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ENCORE Chamber Music Institute: The Cavani String Quartet (June 20)

June 29, 2021 by [Caitlin Winston](#)
by Cait Winston

In her pre-concert introduction, ENCORE artistic director Jinjoo Cho praised the Cavani String Quartet for their tradition of music-making that is rooted in friendship, selflessness, and a strong sense of community.

These principles were in full effect in the June 20th Sparked by Rosa concert, where the quartet's synergy and graceful musical dialogue helped them to move effortlessly through a wide variety of musical styles.

The performance, a continuation of ENCORE's Juneteenth Celebration Weekend, featured violinists Annie Fullard and Catherine Coseby, violist Eric Wong, and cellist Kyle Price, and was held at the Dodero Center for the Performing Arts.

The program was kicked off by Chevalier Saint-George's Quartet in c. Throughout the Allegro moderato, individual voices responded to one another in attentive conversation. Phrases were sincere and lighthearted, and the group paced the music perfectly, moving with a stately excitement. The Rondeau was more urgent, providing moments of intricate counterpoint and a striking combination of tenderness and virtuosity. As this concert was a part of ENCORE's Cleveland Composers Project, the next piece, He Speaks in Shadows was written for the Cavani by Cleveland composer Eric Gould. In his program note, read aloud by Fullard, Gould explains that his piece pays homage to the music and life of John Coltrane. Gould describes Coltrane's work as a "spiritual and contemplative" reflection on his experience in Civil Rights era America, pointing out the irony that the issues Coltrane reflected on are still so prevalent in American society. Gould's note ends by saying that He Speaks in Shadows provides "An example of what can happen when we build musical bridges instead of walls."

The first theme consists of a minor blues with a vamp, inspired by Coltrane's Equinox. The cello took the vamp, laying a strong foundation with its robust tone, while the other instruments played with a freedom and passion that was at times reminiscent of improv. Leaning into the blue notes, their articulations emphasized the piece's swinging rhythms. The interlude, inspired by Coltrane's collaboration with Thelonious Monk, provided a tenderness and earnestness with honeyed tones and

expressive dynamic swells. Throughout the piece, the quartet moved from tight, rhythmically complex grooves — where the cello would sometimes take the role of an upright bass — to rich, expansive textures.

During Beethoven's String Quartet in F, the musicians played highly emotive material with poise, control, and occasional levity. This balanced style was perfect for Beethoven's music, which explores a combination of the succinct phrasing and structural clarity of the Classical era with the lush harmonies and dense textures of Romantic music.

The program ended with Florence Price's distinctly American String Quartet No. 2 in a, which creates pastoral imagery through lyrical melodies that emerge from a spacious harmonic landscape. The third movement, a dance based on Juba rhythms, was propelled forward by lively off-beat melodies that engaged the players in flourishes of virtuosity, while the fourth created intensity by layering of textures and melodies rather than by harmonic dissonance.

The Cavani's signature collaborative energy was obviously infectious. The audience cheered the group to an encore, a hauntingly beautiful rendition of Charles Washington's Midnight Child.

More information on ENCORE's 2021 Music & Ideas Festival can be found [here](#).

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