

# THE NEW YORKER

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

## FOUR PLAY

by Alex Ross

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On a recent night at Weill Recital Hall, the Ebène Quartet, four young string players from France, made an unpromising entrance, looking like classical music's unwanted answer to the Jonas Brothers, but, from the opening bars of Mozart's Divertimento in D (K. 136), their playing was so secure, alive, rich-toned, and profoundly musical that age ceased to be an issue. Brahms's String Quartet in C Minor seethed with drama, not least when the second violinist lost control of his bow and then caught it while the violist held a note longer than usual. Their performance of the Ravel Quartet was a riot of nuance, sometimes raptly lyrical and sometimes swingingly rhythmic. A recent Virgin Classics CD of the Ravel, Debussy, and Fauré quartets shows similar virtues. In a wacky encore, which involved both playing and humming variations on "Some Day My Prince Will Come," the Ebène revealed that they don't take themselves too seriously. They seem bound for greatness all the same. ♦



### KEYWORDS

Ebène Quartet; String Quartets; Classical Music; Weill Recital Hall; Chamber Music