

ARIANNA STRING QUARTET

PRESS REVIEWS

By Larry Lapidus, for the "Spokesman-Review", Wed Feb 16, 2022 - Spokane, WA

In reviewing a musical performance, the standard of virtuosity is complex since it describes a spectrum between two polar opposites: on the one hand, the ability of the artist to impress the audience with his or her gifts and abilities, and on the other hand, the ability of the artist to disappear from the consciousness of the audience, leaving them with the impression that they are communing with the music itself, or, more mysterious still, with the mind of the composer.

The Arianna String Quartet exemplified the latter in its virtuosity. So complete was their technical command of their instruments, mastery of the scores and absolute unity of interpretive purpose that it was though the music was being conveyed unmediated and no other tempos, dynamics or instrumental balances could express the intentions of the composer as perfectly.

Among the trove of delights in the two concerts, two demand special notice. Before hearing his String Trio on Saturday, the name of its composer, Gideon Klein, was unknown to most of the audience. Hearing this tautly constructed, acerbic but compelling piece of music no doubt will move many to learn more about his tragic life and to explore the substantial body of work he was able to produce before his death at Auschwitz.

It was not surprising that the Schubert C major String Quintet was the musical culmination of the weekend, as it occupies hotly contested real estate at the pinnacle of western music. All the qualities that rank Schubert among the greatest composers – his breathtaking lyricism, harmonic and structural audacity and unequalled insight into the tragic nature of the human condition – are epitomized in this Quintet.

Still displaying the same capacity for energy and precision with which they began the weekend, the Arianna Quartet was joined by Bailey, who as always subordinated his great gifts to the common goal of exploring the treasure left by Schubert. Suffice it to say that Bailey and his colleagues left the stage satisfied that their efforts had proved deserving of the trust that Schubert, and the audience, had placed in them.

-Spokesman-Review

"Quartet playing doesn't get much better than this"

"The Arianna Quartet makes music with the tonal warmth, fastidious balance and heightened communication skills of groups many years its senior. In Schubert's Quartettsatz, and especially a shimmering and stylish reading of the Ravel Quartet, the silken refinement of the playing was achieved with no loss of expressive vitality or spontaneity. Quartet playing doesn't get much better than this"

-Chicago Tribune

"Arianna String Quartet offers great music-making"

The members of the Arianna Quartet combine outstanding musicianship, technical mastery of their instruments, energy and focus that add up to great music-making. The inner voices are never covered; all the parts are brought out, and the emotional side is carefully balanced with the thoughtful. In Dvorak's Op.51 quartet, the quartet showed lyricism, balance and that thoughtful phrase-making ability"

-St. Louis Post Dispatch

"Quartet's playing both flawless and warm"

"The Arianna Quartet issued a thoughtful, expressive and technically flawless performance, and it sounded beautiful."

-The Columbus Dispatch, Columbus, OH

"Arianna String Quartet never less than elegant"

The Arianna Quartet made a strong argument for Bartok's Fourth String Quartet in its performance for the

ARIANNA STRING QUARTET PRESS REVIEWS (con't)

"Arianna String Quartet shows its excellence"

Leading off the evening was a crystalline, yet warm rendition of Haydn's Quartet in E-flat Major, Op.64, No.6. The emotional high point of the evening was the relatively unfamiliar Quartet No.3, Op.94 by Benjamin Britten. At the hands of the Arianna, this haunting selection packed tremendous emotional punch, especially in the somber tolling of the final movement. The program was rounded out with a fine performance of Ravel's Quartet in F Major."

-St. Louis Post Dispatch

"Mixture of exultation and melancholy was perfectly balanced"

"Two members of the distinguished Vermeer Quartet joined the players of the Arianna String Quartet for a lustrous reading of Brahms' G Major String Sextet. Led by the Arianna's sweetly sumptuous first violin, the Brahms Sextet had a quietly rhapsodic drive. Its mixture of exultation and melancholy was perfectly balanced; shifts in mood, especially in the scherzo and trio, were always convincing."

-Chicago Sun Times

"Tonally alluring and intellectually challenging."

"The Arianna Quartet's performance of Janacek's "Kreutzer Sonata" Quartet was beautiful, simply beautiful. The opening gesture of Beethoven's Op.18, No.3 quartet was gorgeous, and the whole of Britten's last quartet was cogently argued. Clearly, the Arianna Quartet is tonally alluring and intellectually challenging."

-The Ann Arbor Observer, Ann Arbor, MI

"Quartet's technical virtuosity impressive"

"It didn't take long before one heard the reason behind the impressive success of the Arianna String Quartet. These musicians displayed the smooth blending of sound that many quartets spend decades trying to achieve. In the Mendelssohn Op.12, the group flew through the "rapids" in perfect symmetry and clean phrasing, an impressive technical feat. The Stravinsky was filled with its pungent dissonance yet so cleanly played one could enjoy its satire and rhythmic accents. "La Oracion del torero" by Turina and the gentle Elegy by Puccini were both filled with slow passages played with loving care."

-Asbury Park Press, Asbury Park, New Jersey

"Arianna String Quartet is delightful"

"Performing a varied program ranging from Beethoven to Stravinsky, the ensemble was so in sync with each other and the music they were performing that they seemed to breathe in unison. The Arianna Quartet is truly a thing of beauty to behold. All four play with the expertise of seasoned veterans and the exuberance and passion of youth. This combination makes for the highest of performing ensembles."

-Heritage Newspapers/Press & Guide, Dearborn Michigan

University of Cape Town "Excellent performance; flawless balance and excellent ensemble. The highlight of the evening was the Schubert Death and the Maiden quartet. This profound work in which death is such an important element is always an emotional experience that one is not likely to forget in a hurry, particularly if it is performed in as outstanding a manner as the Arianna String Quartet did on Saturday night."

-The Citizen, Cape Town, South Africa, (8/24/13)

University of South Africa

"An inordinate blend of emotional commitment and fluent virtuosity. The fiendish rhythmic and technical challenges were surmounted so completely that the music's inner core of poetic vision stood revealed with startling clarity."

-Pretoria News, South Africa, (5/17/15)

ARIANNA STRING QUARTET PRESS REVIEWS (con't)

A.M. León, León, Mexico

"Radiant from the first moment... an ensemble of experts with the perfect balance of discipline and emotion."

'Theater Jones' North Texas Performing Arts News "High Five"

"The Arianna Quartet clearly possesses a uniquely beautiful and substantial tone quality... they are an ensemble of extraordinary precision and depth."

-Wayne Lee Gay (Ft. Worth, TX) -(11/12/16)

Arts BHAM "Arianna String Quartet"

"The Arianna String Quartet is an exemplary model for 21st-century string quartets. An engaging, balanced program, coupled with playing that in many ways rivaled the world's finest quartets, made this a memorable experience."

-by Michael Huebner (Birmingham, AL), (10/30/15)

KCMETROPOLIS.org "Kansas City's on-line Journal of the Arts" "East meets West in fruitful collaboration"

"...a remarkable program and performance combining the Western string quartet tradition and that of Japanese Sankyoku... The Arianna String Quartet followed with a performance of Claude Debussy's String Quartet in G Minor unlike any I have ever heard before, humor and aggression, passionate reeds and playful purples, burst forth with exuberance. This performance was immediately gripping and showed artists with much to say about the music they were playing. It was stunning work all around."

-by Lee Hartman, (11/10/15)

"Energy enhances performance of Beethoven Quartets"

"It's a joy to hear the Arianna String Quartet. They are all excellent musicians on their own, but the whole really is greater than the sum of its parts. They breathe together, they listen to each other, and they're generous with one another. The Beethoven quartets proved more than the sum of their parts, as well. Hearing them together brought out both the ways they're related and how they differ, and provided the audience with a new way of listening to each that will carry over to future performances... a re-energized audience stood up and cheered for the Arianna"

- Sarah Bryan Miller, St. Louis Post-Dispatch Music Critic, (2/22/10)

"Arianna String Quartet in beautiful season opener at Touhill"

"A good string quartet needs a well-matched set of fine musicians willing to think and argue and work out their ideas about composers and compositions. Its members need the time to spend in rehearsing, both individually and as a quartet. They need to have a keen interest in different composers and different ways of approaching those composers' oeuvres. The Arianna String Quartet has all those things in spades. They proved it, once again, if Friday night's season-opener for the Touhill Performing Arts Center, with a program of three very different works. Virtuosity and depth of feeling and experience were all on ample display."

-Sarah Bryan Miller, St. Louis Post-Dispatch Music Critic, (9/14/09)

"Arianna String Quartet"

"The Mozart set the tone for the performance and was delivered with the group's accustomed precision, elegance and nearly telepathic rapport. The players delivered an electric performance that made this a genuine tour de force."

-Sarah Bryan Miller, St. Louis Post-Dispatch Music Critic (10/20/06)

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"Arianna String Quartet offers great music making"

"Outstanding musicianship, technical mastery of their instruments, energy and focus that add up to great music making. The inner voices are never covered, all the parts are brought out, and the emotional side is carefully balanced with the thoughtful."

-Sarah Bryan Miller, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch Music Critic*, (9/13/00)

RECORDING REVIEWS

Beethoven Op. 18 Quartet, Centaur Records

Review: American Record Guide, September/October 2015

"The Arianna Quartet delivers a proficient and attractive reading of Beethoven's early quartets. They play with balance and elegance, and all the nuances are played together perfectly. The Arianna is an excellent group."

Janacek String Quartets, Centaur Records

Fanfare Magazine, September/October 2013

"I can tell you that the Arianna's readings of these two quartets project has all of the white-hot emotional intensity one could want, while still managing to maintain a rare silkiness of tone in music that so often pushes players into scraping, scratching, and hacking. The Arianna proves that execution can express the most extreme states of emotion while doing so with beauty and poise. A special luminosity and even warmth marks these performances.

"The Arianna Quartet plays Janáček's quartets with a special emphasis on, and flair for, storytelling. The Arianna has discovered not just the music in the notes but the real story behind them. This is a wonderful addition to the Janáček discography, one that I highly recommend. Whether you are new to these works or already have half-a-dozen other recorded versions on your shelf, these performances are special.

"The Arianna String Quartet demonstrates how technical excellence, in alliance with imagination and the human heart, can come to create something truly transcendent. The players, virtually faultless in their musicianship, provide a powerful vision, and a sense of humanity more far reaching than the hard and glossy reading of the Emerson Quartet, in spite of their virtuosity, or the Smetana Quartet in spite of their florid tone."

American Record Guide, September/October 2013

"It's the first recording of the two Janacek quartets that ever made me fully appreciate what the composer is saying. First, let me set the scene: four consummate players, equally spread and identifiable across the stereo spectrum. In Quartet 1 they capture Janacek's constantly changing gaits, wistful longing, a poignant lyrical voice cast against three others howling and pleading around it. The overall pacing in each movement is gripping. The performance is a sheer tour de force. In the first movement of Quartet 2 the contrast between intimate harmonics and intense chords is startling. The flow or continuity is astounding, given the dramatic range of contrasts in tempo and string attacks. In II I became aware of the players' very careful, judicious use of vibrato - always deliberately expressive. III is the one movement on the album that is essentially a love-lullaby; I felt as if its sweetness was drawn right out of my inner core. In brief, the Arianna Quartet's chameleon-like skills perfectly match Janacek's two chameleon-like masterpieces."

ARIANNA STRING QUARTET RECORDING REVIEWS (con't)

Beethoven Middle Quartets Review, Centaur Records

Jerry Dubins, Fanfare Magazine March/April 2018

“To speak of the Arianna String Quartet’s unimpeachable intonation, fluent bowing, flawless finger-to-bow coordination, great beauty of tone, and conscientious attention to tempo indications, dynamic markings, and articulation instructions would be redundant. Beyond that, I’m not sure I can put into words what it is about the Arianna’s readings of Beethoven’s middle quartets that so transported me to a place of nirvana-like revelation. I can only say that the players seem to have discovered and disclosed secret places in these works that I don’t believe I’ve ever visited before. Every note speaks with special meaning, and even the rests have something important to say.

“The newness and difference [between these works and earlier Beethoven string quartets] are illuminated by the Arianna String Quartet in ways both glorious and at times frightening, as in the angst of the “Razumovsky” No. 2 in E Minor and in the hellish burning and churning of the F-Minor Quartet, op. 95. I simply don’t know what else to say. I can’t stop listening to these performances. They thrill me, enthrall me, and arouse emotional responses in me of an intensity that can’t be described. I am prepared to state and defend my belief that these may just be the greatest performances of Beethoven’s middle quartets in recorded history.