

# JUILLIARD STRING QUARTET

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*The Boston Globe*

## **Juilliard Quartet evolves, but keeps its characteristic charms**

By [Matthew Guerrieri](#)

Globe Correspondent / October 27, 2009

CONCORD - The Juilliard String Quartet takes pride in its continual self-renewal, and on Sunday came to Concord with its newest member: first violinist Nick Eanet - only the 12th player in the quartet's history. The former Metropolitan Opera concertmaster joined violinist Ronald Copes, violist Samuel Rhodes, and cellist Joel Krosnick (who, between them, combine for nearly nine decades of experience with the group).

In the opener, Robert Schumann's opus 41, No. 3 quartet, one could still hear some adjustment, particularly in finding a middle ground between the veterans' rich tone and Eanet's leaner, honeyed sound. But temperamentally, Eanet fit the group perfectly: assertive bowing, gracefully athletic phrasing, a conception of the string quartet as an essentially extroverted endeavor.

The Op. 41 quartets - which Schumann dedicated to Mendelssohn - were his only efforts in the genre, which means they were his only chance to live up to his own ideals for the genre: "a conversation, often truly beautiful, often oddly and turbidly woven." The Juilliard's performance seemed caught between their own proclamatory penchant and Schumann's habit of turning the conversation inward; the result was burnished but topographically flat.

Mario Davidovsky's 1998 Quartet No. 5 was far more effective. It's an homage to Beethoven, specifically the slow movement of his opus 132 quartet, although the source fragments are effectively hidden under Davidovsky's high-modernist sounds; but both composers create illusions of an intense private drama amplified onto a public stage. Distant murmurs return as pervading swarms, flocks of plucked strings drop like snapped branches, and chorale-like textures alternate between hesitant and cathartic. What it all means remains vague, but the music compels in the moment. The group unleashed Davidovsky's special effects in big-screen color.

Mendelssohn's D major quartet, the first of his opus 44, isn't all sunshine - the Andante movement, a slow-tread perpetual-motion machine, is one of the composer's most subtly haunting - but the bright, stained-glass clarity of the writing, each instrument deployed for maximum eloquence, gives the whole a characteristic sparkle. It was manna for the Juilliard, who unleashed a musical charm offensive, scintillating and virtuosic. (Eanet showed some proactive leadership as well, recharging the final Presto whenever the tempo risked settling into something more comfortable.) They reversed gears for an unusually substantial encore, the minuet from Schubert's A minor "Rosamunde" Quartet: lovely, dark, and deep.

The Juilliard Quartet isn't ready to call it a night just yet.

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