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CALIDORE
STRING
QUARTET

BEETHOVEN
THE LATE QUARTETS

BEETHOVEN

THE LATE QUARTETS

CD1

String Quartet No. 12 in E-Flat Major, Op. 127

- | | | |
|---|---|---------|
| 1 | I. Maestoso | [7.06] |
| 2 | II. Adagio, ma non troppo e molto cantabile | [15.22] |
| 3 | III. Scherzando vivace | [8.02] |
| 4 | IV. Finale. Allegro | [7.10] |

String Quartet No. 14 in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 131

- | | | |
|----|---|---------|
| 5 | I. Adagio ma non troppo e molto espressivo | [6.48] |
| 6 | II. Allegro molto vivace | [2.54] |
| 7 | III. Allegro moderato | [0.43] |
| 8 | IV. Andante ma non troppo e molto cantabile | [13.26] |
| 9 | V. Presto | [5.01] |
| 10 | VI. Adagio quasi un poco andante | [1.59] |
| 11 | VII. Allegro | [6.38] |

CD2

String Quartet No. 13 in B-Flat major, Op. 130

- | | | |
|---|--|---------|
| 1 | I. Adagio ma non troppo – Allegro | [13.39] |
| 2 | II. Presto | [1.59] |
| 3 | III. Andante con moto ma non troppo. Poco scherzando | [6.55] |
| 4 | IV. Alla danza tedesca (Allegro assai) | [3.24] |

- | | | |
|---|---|---------|
| 5 | V. Cavatina (Adagio molto espressivo) | [7.00] |
| 6 | Grosse Fuge in B-Flat Major, Op. 133 | [15.32] |
| 7 | VI. Finale. Allegro (Op. 130, replacement finale) | [10.13] |

CD3

String Quartet No. 15 in A Minor, Op. 132

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|---------|
| 1 | I. Assai sostenuto – Allegro | [9.57] |
| 2 | II. Allegro ma non tanto | [9.01] |
| 3 | III. Molto adagio | [17.32] |
| 4 | IV. Alla marcia, assai vivace | [2.17] |
| 5 | V. Allegro appassionato | [6.41] |

String Quartet No. 16 in F Major, Op. 135

- | | | |
|---|--|--------|
| 6 | I. Allegretto | [6.38] |
| 7 | II. Vivace | [3.15] |
| 8 | III. Lento assai, cantante e tranquillo | [7.48] |
| 9 | IV. Grave ma non troppo tratto – Allegro | [6.43] |

Total timings: [203.43]

CALIDORE STRING QUARTET

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INTRODUCTION

Our quartet is continually drawn to Beethoven's music for the enduring relevance of his humanistic perspective. He was an artist who aimed to compose not for one portion of society, but rather to unite through our fundamental elements. His 16 string quartets sonically weave a tapestry of human emotion; from vulnerability and hope as in the "Heiliger Dankgesang" of Op. 132, to terror and anger subsiding to joy as in Op. 135's "Der schwer gefasste Entschluss".

Our public performance of Beethoven's cycle of quartets affirmed to us that this music's immediacy is not contingent upon the century we live in, the country we come from, the generation we belong to, the beliefs we align with or other factors that may divide us. Beethoven's Quartets appeal to the emotional experiences we share in common as human beings, which are far more substantial than what may divide us. These great works are also the result of Beethoven's struggles to overcome the challenges of his own life.

In this spirit, our project came together in a very "Beethovenian" way. The forced separation during the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, made us dream of ways to immerse ourselves once more in our craft and to share our music

with audiences around the globe. The seemingly endless string of concert cancellations, while making the immediate future (and potentially our career path) quite uncertain, made space for and propelled us towards the idea of recording this cycle of immortal works. Finding a venue and recording team was a hurdle in such unusual times. Fortunately, the University of Delaware – where we serve on the faculty – stepped in to provide us with the use of the magnificent Gore Recital Hall for the six recording sessions. And we were fortunate to be introduced to the legendary producer Judith Sherman, an artist whose passion for these works and uncompromising standards have made her the perfect partner in chronicling our interpretations of Beethoven.

Now, finding ourselves at the end of this endeavor, the contents of this recording serve as a snapshot of our twelve years of working, growing, listening and collaborating with one another. Our interpretation speaks to the influences of our teachers and the great traditions associated with this repertoire, but also to that of our own generation, contemporary research, style and experience. Though this music speaks in a language that is hundreds of years old, its message remains immediate, relevant and comforting to listeners of today and of generations to come even, and especially in the most challenging of times.

Calidore String Quartet, November 2022

THE LATE QUARTETS LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

"After silence that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music"
Aldous Huxley, *Music at Night and Other Essays*, London 1931

Between his first and last quartets (1798-1800, 1824-26) Beethoven endured war, Viennese occupation and the post-Napoleonic re-structuring of Europe. Men of spurs and valour, aristocrats bearing swords at the behest of kings and emperors, crossed his path. Blue-blood patrons nurtured him – altruistic visionaries moved by words, music, painting and humanism. One such, transitioning bullets to books, was Prince Nikolai Borisovich Galitzin ([Golitsyn] 1794-1866). Born to one of Russia's noble dynasties, boyars of Lithuanian descent, responsible for ambassadors, statesmen and military leaders – his father was a field marshal, his mother a Georgian princess, a relative from the Alexeevich branch of the family, Dmitri Vladimirovich, governor of Moscow from 1820, subscribed to John Field's memorial – and he served in the Tsar's army from 1810 to 1832, joining the Kyiv Dragoon Regiment. Borodino, the road to Moscow, September 1812. "No struggle

had ever been so stubbornly contested; none had seen such numbers employed or such casualties on such a restricted area ... silence [now] shrouds the countryside round about, for the angel of death had stalked this land". Faber du Faur's words had been Nikolai's eyes to experience, aged 17, subsequently to write about. He married Helena Alexandrovna Saltykov, daughter of another ancient ruling line, in May 1821. She died young seven years later, aged 26. The household was musical. He played the cello, she the piano. Their only surviving son, Yuri, went on to become a composer and conductor. Fluent in the language of high-status society, Nikolai, like Field, knew Pushkin, translating the poet's works into French for his approval.

To Nikolai, Beethoven was 'the God of melody and harmony'. Thayer, in the first edition of *Grove's* (Vol I, 1879), tells us that while in Vienna in 1804–6, albeit a boy not yet into his teens, Nikolai 'doubtless made the acquaintance of Beethoven¹ and his music at the [neo-classical palace] of Count Razumovsky, the Russian ambassador [responsible for commissioning the

¹ Revised in Vol III of his *Life of Ludwig van Beethoven* (Krehbiel edition, 1921) to read 'Whether or not he had made the personal acquaintance of Beethoven has not been established'.

Op. 59 Quartets], and at [the house] of Count von Browne, an officer in the Russian service [son of an Irish soldier of fortune] for whom Beethoven had [also] written several works’.

(Russians, whether out of friendship or political pawning, were a theme in Beethoven’s biography: the Op. 30 Violin Sonatas, published in 1803, were dedicated to Alexander I.) Maybe not a little prompted by Beethoven’s Falstaff-ian friend and associate from long before the Rasumovsky days, the violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh (who’d spent seven years based in St Petersburg before returning to Vienna in April 1823) – and on the advice of the pianist Karl Traugott Zeuner, a staunch Beethovenite, briefly Glinka’s teacher – abandoned his intention of commissioning Weber, the fashion-draw of the moment, to write something for him, instead penning an invitation to Beethoven. One of the epochal letters of history: “Being as passionate an amateur as an admirer of your talent, I am taking the liberty of writing to you to ask you if you would be willing to compose one, two or three new quartets. I shall be delighted to pay you for the trouble whatever amount you would deem adequate.” (9 November 1822).

The idea appealed, Beethoven only months before having floated the prospect of an as yet blank-sheet quartet to the Leipzig publisher Carl Friedrich Peters – “which you could have very soon” (5 June). A fee of fifty gold ducats per opus (around £22 at the time, or £2900, \$/€3400 in modern equivalency) was proposed. Galitzin wasn’t bothered about publication (Opp. 127, 132, 130 in order of composition). “All I ask is the dedication and a MS copy” (5 May). But he wanted a quick turn-around, the outcome preferably incorporating a part suitable for himself to play. Unsurprisingly, this wasn’t to be. Occupying Beethoven’s priorities was the Ninth Symphony (1822-24) and the imminent completion of the *Missa solemnis*. Nikolai, subsequently one of the latter’s nine royal subscribers, generously arranged for its first performance – in the 18th-century St Petersburg mansion on Nevsky Prospekt that had formerly been occupied by an earlier distinguished Galitzin prince, Alexander Mikhailovich, former governor of the city and a confidant of Catherine the Great. “The effect of this music on the public cannot be described,” he wrote to Beethoven, “and I doubt if I exaggerate when I say that for my part I have never heard anything so sublime.” (7 April 1824). A month later followed the premiere of the Ninth Symphony, in Vienna at the Kärntnertheater,

the evening opening with a new overture, *The Consecration of the House*, dedicated on publication to Galitzin – ‘Lieutenant Colonel de las Garde de Sa Majesté Impériale’. Only then, 18 months after receiving Nikolai’s commission, a life-spanning roll call of symphonies and piano sonatas behind him, did Beethoven finally return to a medium he’d not addressed with intent since the Op. 95 *Quartett[o] serio* of 1810-11, published in 1816 coincident with Schuppanzigh’s departure for Russia.²

Once under way he applied himself comparatively quickly, notwithstanding declining health and difficult relations with his nephew Karl (whose attempted shooting suicide in early August 1826 was a criminal offence). Five quartets including the *Grosse Fuge* – 6353 bars of history defining genius – decided in the space of two-and-a-half years between April 1824 and November 1826. Surviving drafts point to an intricately interlaced chronology covering the Galitzin tryptych. The so-called ‘de Roda’ sketchbook from the summer of 1825 (possibly earlier), a roughly bound assemblage of thirteen different paper types

² Just an interim 23-bar 3/8 Allegretto in B minor, WoO 210, ‘composed & written by Beethoven himself [...] in Vienna’, survives, from the end of November 1817.

(and eleven watermarks), alone covers Opp. 127, 130, 132 and 133 [Beethoven-Haus NE 47a]. Sketches for Opp. 130 and 132 are found together [B-H HCB BSK 19/67]). Another bifolium [B-H W4] prompts Julia Ronge, Curator of Collections at the Beethoven-Haus, to observe ‘how closely connected Opp. 132 and 130 are as far as their genesis is concerned’.

Omitting or overlooking inputting parameters, commentators – back to Nottebohm in the second half of the 19th century – largely agree, if not always for the same reasons, that the five works are variously linked, cellularly in particular. A compelling demonstration of this was Deryck Cooke’s ‘The Unity of Beethoven’s Late Quartets’ (BBC, 31 March 1962; *Music Review*, February 1963). Aware that ‘Beethoven did not from the outset conceive the quartets as a single work of art’ but conscious that ‘on a deeper level the set may be treated as a single phenomenon, ... a kind of musical diary’, posing the principle that later themes *evolve* from initial ones, and open to all the possibilities that ‘inversion, retrograde motion, retrograde inversion, octave transposition, and interverson (the switching around of the notes of a phrase)’ permit, his thesis was to demonstrate that the cycle ‘constitutes a self-contained unity, a single continuous act of creation, in

which Beethoven persistently developed certain implications of two basic pitch-patterns', both explicitly present in the opening movement of Op. 127. On the one hand falling and rising fourths ('the bright major motto theme') – the 'thematic source' of the group as a whole. On the other, a pair of (Bachian) falling semitones split by an angular diminished seventh ('the dark minor motto-theme') – 'protagonist' of the middle three quartets. 40 years on Lewis Lockwood (2003) – reminding that Karl Holz, Beethoven's copyist, subsequent secretary, and from 1823 second fiddle of the re-formed Schuppanzigh Quartet [SQ], thought of the Galitzin set, 'and even the next two [Opp. 131, 135]', 'as an aggregate' – speaks of 'shared thematic and motivic ideas', contrapuntal and rhythmic, of entities 'bound to each other like family members who look sometimes alike and have some common features, traits and gestures', 'a new kind of voice-leading [*Stimmführung*] for dialect.

Op. 127 (April 1824 – early 1825).

First performance, 6 March 1825. During the spring of 1823 Schuppanzigh and Beethoven talked about 'composing a new quartet together'. The idea was not new. John M Gingerich – who describes Schuppanzigh's ensemble as 'the story of the emergence of "classical music" in

Vienna' – maintains that 'Beethoven apparently never attempted to compose a quartet without Schuppanzigh's collaboration, from Op. 18 right through Op. 135 ... the [Galitzin] project picked up pace and focus only after his reunion with his old colleague'.³ The global trajectory of the late quartets, progressively lengthening then shortening, is well known, moving chronologically, arch-like, from four to five to seven to six to four movements (Denis Matthews [1985] venturing to trace in Op. 130's pair of dances a 'remote allegiance to the [classical] divertimento'). In four movements maybe – *adagio* placed second, *scherzo* third – but the nature of Op. 127, published, exceptionally for the time, in both parts *and* full-score (June 1826), sets the seal on what the series was to hold in store for early listeners.

The density of writing – 'the parts are interwoven to such an extent that everyone has all they can do just to follow one instrument' (Beethoven's younger brother, Johann) – led to a need for programming double-performances, as well as to Schuppanzigh's humiliating failure at the premiere, vexing his colleagues. Beethoven's

³ John M Gingerich, 'Ignaz Schuppanzigh and Beethoven's Late Quartets', *The Musical Quarterly*, Fall/Winter 2010.

friend, the publisher Tobias Haslinger, deemed the piece unplayable. There was hope, however. A (clarifying) rehearsal less than a fortnight later, led at Beethoven's instigation by the Hungarian-born Joseph Böhm, formerly a student of Rode and the future teacher of Joachim, prompted Anton Steiner, publisher of the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies, to remark that he 'wouldn't have believed it was the same' work (18 March 1825). 'The last of [Beethoven's] pastoral symphonies' (Vincent d'Indy, 1929). His 'crowning monument to lyricism' (Joseph Kerman, 1966). 'One of the largest and strangest of scherzos, contrasting fragmentary counterpoint with vivid jagged unisons' (Robert Simpson, 1971).

Op. 132 (early 1825-July/August 1825).

First performance, 6 November 1825 – Joseph Linke benefit concert (Linke, cellist of the Schuppanzigh Quartet, was one of Beethoven's steadfast friends and supporters). 'The quartet received a lot of applause,' Karl reported to his uncle, 'it went very well together and Linke played better than ever'. Of the five movements, the central *Canzona*, music of new horizon but archaic polarity, is headed with the words 'Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart', 'Holy Song of Thanksgiving of a Convalescent to the Deity, in the Lydian mode'

(F major scale with sharpened fourth [B natural], diatonically harmonised), arriving eventually at 'feeling new strength'. 'Slowly, slowly, the melody unfolded itself,' novelised Huxley. 'The archaic Lydian harmonies hung on the air. It was an unimpassioned music, transparent, pure and crystalline, like a tropical sea, an Alpine lake. Water on water, calm sliding over calm; the according of level horizons and waveless expanses, a counterpoint of serenities. And everything clear and bright; no mists, no vague twilights. It was the calm of still and rapturous contemplation, not of drowsiness or sleep. It was the serenity of a convalescent who wakes from fever and finds himself born again into a realm of beauty. But the fever was "the fever called living" and the rebirth was not into this world; the beauty was unearthly, convalescent serenity was the peace of God. The interweaving of Lydian melodies was heaven' (*Point Counter Point*, 1928).

The Ninth Symphony shadows the landscape. Its slow movement in the quinquartite *Adagio* (4/4 prayer)/*Andante* (3/8 dance, *sentendo nuovo forza*, 'feeling new strength') variation structure of the *Canzona*. A revived sketch from 1823 ('finale instrumentale') in the refrain of the concluding *rondo appassionato*. The drones of its 'scherzo' in the *maggiore* musette A's of the second

movement. Other references/allusions, early Viennese ones, further colour the latter: the Op. 1/2 Piano Trio and Op. 7 Piano Sonata, an obscure Allemande page in A 'No 6' WoO 81 (1793, retrieved/annotated 1822: Beethoven 'kept most of his sketches all his life – they were a valued possession' [Ronge]).

Op. 130 (c May-December 1825; mid September-22 November 1826.

First performance, 21 March 1826 (*Grosse Fuge* finale, *qv* Op. 133 *infra*); 22 April 1827 (replacement finale), Linke benefit concert. In its original form making for a likely duration of anything between 45 and 55 minutes, Op. 130 was without forerunner. And was to have no successor. 'Easy' *Hausmusik* for the salons of Vienna it was not. Catering for a 'larger audience of musical curiosity seekers' (Gingerich), Schuppanzigh programmed the premiere in a mixed concert including a Haydn movement (from Op. 76/3), Beethoven's *Archduke* Trio, and some vocal numbers. The *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, Leipzig 10 May 1826, reported (anonymously): 'The first, third, and fifth [Cavatina] movements are serious, gloomy, mystical, but also at times bizarre, rough, and capricious; the second and fourth [*Alla danza tedesca*] full of mischief, good cheer,

and roguishness. Here the great composer, who, particularly in his most recent works, has seldom known how to find appropriate limits, has expressed himself unusually briefly and convincingly. The repetition of both ... was demanded with stormy applause. But the reviewer does not dare to interpret the sense of the fugal finale; for him it was incomprehensible, like Chinese' (Robin Wallace translation, 2018).

Sketched in A major then B-flat before settling in G, the 3/8 *Alla danza tedesca* was linked from the start with Op. 132. Christian Schubart's 'key of love, devotion and intimate conversation with God' (*Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, 1785/1806) – E-flat – diffuses the *Cavatina*, a discourse as intensifying and personal as Op. 132's Lydian Hymn, a single German word underlining/voicing the brief middle section: *beklemmt*, 'anxious/oppressed'. It speaks, declared Basil Lam (1975), 'with the accents of King Lear'. In essence Beethoven's swansong, completed within weeks of the Op. 135 Quartet, the alternative 2/4 finale – annotated as a 'rondo' in the post-First World War Universal/Philharmonia study-score, but of neither the simple nor sonata variety textbooks used to define – sets off from G major, *pianissimo*, consolidating the tonality of the *tedesca* and retaining the opening G unisons,

forte/fortissimo, of the *Grosse Fuge*. But by halfway through the third bar C minor emerges temporarily as the home-ground: a key-suspending device Schubert was to duplicate identically in his last (B-flat) Piano Sonata less than two years hence. Pulsing quavers, vibrantly demarcated *staccato* articulation contrasting *legato* phrasing, assertive dynamics and accents, a youthfully driven half-Haydnesque rusticity in the air, scarcely a deceleration in sight, exhilaratingly virtuosic ...

Op. 131 (c late 1825-9 January 1826).

Dedicated to Baron Joseph von Stutterheim, lieutenant field marshal, privy and court war councillor, responsible for helping Karl enlist in the military. First performance, 9 March 1828. Though printed (June 1827) the music circulated largely privately for the better part of a decade, Schubert hearing it in his rooms five days before his death. Voluminous drafts exist, more even than for the Ninth Symphony or *Missa solemnis* – including 'almost twenty proposed [finale] solutions' ('Kullak' sketchbook, Berlin Staatsbibliothek) as well as evidence of 'Beethoven not so much drafting themes ... as groping towards something more elusive: overall tonal direction'.⁴ Yet complex working-out passages like the first movement

⁴ Robert Winter, *Beethoven Studies 2* ed Alan Tyson, Oxford 1977.

fugue are seemingly bereft of sketches: 'we can safely say that other leaves have gone missing' (Ronge, accessed 2022). 'Stolen together from different this and that' Beethoven noted on the *Stichvorlage*. Humorously, yet truthfully too in so far as its motifs emanate so pristinely from the *ur-cells* of the Galitzin cycle. Divided into seven *attacca* sections, numbered at the request of the original publishers, the work's architecture, quartet-wise, is without forerunner. 'Does it have to be played through without stopping? But then we won't be able to repeat anything! When are we supposed to tune,' Holz despairs in one of the conversation books.

Some analysts explain the structure as a five-chapter scheme – (1) Fugue, (2) Allegro (d'Indy's 'suite form'), (4) Variations, (5) Scherzo, (7) Finale (sonata-based), with (3) 'Recitative' and (6) 'Lied' (d'Indy's labels) assuming the function of transiting episodes. An early review by the playwright and critic Friedrich Rochlitz likely got closer to the nature of the beast – 'like an overly large fantasy, ever changing and transforming anew' (*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 23/30 July 1828). Beethoven, expanding on the larger-scaled fantasy designs of Mozart, had long been attracted to continuous quasi-improvisatory structures broken up into contrasted sections of

key, tempo, material, structure and character. Examples are not hard to find. Pianistically, aside from the Fantasy Op. 77 and contemporaneous Choral Fantasia (1808/09), both containing variation elements, there were the two 'fantasy' Sonatas Op. 27 (1801) and the first movement of the D minor Sonata Op. 31/2, along with suggestive references among sundry of the post-1815 canon. The sectionalised finales of the *Eroica* and Ninth Symphony might similarly be considered as fantasia-related. Correspondingly the urge to connect movements to create ongoing totalities (randomly the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, Fourth and Fifth Piano Concertos, the Violin and Triple Concertos, *Appassionata*, Op. 97 Piano Trio). Lam, tellingly, refers to the *ur*-form of Op. 130 as 'a vast fantasia and fugue'. Based on one sketching stage when a three-movement plan seems to have been in the melting pot – tonic minor (slow)/major/minor (shifted centre of gravity), Winter invokes the same-key Op. 27/2 Sonata quasi una Fantasia, with the quartet 'viewed as the continuation of experiments from a quarter of a century earlier'. Beethoven regarded Op. 131 his finest achievement in the genre. Veering conceivably 'closest to the dissolution of the harmonic system inherited from Haydn and Mozart ... the traces of [his] most serious affair with the subdominant [having] left their impact on

virtually every phase' of its creation (Winter). 'A perfection ... beyond controversy' (Simpson).

Op. 133 Grosse Fuge, 'Grande fuge, tantôt libre, tantôt recherché', 'sometimes free, sometimes sought' (1825-26). Dedicated to the Archduke Rudolph of Austria, Beethoven's patron and former student. First performance, 21 March 1826. Preceded by unrelated sketches for 'over a dozen possible finales, all quite different' (Barry Cooper, *Beethoven and the Creative Process*, 1990), scaling Olympian peaks deemed too difficult for players and listeners, Op. 130's intended 741-bar ending, mightiest contrapuntally of the composer's B-flat tussles, exasperated Anton Schindler into calling it an 'anachronism [belonging] to that grey future when the relationship of notes will be determined by mathematical computation' (1860). 'Removed' at the publisher's request, it was published separately in May 1827 (along with Beethoven's own far from 'domestic' piano duet arrangement, Anton Halm and Carl Czerny having failed his demands). 'If the instruments in the regions of the south and north poles have to struggle with gigantic difficulties; if each of them is differently figured and they cross over each other *per transitum irregularem* amid countless dissonances; if the players, not trusting themselves, probably

also do not play completely accurately, then the Babylonian confusion is certainly complete ... But we do not wish thereby to pronounce a negative judgment prematurely; perhaps the time is yet to come when that which at first glance appeared to us dismal and confused will be recognized as clear and pleasing in form' (*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, qv Op. 130 *supra*).

Opp. 130 and 133 are organically integral. To isolate the *Grosse Fuge* from its antecedents, argued Lam, 'is rather like presenting the last act of a Shakespeare play without the rest'. Beethoven's crowning climactic fugal finale, with the *Hammerklavier*, Op. 110 Piano Sonata, *Diabelli Variations* and the second of the Op. 102 Cello Sonatas, the structure is fantasia-hued, the key zones are on the 'flat' side of B-flat, the tempo is predominantly *allegro*, the pulse is in two (simple/compound) or four to the bar, with the quaver divisions either two or three per beat. Structurally varied interpretations have been proposed, broadly channelling events into either a sonata introduction/exposition/development/reprise/coda design *or* a prophetically latterday *allegro*/slow movement/scherzo/finale scheme. Signposting the way (Lockwood), a denary ground plan might be tabled. (1) Overtura (Beethoven's heading) [Introduction]; (2) Double Fugue I; (3) Double

Fugato a); (4) Episode a), 'March'; (5) Double Fugue II; (6) 'Fantasy'; (7) Double Fugato b), from (3); (8) Episode b), 'March', from (4); (9) Coda I; (10) Coda II.

Op. 135 (Summer-30 October 1826). Dedicated, on third-party instruction, to Johann Wolfmayer, a wealthy Viennese textile merchant, music lover, closeted patron and supportive friend of Beethoven's since at least the early 1800s. First performance, 23 March 1828, Linke benefit concert. 'Between the completion of the Ninth Symphony in February 1824 and his death in [March] 1827, Beethoven filled at least 1,899 pages of sketches for his five late string quartets and other projects, not counting a further 700 pages of completed scores and copies. This represents over 2,500 densely-packed, often almost illegible pages in less than three years [averaging] two and a half pages a day, every single day for 32 months — hieroglyphic postcards for a later age' (Peter McCallum, University of Sydney, *The Conversation*, 3 February 2020). Reverting to the four-movement concision of Op. 127, in the classically 'pastoral' key of the published first quartet, Op. 18 No. 1, its *Sätze* (like those of Op. 127 and 132) conjoined by a common pivot-tone (F) around which orbit distant spheres, Op. 135 was completed at

Schloss Wasserhof, the elegant country estate of Beethoven's brother in Gneixendorf.

First movement, sonata-plan, without introduction or exposition repeat. Scherzo, teasing, of a style pursued rarely by the Romantics, placed second in the late manner of the *Hammerklavier* and Ninth Symphony. Lento, associated originally with the Op. 131 Quartet. Dark 'stopped string' D flat, its 6/8 imagery transformed into some profoundly intimate dreamscape deep within stellar space – enlarging its forces intensifying prescient Mahlerian nuances (witness Bernstein's 1989 Vienna Philharmonic account). Finale, *Der schwer gefaßte Entschluß*, 'The decision taken with difficulty', both halves repeated (the second discretionary), the opening *Grave, ma non troppo tratto* returning theatrically in the second half. 'Muß es sein?', 'Must it be?', questions the *Gravel* minor *ying* (following the *recitativo*/tessitura exemplar of the Ninth Symphony's finale, but also other instances). 'Es muß sein!', 'It must be', replies the *allegro*/major *yang* (linked with a four-part tenor canon on the same words, WoO 196 (July 1826). Creatively, it's about supreme elucidation of argument, texture and timbre, tonally far-flung, the visual openness of the page belying a pyramid of complexities within. Dvořák, you feel, must have warmed to it. Milan Kundera

assuredly did: 'Es muß sein!' is the 'music' of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Tomas ... who 'wanted the Kingdom of God on Earth'. Tereza ... who would 'offer him up her life'.

By the last quartets, history passes down, Beethoven had lost all hearing. Modern research is re-evaluating that view, that his deafness in fact 'was not absolute but fluctuated considerably'. Analysis of his conversation books, suggests their American translator, Theodore Albrecht, supposes at least some hearing ability. 'Baths [and] country air could improve many things,' Nikolai's 'God' advises a stranger in 1823. 'Just do not use mechanical devices [ear trumpets] too early; by abstaining from using them, I have fairly preserved my left ear in this way'. There's a familiar drawing by a student of the time showing the ageing Beethoven reclining in a café, coffee pot on the table, morning newspaper in left hand, long pipe in right, taking in the world about him. It would be good to imagine the old lion not merely feeling vibration and seeing movement but, come better days, sensing frequency too.

"Art demands from us that we shall not stand still"
Beethoven, Vienna 1825

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THE CALIDORE STRING QUARTET

Jeffrey Myers, violin
Ryan Meehan, violin
Jeremy Berry, viola
Estelle Choi, cello

The Calidore String Quartet are renowned for their "deep reserves of virtuosity and irrepressible dramatic instinct" (*New York Times*). The *Los Angeles Times* described the musicians as "astonishing," their playing "shockingly deep," approaching "the kind of sublimity other quartets spend a lifetime searching." *The Washington Post* noted that "four more individual musicians are unimaginable, yet these speak, breathe, think and feel as one". For more than a decade, the Calidore has enjoyed performances and residencies in the world's major venues and festivals, released multiple critically acclaimed recordings and won numerous awards. The Calidore is recognized as one of the world's foremost interpreters of a vast repertory; from the quartets cycles of Beethoven and Mendelssohn to works of celebrated contemporary voices like Kurtag, Widmann and Caroline Shaw.

The New York City-based Calidore String Quartet have appeared in venues throughout North America, Europe, and Asia such as Carnegie Hall, Wigmore Hall, Kennedy Center, Berlin Konzerthaus, Brussels BOZAR, Cologne Philharmonie, Seoul's Kumho Arts Hall, and at significant festivals including the BBC Proms, Verbier, Ravinia, Mostly Mozart and Music@Menlo. The 22-23 season includes debuts in the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Prague, Madrid and Vancouver. They return to Wigmore Hall, Kennedy Center, Copenhagen, Florence, Montreal, St. Paul, Houston and Los Angeles. In September 2022, the Calidore performed at Carnegie Hall with violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter, in a memorial concert honoring the late composer André Previn. They also enjoy collaborations this season with the Emerson String Quartet, clarinetist Anthony McGill, bassist Xavier Foley, violist Matthew Lipman and harpist Bridget Kibbey.

In their most ambitious recording project to date, this album is the first release in a complete cycle of Beethoven's String Quartets for Signum Records. Their previous Signum recordings on include *Babel* with music by Schumann, Shaw and Shostakovich, and *Resilience* with works by Prokofiev, Janáček, Golijov and Mendelssohn.



Recipient of a 2018 Avery Fisher Career Grant and a 2017 Lincoln Center Emerging Artist Award, the Calidore String Quartet first made international headlines as winner of the \$100,000 Grand Prize of the 2016 M-Prize International Chamber Music Competition. The quartet was the first and only North American ensemble to win the Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship, was a BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist, and is currently in residence with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in New York.

The Calidore has given world premieres of works by Caroline Shaw, Anna Clyne, Hannah Lash, Huw Watkins and Mark-Anthony Turnage among others. Its collaborations with esteemed artists and ensembles include Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Marc-André Hamelin, Joshua Bell, Jeffrey Kahane, David Shifrin, Inon Barnatan, Lawrence Power, Sharon Isbin, David Finckel and Wu Han. The Calidore was mentored by some of the most revered personalities and performers of the international chamber music scene including the Emerson Quartet, Quatuor Ébène, Andre Roy, Arnold Steinhardt, David Finckel, Günter Pichler, Guillaume Sutre, Paul Coletti, and Ronald Leonard.

Composed of dedicated teachers and passionate supporters of music education, the Calidore String

Quartet is committed to mentoring and educating young musicians, students, and audiences. In 2021 the Calidore joined the faculty of the University of Delaware School of Music and serve as artistic directors of the newly established Graduate String Quartet Fellowship Residency and the University of Delaware Chamber Music Series. Formerly, they served as artist-in-residence at the University of Toronto, University of Michigan and Stony Brook University.

The Calidore String Quartet was founded at the Colburn School in Los Angeles in 2010. The Calidore furthered their quartet studies at the Reina Sofia School of Music in Madrid, Spain and Stony Brook University (NY). Within two years, the quartet won grand prizes in virtually all the major US chamber music competitions, including the Fischhoff, Coleman, Chesapeake, and Yellow Springs competitions, and it captured top prizes at the 2012 ARD International Music Competition in Munich and the International Chamber Music Competition Hamburg. An amalgamation of “California” and “doré” (French for “golden”), the ensemble’s name represents its reverence for the diversity of culture and the strong support it received from its original home: Los Angeles, California, the “golden state.”

The Calidore String Quartet plays the following instruments:

Jeffrey Myers plays a violin by Francesco Rugeri c.1680, owned by a private benefactor on loan through the Leonhard Fellowship and plays a bow by Francois Tourte.

Ryan Meehan plays a violin by Vincenzo Panormo c.1775 and a bow by Joseph Henry.

Jeremy Berry plays a viola by Giovanni Battista Ceruti c.1811, owned by a private benefactor and a 1903 Umberto Muschietti viola. He plays a bow by Pierre Simon.

Estelle Choi plays a cello by Charles Jacquot c.1830.

Recorded in Gore Recital Hall, University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware, USA from 4th to 8th February 2022.

Producer – Judith Sherman
Recording Engineer & Editor – Jeanne Velonis

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