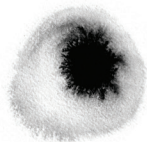
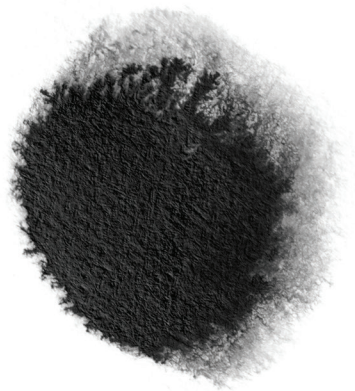




Beethoven
Complete String Quartets
Miró Quartet



Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Complete String Quartets

CD 1

String Quartet No. 1 in F Major, Op. 18, No. 1

1	I. Allegro con brio	9. 08
2	II. Adagio affettuoso ed appassionato	9. 44
3	III. Scherzo: Allegro molto	3. 14
4	IV. Allegro	6. 33

String Quartet No. 2 in G Major, Op. 18, No. 2

5	I. Allegro	7. 28
6	II. Adagio cantabile – Allegro – Tempo	5. 58
7	III. Scherzo: Allegro	4. 15
8	IV. Allegro molto, quasi Presto	5. 08

String Quartet No. 3 in D Major, Op. 18, No. 3

9	I. Allegro	8. 23
10	II. Andante con moto	7. 33
11	III. Allegro	3. 00
12	IV. Presto	6. 07

Total playing time CD 1: 76. 31

CD 2

String Quartet No. 4 in C Minor, Op. 18, No. 4

1	I. Allegro ma non tanto	8. 20
2	II. Andante scherzoso quasi Allegretto	6. 22
3	III. Menuetto: Allegretto	3. 03
4	IV. Allegro – Prestissimo	4. 28

String Quartet No. 5 in A Major, Op. 18, No. 5

5	I. Allegro	6. 33
6	II. Menuetto	4. 35
7	III. Andante cantabile	10. 15
8	IV. Allegro	6. 21

String Quartet No. 6 in B-flat Major, Op. 18, No. 6

9	I. Allegro con brio	5. 45
10	II. Adagio ma non troppo	7. 43
11	III. Scherzo: Allegro	3. 04
12	IV. La Malinconia: Adagio – Allegretto quasi Allegro – Prestissimo	8. 36

Total playing time CD 2: 75. 05

CD 3

String Quartet No. 7 in F Major, Op. 59, No. 1 ("Rasumovsky" No. 1)

1	I. Allegro	9. 41
2	II. Allegretto vivace e sempre scherzando	8. 47
3	III. Adagio molto e mesto –	13. 05
4	IV. Thème Russe: Allegro	8. 03

Total playing time CD 3: 39. 36

CD 4

String Quartet No. 8 in E Minor, Op. 59, No. 2 ("Rasumovsky No. 2")

1	I. Allegro	12. 46
2	II. Molto adagio (Si tratta questo pezzo con molto di sentimento)	12. 05
3	III. Allegretto – Maggiore: Thème Russe	6. 17
4	IV. Finale: Presto	5. 10

String Quartet No. 9 in C Major, Op. 59, No. 3 ("Rasumovsky No. 3")

5	I. Introduzione: Andante con moto – Allegro vivace	10. 15
6	II. Andante con moto quasi allegretto	8. 33
7	III. Menuetto grazioso –	5. 01
8	IV. Allegro molto	5. 48

Total playing time CD 4: 65. 55

CD 5

String Quartet No. 10 in E-flat Major, Op. 74 ("Harp")

1	I. Poco adagio – Allegro	9. 33
2	II. Adagio ma non troppo	9. 15
3	III. Presto –	5. 03
4	IV. Allegretto con Variazioni	6. 42

String Quartet No. 11 in F Minor, Op. 95 ("Serioso")

5	I. Allegro con brio	4. 36
6	II. Allegretto ma non troppo	6. 56
7	III. Allegro assai vivace ma serioso	4. 35
8	IV. Larghetto espressivo – Allegretto agitato – Allegro	4. 52

Total playing time CD 5: 51. 32

CD 6

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

1	I. Maestoso – Allegro	6. 31
2	II. Adagio ma non troppo e molto cantabile	14. 20
3	III. Scherzo: Vivace	8. 22
4	IV. Finale: Allegro	6. 38

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

5	No. 1: Adagio ma non troppo e molto espressivo	6. 34
6	No. 2: Allegro molto vivace	2. 55
7	No. 3: Allegro moderato – Adagio	0. 50
8	No. 4: Andante ma non troppo e molto cantabile	14. 03
9	No. 5: Presto	5. 28
10	No. 6: Adagio quasi un poco andante	1. 58
11	No. 7: Allegro	6. 44

Total playing time CD 6: 74. 23

CD 7**String Quartet No. 13 in B-flat Major, Op. 130/133**

1	I. Adagio ma non troppo – Allegro	13. 34
2	II. Presto	2. 04
3	III. Poco scherzoso: Andante con moto ma non troppo	7. 13
4	IV. Alla danza tedesca: Allegro assai	3. 39
5	V. Cavatina: Adagio molto espressivo	7. 21
6	VI. Große Fuge in B-flat Major, Op. 133	15. 37

Replacement Finale String Quartet No. 13 in B-flat Major, Op. 130

7	VI. Finale: Allegro	10. 02
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Total playing time CD 7: 59. 30

CD 8**String Quartet No. 15 in A Minor, Op. 132**

1	I. Assai sostenuto – Allegro	9. 40
2	II. Allegro ma non tanto	9. 14
3	III. Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart: Molto Adagio – Andante	19. 40
4	IV. Alla marcia, assai vivace –	2. 15
5	V. Allegro appassionato – Presto	6. 29

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

6	I. Allegretto	6. 42
7	II. Vivace	3. 27
8	III. Assai lento, cantante e tranquillo	6. 46
9	IV. Der schwer gefaßte Entschluß: Grave, ma non troppo tratto (Muß es sein?) – Allegro (Es muß sein!)	7. 01

Total playing time CD 8: 71. 14

Miró Quartet:

Daniel Ching, first violin

William Fedkenheuer, second violin

John Largess, viola

Joshua Gindele, cello

* **Sandy Yamamoto**, second violin on CD 1 & 2

"The Cycle of 16 String Quartets by Ludwig van Beethoven stands truly at the centre of any string quartet's repertoire. As an artistic unity they are a culmination of all the European chamber music composed before them, and they cast a long shadow on every string quartet composed after them even up until the present day. Each work individually is a masterpiece that challenges both the listener and the player, but performed live as an artistic whole the complete cycle becomes one of the great life changing experiences in the western art canon, both for the listeners and the players. Over the last two decades, the Miró Quartet has been lucky enough to perform this complete cycle in a single week's time in many different venues around the world, and it is undeniable that the experience of sharing this great musical journey with a live audience has been one of the most impactful experiences of our lives. Recording the

cycle has been yet another part of that journey, a different one, in which we could, and indeed were compelled, to explore the mystery and beauty of these works down to the tiniest detail. But the nature of of this great music is that there is always more in it to discover, there is always a new way to hear it, feel it, play it, know it. It lives and breathes and evolves all on its own, so in a sense, there is no way to truly "record" it. If in this collection we in the Miró Quartet have in any way captured one tiny part of the genius that is Beethoven in these works, revealed one new gleaming facet of the precious jewel that they are, shown one new listener a hint of the universe that they contain, we can be truly grateful and satisfied. Creating these quartets was one of Beethoven's greatest life's works, and in so many ways this recording has been one of ours. Thank you for sharing it with us."

John Largess

"For me, the Beethoven Quartets were the pieces that inspired me to form and play in a full-time touring string quartet. While the Bartók Quartets turned me onto the possibilities of the sounds a string quartet could produce, it was the expression and personal statements of the Beethoven Quartets that I wanted to share with our listeners, as they communicate the full gamut of triumph, joys, love and sorrows of the human experience."

Daniel Ching

"The Beethoven quartet cycle is a deeply personal and intimate experience that is at the core and heart of my love of the string quartet and the string quartet repertoire. Regardless of one's experience with classical music, string quartets, or Beethoven, the cycle is impactful in unexpected and emotional ways for every listener and

performer, changing the way each relates to their internal and external worlds. It is the Mount Everest of the string quartet world — pushing you to emotional and physical highs and lows and engaging in this life cycle through the heart and soul of Beethoven is both life affirming and life changing every time. I never truly know its impact until weeks, months and years later and I consider it to be one of the ten wonders of mankind and believe that Beethoven still has so much to share with us about the heart and soul of the human experience."

William Fedkenheuer

"If we wish to know the force of human genius we should listen to Beethoven. It is music that speaks to the deepest reaches of your soul."

Joshua Gindele

The Early Quartets — Opus 18: Beethoven at 30

Envision the end of the 18th century: a time of war, tremendous social upheaval and incredible change. The Revolutions in America and France were forcing the entire world into a new way of thinking. Everywhere the old guard was struggling to hold on to unwieldy and outdated power in the face of a new society and a new conception of one's self. After all, didn't we all have a calling to be something better, to possess the freedom of a higher state in which no one could ever be a slave of the wealthy, the privileged or the powerful? All of Europe seethed with armed conflict while teetering simultaneously on the brink of a complete transformation. As things fell apart, the modern world as we know it was painfully being born.

Into this picture stepped a short and sickly 22-year-old kid, with curly coal-black hair (in our time he would be fresh out of college), coming to the big city of Vienna from the boondocks. He had a talent for playing the piano, and had become a child star back home in Bonn. Just like many child stars of today, his childhood had been trashed by a pushy (and alcoholic) father who was determined to make his talented little Ludwig into a famous wonder kid. His mother died when he was 17, and at 19 he found himself forced to take care of his younger brothers, while his father's own mediocre music career crashed and burned. Now at 22, Ludwig had finally broken free. Finally, he had his opportunity to make the big time in the big city. This was his chance to prove to everyone, himself included, that he could be a star.

The next five years saw him climb up the career ladder step-by-step

on his own. His musical talent was matched by a gift for self-promotion. He became the private pupil (almost like being an intern today) of famous "older guys" with big names in the business, such as Haydn and Salieri. Impatient with their discipline and authority, he felt he had to sometimes unwillingly follow their advice in order to learn what he still didn't know ...and he used their connections to network even further. But what really got his career moving was his set of new friendships with the rich, the artsy, and the trendy. The wealthy and hip took him into their set: soon he was appearing at every soiree, going on vacations with diplomats, and creating scandalous scenes. He pursued women, many women: usually rich, beautiful, "unavailable" women. He made them feel faint at the intensely passionate way he improvised pieces at the piano. People just couldn't get enough!

He was a rock star, the it-guy, a tabloid success, but what he had always really wanted was just to write music. As a child he was beaten by his father when caught improvising his own music at the piano instead of practicing; now he could use the opportunity his fame presented to get his own music heard by an international audience. First, he published some showy solo pieces he had played live himself in concert and some fun ensemble pieces: serenades, songs, trios. He had been toying with most of the ideas for these pieces since his childhood. When this music sold crazily and the publishers clamored for more, Beethoven felt it was time to give them something else, something really new, something radical, something that people thought that a young pianist couldn't do.

And so the String Quartet became the first really serious form in which Beethoven took on the establishment,

as he transformed himself from performer to composer. He wanted badly for his quartets to be absolutely new and outstanding, for now his career depended on them in more ways than one: he had been hiding from everyone for the last two years the terrible secret that he was going deaf. Fighting depression, he saw his social life starting to unravel, and by the age of 30, he knew for sure he wouldn't be able to perform live much longer. The question of the rest of his career, really the rest of his life, seemed to depend on the answers he gave in these six pieces of the Opus 18.

The Middle Quartets — Opus 59: The “Rasumovsky” Quartets

The three string quartets of Beethoven's Opus 59, despite being three of his most enduringly popular

pieces today, incited some of the most antagonistic and negative responses that his music would ever receive. His student Carl Czerny reported, “When Schuppanzigh's quartet first played the F Major Quartet, they laughed and were convinced Beethoven was playing a trick on them and that it was not the quartet he had promised.” “Surely you do not consider this music?” asked the bemused violinist Felix Radicati. “Not for you,” replied the confident composer, “but for a later age.”

The six years (1800–1806) between the completion of the Opus 18 quartets and the completion of the Opus 59s, though perhaps the most creative and productive of Beethoven's entire life, were shot through with intense personal struggles. He endured a painfully failed love affair; he was shamed by his younger brother's shotgun wedding to a woman he loathed; his increasing deafness

became ever more difficult to hide and was threatening to derail his professional and personal life. In 1802 he wrote a document, known today as the Heiligenstadt Testament, to be read like a will in the case of his untimely death. This declaration reads as a personal statement of his determination to overcome his personal sufferings, to conquer through music. Although addressed to his family and friends, it is a message to the world at large and to posterity: Beethoven the “hero” in the realm of art refuses to let his act of creation be defined by his suffering. In fact, the trials he faces only spur him on.

The years following this testament were studded with success as Beethoven literally conquered every important genre in music one by one, each time with a groundbreaking and perennially popular work: the ballet (*Creatures of Prometheus*), solo piano repertoire

(*Waldstein Sonata*), symphony (*Eroica*), oratorio (*Christ on the Mount of Olives*), opera (*Fidelio*), and the concerto (*Violin Concerto and Piano Concerto No. 4*); this list is by no means exhaustive. By the fall of 1806, while putting the finishing touches on this heroic series of quartets, Beethoven, no doubt looking back on all these triumphs at the moment of completion, writes in the margins of his Op 59, No. 3 sketch: “let your deafness be no longer a secret, even in art.” He had truly triumphed, most especially in the face of his own fears, and left an enduring and personal message of struggle, hope and valor for anyone to listen to in the Opus 59 trilogy.

Perhaps more than any other pieces in the repertoire, the message of this music speaks for itself. This is truly music written by one to inspire all, despite suffering and setbacks, to great deeds; to be true to yourself and to the

promise within. It is music that looks always with heroism and hope to the future. It is not about the past. In Beethoven's own words, this is music "for you," for each of us, now in this "later age," and for every later age to come.

Opus 74 and Opus 95 — Beethoven in Transition

The year 1809 marked an important change in Beethoven's life: he was awarded a perpetual annuity by three wealthy patrons (Archduke Rudolf, Princes Lichky and Lobkowitz), so he would no longer have to live month-to-month solely off his commissions. In a very real sense, he had "arrived." His status as the leading Viennese composer of his day had already been firmly established in the European cultural scene, and now, as he neared forty, Beethoven had hopes for a calmer life; he even began looking

seriously for a wife. The fair hopes of this year were quickly dashed by the invasion of Vienna by the French that May, and the destruction and hardship they brought with them. Beethoven reportedly spent much of the bombardment with his head wrapped in a pillow in his brother's cellar to protect what remained of his hearing. His no longer robust general health was shaken by the experience, and once it was all over and Vienna fell, he wrote absolutely no music for the next three months. When he did begin writing again, it was with the familiar and intimate form of the string quartet, in the form of Opus 74, "the Harp." This piece can be seen as an attempt to return to normalcy, the recapturing of a happy dream; the form and length are very similar to the three Opus 59s of a few years previous, yet the general mood is more warm and gentle than these more heroic pieces. Beethoven no longer had something to prove; but

for the first time his goal was rather to attempt to bring into being a dream for something better into our harsh world.

Though he planned to follow the Opus 74 with at least one other quartet (sketches for a never-written C Major quartet exist), life, full of publishers and business as usual, got in his way, and it wasn't until 1810 that he settled down seriously to write the next quartet in F minor.

The Opus 95 quartet, subtitled "Serioso," is one of the best known of all Beethoven's quartets, and truly it encapsulates the stereotyped personality of his middle-aged years that we most associate with the composer today. Terse (it is one of the shortest quartets), shocking, angry, unpredictable, impetuous, and dramatic are all words that could describe the wild-haired man himself

as well as this music. Gone is the dream world of Opus 74; in its place is raw emotion. Each movement is very short, almost compressed—so much coming through in such very little time. The drama of the first movement, the mystic song of the second, the heroic anger of the third and the pleading anxiety of the last all whirl by at breakneck speed. The fact that the last movement ends with some of the swiftest and most exhilarating music ever written for quartet seems in seconds to whisk the listener off his feet and into the air in a way only the middle-aged Master could accomplish.

Beethoven was clear in his letters that Opus 95 was "written for a small circle of connoisseurs, and never meant to be heard by the general public." Indeed, though complete, Beethoven did not even pursue publishing the work until a few years later, in 1816.



The Late Quartets — Opus 127, 132, 130 and 133 — The “Galitsin” Quartets (1824-25)

It wasn't until twelve years after the completion of Opus 95 that Beethoven returned to the quartet genre. Much of these twelve years are what is commonly termed Beethoven's "dry" period, in which he barely wrote anything at all. Unsuccessful in finding a wife, and with an annuity rapidly diminishing in value through post-war inflation, he was emotionally embroiled in money troubles, his brother's death, a failed lawsuit with his sister-in-law, and continued conflict with his nephew and ward, Karl. Despite earlier career success, by age 50 the grueling trials of real life had caught up to him with a vengeance. To top it off, the new tastes of the Viennese public had moved on to the frothy music of Italian bel canto opera, and held little new interest in his brand of serious Germanic expression.

Worst of all, he seemed to have nothing more to say musically in any case. Though still revered, perhaps the grizzled old composer was all written out. In this context it is even more astonishing that Beethoven could seemingly rebound overnight almost out of nowhere, creating in the last years of his life some of the greatest, most inspiring and monumental works of art music of all time: the *Missa Solemnis*, the Ninth Symphony and the Late Quartets.

In 1822 a young Russian Prince and chamber music fan named Nikolas Galitsin first brought up the idea of a new set of quartets to the famous yet completely deaf Beethoven, promising to pay handsomely for three new ones. Busy as Beethoven suddenly was with the Ninth Symphony, the first sketches for a quartet weren't even begun until 1824. Nonetheless, the work progressed quickly and was ready for a public

performance and publication later that year.

The Opus 127 quartet in E-flat in some ways parallels the earlier Opus 74 quartet in E-flat: it too is the capturing of the form of a dream, yet now on an unprecedented scale of grandeur. It can be viewed almost as an inspirational symphony in scope, but with an uttermost intimacy of expression. The quartet has a majesty and glory, and even a mysterious strangeness about it that is truly otherworldly. It is a glimpse into the mind of a visionary, or rather a visionary's glimpse into the mind of God. It is the experience of a man's spirit dancing on the edge of the beyond, bearing witness as he goes to the ultimate transformative power of the human spirit, to hope itself. Perhaps it is only in the face of harshest adversity that the best of our human nature is truly revealed in all of its freedom and joy. And just as in the

Ninth Symphony, it is in the music of Opus 127 that Beethoven shows us the way.

The A minor Quartet Opus 132 was written during the first 5 months of 1825, closely following the completion of Opus 127 in December 1824. During most of these months Beethoven was seriously and dangerously ill, suffering from an intestinal inflammatory disease that alarmed both the patient and his doctor. To make matters worse, the extremely stressful family situation involving Beethoven's 18-year-old ward Karl was also coming to an explosive head during this time: these months were full of personal confrontations, recriminations, mutual personal threats and outright rebellions (by both uncle and nephew). In such a context, it's no wonder that the Opus 132 covers the tremendous emotional ground that it does, but it's even more astonishing that under such circumstances it could

be so quickly written and coherently organized.

Opus 130 is a very different work entirely: its wit and charm, and sheer variety of characters it contains remind me of watching an opera full of ever changing sets and costumes; the constant contrasts keep the listener entertained and guessing from beginning to end... What doesn't this composition have up its sleeve? It even has TWO finales!

The story of its two finales does deserve special mention here. Beethoven's original idea was to crown this third and final Galitsin quartet with a remarkable final movement: the "Große Fuge" or Grand Fugue. This ground-breaking movement is a 20-minute exploration of contrapuntal techniques, dissonance and titanic emotional extremes, but it also thematically and emotionally ties together the various movements of Opus 130 that precede it. It was

a revolutionary way to end a string quartet, and Beethoven was very satisfied with his achievement; he sent Galitsin a copy of it in this form and made arrangements with the publishing house Artaria to have it published this way as well.

A year later, in March 1826, the quartet received its first live performance (though it was still yet to be published) by Beethoven's friends the Schuppanzigh Quartet — and although the piece generally was a success (the Presto and Alla danza tedesca were encored), the Grand Fugue completely mystified the audience, and from all reports the performers too, who struggled to play it accurately. This is no surprise, as this music sounds contemporary and is challenging to play even today — but the gossip about its difficulty and strangeness began to circulate around Vienna. Alarmed, Beethoven's publisher grew concerned

that he wouldn't be able to sell the work with the Grand Fugue as finale, and enlisted Beethoven's friends to try to convince him to make a substitution. Artaria offered to pay Beethoven an additional fee and publish the Fugue separately if he would write a different (and easier to play) final movement. After five or six months of back and forth, and the strong persuasion of friends and the exchange of cash, Beethoven agreed to separate the Grand Fugue out as Opus 133, and set to work on writing another, lighter finale.

But this was already a year in the future! At the time of its completion in 1825 it is clear that there existed no doubt in Beethoven's mind as to the effectiveness of the Fugue as the finale of Opus 130; and frankly it is clear that composing a substitute ending was not his own idea at all. There is no denying that separating out the Fugue in 1826 as its own Opus 133 meant that it

was hardly heard again in the century following Beethoven's death — and consequently it was not until the 20th century that it was recognized as the masterpiece it truly is.

The Final Chapter Opus 131, Opus 135 and the Last Finale (1826)

Despite finishing the three quartets of the Galitsin commission, miraculously Beethoven found he had not yet exhausted his ideas for the string quartet, and by the beginning of 1826 he had already begun on yet another one, the Opus 131, which was written from January to July of that year. Upon its completion, Beethoven considered the Opus 131 to be his greatest achievement in the quartet form: it is a work completely unified and uninterrupted, based on a single theme. Its seven movements are played together without pause, and in fact the movements are

given numbers only and no true titles; each one is only a stage in the endless flow of the work.

Like a mysterious vision of another universe, Opus 131 seems complete in and of itself, containing its own natural evolution, forces and laws, its own life and development. Like our own universe, its deepest meaning is hidden from us yet at the same time everywhere evident; the keys to understanding its own unique life lie completely within itself and itself alone. To verbalize what Beethoven meant by this work is impossible, as the music itself says so much that is utterly beyond words. As a listener you must give yourself completely to this piece and allow it to reveal its mysteries in its own time and in its own way. It makes no compromises and will not meet you halfway. Yet what it has to share with you about the very nature of existence is a priceless secret that cannot be

apprehended this way in any other art form. It repays your investment of attention one hundred-fold, and as such is the very definition of "Art."

By August of 1826 the situation with Beethoven's nephew had reached its own desperate climax. Beethoven had forcibly wrested the guardianship of his nephew from his sister-in-law Johanna several years previously after the untimely death of his brother. Beethoven had brought up this teenage boy to have the strongest antipathy to Karl's mother, but at the same time the boy rebelled against the harsh strictness and even cruelty of his uncle, clearly feeling estranged from both. Now, at age eighteen, this young man was a simmering stew of resentment and anger, and his sanity had reached a breaking point. On August 5, Karl snapped: he pawned his watch, bought a pistol, and having written a suicide note, climbed a hill and shot himself

in the head. Unbelievably, he failed to kill himself, and wounded with a bullet in his skull, he was taken by a stranger to his mother's house in Vienna, where his uncle found him. This is perhaps the most shocking incident of Beethoven's entire personal life, all the more so because he held himself emotionally responsible for this boy he thought of as his son. His last dream of family happiness lay in bloody ruins at his feet, and at long last Beethoven was forced to see himself and his family in a harsh, but mercilessly truthful light. It was time for Beethoven to let go.

For the next three months Beethoven and Karl retired to the village of Gneixendorf in the Vienna countryside, to talk and to heal; it was a tentative time of reconciliation and rediscovery. As Karl's wounds scar and his hair grows back, arrangements are made to save him from the personal scandal created by his suicide attempt: he

will leave Vienna and enlist in the military, an idea that he himself embraced with excitement. It is also during these suddenly quiet months of personal reflection that the last works of Beethoven's last year were written: the Opus 135 quartet and the replacement finale for the Opus 130 quartet. Perhaps unsurprisingly under the circumstances, both these pieces share a lightness and a sense of release that was not heard in the quartets of the previous year; one might even hear in them a return to a certain pastoral spirit and simplicity. Nonetheless, the slow movement of Opus 135 is weighty with a sense of farewell, perhaps both to his nephew and to his own dreams. The final movement of Opus 135, entitled 'Muß es sein?' (Must it be?) is saturated with both deep pain and a giddy sense of final relief. To my ear, the replacement finale of Opus 130 shares far more stylistically with the Opus 135 quartet than with the

year-old Opus 130 quartet, which it was meant to complete. The twinges of humor, the feeling of release, the playful acceptance, and the simplicity of this lone movement echo the final bars of 'Es muß sein!' in its joyful mystery. There is even a sense of miraculous expectation that the two movements share...we are turning the final corner, and what is about to come next? The substitute finale of Opus 130 is a brilliant movement in its own right, and stands on its own as Beethoven's final composed work.

The emotional drain of these months was to prove the final straw that broke the camel's back as far as Beethoven's health was concerned. By December Beethoven was coughing up blood, having difficulty breathing, progressively less able to move, with swollen painful limbs and abdomen. It was clear to his doctors and friends that there was nothing to be done, and that years of

poor physical health and emotional strain were coming to their inevitable climax. Each week that passed brought the composer greater weakness and greater physical suffering, and by March 26th, 1827, Beethoven at age 56 was dead.

As we review the final year of Beethoven's life, and the absolutely final compositions of this great man's creative output, it is impossible not to hear the tragic elements of this music in their sad context. Yes, these works mark the difficult end of a fellow human being's life, and yes, the thoughts and emotions that the end of life provokes in each one of us are integral to the understanding of these pieces. Yet these works are so much more than ruminations on death and suffering. They are much more even than simple exhortations of hope in the face of death. Beethoven the man has much, much more to say about his

own life than simple despair and hope. These final great pieces of music are the true explorations of a great human soul, one who suffered much, failed at much, and yet despite it all, achieved so much. As works of art they answer no questions, nor do they provide facile solutions to the many uncertainties our human lives pose. These pieces are, however, the triumphs of a flawed person like ourselves, who, despite shortcomings and great odds, lived his dream to its fulfillment. They are messages, created for us at a great cost, meant to provoke and to inspire every human to truly consider what is most challenging and mysterious about our own lives. They contain in total honesty the ultimate contradictions of human existence, and form a priceless mirror in art of our very selves: what we feel, what we are and what we could be.

John Largess



Miró Quartet

The Miró Quartet — violinists Daniel Ching and William Fedkenheuer, violist John Largess, and cellist Joshua Gindele — is one of America's most celebrated string quartets. The Quartet has performed throughout the world on the most prestigious concert stages, earning accolades from critics and audiences alike. Based in Austin, TX, and thriving on the area's storied music scene, the Miró takes pride in finding new ways to communicate with audiences of all backgrounds while cultivating the longstanding tradition of chamber music.

The Miró began recording the complete Beethoven String Quartets in 2004, and released the first volume, featuring Opus 18 (with then second violinist Sandy Yamamoto) in 2005. The Quartet then went on to record and release four additional volumes comprising

Opus 59, 74, 95, 130, 133, and 131. The now completed cycle, including Opus 127, 132 and 135, represents not only Beethoven's journey as a composer, but also a 15-year journey for the Quartet. Among its other recordings are "Schubert Interrupted" featuring the composer's *Death and the Maiden* quartet and song with mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke, and "The Miró Quartet Live!" with Kevin Puts' *Credo*, composed for the Miró, and Dvořák's String Quartet in F major. The Miró is also featured in "Transcendence", an Emmy Award-winning documentary and multimedia project centered around a performance of Schubert's Quartet in G major on rare Stradivarius and Guarneri instruments.

Formed in 1995, the Miró was awarded first prize at several competitions including the Banff International String Quartet Competition and also received the Naumburg Chamber Music Award.

Committed to music education, members of the Quartet have given master classes at universities and conservatories throughout the world; and since 2003, the Miró has served as faculty string quartet-in-residence at the Butler School of Music at the University of Texas at Austin. In 2005, the Quartet became the first ensemble ever to be awarded an Avery Fisher Career Grant.

Together with former second violinist Sandy Yamamoto, featured on the op. 18 quartets recordings
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**CHRONOLOGICAL RECORDING
CREDITS:**

Beethoven Op. 18 (CD 1 & 2)

Executive producers **David Oliver &
Alison Ames**

Producer **Da-Hong Seetoo**

Session producer, Recording &
Mastering engineer **Da-Hong Seetoo**

*Recorded at The American Academy
of Arts & Letters, New York, NY, from
October 7-22, 2004.*

Beethoven Op. 59 (CD 3 & 4)

Executive producer **Glenn Richter**

Producer **The Miró Quartet**

Session producer, Recording &
Mastering engineer **Da-Hong Seetoo**

*Recorded at Jessen Auditorium, The
University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX,
May 14-25, 2012.*

Beethoven Op. 74 & 95 (CD 5)

Executive Producers **David & Amy
Fulton**

Producer **Da-Hong Seetoo**

Session producer, Recording &
Mastering engineer **Da-Hong Seetoo**

*Recorded at Illsley Ball Nordstrom
Recital Hall, Benaroya Hall, Seattle, WA,
March 15-19, 2015.*

**Beethoven Op. 130/133/135
(CD 7 & 8)**

Executive producers **David & Amy
Fulton**

Producer **Da-Hong Seetoo**

Session producer, Recording &
Mastering engineer **Da-Hong Seetoo**

*Recorded at Bastyr Chapel, Bastyr
University, Kenmore, WA, September 28
– October 6, 2016.*

Beethoven Op. 131 (CD 6)

Executive producers **David & Amy
Fulton**

Producer **Da-Hong Seetoo**

Session producer, Recording &
Mastering engineer **Da-Hong Seetoo**

*Recorded at Bastyr Chapel, Bastyr
University, Kenmore, WA, September
26-29, 2017*

Beethoven Op. 132 (CD 8)

Executive producers **David & Amy
Fulton**

Producer **Da-Hong Seetoo**

Session producer, Recording &
Mastering engineer **Da-Hong Seetoo**

*Recorded at Bastyr Chapel, Bastyr
University, Kenmore, WA, October 8-12,
2018.*

Beethoven Op. 127 (CD 6)

Executive Producers **David & Amy
Fulton**

Producer **Da-Hong Seetoo**

Session producer, Recording &
Mastering engineer **Da-Hong Seetoo**

*Recorded at Bastyr Chapel, Bastyr
University, Kenmore, WA, February
17-20, 2019.*

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