

EDGE OF THE CENTER

Monday, June 29, 2009

in a Lydian mode



The critically-acclaimed **Lydian String Quartet** came to UB to perform in the Slee/Beethoven String Quartet Cycle on April 24 at Lippes Concert Hall. They also participated in a Composer Workshop the following day in Baird Recital Hall. **Aubrey Byerly** (left), a graduate student in composition, had the privilege of hearing her string quartet-in-progress played by the ensemble -- an outstanding perk for an emerging composer, and part of a process that began last fall with a previous visit from the group.

"My work with the Lydian Quartet has been a long, interesting, and rewarding learning experience," says Byerly. "The entire process began last fall, when I wrote two short passages of music for a reading with the intention of expanding it into complete piece. The Lydians came from Brandeis to play in the Slee Beethoven Cycle Series and graciously agreed to read the fragments of my piece. The reading was very informative, as a young composer I need experiences like this to build up a reservoir of experience to draw upon to finish this piece and for future pieces. It can be easy to slip into a compositional vacuum, so getting to hear things I have written grounds me in sonic reality. I was able to have them play several variations of passages to get a better sense of the acoustic realities of the ensemble, what voicings sound robust, gnarly, velvety, acerbic, and so on. I also learned quite a bit about how an ensemble like Lydian practices and learns pieces, which has informed the way I illuminate the ideas I am trying to convey in my score and the music. Being young and inexperienced, I feel quite timid around such accomplished musicians and need practice in trying to ask for what I want; so I also value the interpersonal aspect of working with an ensemble in this kind of setting. They have been very accommodating, have made countless helpful suggestions, and have taken great care to realize my ideas.

"Since their visit to University at Buffalo last fall, I have spent several months filling out the piece from its original fragments and revising... There have been many emails between the performers and myself, emphasizing their dedication to music and a desire to realize my ideas. I am already looking forward to the next revision, in order to integrate the knowledge and many insights they will bring with them. Through University at Buffalo's unique Center for 21st Century Music, the Lydian Quartet has provided me with a unique opportunity, which I could not have anywhere else, for which I am grateful."