

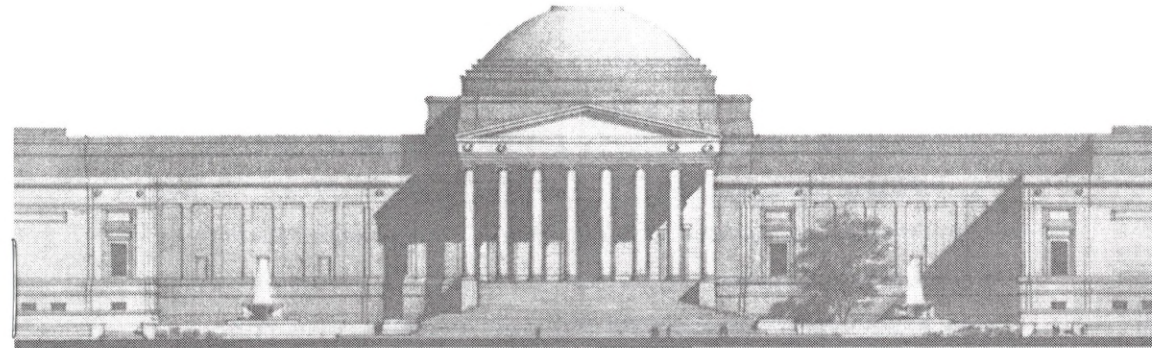
The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

Please note that late entry or reentry of the West Building after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

For the convenience of concertgoers, the Garden Café remains open for light refreshments until 6:00 pm on Sundays.

Music Department
National Gallery of Art
Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC

www.nga.gov



The Seventieth Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,860th Concert

The Pacifica Quartet
Simin Ganatra, *violin*
Sibbi Bernhardsson, *violin*
Masumi Per Rostad, *viola*
Brandon Vamos, *cello*

December 4, 2011
Sunday, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Music by Ludwig van Beethoven

Quartet in B-flat Major, op. 18, no. 6, “La Malinconia” (1798–1800)

Allegro con brio

Adagio, ma non troppo

Scherzo: Allegro

La Malinconia: Adagio; allegretto quasi allegro

Quartet in F Minor, op. 95, “Serioso” (1810)

Allegro con brio

Allegretto ma non troppo

Allegro assai vivace ma serioso

Larghetto; allegretto agitato

INTERMISSION

Quartet in B-flat Major, op. 130, “Liebquartett” (1825)

Adagio ma non troppo; Allegro

Presto

Andante con moto, ma non troppo

Alla danza tedesca: Allegro assai

Cavatina: Adagio molto espressivo

Grosse Fuge: Allegro (op. 133)

The Musicians

Recognized for its virtuosity, exuberant performance style, and bold repertory choices, the Grammy Award-winning Pacifica Quartet tours extensively throughout the United States, Europe, Asia, and Australia. Named *Musical America's* 2009 Ensemble of the Year, the Quartet has gained international stature as one of the finest chamber ensembles performing today. Shortly after its 1994 formation in California, the Pacifica Quartet won top prizes in prestigious competitions, including the 1998 Naumburg Prize. The Quartet has since received many honors, including being appointed quartet-in-residence at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, a position held for forty-three years by the Guarneri String Quartet.

In 2002 and 2003 the Pacifica Quartet won wide acclaim for the first single-concert performances of Elliott Carter's complete five-quartet cycle. The *New York Times* called the accomplishment “brilliant” and “astounding,” and the *Chicago Tribune* praised the Quartet's “astonishing talent, energy, and dedication.” In 2006 the Pacifica was awarded an Avery Fisher Career Grant, becoming only the second chamber ensemble so honored in the granting agency's long history. That same year the Quartet was featured on the cover of *Gramophone* and heralded as one of “five new quartets you should know about,” the only American quartet to make the list. More recently, the Pacifica's recording of Carter's *Quartets nos. 1 and 5* won the 2009 Grammy Award for best chamber music performance.

Resident performing artists at the University of Chicago and visiting artists in chamber music at the Longy School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the members of the Pacifica Quartet were appointed to the faculty of the University of Illinois in 2003 and serve as its quartet-in-residence. Maintaining a website at www.pacificaquartet.com, the ensemble appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Melvin Kaplan, Inc., www.melkap.com.

Program Notes

Although it was not the last quartet that Beethoven completed in his opus 18, he chose to place the *Quartet in B-flat Major* last in the set of six quartets, probably due to the lengthy, slow introduction to the last movement (*La Malinconia*). From the viewpoint of musical development, this introduction is decades ahead of the rest of opus 18. In some ways it presages Beethoven's late quartets of the 1820s, with its moving evocation of grief and despair, providing an insight into the depths of the composer's emotional state.

The first movement opens with a vigorous, vaulting theme in the first violin that eventually becomes a duet with the cello. The far less agile subsidiary theme stays rooted on one note and then another, all within a rather narrow range. The development section ends with a held note, anticipating the return of the theme. Introduced by the first violin over a bare-bones accompaniment, a refined, dignified melody is the main theme of the *Adagio*. For the second violin reiteration of the melody, the importance of the accompanying voices is considerably higher. The entire quartet joins for a brief episode together before the violin states the theme for a third time, now in a highly ornamental style. The contrasting section arrives with a thin, tenuous line played in octaves by the first violin and cello. A short bridge passage and rising chromatic scale in the first violin lead to the return of the opening material, this time even more highly decorated than in its first hearing.

The *Adagio's* stately mood is unceremoniously shattered by the eccentric and very original *Scherzo* that follows. Full of rhythmic verve, it is constantly being tripped up and sabotaged by misplaced accents and cross rhythms. One can only marvel at Beethoven's ability to squeeze such intricate and complex rhythmic patterns into straightforward triple meter. The final movement, the climax of the entire composition, begins with the astounding *La Malinconia*, which Beethoven directs "must be played with the greatest delicacy." The introduction falls into two parts, the first characterized by repeated tones and the second by a fugal texture. The main body of the movement is fast, in the style of a *danza alla tedesca*, or dance in German

style, which was very popular at the time. The *tedesca* never succeeds in raising the somber pall cast by *La Malinconia*, and, as if to underscore the point, Beethoven twice interrupts the festive dance with short reminders of the slow introduction before ending the movement in a furious dash to the powerful last chords.

The only Beethoven quartet that bears a subtitle supplied by the composer, the *Quartet in F Minor*, op. 95, "Serioso," is characterized by its somber mood. The composer's growing deafness, precarious health, frustration in love, financial insecurity, and unhappy family life no doubt combined to make him angry, bitter, and deeply despondent. Usually classified as one of the final works of Beethoven's middle period, the quartet anticipates the exalted third period quartets that were to follow some fourteen years later. The title page dedication to Nikolaus von Zmeskall is significant, because it is the first quartet inscribed to a friend from the middle class rather than a noble patron. The work received its premiere in Vienna in May 1814, played by the Schuppanzigh Quartet.

The first movement—the shortest Beethoven ever composed—lashes out with an angry, laconic phrase, played in unison by the entire quartet. A suspenseful silence follows, after which the first violin whips up and down in forceful octave jumps. After briefly expanding the opening fragment, the quieter, rolling second theme is introduced by the viola and then picked up by the others. The short development, which opens in a fury based on the first theme, leads to a truncated recapitulation. Beethoven relates the second movement to the first by starting at the same soft dynamic level and by giving the introductory cello phrase the same falling-rising shape as the quartet opening.

The third movement continues without pause, starting with a figure drawn from both the rhythm of the octaves and the sudden, dramatic silences of the first movement. The roughness and strong propulsive energy provide a sharp contrast to the contemplative mood of the second movement. The middle section is at once a solemn chorale and a grim march. The finale is related to the third movement by a slow introduction based on that movement's opening rhythmic figure. Unremitting restlessness and nervous anxiety pervade the

movement until nearly the very end. Then, in an abrupt change of mood, Beethoven speeds up the tempo, changing mode from minor to major, and ending with an affirmative conclusion that attests to the indomitability of the human spirit, no matter how sorely tried by bad fortune.

Beethoven produced few major works from 1811 until the early 1820s, but in 1822 he was able to write a publisher, "I have long known what I want to do, but I can't get it down on paper. I feel I am on the threshold of great things." Not long thereafter, he composed the crowning achievements of his life's work—the *Missa Solemnis*, the *Ninth Symphony*, and the five "late" string quartets. Composed between May 1824 and November 1826, these quartets confused audiences, due to the frequent presence of supposedly outdated techniques such as fugues, recitative, and simple dance tunes. Opus 130 follows the classical order of movements—fast, scherzo, slow, and finale—except that Beethoven adds an extra scherzo and slow movement just before the finale. The latter of these "extra" movements (*Cavatina: Adagio molto espressivo*), is darkly expressive and intensely emotional. Massive, complex, and often frenzied, the *Grosse Fuge* (Great Fugue) is a particular shock coming moments after the quiet eloquence of the lovely *Cavatina*. Symphonic in its grand proportions and at times brutal, the *Grosse Fuge* recalls the rigorous polyphony of Johann Sebastian Bach while at the same time ahead of its time in many ways. The *Grosse Fuge* was removed from the quartet at the publisher's request and published separately as opus 133. The publisher artfully told Beethoven that the public demanded the fugue as a separate piece and offered him additional money to replace it with a less challenging finale. The Pacifica Quartet plays the work as Beethoven originally composed it, with the *Grosse Fuge* as the final movement.

Program notes adapted from Guide to Chamber Music, by Melvin Berger, used with permission

Next Week at the National Gallery of Art

Thomas Hrynkiw, pianist

Music by Kevich, Revutsky, and other Ukrainian composers

Presented in conjunction with the film series
"Yuri Ilyenko: Ballad of Ukraine"

December 7, 2011
Wednesday, 12:10 pm
East Building Auditorium

(Films shown December 10, 2011, at 2:00 and 4:00 pm;
December 17 at 2:00 pm in the East Building Auditorium)



The Rose Ensemble

Arab, Christian, and Sephardic music from the Middle Ages

December 11, 2011
Sunday, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Preceded at 6:00 pm by a preconcert talk
on Sephardic music by Jerome Barry