

Captivating Kopelman

REVIEW

As part of the Pharos Concert Series, the Kopelman String Quartet gave a single concert at the Pasydy Auditorium on Wednesday night.

The quartet was founded by Mikhail Kopelman, who for over 20 years was first violinist of the renowned Borodin Quartet. His colleagues are all graduates of the Moscow Conservatoire and with their common musical roots and background quickly established themselves as a quartet receiving extraordinary reviews just one year after their formation in 2002.

The concert, which was unfortunately not well attended, began with Borodin's *String Quartet No 2 in D major* which has vastly superseded the first in popularity with its profuse melodies and rhythmic life. Two of its melodies were even used as songs in the Broadway musical *Kismet*. Their approach was rather lyrical although the kernel of the composition, the famous *Notturmo: Andante* was taken rather fast. The accompanying syncopated passages were more legato than pointed, with the luscious cello melody, beautifully played by Mikhail Milman.

The phrasing was elegant with a close observation of Borodin's dynamic markings – their deep understanding and musicality permeating throughout. The highlight of the evening for me was Shostakovich's *String Quartet No 8 in c minor Op 110* which is one of the composer's most intimate and contemplative masterpieces. It was written in 1960 when Shostakovich went to Dresden which was still shattered from the Allied bombing in 1945. He dedicated this powerfully bleak work "to the memory of the victims of fascism and war." Just days after he had finished the composition, he called it an "ideologically deficient quartet that nobody needs" and described it as his own memorial. Both violinist Boris Kuschnir and violist Igor Sulyga worked with Shostakovich on his late quartets giving them further insight into this marvellous composer's





works. They captured the soul of the music absorbing every gesture and shade with passion and technically breathtaking precision. The intimacy of the music came through, poignant and yet assured and vibrant.

The final work was Weinberg's *Quintet for Piano, 2 violins, viola and cello in f minor Op 18*. The quartet was joined by Elizaveta Kopelman, daughter of Mikhail. She displayed technical proficiency, especially in the *Allegretto* with its dramatic trills and contrary motion passages against the string *col legno* and a deep musical understanding in

her solo of the *Largo* movement. The final movement *Allegro agitato* with opening fugato taken from the first violin at an almost breakneck tempo followed by the cello and piano was dramatic and reminiscent of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*.

A captivating and emotional performance.

Bookings for the next Pharos concert on Friday April 4, with pianist Grigory Sokolov have opened at the Strovolos Municipal Theatre. For further details, contact 22-663871

By Saskia Constantinou

