

MICHELANGELO QUARTET RNCM

MANCHESTER Chamber Concerts Society last night welcomed one of the newest string quartets on the international scene.

It was formed only last year, but its members are established soloists: Mihaela Martin and Stephan Picard, violins, Nobuko Imai, viola, and Frans Helmerson, cello.

Their virtuosity and experience showed throughout. Just occasionally in the opening Haydn quartet (F minor, op. 55 no. 2) was there a suspicion of uncertainty in phrase ending, which might be solved more instinctively by a group of longer association.

But it was playing of fire, luminosity and purity, and their account of Beethoven's op. 59 no. 1 (first Razumovsky) was utterly unified and beautiful to hear.

In between came Stravinsky's Three Pieces, with a bonus of his Concertino.

There are clearly no limitations in the sympathies of this brilliant ensemble.

ROBERT BEALE