



RACHEL PAPO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Nick Eanet, at left, the Juilliard players' newest member, with, from left, Ronald Copes, Samuel Rhodes and Joel Krosnick.

Now Joining in the Bows Is the Newest Violinist

Cliffhangers are rare in the chamber music world, but the Juilliard String Quartet came close to producing one last season. When Joel Smirnoff, the

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group's first violinist, was appointed president of the Cleveland Institute of Music, the ensemble hired Nick Eanet, who was then in the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, and had spent six years as the first violinist of the Mendelssohn String Quartet. But while celebrating his new appointment Mr. Eanet took a spill skating in Central Park and broke his left wrist. He said at the time that he was not worried about it. But that remained to be seen.

As it turned out, Mr. Eanet sounds none the worse for the experience. The quartet gave a free concert at Alice Tully Hall on Tuesday evening — its first at Lincoln Center and under the auspices of the Juilliard School since Mr. Eanet joined — and from the first bars of Schubert's "Rosamunde" Quartet (D. 804), which opened the program, you could see why Mr. Eanet won the position.

His tone in the graceful solo violin line that runs through the first two movements was consistently warm and rounded, and his phrasing approximated what an expressive, well-trained singer would do with Schubert's gently arching melody. And when the score demanded a homogenous blend, in the Menuetto, Mr. Eanet settled into the smooth, dark texture produced by his colleagues — Ronald Copes, second violinist; Samuel Rhodes, violist; and Joel Krosnick, cellist — and matched them perfectly in both timbre and gesture.

Opening with the Schubert

The Juilliard String Quartet will play works by Mendelssohn and Mario Davidovsky on Feb. 22 at Alice Tully Hall. Tickets are available at the Juilliard School, 155 West 65th Street, Lincoln Center, (212) 769-7406; juilliard.edu.

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Juilliard String Quartet

Alice Tully Hall

was clearly a nod to Mr. Eanet, who said in an interview around the time he joined the quartet that the work was a personal favorite and that he had suggested including it among his audition pieces. The other works on the program — Bartok's Quartet No. 2 and Beethoven's Opus 135 Quartet — are part of any quartet's repertory but are particularly close to the Juilliard, which (in earlier configurations) made revered recordings of both composers' complete cycles.

Where Schubert puts the first violin in the spotlight much of the time, the Bartok and Beetho-

A foursome is up to full strength despite one player's injury.

ven works are closer to the chamber music ideal of equally balanced lines. Here the Juilliard players sounded rejuvenated, if not necessarily cheerful: they made the tensions of Bartok's unsettled Second Quartet sound vivid and personal, as though the work reflected their own anxieties as much as the depression and disorientation that Bartok felt when he composed the work, during World War I. Just as striking, in the finale they moved between acridity and warmth, and made the transitions seem easy.

Beethoven's last quartet had the second half to itself and benefited from a fluid, high-energy performance. The most felicitous touches — the sharp articulation and quick dynamic swell on the final chord of the opening Allegro, for example — might sound trivial when described individually after the fact, but they made the difference between a polished walk-through and a thoughtful interpretation.

A gentle account of the Menuetto from Mendelssohn's Quartet in D (Op. 44, No. 1) made a lovely encore.

The New York Times

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2009

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