

Winnipeg Free Press, May 05, 2005
Quartet Shines in Beethoven Marathon
By Gwenda Nemerofsky

Nothing adds more to a good musical performance than the musicians who convey to the audience their own enjoyment. Last night, the Lafayette String Quartet strode onto the stage of Eckhardt-Gramatté Hall with broad smiles on their faces and proceeded to play three Beethoven string quartets with unmitigated vigour and glee. Their enthusiasm was entirely infectious.

This is the fourth in the six-concert Beethovenfest put on by the Virtuosi Concert Series, marking the achievement of their mission (begun in 1999) to present the core of Beethoven's chamber works. This festival is a marathon in itself.

The four ladies making up this exciting and ambitious group, Ann Elliott-Goldschmid, violin, Sharon Stanis, violin, Joanna Hood, viola and Pamela Highbaugh Aloni, cello, have taken on a monumental task and are dispensing with it in style.

Opening with the *Opus 18, no. 4 in C minor*, one of the early quartets, they displayed wonderful precision and an instinctive responsiveness to one another's playing that can only come from years of making music as a team.

Their balance was excellent, every voice allowed to sing.

Elliott-Goldschmid played with a great deal of passion and urgency, performing smooth transitions into effective lyrical phrases.

Never losing the momentum, the ensemble was exacting in the fugue-like introduction of the second movement, then danced through the playful melody that followed.

The final movement was almost like a gypsy dance with a true bounce to it performed with great excitement and gusto.

Beethoven transcribed the *Opus 14 in F Major* from a piano sonata.

The group played this in a remarkably relaxed manner, their candid demeanour making the audience comfortable, as if we were being entertained in our own home.

The allegretto was stately and rather formal, while the allegro was bouncy and light-hearted.

Lastly, the ensemble played the *Opus 132 in A minor*, one of the final quartets which Beethoven wrote while in ill health and completely deaf. More complex and emotionally charged than the earlier works, it was a fitting end to the evening.

It began introspectively, the group capturing the sombre mood, then built gradually in intensity. Highbaugh Aloni played the solo cello line beautifully and with raw feeling.

This was a night of inspiring music. Highbaugh Aloni asked a good question during the concert: "What would Beethoven have thought if he knew that in 2005 someone would be playing all his quartets over six nights in Winnipeg?" In a good context, it brings to mind that other composition, not quite as old – *Roll over Beethoven*.