

# The New York Times

February 7, 2009

## A Stormy Beethoven Night

Beethoven wrote some of his stormiest music in the key of C minor, including his Fourth String Quartet (Op. 18, No. 4), one of a set of six in which he began to challenge

### MUSIC REVIEW

VIVIEN  
SCHWEITZER

the Classical model established by his predecessors. On Thursday at the Metropolitan Museum, the Talich Quartet offered an intense, driven interpretation that highlighted the work's seething angst.

The Talich — the third of six international ensembles performing Beethoven's complete string quartets at the museum this season — was founded in 1964 in Prague by Jan Talich Sr., who named the group after his uncle Vaclav Talich, a conductor of the Czech Philharmonic. The violinists Jan Talich Jr. and Petr Macecek, the violist Vladimir Bukac and the cellist Petr Prause re-

*The museum's Beethoven series features the Leipzig String Quartet on March 12; (212) 570-3949, metmuseum.org.*



DAVID GOLDMAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Talich Quartet from the Czech Republic, at the Met.

### Talich Quartet

Metropolitan Museum of Art

placed the founding members of the quartet in the 1990s.

Their interpretation of the C minor work (which has no slow movement) was notable for its sharpness of attack. The bristling urgency contrasted vividly with the moments of sweet lyricism in the first movement. The musicians' crisply etched rhythms and bold accents in the Menuetto heightened the sense of drama. In the concluding Allegro, Mr. Talich performed the melody with vigorous energy, effectively supported by his colleagues.

After intermission came searching intensity in a striking rendition of Beethoven's magisterial late Quartet in B flat

(Op. 130). The players' introspective poise was particularly commendable in the poignant Cavatina: Adagio molto espressivo.

The concluding movement shatters the introverted mood of the Cavatina with an almost incongruously sunny frolic. The original finale was the daunting "Grosse" Fuge, which reportedly baffled listeners (and Beethoven's publisher) to such a degree that Beethoven subsequently offered a more listener-friendly substitution. (He later published the "Grosse" Fuge separately.)

The group played the cheery, Haydnesque finale with a flourish and continued the Classical theme with an encore: a spirited, joyous performance of the fugal final movement of Mozart's String Quartet in G (K. 387), the first of his six "Haydn" Quartets.

MELVIN  
KAPLAN  
INCORPORATED

115 College Street  
Burlington, Vermont 05401  
(802) 658-2592  
Music@melkap.com