BEETHOVEN

COMPLETE STRING QUARTETS

audite

VOL. V

QUARTETTO DI CREMONA

audite

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

String Quintet in C major, Op. 29

I. Allegro moderato
II. Adagio molto espressivo
III. Scherzo. Allegro
IV. Presto

String Quartet in A minor, Op. 132, No. 15

I. Assai sostenuto – Allegro
II. Allegro ma non tanto
III. „Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenden an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart“ (Holy song of thanksgiving of a convalescent to the Deity) Molto adagio – Neue Kraft fühlend. Andante – Molto adagio – Andante – Molto adagio. Mit innigster Empfindung
IV. Alla marcia, assai vivace
V. Allegro appassionato

QUARTETTO DI CREMONA
Cristiano Gualco, Violine
Paolo Andreoli, Violine
Simone Gramaglia, Viola
Giovanni Scaglione, Violoncello

LAWRENCE DUTTON Viola
(Emerson String Quartet)


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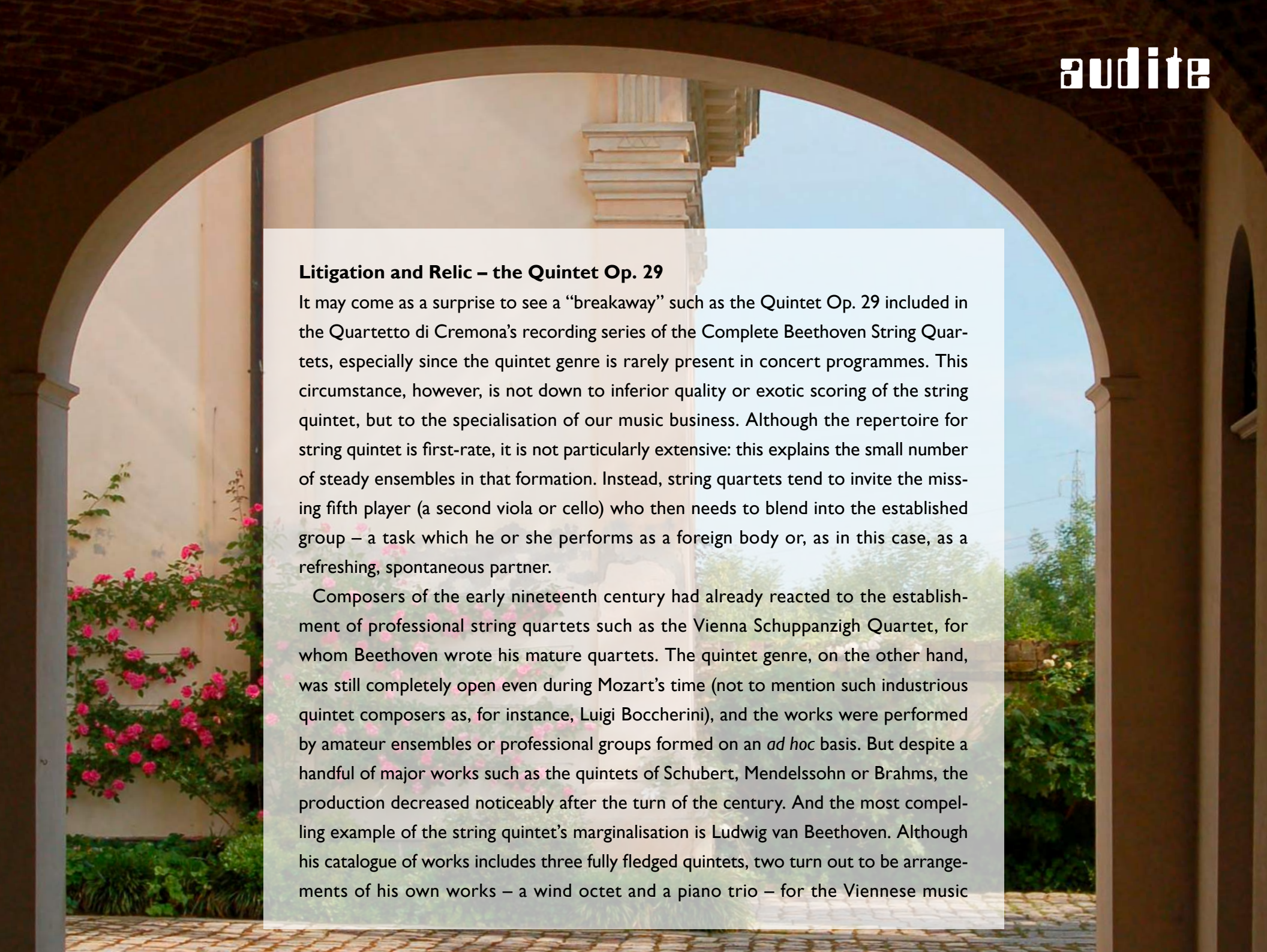
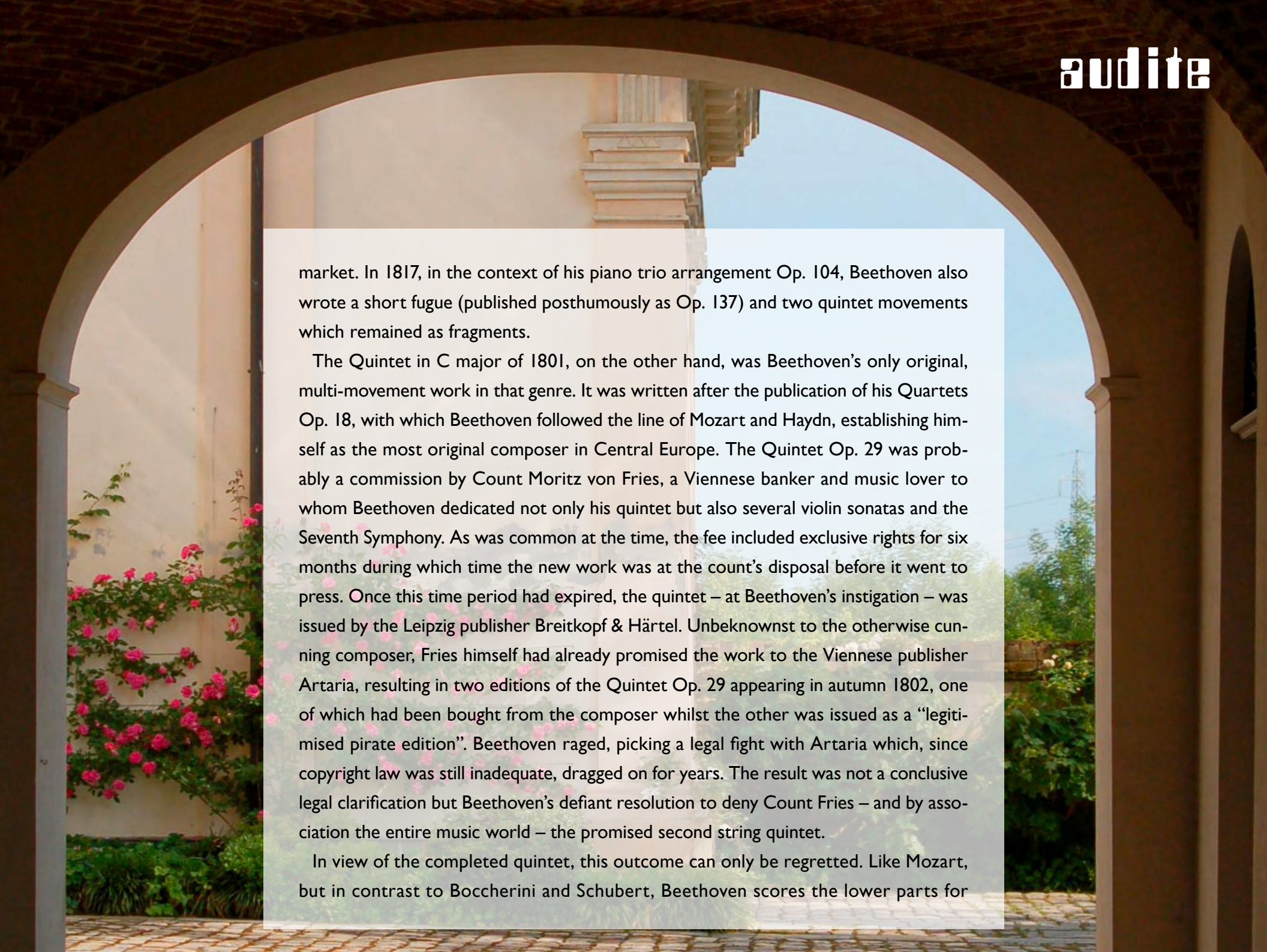


Litigation and Relic – the Quintet Op. 29

It may come as a surprise to see a "breakaway" such as the Quintet Op. 29 included in the Quartetto di Cremona's recording series of the Complete Beethoven String Quartets, especially since the quintet genre is rarely present in concert programmes. This circumstance, however, is not down to inferior quality or exotic scoring of the string quintet, but to the specialisation of our music business. Although the repertoire for string quintet is first-rate, it is not particularly extensive: this explains the small number of steady ensembles in that formation. Instead, string quartets tend to invite the missing fifth player (a second viola or cello) who then needs to blend into the established group – a task which he or she performs as a foreign body or, as in this case, as a refreshing, spontaneous partner.

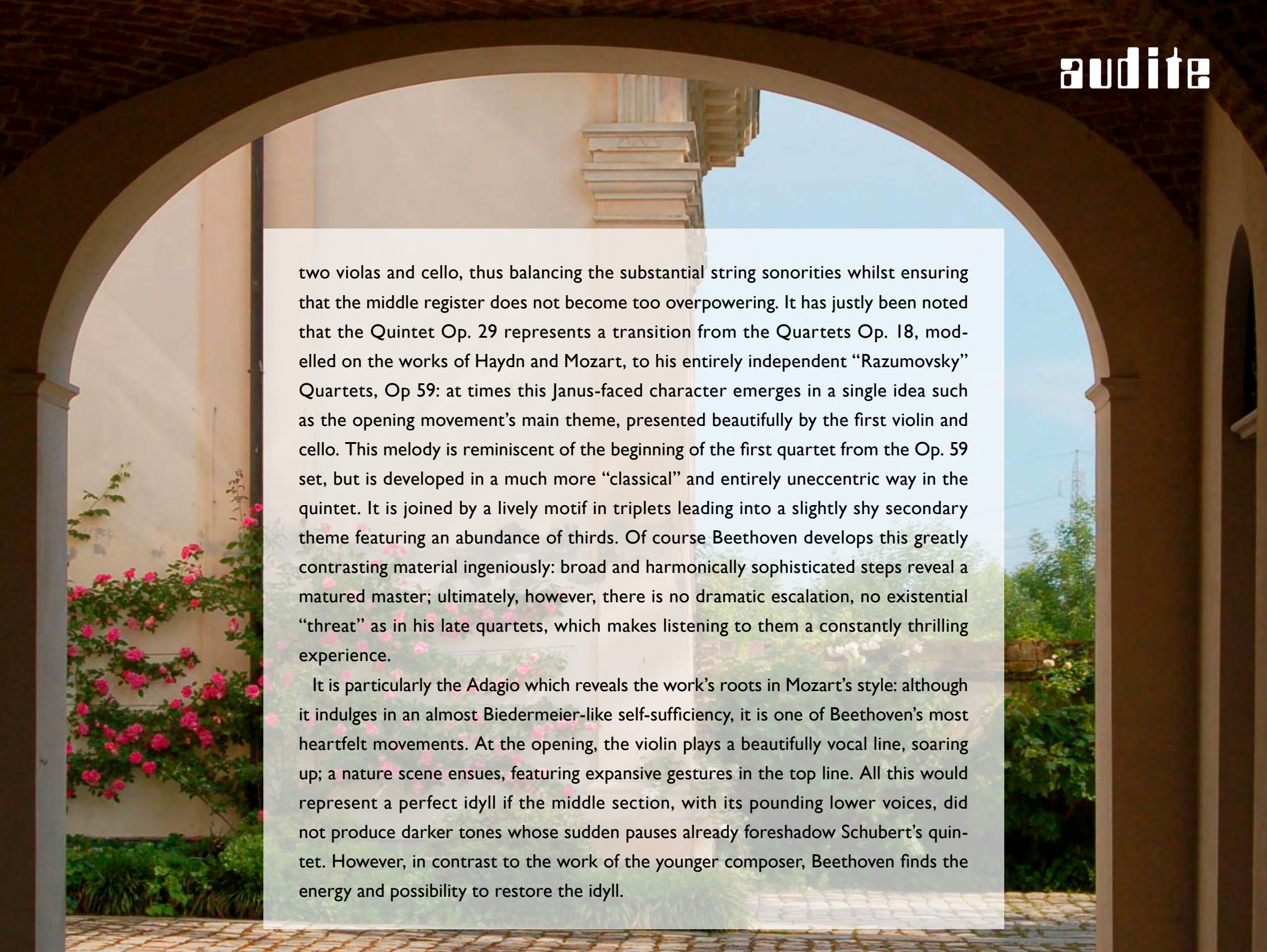
Composers of the early nineteenth century had already reacted to the establishment of professional string quartets such as the Vienna Schuppanzigh Quartet, for whom Beethoven wrote his mature quartets. The quintet genre, on the other hand, was still completely open even during Mozart's time (not to mention such industrious quintet composers as, for instance, Luigi Boccherini), and the works were performed by amateur ensembles or professional groups formed on an *ad hoc* basis. But despite a handful of major works such as the quintets of Schubert, Mendelssohn or Brahms, the production decreased noticeably after the turn of the century. And the most compelling example of the string quintet's marginalisation is Ludwig van Beethoven. Although his catalogue of works includes three fully fledged quintets, two turn out to be arrangements of his own works – a wind octet and a piano trio – for the Viennese music



market. In 1817, in the context of his piano trio arrangement Op. 104, Beethoven also wrote a short fugue (published posthumously as Op. 137) and two quintet movements which remained as fragments.

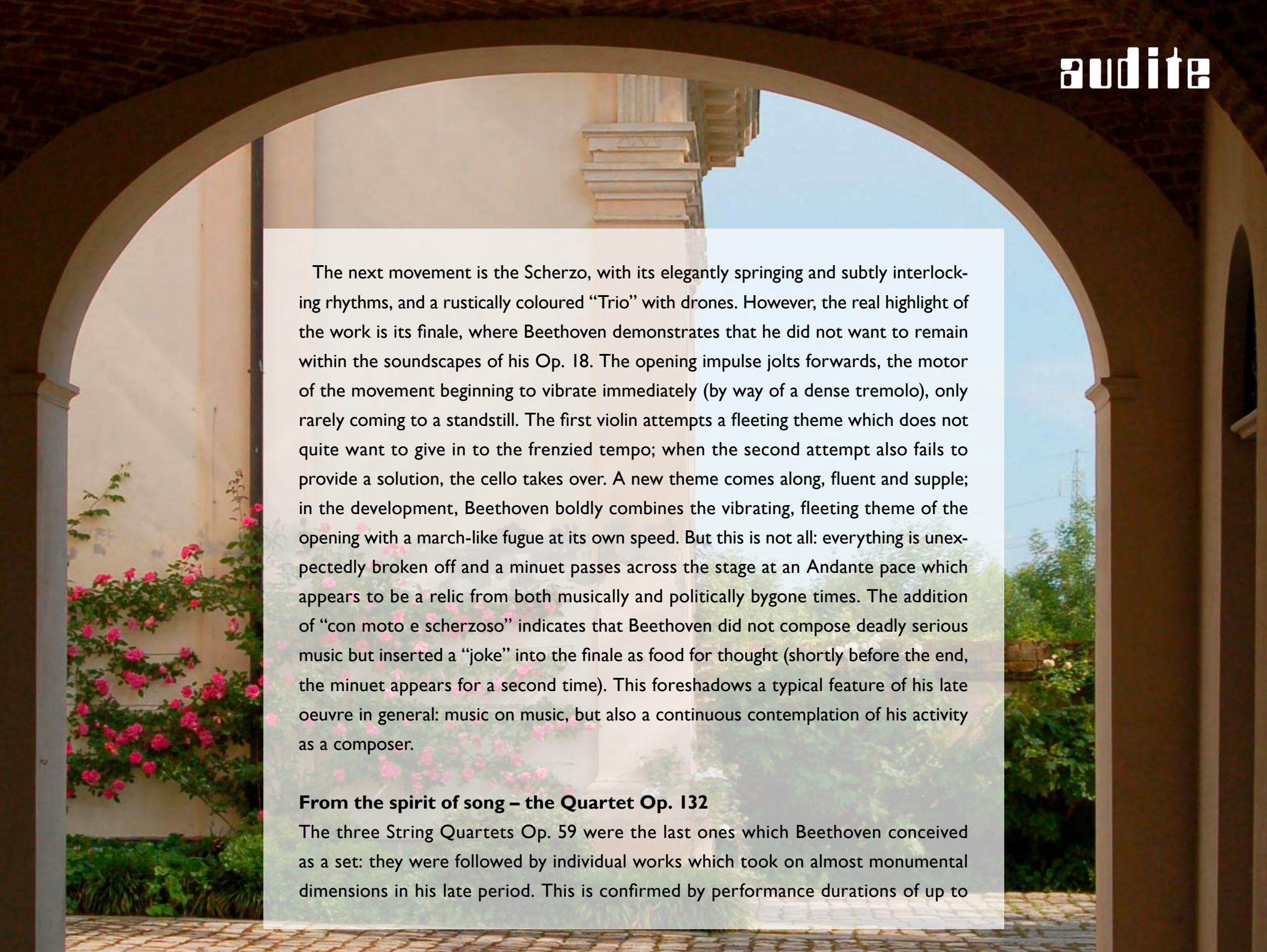
The Quintet in C major of 1801, on the other hand, was Beethoven's only original, multi-movement work in that genre. It was written after the publication of his Quartets Op. 18, with which Beethoven followed the line of Mozart and Haydn, establishing himself as the most original composer in Central Europe. The Quintet Op. 29 was probably a commission by Count Moritz von Fries, a Viennese banker and music lover to whom Beethoven dedicated not only his quintet but also several violin sonatas and the Seventh Symphony. As was common at the time, the fee included exclusive rights for six months during which time the new work was at the count's disposal before it went to press. Once this time period had expired, the quintet – at Beethoven's instigation – was issued by the Leipzig publisher Breitkopf & Härtel. Unbeknownst to the otherwise cunning composer, Fries himself had already promised the work to the Viennese publisher Artaria, resulting in two editions of the Quintet Op. 29 appearing in autumn 1802, one of which had been bought from the composer whilst the other was issued as a "legitimised pirate edition". Beethoven raged, picking a legal fight with Artaria which, since copyright law was still inadequate, dragged on for years. The result was not a conclusive legal clarification but Beethoven's defiant resolution to deny Count Fries – and by association the entire music world – the promised second string quintet.

In view of the completed quintet, this outcome can only be regretted. Like Mozart, but in contrast to Boccherini and Schubert, Beethoven scores the lower parts for



two violas and cello, thus balancing the substantial string sonorities whilst ensuring that the middle register does not become too overpowering. It has justly been noted that the Quintet Op. 29 represents a transition from the Quartets Op. 18, modelled on the works of Haydn and Mozart, to his entirely independent "Razumovsky" Quartets, Op 59: at times this Janus-faced character emerges in a single idea such as the opening movement's main theme, presented beautifully by the first violin and cello. This melody is reminiscent of the beginning of the first quartet from the Op. 59 set, but is developed in a much more "classical" and entirely uneccentric way in the quintet. It is joined by a lively motif in triplets leading into a slightly shy secondary theme featuring an abundance of thirds. Of course Beethoven develops this greatly contrasting material ingeniously: broad and harmonically sophisticated steps reveal a matured master; ultimately, however, there is no dramatic escalation, no existential "threat" as in his late quartets, which makes listening to them a constantly thrilling experience.

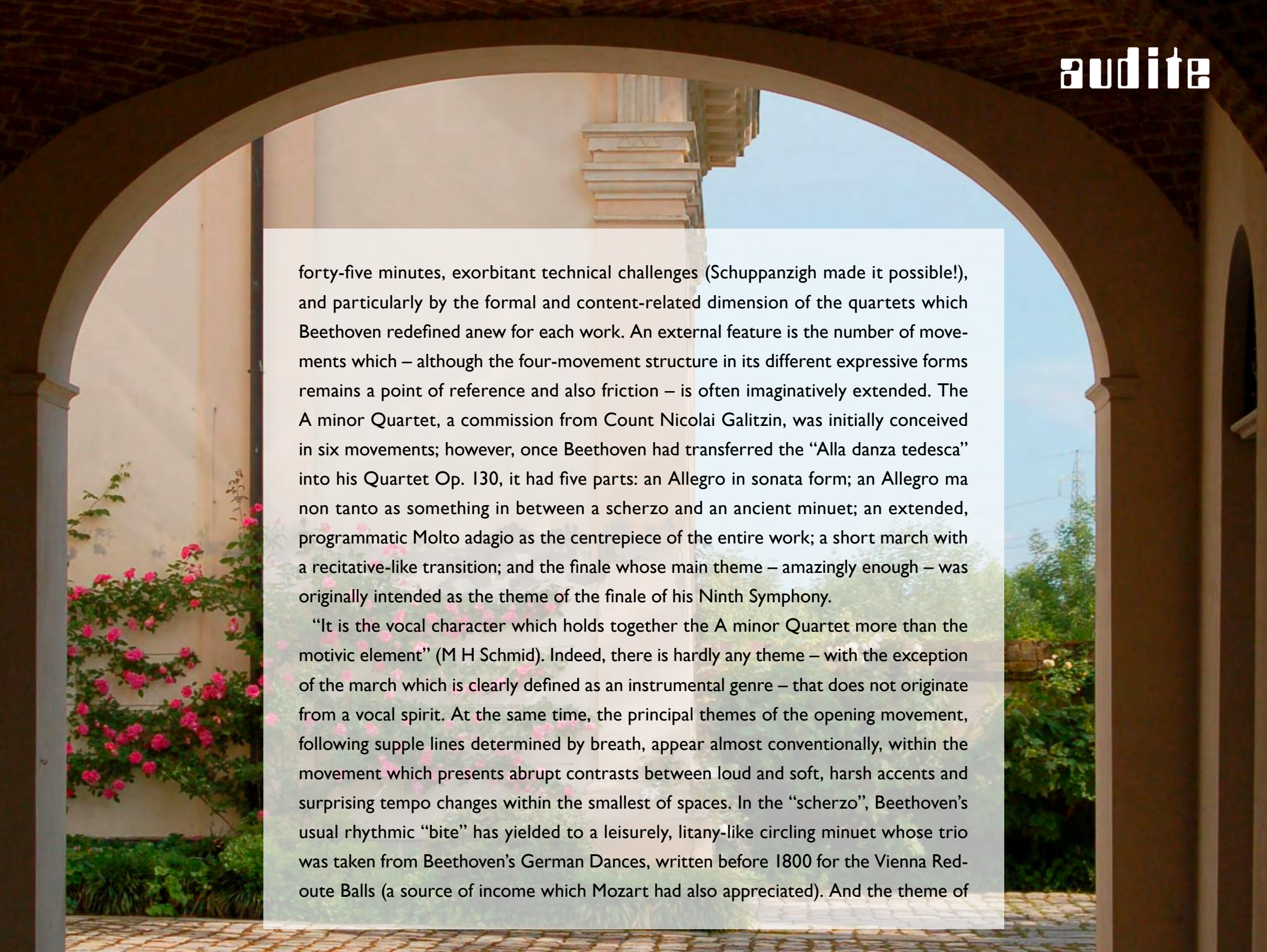
It is particularly the Adagio which reveals the work's roots in Mozart's style: although it indulges in an almost Biedermeier-like self-sufficiency, it is one of Beethoven's most heartfelt movements. At the opening, the violin plays a beautifully vocal line, soaring up; a nature scene ensues, featuring expansive gestures in the top line. All this would represent a perfect idyll if the middle section, with its pounding lower voices, did not produce darker tones whose sudden pauses already foreshadow Schubert's quintet. However, in contrast to the work of the younger composer, Beethoven finds the energy and possibility to restore the idyll.



The next movement is the Scherzo, with its elegantly springing and subtly interlocking rhythms, and a rustically coloured "Trio" with drones. However, the real highlight of the work is its finale, where Beethoven demonstrates that he did not want to remain within the soundscapes of his Op. 18. The opening impulse jolts forwards, the motor of the movement beginning to vibrate immediately (by way of a dense tremolo), only rarely coming to a standstill. The first violin attempts a fleeting theme which does not quite want to give in to the frenzied tempo; when the second attempt also fails to provide a solution, the cello takes over. A new theme comes along, fluent and supple; in the development, Beethoven boldly combines the vibrating, fleeting theme of the opening with a march-like fugue at its own speed. But this is not all: everything is unexpectedly broken off and a minuet passes across the stage at an Andante pace which appears to be a relic from both musically and politically bygone times. The addition of "con moto e scherzoso" indicates that Beethoven did not compose deadly serious music but inserted a "joke" into the finale as food for thought (shortly before the end, the minuet appears for a second time). This foreshadows a typical feature of his late oeuvre in general: music on music, but also a continuous contemplation of his activity as a composer.

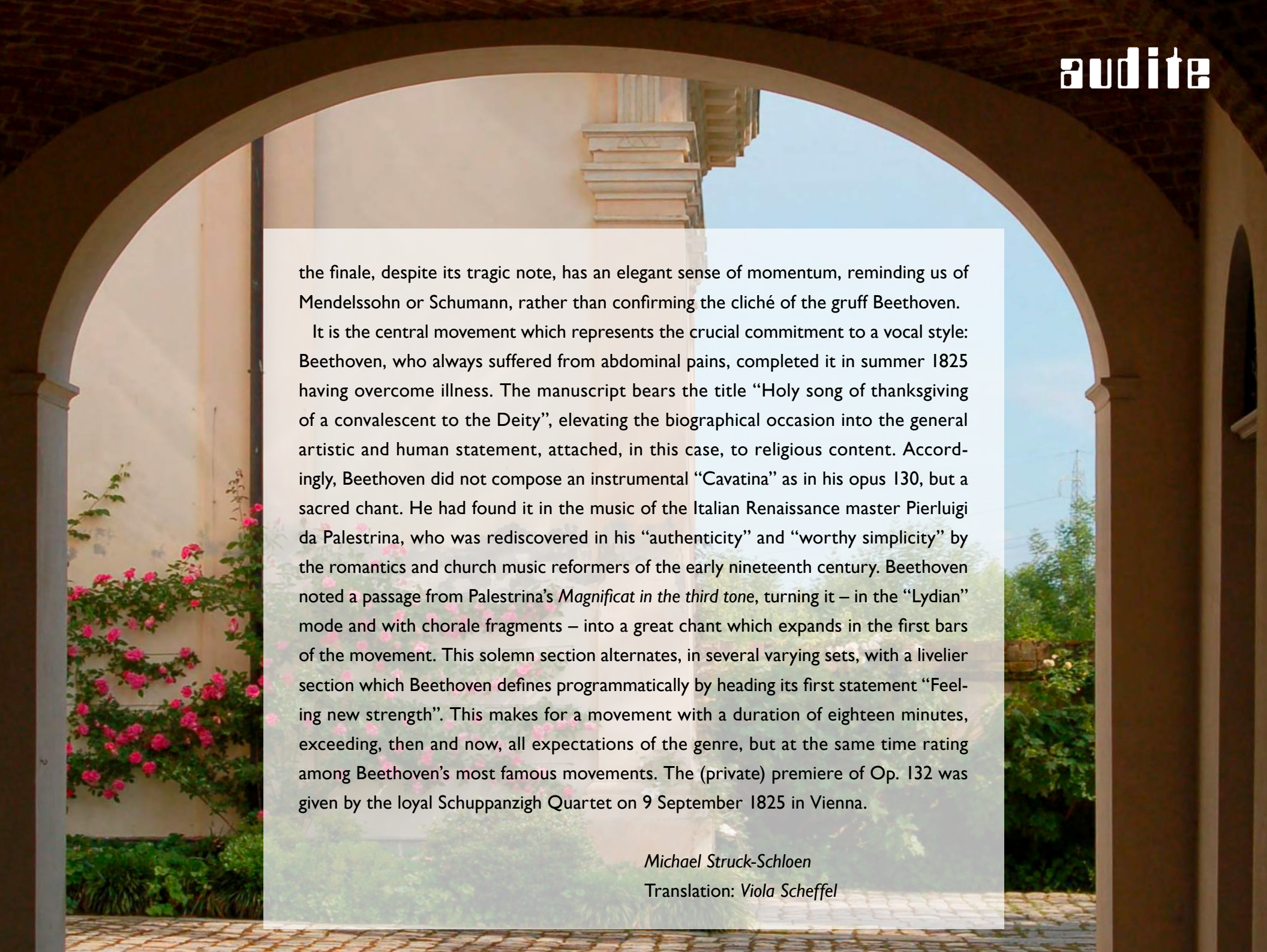
From the spirit of song – the Quartet Op. 132

The three String Quartets Op. 59 were the last ones which Beethoven conceived as a set: they were followed by individual works which took on almost monumental dimensions in his late period. This is confirmed by performance durations of up to



forty-five minutes, exorbitant technical challenges (Schuppanzigh made it possible!), and particularly by the formal and content-related dimension of the quartets which Beethoven redefined anew for each work. An external feature is the number of movements which – although the four-movement structure in its different expressive forms remains a point of reference and also friction – is often imaginatively extended. The A minor Quartet, a commission from Count Nicolai Galitzin, was initially conceived in six movements; however, once Beethoven had transferred the "Alla danza tedesca" into his Quartet Op. 130, it had five parts: an Allegro in sonata form; an Allegro ma non tanto as something in between a scherzo and an ancient minuet; an extended, programmatic Molto adagio as the centrepiece of the entire work; a short march with a recitative-like transition; and the finale whose main theme – amazingly enough – was originally intended as the theme of the finale of his Ninth Symphony.

"It is the vocal character which holds together the A minor Quartet more than the motivic element" (M H Schmid). Indeed, there is hardly any theme – with the exception of the march which is clearly defined as an instrumental genre – that does not originate from a vocal spirit. At the same time, the principal themes of the opening movement, following supple lines determined by breath, appear almost conventionally, within the movement which presents abrupt contrasts between loud and soft, harsh accents and surprising tempo changes within the smallest of spaces. In the "scherzo", Beethoven's usual rhythmic "bite" has yielded to a leisurely, litany-like circling minuet whose trio was taken from Beethoven's German Dances, written before 1800 for the Vienna Redoute Balls (a source of income which Mozart had also appreciated). And the theme of



the finale, despite its tragic note, has an elegant sense of momentum, reminding us of Mendelssohn or Schumann, rather than confirming the cliché of the gruff Beethoven.

It is the central movement which represents the crucial commitment to a vocal style: Beethoven, who always suffered from abdominal pains, completed it in summer 1825 having overcome illness. The manuscript bears the title "Holy song of thanksgiving of a convalescent to the Deity", elevating the biographical occasion into the general artistic and human statement, attached, in this case, to religious content. Accordingly, Beethoven did not compose an instrumental "Cavatina" as in his opus 130, but a sacred chant. He had found it in the music of the Italian Renaissance master Pierluigi da Palestrina, who was rediscovered in his "authenticity" and "worthy simplicity" by the romantics and church music reformers of the early nineteenth century. Beethoven noted a passage from Palestrina's *Magnificat in the third tone*, turning it – in the "Lydian" mode and with chorale fragments – into a great chant which expands in the first bars of the movement. This solemn section alternates, in several varying sets, with a livelier section which Beethoven defines programmatically by heading its first statement "Feeling new strength". This makes for a movement with a duration of eighteen minutes, exceeding, then and now, all expectations of the genre, but at the same time rating among Beethoven's most famous movements. The (private) premiere of Op. 132 was given by the loyal Schuppanzigh Quartet on 9 September 1825 in Vienna.

Michael Struck-Schloen

Translation: *Viola Scheffel*

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During the past ten years the **Quartetto di Cremona** has matured into a string quartet of international renown, combining the Italian culture of string playing with an awareness of historical performance practice. As a quartet of the younger generation, the Quartetto di Cremona has acquired an excellent national and international reputation. Having for many years performed at the great international halls, it is often regarded as the successor to the famous Quartetto Italiano. The musical style of the Quartetto di Cremona is marked by a fruitful tension between Italian and German-Austrian influences. Following their academic studies the players continued their training with Piero Farulli of the Quartetto Italiano. He strongly favoured intuitive playing and a fervent, emotional, romantic and "Italian" approach to music. Afterwards the musicians pursued their studies with Hatto Beyerle of the Alban Berg Quartet. As an expert in the classical era, he represents a clear, classical, "German-Austrian" style, focusing on faithfulness to the original, form and structure as a basis for musical interpretation and inspiration.

Both teachers have left a lasting impression on the quartet and significantly influenced its musical style. The players naturally unite both poles, combining boisterous enthusiasm with a distinct sense for musical architecture, cultivating the fusion of structure and expression, external shape and internal passion.

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The Quartetto di Cremona has performed at major festivals in Europe, South America, Australia and the United States, including Beethovenfest in Bonn, Bozar Festival in Brussels, Cork Festival in Ireland, Turku Festival in Finland, Perth Festival in Australia and Platonov Festival in Russia. They have performed at such prestigious international concert halls as the Konzerthaus Berlin, London's Wigmore Hall, Bargemusic in New York and Beethovenhaus Bonn.

Since 2010, the Quartetto di Cremona has been Ensemble in Residence at the Società del Quartetto in Milan and as such it is featured in numerous concerts and projects. In 2014, the 150th anniversary of the society, the co-operation will culminate in performances of the complete Beethoven String Quartets.

The quartet collaborates with artists such as Ivo Pogorelich, Pieter Wispelwey, Angela Hewitt, Lawrence Dutton, Antonio Meneses, Alessandro Carbonare, Andrea Lucchesini, Lilya Zilberstein and Lynn Harrell. Its repertoire ranges from the early works of Haydn to contemporary music; here their particular interest lies in works by Fabio Vacchi, Michele Dall'Ongaro, Helmut Lachenmann and Silvia Colasanti.

The musicians are also dedicated to teaching, giving masterclasses throughout Europe. In 2011 the quartet was entrusted with the leadership of the String Quartet Course at the Accademia Walter Stauffer in Cremona, closing a circle, for all four members received their initial training at this institution.

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Lawrence Dutton, violist of the nine-time Grammy winning Emerson String Quartet, has collaborated with many of the world's great performing artists, including Isaac Stern, Mstislav Rostropovich, Leon Fleisher, Renee Fleming, Sir James Galway, Andre Previn, Menahem Pressler, Rudolf Firkusny, Emanuel Ax, Yefim Bronfman, Lynn Harrell, and Joshua Bell, among others. He has also performed as guest artist with numerous chamber music ensembles such as the Juilliard and Guarneri Quartets and the Beaux Arts Trio. Lawrence Dutton has appeared as soloist with many American and European orchestras including those of Germany, Belgium, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Colorado, and Virginia, among others. He has also appeared as guest artist at the music festivals of Aspen, Santa Fe, Ravinia, La Jolla, the Heifetz Institute, the Great Mountains Festival in Korea, Chamber Music Northwest, the Rome Chamber Music Festival and the Great Lakes Festival. Currently Professor of Viola and Chamber Music at Stony Brook University and at the Robert McDuffie School for Strings at Mercer University in Georgia, Lawrence Dutton began violin studies with Margaret Pardee and on viola with Francis Tursi at the Eastman School of Music. He earned his Bachelors and Masters degrees at the Juilliard School, where he studied with Lillian Fuchs and has received Honorary Doctorates from Middlebury College in Vermont, the College of Wooster in Ohio, Bard College in New York and The Hartt School of Music in Connecticut.

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recording: November 24 - 27, 2015
recording location: 'Fondazione Spinola Banna per l'Arte', Poirino
instruments:
violin I: N. Amati, 1640
violin II: P. Antonio Testore, 1750
viola: Gioacchino Torazzi, Turin, Italy ca. 1680-1720
viola (Lawrence Dutton): Samuel Zygmuntowicz (Brooklyn, NY 2003)
violoncello: Dom Nicola Amati, 1712 Bologna
recording / executive producer: Dipl.-Tonmeister Ludger Böckenhoff
editing: Dipl.-Tonmeister Justus Beyer
photos: Elisa Caldana
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