audite

BEETHOVEN
COMPLETE STRING QUARTETS

QUARTETTO DI CREMONA

8 SACD

audite

SACD 1

String Quartet in B flat major, Op. 18, No. 6	***24:08***
Allegro con brio	*5:54*
Adagio ma non troppo	*6:38*
Scherzo. Allegro – Trio	*3:10*
'La Malinconia'. Adagio – Allegretto quasi Allegro	*8:26*
String Quartet in F minor, Op. 95	***20:01***
Allegro con brio	*4:10*
Allegretto ma non troppo	*6:37*
Allegro assai vivace ma serioso – Più Allegro	*4:32*
Larghetto – Allegretto agitato – Allegro	*4:42*
String Quartet in F major, Op. 135	***23:35***
Allegretto	*6:28*
Vivace	*3:22*
Lento assai e cantante tranquillo	*6:49*
Grave, ma non troppo tratto – Allegro	*6:56*

recording: September 3 - 5, 2012

violin I: Guarneri del Gesù, 1733
violin II: Giovanni Battista Guadagnini, 1752
viola: Anonymous instrument from 1680, Piemontese school
cello: Marino Capicchioni, 1974 Rimini

audite

SACD 2

String Quartet in E minor, Op. 59, No. 2 'Razumovsky No. 2'	***34:23***
Allegro	*9:54*
Molto Adagio	*12:10*
Allegretto – Maggiore (Thème russe)	*6:38*
Finale. Presto – Più presto	*5:41*
String Quartet in E flat major, Op. 127	***35:14***
Maestoso – Allegro	*6:33*
Adagio, ma non troppo e molto cantabile – Andante con moto – Adagio molto espressivo	*13:52*
Scherzando vivace – Presto – Tempo I	*8:01*
Finale – Allegro comodo	*6:48*

recording: September 3 - 5, 2012

violin I: Guarneri del Gesù, 1733
violin II: Giovanni Battista Guadagnini, 1752
viola: Pietro Gargini, 2012 Pistoia
cello: Marino Capicchioni, 1974 Rimini

audite

SACD 3

String Quartet in C minor, Op. 18, No. 4	***24:05***
Allegro ma non tanto	*8:39*
Andante scherzoso quasi Allegretto	*7:01*
Menuetto. Allegretto – Trio	*3:37*
Allegro – Prestissimo	*4:48*
'Great Fugue' in B flat major, Op. 133	***15:13***
Overtura. Allegro – Meno mosso e moderato – Allegro – Fuga – Meno mosso e moderato – Allegro molto e con brio – Meno mosso e moderato – Allegro molto e con brio	
String Quartet in F major, Op. 59, No. 1	***39:13***
Allegro	*10:05*
Allegretto vivace e sempre scherzando	*8:45*
Adagio molto e mesto	*12:16*
Thème russe. Allegro	*8:07*

recording: June 3 -5, 2013

violin I: Guarneri del Gesù, 1733
violin II: Giovanni Battista Guadagnini, 1752 (*Große Fuge*)
Salvatore Scalia, 2012 (op. 18 Nr. 4 und op. 59 Nr. 1)
viola: Pietro Gargini, 2012 (*Große Fuge*)
Alberto Giordano, 1995 (op. 18 Nr. 4 und op. 59 Nr. 1)
cello: Marino Capicchioni, 1974 Rimini

audite

SACD 4

String Quartet in F major, Op. 18, No. 1	***28:48***
Allegro con brio	*9:17*
Adagio affettuoso ed appassionato	*9:02*
Scherzo. Allegro molto – Trio	*3:25*
Allegro	*7:04*
String Quartet in C sharp minor, Op. 131, No. 14	***38:55***
Adagio ma non troppo e molto espressivo	*7:14*
Allegro molto vivace	*3:12*
Allegro moderato	*0:45*
Andante ma non troppo e molto cantabile – più mosso – Andante moderato e lusinghiero – Adagio – Allegretto – Adagio ma non troppo e semplice – Allegretto – Allegretto	*13:45*
Presto	*5:22*
Adagio, quasi un poco andante	*1:44*
Allegro	6:53

recording: March 12 - 15, 2014

violin I: N. Amati, 1640
violin II: P. Antonio Testore, 1750 Milan
viola: A. Poggi 1952
cello: Marino Capicchioni, 1974 Rimini

audite

SACD 5

String Quintet in C major, Op. 29*	***35:06***
Allegro moderato	*10:53*
Adagio molto espressivo	*10:49*
Scherzo. Allegro	*4:00*
Presto	*9:24*
String Quartet in A minor, Op. 132, No. 15	***45:24***
Assai sostenuto – Allegro	*9:56*
Allegro ma non tanto	*8:10*
„Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenden an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart" Molto adagio – Neue Kraft fühlend. Andante – Molto adagio – Andante – Molto adagio. Mit innigster Empfindung	*13:13*
Alla marcia, assai vivace	*2:11*
Allegro appassionato	*6:54*

*** LAWRENCE DUTTON, viola**

recording: November 24 - 27, 2014

violin I: N. Amati, 1640
violin II: P. Antonio Testore, 1750 Milan
viola: Gioacchino Torazzi, Turin ca. 1680-1720
viola (Lawrence Dutton): Samuel Zygmuntowicz (Brooklyn, NY 2003)
cello: Dom Nicolò Amati, 1712 Bologna

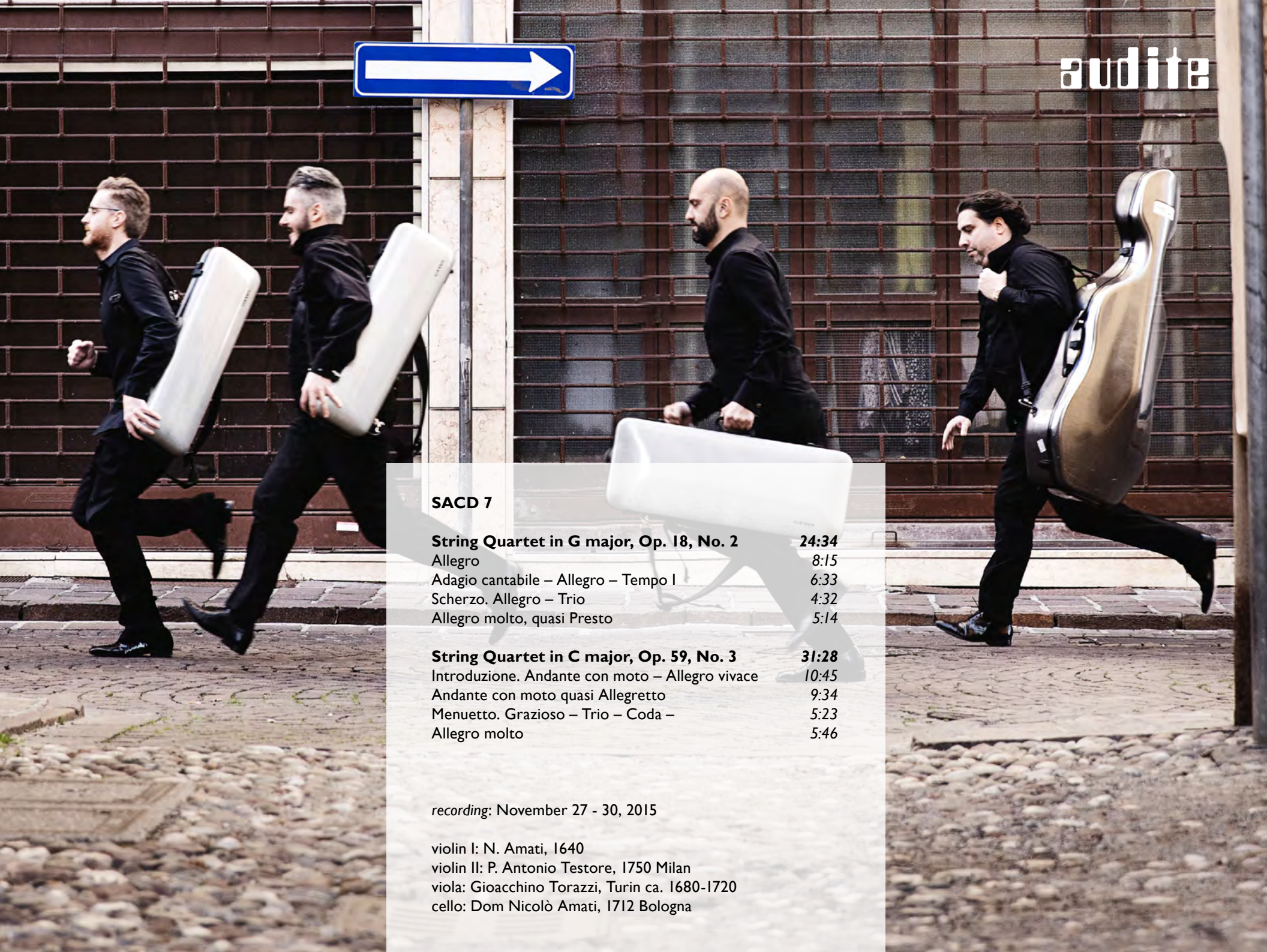
audite

SACD 6

String Quartet in A major, Op. 18, No. 5	***27:44***
Allegro	*6:36*
Menuetto – Trio	*4:37*
Andante cantabile	*10:21*
Allegro	*6:09*
String Quartet in B-flat major, Op. 130	***42:57***
Adagio ma non troppo – Allegro	*13:56*
Presto	*2:02*
Poco scherzoso. Andante con moto ma non troppo	*6:51*
Alla Danza tedesca. Allegro assai	*3:11*
Cavatina. Adagio molto espressivo	*6:40*
Finale. Allegro	*10:15*

recording: November 27 - 30, 2015

violin I: Giovanni Battista Guadagnini, 1776 Turin
violin II: P. Antonio Testore, 1750 Milan
viola: Gioacchino Torazzi, Turin ca. 1680-1720
cello: Dom Nicolò Amati, 1712 Bologna



audite

SACD 7

String Quartet in G major, Op. 18, No. 2	***24:34***
Allegro	*8:15*
Adagio cantabile – Allegro – Tempo I	*6:33*
Scherzo. Allegro – Trio	*4:32*
Allegro molto, quasi Presto	*5:14*
String Quartet in C major, Op. 59, No. 3	***31:28***
Introduzione. Andante con moto – Allegro vivace	*10:45*
Andante con moto quasi Allegretto	*9:34*
Menuetto. Grazioso – Trio – Coda –	*5:23*
Allegro molto	*5:46*

recording: November 27 - 30, 2015

violin I: N. Amati, 1640
violin II: P. Antonio Testore, 1750 Milan
viola: Gioacchino Torazzi, Turin ca. 1680-1720
cello: Dom Nicolò Amati, 1712 Bologna

SACD 8

String Quartet in D major, Op. 18, No. 3	***25:41***
Allegro	*7:56*
Andante con moto	*8:23*
Allegro	*3:12*
Presto	*6:10*
String Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 74 'Harp'	***30:41***
Poco Adagio – Allegro	*9:32*
Adagio ma non troppo	*9:14*
Presto	*5:10*
Allegretto con Variazioni	*6:45*

recording: November 27 - 30, 2015

violin I: N. Amati, 1640
violin II: P. Antonio Testore, 1750 Milan
viola: Gioacchino Torazzi, Turin ca. 1680-1720
cello: Dom Nicolò Amati, 1712 Bologna

SACD 1

Between Genoa and Cremona

Visitors to the venerable Palazzo Tursi in Genoa are asked to close the heavy wooden door to the "Paganini Room" carefully behind them: this temperature-controlled, gloomy Genovese hall contains immensely precious treasures, including Paganini's violin from the Cremona workshop of Giuseppe Guarneri "del Gesù" which the wizard played so powerfully that he called it "il mio cannone violino" (my cannon violin).

Cristiano Gualco suggested I go and see this place of pilgrimage for the greatest musical son of Genoa during my visit to the city. Cristiano is the first violin of the Quartetto di Cremona which has not had a change of players for sixteen years – and all of whose players come from Genoa! The fact that they did not call themselves "Quartetto di Genova" is down to several reasons, one of which is Niccolò Paganini. "Genoa is too closely associated with his name; one can identify with him as a violinist, but not as a string quartet. And we don't just want to play the three early works that survive by Paganini."

Cristiano speaks rapidly, has a fine sense of irony and is well-versed in music history. With his red curly hair, he seems like the intellectual leader of the group which is made up of four highly individual musicians. Paolo Andreoli, the second violin with a small beard, is a trained chef and a master of dry remarks. Simone Gramaglia, the violist of South Italian origins, epitomises the sensitive centre of the quartet whilst Giovanni Scaglione at the cello is a dependable foundation, both personally and musically, and thus represents a strong opposite pole towards the top part.

Cristiano and Simone are two of the founding members of the quartet, which was established in Cremona in the year 2000. Both were graduates of the "Accademia Walter Stauffer" where luminaries such as the violinist Salvatore Accardo, the violist Bruno Giuranna and the cellist Rocco Filippini gave master-classes. Thus the town of Cremona obtained its rightful place in the name of the quartet – and kept it even when the second violin and cello of the original formation left after only two years. It was Piero Farulli, the viola player of the Quartetto Italiano, who persuaded his young colleague Cristiano Gualco not to give up the quartet but to view it as a "vocation" and continue it, come what may. Together with its new members, Paolo and Giovanni, the ensemble was given its fine-tuning by their mentor Farulli in Fiesole and the violist Hatto Beyerle. Paolo recalls that "Beyerle was a brilliant pedagogue, but also an expert on the classical era, who taught us the most important rules of quartet playing. Farulli tended to be more instinctive and was not so philologically minded. But he was a great musician and taught us a lot about the sound and power of Beethoven's idiom."

Melancholy and a difficult decision

This power is demonstrated by the very beginning of the String Quartet Op. 18 No 6 which opens the recording of the complete Beethoven quartets by the Quartetto di Cremona. The pressing accompanying rhythm of the central parts and the theme in the first violin which is answered by the cello are propelled forward as though they were released from a drawn bow. The first bars introduce the energy, range and characters of the instruments: the presence of all four players is called for.

Franz Joseph Maximilian Lobkowicz, one of Vienna's most important music patrons and a competent violinist himself, instructed Beethoven, after his years of study with Joseph Haydn and Antonio Salieri, to explore the string quartet. By the summer of 1800 he had written his six Quartets Opus 18 – a collection of samples of composing in four parts where Beethoven not only moved on from the technical abilities of amateur musicians but also revolutionised the quartet style of his time.

The last piece of Op. 18, of course, is shrouded in mystery. For three movements, everything moves along in keeping with tradition, with Beethoven offering up the finest quartet writing according to his training by Haydn and Mozart. But suddenly, before the serene *Allegretto* finale, underneath the heading of "La Malinconia", an *Adagio* strides along at a measured pace, brooding over bold harmonies and harsh dynamic contrasts. There are no surviving explanatory statements by the composer regarding the title of this gloomy *Adagio*; however, it has become traditional among his biographers to associate this movement with Beethoven's problematic personal life at that time, just before his thirtieth birthday. "I can tell you that my life is miserable", he wrote to his childhood friend Wegeler in 1801, "for nearly two years I have avoided social occasions since it is impossible for me to say to people that I am deaf". Isolation from society and anxious brooding over his own state – it does not seem far-fetched to assume that "La Malinconia" reflects this situation in his life, whereas the following *Allegretto* seems to symbolise the dull distractions of an unattainably "normal" society. "On the whole, Beethoven's Op. 18 is still firmly rooted in tradition", according to Cristiano of the Quartetto di Cremona, "but 'La Malinconia' is strongly reminiscent of the pathos of his late quartets, creating a meaningful arch towards the last Quartet, Op. 135".

Regarding "pathos", the violinist does not just refer to the finale of Op. 135 bearing the famous motto "The difficult decision" ("Must it be? – It must be!") which, musically, rises far above the anecdotes that Beethoven's biographers have connected to this statement. Cristiano thinks generally of the confusing grammar in Beethoven's late œuvre, his inner alienation from the external "contemporary style" and his way of placing conventional expressions and transitions next to highly subjective ideas. It is a radicalism of old age which, even in a more moderate form, can be found in the Quartet in F major which was completed in the autumn of 1826 and premièred at the Vienna Musikverein after Beethoven's death.

Even in the first movement particles of motifs flutter about as richly and inventively as autumn leaves, without growing into regular themes: a looping figure at the beginning, allusions to popular tunes, more serious chords, running passages. This *Allegretto* is dominated by fragments, and the following movements also present surprises. The scherzo (*Vivace*) stumbles along with syncopations and hectic accents; an inconspicuous ornament compacts into a wild *ostinato* in the lower parts and an even wilder violin solo in the "trio". In the *Lento* we hear, once again, the Beethoven of hymn-like chants which have become infinitely spiritualised and transfigured ever since the middle movement of the *Sonate pathétique*. In the finale the dramaturgical juxtaposition of an anxious question in the *Grave* introduction and a relaxed confirmation in the *Allegro* is easily comprehensible as overcoming pathos and tension through a freely flowing motion and folk-like simplicity. "This is a very strange movement", Cristiano thinks, "as language is directly transferred onto music, influencing its idea."

Pioneers of Quartet Playing in Italy

The instinctive musicianship of the magnificent Quartetto Italiano and an historically minded examination of manuscripts, first editions and treatises – this fertile combination shapes the playing of the Quartetto di Cremona. In 2011 its members began teaching quartet playing at the institution where they began playing themselves – the "Accademia Walter Stauffer". However, tuition in the discipline of string quartet playing is still pioneering work in Italy for "although there are many quartets in Italy, only few really work daily and even fewer have made it their profession".

All the same, the Quartetto di Cremona is doing a lot to promote the image, repertoire and playing culture of the string quartet in its home country. In cooperation with the long-standing "Società del Quartetto di Milano" it will be performing the complete Beethoven string quartets at the Conservatoire "Giuseppe Verdi" over the coming seasons; so far, the quartet's discography comprises works by Boccherini and Haydn and up to the contemporary composer from Bologna, Fabio Vacchi. And the Stradivarius Foundation of Cremona has engaged the ensemble for the project "Friends of Stradivarius" which involves playing instruments from the glorious Cremona violin-making school that have been made available by collectors and museums.

With their recording series of the complete Beethoven string quartets, the four musicians from Genoa now wish to bring to fruition their experience gathered over the last ten years of the technique and sound of the historical instruments, of Beethoven's idiom and its historically correct realisation and also of later repertoire up to the modern age. Between the early Quartet Op. 18 No 6 and the last work in that genre, the Quartetto di Cremona plays a work from Beethoven's middle period which, due to its ruthless grasp and fragmented tonal language, is singular in the composer's quartet œuvre. "This Op. 95 is one of the strangest quartets: very compact, almost minimalist", says Cristiano who, as first violin, often has to play in extreme registers whilst his colleagues are equally challenged.

Beethoven completed his Quartet in F minor in 1810 as an endpoint and also a preview to future creative problems; he kept it the drawer for a long time. "The quartet was written for a small circle of connoisseurs and may never be performed publicly", he wrote to the London conductor Sir George Smart. Never before or again did Beethoven open a quartet as brilliantly as with the imperious unison barrel which introduces the work without prior warning. The brevity of the statement and the abrupt series of strong contrasts even at the beginning come as a surprise – wild, purely instrumentally designed unison passages are followed by a mild *cantabile*; choppy sonorities with threatening basses are followed by the sweetest harmonies. The slow movement is no hymnic *Adagio* but an *Allegretto* with an extended fugue at its centre. A rhythmically refined *Scherzo* is followed by the finale which summarises the characteristics of the entire work – brevity of statement, drama and density of the course of events – in a restless 6/8 metre. Only at the end does the tension release entirely in an exultant F major stretto.

Beethoven's Op. 95 challenges the strength and concentration of every quartet. When one hears it played by the Quartetto di Cremona, one is glad that its founders did not disappear into various orchestras or conservatoires after their difficult beginning, but that they opted for the harder, but also wonderful, path of the string quartet.

audite

SACD 2

Digital pastoral

The country estate of the "Fondazione Spinola Banna per l'Arte" is one of the most magnificent estates in Piedmont, close to Turin and the legendary wine-growing regions of Langhe and Montferrat. During the course of the centuries, residential dwellings and utilitarian buildings have been built on mediaeval foundations. The church which belongs to the estate nestles next to the elegant manor house, whilst the mighty quadrangle of the farm buildings reminds us of the agricultural use of the extensive surrounding fields. A few years ago, the Marchese Spinola, who owns the architectural island within the undulating corn fields, began opening some of his buildings for the fine arts. Consequently, each year a number of visual artists, but also renowned contemporary composers such as Toshio Hosokawa, Hugues Dufourt and Salvatore Sciarrino, come to Banna in order to pass on their craft and their experience to students.

Sometimes, however, it can happen that classical sounds waft over from the music room of the manor house into the carefully groomed gardens: furious *sforzato* attacks from Beethoven's String Quartets Op. 59, or one of those yearningly infinite cavatinas of the master's late œuvre. Then the farmers at Banna know that the Quartetto di Cremona is recording another volume in its Beethoven series. In an adjoining room, Ludger Böckenhoff, chief executive of audite, has installed a mobile recording studio amongst marble vases and gilded mirrors, thus uniting the Franciscan solitude of this place with modern digital technology, the outer harmony of nature and art with the greatest focus on Beethoven's scores.

On the schedule is the middle work of the so-called "Razumovsky" Quartets Op. 59, as well as the Quartet Op. 127, the first of Beethoven's late quartets. These two quartets are separated by nearly sixteen years, during which Beethoven experienced the suffering of the Napoleonic Wars, the hope for a liberal reorganisation of Europe, as well as the restoration period which bitterly disappointed him. After the jubilation of his Seventh Symphony (1812), Beethoven's symphonic work, as well as his compositional work in general, came to a standstill. His crisis was unmissable and his contemporaries had all but written him off when Beethoven made a powerful and uncompromising return with his late piano sonatas, string quartets and his Ninth Symphony.

Russia in Vienna – the String Quartet Op. 59 No 2

In 1806 Beethoven created (following his Op. 18) his second major string quartet cycle after working predominantly on his symphonic cycle – the "Eroica" – and the two early versions of the opera *Leonore*. The inspiration towards the three Quartets Op. 59 was twofold. One was the Russian envoy at the imperial court in Vienna, Count Andrey Kirillovich Razumovsky who, even during catastrophic times of war, did not give up his musical patronage but instead hosted concerts and musicians at his residence. For him, Beethoven personalised the quartets with "Thèmes russes" (Russian themes) which must surely have pleased their commissioner.

The second source of inspiration was the Viennese violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh who, alongside his quartet, set new standards in instrumental virtuosity and perception. Following an engagement as house quartet at Beethoven's patron Prince Lichnowsky, the Schuppanzigh Quartet was employed, from 1808 until 1816, as the private string quartet of Count Razumovsky. Beethoven, who had long-since befriended the violinist, thus paid a double tribute with his opus 59, both to his patron and his friend. And one only has to compare the technical and mental challenges of Op. 59 to contemporary works (as for instance the quartets of the young Franz Schubert) to realise that Beethoven no longer composed for competent amateurs, but for highly professional specialists.

The E minor Quartet, as the middle piece of the set of three works, appears formally balanced, even though the modern grammar of Beethoven's middle period is fully exploited. The two opening chords, flung into the air, are not only an effective "curtain up" gesture but also already a crucial element of the first theme. This is no balanced, well-seasoned melody but a hesitant beginning, rutted by general pauses, whose harmonies seem to be anything but reliable. With all these contrasting moods, both listeners and players are constantly treading on thin ice. Although the movement pays tribute to "classical" sonata form, one cannot easily follow the continual mood contrasts with their short, rapidly changing motifs. The harsh change between the intimacy of chamber music and a certain orchestral stance demands the greatest attention from the players.

If this first movement challenges the mental and formal strengths of an ensemble, then the *Molto Adagio* is to be played, according to Beethoven's own instruction, "con molto di sentimento", i.e. with plenty of feeling. The opening of the chorale-like theme is reminiscent of the B-A-C-H motif, and indeed Beethoven's sketches reveal a reference to the oft-used musical symbol of the *Kantor* of St Thomas, Leipzig, which also seems to have inspired contrapuntal finesse and several canons in the *Adagio*. However, in the simple accompanying figures and the almost naïve intimacy of the widely spun vocal lines, typical characteristics of the late Beethoven can already be found.

Compared to the advanced harmonic idiom of this *Adagio*, the *Allegretto* adopts a strangely ingenuous tone. "This piece responds to the intensive internalisation and eccentricity of the *Adagio* by referring back to the natural and simple in the world, to song and to dance", according to Walter Salmen. To which one wants to add: not without a cunning rhythmic game of deception involving the unaccentuated beginning of the bar in the first violin and the following notes in the inner voices. In the trio Beethoven eventually uses a Russian melody from the folk music collection of Ivan Prác. Modest Mussorgsky stylised this chant, "Sláva Bogu na nebe" ("Glory to God in heaven"), in his opera *Boris Godunov* into a powerful coronation hymn; Beethoven, on the other hand, uses it in the manner of a round dance whose melody is repeated twelve times. The dance-like character is also retained in the finale, a fiery sonata rondo with a Hungarian flavour which derives all its energy from the rising upbeat in 2/8 with a descending answer over stamping, propulsive lower parts.

Tenderness and transfiguration –Beethoven's modernity in the late Quartet Op. 127

The year 1824, in which the Quartet Op. 127 had been started, reveals a completely transformed Beethoven. His work on the *Missa solemnis*, which had quietly morphed from an occasional piece into a large-scale work, as well as on the Ninth Symphony, had brought forth a new style which, first and foremost, introduced the human voice as a herald for messages of both a very personal nature and also common to all mankind – if not directly as a voice part, then at least with its forms: the aria, the song, the solemn hymn. This was also how the five late string quartets obtained a distinctive quality: here, music firmly appears as "language" in order to communicate directly, and even to make existential utterances. The modernity of his late style, however, is not based on Beethoven ingratiating himself in his need to communicate, but on the composer pushing the boundaries of conventional speech and seeking out new forms and idioms which dismayed his contemporaries. The four-movement form of Haydn's and Mozart's quartets was no longer sacred to him; even Op. 127, which he had begun in the summer of 1824 and which was to remain the only one of his late quartets to be published during his lifetime, had an original formal plan of six movements. In the end, he wrote only four; however, the weighty *Adagio* with a duration of more than thirteen minutes suggests that the proportions had originally been conceived differently.

The inner structure of the movements had also changed considerably. The fundamental character of the first movement can be described, despite several dramatic intensifications, as predominantly lyrical, and Beethoven places hymn-like *maestoso* chords at the beginning: it is not clear whether they are intended as an introduction or whether they form part of the following violin melody marked "teneramente" (tender). The classical balance of the sound yields to a linearity in all parts; uncompromising part writing and extreme registers are especially favoured. The great *Adagio*, which emerges from a mysterious foundation, then presents one of those other-worldly melodies which, despite their regular and song-like structure, create the impression of a never-ending chant. Beethoven writes five variations of the theme – initially he composes a dense network of voices, then (*Andante con moto*) a dialogue of the two violins over a march-like accompaniment, reaching another level of transfiguration with the climax in the *Adagio molto espressivo*. The two final variations are separated by an episode with which Beethoven – as numerous sketches prove – struggled particularly and which, harmonically speaking, is indeed at the edge of tonality.

In comparison to the dense writing in the *Adagio*, the *Scherzando*, with its dotted motivic shreds, appears thinned out, erratic and, thanks to the changes in rhythm and tempo, disjointed. The middle section (Beethoven now eschews the old-fashioned term "trio") presents a rapid violin melody in a feverish *Presto*, to which, after the repeat of the *Scherzando*, he alludes once more, like a fleeting memory. Different to that originally planned, the finale begins without a slow introduction and, without ceremony, presents a rustic "bagpipe theme": a signal for the bright character of the movement whose dance-like panache lasts until the beginning of the coda. Here, the main theme is gently placed within a fragrant framework of filigree triplet chains, resembling more the chamber music of Johannes Brahms than a work of 1824.

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SACD 3

A quartet in C minor

During his first years in Vienna, Beethoven noticeably held back from composing string quartets and instead, apparently on account of studying this craft, resorted to copying quartets by Haydn and Mozart. Of course he knew exactly that the much-quoted Bonn farewell by Count Waldstein – "Sustained diligence will bring you Mozart's spirit from Haydn's hands" – did not so much refer to the piano sonatas and piano trios with which Beethoven made his musical début in Vienna as to symphonies and string quartets (and perhaps opera, for which Haydn was known then, more than nowadays). The prestige of the string quartet genre had reached a height which is perhaps best described by Goethe's famous comparison to four people engaged in a "sensible" conversation – with which he certainly did not refer to a harmless chat, but to a trenchant dispute between equal partners.

However, this equality of the voices – which, in a homogenous structure comprising four strings without piano or added wind instruments, assumed a certain abstract, model-like quality – necessitated much experience which Beethoven initially acquired in other genres. Only once Count Lobkowitz, one of Beethoven's aristocratic patrons, commissioned six string quartets each from Haydn and Beethoven around the end of 1798 for the fee of 400 guilders, was there no turning back. Whilst the aged Haydn did not manage to fulfil his duty entirely, Beethoven feverishly worked, alongside large-scale works such as his First Symphony, the final version of his Piano Concerto in C and his Septet Op. 20, on the six string quartets. In October 1800 he was able to confirm receipt of the final fee from Lobkowitz; following the customary retention period of one year, required by commissioners of the time for performances of their own, the quartets were printed in Vienna as his Op. 18 in the notorious first edition, teeming with errors, by the publisher Tranquillo Mollo.

Although Beethoven revolutionised the string quartet style of the time with his Op. 18, decidedly moving on from the technical abilities of amateurs, he nonetheless drew upon his teachers and models. The agitated C minor opening of the fourth Quartet from Op. 18 does not hide the example from Haydn, to which Beethoven adds several imperious chords. The inner movements are unusual and experimental, not allowing any *adagio* bliss to develop. An "Andante scherzoso" (the notion of which is in itself paradoxical) feigns an old-fashioned minuet by way of a fugal opening which, however, during the course of the movement turns out to be a sonata form movement of an ironic, classicist basic hue (Gustav Mahler satirised this *Biedermeier* sense of humour in the scherzo of his Symphony No. 6). The "Menuetto", on the other hand, appears more agitated than expected and, with numerous accents and syncopations, Beethoven pushes it against the grain. The rare instruction "la seconda volta si prende il tempo più allegro" (the second time the tempo is to be taken faster) shows that he also countered the obstinate repeat of the minuet after an aromatic trio. The final "Allegro", a fiercely dance-like rondo with three interludes and a quirky *prestissimo* ending, is once again reminiscent, in its rapidly circling theme, of similar movements by Haydn and Mozart.

Counterpoint ecstasy

A fugue as a finale to a string quartet was no alien concept to a composer of the Viennese Classical era. Both Haydn and Mozart deemed the strict contrapuntal form to be a "perfect" form of four-part writing; Beethoven closes the third of the "Razumovsky" Quartets with a fugue, to great effect. However, the final movement that Beethoven composed in the autumn of 1825 for his Quartet in B flat major, Op. 130, the "Great Fugue", is singular in its radical and uncompromising design. On 21 March of the following year, this work in six movements was premièred by the Schuppanzigh Quartet, who valiantly took on the enormous complexities of the finale. The reviewer of the significant *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, however, was left confounded by the fugue: "The reviewer dares not interpret the meaning of the fugal finale: to him it seemed unfathomable, like Chinese."

Perhaps it was the bewilderment of the audience, or rather the technical complexities, which led Beethoven – on the instigation of his Viennese publisher, Artaria – reluctantly to compose a new finale and to publish the fugue separately as Op. 133 (Beethoven also published his own arrangement for piano duet as Op. 134 during the same year, 1827). Despite its well-balanced attachment to the Quartet Op. 130, the "Great Fugue" probably stands apart from all usual chamber music as an individual piece. Its sound, despite occasional lyrical excursions, is unusually rugged and sharpened by harsh accents, gruff rhythms and radical harmonies, anticipating not so much Brahms as Schoenberg.

Formally, Beethoven attempts to compress baroque fugal technique and the classical-romantic sonata form into one enormous movement. A brief "Overtura" initially presents the intensely chromatic fugal theme in its original form, and then in short fragments whose rhythmic shapes become significant during the course of the movement. This is followed by the first main section which combines the subject with a dotted counter-subject. A true *tour de force* breaks forth, *fortissimo*, which comes to a sudden standstill after 130 bars, clearing the way for a tender, flowing variant of the theme ("Meno mosso e moderato"). In terms of sonata form, this could be described as a slow movement which, after only a few minutes, is swept away by a delicate "Allegro molto e con brio". The airiness of this section gives way to another fugal development, speckled with triplets and trills – a variation of a *scherzo*, perhaps, leading into the much-transformed repeat of the opening section. A coda with a high-volume repeat of the theme in unison, softly murmuring chords and an effective ending closes this work, which is completely unique within the string quartet repertoire.

Russian pastoral

F major! For Beethoven the key of bright moods, often inspired by the arcadian calm of country life, even if this, during the time of the Napoleonic wars with its constant troop movements, was already a deceptive idyll. Beethoven chose this key for the first of his three Quartets for the music connoisseur Count Razumovsky which even his contemporaries considered to be "deeply thought out and splendidly fashioned, but not generally comprehensible". And indeed, where had a composer's language ever developed so radically as in the seven years that separate Beethoven's set of Quartets Op. 18 of 1800 and the first "Razumovsky" Quartet? Whilst the quartets of the 28-year-old were an ambitious attempt to take his place within "Viennese Classicism", Beethoven introduced an entirely new concept of chamber music with his Quartets Op. 59 of 1806/07, when Haydn was still alive: music for highly specialised professional musicians whose language, in contrast to the generally more approachable symphonies and concertos, had become increasingly complex and cryptic. The noble salon had become a sound laboratory; occasional music for connoisseurs and enthusiasts had become confessional scores of an individual.

The inspiration to the three Quartets Op. 59 was twofold: Count Andrey Kirillovich Razumovsky provided the financial requirements as well as the venue – as Russian envoy at the imperial court in Vienna he acted as host and patron to music and musicians at his palatial house, until it and many invaluable works of art were destroyed during a fire on New Year's Eve, 1814. The second stimulus for the quartets came from the violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh who, together with his string quartet, set new standards in Vienna for instrumental virtuosity and interpretation. Until 1816 the Schuppanzigh Quartet were engaged by Razumovsky. And Beethoven, who had been on friendly terms with the quartet's leader for a long time, produced a double homage, as it were, to his patron, as well as the virtuoso, with his opus 59.

Already the first work in the pastoral key of F major, begun in May 1806, revealed that Viennese audiences were about to be confronted with revolutionary music. With a duration of nearly forty minutes, the quartet exceeds even symphonic dimensions (which Beethoven had, of course, already stretched considerably with his own "Eroica"); technically, the "Razumovsky" Quartets, with their complex part-writing, awkward figures and extreme registers, are a challenge for any quartet to the present day. But formally the Beethoven of op. 18 had also taken an enormous step. For the tender, "dolce" cello melody at the opening of the first quartet does not develop into a clear structure with flowing transitions, but instead into a kaleidoscope of themes, motifs and moods that only become accessible to the listener after several performances. The sharp distinction between a prominent principal theme and a lyrical secondary theme is relinquished. Beethoven develops permanently, accelerating the pulse in passages such as the double fugue in the middle of the movement, or lifts them through strangely floating chords. The rough gesture of a *sforzato* accent or wild *crescendi* stands alongside an almost Schubertian sense of pensiveness, a banal phrase alongside highly complex textures. Beethoven's idiosyncratic simultaneity of asynchrony that distinguishes his late works is hinted at even here.

Those who expect, after this wondrous opening, a hands-on *scherzo* in the style of his Seventh Symphony, will find themselves disappointed once again. Beethoven, whose "Razumovsky" Quartets had been dubbed (by contemporaries) "quartet symphonies" thanks to their orchestral sonorities, maintains a chamber music tone and does not expose a melody in the "Allegretto" but a rhythm in the cello, stipulating the basic pulse. What follows fulfils the instruction "sempre scherzando" (always with a sense of humour). For this movement, in essence, is an essay on musical humour; on listeners' expectations and

their disappointment; on musical irony; on dismembering, reinterpreting and reformulating thoughts; on the overall meaning of a sonic vocabulary. The music scholar Walter Salmen pointed out the baroque mourning motifs in the "Adagio", suggested by the addition of the word "mesto" (melancholy). The distant biographical motivation for this movement was, as can be gleaned from sketches, Beethoven's brother's wedding and his emotional alienation from Beethoven, who remained unmarried. Indeed, Schuppanzigh's violin may, for once, break away from the other players and embody the individual who at the end of the movement floats above certain resting chords.

However, the sorrowful mood is not permanent and makes way for the worldly tone of a "Russian theme" which – as a reverence towards the commissioner Razumovsky – provides the basis for the finale. Beethoven had found it in Ivan Prác's collection "Sobranije narodnych russkich pesen" (Collection of Russian songs), although he changes the minor hue of the song "Oh! My destiny", which talks about the hardships of a soldier's life, into a brighter F major. At the same time, Beethoven does not simply trail the fashion of Eastern exoticism. His "Thème russe" is not the object of variations or a mood creator, but provides the basic material of a full-scale sonata movement where popularity and craftsmanship, foreign and own elements are united in a sophisticated and genial manner.

SACD 4

"The last sighs" – Beethoven's first String Quartet Op. 18

Also the opening piece of Beethoven's String Quartets Op. 18 – the "portal to Beethoven's world of quartets", according to the music scholar Ulrich Konrad – is set in the pastoral key of F major. Since it is a known fact that this quartet, out of the set of six, was not the first to be written, it seems likely that Beethoven deliberately selected it to be his "No. 1". After his previous chamber music works for less traditional combinations of instruments – such as the String Trios, Op. 9, or the Quartet for Piano and Winds – the first publication in the prestigious genre of the string quartet was to be an effective, successful work.

The opening *Allegro con brio* of the F major Quartet seemed to Beethoven to be a perfect candidate for this. With a powerful twisting figure from all four strings in unison – the movement's main theme – Beethoven presents the defining source of energy for this entire movement. Inventing ever more variants and guises of the simple motif, he produces both dramatically gripping and soft, dance-like colours, whilst the actual secondary theme fades into the background amidst this pyrotechnical display of compositional artifice. And if Mozart, in the dedication of his six quartets to Haydn, admitted that these works had cost him some effort, then Beethoven must have sweated over the numerous musical combinations in this movement.

Around the end of 1798, Prince Franz Joseph Lobkowicz had commissioned Beethoven, for a generous fee of 400 guilders, to write six string quartets. As well as large-scale works, such as his First Symphony or the Septet Op. 20, Beethoven worked feverishly on these quartets. In October 1800, he confirmed receipt of Lobkowicz's final instalment for his Op. 18, whose technical and compositional level remains in the tradition of sophisticated *Hausmusik*. A few years later, Beethoven was to withdraw the string quartet from the sphere of aristocratic connoisseurs and enthusiasts, from then on exclusively writing for specialised professional ensembles of the level of the Schuppanzigh Quartet.

Since all autograph scores of Op. 18 have been lost, it is difficult to reconstruct the order of composition from the sketches. A surviving copy of the Quartet in F major, which the composer had given as a present to his friend Carl Amenda, who was leaving Vienna, therefore represents a cast of fortune. "Dear Amenda!", Beethoven wrote in his dedication, "take this quartet as a small memorial of our friendship, and whenever you play it to yourself, remember our days together and also how dearly devoted to you was, and always will be, your true and warm friend Ludwig van Beethoven." This would merely represent a heartfelt gesture, were it not for the fact that the copy for Amenda noticeably differs from the printed version, revealing Beethoven's honing hand.

The slow movement of the quartet has a mysterious air about it; a sketch book entry contains the following words about it: "Il prend le tombeau / desespoir / il se tue / les derniers soupirs" (He comes to the tomb / desperation / he kills himself / the last sighs). According to Amenda, this was full-blown

programme music, depicting the tomb scene in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, ending, highly dramatically, with the protagonists' suicides. That would have made this movement, marked *Adagio affettuoso ed appassionato*, an early document of Beethoven's lifelong study of Shakespeare, who played a central role during the age of Romanticism. However, the great arches of suspense with their sudden collapses, baroque sighing figures and lamenting rhetoric are little more than purely instrumental utterances. Tension finally crystallises in the coda with its twisting figures, general rests and a fortissimo outcry which may represent Romeo's (or Juliet's) "derniers soupirs".

After such externalisation, the *Scherzo* is a worldly, contrapuntally involved study whose middle section, however, returns to the fantastical sphere by way of the first violin's strangely timid figures. As a whole, the work, in its Bachian severity, seems aloof, nervous, and still a long way from the superior serenity of his late quartets.

Fugue and popular tune – the world of late Beethoven in the String Quartet Op. 131

Twenty-two years after completing his opus 18, Beethoven embarked on the first of his late string quartets. The composer's final years from 1815, when the Congress of Vienna prescribed Europe's restoration and Beethoven's brother Karl died of consumption, were overshadowed by illness and financial worries, intermittent depression and the inglorious battle for the guardianship of his nephew Karl. It was within this personal vale of tears of the deaf Beethoven, going hand in hand with an increasing withdrawal from public life, that his wondrous late style matured.

The fact that he returned to the string quartet – alongside working on the Ninth Symphony, the *Missa solemnis* and his final piano sonatas – also had a "practical" reason: in 1823, the violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh had returned to Vienna after a seven-year sojourn in Eastern Europe and immediately discussed new projects with Beethoven. Even as a twenty-year-old he had played in the so-called "boys' quartet" for Prince Lichnowsky and distinguished himself by performing Beethoven's Op. 18: Beethoven had returned the favour by writing a humorous canon, *Lob auf den Dicken* (Praising the plump one) – the violinist was well known for his voluminous shape. The first Schuppanzigh Quartet was founded in 1808 at the palace of Count Razumovsky and continued to give well-attended subscription concerts for eight years, making Vienna the European centre for string quartet playing. "These four gentlemen seemed to have only one soul", one reviewer enthused, "and doubtless nobody can boast of having heard a more perfect ensemble. [...] Mr Schuppanzigh knows to extend the enthusiasm flooding through him to his fellow performers so perfectly that it is no longer clear whether he influences them, or they him."

Four of Beethoven's five late string quartets were premièred by Schuppanzigh's "Quatuor par excellence", as it was praised by one contemporary critic. And the reviews of 1823 reveal the true strength of the Schuppanzigh Quartet: it was not so much the impeccable playing of its leader, whose technique was not infallible and whose pronounced *portamento* – a mannerist slide from one note to the next – did not win the hearts of all members of the audience. Rather, it was Schuppanzigh's expressive and *cantabile* playing, as well as the homogenous sound of the quartet, its precise reactions and the equality amongst the musicians, which made their mark on Beethoven's quartet writing. Polyphonic interleaving, movement of motifs through all parts and abrupt contrasts in tempo, dynamics and articulation – all of which are typical features of the late works – necessitate perfectly coordinated playing which could no longer be entrenched behind the reign of the first violin.

Towards the end of his life, Beethoven was less worried than previously about "serving" an audience or a publishing market. The music scholar Carl Dahlhaus once listed characteristic elements of musical late styles from Bach to Schoenberg. These include an anticipatory modernity without direct successors, an internal alienation from the external "style of the times", as well as an archaic streak with which traditional techniques are suddenly, and without any transitional passages, juxtaposed with subjective ideas. Most of the late quartets, including the one in C sharp minor, confirm this perception.

Following diplomatic considerations, Beethoven dedicated his Quartet Op. 131 to Baron Joseph von Stutterheim who, as "field marshal lieutenant", commanded the infantry regiment in which Beethoven's nephew was serving. In summer 1826 Beethoven completed the quartet: six hundred surviving pages of associated sketches suggest that it is one of the composer's most scrupulously honed pieces. Also in this case several different layers of tradition are placed next to each other with little mediating material in between. The seven sections of the work, connected *attacca*, relinquish the classical four-movement form.

And there is still discussion as to how many independent movements there actually are, since the third (*Allegro moderato*) and sixth (*Adagio, quasi un poco andante*) sections resemble short transitions in character.

It is particularly interesting to observe how Beethoven extends the traditional combination of slow introduction and allegro section of the first movement into an entirely new concept, finally doing without it at all. In the first section (*Adagio ma non troppo e molto espressivo*), the old form of the fugue is fulfilled in keeping with all rules of contrapuntal art; at the same time, the unusual marking of "molto espressivo" opens up romantic expressive spheres. Richard Wagner, a great admirer of Beethoven's, interpreted the mournful mood from a romantic perspective as "Awakening in the morning of the day" which "during its course will not fulfil one wish, not one! But at the same time it is a penitential prayer, a consultation with God in the belief of the eternal good."

Beethoven continues the musical density of the fugue in the following movement by concentrating on almost only one thought, the lyrical main theme, rendering this *Allegro molto vivace* the dialectical counterpart of the *Adagio*. An *Allegro moderato* with a violin cadenza forms a recitative-like transition to a tuneful theme whose lyrical substance Beethoven puts to the test in seven variations and a concluding coda. Its enormous expansion and numerous changes in tempo and expression make this *Andante* the centrepiece of the work.

The building blocks of the scherzo (*Presto*), however, seem to be arranged in a stereotypical manner; the naively leaping, popular tune theme is boosted with many surprising moments. The last *Adagio*, on the other hand, acts as a form of buffer zone before the final *Allegro* – a complex, intricate sonata rondo with a consistently hard-chiselled dance rhythm. The striking opening flourish and the jagged rhythm of the main theme seem to echo the "Great Fugue", the original finale of the String Quartet Op. 130. The fact that Beethoven now opens his C sharp minor quartet with a fugue and merely cites the gestures reveals his willingness to engage in a permanent, experimental restructuring of his works.

SACD 5

Litigation and Relic – the Quintet Op. 29

It may come as a surprise to see a "breakaway" such as the Quintet Op. 29 included in the Quartetto di Cremona's recording series of the Complete Beethoven String Quartets, especially since the quintet genre is rarely present in concert programmes. This circumstance, however, is not down to inferior quality or exotic scoring of the string quintet, but to the specialisation of our music business. Although the repertoire for string quintet is first-rate, it is not particularly extensive: this explains the small number of steady ensembles in that formation. Instead, string quartets tend to invite the missing fifth player (a second viola or cello) who then needs to blend into the established group – a task which he or she performs as a foreign body or, as in this case, as a refreshing, spontaneous partner.

Composers of the early nineteenth century had already reacted to the establishment of professional string quartets such as the Vienna Schuppanzigh Quartet, for whom Beethoven wrote his mature quartets. The quintet genre, on the other hand, was still completely open even during Mozart's time (not to mention such industrious quintet composers as, for instance, Luigi Boccherini), and the works were performed by amateur ensembles or professional groups formed on an *ad hoc* basis. But despite a handful of major works such as the quintets of Schubert, Mendelssohn or Brahms, the production decreased noticeably after the turn of the century. And the most compelling example of the string quintet's marginalisation is Ludwig van Beethoven. Although his catalogue of works includes three fully fledged quintets, two turn out to be arrangements of his own works – a wind octet and a piano trio – for the Viennese music market. In 1817, in the context of his piano trio arrangement Op. 104, Beethoven also wrote a short fugue (published posthumously as Op. 137) and two quintet movements which remained as fragments.

The Quintet in C major of 1801, on the other hand, was Beethoven's only original, multi-movement work in that genre. It was written after the publication of his Quartets Op. 18, with which Beethoven followed the line of Mozart and Haydn, establishing himself as the most original composer in Central Europe. The Quintet Op. 29 was probably a commission by Count Moritz von Fries, a Viennese banker and music lover to whom Beethoven dedicated not only his quintet but also several violin sonatas and the Seventh Symphony. As was common at the time, the fee included exclusive rights for six months during which

time the new work was at the count's disposal before it went to press. Once this time period had expired, the quintet – at Beethoven's instigation – was issued by the Leipzig publisher Breitkopf & Härtel. Unbeknownst to the otherwise cunning composer, Fries himself had already promised the work to the Viennese publisher Artaria, resulting in two editions of the Quintet Op. 29 appearing in autumn 1802, one of which had been bought from the composer whilst the other was issued as a "legitimised pirate edition". Beethoven raged, picking a legal fight with Artaria which, since copyright law was still inadequate, dragged on for years. The result was not a conclusive legal clarification but Beethoven's defiant resolution to deny Count Fries – and by association the entire music world – the promised second string quintet.

In view of the completed quintet, this outcome can only be regretted. Like Mozart, but in contrast to Boccherini and Schubert, Beethoven scores the lower parts for two violas and cello, thus balancing the substantial string sonorities whilst ensuring that the middle register does not become too overpowering. It has justly been noted that the Quintet Op. 29 represents a transition from the Quartets Op. 18, modelled on the works of Haydn and Mozart, to his entirely independent "Razumovsky" Quartets, Op 59: at times this Janus-faced character emerges in a single idea such as the opening movement's main theme, presented beautifully by the first violin and cello. This melody is reminiscent of the beginning of the first quartet from the Op. 59 set, but is developed in a much more "classical" and entirely uneccentric way in the quintet. It is joined by a lively motif in triplets leading into a slightly shy secondary theme featuring an abundance of thirds. Of course Beethoven develops this greatly contrasting material ingeniously: broad and harmonically sophisticated steps reveal a matured master; ultimately, however, there is no dramatic escalation, no existential "threat" as in his late quartets, which makes listening to them a constantly thrilling experience.

It is particularly the Adagio which reveals the work's roots in Mozart's style: although it indulges in an almost Biedermeier-like self-sufficiency, it is one of Beethoven's most heartfelt movements. At the opening, the violin plays a beautifully vocal line, soaring up; a nature scene ensues, featuring expansive gestures in the top line. All this would represent a perfect idyll if the middle section, with its pounding lower voices, did not produce darker tones whose sudden pauses already foreshadow Schubert's quintet. However, in contrast to the work of the younger composer, Beethoven finds the energy and possibility to restore the idyll.

The next movement is the Scherzo, with its elegantly springing and subtly interlocking rhythms, and a rustically coloured "Trio" with drones. However, the real highlight of the work is its finale, where Beethoven demonstrates that he did not want to remain within the soundscapes of his Op. 18. The opening impulse jolts forwards, the motor of the movement beginning to vibrate immediately (by way of a dense tremolo), only rarely coming to a standstill. The first violin attempts a fleeting theme which does not quite want to give in to the frenzied tempo; when the second attempt also fails to provide a solution, the cello takes over. A new theme comes along, fluent and supple; in the development, Beethoven boldly combines the vibrating, fleeting theme of the opening with a march-like fugue at its own speed. But this is not all: everything is unexpectedly broken off and a minuet passes across the stage at an Andante pace which appears to be a relic from both musically and politically bygone times. The addition of "con moto e scherzoso" indicates that Beethoven did not compose deadly serious music but inserted a "joke" into the finale as food for thought (shortly before the end, the minuet appears for a second time). This foreshadows a typical feature of his late œuvre in general: music on music, but also a continuous contemplation of his activity as a composer.

From the spirit of song – the Quartet Op. 132

The three String Quartets Op. 59 were the last ones which Beethoven conceived as a set: they were followed by individual works which took on almost monumental dimensions in his late period. This is confirmed by performance durations of up to forty-five minutes, exorbitant technical challenges (Schuppanzigh made it possible!), and particularly by the formal and content-related dimension of the quartets which Beethoven redefined anew for each work. An external feature is the number of movements which – although the four-movement structure in its different expressive forms remains a point of reference and also friction – is often imaginatively extended. The A minor Quartet, a commission from Count Nicolai Galitzin, was initially conceived in six movements; however, once Beethoven had transferred the "Alla danza tedesca" into his Quartet Op. 130, it had five parts: an Allegro in sonata form; an Allegro ma non tanto as something in between a scherzo and an ancient minuet; an extended, programmatic Molto adagio as the centrepiece of the entire work; a short march with a recitative-like transition; and the finale whose main theme – amazingly enough – was originally intended as the theme of the finale of his Ninth Symphony.

"It is the vocal character which holds together the A minor Quartet more than the motivic element" (M H Schmid). Indeed, there is hardly any theme – with the exception of the march which is clearly defined as an instrumental genre – that does not originate from a vocal spirit. At the same time, the principal themes of the opening movement, following supple lines determined by breath, appear almost conventionally, within the movement which presents abrupt contrasts between loud and soft, harsh accents and surprising tempo changes within the smallest of spaces. In the "scherzo", Beethoven's usual rhythmic "bite" has yielded to a leisurely, litany-like circling minuet whose trio was taken from Beethoven's German Dances, written before 1800 for the Vienna Redoute Balls (a source of income which Mozart had also appreciated). And the theme of the finale, despite its tragic note, has an elegant sense of momentum, reminding us of Mendelssohn or Schumann, rather than confirming the cliché of the gruff Beethoven.

It is the central movement which represents the crucial commitment to a vocal style: Beethoven, who always suffered from abdominal pains, completed it in summer 1825 having overcome illness. The manuscript bears the title "Holy song of thanksgiving of a convalescent to the Deity", elevating the biographical occasion into the general artistic and human statement, attached, in this case, to religious content. Accordingly, Beethoven did not compose an instrumental "Cavatina" as in his opus 130, but a sacred chant. He had found it in the music of the Italian Renaissance master Pierluigi da Palestrina, who was rediscovered in his "authenticity" and "worthy simplicity" by the romantics and church music reformers of the early nineteenth century. Beethoven noted a passage from Palestrina's *Magnificat in the third tone*, turning it – in the "Lydian" mode and with chorale fragments – into a great chant which expands in the first bars of the movement. This solemn section alternates, in several varying sets, with a livelier section which Beethoven defines programmatically by heading its first statement "Feeling new strength". This makes for a movement with a duration of eighteen minutes, exceeding, then and now, all expectations of the genre, but at the same time rating among Beethoven's most famous movements. The (private) premiere of Op. 132 was given by the loyal Schuppanzigh Quartet on 9 September 1825 in Vienna.

SACD 6

Retrospective and Revolt

The propensity to produce complete overviews is, one might think, a phenomenon of our time. Complete recordings of a composer's comprehensive œuvre, re-releases of famous interpreters, performance cycles of all Schubert songs or presenting the complete Beethoven string quartets as concert or recording series appear to be an expression of an age of Olympian records and excessive stimuli.

However, looking back into history tells us that Beethoven's core genres in particular – his symphonies, piano sonatas and string quartets – have, ever since the master's death, motivated performance series. The cyclical efforts in relation to Beethoven's quartets began in 1845 when the "Beethoven Quartet Society", founded by the London journalist Thomas M Alsager, presented all sixteen works; during the course of the nineteenth century, the late quartets were to come into special focus. At a time when Beethoven's works – and this should not be forgotten – still presented considerable technical problems to performers, it was, first and foremost, the great violin virtuosos who championed Beethoven, including the Leipzig Gewandhaus concertmaster Ferdinand David, the Berlin-based Hungarian Joseph Joachim, Henri Vieuxtemps, Henryk Wieniawski, and Leopold Auer. Once the late quartets had established themselves (in Paris there was even a "Society of the Great Last Beethoven Quartets"), performance cycles of the complete quartets were presented in music metropoles such as Berlin or Paris, reaching an international climax at the centenary of Beethoven's death in 1927.

Reasons must therefore exist that make a Beethoven cycle appear more attractive than complete performances of the Haydn, Mozart, Schubert or Mendelssohn quartets, which occur considerably less frequently. Doubtless the top-ranking motivation is the appeal of the hugely diverse sonic and technical challenges, followed by the fact that the quartets embody a representative reflection of Beethoven's development as a composer from 1800 until his death. Since this scrupulous composer only began producing quartets relatively late, the discourse as to whether to include mediocre early works (as in the case

of his piano sonatas) becomes irrelevant. The six Quartets Op. 18 mark the effective appearance of a master who is already familiar with all compositional styles and techniques, and who does not simply copy his models, but uses them to help him find his own, new solutions.

The six Quartets Op. 18, which Beethoven wrote in 1799/1800 having been commissioned by the generous Count Franz Joseph Maximilian Lobkowicz, represent a stage between tradition and departure. Although Beethoven revolutionised the quartet style of the time, clearly going beyond the technical standards of amateurs, he nonetheless drew on great examples. In the case of the A major Quartet, Op. 18 No. 5, this was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and his Quartet written in 1785 in the same key (K. 464) which, in turn, had been dedicated to his revered colleague Haydn. Beethoven uses the same movement sequence – putting the minuet in second place – as well as a number of architectural devices, including a movement of variations. That is why the opening theme with its violin flourishes seems more "old-fashioned" than those of the other Op. 18 works; the simple upbeat-dominated theme and the two-part writing of the minuet looks towards the style of Haydn.

Despite these retrospectives, Beethoven's compact, harmonically bold, roughened and accented chamber style already reveals hints of a revolt in chamber music; the metronome markings, published subsequently, often demand rapid tempi. The *Andante cantabile* displays originality with its five variations on a naïve theme, of which the fourth is a tender, luminous movement in a slow tempo, and the fifth, in contrast, is a stomping dance followed by an expansive coda in which the theme returns. The finale nods towards the last movement of Mozart's *Prague* Symphony and its famous upbeat in $^{3}/_{8}$ tempo.

String Quartet, Op. 130

The folk-like tone which Beethoven adopted in the *Andante* of the A major Quartet from Op. 18 can also be found in his late works; even the most complex works of his late period feature passages of heart-rending simplicity, such as in the *Andante con moto* from the Quartet Op. 130: a graceful viola melody emerges, accompanied by a busy cello line and discreetly commenting violins. In its playful lightness, the entire movement appears as a serenade in a garden of a Viennese suburb. And yet this stance seems more like a quote from distant times, an evocation which in the coda loses itself in romantic harmonies – not unlike the following movement, *Alla danza tedesca* [in the manner of a German dance], quoting the popular *Deutschen* (a form of Ländler which was still cultivated by Schubert) whilst at the same time alienating it by inserting idiosyncratic surges and resolving it in the coda. In his late works Beethoven thus no longer views convention as a form of opposition to be creatively overcome, but instead he proceeds to integrate it as an instant of reconciliation and nostalgia for an unalienated life (which of course never existed in that form).

The modernism of the B flat major Quartet was already beyond dispute for Beethoven's contemporaries, who by no means always approved of the composer's artistic development during the 1820s. "Who would not remember the enthusiasm created by his first symphonies, his sonatas, his quartets", Ignaz Mosel wrote fifteen years after Beethoven's death. "All music lovers were delighted to find, so soon after Mozart's death, a man emerge who promised to replace the sorely missed. But alas, albeit gradually, though increasingly, he departed from his initial path, insisted on cutting out a new one, and finally went astray." As Mosel, many perceived Beethoven's new idiom as incomprehensible – the irritations are comparable to the shock caused by the music of a Karlheinz Stockhausen or Luigi Nono around 1950.

A significant reason for this incomprehension was that Beethoven (in contrast to Stockhausen and Nono) worked with known musical elements, but put them into an unfamiliar, experimental context which he treated differently in every single one of the late quartets. These known elements include, in Op. 130, the afore-mentioned movement types of serenade and dance which Beethoven re-phrased in a startlingly novel manner. A further example of productive irritation is the customary succession of slow introduction and fast *Allegro* in the first movement which in the B flat major Quartet is conceived as a tightly interconnected "thematic configuration": the *Adagio* and *Allegro* are so closely intertwined that they are in constant exchange. The *Scherzo* (in second place), on the other hand, is condensed into extreme, terse brevity, with the middle section ("trio") being frantically dealt with in a few bars.

The most spectacular quotation of traditional forms in the initial version of the B flat major quartet was, of course, the finale, an enormous double fugue which the composer later took out, following his publisher's advice, releasing it separately as the *Great Fugue* Op. 133. In late 1826 Beethoven wrote a rondo-like *Allegro* as a replacement finale – this was his last completed composition, tying in with the playful tone of the *Andante*.

This account shows that the traditional four-movement form had also been replaced in Op. 130, yielding to a new dramatic form in six movements with which, as countless sketches reveal, Beethoven wrestled for a long time. Tempo and character, however, are well-matched. The weighty opening complex of *Adagio* and *Allegro* is followed, as a contrast, by a rushing movement in an extreme tempo; whilst the *Andante*, at a moderate speed, is succeeded by the middle *Allegro*, *Alla danza tedesca*. The final contrasting pair is the *Cavatina* with its heartfelt, hymn-like melody, and the harrowing solo episode of the first violin (Beethoven marks this "beklemmt" – "anguished"), as well as the clearly structured *Finale* with its folk-like, earthy theme. If this melody originates in the instrumental pieces of the salon and dance music of the time, then the *Cavatina* represents an excessive form of "sound speech" and human expression – similar to the expression Beethoven sought in the vocal passages of his Ninth Symphony and *Missa solemnis*.

It was typical of his contemporaries' reaction that, at the premiere on 21 March 1826 given by the Schuppanzigh Quartet, they did not ask for the *Cavatina* to be repeated (which Beethoven loved most out of his quartet movements), but instead the *Presto* and *Alla danza tedesca*. Here, his audience found what Beethoven otherwise denied them. His late œuvre was, as a critic rightly observed, not suitable for those "who use music only to amuse themselves, to create a pastime".

SACD 7

"For it is only now that I know how to write quartets…"

The performance culture and market for the string quartet in the late eighteenth century was markedly different to that of later times. In practice, professional quartets only existed at court chapels, whilst the large majority of quartets were made up of talented amateurs. The fact that these (mostly aristocratic) enthusiasts mastered their instruments much better than today's amateur musicians is proved by Ludwig van Beethoven's Quartets Op. 18 which, to their young composer, represented uncharted waters. Naturally, he looked towards models such as Haydn and Mozart for guidance and inspiration: several copies in his hand show a meticulous examination of the quartets of his older colleagues. Nonetheless, during the early years in his adoptive home city of Vienna, the celebrated piano virtuoso had been careful to avoid the quartet, instead delving into the realm of the piano trio, the piano sonata and chamber music for wind instruments. Late in 1789, however, the time had come to turn his hand to the genre which required (according to his teacher Haydn) both taste and "compositional scholarship": two qualities which most quartets written for connoisseurs lacked.

The external impulse for the Quartets Op. 18 – published, as was common at the time, as a set of six works – was provided by Prince Lobkowitz, who commissioned both the aged Haydn and the newcomer Beethoven to create a set of quartets for a fee of 200 guilders each. Perhaps he intended to juxtapose the "inventor" of the modern string quartet with his most talented and original student. Initial sketches were made in autumn 1798, and in October 1800 Beethoven presented his six quartets to the aristocratic benefactor.

Beethoven thus spent two years composing, polishing and revising his works, in the process learning to resolve issues concerning compositional technique, motivic work, architecture and sound textures. It is therefore hardly surprising that after (initially) finalising his cycle, he revisited the first three quartets, amending them heavily. "Be certain not to let your quartet slip away", he urged his friend Carl Amenda in the summer of 1800 for whom he had copied the original version of the first quartet, "because I have changed it considerably, for it is only now that I know how to write quartets ...". The G major Quartet, Op. 18 No. 2, was also fundamentally reworked, with Beethoven replacing the original central section in the Adagio with an unusual allegro episode and expanding the brief fourth movement into a substantial finale. As his commissioner is likely to have reserved exclusive performance rights for a certain amount of time, Beethoven's opus 18 did not appear in print until summer and autumn 1801. The quartets were issued by the Viennese publisher Tranquillo Mollo – in a notorious edition which, as the composer commented furiously, was "teeming with mistakes like small fish in water, i.e. ad infinitum".

That publishing problem aside, the 30-year-old Beethoven demonstrates the highest possible technical mastery in his G major Quartet that could possibly be reached by a Haydn student and Mozart admirer around 1800. Its bright sounds and supple melodies make it, as has often been pointed out, the most

optimistic of the six works. The *galant* turns, the wit and the folk-like intonation of Viennese classicism still shine through the main theme of the opening movement. But even here Beethoven sets to work most productively, gathering from these opening rhythmic and melodic formulae the material for the entire movement. The instruments are granted the highest possible measure of independence and equality, and yet the texture appears entirely organically and with a homogenous sense of fluency. And in order to satisfy not only the educated enthusiast but also the expert, the Allegro provides surprises in the form of a fugal passage in the development as well as several "false" recapitulation entries in extraneous keys.

The ensuing Adagio also offers a surprise. In keeping with the instruction "cantabile", a theme with vocal qualities and manifold embellishments opens the movement. But as soon as it comes to its first halt, Beethoven inserts a busy Allegro which spreads intrusively and then disappears as rapidly, making way for the Adagio's second verse, featuring expansive elaborations from the first violin and cello. The Scherzo is characterised by a delicate elegance (rather than Beethoven's later ferocity) with an intricate interlocking of the theme. The finale opens with a simple "earworm" which Beethoven also favoured in later quartets – only to derive from it the most adventurous variations, break-aways and canonic interweavings. In this case, it is the bouncy opening in $^{2}/_{4}$ which dominates the movement as a source of energy and downgrades the brief secondary theme to a mere episode.

New rules

After exploring a new concept of the symphonic cycle in the *Eroica* and devoting himself to opera for the first time (with the two early versions of *Fidelio*), Beethoven wrote his second major quartet cycle in 1806. There were two sources of motivation for his three Op. 59 Quartets. One impulse was provided by the Russian envoy to the Habsburg court in Vienna, Andrey Kirillovich Razumovsky who, even during the disastrous times of the Napoleonic wars, did not abandon his cultural patronage but continued to host music and musicians at his palace. For him, Beethoven inserted "Thèmes russes" into his quartets – personalisations, as it were – which surely delighted his patron.

The second impulse came from the Viennese violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh and his quartet who set new standards for instrumental virtuosity and interpretation. Having served as "house quartet" to Beethoven's patron Karl von Lichnowsky, the Schuppanzigh Quartet was engaged by Razumovsky between 1808 and 1816. Beethoven, a long-standing friend of the violinist, thus produced a double homage, his opus 59 paying tribute to both his patron and the virtuoso. And one only needs to compare the technical and intellectual demands of Op. 59 to contemporary works (such as the quartets of the young Franz Schubert) in order to recognise that Beethoven no longer composed for able amateurs, but for highly professional specialists.

For Beethoven as a composer there was of course not just the question of technical demands but also that of musical dramaturgy. "How do I begin according to the rule?" – Walther von Stolzing's anxious question in Richard Wagner's *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg* touches on a fundamental problem of the creative process. The beginning of a work is to be interesting and original, it needs to attract attention whilst also building on tradition, and it should already anticipate what is to follow. Responding to the Franconian squire, the wise shoemaker-poet Hans Sachs does not stipulate pedantic directives but instead formulates a revolutionary maxim: "You set a rule yourself, and then you follow it." These words could have been Beethoven's own. For hardly any other composer before him had, with such a degree of idiosyncrasy and entirely consciously, torn up traditional rules, replacing them with his own which he then consistently followed.

Let us examine the beginning of the "Razumovsky" Quartet, Op. 59 No. 3. Beethoven composes an "Introduzione" in a moderate Andante, provocatively obscuring the key of the quartet. A dissonant opening chord is followed by strange, boldly modulating soundscapes, almost without any melodic contours. The theme of the Allegro vivace with its bouncy opening towards the dominant key and the solo of the first violin also deliberately avoids a harmonic grounding in C major which is only reached in a stomping tutti outburst. In the development and recapitulation, the opening motif – as inconspicuous as it initially seems – plays the lead: a continual question which, after a breathtaking acceleration in the final bars, is only answered by the closing chord.

Despite its startling beginning, the C major Quartet was deemed by his contemporaries to be the most comprehensible of the three quartets which Beethoven dedicated to Count Razumovsky. But while Beethoven had previously inserted little "sonic messages" to the count in the form of Russian folk melodies, the third quartet is devoid of traceable quotations. However, the Beethoven scholar Walter Salmen commented that the Andante con moto – a serenade-like

movement over a cello pizzicato – is deliberately kept in a folk-like tone, thus transforming the original quotes in the other quartets into an "appearance of the known". The movement in which Beethoven probably comes closest to Schubert (and Brahms) also became especially popular via arrangements, thanks to its circular *perpetuum mobile* form.

The simplicity of the "Menuetto" and its somewhat angular trio serves as a breather before the finale which opens with a splendid fugal exposition on a seemingly endless theme. The movement itself, however, is still a long way from the unwieldy monumentalism of the *Great Fugue*, Op. 133. It unites old contrapuntal technique and modern sonata form, intellectual challenges and musical exuberance which does not calm at any point. According to Salmen, Beethoven, from all the Quartets Op. 59, "draws a positive, liberating conclusion which, in its extremely expansive sonorities, truly is generally comprehensible and strives towards a destination which can also be appreciated by a wider public".

SACD 8

Cremona in April

… is a promise. The cool morning hours pass quickly, the sky above the river Po seems to be ablaze even at midday, people in the piazza in front of the cathedral are either taking a stroll or enjoying a glass of Franciacorta under the arcades of the town hall. The maze of alleyways and side streets, stretching out beneath the Torrazzo – the slim, ancient bell tower with its languidly ticking astronomical clock – houses more than a hundred luthier workshops, following on from the likes of Stradivari and Guarneri. In one piazza, Cremona's palace of art can be found, built in the angular style of fascist modernism, which today accommodates the violin museum as well as a new, breathtakingly curved auditorium.

The members of the Quartetto di Cremona, Cristiano, Paolo, Simone and Giovanni, agree that this is not a bad location in which to work. Originally from the frantic port of Genoa, they come to Cremona mainly to teach at the "Accademia Walter Stauffer". Since 2011, they have been imparting their art to young quartets from Italy or Switzerland – painstaking work, for Italy has seen virtually no top-class ensembles of international renown since the glorious days of the Quartetto Italiano. "This was due to the dominance of opera, but also an ingrained ignorance regarding chamber music, and a lack of support for music", the quartet's violist, Simone Gramaglia, points out wistfully.

But this grim situation has improved over recent years with, as in Germany and elsewhere, young quartets also popping up in Italy. "There is a form of renaissance of the string quartet", says Simone, "and that is down to us: I'm very proud of that." The Quartetto di Cremona has indeed contributed significantly to this development: by teaching courses at the Stauffer Academy; by working with collectors who make precious instruments available to young artists; or through projects such as "Le dimore del quartetto" which encourages owners of historical villas and palazzi to host young quartets for periods of time.

Beethoven as a Touchstone

At present, the four players of the Quartetto di Cremona are still teaching in more or less comfortable dressing rooms and salons of the Teatro Ponchielli in the town centre. This atmospheric makeshift arrangement, however, will change once the Stauffer Academy is able to move into a villa which has been customised specifically for music tuition. In order to be able to compete internationally, young performers need to hone their musical skills with the help of experienced professionals as well as build their concert repertoire stretching from Haydn through to modernism – and the early years of young ensembles often see a lot of blood, sweat and tears, but seldom money.

If we take a look at a stock piece such as Beethoven's Quartet in D major, Op. 18 No 3, it soon becomes apparent that, despite its serenely classical stance, from the beginning the players have to overcome a number of hurdles. The first violin opens with the unstable interval of a seventh, marked *piano* and using two stretched semibreves which hardly give any inkling of the fast allegro theme. Only gradually, as the remaining strings enter and the texture is flowing

along, do harmony and tempo become clearer. A clear concept of tempo, character and drama is needed even in these opening bars. As expected, sentiment and tone quality are central in the andante con moto; Beethoven contrasts the warmly harmonised, evocative melody of the second violin with a slightly old-fashioned secondary theme. A Haydnesque minuet with a minor-keyed middle section ("minore") leads into the finale which Beethoven conceived as a tarantella: in the melting pot of Vienna, where many Italian musicians and publishers worked, this was presumably more than just an exotic colour. From sonic drama to technical fireworks, Beethoven's early collection features all aspects which a quartet needs to be able to master.

For the Quartetto di Cremona, recording the complete Beethoven Quartets – a project which is concluded with this eighth volume – represented a major opportunity to review and polish its musical outlook and technique. According to the leader, Cristiano Gualco, "Beethoven is probably the only composer who can provide an entire concert programme of quartets – simply because every work is so distinct and tells a different story. The late quartets can't be explained at all; they work more like our brains: volatile in their perception, full of disruptions and contradictions. Also, when one has played all the quartets, not only does one really know Beethoven, but it also sharpens the mind for all music after him. For everyone has studied Beethoven."

This impression is confirmed by a quartet which has always been slightly overshadowed by its companion pieces – even though it was given the lyrical sobriquet of "Harp" quartet. A more suitable motto for Beethoven's Op. 74 might have been "Freudvoll und leidvoll" [joyful and sorrowful], the title of Klärchen's song in Goethe's drama *Egmont*, for which Beethoven had composed incidental music for the Vienna Burgtheater in 1809. The early version of the song reappeared in the E flat major quartet as the theme for the variations in the finale. However, the piece opens with a thoughtful adagio introduction, made rugged by its pauses, until an allegro wipes away all brooding with a few striking chords. Here, more than in any other quartet from Beethoven's "middle" period, the sound determines the character of the work: through constantly changing degrees of density in the writing; through scurrying chains of thirds in the lower parts; through harmonic brightening; and of course through the pizzicato effects (sounding nothing like a harp) which prompted the work's nickname. The adagio presents an extensive theme that anticipates the chants and "cavatinas" of the late quartets, and the scherzo re-uses the rhythmic energy from the opening of the Fifth Symphony (both movements are in C minor), propelling the "knocking motif" through all the parts. The closing movement with the afore-mentioned song theme is markedly simple, the six variations plus coda following the example of a Haydn or a Mozart.

Success!

Seventeen quartets and a quintet (together with the violist Lawrence Dutton, "on loan" from the Emerson String Quartet) in just over three years: time and again, dates had to be found and bundled in between concerts and lessons, and the owner of the wonderful estate near Turin, housing the "Fondazione Spinola Banna per l'Arte", had to be available for recordings to take place at a suitable distance from the hustle and bustle of daily life. It was a particular challenge, for twelve hours each day, for both the musicians and the producer, Ludger Böckenhoff to maintain the high levels of concentration, precision and passion that each quartet demands.

Once the stage was set, there was implicit trust – especially after the first successes in the press. The cellist, Giovanni Scaglione, remembers: "At that point, the quartet had been around for twelve years and it was time to position ourselves with an important project. We didn't want recordings at any cost, but instead to turn up in the right situation with the right works and the right label. Our many Beethoven engagements, even in the USA, and the response from the critics have shown that it worked – we are now a known quantity." Chuckling, he adds: "And wealth will follow eventually…"

In the meantime, we have relocated from the Teatro Ponchielli to the trattoria "La Sosta": heavy stoneware with extremely delicate salami accompanied by red wines from the region is doing the rounds. It becomes clear that Italy remains a tricky place for chamber music. But there are many impulses and stimuli, not least thanks to Cristiano, Paolo, Simone and Giovanni, who mentions the first Italian radio broadcast. Back then, in October 1924, the producers did not opt for Verdi's Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves, but instead for two movements from a Haydn string quartet…

Michael Struck-Schloen / Translation: *Viola Scheffel*

QUARTETTO DI CREMONA

During the past eighteen years the Quartetto di Cremona has matured into a string quartet of international renown and has acquired an excellent national and international reputation. Having for many years performed at the great international halls, it is often considered as the successor to the famous Quartetto Italiano. The musical style of the Quartetto di Cremona is marked by a fruitful tension between Italian and German-Austrian influences. Following their academic studies the players continued their training with Piero Farulli of the Quartetto Italiano. He strongly favoured intuitive playing and a fervent, emotional, romantic and "Italian" approach to music. Afterwards the musicians pursued their studies with Hatto Beyerle of the Alban Berg Quartet. As an expert in the classical era, he represents a clear, classical, "German-Austrian" style, focusing on faithfulness to the original, form and structure as a basis for musical interpretation and inspiration. Both teachers significantly influenced the musical style of the quartet. The players naturally unite both poles, combining boisterous enthusiasm with a distinct sense for musical architecture, cultivating the fusion of structure and expression, external shape and internal passion.

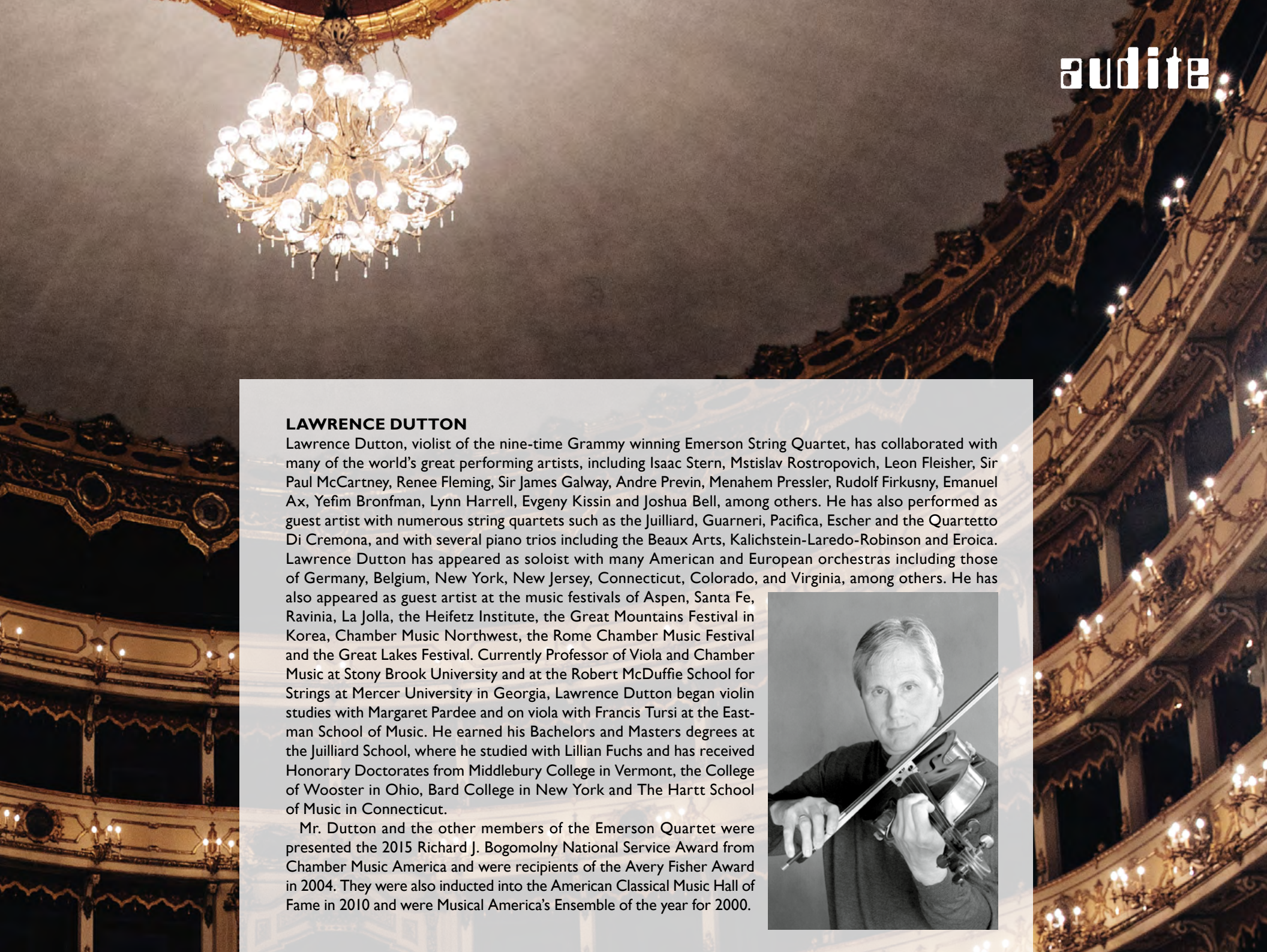
2017 marked the release of the final volume of their complete edition of Beethoven string quartets on audite. From the first volume, the series received immediate international recognition resulting in outstanding reviews and numerous prices. Among the most recent awards were e.g. the Echo Klassik 2017 for Vol. 7, and the International Classical Music Award 2018 for both, Vol. 7 and Vol. 8.

The Quartetto di Cremona has performed at major festivals in Europe, South America, Asia, Australia and the United States, including Beethovenfest in Bonn, Bozar Festival in Brussels, Cork Festival in Ireland, Turku Festival in Finland, Perth Festival in Australia and Platonov Festival in Russia. They have performed at such prestigious international concert halls as the Zurich Tonhalle, Concertgebouw and Muziekgebouw Amsterdam, Konzerthaus Berlin, Beethoven-Haus Bonn, Laeiszhalle Hamburg, London's Wigmore Hall, The Queen's Hall Edinburgh, Auditorio Nacional de Música Madrid, Stockholm Concert Hall, Bargemusic New York, Herbst Theatre San Francisco, The Vancouver Playhouse, NCPA Beijing and Sala Cecília Meireles Rio de Janeiro.

The quartet collaborates with artists such Pieter Wispelwey, Angela Hewitt Lawrence Dutton, Antonio Meneses, Andrea Lucchesini, Lilya Zilberstein, Edicson Ruiz, Lynn Harrell and the Emerson String Quartet. Its repertoire ranges from the early works of Haydn to contemporary music; here their particular interest lies in works by Fabio Vacchi, Michele Dall'Ongaro, Helmut Lachenmann and Maxwell Davies.

The musicians are also dedicated to teaching, giving master classes throughout Europe and the US. In 2011, the quartet was entrusted with the leadership of the String Quartet Course at the Accademia Walter Stauffer in Cremona.

The Quartetto di Cremona is an ambassador for the international "Friends of Stradivari" project. In September 2017, the Nippon Music Foundation loaned the "Paganini Quartet" by Antonio Stradivari to the ensemble. The ensemble is kindly supported also by the Kulturfond Peter Eckes with four Italian instruments by Guadagnini, Testore, Torazzi and Amati. In November 2015, they were awarded honorary citizenship of the city of Cremona.



audite

LAWRENCE DUTTON

Lawrence Dutton, violist of the nine-time Grammy winning Emerson String Quartet, has collaborated with many of the world's great performing artists, including Isaac Stern, Mstislav Rostropovich, Leon Fleisher, Sir Paul McCartney, Renee Fleming, Sir James Galway, Andre Previn, Menahem Pressler, Rudolf Firkusny, Emanuel Ax, Yefim Bronfman, Lynn Harrell, Evgeny Kissin and Joshua Bell, among others. He has also performed as guest artist with numerous string quartets such as the Juilliard, Guarneri, Pacifica, Escher and the Quartetto Di Cremona, and with several piano trios including the Beaux Arts, Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson and Eroica. Lawrence Dutton has appeared as soloist with many American and European orchestras including those of Germany, Belgium, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Colorado, and Virginia, among others. He has also appeared as guest artist at the music festivals of Aspen, Santa Fe, Ravinia, La Jolla, the Heifetz Institute, the Great Mountains Festival in Korea, Chamber Music Northwest, the Rome Chamber Music Festival and the Great Lakes Festival. Currently Professor of Viola and Chamber Music at Stony Brook University and at the Robert McDuffie School for Strings at Mercer University in Georgia, Lawrence Dutton began violin studies with Margaret Pardee and on viola with Francis Tursi at the Eastman School of Music. He earned his Bachelors and Masters degrees at the Juilliard School, where he studied with Lillian Fuchs and has received Honorary Doctorates from Middlebury College in Vermont, the College of Wooster in Ohio, Bard College in New York and The Hartt School of Music in Connecticut.

Mr. Dutton and the other members of the Emerson Quartet were presented the 2015 Richard J. Bogomolny National Service Award from Chamber Music America and were recipients of the Avery Fisher Award in 2004. They were also inducted into the American Classical Music Hall of Fame in 2010 and were Musical America's Ensemble of the year for 2000.

audite

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Simone Gramaglia with the Torazzi viola,
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Quartetto di Cremona

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