



The Seventy-Third Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
3,048th Concert

National Gallery of Art String Quartet
Claudia Chudacoff and Teri Lazar, violins
Osman Kivrak, viola
Marion Baker, cello

April 19, 2015
Sunday, 3:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Program

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

String Quartet no. 1 in G Major, K. 80 (1773)

Adagio

Allegro

Menuetto; trio

Rondo

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975)

String Quartet no. 7 in F-sharp Minor, op. 108 (1960)

Allegretto

Lento

Allegro; allegretto; adagio

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

String Quartet in F Major (1903)

Allegro moderato

Assez vif, très rythmé

Très lent

Vif et agité

The Performers

The National Gallery of Art String Quartet has performed regularly at the Gallery since its debut in 1995. In addition to standard quartet repertoire, the group presents rarely heard masterpieces of chamber music. The musicians also perform under the name Sunrise Quartet, and in that capacity they have been recognized with a Chamber Music America residency at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts as well as with residencies at Concerts at the Beach in Delaware and the Davies Concert Series in Camp Springs, Maryland. The quartet appeared on the Millennium Stage at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and has collaborated in concerts at the National Gallery with pianists Míceál O'Rourke and Menahem Pressler.

Program Notes

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart wrote his *String Quartet no. 1* at the age of fourteen during his first tour of Italy. The work is also known as Mozart's *Lodi Quartet*, since he completed the work in one sitting in a tavern in Lodi, Lombardy—Mozart's father, Leopold, made a specific annotation in the manuscript to that effect. Mozart conceived the quartet in three movements after the style of the Italian trio sonata. He continued to revisit the work at various points over the next decade and added a French rondeau to the three Italian dance movements. Eventually, he deemed the work worthy to copy for a patron in Paris, which allowed for wider dissemination and appreciation.

Although it is Mozart's first venture in the quartet genre, the composition has the same self-assured grace of his mature style. The opening adagio is sincere and subtle, steady in tempo but with a varied palette of articulations throughout. The second allegro movement provides an impetuous contrast, demanding a mixture of flashy dexterity and sensitive lyricism from the players. The third movement is a standard minuet and trio, and the allegro finale recalls the character of the second movement and complements the rest of the work, despite being composed two years later. In rondo form, the finale features a refrain marked by high, suspended pauses and low, brisk resolutions indicative of Mozart's musical wit.

Dmitri Shostakovich experienced heightened musical freedom following Joseph Stalin's death in 1953, and addressed heavy subject matter in his seventh and eighth string quartets. He dedicated these works to both his late first wife, Nina Varzar, who had died of lung cancer six years earlier, and "to the victims of fascism and war," the latter during a visit to the Dresden. The seventh quartet marked a stark departure from Shostakovich's prior modus operandi within the quartet genre. He had framed his first six quartets' tonalities around a progression of descending thirds: C—A—F—D—B-flat—G. The next in line would be E-flat, but Shostakovich instead resumed this pattern with his *String Quartet no. 9 in E-flat Major*. Typically associated with joy and human heroism, E-flat major would not have meshed with the seventh quartet's somber subject matter, so the composer turned to F-sharp minor for his key.

The first movement, essentially in sonata form without the development section, introduces a common Shostakovich motive of three repeated eighth notes. This movement's middle section, set in E-flat major, ventures fleetingly to the quartet's would-be key before returning to a pizzicato-based recapitulation in F-sharp minor. The still and elegaic quality of the second movement owes to Shostakovich's sparse textural choices: he occasionally writes duet sections for instrumental pairs rather than integrating all four players throughout the work. The third movement, a wild and varied *fugato*, alludes often to themes from earlier movements. Also present is the common "D-S-C-H" motive, although here out of sequence as "S-D-C-H." The "D-S-C-H" motive, containing the notes D, E-flat, C, and B-natural, was Shostakovich's signature, a way of writing his own German initials into his music.

Maurice Ravel submitted his *String Quartet in F Major* to the Prix de Rome and the Conservatoire de Paris competitions, and both institutions dismissed the work following its 1904 premiere. Ravel dedicated the work to his mentor, Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924), who called the quartet's finale "stunted, badly balanced, in fact a failure." Although wide criticism of the quartet caused Ravel ultimately to leave the Paris conservatory in frustration, many members of the French musical community adored the work, with Claude Debussy (1862–1918) among its staunchest supporters. The work's controversy helped bring attention to Ravel, which advanced his career.

Debussy and Ravel wrote one string quartet each, and these works are often paired together and compared. Debussy's 1893 quartet may have presented him as a progressive, but he was still searching for his mature voice. Ravel's 1903 quartet, on the other hand, is a mature, well-crafted work. Some defining features of it include the second movement's rhythmic pyrotecnics in the second movement scherzo, as well as the finale's radical transformation of prior themes in the finale.

Program Notes by Michael Jacko, Music Program Assistant, National Gallery of Art

Upcoming Concerts at the National Gallery of Art

**Timo Andres and David Kaplan, pianists
with the National Gallery of Art Vocal Ensemble**

Music by Andres, Brahms,
and Schumann

April 26, 2015
Sunday, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court



“Pershing’s Own” United States Army Band

Music by Sousa
and other composers

May 3, 2015
Sunday, 3:30 pm
West Building, Mall Steps



Pavel Gintov and Mykola Suk, duo pianists

Music by Mozart, Bach,
and sons

May 10, 2015
Sunday, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

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

www.nga.gov

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