

Shanghai Quartet

November 8, 2009
Temple Beth El, San Antonio, Texas

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

Program

String Quartet in D Major, Op. 20, No. 4, Hob. III:34
Allegro di molto
Un poco adagio e affettuoso
Menuet allaq Zingarese: Allegretto
Presto e scherzando

Joseph Haydn
(1732-1809)

Chinasong – Chinese folk songs arranged for string quartet
Yao Dance
Shepherd's Song
Harvest Celebration

Yi-Wen Jiang
(1963 -)

String Quartet No. 3 - Leaves from an Unwritten Diary
Krzysztof Penderecki
(1933 -)

*String Quartet No. 3 by Krzysztof Penderecki was commissioned by
Peak Performances, Montclair State University, New Jersey, lead commissioner,
Modlin Center for the Arts, University of Richmond, Virginia
For the Shanghai Quartet in honor of their 25th Anniversary and
Maestro Penderecki's 75th Birthday
The Shanghai Quartet expresses its gratitude to Montclair State University for generously
underwriting the major portion of this Commission*

Intermission

String Quartet in G minor. Op. 10
Animé et très décidé
Assez vif et bien rythmé
Andantino, doucement expressif
Très modéré - En animant peu à peu - Très mouvementé et avec passion

Claude Debussy
(1862-1918)

PROGRAM NOTES

Haydn, String Quartet in D Major, Op. 20, No. 4

With Op. 20, the historical development of Haydn's quartets reaches its goal; and further progress is not progress in any historical sense, but simply the difference between one masterpiece and the next. . . .

(Donald Francis Tovey)

Tovey's words suggest that Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) reached both an artistic and technical pinnacle with the six quartets of Op. 20. Not only are these works of 1772 among his greatest artistic achievements up to that time (along with certain symphonies), but here Haydn also achieved the technical triumph of the true string quartet texture. Still dominated by the first violin, the cello nevertheless has been rescued from its former completely subordinate role and even achieves a few spotlighted passages in these quartets. Haydn also made strides in form and balance here, strengthening his first movements and adding more weight and interest to the finales.

The sober opening of the D Major Quartet gives no hint of the sparkling treasures ahead. Once the exposition reaches its secondary key, it fairly explodes with rhythmic exuberance. Though there is no real second theme here, Haydn compensates by introducing a new, lyrical theme in the development section.

In the second movement, the composer turns to D minor for a set of variations on a meditative theme. The second variation is noteworthy for its featured cello part. The fourth variation is actually a reprise of the theme, extended to form a coda colored with pathos.

The last two movements are notable examples of Haydn's use of folk music idiom, in this case Hungarian. The minuet, Allegretto alla zingarese (Allegretto in the style of Gypsy music), contains such amusing rhythmic offsets as to suggest duple rather than standard triple meter. The Trio section again emphasizes the cello.

The finale, full of wit and high spirits, was "the most hilarious he has yet written" (Rosemary Hughes). The form is again sonata, but there is a dizzying wealth of motivic ideas. Haydn also has the last laugh — heard in the final moments.

Jiang, Chinasong

Chamber music is no stranger to folk music, especially among 20th-21st century composers. The folkloric legacy of Dvořák, Smetana, Rimsky-Korsakov and others has been received and amplified by composers such as Janáček, Bartók, Vaughan Williams, Ives, Copland, and many others. In our concerts, we are most accustomed to hearing the music of composers like these, that is, those from the "Western" culture. Until recently, we have not been much exposed to the folklore of Asia, although it seems that repertoire was undergoing a similar

metamorphosis in the concert hall. Now, in a spectacular suite of Chinese folk songs and dances, Yi-Wen Jiang (violinist with the Shanghai Quartet) has arranged a work that introduces us to that lesser-known folk idiom. About Chinasong, Jiang writes:

Some years ago I developed the idea of arranging a few sets of Chinese folk songs along with popular music by various Chinese composers. I grew up with many of these pieces, and played some as solo works for violin and piano during the difficult days of the Cultural Revolution.

These works are short and diverse, some based upon traditional folk songs, and others composed recently. Although their musical style is not structured or sophisticated, the pieces seem to be accessible and enjoyable for a general audience. The themes speak to the individual listener because they are expressive, direct and easily absorbed and understood. I asked myself: "Why not arrange them for string quartet, which is the form I love the most? That way I can play beautiful Chinese music again and also bring it to a wider audience with my group, the Shanghai Quartet."

I sifted through many songs and began arranging them for string quartet or small ensemble. Some of the folk songs are usually performed by a singer, violin, or piano; or by Chinese traditional instruments such as the Pipa, Erhu or Suona (a double-reed wind instrument, almost like an oboe), and Bamboo flute. But, I didn't want simply to imitate traditional Chinese instruments when we play those pieces. I tried to make the harmony and the structure closer to traditional western styles. The idea is that Chinese music can be played on western instruments and thus can be enjoyed internationally.

The Shanghai Quartet has recorded Chinasong on the Delos label.

Penderecki, String Quartet No. 3

The String Quartet No. 3 was written for the Shanghai Quartet, and received its premiere at the Krzysztof Penderecki Festival in Warsaw on November 21, 2008.

For Penderecki, in the beginning was the violin: "When I was twelve, my father bought a good instrument for me from a Soviet soldier for a bottle of raw spirits," he recalls in an interview. And he adds that he wrote his first violin pieces for his own pleasure, at eleven or twelve.

Two string quartets already occupy a significant place in the composer's oeuvre. His first (of 1960) appears in the context of Threnody, Anaklasis and Polymorphia, i.e. works that have shaped the image of Polish sonorism. In the 1960s, sonorism became a trademark of the Polish school of composing, highlighting tone and color. The Second Quartet (of 1968) was composed

after Penderecki's St. Luke Passion, which gave rise to comments on the composer's betrayal of the ideals of the avant-garde, the same avant-garde that he had spearheaded and defined.

This Third Quartet comes some forty years after the previous Second. Significant changes occurred in the composer's oeuvre within these four decades: he was no longer "a barbarian in the garden" of music (as he had been seen with his early sonorist works that had caused such an outcry); using melody and euphony, he now drew thinner, more delicate lines, purified of excess.

The dramaturgy of the Third Quartet is constructed according to the principle of continuity in the course of music – quite similarly to what happens in a Baroque Concerto grosso. Yet this assumed continuity has its own phases, its own facets of music, contrasted as they are in tempo, character and tone. This music, then, can accommodate equally the brilliant and energetic playing in Vivace sections and the moments of softness and meditation as exemplified by the reflexive Adagio notturno. The singing and nocturne-like tone has become a trademark of Penderecki's "sound language" of recent years – and the same is true of recurring motives of music anchored in static tonal centres. What remains is thinking in terms of form delineated within clear boundaries of beginning and end, and intense emotion meeting a predefined order.

In a conversation with students of the Academy of Music in Kraków (conducted in February 2008), the composer confessed: "My entire life is to surprise, seek and find myself in a thicket." This finds its confirmation in his music. More and more often, very special places can be found in the thicket of sounds – like green, sun-drenched clearings in a dark forest.

Debussy, String Quartet in G Minor

The songs show Debussy to be the poet's musician, and many of the piano works the painter's musician. He is seldom the musician's musician, at any rate not in the sense that he wrote works deriving inspiration from the technical resources of music alone.

With these words, biographer Edward Lockspeiser introduced the chamber music of Claude Debussy (1862-1918). The passage suggests that, like Mussorgsky before him, Debussy was out of his element in "absolute" music, much of which he found too academic to be dynamically interesting and vital. However, he found ways around the problem in his 1892 String Quartet, which was not without "outside" influences. The Javanese gamelon music, which had impressed Debussy so deeply when he heard it at the Exposition Universelle of 1889, had found its way into his style. We may hear the gamelon spirit especially in the quartet's second movement. The outside sections, with their insistent pizzicato in moto perpetuo give an approximation of the repetitious, percussive music of the Javanese.

Debussy usually avoided or severely recast the classically-fashioned classical forms inherited from the Viennese masters. The quartet is something of a paradox in this respect, for amid the lush harmonies, the modal scales, the flights of thematic fancy, and the splashes of impressionistic tone color lie the outlines of pure, clear classical form.

Debussy builds the quartet around a motto theme, which appears in each movement. This cyclic technique had first been introduced by Beethoven and was used frequently by Debussy's teacher (and sometime adversary), César Franck. The first movement, a very loose sonata form, is dominated by the motto. In the second, a three-part form, the theme occupies the flanking sections, while contrasting ideas are introduced in the center. The slow movement, another ternary form, reverses the thematic pattern: A fragment of the motto appears in the middle section, while the outside sections seem to ignore it entirely.

In the finale, we hear echoes of the motto as early as the introduction and in the fugato (!) that follows it, then more fully (and in long notes) toward the middle of the movement. The quartet's finale is constructed more as a mosaic than a classical form, and it completes what may be Debussy's finest contribution to the chamber medium.

Program Notes (except Penderecki) by Dr. Michael Fink
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Penderecki, String Quartet No. 3 Notes by Malgorzata Janicka-Slysz

DISCOGRAPHY



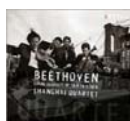
Bach: Music for a Sunday Morning ☑with Eugenia Zukerman and Anthony Newman
Ginastera: Impresiones de la Puna; J.S. Bach: Overture [Suite] No. 2 in B Minor
DELOS



Bartók: String Quartet No. 4 (from Melinda and Melinda soundtrack)
The Shanghai Quartet's motion picture premiere, directed by Woody Allen.
Contains a performance of the Quartet playing the pizzicato movement.
MILAN



Beethoven: The Razumovsky Quartets
Beethoven String Quartet No. 8 (Op. 59 Nr. 2 in E Minor) and No. 9 (Op. 59 Nr. 3 in C Major).
DELOS



Beethoven: String Quartet No. 4 (C Minor), Op. 18-4; String Quartet No. 5 (A Major), Op. 18-5; String Quartet No. 6 (B flat Major), Op. 18-6
CAMERATA



Beethoven: String Quartet in F Major, Op. 18-1; String Quartet in G Major, Op. 18-2; String Quartet in D Major, Op. 18-3
CAMERATA

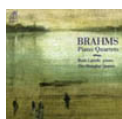
Beethoven: String Quartet No. 2, Op. 59 (Rasumovsky); Op. 74 (The Harp)
CAMERATA



Beethoven: String Quartet No. 12 in E flat Major, Op. 127; String Quartet No. 14 in C sharp Minor, Op. 131
CAMERATA



Beethoven: Great Performances at the Ludwig van Beethoven Easter Festival
String Quartet in B flat Major, Op. 130; String Quartet in C sharp Minor, Op. 131
ACCORD



Brahms: Piano Quartets with Ruth Laredo☑
Quartet No. 1 (G Minor), Op. 25; Quartet No. 3 (C Minor), Op. 60; Quartet No. 2 (A Major), Op. 26
ARABESQUE



Brahms: The Shanghai Quartet Plays Brahms with Arnold Steinhardt Quartet No. 3, Op. 67; Quintet No. 1, Op. 88
DELOS



Dvorák: String Quartet No. 12 and Mendelssohn: String Octet
Includes a special appearance by the Bartók Quartet
CAMERATA



Ge: Four Studies of Peking Opera for Piano and String Quartet with Kathryn Woodard
NEW ALBION



Greig and Mendelssohn: String Quartets
Mendelssohn: Quartet No. 2 (A Minor), Op. 13; Greig: Quartet in G Minor Op. 27
DELOS



Hovhannes: Spirit Murmur
Three Bagatelles for String Quartet Op. 30; String Quartet No. 1, Op. 8; Suite from String Quartet No. 2
DELOS



A Hovhannes Collection
Double disc compilation of Alan Hovhannes compositions
DELOS



Jiang: Chinasong
Traditional and popular Chinese folk songs arranged for string quartet by Yi-Wen Jiang, the quartet's second violinist. Flautist Eugenia Zukerman also contributes.
DELOS



Long: The Flowing Stream with Min Xiao-Fen
Chinese Folk Songs (arr. Long) and Poems from Tang
DELOS



Long: Rhymes
Poems from Tang; The Rhyme of Taigu; Da Qu; The Future of Fire
BIS



Mozart: Mozart's Last Two Quartets
Quartet No. 22 (B-Flat Major), K. 589; Quartet No. 23 (F Major), K. 590
DELOS



Mozart: Jon Manasse Plays Clarinet Music from 3 Centuries

Mozart: Clarinet Quintet in A major (“Stadler”), K. 581; Spohr: Fantasia and Variations on a theme by Danzi for clarinet & string quartet (or piano) in B flat major, Op. 81; Gershwin: Preludes; Cohn: Concerto for clarinet & orchestra, Op. 62
XLNT



Ravel and Bridge: Quartets

Maurice Ravel String Quartet in F Major; Frank Bridge Quartet in E Minor; Frank Bridge Novelletten for String Quartet
DELOS



Schumann and Dvorak: Great Performances at the Ludwig van Beethoven Easter Festival with Rudolf Buchbinder, piano

Schumann: Piano Quintet in E flat Major, Op. 44; Dvorak: Piano Quintet in A Major, Op. 81
ACCORD



Sheng: Silent Temple

New music for piano trio, as well as music for piano, strings, and pipa, a traditional Chinese instrument.
BIS



Sierra: Acoustic Counterpoint

David Tanenbaum with the Shanghai Quartet
NEW ALBION

The Shanghai Quartet also appears on these recordings:



Heigh-Ho Mozart!

Favorite Disney tunes in the style of the great classical composers
DELOS



Bibbidi Bobbidi Bach

More favorite Disney tunes in the style of the great classical composers
DELOS

The Shanghai Quartet makes an onscreen appearance in:



Melinda and Melinda, directed by Woody Allen
20th Century Fox



THE SHANGHAI QUARTET

Biography

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

“The whole performance was superb.” - The New York Times

The Shanghai Quartet is renowned for its passionate musicality, impressive technique, and multicultural innovations. 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 seasons have included concert tours of Europe, Japan, China, Australia and New Zealand. The Quartet has appeared at Carnegie Hall in chamber performances and with orchestra, and in it 2006 gave the premiere of Takuma Itoh’s Concerto for Quartet and Orchestra in Carnegie Hall’s Isaac Stern Auditorium.

Performances at many of the most distinguished festivals and concert halls highlighted the Shanghai Quartet’s 25th anniversary season in 2008-89, including appearances at the Ravinia, Tanglewood, and Ottawa International Festivals,

New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and residencies at the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival and the Oregon Bach Festival. November 2008 brought the world premiere of Penderecki's String Quartet No. 3, *Leaves From an Unwritten Diary* at a special concert in Poland honoring the composer's 75th birthday with the US Premieres at Montclair State University and the University of Richmond and further performances in Lithuania, France and throughout the United States. The Quartet gave the premiere of Chen Yi's *From the Path of Beauty with Chanticleer* in San Francisco with the Asian premiere in China in May 2009.

The Quartet has a long history of championing new music and juxtaposing Eastern and Western sounds. Its 25th anniversary included world premieres from the three continents that comprise its artistic and cultural worlds: Penderecki's String Quartet No. 3, Chen Yi's *From the Path of Beauty*, jazz pianist Dick Hyman's String Quartet and String Quartet No. 2, by Vivian Fung. Among its other major commissions and premieres are works by Lowell Lieberman, Bright Sheng and Zhou Long. The tradition continues with forthcoming works from Marc Neikrug, Lei Liang and Stewart Wallace in the coming seasons.

The Quartet has built an extensive discography that totals over 25 recordings on multiple labels. Recent releases include Schumann and Dvorak piano quintets with Rudolf Buchbinder and Zhou Long's *"Poems from Tang"* for Quartet and Orchestra with the Singapore Symphony (BIS). In 2003, the Quartet released its most popular disc: a 24-track collection of Chinese folk songs titled *Chinasong* (Delos) featuring music arranged by Yi-Wen Jiang reflecting his childhood memories of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Current recording projects include the complete Beethoven string quartets (Camerata), a seven-disc project that will be completed in November 2009.

The Shanghai Quartet has appeared in a diverse and interesting array of media projects, ranging from a cameo appearance in the Woody Allen film *"Melinda and Melinda"* playing Bartok's String Quartet No. 4 (and the film's soundtrack recording) to PBS's *Great Performances* series for television. Other film credits include an appearance by violinist Weigang Li in the documentary *"From Mao to Mozart: Isaac Stern in China,"* and the family of cellist Nicholas Tzavaras' as 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, Shanghai Symphony Orchestra and visiting guest professors of the Shanghai Conservatory and the Central Conservatory in Beijing.

06/09