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**September 21, 2018**

**The ensemble's opening concert for its 15th season as UT's Faculty-Quartet-in-Residence was uplifting in a number of ways**

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Uplifting – it's a quality you count on the Miró Quartet to deliver in any concert, no matter what's on the program (well, maybe not George Crumb). Their deep investment in every piece of music they take on, the seamlessness of their musical interplay, their professionalism, and, not least, the love of what they do, will invariably raise one's spirits. But in the first concert of the ensemble's 15th season at the Faculty-Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Texas, the musicians of the Miró also showed the variety of colors that one quality may contain.

The first, and probably most familiar, embodiment of uplift came in the program opener, Mendelssohn's *String Quartet No. 2 in A Minor*. Written when the precocious composer was just 18, it has moments that speed along on a youthful exuberance, the kind of energy that turns the clock back to the listener's own days of adolescent vivacity and cheer (and, well, yes, angst, too). Throughout the work, but especially in the fourth movement, "Presto – Adagio non lento," the quartet brought the music forth with such crispness and immediacy that we were buoyed along on the feeling.

Another kind of uplift came in the fifth movement of *Credo for String Quartet*, a work that Pulitzer Prize winner Kevin Puts composed when he was still teaching in the UT Butler School of Music. Midway through, a preternatural calm settles over the piece, and the music slows to what seems like the tempo of breathing. It opens the way for the tenderness of the violins – first, Daniel Ching's, then William Fedkenheuer's – as they floated and soared above the solemn foundation of Josh Gindele's cello and John Largess' viola lured us into this luminous skyspace, then ultimately pulled the cello and viola up there, too, until all four instruments felt as if they were opening a space into a tranquil heaven.

Then there was the third movement of Beethoven's *String Quartet in A minor* – a magnificent work in its entirety, but in this section, the "Molto adagio," there is a remarkable accumulation of – what else to call it? – grace. The slow back-and-forth of the opening felt as if it were picking up just where Puts' "Credo" left off, but then, in an unexpected burst of animation, as if awakening to a new state of being, the movement became an airy dance, such that you felt like you were doing a minuet among the clouds. The resumption of the slow seesawing that preceded it should have brought us back to Earth, but, paradoxically, the Miró's lightness of touch kept us airborne. The ascent continued with a tender passage opened by Fedkenheuer, whose melodic line was picked up by Largesse, then Gindele, then Ching. With each repetition and embellishment of this line, the emotion within it would expand and rise, until it seemed not only to fill the concert hall but to lift off the roof and carry us to the stars.

And it doesn't get more uplifting than that.