



from
Young Concert Artists, Inc.

THE JUPITER STRING QUARTET

The Birmingham News

Quartet gives glorious, awe-inspiring program without missing a beat

By Phillip Ratliff
Monday, April 23, 2007

The Jupiter String Quartet, a superb young ensemble based in Boston, gave a dazzling performance Saturday evening at the Alys Stephens Center.

The Jupiter's playing is engaging -- at once nuanced and spectacularly confident and aggressive. Not a misstep, unclear phrase or gesture, out of tune note, or, most important, boring moment could be heard.

The ensemble opened with Hadyn's delightful C Major Quartet from the Op. 20 series, in a performance with several gorgeous moments. The quasi-recitative sections in the second movement, which, as Jupiter cellist Daniel McDonough explained, derive from opera, were particularly ear pleasing both in tone color and for their impeccable intonation. The fourth movement, a nimble fugue, was fun from start to finish.

The first movement of Benjamin Britten's masterful String Quartet No. 1 opens with the violins and viola playing mildly

dissonant chords in extreme upper registers while the cello imitates a harp. This wonderful strangeness portends other mysterious sonic landscapes; the Jupiter's concept and execution of such passages was jaw dropping.

Britten filled the quartet, written in California after a cross-country car ride, with images of prairies, hoedowns and a sort of celestial vastness. The Jupiter, consummate musical colorists that they are, realized it flawlessly. This piece and this quartet were made for one another.

Indeed, the highlights in the Britten piece were the most memorable of the concert. If it wasn't something of a convention that modern works get sandwiched between two warhorses, the Jupiter could have ended the concert with the Britten, and with a bang. Instead, the Jupiter ended with Mozart's Quintet in D Major. Alabama Symphony's principal violist Michael Fernandez joined the quartet for this rich and ponderous work. Despite its weightiness, the Mozart is certainly less filling than the Britten. But it nonetheless provided a lovely conclusion to a lovely evening.