

November 8, 2011

Traversing eras



IN SYNC: The Minguet Quartet

The Minguet Quartet promises an evening of Classical, Romantic and modern music

Date: November 15

Venue: The Music Academy

Time: 7.30 p.m.

The 18th Century Spanish philosopher Pablo Minguet e Yrol's dream of making the fine arts accessible to the masses finds an echo in the music of the Minguet Quartet from Germany. Among the more popular younger string quartets in Europe, the group's intention is to popularise the music of the Masters. In that quest they have performed at almost every major European concert hall such as London's Wigmore, the Cologne and Berlin Philharmonie, the Auditorio in Madrid and the Palau in Barcelona, the Alte Oper in Frankfurt, Vienna's Konzerthaus and Amsterdam's Concertgebouw.

Founded in 1988, the quartet today comprises Ulrich Isfort (violin I), Annette Reisinger (violin II), Aroa Sorin (viola) and Matthias Diener (cello). The four have been part of celebrated music festivals such as the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, the Schwetzingen Festival, the Bad Kissingen Summer Festival, the Bremen Music Festival, the Musica d'Hoy in Madrid, the Festival d'Automne in Paris, the Edinburgh Festival, the Berlin Festival, the Beethoven Festival in Bonn and the Salzburg Festival. They have also performed across the globe.

The ensemble's forte is Classical, Romantic and modern music, with a strong leaning towards the last — they have premiered numerous 21st Century compositions. All four musicians were trained as soloists and studied chamber music at the Folkwang Hochschule in Essen and the Cologne College of Music. Among their important projects is the complete recording of the string quartets of the avant-garde European composer, Wolfgang Rihm, Peter Ruzicka and the performance of all Jörg Widmann's quartets.

Playing on a set of instruments from the Stiftung Kunst und Kultur, the quartet will be performing the works of Wolfgang Mozart (Streichquartett D-Moll KV 421), Wolfgang Rihm (11 Streichquartett) and Johannes Brahms (Streichquartett Op. 51 Nr. 1), at their concert 'Across the Ages' at *The Hindu* Friday Review November Fest.

Mozart's piece is one from a set of six string quartets dedicated to Joseph Haydn. Considered the pinnacle of writing for a classical string quartet, the piece has some of Mozart's best melodies. Rihm's music is raw in intensity and rich in allusion while Brahms' piece is one of his most forceful minor key works.

In keeping with Pablo Minguet's philosophy, the quartet promises to unravel the mysteries behind Mozart's fiery spirit, Rihm's formidable atonals and Brahms' hidden turmoil. With flexibility and expressiveness of craft, the Minguet Quartet guarantees an evening of intimate chamber music.

This performance is being staged with the support of Goethe-Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan Chennai and Germany, and India 2011-2012: Infinite Opportunities.

How did a German quartet such as yours find inspiration in the writings of a Spanish philosopher?

The group takes its name from Pablo Minguet, an 18th Century Spanish philosopher who tried in his writings to make the fine arts accessible to the masses. The Minguet Quartet has the same intention.

Is there a favourite composer whose works you'll love playing?

No, but we love to play good music — so we try to find a good balance in our repertoire among famous classical music composers (Bach, Mozart, Brahms) and forgotten composers of the past who have contributed to the development of music history (Robert Fuchs in Vienna and Josef Suk in Prague). We also make first recordings of such pieces for documentation and love to play contemporary music.

When playing contemporary music, how do you all work on the “individual versus the group” sound?

We decide amongst ourselves who best will play the required solo and when a group sound will work best. This is the reason we play our complete repertoire from score so that it's easier to make harmonic analyses even when the music is complex.

How much do you enjoy performing live as opposed to recording for an album?

We love playing at concerts because we know we evoke different feelings in people. Recording, on the other hand, is like an intensive rehearsal. It makes for a great learning-process.

Do you find it easier to play a piece that has been performed before, or easier to work with a piece that is completely untried?

In a way, for us, both are the same, because we try always to have a new, modern look at each work — it doesn't matter whether it was composed in the 18th Century or the 21st Century.