



Beethoven for a Later Age: The Journey of a String Quartet

Edward Dusinberre

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'They are not for you but for a later age!' *Ludwig van Beethoven, on the Opus 59 quartets.*

Tackling the Beethoven quartets is a rite of passage that has shaped the Takács Quartet's work together for over forty years. Using the history of the composition and first performances of the quartets as the backbone to his story, Edward Dusinberre, first violinist of the Takács since 1993 - recounts the life of the Quartet from its inception in Hungary, through emigration to the US and its present-day life as one of the world's renowned string quartets. He also describes what it was like for him, as a young man fresh out of the Juilliard School, to join the Quartet as its first non-Hungarian member - an exhilarating challenge.

Beethoven for a Later Age takes the reader inside the life of a quartet, vividly showing how four people enjoy making music together over a long period of time. The key, the author argues, is in balancing continuity with change and experimentation - a theme that also lies at the heart of Beethoven's remarkable compositions.

Beethoven for a Later Age: The Journey of a String Quartet Details

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From Reader Review Beethoven for a Later Age: The Journey of a String Quartet for online ebook

Daniel says

A parallel journey of Ed (and the Takacs quartet) in the current age and Beethoven in his. Discover how the quartet faces the challenge of this music along with their challenges in life and how the two intertwine. And realize how similar battles were waged 200 years ago.

Robert Blumenthal says

This is a book, I think, for a rather specific audience. It is written by the first violinist of the renowned Takacs String Quartet, and it revolves around the string quartets of Beethoven, from the early Opus 18 through the groundbreaking, forward thinking late quartets. There is some personal reflections on the part of the author, and there is much technical exposition of rehearsing and playing the quartets, as well as historical information about Beethoven. I found the book utterly fascinating and illuminating at times and rather tedious at others. It was not a book that I anxiously anticipated getting back into, yet I did have some wonderful moments with it. His description of the quartet analyzing and performing the luminous slow movement from Beethoven's late a minor quartet (one of the most gloriously beautiful movements of music ever composed, IMHO), was captivating and revealing. I also really enjoyed the author's commentary on his working with the other members of the quartet, especially his feelings upon first joining the quartet. Here was a well-established string quartet, all the members speaking Hungarian with limited English skills auditioning and accepting an English violinist with limited Hungarian speaking skills. And he was auditioning for the first violin position, which is essentially the leader of the group.

I am a composer and I have studied music history and theory, and even I found some of the book to be a bit too intricate in the descriptions of the composed music and the musicians technical and interpretive problems. However, the moments that struck gold for me were well worth the journey of this unusual memoir and music history account.

Deborah says

Having heard Edward Dusinberre give his witty, personable and succinct introductions to works during a concert, I was not surprised at his fluid and entertaining writing style. I absolutely loved this book, which interweaves the day-to-day life of a string quartet member with the cultural history of Beethoven's time. It definitely makes me want to play a string instrument! I would certainly recommend this book to any and all musicians, but also to concert-goers and lovers of the string quartet. It will make everyone who reads it a better listener.

Wanda says

28 MAR 2016 - recommendation through Bettie. Many thanks!

Will Leben says

This unique book gives an inside look at what life is like for a member of one of the world's most celebrated string quartets. But the real revelations come when the author describes in detail how a string quartet negotiates the many, many choices that go into interpreting a Beethoven composition. Along the way, we get many anecdotes from the life of Beethoven, which humanize a composer whose problematic personality has made him a stereotype.

It's engaging throughout, possibly one of the best-written books on music you'll ever read.

Bettie? says

BOTW

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b075pb4t>

Description: Edward Dusinberre is the Tackas Quartet's first violinist and in his illuminating account he takes us inside the daily life of a string quartet and explores his creative, musical and personal relationships with his fellow players. He also looks at the challenges of performing Beethoven's extraordinary quartet music which was composed against the backdrop of the Napoleonic Wars. Recordings of the Tackas Quartet playing Beethoven's string quartets will be interwoven into each programme. Tim McMullan is the reader.

1/5 Audition

2/5 The First Season

3/5 Irretrievably Fractured

4/5 Recreation

5/5 Convalescence

Tim Regan says

A lively and informative mixture of history, musical analysis, and anecdotes from a top string quartet. I lost my way a bit two thirds through but when I picked it up again I was gripped again. One thing that would help is to be able to jump to the passages Dusinberre is exploring so that we might hear the things he's writing about. Sometimes I put the book down thinking "I must listen to that bit before I read on" which inevitably made the reading falter.

Markw says

Enjoyable mixture of personal anecdote and musical analysis and discussion. Will make you want to (re-)listen to the Beethoven quartets, and in particular seek out the Takacs recordings (highly regarded, incidentally, though I'm currently favouring the more recent Belcea set)

Mike Sumner says

The perfect start to 2017. I love the music of Beethoven; who is not inspired by the great 'Eroica' symphony or the gentle beauty of the 'Pastoral'? His string quartets are astonishing in their range and accomplishment. The world-renowned Takács Quartet is a particular favourite of mine and I have many of their recordings. So, to find this book amongst my Christmas presents, written by the current first violinist Edward Dusinberre, was a most rewarding surprise. Dusinberre has filled this rôle for 23 years and his experience with this quartet is portrayed in a forensic examination of seven of the string quartets. What it means to be a member of a group of four, how they work together, how they rehearse, how they discuss interpretation and the musical terminology used by Beethoven. It has made me listen to this music with fresh ears and I have done just that as I progressed through this masterclass of string playing. It has been a wonderful journey and if, like me, you love classical chamber music, you will I am sure enjoy this fascinating work.

Highly recommended to music lovers.

Dan says

Not for the general reader. Recommended primarily for those interested in string quartets. Written by Edward Dusinberre, First Violin of the Takács String Quartet, resident quartet at the University of Colorado at Boulder and perhaps the best quartet in the world (2017).

This is a history of the Takács and considerations guiding their performances of Beethoven's amazing sixteen string quartets and the history of those. Dusinberre relates his experiences traveling, practicing and performing with his remarkable associates. Some musical notation included. Some comparison of qualities among different violins. The serious student may want to have recordings at hand; the quartets are addressed in chronological order.

Living near Boulder, I have heard the quartet in person several times. My marvel is beyond description.

Lyle says

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Up to know I have viewed the concert as the end product of many hours of work, after which I would move on to study a new piece. But the constant debates in the Takacs about phrasing, tempo and character altered my sense of the relationship between rehearsals and concerts. Both now seeming part of an ongoing exploration of the music.

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As we drove across Europe the Hungarians described with zest previous setbacks on the road. When the old quartet car (reassuringly also a Ford Granada) burst into flames on the French motorway, the alacrity with which they extricated themselves and instruments was a source of pride, the sort of experience that added

spice to touring life. Driving a hundred miles in the wrong direction from Vermont, only to be alerted to their mistake by the surprising presence of Canadian customs officials, was a digression that merely added to the adventure.

Laura says

From BBC Radio 4 - Book of the Week:

1/5: Edward Dusinberre is the Takacs Quartet's first violinist and in his illuminating account he takes us inside the daily life of a string quartet and explores his creative, musical and personal relationships with his fellow players. He also looks at the challenges of performing Beethoven's extraordinary quartet music which was composed against the backdrop of the Napoleonic Wars.

2/5: Edward Dusinberre recalls his first season as the Takacs Quartet's first violinist. As he and his three fellow performers set out to perfect their performance of Beethoven's Opus 18, no 1 he is preoccupied by questions of more individual and more integrated expression in the musical ensemble. He also finds that adapting to life as a touring musician has it's challenges.

3/5: The Takacs Quartet's first violinist Edward Dusinberre recalls a time of loss and grief. He finds solace and a changed perspective in performing Beethoven's turbulent Opus 59, no 2.

4/5: The Takacs Quartet's first violinist Edward Dusinberre takes us into the recording studio and away from the stage as he and his fellow musicians set about recreating Beethoven's extraordinary music for CD.

5/5: The Takacs Quartet's first violinist Edward Dusinberre reflects on his career with his fellow players; taking a leap of faith, and Beethoven's late and transcendent music.

Recordings of the Takacs Quartet playing Beethoven's string quartets will be interwoven into each programme. Tim McMullan is the reader.

Abridged by Sara Davies

Produced by Elizabeth Allard.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b075pb4t>

Richard says

Dusinberre plays 1st violin with Takacs Quartet, a group with an extraordinary reputation. On the basis of a write-up in the NY or Boston newspapers, I made two trips to Boston to hear them play the Bartok quartets and was not disappointed.

This volume focuses on the Beethoven quartets (also recorded by the Takacs and which I have been listening to for the past two weeks), placing them in their biographical and historical contexts, describing the interactions of the quartet(s) (a new member "joins") as they rehearse the various pieces for performance or recording, and indicating at least Dusinberre's experience of playing his parts within the group's effort.

There is not a lot to say about the writer's style which is competent, clear, straightforward. The best lines are Beethoven's; the violinist for Opus 59 declared the quartets "not music" to which Beethoven replied, "Oh, they are not for you, they are for a later age!" (p. 99) One of the epigraphs: "Art demands of us that we not

stand still" (Beethoven, in relation to the late quartets).

The detail in the narrative fascinated me (of course, I now own and am listening to the three CD sets the group made), and I certainly picked up pointers that make my listening more responsive.

A worthwhile volume.

Michael Finocchiaro says

The story of Edward Dusinberre and his induction into the Hungarian Takacs String Quartet is fascinating and educational. Not only do we learn the history of the magnificent final string quartets of Beethoven that were the last pieces he wrote before passing away, but we also learn about the inner workings of a string quartet. I felt I appreciated the entire genre of string quartet music thanks to this book and also a bit better how to appreciate various different recordings of them. A must read for fans of classical music and of Beethoven.

I have acquired all of the Takacs Quartet recordings of the quartets and find them very beautiful. My favorite is the Razumovsky (Opus 59), I find it so beautiful and harmonious. I also have listened to the Lindsey, Emerson, Alban Berg, and Borodin Quartet versions. Each is special, I think my favorite may be the Borodin though. What is certain, is that I would never have appreciated this music as much had I not read this book!

Awab AlSaati says

Recounting a story of something gives life and sometimes meaning. And that is exactly what this book did for Beethoven's quartets. I'll never listen to them again in the same way. Nor will I see a quartet as four people only.
