

Jupiter Quartet brings sparkling performance to Tudor House

by Samantha Spaccasi



A hot and humid Friday night did not stop the Jupiter Quartet from putting on a stellar performance at the Gilmour Academy's Tudor House. The group performed a "Beethoven sandwich" — two pieces by Beethoven with a delicious Ligeti work in the middle — for a fantastic opening to ENCORE Chamber Music's second season.

The intimate setting was perfect for an evening of chamber music. Gathered in a richly decorated, wood-paneled room complete with grand portraits, the audience was transported back in time, as if we were aristocrats in a Parisian salon in the mid-1800s.

After a brief introduction from ENCORE director Jinjoo Cho, the Jupiters launched into Beethoven's *String Quartet No. 10* with precision. The group was originally set to perform the composer's Second Quartet, yet the slight change in programming was no cause for alarm, as the Jupiters played the Tenth beautifully.

From the outset, the group demonstrated excellent communication, trading the melodies with ease. Though first violinist Nelson Lee had some intonation issues, this was forgivable thanks to his and the group's excellent musicianship. The Quartet brought out the many voices from the lush texture, showcasing each artist's personality. They played this lively piece with color, motion, and delightfully creative phrasing.

After a brief wardrobe change, cellist Dan McDonough, who informed the audience that his shirt was now drying off in front of a fan, gave an introduction to Ligeti's "Metamorphose Nocturnes." Loaded with pain, paranoia, and anxiety, it's considered the first mature work by Ligeti, a Hungarian Jew whose parents were sent to Auschwitz. The

piece is disturbing and sublime, the soundtrack to a nightmare that turns out to be real.

The Quartet's wonderful use of dynamics added to the piece's menacing quality. The technically-demanding work incorporates slides and unexpected percussive elements, but the Jupiters avoided any pitfalls, performing the difficult elements with ease. It was the highlight of the evening.

After a brief intermission, the group's rejuvenating performance of Beethoven's monumental *String Quartet No. 14* brought light back into the room. McDonough's playing was rich and full, grounding the piece well. Violist Liz Freivogel produced a smooth, velvety tone from her instrument, while Lee and second violinist Meg Freivogel were a dynamic duo throughout. The Jupiters performed this work with a bouncy, playful flair, easily switching among the many moods the work requires. The performance concluded with well-deserved, thunderous applause in appreciation of this wonderful evening.

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