

Parisii Quartet delights listeners with understated tone

By David Williams
FOR THE GAZETTE

In a world of hype where just about everything is overstated, the Parisii Quartet came as a refreshing contrast Saturday night in its concert for the Charleston Chamber Music Society. It displayed fine musicianship throughout, but its understated way of playing drew the large audience at Christ Church United Methodist into rapt stillness.

The Paris-based group — Thierry Brodard, and Jean-Michel Berrette, violins; Dominique Lobet,

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viola; Jean-Philippe Martignoni, cello — brought a mellifluous sound to the rich textures of Gabriel Faure's "Quartet in E Minor, Op. 121."

The first movement had a dream-like quality, Bachian counterpoint drenched in impressionistic delicacy. The complex lines never lacked in grace, but the ensemble couldn't rescue the homogeneous quality of the writing with beauty of sound alone.

The middle movement built a

long, slow climax that had good intensity for its restrained volume. The more aggressive finale had an elegant polish.

Today's audiences get few chances to hear music by Darius Milhaud. His "Percussion Concerto," "Suite Française" for band and some early orchestral pieces have managed to stay in the repertoire. His excellent chamber music has fared less well.

One has to wonder when the music sounds as interesting as his "Quartet No. 12, Op. 252." It didn't hurt that the Parisii played it with illuminating conviction.

The opening, with its melodies extended by repeating the middles of phrases, had power and warmth.

The songlike middle movement had its flow interrupted by cello and viola intoning ghostly calls as if from distant hunting horns. The finale flew along, its busy counterpoint giving way unexpectedly to wild displays of virtuosity.

Debussy's great "Quartet in G Minor" had a full range of subtle articulation and elastic phrasing. The ensemble made a splendid display of the well-argued melodic transformations of the scherzo. The slow movement had tonal transparency of the utmost delicacy.

An encore of the scherzo from Ravel's "Quartet in F" complete with razor-sharp attacks, held the audience enthralled.

Charleston Daily Mail

MONDAY, MARCH 30, 1998** 5A

Quartet induces visions of serenity

WITH a polished sound that made its all-French program shine like a new penny, Parisii Quartet gave new meaning to some beautiful music.

The Parisii quartet was the guest of the Charleston Chamber

Music Society and wove its gossamer tapestry Saturday night at Christ Church United Methodist.

The thing that amazed me about this group the most was the incredible amount of focus each player achieved before every



started before the fingers touched the strings and well before the bow made contact.

What all this achieved was a sound that appeared to emanate from space without physical contact being made by the players or their instruments.

The sound was glorious. Claude Debussy's four movement Quartet in G minor was the big work of the evening, and Parisii's playing was so divine that with my eyes closed, my mind drifted into technicolor worlds of sea spray and dancing nymphs at the sparkling water's edge.

In the second movement, played primarily by plucking the strings instead of bowing them, the maidens surf dancing was so pronounced that the entire spellbound crowd nearly got soaking wet.

Dave Brubeck's old teacher, Darius Milhaud, composed his Quartet No. 12 as a centennial remembrance to Gabriel Faure.

And what a loving memento it turned out to be. The muted cello in the second movement, Lent, was so calm and peacefully reflective that your personal serenity level really started to fill.

What really topped it off was the unexpected beauty of the Quartet in E minor by Gabriel Faure himself.

This was the opening work performed by Parisii, and I was so impressed by the group's tender reading of the piece, that I rushed out of the hall and purchased one of the recordings that were for sale in the lobby. When someone as tight as I am with a dollar acts this impulsively, something is going on.

This was just the latest in an season of winners Charleston Chamber Music has brought us.