

Cypress String Quartet

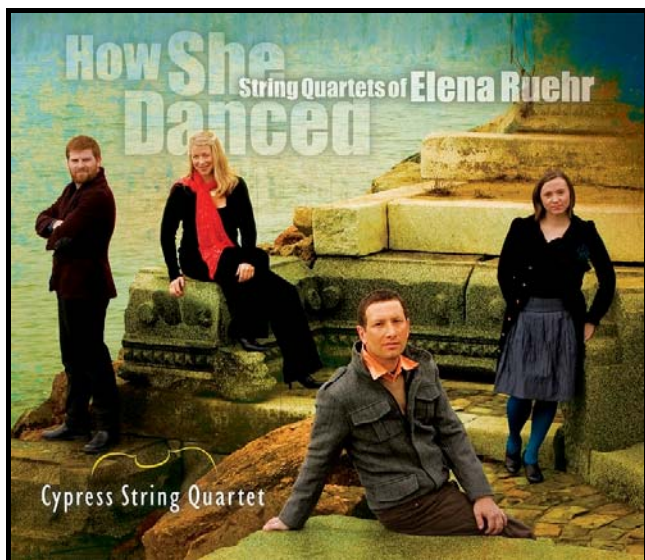
How She Danced: String Quartets of Elena Ruehr

Release Date: February 23, 2010

****Audio Album Preview****

www.cypressquartet.com/listen.html

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“music with heart and...a forceful sense of character and expression” – *The Washington Post*
“Ruehr’s voice is as memorable as it is gentle.” – *Fanfare*

**Track Listing: Elena Ruehr – String Quartet No. 4 (2005; commissioned by the Cypress Quartet),
String Quartet No. 3 (2001), String Quartet No. 1 (1991)**

San Francisco, CA – The Cypress String Quartet (Cecily Ward, violin; Tom Stone, violin; Ethan Filner, viola; and Jennifer Kloetzel, cello) announces the commercial release of *How She Danced: String Quartets of Elena Ruehr* on Tuesday, February 23, 2010. The album, which includes Elena Ruehr’s String Quartets No. 1 (1991), No. 3 (2001), and No. 4 (commissioned by the Cypress Quartet in 2005), will be available on iTunes, CDBaby.com, Amazon.com, and other major retailers. The disc was produced by Cypress first violinist Cecily Ward and Mark Willsher, and recorded at Skywalker Sound.

The album’s release coincides with the world premiere of another string quartet commissioned by the Cypress Quartet from Ms. Ruehr, which is based on Ann Patchett’s novel *Bel Canto*. The premiere performance will take place on Friday, February 26 at 8pm at Herbst Theatre (401 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, CA). A second performance will take place on Sunday, February 28 at 3pm as part of the Montalvo Arts Center’s Villa Chamber Music Series (15400 Montalvo Rd., Saratoga, CA).

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.” This disc follows the success of the ensemble’s recent recording of Beethoven’s Late Quartets Op. 131 and 135, which *Gramophone* magazine praised as “revealing artistry of uncommon insight and cohesion.”

Elena Ruehr has been called a “composer to watch” by *Opera News*, and her music has been described as “stunning . . . beautifully lighted by [a] canny instinct for knowing when and how to vary key, timbre, and harmony” by *The Boston Globe*.

The Cypress Quartet came to know Ms. Ruehr’s music through a blind listening process. Each year, the ensemble commissions a number of new works for string quartet, and selects composers based solely on whose music speaks to all four of them. Over just a decade, the Cypress 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.

Of the music included on *How She Danced*, Ms. Ruehr said, “The three quartets here span about 15 years of my work. Each is quite different and reflects my interests, which include opera, poetry, and literature. I treat the instruments either as voices or as drums, with long lyrical lines and a dance-like sense of rhythmic drive. In addition, the quartets all specifically refer to older music, ancient and traditional source, from folk songs to specific classical repertoire.”

Cecily Ward describes their relationship as simpatico. “Elena has described a credo she has had since her 20s: ‘The surface is simple, but the structure is complex,’” she said. “That’s probably why we get along; it’s what our quartet does!”

More about Elena Ruehr: Ms. Ruehr grew up in Michigan's isolated Upper Peninsula, where her musical training began at home with her mother, who sang and played the guitar. Her father, a mathematician, played jazz piano. She began playing piano and composing at age four, and later studied modern dance. Her town of 4,000 was also home to Finnish kantele player and classical composer Melvin Kangas, whom Ms. Ruehr counts as her earliest mentor. She later studied with William Bolcom at the University of Michigan and Vincent Persichetti at The Juilliard School. In addition to her classical studies, she played in the University of Michigan Gamelan and studied West African drumming.

Ms. Ruehr has had commissions from and residencies with leading ensembles and presenters across the country. In addition to the Cypress Quartet, advocates for her music include the Borromeo String Quartet, the Shanghai String Quartet, and baritone Stephen Salters. A faculty member at M.I.T. since 1991, she has lectured at Princeton University, Boston College, Boston Conservatory, Longy School of Music, Berklee School of Music, Eastman School of Music, and Oberlin Conservatory, and was a fellow at Harvard University's Radcliffe Institute, Yaddo, and the Aspen Center for Compositional Studies.

Ms. Ruehr was composer-in-residence with the Boston Modern Orchestra Project from 2000-2005. Her orchestral music has also been performed by the Cincinnati Symphony, the Omaha Symphony, and the Civic Orchestra of Chicago. Available recordings of Ms. Ruehr's music include *Toussaint Before the Spirits* (Arsis), *Jane Wang considers the Dragonfly* (Albany), and *Shimmer* (Albany). A natural collaborator across genres, Ms. Ruehr has worked with the Nicola Hawkins Dance Company on critically-acclaimed performances in New York and Boston. She also wrote the film score for the documentary *The Manhattan Trade School for Girls*, part of the Treasures from the National Film Archives' *Treasures III: Social Issues in American Film*. The film was chosen as one of the top six DVDs of the year in 2007 by *TIME* magazine.

For more information about Elena Ruehr, visit www.elenaruehr.org.

More about the Cypress Quartet: The Cypress String Quartet 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.

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 – rather than signing with a management agency. 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."

The Cypress maintains 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. During the 2008-2009 season, in addition to several Bay Area performances including a debut on the Cal Performances series in Berkeley, the Cypress returned to the Montalvo Arts Center for a series of concerts exploring the Late quartets of Beethoven and the inspirational influence of visual arts on composers from Debussy to George Tsontakis. 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.

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.