

# Notes of Farewell

by Paul Katz  
FOUNDING CELLIST

**T**HOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE HEARD THE CLEVELAND QUARTET over the years know that we often speak from the stage. It has been a natural way for us to break down some of the unnecessary formality that sometimes stands between classical performers and their audiences. So forgive us this evening, on this, our final concert, if we feel that it would be better to write. As you can imagine, this last performance is emotional for us and, more than anything, we want to concentrate on playing our very best.

"End the Cleveland Quartet? Fold up your music stands and quit? You've got to be out of your minds!" We've heard such comments almost daily since announcing 18 months ago our decision to conclude the Quartet in December 1995.

How does one explain? It's not easy, for we have suffered none of the problems that so frequently plague ensembles. We all passionately love the quartet; we remain good friends without problems of internal dissension; and we are much in demand with more concerts, commissions, special projects, and recording opportunities than we are able to accept.

Is it insanity to quit? Possibly. Yet despite the agonizing nature of this decision and the inevitable sadness we have felt as the end has been drawing near, we remain convinced that this is the best for each of us. We are all eager about our new lives: teaching, orchestral playing, other chamber music, solo opportunities — there are so many musical

outlets and so many possible directions for each of us. This quartet life that we treasure, rich and irreplaceable as it is, has been all-consuming, and the 150-180 days a year away from our families has been much too much over the years.

As time on the road was a major issue, we discussed the possibility of keeping the Quartet together and just playing less, but somehow that didn't feel right. It's been the intensity of the life, the total commitment to the music and to each other that has made the experience so rich and, we believe, resulted in the interaction, cohesion, and communicative force that has been a Cleveland Quartet strength. Quartet playing is one endeavor that doesn't work halfway. We decided it would be better to conclude feeling good about ourselves — colleagues proud of the way we sound, playing with passion, commitment, and love to the end.

Having reached this decision, the conversations turned to the questions of "how" and "when." We did not want to renege on already existing commitments, and, of course, we had been looking forward to upcoming projects and wanted to see them through. The last year and a half has allowed us to do just that: For Telarc International we just finished our second complete recorded Beethoven cycle; this past September we premiered *Three Places of Enlightenment*, a concerto written for the Cleveland Quartet and Cleveland Orchestra by Stephen Paulus; we toured last spring with Osvaldo Golijov's *The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac The Blind*, a work for Klezmer clarinetist Giora Feidman and the Cleveland Quartet (a work that we premiered at Lincoln Center in March of 1995 and which recently won the Kennedy Center's Friedheim Award). And we are, of course, honored that Lincoln Center commissioned John Corigliano to write a quartet especially for us; we are especially



*The Cleveland Quartet (left to right: Donald Weilerstein, Peter Salaff, Paul Katz, and Martha Strongin Katz) in January 1973 playing on the Grammy Awards telecast — the first classical musicians to perform on the annual awards show.*



touched that he wanted to write it for our final tour, and that our decision to stop inspired much of the feeling of "farewell" that is imbued in this powerful new work.

None of these wonderful endeavors, however, equals the joy and fulfillment we are experiencing from the creation of the Cleveland Quartet Award. Administered by Chamber Music America, this award will identify and honor an exceptional young quartet every two years. The winner will return to many of the cities presenting us in our final tour, giving a deserving ensemble national exposure it might otherwise take years to achieve. Throughout our career, our mentoring of young musicians — at the Eastman School of Music, Aspen Festival, and indeed, all across the country — has been as deeply gratifying as the concerts we play. Many of the musicians and ensembles we have worked with are among the leading chamber groups in the country. What better way to finish our career together than to help perpetuate our most important legacy: future generations of artists of excellence.

EACH OF THE WORKS ON TODAY'S PROGRAM has a special significance: the notes of the **String Quartet in D major (Op. 76, No. 5)** by **Franz Josef Haydn** were the first played together by the original Cleveland Quartet of Donald Weilerstein, Peter Salaff, Martha Strongin Katz, and Paul Katz. (These early rehearsals took place here in Cleveland at the home of Dr. David and Joanne Klein. The sessions, which went on for hours as we struggled and fussed over each phrase, were particularly amusing to their three young children, Debby, Betsy, and Susan.

Now grown women, they still greet us today by singing the opening melody — those interminable rehearsals now a fond memory of their childhood.) This Haydn Quartet opened many concerts in our early years, including our New York debut in the fall of 1971. By sheer coincidence, it is also one of the first works the present foursome played together, when Bill Preucil joined us in 1989.

The **String Quartet** by **John Corigliano** was, of course, written for our final concert tour this fall. First performed on October 26, it symbolizes for us our 26-year dedi-

cation to the performance of new music, as well as our belief and commitment to the future of young ensembles and to the string quartet as an enduring art form. (For the many of you interested in the genesis and particulars of this work, the composer's own comments about its creation can be found on pages 10-11 of this program.)

The **String Quartet in A minor (Op. 51, No. 1)** by **Johannes Brahms** was the first work performed by the Cleveland Quartet in public (on August 9, 1969, at the Marlboro Music Festival), and also part of our first recording, *The Complete Brahms Quartets* for RCA Red Seal. The album was nominated for a Grammy, and, in January 1973, we played the Finale for the Grammy Awards telecast as the first classical performers ever to appear on that show.

It is the music of **Ludwig van Beethoven**, however, which, almost from the beginning, has been most central to our interpretive efforts, with literally thousands of performances of individual quartets, two complete recorded cycles, and 25 cycles that we have played as far and wide as New York, Tokyo, Washington, San Francisco, Paris, Antwerp, Rome, and Florence. Beethoven is missing from this eve-



*The Cleveland Quartet (left to right: Donald Weilerstein, Peter Salaff, Martha Strongin Katz, and Paul Katz) at the White House in 1977 with President Jimmy Carter, his wife, Rosalynn, and Robert Shaw.*



ning's program, but we plan to rectify that with an encore. (Excuse the *chutzpah* of announcing an encore in advance of the concert, but it is not the moment for us to try speaking from the stage.)

The appropriateness of the Finale of Beethoven's last String Quartet (Op. 135) is clear: He entitled it *Der Schwer Gefasste Entschluss* ("The Difficult Decision"). Written into the score, under the notes of the opening *Grave* is the philosophical question "Muss es Sein?" — *Must It Be?* Beethoven answers the question with an exuberant, joyous *Allegro*, in which he writes "Es Muss Sein!" — *It Must Be!* We will leave you, dear friends, with that.

AFTER TWENTY-SIX YEARS, there are so many people we want to thank; most importantly, the three other members of the Cleveland Quartet not on stage tonight: Donald Weilerstein, founding 1st violinist who remained with the Quartet for 20 years from 1969-89, founding violist Martha Strongin Katz (my dear wife) who played 11 years from 1969-80, and violist Atar Arad who was with us the 7 years of 1980-87. Each of them is a unique artist who has had a lasting impact on the quartet and has influenced what you hear tonight — never a rehearsal goes by when I do not think of them and something special they have taught us.

Although the Cleveland Quartet spent only its first two years in Cleveland, the friendships from that time have been special and enduring. Through all of these years, David Klein and Dick Bogomolny have given counsel and support in so many countless career and personal decisions, medical and business situations, that it is impossible to imagine the directions our lives might have gone without them. We are also immensely grateful for their personal belief in and commitment to the Cleveland Quartet Award, for their continual involvement in the project since its inception, and for their part in organizing this evening's Cleveland benefit recital.

You can read elsewhere in this program about the Cleveland Quartet Award, of which we are so very proud. This is the first time I have ever fundraised, and the generosity of so many extraordinary

people, and their love and belief in the future of great music has been thrilling and at times overwhelming. And, of course, none of this would be possible without Chamber Music America, whose Board and Staff have so enthusiastically supported and advised our efforts, and who will administer the award in years to come. In particular, Executive Director Dean Stein and Development Director David Bury have worked assiduously for more than a year in every aspect of the Cleveland Quartet Award's creation.

Space does not permit listing all of the many wonderful people who have worked as close friends and supporters on our behalf over 26-plus years, but among those many, we could not have done without: Robert Freeman, Director of the Eastman School of Music where, since 1976, we have taught and been an integral part of his extraordinary vision and commitment to the future of fine music and musicians; Carol Freeman, who as our secretary and administrative assistant has brought some order and peace to our frantic lives; Lee Lamont, Byron Gustafson, and Pat Winter of ICM Artists in New York, Sonia Simmenauer in Europe and Mitsutoshi Kato of Kambara Management in Tokyo, who have managed us with expertise and commitment; Connie Shuman, and, in her office, Roberta Kozinn, who for so many years have handled our public relations and arranged the considerable newspaper, magazine, radio, and television exposure of the Quartet;



The Cleveland Quartet (left to right: Peter Salaff, Donald Weilerstein, Paul Katz, and Atar Arad) in 1980 at Aspen, where they had earlier co-founded the Center for Advanced Quartet Studies, returning for more than two decades as performers and coaches.



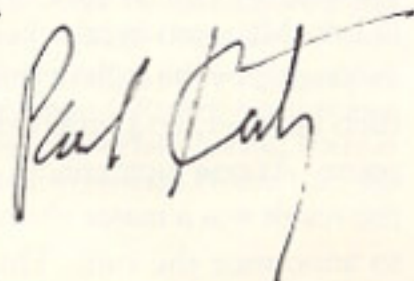
Robert Woods, Elaine Martone, and Jack Renner of Telarc International, who along with our producer, Judy Serman, have made recording a joy and given us what we believe is the best quality CD sound in the world.

In the beginning, Karl Haas, as President of Interlochen gave the eight-week-old Cleveland Quartet its first job coaching string quartets and our first paid public performance; Kazuko Hillyer International guided our early career; Alexander (Sasha) Schneider of the legendary Budapest Quartet gave us our New York debut; Robert Sherman of WQXR presented us year after year in live radio performances in New York City; and R. Peter Munves, as President of RCA Red Seal, brought the two-year-old Cleveland Quartet to that legendary label for our first 11 years of recordings.

I FIND MYSELF DAYDREAMING these days over times ranging from the near tragic to hilarious, reliving memories of the very fortunate life we four have shared with one another: There was the White House concert where, following the departure of the guests, the President and First Lady asked us to remain and play a little more for them privately; the tip of Donald Weilerstein's bow came within an inch of Jimmy Carter's face when, standing next to us, Mr. Carter suddenly decided to lean into the quartet to get a closer look at the music. There was the dark night in Montevideo, Uruguay, when our taxi, speeding late to the airport, broadsided a horse at 50 m.p.h. — though the impact showered us with thousands of salt-like glass fragments from the non-safety glass windshield, the four of us were spared the serious injuries suffered by those in the front seat. And there was the invitation to play the first chamber music recital ever at the historic Noh theater in Kyoto, Japan. Arriving at the hall, we found a rather unique problem: the stage floor was constructed of a very flexible wood, made to respond to differing foot pressures so that actors could create a variety of sounds with their feet, which were then amplified by a hollow resonating chamber below. Our normal walking caused the elastic-like boards to buckle with thunderous booms. Although we were given a quick lesson in how to "glide" across the stage in stocking feet (not so easy on this highly waxed and polished surface), keeping time in the concert with our big toes provided our all-Beethoven program with a quite audible rhythm-band accompaniment!

Perhaps the most touching moment of all took place at a Beethoven Cycle in London, where a young girl of 8 or 9 years sat in the first row for all five of the two-hour-plus programs. Her enormous concentration and her joyous, uninhibited response caught our attention the first evening and, when she returned night after night, she became an inspiration for us: "Let's play this one for the little girl in the first row," we would say as we went to the stage. At the close of the cycle, she appeared back stage and presented us with a cuddly velvet octopus: "Mr. Cleveland," she called it, because it has "one head, one heart, and eight hands that work perfectly together."

Music is a communicative art more circular in nature than many people realize, and, like the child in London, the intensity and involvement of you, our audience, has, for more than 26 years, motivated, encouraged, and inspired us. We want to thank each of you for your enthusiasm, support, and appreciation, for the energy you've given us so that we could give to you in return.



*This fall, the Cleveland Quartet finished recording all of the Beethoven Quartets for Telarc International, a project begun in 1992. The final two volumes in the complete seven-volume set are to be released in 1996. Below, for the 20th anniversary of their founding, the Quartet (clockwise from left: Paul Katz, Donald Weilerstein, Peter Salaff, James Dunham) was featured on the cover of Musical America in 1989 — just one of the many feature articles written about the group during 26 years as one of America's premier string quartets.*

