cello

Programme

Fourteen	David Kotlowy
Two Canons for Violin and Viola	Ludwig van Beethoven
A greeting through the stars...with dances	Quentin SD Grant
Three Canons for two Violins and Viola	Ludwig van Beethoven
Divertimento No.2	Raymond Chapman Smith
Four Canons for String Quartet	Ludwig van Beethoven

"Christmas? Should not Beethoven's birthday be celebrated the same way?"

Anton Webern to Alban Berg, December, 1911.

Please join the performers and composers after the concert for complimentary (free) drinks and torte by Gabriele.

Pilgrim Church provides wheelchair access via the rear (northern) doors.

Toilets can be accessed through the door on the left of the performance area.

Fourteen

David Kotlowy

Adagio, molto espressivo

Largo, con alcuna licenza

The inspiration for this composition is Beethoven's Op. 131, his fourteenth string quartet.

First, I had to answer the question, "How does one approach this esteemed composer?"

John Cage offers a pointer in his poem, *Composition in Retrospect*;

the past must be Invented / the future Must be / revIsed / doing
boTh / mAKes / whaT / the present Is / discOvery / Never
stops

Yes, but what about Beethoven, the human being behind the gruff, frowning portrait?

Composers are immensely concerned with how our dots and scratchings on the page sound; that they convey our inspiration, and that the piece 'works'. I wonder how the deaf Ludwig dealt with these concerns, but am grateful for his selflessness, his generosity in choosing to compose profound music that only the ears of other's could hear.

In the first movement, *Adagio, molto espressivo*, phrases are fragmented and permeated in a somewhat kaleidoscopic manner. In the second movement, a melodic sequence is explored through horizontal adjacencies.

Various Canons

Ludwig van Beethoven

In the last five years of his life, Beethoven made a wilful disavowal of anything obviously contemporary. Appalled by the fashionable, bourgeois Viennese obsession with the low-brow populism of Italian opera he focused all his creative attention, with some degree of polemical intent, on that most elite of musical media, the string quartet.

His only other musical statements of this period are the little known miscellany of canons - incidental vocal pieces to sarcastic, ironic and sometimes tender texts - fond and mocking greetings to friends, publishers, servants and musicians that were never intended for performance but certainly broaden our view of Beethoven's humour and humanity.

In arranging these little pieces for strings, I have had to transpose a number of them to suitable keys and find a fitting tempo for their textual content, for the rest they are as Beethoven left them.

Raymond Chapman Smith

Two Canons for Violin and Viola (1823)

Ludwig van Beethoven

1. Te solo adoro, I
2. Te solo adoro, II

"I adore only you, and think of you always. You are the fount of life and truth".

We do not know for whom these gentle canons were intended but they seemed to sit well with our connubial Langbeiners, Michael and Rosie.

A greeting through the stars - with dances

Quentin SD Grant

I bear equally with you
the black, permanent separation.
Why are you crying? Rather give me your hand,
promise to come again in a dream.
You and I are a mountain of grief...
You and I will never meet again on this earth.
If only you could send me at midnight
a greeting through the stars.

from The Sweetbriar Flowers: from a burnt notebook,

Anna Akhmatova

Three Canons for 2 Violins and Viola

Ludwig van Beethoven

1. Ich bitt' dich (1822)
2. Kühl, nicht lau (Sept. 3, 1825)
3. Ewig dein (1823)

"Ich bitt' dich" (I beg you), is "dedicated" with mock solemnity to "The Illustrious Maestro Hauschka by his servant, Ludwig van Beethoven." Hauschka was a prominent member of that beleaguered host of orchestral players who also acted as Beethoven's much abused but often devoted army of copyists. The full text of this canon says: "I beg you, I beg you, just write me out the E flat scale!"

"Kühl, nicht lau" is the full text of this scholarly canon addressed to Beethoven's composer companion, Friedrich Kuhlau - "Cool, not luke-warm."

"Ewig dein" (Your's always...) is Beethoven's somewhat unique way of concluding a witty letter to his long-time friend, Baron Pasqualati.

Divertimento No.2

Raymond Chapman Smith

1. Andante cantabile
2. Vivace, ma non troppo
3. Adagio sostenuto
4. Vivace
5. Andante molto moderato

In September 2003, the following note accompanied the first performance of my previous Divertimento for String Quartet:

There are moments when a little tender diversion is necessary and hopefully efficacious. Especially so at a time, and in a country, ruled over by oafish, bullying, bellicose, mendacious, meanspirited, opportunistic, witless thugs....

It would seem that little has changed.

Four Canons for String Quartet

Ludwig van Beethoven

1. Schwenke (Nov.17, 1824)
2. Doktor, Doktor! (May.13, 1825)
3. Happy New Year! (1825)
4. Es muss sein! (Spring 1826)

"Schwenke" is another play on the name of a friend. In the text, Carl Schwenke becomes 'Schwänker' - a farce or practical joke.

"Es muss sein!" (It must be!) is Beethoven's last and probably most celebrated canon as it provides the essential thematic material for the closing movement of his final String Quartet Op.135. In that great work, under the heading "A Difficult Decision", the canon's affirmative text is preceded by the question, "Muss es sein? (Must it be?)

Oceans of musicological ink have been spilt over the seeming profundities of these allusions but it just might be that Ludwig van was having a lend of us all - especially when one considers that the full text of the canon is nothing more than one of Beethoven's typical demands for rapid payment from a recalcitrant publisher - "It must be! Yes, yes, yes, yes, It must be! Bring me the purse and bring it soon! It must be!"

"Beethoven was sometimes extremely irate. One day we were dining at the Swan; the waiter brought him the wrong dish. Beethoven had scarcely said a few choice words about it, which the waiter had answered perhaps not quite so politely as he should have, when Beethoven laid hold of the dish (it was a kind of roast-beef with lots of sauce) and flung it at the waiter's head. The poor fellow still had on his arm a large number of plates containing various dishes (a dexterity which Viennese waiters possess to a high degree) and could do nothing to help himself; the sauce ran down his face. He and Beethoven shouted and cursed at each other, while all the other guests laughed out loud. Finally Beethoven began laughing at the sight of the waiter, who lapped up with his tongue the sauce that was running down his face, tried to go on hurling insults, but had to go on lapping instead, pulling the most ludicrous faces the while, a picture worthy of Hogarth ...

Beethoven hardly knew what money was, which often gave rise to unpleasant scenes because, mistrustful in general, he often believed he had been cheated when in fact he had not. Quickly aroused, he bluntly called people cheats, which in the case of waiters had to be made good by a tip. Ultimately his peculiarities and his absent-mindedness became so well known at the inns he most frequented, that everything was tolerated, even when he left without paying."

Ferdinand Ries on Beethoven's irritability

"It has sometimes been said abroad that Beethoven was neglected and oppressed in Vienna. The truth is that he enjoyed, even as a young man, all possible support and an encouragement and respect on the part of our high nobility which has rarely been the portion of a young composer.

Later too, when he had alienated many of his well-wishers by his hypochondria, no difficulties were ever put in the way of his often conspicuous idiosyncrasies; this accounts for his preference for Vienna. And it is doubtful whether he would have remained so unchallenged in any other country. It is true that, as an artist, he had to contend with intrigues, but the public had no part in them. He was always esteemed and stared at in wonder as an exceptional being, and his greatness was also sensed by his opponents, who did not understand him. He could have been well off, but he was not made for domestic order."

Carl Czerny on Beethoven's reputation in Vienna

"As regards our composer's daily schedule, he customarily arose at dawn at every season of the year and went at once to his writing-desk. He worked until 2 or 3 o'clock, at which hour he ate his dinner. During his working hours he would usually go out of doors once or twice, where he worked while walking. Such excursions seldom lasted more than an hour and resembled the flights of bees to gather honey; they took place whatever the season, and neither heat nor cold were heeded. The afternoons were kept for regular walks; later he would stop in a favourite tavern to peruse the daily newspapers, if this need had not already been satisfied at a coffee-house. When the English parliament was in session, however, the *Allgemeine Zeitung* was regularly read at home for its reports and debates. It will easily be understood that our amateur politician was on the side of the opposition; this would have been so even if he had not been partial to Lord Brougham, Hume and other opposition orators. Beethoven always stayed home on winter's evenings, which were devoted to serious reading. Only rarely did one see him engaged in writing music in the evening, because this was too tiring to his eyes. This might not have been the case when he was younger. It is certain, however, that at no time did he use the evening hours for composition. He went to bed at 10 o'clock at the latest."

Anton Schindler on Beethoven's daily schedule

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