

Ariel Quartet

Gershon Gerchikov & Alexandra Kazovsky, violins
Jän Grüning, viola Amit Even-Tov, cello

“ . . . they crank out virtuosity by the bucketful and passion by the yard.” –The Washington Post





Characterized by its youth, brilliant playing, and soulful interpretations, the Ariel Quartet has quickly earned a glowing international reputation. Previously the resident ensemble in the New England Conservatory's prestigious Professional String Quartet Training Program, the Quartet recently celebrated its tenth anniversary.

Formed in Israel, the Quartet moved to the United States in 2004 to continue its professional studies. The Grand Prize winners of the 2006 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, they have also been awarded First Prize at the international competition "Franz Schubert and The Music Of Modernity" in Graz, Austria (2003). After they won the Székely Prize for their performance of Bartók, as well as the overall Third Prize at the Banff International String Quartet Competition in 2007, the *American Record Guide* described the Ariel Quartet as "a consummate ensemble gifted with utter musicality and remarkable interpretive power" and called their performance of Beethoven's Quartet Op. 132 "the pinnacle of the competition."

The Ariel Quartet has performed extensively in Israel, Europe, and North America, including such venues as the Louvre in Paris, Kaisersaal in Frankfurt ("...a tour de force," said *Frankfurter Allgemeine*), Jordan Hall in Boston, and the Washington Performing Arts Society, the Corcoran Gallery, and the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. In the 2010-2011 season the Quartet participated in a Beethoven cycle at the National Gallery, and joined the competitors of the 13th Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Master Competition for the Chamber Music round in May 2011. The quartet spent most of the 2010-11 season in Basel, Switzerland, where they had the opportunity to work with Walter Levin, the founding first violinist of the famous LaSalle Quartet.

Highlights of the 2011-12 season include residencies for the Perlman Music Program and El Paso Pro Musica, and performances in Europe and throughout North America including concerts in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Gainesville, FL. The Ariel has remained committed to performing extensively in Israel, and returns home frequently to appear in concert.

In addition to performing the traditional quartet repertoire, the Ariel Quartet regularly collaborates with many Israeli and non-Israeli musicians and composers, including pianists Roman Rabinovich, Alexander Gavrylyuk and Yaron Kohlberg; the Jerusalem String Quartet; composers Matan Porat, Matti Kovler, and Menachem Wiesenberg; clarinetist Moran Katz; violist Roger Tapping; and the Zukerman Chamber Players. Additionally, the Ariel was quartet-in-residence in the Steans Music Institute at the Ravinia Festival for two consecutive years.

The Quartet received extensive scholarship support for the members' studies in the United States from the America-Israel Cultural Foundation, Dov and Rachel Gottesman, and the Legacy Heritage Fund. Most recently, they were awarded a substantial grant from The A. N. and Pearl G. Barnett Family Foundation, and were named the 2011 Barnett Fellows.

Multimedia

(Click thumbnail to launch in your browser.)



Mozart: Quartet in D minor, K. 421, I. Allegro moderato



Webern: Six Bagatelles for String Quartet

Sample Programs

Program I

Beethoven: Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 18, No. 6
Berg: Quartet, Op. 3 **OR** Korngold: Quartet No. 3

Schubert: Quartet in G Major, D. 887

Program II

Haydn: Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 33, No. 2, “The Joke”
Bartok: Quartet No. 6

Beethoven: Quartet in C-sharp minor, Op. 131

Program III

Beethoven: Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 18, No. 6
Janacek: Quartet No. 1

Bartok: Quartet No. 6 **OR** Brahms: Quartet in C minor, Op. 51, No. 1

**Ariel Quartet serves up finest fare of Fontana opening
By William R. Wood Published: Thursday, June 22, 2006**

At the end of the opening of the Fontana Chamber Arts 2006 Summer Music Festival Wednesday night, there was no doubt that the Ariel Quartet was the star of the evening.

That was no easy feat, as the concert, given at the Kalamazoo Nature Center, contained performances by three other notable ensembles as well. Yet the Ariel Quartet was the clear audience favorite in the sold-out Cooper's Glen Auditorium, where all the music was played.

Fresh from the Fischhoff Chamber Music Competition in May, when the group took Grand Prize, violinists Alexandra Kazovsky and Gershon Gerchikov, violist Sergey Tarashchansky and cellist Amit Even-Tov were as mesmerizing to watch as they were to listen to. They played with power, fire and attitude.

The slow, emotional third movement of their Beethoven selection, String Quartet No. 15 in A Minor, was a stand-out as the group offered punch to dynamics and intensity to the hymnlike phrases in the piece...

Beauty in the gray between old, new

By Joseph Dalton Published: Monday, February 1, 2010

TROY—The Ariel String Quartet proved itself to be adept and unpredictable as well as something of a throw back to an earlier era during its performance Sunday afternoon at Emma Willard School, presented by the Friends of Chamber Music.

Though the players are currently in residence at the New England Conservatory in Boston, the Ariel was formed 11 years ago in Israel. The performers are all in their 20s.

They began the concert with a remarkably dry sounding performance of Beethoven's Quartet in F Minor, Op. 95. Most young ensembles today are brimming over with vibrato-rich, honey-soaked sound, yet at the launch the Ariel sounded almost like an old recording. It wasn't as frail and vibrato-free as early music, but the whole piece seemed to arrive in shades of black, white, and grey.

It was also measured and precise, a bit business like and often arresting. In the opening Allergo, there were frequent unison storms in the lower register after which the first violinist Gershon Gerchikov would launch into a high and tight little tune. The lean sound also lent a remarkable transparency to the web of counterpoint in the third movement.

With the first notes of Brahms' Quartet in A Minor, Op. 51, No. 2, which came after intermission, it was immediately obvious that the Ariel's approach to Beethoven was calculated and not necessarily characteristic. Now in the first chair was violinist Alexandra Kazovsky and the whole quartet arrived with a lovely blooming tone. Thoughts of spring came to mind. There was still a certain introspection, yet also an obvious comfort with dramatic gesture and even sentiment.

In between the Beethoven and Brahms, the Ariel presented a new work that seemed to come from another era. "Tikun Hatzot" was written on a commission by the Caramoor Festival by the 27-year old Israeli composer Yohanan Chendler. In one continuous movement, almost 20 minutes in length, it was full of austere atonal writing. There were angular melodies, vigorous tone clusters, odd flecks squeaks and scratches and even what appeared to be quartertones.

About the only time such writing comes from young American composers today it will be juxtaposed with something equally laden in schmaltz for a comic or ironic effect. But this dose of modernism never had a punch line.

Some insight comes from the title, which means literally "midnight rectification" and refers to a Kabalistic practice of a late night prayer. Like a restless meditation session, the music was both agitated and weightless and eventually moved toward a certain hazy stasis.



American Record Guide

Gateway to Enlightenment

By Gil French Published: November 2007

. . . The evening opened with the competition's jaw-dropping group, the Ariel Quartet, founded in Jerusalem in 1998 and now residing in the USA. There's a saying, "Don't mess with Texas;" in Israel you don't mess with music—it's played with a concentration and intensity not found elsewhere. Here were four players, each a consummate master, who captured all the "old world" qualities: long lyrical lines, the ability to shape not just phrases but single measures with breadth and nuance, and the ability to switch in Opus 77:1 from romantically lyrical lines to facetious playfulness with total musicality in the time it takes you to say "Haydn". But it was their Bartok No. 4 that was the "Oh, that's what it's all about!" moment of the competition, when Amit Even-Tov played her cello solo in the third movement, revealing it as the heart of the entire work. The Ariel was simply beyond technique, a consummate ensemble gifted with utter musicality and remarkable interpretative power.

The Ariel's performance of Beethoven's No. 15 that not only left me paralyzed but made me feel the composer's final acceptance of all that had been dealt him in life—I was hardly the only one who was so overwhelmed. It was the pinnacle of the competition.



Tinley Park, IL

Norton Building Concert Series - October 15, 2006 concert review By D. J. Luksetich Published: October 15, 2006

The Norton Building Concert Series in Lemont hosted the Ariel Quartet on Sunday October 15 in a concert spanning 150 years of string quartet repertoire. The quartet, Alexandra Kazovsky and Gershon Gerchikov, violins, Sergey Tarashchansky, viola, and Amit Even-Tov, cello, recently won the Grand Prize at the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, one of the most prestigious music contests in the world.

The concert opened with Haydn's Quartet in F from 1799. The performance immediately introduced the audience to the dramatic nature of the group, musically able with a very intense physicality.

The latter was most obvious in the cello playing of Even-Tov whose bow often resembled a weapon.

The performance, however, seemed enhanced by the quartet's immersion in the music and their feverish internal communication. The music of Haydn became transparent, with quartet reduced sometimes to contrasting duets and individual passages shining with the support of trio. The second movement minuetto was simply dazzling and the stately violin/cello opening of the andante transformed to majestic quartet, produced an incredibly immaculate soft ending.

Shostakovich's 1949 String Quartet No. 4 came next. The group's versatility shown through in this "screaming" composition. The finale's pizzicato elements neatly wove into a dance resulting in a lonesome cello ending which Even-Tov handled brilliantly.

The final piece on the program was Brahms's a minor Quartet written in 1873. The passion of the Ariel Quartet took on a different tone from the music of Shostakovich as Kazovsky assumed first chair from the very able Gerchikov and added a feeling of pathos to the sound of the group. Tarashchansky's viola continuously emerged from the texture showing a broad range of feeling. This music illustrated the wide range of the quartet's talent and the accelerated finale gave the performance a spectacular ending.

Ariel stuns with energy, precision
By Matt Steel Published: Monday, October 23, 2006

An outstanding string quartet is so much more than just a collection of four exceptional musicians. It also requires that the musicians have a symbiotic relationship that has been carefully nurtured through time and experience. Youth usually works against such a relationship, but not so with Israel's Ariel Quartet.

Now the Honors String Quartet of New England Conservatory, Ariel has been together since 1998, much of their young lives. In a Fontana Chamber Arts concert on Saturday night at Brook Lodge in Augusta, violinists Alexandra Kazovsky and Gershon Gerchikov, violist Sergey Taraschansky and cellist Amit Even-Tov displayed the remarkable, cohesive musicianship that earned Grand Prize at the Fischhoff Chamber Music Competition.

Saturday's program was wonderfully balanced and varied with works from the classic, Romantic and modern eras. Gerchikov played first violin in the Haydn's String Quartet in F Major as well as in the Shostakovich's String Quartet in D Major. He is an excellent leader, playing his part masterfully as he subtly monitored the ensemble's balance, tempo and myriad nuances.

Ariel depended on its energy and precision, rather than its dynamic power, to create a stunning performance. There were no clouds of rosin or broken bow hairs to show for their effort. Staying within the confines of good sound qualities, they allowed extraordinary ensemble cohesion and pitch accuracy to generate thrills.

However, they did not lack virtuosity. The Finale (vivace assai) to the Haydn quartet was tremendously exciting as the musicians played so vigorously that the cello's endpin came unmoored from its spot in the floor. Again, in the energetic scherzo of the Mendelssohn's String Quartet in E Minor, each member played the ubiquitous and pesky little four-note motive with great exactitude.

There were also moments of extreme beauty and grace as in Even-Tov's cello solos in Haydn's simple third-movement andante and in Kazovsky's lyrical violin line in Mendelssohn's andante movement. The ensemble delicacy achieved in the Andantino of the Shostakovich was uncanny.

The most challenging work of Saturday's program was probably the Shostakovich because it pitted warm and expressive passages against rough-hewn peasant music. In the first and fourth movements, each marked allegretto, there are drones reminiscent of the hurdy-gurdy accompanying modal tunes that move in and out of a foreground of sometimes mysterious and often agitated counterpoint. Here Ariel was marvelous, effecting the peasant-like passages to perfection in a vibrato-less simplicity and then quickly restoring the vibrato for the angular and dissonant "high art" music.

Somewhere beneath the polish and professionalism of Ariel's performance, there lingers a hint of the enthusiastic young students that they are. No doubt they have benefited from some of the finest quartet training available anywhere, and it takes time for an ensemble to establish its unique identity. Right now, they hold the promise of completely realizing that identity very soon.





Melvin Kaplan, Inc.
115 College Street
Burlington, Vermont 05401
Phone: (802) 658-2592
Fax: (802) 658-6089
music@melkap.com
www.melkap.com

www.arielquartet.com