



JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET

by EMANUEL AX

One of my favorite stories about music travels was told to me by Earl Carlyss, a master violinist and longtime member of the Juilliard String Quartet. The group was playing what was probably the first chamber music concert ever in a Western town in the United States — this was in the dark ages when we were all young — and after the concert, which was received with great enthusiasm, a rather grand lady sallied into the group's dressing room and said, "What a marvelous concert, and I hope your little orchestra grows and grows!"

The Juilliard String Quartet is largely responsible for the incredible rise in popularity and knowledge of the string quartet literature — and the fact that most music lovers are now as aware and excited by quartets as they are a grand opera.

When I first came to study at the Juilliard School, I knew nothing about chamber music, and certainly nothing about quartets. The first recording of quartets that I heard, and then quickly ran out to buy, was the Debussy and Ravel string quartets, as recorded by the Juilliard Quartet. I have since heard them countless times on record and in person. In fact, I had the privilege of studying and playing all of the Beethoven sonatas for violin and piano with Robert Mann, one of the founding members of the quartet, and one of the great artists of our time. Like most of my colleagues and friends who love music, I remain in awe of the continuing saga of the Juilliard Quartet.

Of course, the members have changed over the years, but somehow the pioneering spirit that animated the group from the beginning seems to remain. The quartet has inspired, and indeed nurtured, so many of the great ensembles of the present era, and has been the vehicle for an amazing number of works by the leading composers of the day. The first recording of the Bartók quartets and the complete Elliott Carter quartets are just two examples of an astoundingly complete and adventurous Juilliard discography.

This award is a fitting climax to the decades of dedication and love that the Juilliard Quartet has always brought to their work — on stage, in the recording studio and in the classroom. I hope and believe that there are many more years of the same to come, and I hope to be one of the many fans who will look forward to every new effort of the Juilliard Quartet.

Pianist Emanuel Ax, who studied at the Juilliard School, is a seven-time GRAMMY recipient and has received 18 nominations to date.