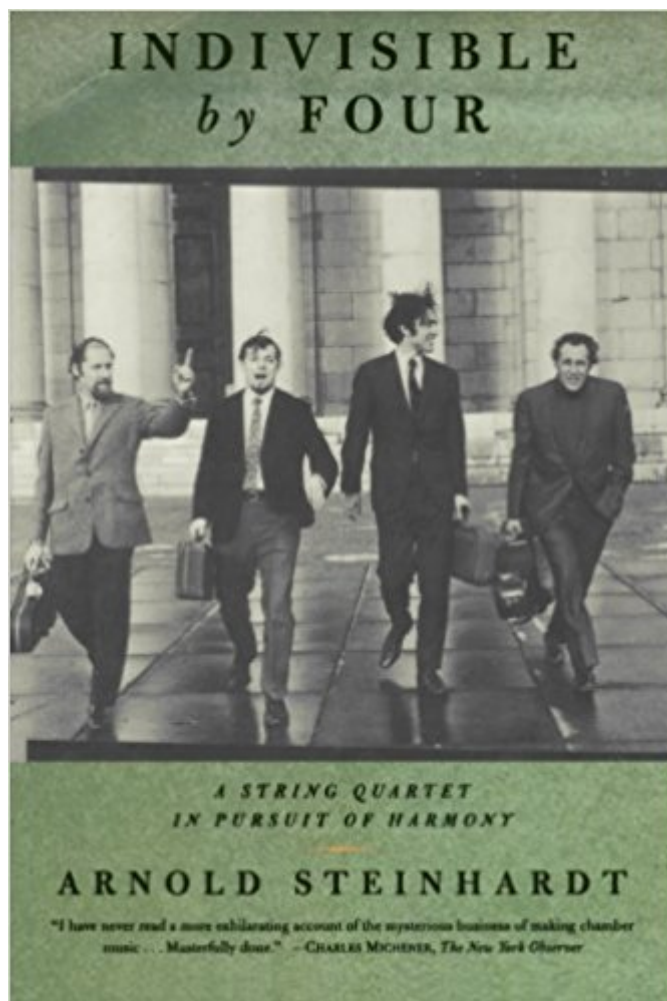


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Indivisible By Four: A String Quartet In Pursuit Of Harmony



Synopsis

The Guarneri Quartet is fabled for its unique longevity and high-spirited virtuosity. Here is its story from the inside--a story filled with drama, humor, danger, compassion, and, of course, glorious music. A player who studies and performs the exalted string-quartet repertoire has opted for a very special life. Arnold Steinhardt, tracing his own development as a student, orchestra player, and budding young soloist, gives a touching account of how he and his intrepid colleagues were converted to chamber music despite the daunting odds against success. And he reveals, as no one has before, the intensely difficult process by which--on the battlefield of daily three-hour rehearsals--four individualists master and then overcome the confining demands of ensemble playing.

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Customer Reviews

Chamber-music lovers will rejoice in this story of the formation, nurturing, and maturing of the Guarneri String Quartet. First violinist Arnold Steinhardt has written a delightful memoir that radiates the love of music and sense of mutual respect and affection that have kept the Guarneri's players together since the ensemble was founded in 1964. How a famous, extremely busy musician learned to write so well is a mystery, but Steinhardt's style is as engaging and captivating as his playing. After sketching his own and his colleagues' pre-quartet careers, he describes how they choose and rehearse their repertoire and how they resolve their inevitable disagreements--and he even throws light on the inexplicable magic that happens in performance. Steinhardt recounts the pleasures and

hardships of traveling and the group's partnership with illustrious guests (notably pianist Artur Rubinstein); he tells musical and personal anecdotes, wryly poking fun at himself and others, but never saying a malicious or derogatory word about anyone. Most remarkably, his discussions of a score are illuminating without becoming too technical. Steinhardt describes the emotional impact of music with a strikingly felicitous, often poetic touch, yet his characterizations resonate with his own experience and avoid the overblown or extravagant. Though it helps to know the music he feels so strongly about, this is a book anyone can enjoy. --Edith Eisler --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

There are few good books written from inside a notable string quartet, and Steinhardt's effort is a charming one. Having been together for 35 years, the Guarneri quartet, with John Dalley, Michael Tree, David Soyer and Steinhardt as first violin, is the oldest American group to have preserved the same membership. With self-effacing modesty (he is the first to insist that the first violin is not necessarily the leader of the group, though he may play a prominent role), Steinhardt describes both his own career and that of the group. He could have been a soloist or a successful orchestral musician, like most chamber players, but chose otherwise. The reasons he gives--the unwillingness to be regimented, the need for companionship on the road, the closeness to the music--are cogent ones, but a chamber group with permanent membership is an extraordinary organism all the same. Steinhardt skillfully describes the tensions, the long-running jokes, the arguments, the determinedly separate vacations--and the ecstasy when all the skills and long hours of practice come together in performances that strike to the heart of some of the most intimate music ever composed. The Guarneri, while not perhaps the most glamorous of American quartets, has well deserved its sturdy longevity, and Steinhardt's book gives an excellent sense of the dynamics that have kept it going. A discography of this much-recorded group would have been a welcome addition. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

After reading Arnold Steinhardt's "Violin Dreams", a book that I am not crazy about, I was reluctant to seek out "Indivisible By Four." I'm glad I did. Arnold takes us through 33 seasons of the Quartet's life (they stopped after 45 long years, in 2009.) He tells all - from how they got started, how they strived and thrived - and most importantly, how they stayed together. Most people, including frequent classical music concertgoers - including classical musicians themselves - don't realize what touring musicians must endure. Be they a soloist or an ensemble, it's not an easy life. It often makes a railroad worker's job look comfy. They must go to their audiences (and not the other way

around) to present their musical gifts, as humble exponents of warhorses and new music alike. Not to mention, by the mid 1990s (when this book was written) classical music was already becoming a dying art form. But luckily for the Guarneris, they hit the scene in the mid 60s, when the economy was ripe, and the audiences more knowledgeable and appreciative than those of today or, let's say pre-internet. And they maintained their stride for over four decades. In order to do what Steinhardt and his compatriots John Dalley, Michael Tree, and the late David Soyer, did, they all had to want it very much...and definitely not for financial gain. That's the underlying thread of this book, and of the quartet's longevity. They really were on the road constantly, dazzling audiences with over 100 concerts a year. And although they were indivisible by four while playing, Steinhardt does emphasize that they had to be divisible while not playing, in order to keep their sanity. The funny and sometimes semi-shocking anecdotes that Steinhardt writes of make for an excellent read. If you've read Steinhardt's "Violin Dreams", you definitely need to follow it up with "Indivisible."

Steinhardt writes an engaging story of his musical growth into the Guarneri String Quartet, and his ensuing experiences. This comes across as honest and open - desirable attributes if the reader desires a genuine look into this world. It should be noted that this account is made in a humble way, but in no way represents a common career trajectory for a classical musician. This is better seen as an ideal to strive toward. Steinhardt worked very hard and had stars align for his success. The greatest lesson to take away may be that the joy and passion he derived from this pursuit was both central and necessary. As with many things, the journey rather than the destination is the real prize.

Full of very recognizable experiences for amateur and professional string quartet- players alike. Wonderful wit. Wonderful knowledge. I place it on the same enjoyment level as Gerald Moore's "Am I too loud?" Highly recommended for every serious music lover.

This book was recommended by Maestro Alan Gilbert in the NY Times Book Review. As a lover of quartet music, though not a musician or technically very knowledgeable, I bought it and found it enlightening and captivating. Very enjoyable to read about how this particular quartet worked and about their repertoire, travels, and recordings. Mr. Steinhardt has a gift for observation and storytelling and the writing is not at all technical. In fact, I enjoy Indivisible by Four so much, I signed up for his blog. Highly recommended.

I heard Steinhardt speak at a local chamber music concert in November (2016) and was enthralled.

I ran out and bought the book and enjoyed it immensely. It shares insights to what is involved in chamber music ensembles versus soloists and orchestras that will enhance anyone's enjoyment of music.

Steinhart is a first-rate fiddler and, as it turns out, a first-rate writer. Who knew? I attended the same music school so it was a fun reminiscence for me to read about the hallowed halls of the Curtis Inst. and some fellow students. You don't have to be a musician to like this book, but you probably ought to be a chamber music lover to appreciate what these fellows do and what they go through to do it. Arnold writes about it all so engagingly. It's an easy and delightful read that all music lovers will enjoy, perhaps especially those who are not professional musicians but who love the gifts musicians give them. I had hoped to be mentioned. I was not. But then, I am somewhat younger and considerably less successful as a musician. Still, I loved the book. And for those who only adore music, it is fun to get inside the profession if only for a little while.

If you are intrigued by music and how it's made, by the hearts and minds of those who have devoted their lives to making instruments sing, then this will be one of the most interesting and satisfying books you've ever read. Arnold Steinhardt, the first violinist of the Guarneri String Quartet, has that rare ability to step outside his discipline and bring it alive for others. *Indivisible by Four* is the story not only of how the Guarneri String Quartet came to be, but of how four very different musicians have managed to forge a unique musical identity for themselves as well. Here you will hear how Steinhardt and his colleagues approach a piece - about their differences and how they are resolved, the things that worked and those that didn't, the inevitable surprises and how they got through them. Best of all, from the perspective of someone who is not a professional musician, is Steinhardt's ability to bring the technical as well as the human elements alive for the reader. I came away with a good solid introduction to chamber music in general, and to the music and composers that have shaped it. Steinhardt even manages to toss in some music theory without allowing the pace to slow to a crawl. An action packed thriller with plenty of twists and turns in the plot this is not. Expect instead to be treated to a very personal and intimate glimpse into the hearts of four very gifted and dedicated musicians.

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