



Larchmere String Quartet

Praised as “an outstanding quartet [with] keen sensitivity and receptivity” (*Bloomington Herald Times*), the Larchmere String Quartet has been garnering international attention for its musical dynamism and innovative programming since its formation in 2011. The Quartet currently holds the faculty position of Eykamp Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Evansville in Evansville, Indiana, where they work with students and serve as the University’s ambassadors of chamber music performance in the community and abroad. The quartet also performs as principal players of the Evansville Philharmonic Orchestra.

Dedicated to bringing the accessibility of chamber music to all audiences, the members of the LSQ have performed regularly on the international stage in venues such as the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, the Gewandhaus in Leipzig, the Royal Festival Hall in London and Suntory Hall in Tokyo, as well as more intimate settings. Recent festival appearances include a fully funded Banff Centre Residency in Banff, Canada and the Accademia Chigiana in Siena, Italy.

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Wonkak Kim, Clarinet



Korean-born clarinetist Wonkak Kim has captivated audiences around the world with his “excellent breath control” (*The Washington Post*) and “exuberant musicianship” (*Fanfare*). Kim has appeared as a soloist and chamber musician at leading venues throughout the United States such as Carnegie Hall, the Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, and Constitution Hall as well as in Paris, London, Ghent, Geneva, Seoul, Osaka, Costa Rica, and Brazil. A Naxos Recording Artist, he has recorded numerous CDs that have received international acclaim: *Gulfstream* (8.559692), a collection of new American chamber music, was named ‘US Music Choice’ by *BBC Music Magazine* and praised for its “very highest quality” (*Gramophone*, UK). *The Clarinet* lauded Kim’s “sensitive playing, lovely sound and consummate facility” on his Naxos recording of the Clarinet Sonatas by François Devienne (9.70150). Kim’s live and recorded performances have been featured on Radio France, Swedish Radio, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, CJPX Radio Classique Québec, Hong Kong RTHK-HK, the Korean Broadcasting System, and NPR stations around the US. Kim is Professor of Clarinet at Tennessee Tech University, USA and is a Buffet-Crampon, Silverstein, and Vandoren Performing Artist.

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Stephan KREHL (1864–1924)

Clarinet Quintet String Quartet

Wonkak Kim, Clarinet Larchmere String Quartet



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Stephan Krehl (1864–1924)
Clarinet Quintet
String Quartet

Stephan Krehl was born in Leipzig in 1864 and studied at the music conservatories in Dresden and Leipzig, where he became a protégé of the renowned professor Salomon Jadassohn. As a young composer and pianist, Krehl was employed at the Conservatory of Music in Karlsruhe from 1889 until 1902, when he was appointed to the faculty of the Leipzig Conservatory. Krehl taught theory and composition there from 1902 until his death in 1924, acting as Rector in his later years and thus joining a line of distinguished directors which began with Felix Mendelssohn in 1843.

Krehl's numerous textbooks on theory, harmony, and counterpoint proved highly influential during his tenure at the Leipzig Conservatory. His book *Kontrapunkt* (Counterpoint), published in 1908, left its mark on countless twentieth-century composers, including notables such as Zoltán Kodály. Other significant works include *Musikalische Formenlehre* (Musical Form), *Harmonielehre* (Harmony) and *Tonalitätslehre* (Tonality). Many of Krehl's students, including Pablo Sorozábal and Fritz Reuter, went on to garner international acclaim for their compositions.

As a composer, Krehl has not enjoyed the lasting esteem he achieved as a music theorist and pedagogue. Throughout his career, he published close to thirty works of chamber

music, mainly for strings, clarinet and piano. Of these pieces, only a few are extant today. Besides the *String Quartet, Op.17* and the *Clarinet Quintet, Op. 19* there exists a *Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano, Op. 8, Sonata in F major for Cello and Piano, Op. 20, and a Piano Trio in D major, Op. 32*, among others.

Pitted against other composers of his time, Krehl stands out mainly for his adherence to traditional late German Romanticism in an era of exploration led by Schoenberg, Richard Strauss and Mahler. His influences and models for composition include Brahms and Schumann, the latter having also taught at the Leipzig Conservatory in his day. While colleagues such as Max Reger sought to synthesise classical forms and abstract experimentation, Krehl remained largely within the Brahmsian sphere of influence, resisting the currents of musical advancement in both composition and theory.

Krehl's *String Quartet in A Major, Op. 17*, was first published in 1899 by the Berlin publisher Simrock. It is dedicated to the Meininger String Quartet, whose members were Bram Eldering, August Funk, Alfons Abbas and Karl Piening. Founded in 1894, the quartet achieved wide acclaim touring throughout Europe, especially Belgium, and was known for its collaboration with the clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld, for whom Krehl later wrote his *Clarinet Quintet*.

Op. 17 certainly demonstrates Krehl's understanding of the string quartet idiom. Texturally, the various musical sections often begin with unison voices that segue into dense harmonies. The four movements of the quartet generally follow a pattern of expansion in pacing as well, as single line melodies give way to more complex counterpoint. The musical material varies between operatic melodies and gestural dances, and highlights Krehl's penchant for quick alternations between *pizzicato* and *arco*.

This quartet comprises four movements, all of which are roughly cyclical in organisation. The first movement, a sonata form *Allegro* in 3/4 time, opens with the four voices in unison, singing a warm yet yearning ascending melody that eventually gives way to a robustly rollicking theme. The viola has a doleful second theme, which brings in a heavier but energetic dotted-rhythm jaunt. The movement closes as it began, except this time with the initial melody stitched from one voice to another.

The second movement, *Lento*, begins with a mournful cello melody that is gradually transformed through intense passion and drama. Marked *con sordino*, the muted strings at the opening give a sense of restraint or suppression leading to an ethereal air of mystery. This mysterious theme then melts into a pastoral song in the middle *Più mosso* section, before ending in the initial forlorn character, as though resigned to a solemn fate.

The third movement, *Vivace*, is a joyful, sprightly dance in 3/4 that recalls the charm of Mendelssohn's *Scherzo* from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, balanced with a rustic flare and a more emphatic heroic line. The middle section, *Meno mosso*, is a nostalgic slow waltz that funnels into a wispy unison before returning to the first section and ends with a wink.

The fourth movement is monumental in its scale and pacing. A set of unmarked variations, the movement opens with a grave melodic statement in the solo cello that functions like the ground bass of a passacaglia. Each successive entrance ratchets up the musical tension through embellishments and increasingly smaller rhythmic units. Krehl employs various compositional tools – whispering unisons, emphatic chords, fast *pizzicato* and feverish tremolos – to end the entire piece with an exciting but slightly menacing flourish.

The influence of Schumann and particularly of Brahms can be heard clearly in Krehl's *Clarinet Quintet in A major, Op.19*, published by Simrock in 1902. Krehl dedicated the work to Richard Mühlfeld, the same clarinetist for whom Brahms wrote his Op.115 *Quintet* eleven years earlier. Having first heard him in 1891, Brahms referred to Mühlfeld as the 'nightingale of the orchestra', and was so inspired by Mühlfeld's playing that he abandoned retirement to compose his final great chamber works for the clarinet. Krehl's quintet was certainly in the hands of a masterful performer.

Krehl takes Brahms's *Quintet* as a model on many levels. Scored for A clarinet, the piece formally mirrors that of Brahms, from the first movement in 6/8 time to the variation movement finale. Krehl's unique compositional voice is apparent throughout, however, and does not strive to imitate that of his rôle model.

The wistful descending fifth motif heard in the clarinet at the opening of the first movement harkens back to Robert Schumann's 'Clara motif,' which appears throughout many of Schumann's works to signify his beloved wife. The clarinet's dotted rhythmic motif is answered by a sighing figure in the strings, in a yearning call-and-response figure that is repeated twice before growing into a supple melodic line. At turns hopeful, melancholic, tender and pleading, the music flits quixotically between musical moods as though through the states of young love. In the charming codetta we can almost hear the young lovers bidding each other goodnight, the movement sighing to a close with all five voices in unison on the descending fifth.

The second movement, *Lento*, opens with the string quartet alone, in a doleful F sharp minor. In contrast with the first movement's youthful vitality, the second movement is sombre and brooding, with a mournful theme passed from violin to clarinet. In the middle section, a tender, major key pastoral tune seems to recall a more innocent past. This melody becomes gradually impassioned until it leads back to the first theme,

now heard more forcefully above an unrelenting hemiola. Despite momentary glimmers of hope, the F sharp minor mood prevails, dying away to pianissimo with a prolonged suspension on the final chord.

The opening phrases of the sunny third movement, *Allegretto grazioso*, alternate between 2/4 and 3/4, creating a buoyant and light-hearted swing. A fleeting *Vivace* is interwoven between *Allegretto* sections, followed by a strident fugue, marked *Animato*. This passage evokes a hunt or chase, reaching a climax with galloping arpeggios in the lower strings. Calm is eventually restored and the movement closes with a gently teasing alternation between the *Vivace* and *Allegretto*.

The final movement is a set of variations on a theme, framed by an introduction (*Einleitung*) and a closing section (*Schluss*). The slow introduction evokes Baroque opera, with the quartet playing the Greek chorus and setting the stage for the dramatic lead played by the clarinet. The theatrical flourish of the opening melts into a tenderly flowing theme in A major, which serves as the basis for the seven variations to follow. *Schluss*, marked *Andante*, begins with an inversion of the theme. The music rapidly intensifies, rekindling the drama of the introduction, until the theme is finally recapitulated, bringing the work to a glowing finish.

Kirsten Jermé & Alicia Choi