

Arkansas Democrat  Gazette

Friday, January 15, 2010

MUSIC REVIEW

Quartet too much fun
for a chamber concertERIC E. HARRISON
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I'm not sure what folks expected from a half-British, half-Irish quartet with an Italian name going into Thursday night's concert in the Parish Hall of Little Rock's St. Mark's Episcopal Church.

But what the Carducci String Quartet — Matthew Denton and Michelle Fleming, violins; Eoin Schmidt-Martin, viola; and Emma Denton, cello — provided was more intensity, more passion, more excitement and more just plain fun than you're supposed to be able to get from a chamber music concert.

Performing under the auspices of the Chamber Music Society of Little Rock, the young players were determined to take no prisoners, starting with the very first notes of Franz Joseph Haydn's E-flat major "Joke" Quartet, op.33 No. 2, straight through to the composer's "gotcha" false cadences in the finale, which, sure enough, caught the audience off-guard several times.

The quartet matched up very well tonally; the first violin, though it dominated the melody (because that's the way Haydn wrote it), never dominated the balance. Lots of eye contact and communication made the slight use of slow-up, speed-up rubato work in the charming second-movement "Scherzo: Allegro." And they pushed the dynamics almost to extremes throughout the concert.

The *String Quartet No. 2* in E-flat major by early 20th century, half-English, half-Irish composer Ernest

Moeran was perfect fodder for the foursome, the themes becoming increasingly Irish in character and the intensity flaring into a blaze by the finale.

But that was nothing to what they brought to the *String Quartet No. 9* in C major, the third of the three "Razumovsky" quartets by Ludwig van Beethoven, especially the gorgeously played, almost Brahmsian approach they brought to the second movement and the hell-for-leather rush through the fugal fourth-movement coda.