

THE ARTISTS

The Ames Piano Quartet, the resident chamber music ensemble at Iowa State University, holds a unique position in the chamber music field as one of the few piano quartets in the world. The combination of their lush string sound, blended with the orchestral quality of the piano, produces an exquisite and rare sonority. *The Washington Post* aptly described it as “one of the most heavenly combinations of instruments around.”

The ensemble has toured the United States, including concerts in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, Denver, San Diego, and Washington D.C. Internationally they have performed in Canada, Mexico, France,

Austria, and the Far East. Most recently the Quartet spent a week playing and teaching in Havana, Cuba, the first American chamber music group to perform there in over forty years. Since its formation in 1976, the ensemble has recorded eight compact discs, including six for the Dorian label that have received national and international critical acclaim. *Fanfare* called its CD of the Dvořák quartets, “one of the best chamber music recordings of the century.” The French magazine *La Côte des Arts* commented, “The Ames [Piano] Quartet has a full vigorous sound, which deeply touches the soul.”

PROGRAM NOTES

Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 16 (1796), Ludwig van Beethoven

Beethoven attempted to establish his reputation as a composer after settling in Vienna in 1792 with a series of pieces for wind instruments, among which was the Quintet for Piano and Winds, Op. 16. These works enabled him to demonstrate his skill in the traditional modes of chamber music without broaching the genre of the string quartet still dominated by Joseph Haydn. The Op. 16 quintet took its inspiration from Mozart’s exquisite Quintet for Piano and Winds (K. 452). Beethoven began his quintet in Berlin and completed the score later that year in Vienna. The piece was first given at a concert on April 6, 1797 at the Palace of Prince Joseph von Schwarzenberg.

Although the version of Op. 16 for piano and winds is one of Beethoven’s most sonorous creations, the original scoring limited the music’s suitability for a market providing income for composer and publisher. Thus, Beethoven arranged the work for the popular and salable piano quartet issued at the same time as the original wind version. The musical substance was unaltered and the piano part was unchanged.

The work opens with a slow, stately introduction recalling the old baroque form of the French overture. Its sweeping figurations and full scoring announces the piano’s primary role in the following music, appropriating the principal theme of the main body of the movement — “a sleek triple-meter melody made from a quick upward leap and a gently descending phrase.” The strings play this melodic material before bolder piano scales and arpeggios lead to the subsidiary subject, a lovely flowing strain in even note values. The development section with some piano figurations leads to the main theme.” (Richard E. Rodda (© 2006), Beethoven and Dvořák Piano Quartets)

Carolina Réveille (2001), Paul Schoenfield

Paul Schoenfield, a native of Detroit, was born in 1947. He began studying piano at age six and wrote his first composition the following year. He later studied piano with Julius Chajes, Ozan Marsh and Rudolf Serkin. He holds a degree from Carnegie-Mellon University, as well as a Doctor of Music Arts degree from the University of Arizona. As a composer, he is known for combining popular, folk and classical musical forms. One of his best-known works, *Cafe Music for Piano Trio*, combines many elements of jazz with ragtime. Schoenfield is an avid scholar of mathematics and Hebrew. He lived on a kibbutz in Israel and was a free-lance composer and pianist in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. He has received commissions and grants from the NEA, the Ohio Arts Commission, and the Rockefeller Fund among many others.

Schoenfield comments on his work—“Frequently, I have been asked if I ever use mathematical models or methodologies to compose music. The answer is no. (It seems that in general, such procedures lead to bad music and/or bad mathematics.) However, it does happen occasionally that after writing a piece of music, I notice a similarity between the piece and a mathematical concept I have studied. This occurred while perusing my quartet Carolina Réveille. “I started with the generators (i.e. musical motives) of the widely-known tune, “Carolina in the Morning,” and formulated various relationships between them. This in turn generated new musical elements, and from this aggregate, all the material --melody, rhythm, harmony and counterlines--emanated. The processes is hardly new, the same technique is often found in classical sonata-allegro movements, and most likely, it shows the ubiquitousness of the group-theoretic concept, which has relevance in so many diverse fields... The source material (i.e. “Carolina in the Morning”) is

presented in its entirety only near the end of the work. However, apart from this detour, Carolina Réveille follows what is probably the most common classical variation procedure. That is, there is a gradual increase in tempo from one variation to the next, up to the penultimate, which is written in a somewhat stuffy and scholastic style. This is followed by a lively finale, here a tarantella, which brings the work to a clamorous and joyful conclusion.”

Quartet in g-minor, Op. 25 (1856-61), Johannes Brahms

Brahms’s “biography is quiet and uneventful-there is nothing in the least picturesque or manic about it,” said Ernest Walker in 1899 two years after the composer’s death. “He is one of the most popular composers at the present timeI know one or two of his chamber compositions always draw full houses at the popular concerts....more important is that few chamber works are more often played in private than his. What then is the style of Brahms?...[I]t is the fusion, of the musical material of the latter half of the 19th century, but the desire for emotional expression with the desire for structural proportion.” His work “represents the unifying of a large mass of heterogeneous material”. . . The Romantic School put the interests of expression, dominant in Germany during Brahms maturing years, before an interest in structure. His early instrumental work derives from Schumann. His harmonic and contrapuntal method from Bach comes through the romanticists. He fused these with the formal perfection of Beethoven. Like both Bach and Beethoven, he recognized both form and expression as essential elements in a great work, and his fusion of the two is more complete than theirs. (Ernest Walker, *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 25th Session (1898-1899))

“The piano quartet in g minor Op. 25 is completely innovative. The exposition of the first movement has no fewer than five thematic groups, from the somber opening to an exuberant D Major close. In a striking tonal reversal that may owe something to the first movement of Schubert’s G Major String Quartet, the recapitulation begins in G Major with the middle rather than the initial segment of the tripartite first theme. In the Intermezzo of Op. 25, Brahms for the first time substituted for the expected scherzo or minuet a gentler movement that became a hallmark of his works. The fiery rondo-finale *alla Zingarese* constitutes the earliest appearance of the *style hongrois* (and one of the most successful) in Brahms’s chamber music.” (*Grovmusic*)

The *style hongrois* is described by Jonathan Bellman as “arising from the exotic-sounding music played by gypsy bands (professional musicians, not actual Magyars) in Hungary and westward to Vienna.” It emerged with the Orientalist Turkish style in the middle of the 18th century, when there was no clear line between the two. The *style hongrois* is marked by syncopation, dactylic and dotted rhythms, virtuoso violin passages, and a more prominent raised fourth than in the Turkish style, as well as the melodic interval of the augmented second. Orientalist music had little to do with non-Western musical practices. It was a western representation of “oriental” music and created something new in western music. (Derek B. Scott, “Orientalism and Musical Style.” *Critical Musicology Journal*, *A Virtual Journal on the Internet*.)

Program notes - Joan Fiori Blanchfield

Please visit our website: www.uticachambermusic.org



Our next concert, will be on Sunday, 7 March 2010 at 2:30 PM
presenting **The Prairie Winds**, performing Ligeti, Farkas, Nielsen, Maslanka and selections
by Copeland, Gershwin, Rutter, Unger and Williams.



PLAYERS OF UTICA will present (the female version) of “**THE ODD COUPLE**” by Neil Simon, directed by Win Haslam,
at the Kirkland Arts Center in April, 2010. Dates TBA PH: 724-7624 www.playersofutica.org



THE UTICA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA will present **A SALUTE TO BROADWAY AND RICHARD RODGERS** on Saturday, 10 April 2010 at 8:00 PM at the Stanley Center for the Arts **AND** on Sunday, 11 April 2010 at 3:00 PM at Rome Free Academy. PH: 724-4000 www.uticasymphony.net



THE B# MUSICAL CLUB will present performances by **Lauralee Driscoll, Tamara Hall, John Murphy, Lisa Jones, Jane Metzger** and **Sarah Buell** on Sunday, 7 February 2010 at 3:00 PM at Westminster Presbyterian Church,
714 Washington St., Utica. PH: 292-1050 www.bsharpny.org