

**Christopher Taylor, Pianist
with the Ying Quartet**

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The Ying Quartet with Christopher Taylor, piano

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NUVO Rates it

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Ensemble Music Society, Indiana History Center, Oct. 7

Pianist Christopher Taylor's impeccable musicality provided the exhilarating driving force behind two very challenging quintets in which the strings successfully rose to the demands. Dimitri Shostakovich may have written his Quintet for Piano and Strings in G Minor, Op. 57 in an accessible style, but here the challenge in playing "populist" requires meticulous attention to clearly articulating the powerful melodies. In five movements rather than the usual four for this genre, the work proceeds from an inviting prelude to a fulsome fugal second movement, a terse scherzo, and an intermezzo (that replaces the conventional slow movement) leading up to a sparkling finale. Taylor thrilled in his solo parts while together and individually Frank Huang, Janet Ying, Phillip Ying and David Ying offered total engagement with the virtuoso scoring. Johannes Brahms' Quintet in F Minor for Piano and Strings, Op. 34, gives piano and strings equal and significant roles, showcasing the strength of individual players along with demanding ensemble playing. The opening Allegro non troppo and the Finale are daring in terms of harmony (and speed) for players and audience alike, hovering on feeling unsettling. Reassurance comes with a calming Andante featuring the piano with a dance-like melody against the rhythmic strings bridging to the richly diverse Scherzo with its expanding and driving melodic contrasts. The program opened with Beethoven's Quartet in D, Op. 18 No. 3. Huang, who replaces Timothy Ying as the quartet's original first violinist, has early career links with our International Violin Competition. Taylor's Indianapolis connection is as an American Pianists' Association Fellow.

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