

Program notes

The Fischer Piano Quartet, completed in July of 2015, was written for the Ames Piano Quartet and is receiving its world premiere this evening. The Quartet is in three movements. The first, in 5/4 meter, is a fast expansive modified sonata form with a rhapsodic development section. The two key/theme areas in the exposition are tri-tone polar foundations that are then reversed in the recapitulation. One of the developmental sections features a lengthy ostinato in the strings with melodic material traded and combined in the cello and piano. The original motivic material is explored, as well as a foreshadowing of the fugue subject from the third movement. After the recapitulation, the coda uses the opening motive in very slow, expansive augmentation, as the music dies away.

The second movement is in a compound 10/8 meter, opening with pizzicato strings presenting a rhythmic ostinato as an introduction, leading to the same rhythmic statement in the piano that becomes foundational to the entire structure. The rhythm is at the same time playful (*giocoso*), serious, and infectious. An extended melody in the cello is presented with just the aforementioned piano accompaniment. The B section is a mysterious colorful series of rising figurations in all instruments with a varying melodic theme embedded in the texture. The opening material appears to return, but the music has a completely different feel and texture. This leads to the return of the A section proper, with strings playing pizzicato and the original cello melody now in simple octaves in the piano. The piano takes over the rhythm and the strings play the melody in triple octaves. A dramatic coda then begins, though this eventually gives way to a slow, yearning, and expressive final set of measures.

The third movement is a fugue in 7/8 meter, beginning in the solo viola, with successive entrances by the cello, piano, and violin. A bridge passage separates the first two entrances, and this material, along with fragments of the subject, are all used for extensive development and variation in episodes, middle entries, and false entries. Of note is how the fugue unfolds—the entrances are at the fourth and do not go back to the original—the entrances are successively on B, E, A, and finally D. For the final entry, they are combined so that all four original pitch entrances are played simultaneously. The fugue appears to die away, as the other movements did, but instead, an energetic Finale enters, marked *con Fiero*. The final measures offer a brilliant conclusion. The musical language of the entire work combines a modern lyricism with a harmonic language that avoids major and minor triadic implications, as well as avoiding thirds in the melodic language, and in the sonoric progression of the bass. The language instead uses quintal harmonies with numerous variations and strong non-tertian harmonic progressions.

Peter Fischer