

At the Wigmore Hall on 8 July, a younger Russian ensemble, the **Atrium Quartet**, did less justice to Beethoven. The 'Harp' Quartet op.74 started strongly, with good Russian tone, but the leader began the Adagio too emphatically. They settled to some sensitive playing, but again it was the leader who skated over Beethoven's heart-stopping little decorations. The scherzo was very fast, as if being made to fit a preconceived tempo regardless of its effectiveness. The variations were nicely done, however.

Ligeti's First Quartet used to be the province of the avant-gardists, so it was good to find it so well planned and executed by a mainstream ensemble. The slow sections were lovely and *the more strenuous passages were dispatched with terrific* virtuosity. Tchaikovsky's Second Quartet is a problem work and the Atrium approach was to go at it hammer and tongs. Even the charming scherzo had an air of calculation. The Andante brought splendid depth of tone but also more over-emphasis. Likewise the finale, although the players rose courageously to the climax and the scurrying coda, earning themselves a Shostakovich encore.

