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**New Classical Tracks: Miro Quartet expresses hope and struggle in new Beethoven album**

[by](https://www.classicalmpr.org/topic/features) [Julie Amacher](http://minnesota.publicradio.org/about/people/mpr_people_display.php?aut_id=93)

Miro Quartet *Courtesy of the artist*

**The Miro Quartet — *Beethoven String Quartet No. 14, Op. 131***

[***Listen to the full audio interview here***](https://www.classicalmpr.org/story/2018/04/04/new-classical-tracks-miro-quartet)

They were young students playing chamber music in Oberlin, Ohio, when they became the Miro Quartet. Recently I spoke with violist John Largess and cellist Joshua Gindele and asked them how things are going with their Beethoven String Quartet project. Joshua says they are almost done.

"You know Beethoven's 250th anniversary is 2020 and it just happened to line up perfectly with our 25th season. And you know we have a unique opportunity in that we have this donor who basically covers all the expenditures of recording for us. And so this was a goal of ours and he loved the idea of doing these, he thought we had a really unique take on playing Beethoven."

The work that's featured on the new recording is the String Quartet No. 14, and this came out of a very challenging time in the composer's life.

**John, could you share a bit about Beethoven and his relationship with his nephew?**

JOHN: It was written during the very last year of Beethoven's life and his brother died. His nephew Carl ended up as his ward after the death of his brother. And, he had a contentious relationship with Carl's mother. I think Carl was maybe very much like Beethoven himself: very emotional, very willful, often very stubborn as many teenagers are. And within a week of completing this work, Carl attempted suicide. This piece sort of I think encapsulates a lot of the difficult emotions of struggle and frustration and anger as well as searching for hope, searching for release, remembering happy times in the past that Beethoven was going through personally at this time. I think it all seeps into this one work.

**It's interesting how the moods shift so quickly through the different movements.**

JOHN: It's true. I mean this air of mystery to the opening of the piece which is truly magical. There's humor and fun — the Scherzo, the fifth movement, is one of my very favorite movements. It's almost humorous — makes the audience laugh with our funny pizzicato when we play it live.

**I was also really moved by the 4th movement because there's so much happening there. And, you have more of that percussive element you mentioned a moment ago. And also, the cello gets growly, some wonderful growly opportunities.**

JOSHUA: It's the most challenging movement I think for the Quartet to perform because it's really...it really lives, like when we play it in front of an audience, we have to be very sensitive to how the audience is actually receiving the music. And the pacing has to be kind of crafted very delicately, chiseled out in a way. And so you know our recording is a snapshot in time. But every time we play that movement it comes off very differently.

**Joshua, did you have a moment — John mentioned a few moments that are special to him — are there one or two special moments you'd like to point out?**

JOSHUA: The sixth movement is really special. There's something about the writing. It's really sad. I find myself kind of breaking down. I know that I can't, but that movement is just so intimate, so introverted and heartfelt, and even in recording it I kind of had to keep my wits about me because it's just so stunning.

**How would you say the distinct voice of the Miro Quartet comes through in this work — compared to maybe another string quartet?**

JOSHUA: We're very good at allowing listeners to understand the score. Because we want to hear all the guts, it's all the stuff that Beethoven carefully crafts in the middle. To me that's exciting to listen to because you can really like kind of lock in on a singular voice and understand how brilliant Beethoven's writing is.

*To hear the rest of my conversation, click on the extended interview above, or* [*download the extended podcast on iTunes*](https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/new-classical-tracks-with-julie-amacher/id120586577?mt=2)*or wherever you get your podcasts.*