

AMERICAN STRING QUARTET
ANDRÉ-MICHEL SCHUB (PIANO)

Manhattan School of Music, New York

16 December 2007

Now in its 32nd season, the American String Quartet has been in residence at the Manhattan School of Music since 1984. Stability and excellence are chief among its many fine attributes. Two founding members remain: violist Daniel Avshalomov and second violinist Laurie Carney. Leader Peter Winograd has occupied his chair since 1990; cellist Wolfram Koessel, the most recent arrival, joined in 2006. The quartet continues to play with superior tonal quality and integration from season to season. It is expertly balanced and always expressive but never exceeds true chamber music proportions. All those virtues, intensified by an uncommon interpretative unanimity, were on offer in Mozart's 'Dissonance' Quartet, enabling the score to emerge without any filtering during this concert at the group's home venue, the John C. Borden Auditorium.

Bartók's Fourth Quartet was so well played that the casual listener would not have suspected its formidable challenge. Instead, intelligence and energy, abetted by subtle and variegated tonal colouring, produced a wonderful feeling of inevitability. Last month, pianist André-Michel Schub



PETER SCHAAF

stood out in an all-Fauré programme; he was equally impressive in his partnership with this quartet in the Franck Quintet in F minor. If they failed fully to value the work's mystical and ethereal moods, its quasi-orchestral textures were always expertly controlled. Transparency and lean but impassioned expression produced outstanding dividends.

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