**Milwaukee Journal Sentinel**

**March 12, 2014**

**Miro Quartet brings flawless ensemble sound to Frankly Music series**

BY ELAINE SCHMIDT

String quartets, at least the ones that play, teach and tour together for many years, are unique organisms — hybrids of a marriage, a small, democratic government with a constant possibility of deadlock, and a performer expected to play at the very highest artistic level.

The Frankly Music series presented the Miró Quartet, one of the world's glowing examples of such a string quartet, Tuesday evening at St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

The quartet played with full, vibrant sounds, tremendous energy, flawless ensemble sense and the sort of deeply musical, stylistically true interpretations that make them sound as though they sat down with Haydn, Beethoven and others for a good conversation about the pieces they play.

Violinists Daniel Ching and William Fedkenheuer, violist John Largess and cellist Joshua Gindele created a hypnotic balance between individual expressive freedom and flawlessly woven ensemble playing.

When the music demanded it, they each turned an exposed phrase exquisitely, the other players joining their sounds in seamless support of that line. A moment later, the four players became a single entity, moving through musical lines, dynamic shifts, timbre changes and artfully placed ornaments as though performing fluid, unison choreography.

The quartet opened the evening with Haydn's Quartet in D Major, Op. 64 No. 5 ("The Lark"). Throughout the piece, they balanced Classical style — including effortless ornaments and dynamic shifts that outlined both the overall structure of the piece and the delicate interplay of prominent and inner voices —with vigor, energy and endlessly fascinating musical ideas.

Philip Glass' String Quartet No. 5, an unabashedly expressive piece not often heard in performance, followed. The players brought a laser-like intensity, profound understanding and communication of the piece's musical depth to the piece, along with the technical mastery to make what is a highly complex score sound perfectly logical.

The players closed the evening with a richly wrought performance of Schubert's Quartet No. 14 in D minor ("Death and the Maiden"). They played with an expressive freedom that gave distinct voices to both the characters of Death and the Maiden, allowing Schubert's emotionally and intellectually expressive writing to soar, while keeping the piece, not the players, in the spotlight.

The quartet answered a vigorous standing ovation with a breathless encore from the last of Beethoven's "Razumovsky" quartets.