

# Quartet's approach — vigorous, aggressive

By Avigdor Zaromp  
special writer



**Avigdor Zaromp**

With the many prominent string quartets in existence, one might expect a lot of redundancy. You hear a few, you've heard them all — not so. The art of music is sufficiently wide and varied to allow different individuals or performing groups to leave their own distinctive mark. This is even true for works from the standard repertoire.

Beethoven's string quartets are sometimes referred to as "the Bible" among chamber string players. Almost every string quartet of note has played and recorded the complete

cycle of the 16 Beethoven quartets. One such group, the Alban Berg String Quartet, is the latest group to present its rare art in the Chamber Music Society of Detroit (CMS) series.

THE QUARTET consists of four members from the Vienna Academy

— violinists Gunther Plehler and Gerhard Schultz, violist Thomas Kakuska and cellist Valentin Erben. As the name suggests, the music of Berg is among their specialties, but not to the exclusion of other masters.

The program featured the Quartet Op. 18 No. 6, the Grosse Fuge Op. 133 and Op. 59 No. 2, the second

Rasumovsky Quartet. These represent the early, late and middle periods, respectively.

One fascinating aspect of Beethoven's string quartets is that so many different approaches are possible, without exhausting all the legitimate measures. The approach of the Alban Berg group may be characterized as vigorous and aggressive.

Even in the early quartet the characteristic attack was intense. But it is much more than loud playing. Within the intense range there are many levels, which at times are highly refined. They are not reluctant to take daring chances, occasionally sacrificing cleanliness for

the sake of the overall effect.

I didn't always find myself in agreement with this approach. The main theme in the final movement of the Op. 18 No. 6, for example, was too bumpy and coarse for my taste. This melodic movement from an early quartet possesses some calmer, Mozartian elements, that tended to become roughed up.

THE GREAT FUGUE is one work that shows Beethoven to be ahead of his time. One who is unfamiliar with it would be likely to attribute it to a much later period. Yet behind the daring dissonances, there is a high sense of order and design that, in my

opinion, was not sufficiently reflected in this performance.

When several themes were present, they were frequently competing at the top of the range of intensity, making them difficult to tell apart. Even a wrong sense of priority would have been preferable, in my opinion.

This being said, there is no doubt that the Alban Berg group manages to bring daring originality into their approach. They were successful in establishing a warm rapport with the audience, which applauded enthusiastically. They played the Cavatina from the Quartet Op. 130 as an encore.

# Symposium to teach about herbs and their uses

Mark your calendars now. Call and make your reservation. The fifth Herb Symposium, sponsored by the Southern Michigan Unit of The Herb Society of America will be 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, April 9, at North Congregational Church, Lahser and Civic Center Drive, Southfield. This is a new location. Come and enjoy scenes and tea to begin your day and learn about herbs and their uses.

The keynote speaker will be Sherry Pees of Ohio. She is the owner of Pees's Poor Ridge Farm and Herb Shop, producer of 19th century clothing and a herb garden designer. Her topic, "The Herby Country

Home," promises to be a unique approach to this popular subject. She encourages audience participation in her lectures, which should be fun.

Another speaker will be Jean Riggs, proprietor of Sunshine Farm and Garden in Milford. A lecturer and teacher, Riggs will talk about "Bible Herbs for Michigan Gardens."

This year there will be a choice of special interest topics: "The World of Scented Geraniums," John Wendland, the geranium cowboy; "Herb Garden Design" and "Theme Gardens," Venetia Arft, owner of the Plant Station in Birmingham; and

"Preservation and Uses of Herbs in the Kitchen," Katharine Kip Smith, past consultant to area chefs concerning herbs.

Cost for the day, \$30, includes lunch. For information, call 645-0895 or 553-7240. These symposiums are becoming more popular every year, early reservations are recommended. Special gift items and books will be available for purchase.

AMONG THE books will be a wonderful new one, "Southern Herb Growing" by Madeline Hill, president of The Herb Society of America, and her daughter, Gwen Barclay



down to earth  
**Marty Figley**

(Shearer Publishing \$29.95). Available in local book stores.

For someone contemplating a move to the southern states from the Carolinas to Texas, this is the book to purchase.

It is set up in three parts. The

first, soil preparation, planting, care and propagation and container-growing, leaves no question as to what to do. Garden design is a bonus in this section.

The second part deals with the how, when, where and why of herbs

and is written with a practical approach.

The many herbal recipes in the third section contain herbs that can be used in any part of the country. Many tips for culinary uses of herbs are included. The recipes were developed and perfected in the kitchens of Hilltop Herb Farm Restaurant in Texas and will please the most discriminating palate.

More than 130 herbs are included in this comprehensive guide to growing and maintaining herbs in these hot, humid states. The beautiful photographs show the herbs in garden settings and individually.

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