



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

National Gallery of Art
2,921st Concert

Orava String Quartet
Daniel Kowalik and David Dalseno, violin
Thomas Chawner, viola
Karol Kowalik, cello

January 13, 2013
Sunday, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)

String Quartet in D Minor (“Quinten”), op. 76, no. 2

Allegro

Andante o più tosto allegretto

Menuetto. Allegro ma non troppo

Vivace assai

INTERMISSION

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

String Quartet No. 2 in A Minor, op. 13

Adagio—Allegro vivace

Adagio non lento

Intermezzo: Allegretto con moto—Allegro di molto

Presto—Adagio non lento

The Musicians

Founded in 2007 by three siblings—violinists Daniel Kowalik and Sylwia Waples and cellist Karol Kowalik—the Orava String Quartet was completed by violist Thomas Chawner. In 2012 violinist David Dalseno joined the quartet on second violin. Based in Sydney, Australia, the musicians have performed locally and nationally in venues including Sydney Opera House’s Utzon Room; Melbourne Recital Center; and City Recital Hall, Angel Place. Internationally, Orava has performed in Canada, China, Hong Kong, and United Arab Emirates, and in 2010 completed a highly successful tour of Asia for Musica Viva with world-renowned didgeridoo performer and composer William Barton. Frequent guests at the Musica Viva, Sydney Vivid, Crossroads, and Chinese Garden Chamber Music festivals, the quartet has performed for Queen Sofia of Spain and Pope Benedict XVI.

Currently the graduate quartet-in-residence at the University of Colorado, Boulder, under the world-renowned Takács String Quartet, Orava received the coveted Chamber Music Residency at the Banff Arts Center in Canada, and in 2009 was selected as one of six finalists for the Asia-Pacific Chamber Music Competition. Members of the quartet have studied with musicians from the Australian, Brentano, Emerson, Goldner, Jerusalem, Juilliard, Saint Lawrence, and Schoenberg string quartets.

The Orava String Quartet appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Arts Global, Inc. Founded in 1999 by its president, Heather de Haes, Arts Global is incorporated in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland, and has Friends’ organizations in Russia, the Middle East, and Asia. Its mission is to support, foster, and develop emerging musicians of exceptional talent.

Program Notes

Over a period of forty years, Haydn wrote nearly seventy string quartets, transforming the lightweight divertimento, designed more for entertainment than serious music-making, into the challenging core form of the chamber music repertory. The “Quinten” quartet is the second in the remarkable series of eight quartets — six published as Opus 76 and two as Opus 77 — that constitute Haydn’s final word on the form.

The eight quartets were composed in the 1790s after Haydn had returned to Vienna from two extended visits to London. His experiences in England had been the most rewarding of his life, artistically and financially. He had been honored at court, lionized in concert halls and ballrooms, awarded an honorary degree at Oxford, and compensated generously for his music. In response, he had composed and conducted his twelve greatest symphonies — numbers 93 through 104 — and soon they were in demand throughout the continent.

Haydn was now the most famous composer in Europe, and though his international earnings assured him an unprecedented degree of economic security and he had reached age sixty, he was not content to retire to a life of leisure. For one thing, he had been overwhelmed in London by the oratorios of Handel, and soon he was at work on his own oratorio masterpieces, *The Creation* and *The Seasons*. For another, Haydn’s reputation inevitably led to a brisk business in teaching and freelance composing.

In 1796 he received a commission for six quartets from Count Joseph Erdödy, a Hungarian aristocrat and the brother-in-law of Haydn’s patron, Prince Anton Esterhazy. The quartets were written the following year and initially performed in the count’s drawing room, and in 1799 they were published as Opus 76. These works set new standards of subtlety and originality, and rank among the greatest works in the chamber music literature.

The second quartet of Opus 76 is, in many ways, the most remarkable in Haydn’s total output. The work is, first of all, a continuing demonstration of the power of contrast between the major and minor modes. In the opening movement, the first theme is in D minor, the second in F major. The second movement consists of a section in minor surrounded by two major sections, with a coda combining both elements. The main section of the minuet is in

the minor, with the trio in a major mode. The fourth movement is predominantly minor, but there is an abrupt shift to the major after the restatement of the main theme.

Even more noteworthy is the structure of the first movement—an astounding demonstration of what a resourceful composer can do with the simplest of materials. In this instance, the building block is the descending fifth. Both the first and second themes are based on that interval, and the working out of the themes leans heavily on its repetition, upward as well as downward, in a variety of guises but always with clarity and power. This, of course, is the source of the quartet’s nickname, German for “The Fifths.”

Felix Mendelssohn completed his first string quartet, which remains without an opus number, in 1823, at age fourteen. Two years later, he produced his *Octet for Strings*, and it was clear that, at age sixteen, he had already come into his own and had mastered the technical aspects of composition. When he was eighteen, he wrote a song based on a text by Johann Gustav Droysen titled “Frage” (Question). The text reads, in part: “Is it true? Is it true that you are always waiting for me in the arbored walk . . . she who feels with me and stays ever true to me?” The music from “Frage” frames Mendelssohn’s Opus 13 quartet of the same year, and elements from “Frage” are found in every movement in the piece. In particular, the dotted rhythm and the melodic half step found in the song pervade the quartet.

Despite its connection to the song, the quartet is not simply the pining of a lovesick teenager. Beethoven died the same year Opus 13 was composed, and the work can also be seen as an homage to the elder composer. Beethoven’s influence is most obvious in the last movement, which closely resembles the last movement of Beethoven’s Opus 132, written two years prior. The recitative for the first violin, the opening melody, and the bass line in the cello part are too similar to Opus 132 to be coincidental. In addition, a fugato section in the second movement (which is based on the half step from “Frage”) closely resembles the fugato section in the second movement of Beethoven’s Opus 95 quartet. Scholars also point out links to the Cavatina from Beethoven’s Opus 130 quartet in the Adagio non lento and remark on the similarity of the quoted phrase “Is it true?” to Beethoven’s “Must it be?” in his Opus 135 quartet.

Opus 13 is a dark piece at times, but it is not tragic in the Beethovenian sense. After the Adagio introduction in A major and “Frage” quote, we are spurred by a rumbling in the viola into a tumultuous Allegro vivace in A minor, the theme of which is an expansion of the song’s rhythmic motive. But despite the passionate outbursts, the nervous murmuring, and the wailing melodies, we can’t help somehow relishing all this grief, in the same way that a teenager relishes the pangs of love. Similarly, the second movement drips with angst, but is deliciously sweet. The Intermezzo is in ternary form—a classic Mendelssohn scherzo is framed by strains of an ancient-sounding song. The final movement, the stormy, youthful answer to Beethoven’s Opus 132, yields to the opening “Frage” material in a way that might seem saccharine if it were not so sincere. As it is, we are left marveling at the deft emotional manipulation by the young genius, who somehow makes us all believe that we are eighteen again, when the world still held unlimited potential and its colors seemed more vivid.

Program notes on Haydn by Will Hertz, notes on Mendelssohn by the Daedalus Quartet

Upcoming concerts at the National Gallery of Art

Cyrus Forough, violinist
Katya Janpoladyan, cellist
Sung-Im Kim, pianist

Music by Schubert and Vali

Preceded by a talk on the composers and their music by
Stephen Ackert and M. Frank Ruppert

January 20, 2013

Preconcert talk, 6:00

West Building Ground Floor, Lecture Hall

Concert, 6:30

West Building, West Garden Court

Please note that the area around the National Gallery
will be open to metro and foot traffic only on January 20,
due to advance preparations for the Inaugural Parade.



Rachel Barton Pine, violinist

Music by Paganini

In collaboration with the Phillips Collection and in honor of
Color, Line, Light: French Drawings, Watercolors, and Pastels
from Delacroix to Signac

January 27, 2013

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 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

Concerts are made possible in part through the generosity of donors to the National Gallery of Art through The Circle. Reserved seating is available in recognition of their support. Please contact the development office at (202) 842-6450 or *circle@nga.gov* for more information.