SAMUEL RHODES

Elliott Carter in his Second String Quartet directs the first violin to "exhibit the greatest variety of character, sometimes playing with insistent rigidity but more often in a bravura style." This quartet is, of course, the work in which each of the four instruments has its own very distinct persona. Indeed, the first violin part exhibits not only the two traits listed above by the composer but also many others including great profundity, mercurial restlessness, and scherzando humor. I have always wondered if Mr. Carter did not have Robert Mann specifically in mind when he drew this musical portrait of an "ideal" first violinist of a string quartet. Bobby's playing certainly has all these characteristics and many more. Who of us can forget the tremendous depth of feeling of the cantilenas of Beethoven's op. 130 Cavatina or the op. 135 slow movement? Who of us has not been transfixed with his heart in his mouth at the wild intensity of the Grosse Fuge or the hurtling velocity of the finale of op. 59, 3?

We honor here today not just Robert Mann the violinist, as wonderful as his contributions have been in that field, but also his achievements as a teacher, mentor, composer, conductor, administrator and occasionally, I acknowledge not without a bit of jealousy, even as a violist! We also honor his wife, Lucy, who for many years has helped him manage the Naumburg Foundation, which has considerably aided the careers of young artists and chamber groups.

Bobby is truly a "renaissance" man and an artist who is driven to constantly strive for an ideal which may exist but is elusively evolving all the time. He is always looking for a new perspective and never standing still. As a founding member of the Juilliard String Quartet, he was the "ideal" first violinist for 51 seasons, which has to be some kind of a record. I had the privilege of spending 28 of those years with him and am thankful for the expanding of my artistic horizons that was the result. Today, he is continuing to function and excel in all the fields listed above and in doing so he is an example for all of us.

Cheers and lots of love to you Bobby, Lucy and family on this most special of occasions from Sam and Hiroko!

