

Cypress String Quartet

Beethoven Late Quartets, Vol. 2
String Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 130
with the *Große Fuge*, Op. 133

Release date: August 3, 2010

*****Audio Album Preview*****

www.cypressquartet.com/listen.html

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“artistry of uncommon insight and cohesion”
– *Gramophone* on the Cypress’ Beethoven Late Quartets, Vol. 1

New York, NY – The Cypress String Quartet (Cecily Ward, violin; Tom Stone, violin; Ethan Filner, viola; and Jennifer Kloetzel, cello) is recording the six quartets written by Beethoven between 1822 and 1826 (historically known as Beethoven’s Late Period) for commercial release. The second disc of this three-volume set includes Beethoven’s String Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 130 and the *Große Fuge*, Op. 133. It will be available on iTunes, CDbaby.com, Amazon.com, and other major retailers on August 3, 2010. The disc was produced by Cypress first violinist Cecily Ward, engineered by Mark Willsher, and recorded at Skywalker Sound.

Volume one of the Cypress’s Late Beethoven set was released in August 2009. *Gramophone* praised the disc as “revealing artistry of uncommon insight and cohesion.” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer* reported, “The Cypress players converse with such rare sincerity as to make long-familiar music sound utterly fresh.” The album was featured as one of *The Denver Post*’s “Best discs of 2009.” Volume three – which includes String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 127 and String Quartet in A minor, Op. 132 – is scheduled for release in 2011.

Beethoven referred to his String Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 130 as the “Liebquartet” (Dear Quartet), a fitting title since it contains some of his sweetest and most intimate music. Composed in 1825, its form is unusual in that it has six movements – the “extra” “Alla Danza tedesca” and “Cavatina” movements are some of Beethoven’s best-known music. Beethoven’s original conclusion for Op. 130 was a complex and dense fugue, the “Große Fuge,” which his publisher later convinced him to replace with an alternate ending, “fitting the overall feeling of the piece.” The *Große Fuge* was published separately as Op. 133. Today it is recognized as one of the greatest works for string quartet, but it confounded the audiences of its time. Beethoven was too nervous to attend the premiere in 1825, and waited in a nearby tavern. Upon hearing that the second and fourth movements were given encores, he reportedly exclaimed, “Yes, these delicacies! But why not the Fugue! Cattle! Asses!”

Known for their elegant performances, the Cypress’s sound has been called “beautifully proportioned and powerful” by *The Washington Post*, and the ensemble has been singled out by *Chamber Music Magazine* as “a Generation X ensemble to watch.” The Cypress formed in 1996 in San Francisco and during its first rehearsals together created a now-signature sound through intense readings of J.S. Bach’s Chorales. Built up from the bottom register of the quartet and layered like a pyramid, the resulting sound is clear and transparent, allowing the texture of the music to be discerned immediately.

Traditionally, Beethoven’s complex and epic Late Period quartets are thought to be the territory of older, long-established ensembles, but in their first summer together the Cypress began rehearsing these works immediately, applying the same principles they had discovered in their rehearsals of the music of Bach. Cellist Jennifer Kloetzel explains, “People thought we

were crazy, but we wanted to dive right in. We had each been waiting a long time to meet the right people to play this music with, and really saw no reason to postpone it any longer.”

For more than a decade since then, the Cypress String Quartet has explored Beethoven’s Late quartets in rehearsal and live performance, and in this recording they share what they have discovered. Violinist Tom Stone says, “I think we have revealed Beethoven’s general humanity, rather than just his drama and idiosyncrasies. The harmonic structure and form of this music are what we focused on, and I think the result is a recording that glows in a very organic and positive way.”

The Cypress String Quartet’s unusual approach to their career is informed by their fierce dedication to the ensemble. Violinists Cecily Ward and Tom Stone were studying in San Francisco when the quartet came together. Jennifer Kloetzel and Ethan Filner relocated to San Francisco to form the group, and the foursome made a commitment to each other to only perform as a quartet (meaning that they would not take on teaching or freelance jobs as orchestral members or with other chamber ensembles). They realized early on that they needed to create their own performance opportunities and organized as a non-profit – the Cypress Performing Arts Association. Eventually, they hired a small administrative staff.

This independent spirit is evident in their music as well. Cecily Ward explains, “We found our common ground in the music. Because we had not all gone to school together and had no common past or anyone shepherding us along, we were forced to find out who we are as an ensemble on our own – both in how we made a career and in how we create our sound.”

Now, on top of a busy schedule of over 90 concerts each year at venues across the US and internationally, including major concert halls and series such as the Kennedy Center, Library of Congress, Stanford Lively Arts, Krannert Center and Ravinia Festival, the Cypress String Quartet is a vibrant member of the San Francisco arts community and is dedicated to reflecting and enriching the city’s cultural landscape. This season, the quartet returns for the third year to the Montalvo Arts Center for its signature Salon Series, which seeks to demystify classical music by exploring one work per concert through performance and discussion. Through its Call & Response commissioning and outreach program, the Cypress String Quartet has created a dialogue between the old masters and living composers, performing known and loved repertoire in a fresh context and introducing ground-breaking new works to the chamber music genre. Over just a decade, the Cypress String Quartet has commissioned and premiered more than 30 new works, four of which are now included on Chamber Music America’s list of “101 Great American Ensemble Works.”

The Cypress Quartet members trained individually at institutions including The Juilliard School, Interlochen Arts Academy, Cleveland Institute of Music, Guildhall School of Music & Drama and the Royal College of Music. They play exceptional instruments, including violins by Antonio Stradivarius (1681) and Carlos Bergonzi (1733), a viola by Vittorio Bellarosa (1947), and a cello by Hieronymus Amati II (1701). The Cypress Quartet takes its name from the set of twelve love songs for string quartet, *The Cypresses*, by Antonin Dvořák.

For more information and the Cypress Quartet’s most up to date concert schedule, visit www.cypressquartet.com.

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| 1. Adagio ma non troppo – Allegro | 14:19 |
| 2. Presto | 02:07 |
| 3. Poco scherzoso: Andante con moto ma non troppo | 07:25 |
| 4. Alla Danza tedesca: Allegro assai | 03:58 |
| 5. Cavatina: Allegro molto espressivo | 06:34 |
| 6. Original finale (1825): Grosse Fuge: Overtura – Fuga | 15:15 |
| 7. Alternate finale (1826): Finale: Allegro | 10:48 |