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Young Concert Artists, Inc.

THE JUPITER STRING QUARTET

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Jupiter Quartet's first recording is exquisite

By Sarah Bryan Miller

Post-Dispatch Classical Music Critic

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It's unlikely to go gold, but the first recording from the Jupiter String Quartet is a definite winner.

It's a milepost for the Jupiters — violins Nelson Lee, 28, and Meg Freivogel McDonough, 27; viola Liz Freivogel, 30; and cello Daniel McDonough, 28 — whose new compact disc, "Shostakovich Quartet No. 3 in F major, op. 73; Britten Quartet No. 2 in C major, op. 36", features exquisite, mature playing.

The Freivogels are St. Louis natives and graduates of Kirkwood High School; their parents, William and Margaret Wolf Freivogel, are former editors at the Post-Dispatch. Daniel and Meg were married in May in Tower Grove Park.

The Jupiters got a big boost when they won the 8th Banff International String Quartet Competition in 2004. That gave them the contract for their new recording, new management, a recital tour, cash and other help in career-building.

They recently received another accolade when they were awarded the Cleveland Quartet Award by Chamber Music America. "That was really great," Meg says. "First, you don't know you're in the running; they just call you and let you know you've won." The prize brings bookings for a dozen concerts, "and you get paid for those concerts like a real bona fide quartet. It's the best kind of award to get."

The Jupiters are now playing 45 to 50 concerts a year, an impressive number for such a young ensemble. "It feels like a lot to us," Meg says. "We're still trying to learn a whole lot of repertoire, so it's enough for now."

The Boston-based quartet has performed everywhere from New York's Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center to the Aspen Music Festival, from London's Wigmore Hall to the Kennedy Center. They do a lot of school outreach programs and small-town concerts, which, Meg says, they enjoy tremendously.

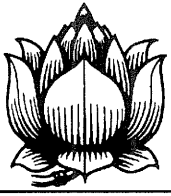
And they're a part of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's Chamber Music Two, an opportunity for performing everything from family concerts and lecture recitals to formal quartet recitals. Their scheduled May 1 recital with veteran violinist Ida Kavafian sold out so quickly that a second performance was added.

Their new CD shows their artistic growth in the past several years. The Jupiters always had superb technique, amazing unanimity, clarity and terrific energy in their sound, and those qualities have become even more pronounced and authoritative since Banff. Both scores are played with virtuosic skill; the Shostakovich, in particular, stays with the listener.

Both quartets take the listener from cloudless skies to the darkness of war. The Shostakovich, composed in 1946, moves from the light (the original title of the movement was "Blithe ignorance of the future cataclysm") through apocalyptic darkness. The Jupiters capture all its moods, and they're not afraid to be subtle.

The Britten, from 1945, is defined by the 20-minute final movement, the "Chacony," and the reading of it here could hardly be more profound. These two essential chamber scores of the mid-20th century work beautifully together.

String quartets, like fine wines, get better with age; the Jupiters are a very fine vintage indeed.



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MUSIC REVIEW

Jupiter Quartet reaches for the stars

Ensemble captures
heartbreak, emotional
intensity at the Dayton Art
Institute performance.

By Carol Simmons
Staff Writer

DAYTON — Like the Roman god and the commanding planet with whom it shares a name, the Jupiter String Quartet aspires to lofty heights.

But the goals of the Boston-based quartet are strictly of a musical nature.

Still, the ensemble managed to throw a few lightning bolts at the Dayton Art Institute, where it performed Saturday night as part of the Vanguard Concerts series.

The group, which has collected an impressive number of prestigious awards in its relatively brief history, played with furious emotional intensity and focused technical control.

The musicians' difficult program featured works ranging from the Classical through the Modern eras, with pieces by Felix Mendelssohn, Samuel Barber, Ruth Crawford Seeger and Ludwig van Beethoven.

Particularly moving was the masterful way in which the group captured the heartbreak at the core of Mendelssohn's Quartet in f minor, Op. 80, written after the death of his beloved sister, Fanny.

The performance opened a window onto the universal qualities contained in the highest arts.

The group shares not only a commitment to the music but a communal sense of its message.

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