

ROBERT STEWART: String Quartet No. 3
IOWA QUARTET

DONALD KEATS: String Quartet No. 2
BEAUX ARTS QUARTET

ROBERT STEWART, born (1918) in Buffalo, New York, spent his formative years in Chicago, later receiving his masters degrees in Music Education, Violin, and Composition at the American Conservatory. He was a professional violinist and teacher, and during World War II composed for Armed Forces radio shows. He has received a MacDowell Colony fellowship and has served as president of the Southeastern Composers League. He has received several commissions and awards and served on important composition contest panels. Mr. Stewart is (1970) head of the Department of Music and Drama at Washington and Lee University.

About his STRING QUARTET NO. 3, Mr. Stewart writes:

“The construction is based on two hexachords of a 12 tone row. The first hexachord contains a perfect 5th, a minor 2nd and a minor 7th. The second hexachord contains major and minor 2nds, perfect 4ths and augmented 5ths. The omission of 3rds and 6ths in the row lends a biting and tense character to the melodic structures which evolve from the permutation of intervals in each hexachord.

“The first movement contains three parts preceded by a slow introduction in fugal style. The first part is in fast tempo; the second, moderately fast, is a recitative; the third, a theme with six variations and coda.

“The second movement is in a large three part form; scherzo-and-trio, short adagio in ternary form, and a condensed sonata form using the reshaped scherzo theme.

“The quartet is dedicated to my wife and was first performed by the Iowa String Quartet at the University of Iowa in the fall of 1969.”

DONALD KEATS was born in New York in 1929 and received his preliminary musical education there, at the High School of Music and Art and the Manhattan School of Music. Then to the Yale School of Music, Yale Graduate School, Columbia and Minnesota Universities, with Paul Hindemith, Otto Luening, Quincy Porter, Henry Cowell, Douglas Moore and (during a Fulbright Fellowship sojourn abroad) Philipp Jarnach as his composition teachers. He has won a Guggenheim Fellowship and five consecutive ASCAP Awards among other musical prizes. He has composed in the large forms, including two symphonies, both of which have been performed by major orchestras, and his music has been extensively played across the U. S., and in Germany, France and Australia. He is chairman of the Music Department at Antioch College.

About his music, the composer writes:

“STRING QUARTET NO. 2 was written in the period 1964-65, when I was living in Europe on sabbatical leave from Antioch College and holding a Guggenheim Fellowship in composition.

“The work has three movements. The first presents a tight motivic idea, based on the interval of a second, and then a more lyric one, over a pizzicato-glissando cello. Following the statement of the two ideas, there is a gradual “composed accelerando” and a gradual crescendo until a climax is reached, at which point the initial idea returns in a changed form.

“The second movement is a fast, driving scherzo in which there is a constant interplay between the fast triple meter and the division of the measure into twos. In contrast to this section there appears an adagio in which each instrument is treated soloistically. Often, muted pianissimo double-stopped chords are heard against the virtuoso solo writing. Following this middle section, the scherzo returns in altered form, and the movement ends with rhythmic and dynamic strength.

“The final movement begins with an amorphous rhythm followed by a section of strummed, quadruple- stopped chords against a lyric line. Out of these strummed chords grows a section which is faster, somewhat pointillistic in concept, with the glissandos, pizzicato in the first movement, now bowed and expanded to larger ranges. The climax of this section is reached with a 12-tone chord, triple-stopped in all the instruments, pizzicato, *fff*. The movement ends with a restatement of the original amorphous rhythm, and, as the tonal center shifts to an unexpected level, the final sounds heard, pianissimo, are those of the cello strumming the quadruple-stopped chord against the held tones of the viola.”

The IOWA QUARTET, called “one of the best in the world” by Atlantic Monthly, has a distinguished international reputation for its interpretations of classical chamber music as well as the music of contemporary composers. Attestation to their prestige is the fact that they play a set of Stradivarius instruments once owned by Paganini, on loan from Washington's Corcoran Gallery. Its members are Allen Ohmes, William Preucil, John Ferrell and Charles Wendt. It may also be heard on CRI SD 242.

The BEAUX ARTS QUARTET is Quartet in Residence at New York State University College, Potsdam, and was Quartet in Residence for three seasons at the Festival of Two Worlds, Spoleto, Italy. Its career has been a series of distinguished performances on three continents, including premieres of important new works (it may be heard on CRI numbers 126, 148 and 173). Its members are Charles Libove, Bernard Eichen, John Graham and Bruce Rogers.

Produced by Carter Harman

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(original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)