

The Stuyvesant String Quartet

Sylvan Shulman & Bernard Robbins, violins
Ralph Hersh, viola; Alan Shulman, cello
with Benny Goodman, clarinet

Gian Francesco Malipiero
(1882-1973)

- 1** **String Quartet No. 1 *Rispetti e Strambotti*** (21:19)
(in one movement)

Claude Debussy
(1862-1918)

First String Quartet in G-minor, Op. 10 (26:00)

- 2** Animé et très décidé (6:12)
3 Assez vif et bien rythmé (3:41)
4 Andantino doucement expressif (7:58)
5 Très modéré (6:53)

Maurice Ravel
(1875-1937)

String Quartet in F-Major (27:52)

- 6** Allegro moderato (7:41)
7 Assez vif très rythmé (6:23)
8 Très lent (8:45)
9 Vif et agité (5:12)

Alan Shulman
(1915-2002)

- 10** **Rendezvous for Clarinet & String Quartet** (4:48)
Moderato; Twice as Fast

The Stuyvesant String Quartet

The Stuyvesant String Quartet was founded in 1938 by violinist Sylvan Shulman (1912-1985) and cellist Alan Shulman (1915-2002). Born in Baltimore, the brothers received their early musical training at the Peabody Conservatory. By 1925, they were playing in a piano trio with their sister Violet, and broadcasting over WFBR. In 1928, the Shulmans moved to New York. Sylvan supported the family playing in the Broadway pit orchestra of Jerome Kern's *The Cat and the Fiddle* (1931) while Alan received New York Philharmonic and Juilliard scholarships.

In 1935, Polish-born violist Edward Kreiner asked the Shulmans to join a string quartet he was reorganizing. Kreiner, who had been Fritz Reiner's principal violist in the Cincinnati Symphony during the 1923 season, also played with the Detroit Symphony and the Letz Quartet. Kreiner's social connections helped finance the Quartet's Town Hall debut in October 1935. Ralph Hersh, the original second violinist, resigned and the chair was held in succession by Joseph Relich, David Sterkin, David Mankovitz, Bernard Robbins, and Josef Gingold. The Kreiner Quartet made weekly radio broadcasts over CBS, and recorded for Victor and for the Friends of Recorded Music. When the NBC Symphony was created for Arturo Toscanini in 1937, the Kreiner Quartet auditioned for Artur Rodzinski and were accepted. Edward Kreiner left NBC after one season. The Shulman brothers then formed their own quartet in 1938. Seeking a regional identity, they named their quartet after the Dutch director general of New Netherland, Peter Stuyvesant.

As with the Kreiner Quartet, the pre-war Stuyvesant String Quartet also changed inner voices frequently. Violinists were Harold Kohon, Zelly Smirnoff,

John Dembeck, Harry Glickman, Maurice Wilk, and Leo Kahn. Violists were Louis Kievman and Emanuel Vardi (1941-2).

In 1938, the Quartet recorded Bach's *Musical Offering* for Victor under the supervision of Bach scholar Dr. Hans T. David and the *Wedding Cantata* with soprano Elisabeth Schumann. In 1939, they began recording for Columbia Records. Releases included the first quartets of Bloch, Prokofiev and Shostakovich, and works of Gabrieli and Scarlatti. On March 29, 1941, four months after Shostakovich introduced his *Piano Quintet* with the Beethoven Quartet in Moscow, the Stuyvesant Quartet played the American premiere with Vivian Rivkin at Carnegie Hall. In May 1941, Columbia recorded it. The group's recording of the Ravel *Introduction and Allegro* with harpist Laura Newell was already a best seller. With Newell, they also made popular records for Victor under the name The New Friends of Rhythm, a swing septet featuring arrangements of classics and originals by Alan Shulman. *Time* magazine noted on June 10, 1940, that the New Friends had sold 20,000 records, impressive for its day.

The Stuyvesant Quartet made a belated New York debut with Wilk and Vardi at Town Hall, March 29, 1942, playing a program of Haydn, Brahms, and the premieres of Leo Weiner's 1938 *Quartet* and Alan Shulman's *Four Moods*. The *World-Telegram* and the *Post* praised their tone and ensemble. On May 18 the Quartet performed the Shostakovich *First Quartet*, Opus 49 on a Buffalo Chamber Music Society program. They recorded it for Columbia on July 30, 1942, with Goddard Lieberson producing, just prior to the recording ban that American Federation of Musicians President James C. Petrillo instated on August 1. Soon after, Emanuel Vardi and Alan Shulman entered military service. The Quartet played the first performance of Vincent Persichetti's *1st String Quartet*, Opus 7 at a League of Composers concert in New York, March 14, 1943, and played another wartime concert in Washington, D.C., August 3, 1944, with Leo Kahn, second violin and Ralph

Hersh, viola. *The Evening Star* wrote, "It is a group that maintains the highest standards of chamber music art, being individual musicians of distinction, yet willing to submerge their personalities for a more perfect united effect."

In 1943, the Government mandated that NBC split the Red and Blue networks into separate entities, creating ABC. Sylvan Shulman left NBC for the newly-created network, where he was concertmaster and conducted. Violist Ralph Hersh (1910-1985) became principal at ABC. He had played with the National Symphony under Hans Kindler, and briefly with the WQXR String Quartet. Violinist Bernard Robbins (1913-1999) returned to New York in August 1943, first joining the Blue staff, then playing with the NBC Symphony and NBC String Quartet. He had been assistant concertmaster of the National Symphony Orchestra under Kindler, and from 1937-43, was second violinist of the Stradivarius Quartet. In the fall of 1945, when Alan Shulman was discharged from the Merchant Marine, the Shulman brothers reformed the Stuyvesant Quartet with Robbins and Hersh, both of whom were Kreiner Quartet alumni. They resumed concertizing December 9, 1945, in a typically challenging program at Princeton playing Hindemith Third, Shostakovich First and Porter Third. In demand as a composer and arranger and preferring to play with the Quartet, Alan Shulman did not rejoin the NBC Symphony until 1948.

The Stuyvesant Quartet repertoire emphasized twentieth-century works including Bartók, Milhaud, Malipiero, Hindemith, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Bloch, Turina, Kreisler, Weiner, Persichetti, Paul Creston, Roger Goeb, Quincy Porter and Alan Shulman. Their programs also included standard fare: Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, Schubert, Brahms, Schumann, Dvořák, Smetana, Dohnányi, Wolf, Debussy, Ravel, and lesser known Dittersdorf and Boccherini.

In July 1946, Benny Goodman, who had played on the Carnegie Hall concert when the Shostakovich Quintet premiered, asked the Quartet to join him playing a movement of the Mozart *Clarinet Quintet* on his weekly radio program. Alan

suggested instead that Goodman commission him to write a short original work for clarinet and string quartet. Goodman agreed, and Alan composed *Rendezvous with Benny*, which premiered over WEAJ on August 19, 1946.

The Quartet returned to Washington December 30, 1946, to perform at the Library of Congress in a program of Dohnányi, Prokofiev and Dvořák. Their manager, Erminie Kahn, booked short concert tours of the East, Midwest and Canada when their busy radio (and soon television) schedules permitted.

Early in 1947, The New Friends of Rhythm reformed briefly to record two sessions for the independent label International Records. Then in May 1947, the Quartet recorded the Villa-Lobos *Sixth Quartet* for International. The composer, on one of his annual trips to New York, gave them a photograph inscribed, "*A Quatour admirable Stuyvesant Quartet avec beaucoup d'admiration Villa Lobos.*" Alan Shulman sent a copy of the album set to his friend Eleanor Aller Slatkin, cellist of the Hollywood String Quartet, and the Villa-Lobos Sixth then became the Hollywood's first LP. In November 1947, the Stuyvesant recorded the Bloch *Second Quartet* and, in December, the Brahms *Clarinet Quintet* with Alfred Gallodoro. These sets later appeared as LPs on the Concert Hall label.

In 1950, with horn player and inventor Norman Pickering, the Shulman brothers, Bernard Robbins and Ralph Hersh formed their own label: Philharmonia Records. Self-financed and self-promoted, Philharmonia issued an eclectic series of recordings during the label's short life. Releases included solo albums by Laura Newell, guitarists Ramon Montoya and Rey de la Torre, saxophonist Vincent Abato playing concertos by Ibert and Glazounov (conducted by Pickering and Sylvan Shulman) and the New York Woodwind Quintet.

The first Stuyvesant Philharmonia recording begun July 26, 1950 (completed August 9 & 16), at the Mannes School was the Malipiero *Rispetti e Strambotti*, which the Kreiner Quartet had recorded for Victor in 1937. In November 1950, at

Mannes, they recorded the Hindemith F-minor Quartet, which was released on a 10" Philharmonia LP in early 1951. Pickering and the Quartet bought their own recording equipment, a Magnecord PT-6 15 ips tape recorder and a Western Electric 635 microphone (later a Neumann U-47), and moved their recording activities to the acoustically vibrant Village Lutheran Church in Bronxville, New York.

Between 1951 and 1953 they recorded the Debussy and Ravel Quartets (in what was to become the standard pairing of these two works in the LP era), the Mozart D-Major Quartets, K. 499 and K. 575, the Boccherini D-Major *Guitar Quintet* with Rey de la Torre, and with Laura Newell, the Bax Quintet, the Ibert Trio and the Malipiero *Sonata a Cinque*. Reviews of Philharmonia releases were enthusiastic. *The Herald-Tribune* praised the Debussy/Ravel as "...beautifully executed, with lovely tone and deliciously in tune." David Hall wrote of the Mozart disk, "To my ear, this recording offers more of an aural thrill and human listening experience than many a symphonic or choral-orchestra effort." Jazz publications loved the Hindemith. *Metronome* called it "a superb performance," and *Downbeat* called the Stuyvesant Quartet "...one of the most intelligent and inventive groups now recording."

The Quartet "consciously avoided the well-traveled literature," according to recording engineer Norman Pickering. Projects considered, but not recorded, included the Brahms viola quintets with Leon Frengut and the 1951 *String Quartet* of Julián Orbón. Pickering, who was also a violin maker, made the viola that Ralph Hersh played on the recordings of the Mozart Quartets and the violin Sylvan Shulman played on the Kreisler recording.

After recording the Kreisler String Quartet, Sylvan Shulman and Norman Pickering played the test pressing for Fritz Kreisler who approved, praising in particular Sylvan's playing. On December 6, 1953, the Stuyvesant Quartet recorded the Paganini *String Quartet* as a companion piece at Carnegie Recital Hall. It was to be

their last recording session.

When the Kreisler/Paganini disk was released in April 1954, Irving Kolodin wrote in the *Saturday Review*, "It is in every way a successful combination of affectionate performance, first-class engineering and excellent processing. Those who know other recordings by this group know what to expect in tonal faithfulness; others will find it hardly subject to improvement."

In the 1950s, fees for chamber music concerts were not substantial. The Quartet declined a residency offer at Princeton. They all had families to support and commercial work was more lucrative. Coordinating their schedules was difficult. The demise of the NBC Symphony in April 1954 marked the end of an era. In a letter dated June 18, 1954, Alan Shulman wrote his friend Milton Preves, principal violist of the Chicago Symphony, "Thanks for the Qt. leads. I don't think we'll be doing any playing since concerts are booked so far in advance none of us want to commit ourselves. After agents fees, hotels, meals, transportation, etc, one record date pays more without knocking one's brains out rehearsing."

Other opportunities beckoned. Bernard Robbins joined the New York Philharmonic in 1955, played with the CBC String Quartet (1961-1964) and then returned to New York to rejoin the Philharmonic, retiring in 1983. He was an avid chamber music player. Ralph Hersh remained at ABC until 1964 when he joined the Philadelphia Chamber Symphony. Summers he played at Blue Hill in Maine, at the Casals Festival (1951) and at the Aspen (1956-61) and Dartmouth (1962-64) Music Festivals. He played in the Atlanta Symphony (1968-9) and was principal violist of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra (1972-1977) before retiring to Tucson where he remained active until his death in 1985. Alan Shulman was a founder of the Symphony of the Air (1954) and the Violoncello Society (1956), was cellist of the Philharmonia Trio (1962-1969) and the Haydn Quartet (1972-1982), composed and arranged, played in the television and recording studios in New York, and taught.

Sylvan Shulman conducted the Great Neck Symphony on Long Island between 1954 and 1972, taught at Juilliard and Meadowmount, and also was a busy studio player. Illness curtailed the Shulman brothers' activities, Sylvan in 1982, Alan in 1987.

In 1964 Nonesuch Records reissued the Hindemith/Malipiero, Debussy/Ravel and Mozart recordings remastered in electronic stereo to renewed critical acclaim. Sylvan Shulman then recorded a new LP for Nonesuch, "Quartet Music of the 17th & 18th Centuries," under the name Stuyvesant String Quartet with violinist Rena Robbins (no relation to Bernard), violist Leon Frengut and cellist Harvey Shapiro.

In 1980, CBS/Odyssey reissued the Kreisler/Paganini recording in mono. Richard Freed wrote in *Stereo Review*, "The Stuyvesant recordings always gave us an image of four musicians not only in total accord with each other, but crazy about the music they chose to play." In a 1997 interview, Norman Pickering told of seeing Alan Shulman again at a Toscanini Association dinner at Lincoln Center in the 1980s. "Those years we worked together," Alan said to Norman, "were the happiest times of my life." For these extraordinary, versatile, driven musicians, the Stuyvesant Quartet was truly a labor of love.

~ Jay Shulman © 1999 & 2002

String Quartet No. 1, *Rispetti e Strambotti* (1920)

Gian Francesco Malipiero (1882-1973)

Italy left a pale imprint on the twentieth century. Excepting the operas of Puccini and the other verismo composers, concerts that program modern Italian music are relatively rare. Thanks to the perennial popularity of *The Pines of Rome* and *The Fountains of Rome*, Ottorino Respighi gets more performances than other Italian composers of his day, who are only known to most music lovers as shadowy footnotes. Italian music during the first half of the last century was dominated by Alfredo Casella, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Luigi Dallapiccola, Gian Francesco Malipiero, Goffredo Petrassi, and Ildebrando Pizzetti, as well as Respighi. In the 1950s, many critics considered Malipiero (1882-1973) to be the most important living composer, a curious perspective since his music has virtually disappeared from today's concert programs.

The Malipiero family were Venetian aristocrats and musicians. Gian Francesco's grandfather Francesco was an opera composer; his father Luigi was a pianist and conductor. Some of the boy's early education took place in Trieste, Berlin, and Vienna, giving him exposure to other cultures and their music; however, he returned to Venice in 1899 and matriculated at the Liceo Musicale. By 1902, Malipiero had discovered the rich manuscript collections in Venice's Biblioteca Marciana. Developing a keen interest in works of such forgotten Baroque masters as Merulo, Frescobaldi, Stradella, Tartini and Monteverdi, he began transcribing their works. His passion for early music—one shared, incidentally, with Respighi—was an important influence on his career and his original music. He was a pioneer in early modern editions of Italian Baroque music, and is best known today as an early editor of Vivaldi.

Malipiero pursued formal music study in Bologna. Early in his career, he taught briefly at the Conservatorio Benedetto Marcello in Parma, then declined an offer from the Conservatory in Florence, opting instead to situate his family in Asolo, outside of Venice. He remained in greater Venice for the balance of his career. His list of works is dominated by operas - more than thirty between 1907 and 1970 - and vocal/orchestral works. In addition, however, Malipiero was an important contributor to the literature of both symphony and string quartet. His eight mature quartets, produced between 1920 and 1964, are underrated.

The first quartet's subtitle, *Rispetti e Strambotti*, derives from literary terms. A *rispetto* is a Tuscan poem composed of eight-syllable lines that was popular in the 14th and 15th centuries. *Rispetti* are actually a type of *strambotto*, a one-stanza verse form that held sway in Sicily as well as Tuscany. *Strambotti* are often satirical. This conceit of assigning poetic subtitles is not unique to the first quartet. Malipiero's Quartet No. 2 is entitled *Stornelli e Ballate*; according to the composer it was a continuation of *Rispetti e Strambotti*. No. 3 bears the subtitle *Cantari alla madrigalesca* and No. 5, *dei Capricci* (based on his 1942 opera *I Capricci di Callot*, after E.T.A. Hoffmann). Similar titles appear elsewhere among his instrumental compositions. Given Malipiero's extensive experience with opera and texted works, we may construe his literary quartet titles as a method of transferring the symphonic poem concept to chamber music. The programme is implied rather than explicit, and Malipiero thereby frees himself from responsibility to sonata form.

That stated, Malipiero published a disclaimer in his composer's note preceding the 1921 edition of the score, published by J. & W. Chester Ltd. in London.

The title *Rispetti e Strambotti* has given occasion for numerous mistaken conceptions. . . . Though [dictionary] definitions may apply to certain poetry, still they cannot be applied in a literal sense to music. Besides the alternate and successive rhythms, the characteristics of old Italian poetry also hold good for these kinds of versifying, and it is to these principally that I wished to adhere

in this quartet.

Since the second half of the 18th century, the combination of two violins, viola and violoncello has determined a compositional form that, since its birth, has been deemed classical, although the sonorous possibilities of the instruments in a string quartet are infinite and allow for a sortie from a rarefied chamber music environment to the open air of the street and the countryside.

The twenty stanzas that form this quartet are united by a theme that almost resembles a *ritornello*, but which is meant, above all, to express the joy of one who loves to listen to the vibrations of the open strings and to intoxicate himself with their sounds. Each stanza in turn expresses some musical thought of a folk nature, which can only be expressed by the four instruments of a string quartet.

As a group, Malipiero's quartets are formally irregular. He avoided the traditional structural organization of four discrete movements. Most of his quartets are in one movement. His style is episodic, sometimes rhapsodic, with an abundance of melodic material but little or no development of ideas. Such apparent lack of discipline is balanced by his richly imaginative approach to string writing and his subtle methods of unification.

Although this quartet was published in 1920 as Malipiero's first, he had written one prior quartet that remains unpublished. As with many of his other pre-World War I works, the composer suppressed that piece; however, *Rispetti e Strambotti* was awarded the Coolidge prize in 1920. When it was published the following year, Malipiero's dedication read "A Madame Frederic S. Coolidge," aka Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, the eminent American patron of music. Most of Malipiero's subsequent quartets were dedicated to her as well.

The inventiveness of *Rispetti e Strambotti* reflects Malipiero's acquaintance with many of his contemporaries' music, notably Stravinsky and Debussy. His affection for old Italian music finds an occasional fleeting place in the kaleidoscopic textures of *Rispetti e Strambotti*. Listening to this work, one can be overwhelmed

by the profusion of ideas and the capriciousness of changing moods. We may think of it as a series of rhymed couplets, each one introducing a new thought that may or may not relate directly to its predecessor. The unity in this potentially fragmented structure comes from recycled motives drawn from the opening violin flourish and the first statement. As a recurring herald that a new section is beginning, Malipiero's restatement is his sole concession to the concept of development. His technique favors the expository rather than the developmental, inundating the listener with a constantly shifting panoply of ideas. Analysts of Malipiero's style refer to this technique as 'panels.' The idea is consciously related to the visual arts, particularly those of the renaissance and baroque eras that were so dear to Malipiero. Diptychs, triptychs, and polyptychs of uncertain number populate the art galleries of Italy and other countries whose museums prize their collections of old Italian art.

Malipiero expanded that painterly concept in music, adopting his own sonic unifier. The opening ritornello, played by the first violinist, celebrates the reverberant sonorities of open strings. Fanfare-like, it reappears not verbatim but metamorphosed and recognizable, providing a springboard for Malipiero's fertile imagination. The individual meanderings of these panels are distinctively musical rather than artistic. The composer uses the panel technique as a vehicle through which he can switch gears, abandoning one sonority and texture for another. His abundant ideas yield wild key changes to such distant tonal centers as F# -Major and C# -Major. Sudden changes - not precisely variations but still logically derived from the ever-present ritornello 'frame,' - dot the quartet. Its final chorus is a riotous celebration of the opening ritornello on open strings among all four players. Malipiero chooses to end quietly, however, with a neo-baroque texture that evokes old Italian vocal music. His love of the past has the last word.

First Quartet in G-minor, Opus 10 (1893)

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Quartet in F-Major (1902-03)

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

In the public imagination, the names of Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel are practically uttered in the same breath, dually synonymous with French musical impressionism. Ravel was, in fact, half a generation Debussy's junior and survived the older composer by nearly two decades. He developed his own highly individual musical language, whose principal affinity with that of Debussy is that ineffable quality of being French. Nevertheless, the linking of their two names persists, perhaps nowhere more firmly than with their string quartets.

Each wrote but a single quartet, both early works: Debussy's dates from 1893, when he was in his early 30s, and Ravel's was composed in 1902 and 1903, when he was still in his late 20s. Both quartets employ cyclic devices to unify the musical material among movements. Further reinforcing the prevailing modern idea that Ravel and Debussy "go" together is the fact that so many commercial recordings pair Debussy's *G-minor Quartet* with Ravel's *Quartet in F-Major*. The Stuyvesant Quartet's historic recording, reissued here, was the first to pair the two quartets together in what has become a standard coupling.

It is a curious quirk of fate that this particular pairing is so plausible. Debussy's quartet was a significant model to young Ravel, probably more so than in any other of Ravel's compositions, except perhaps the songs of *Shéhérazade*. Debussy dedicated this piece to the Belgian virtuoso Eugène Ysaÿe (1858-1931), whose quartet gave the work its première in Brussels in 1893. Initial reaction to the work was poor. Audiences did not understand the music, and critics accused the composer of being vague and incoherent. In fact, Debussy was not an experienced contrapuntalist, and tended to eschew the traditional forms of music, into which cat-

egory the string quartet certainly fell. He had established his then modest reputation as a composer with arts songs and choral music.

Debussy's biographer Edward Lockspeiser argues strongly that Debussy was most successful when his music had an extra-musical association: The songs show him to be the poet's musician; the best of the piano pieces, the painter's musician. With his abhorrence for professionalism, he did more than any other composer to bring music out of its own isolated world into a wider world where art, literature, and music interacted freely with each other. Is it, then, surprising that, with one exception, his examples of absolute music are failures? But that one exception is a masterpiece: it is the *String Quartet*.

The quartet is unique in Debussy's *oeuvre*. Widely regarded as his finest piece of chamber music, it is his sole completed effort in the realm of the string quartet, and the only composition to which he assigned a key and an opus number as part of its title. (His intent was ironic; he was poking fun at tradition.) The quartet is unmistakably cyclic in its thematic organization. Between 1892 and 1894, Debussy was very close to Ernest Chausson. Chausson's famous teacher, César Franck, had achieved great renown with his cyclic *Symphony in D-minor* (1888). That pioneering work, and Franck's innovative technique, exerted enormous influence on both younger composers.

In a series of letters to Chausson from 1893, Debussy wrote of difficulties with the incomplete quartet. On 2 July, he complained: "As for the last movement of the Quartet, I can't get it into the shape I want, and that's the third time of trying. It's a hard slog!" Even after its completion, he expressed dissatisfaction with its formal structure. Struggling with the exigencies of sonata form, he seized upon the technique of stating a germinal motive in the opening measures of the first movement, which then figured prominently throughout the entire work. Debussy reworks the motive with great rhythmic and textural ingenuity in the scherzo (*Assez vif et*



bien rythmé). Vivid pizzicato writing evokes both mandolin and guitar.

Emotionally, the climax of the quartet occurs in its slow movement, which is the one section where Debussy chooses not to apply the cyclic composing technique. The finale, *Très modéré*, makes specific reference to the first two movements, quoting the germinal motive in inversion and in syncopation, as melody and as accompaniment. Debussy's contrapuntal technique in this last movement is as disciplined and traditional as in any piece he wrote. Passages with double stops for all four players result in a lush, rich sonority with the color range of a small orchestra. As in all of his finer works, Debussy paints for us in this quartet a brilliant, evocative canvas in sound.

* * *

The *String Quartet in F-Major* was Ravel's first large scale composition and the work that first established his reputation in French musical circles. Ironically, it was counted against him in one of his several failed attempts to win the coveted Prix de Rome. Even his teacher Gabriel Fauré (to whom the piece is dedicated) disliked the finale, criticizing its lack of balance. It was Debussy who came to Ravel's defense, purportedly writing to the younger composer: "In the name of the gods of music and of my own, don't touch a thing you have written in this quartet."

No programme is associated with Ravel's Quartet. At this stage of his career, it was unusual for him not to employ an extramusical idea of some sort, but with the Quartet he established a pattern of absolute music that remained constant in his chamber works. Counterpoint is a lesser priority than sheer beauty of sound. Norman Demuth has observed that "Ravel took the line that the four string instruments called for sweetness rather than vigour (although the scherzo has this element)." Ravel emphasizes color, at the same time exploiting with great ingenuity

The Quartet is marked by grace and charm throughout. Its characteristic sonority is the melody doubled at the octave or a wider interval, sometimes the tenth, sometimes the thirteenth or fifteenth. The second movement scherzo is particularly noteworthy for its contrasts of pizzicato and the lyrical theme. Modal sonorities recall the Javanese gamelan orchestra that had such a powerful impact on Debussy following the Parisian exposition of 1889. A rhapsodic slow movement reintroduces melodies from the opening movement, and the finale is even more strongly dependent on the opening *Allegro moderato* for its material. Tremolo sections, arpeggios, wide chords, and metric switches between 5/8, 5/4 and 3/4 combine with brilliant, flashy string writing to conclude this marvelous piece.

~ Laurie Shulman © 2002

Rendezvous for Clarinet and Strings (1946)

Alan Shulman (1915-2002)

In the summer of 1946, Alan Shulman left the heat of New York for Oquossoc, Maine, where he rented a cottage and began composing his *Cello Concerto*. While there, he received a telephone call from his brother Sylvan in New York. Benny Goodman had invited the Stuyvesant String Quartet to be "homecoming stars," a weekly feature on his summer NBC radio show, and perform a movement from the Mozart *Clarinet Quintet*. The Quartet had appeared on a concert for Anglo-Soviet relief at Carnegie Hall on April 29, 1941, on which they played the American première of the Shostakovich *Piano Quintet*, Opus 57 with pianist Vivian Rivkin. Also on the program had been singer, actor and humanitarian Paul Robeson, and Benny Goodman.

Alan did not want to make the long trip from Maine to play five minutes of Mozart on the air. He proposed instead that he compose a short work for clarinet and string quartet for the broadcast. Goodman agreed, and on July 29, 1946 Alan completed a new work which he called *Rendezvous with Benny* in honor of the occasion. The broadcast première took place on Monday, August 19, 1946 with “The King of Swing” introducing the Stuyvesant Quartet to his national audience. According to Alan, Benny was nervous about *Rendezvous* right up until airtime. Goodman never played *Rendezvous* again, although he commissioned concertos from both Copland and Hindemith in 1947. In December, Alan added a bass part for an NBC Symphony Carnegie Hall concert featuring Al Gallodoro. By the time it was published by Bregman, Vocco and Conn in 1947, its title had become simply *Rendezvous* for Clarinet and Strings. Goodman’s rival, Artie Shaw, performed it at Bop City with string quartet and recorded it with the New Music Quartet for Columbia in 1949. In his chapter on Shaw in *The Swing Era*, Gunther Schuller notes that *Rendezvous* has “definite leanings in the direction of the French Impressionist school” (hence its inclusion here) and “a lively, catchy jazzy theme.”

~ Jay Shulman © 2002



Jay Shulman is a cellist and the son of Alan Shulman. Alan's daughter, Laurie Shulman is a musicologist, author, and program annotator.

For a complete Stuyvesant Quartet discography, visit the Alan Shulman Website:

<http://www.capital.net/com/ggjj/shulman>

Note on the Recordings:

As the original master tapes are missing, the four performances included on this disc each come from a different source. The Malipiero was made from a mono copy of the Nonesuch LP reissue. The Debussy was transferred from a commercial 7½ ips tape. The Ravel was transferred from a 15 ips copy of the original master tape. The Shulman was made from a copy of the original broadcast transcription disc in the NBC collection at the Library of Congress.

Producer: Jay Shulman

Recording Engineer: Norman Pickering (Malipiero, recorded July 26, August 9 and 16, 1950, Mannes School, New York City; Debussy recorded May 15, 1951, Village Lutheran Church, Bronxville, New York; Ravel recorded April 24, 1951, Village Lutheran Church, Bronxville, New York)

Recording of Shulman *Rendezvous*: WEAf broadcast of première, August 19, 1946, previously unreleased.

Transfers: Brian C. Peters (Malipiero & Debussy), Roger Rhodes (Ravel), Brad McCoy (Shulman)

Remastering: Brian C. Peters

Annotators: Jay Shulman and Laurie Shulman

Design: Alexis Napolliello and Kelly Ferriter

Cover photo: Fred Plaut; December 11, 1948

Malipiero, Debussy & Ravel Quartets by special arrangement with Nonesuch Records.
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Shulman *Rendezvous* recording provided courtesy of the Estate of Benny Goodman and National Broadcasting Company, Inc. © 1946 by NBC

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Executive Producers: David and Becky Starobin

For Bridge Records: Ashley Arrington, Kelly Ferriter, Dan Lippel, Alexis Napolliello and Robert Starobin

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