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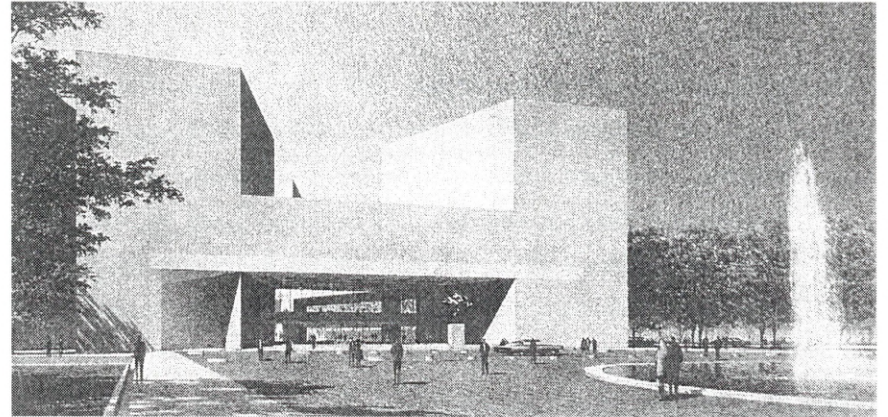
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pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

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

Music Department
National Gallery of Art
Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue NW
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The Sixty-fourth Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,552nd Concert

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

December 11, 2005
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
East Building Auditorium

Program

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

String Quartet in G Major, op. 18, no. 2 (1798–1801)

Allegro

Andante con moto

Scherzo: Allegro

Presto

Leoš Janáček (1854–1928)

String Quartet no. 2 (“Intimate Letters”) (1928)

Andante; con moto; allegro

Adagio

Moderato; adagio; allegro

Allegro; andante; adagio

INTERMISSION

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

String Quartet in E-flat Major, op. 44, no. 3 (1837–1838)

Allegro vivace

Scherzo: Assai leggiero vivace

Adagio non troppo

Molto allegro con fuoco

The Musicians

The Pacifica Quartet celebrates its eleventh year in the 2005–2006 concert season. Rising to prominence soon after it was founded in 1994, the quartet swept top prizes in three of the most important international chamber music competitions: the 1996 Coleman Chamber Music Competition, the 1997 Concert Artists Guild Competition, and the 1998 Naumburg Chamber Music Competition. In 2002 the Pacifica Quartet was appointed a member of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center’s CMS-Two program for gifted young musicians. For the next two years the quartet participated in the full range of activities at Lincoln Center, including performances in Alice Tully Hall and leading roles in the educational activities of the Chamber Music Society. The ensemble has appeared at numerous chamber music festivals, including the Aspen, Bellingham, Britt, Cape and Islands, Caramoor, and Santa Fe Festivals. Outstanding musicians with whom the Pacifica Quartet has collaborated include Wu Han, Paul Katz, Ursula Oppens, Michael Tree, and the Emerson String Quartet.

Recent seasons have seen an increasing number of invitations for the quartet to play in Europe, with engagements in Germany, Scotland, and Spain. An ardent advocate of contemporary music, the ensemble commissions as many as eight new works each season and recently took on the complete string quartets of Elliott Carter (b. 1908) as a single project. The first performance of the cycle in New York City was hailed by the *New York Times* as one of the ten best classical music events of 2002. The Pacifica Quartet appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Melvin Kaplan, Inc., of Burlington, Vermont.

Program Notes

The works chosen by the Pacifica Quartet for this concert present the transformation of the string quartet from the romantic era to the twentieth century. The early Beethoven quartet with which the concert opens represents one of the first cracks in the shell of the classical era, the Mendelssohn quartet is the epitome of romantic exuberance, and the work by Janáček presents the severe technical demands and daring sonorities that are the hallmark of twentieth-century music.

The quartets of Beethoven's opus 18 are his first venture in the medium. A letter he wrote in 1801 attests that he had "only now learned how to write quartets properly." Ever since he had arrived in Vienna in 1792, his work had been compared with that of his teacher, Joseph Haydn. Even though there is some homage to Haydn in the opus 18 quartets (some scholars maintain that the homage is tongue-in-cheek), it is clear that, with them, Beethoven was serving notice to the audiences in Vienna that he was a composer who did things in his own way.

The *Quartet in G Major*, op. 18, no. 2, is one of many Beethoven works that belie the composer's emotional state at the time they were written. In another letter of 1801, written to the violinist Karl Amenda, the composer says: "Your B[eethoven] is living a most unhappy life, in conflict with nature and its creator. My most precious faculty, my hearing, has deteriorated. I beg you to keep this affair a great secret." In contrast to this message of ominous foreboding, the mood of the quartet is optimistic and uplifting. The opening *Allegro* has an air of stately elegance. The second movement, *Andante con moto*, gives an extended solo to the lead violin. The rhapsodic mood established by this melody is interrupted by a light passage in faster tempo, after which the movement concludes with a variation of the opening material. The *Scherzo*, by its very nature, reinforces the good humor of the entire work, and the mood is intensified by the closing movement, which Beethoven jokingly referred to as "aufgeknöpft" (unbuttoned).

Leoš Janáček was a leading figure in central European music. Like his Czech predecessors Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904) and Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884), he turned to national subjects for program music, songs, and operas. He had a lifelong involvement with Moravian folk music, which he collected, edited, and performed. In 1890 he went so far as to renounce publicly the styles of composition that were associated with Western Europe.

Both of Janáček's two string quartets have as their underlying theme the eternal dilemma of love. As its subtitle ("Intimate Letters") implies, his second quartet refers to something even more specific. He had fallen in love with Kamila Stösslová (1891–1935), a woman who was not only thirty-seven years his junior but also married to another man. Between 1915 and 1928 Janáček wrote more than six hundred letters to Kamila. In one of them, dated February 1, 1928, he confided: "Our life will be in [my new string quartet]. . . . I wrote the first number in Hukvaldy, [where] I saw you for the first time." He refers to the first movement (*Andante; con moto; allegro*), which begins almost tentatively, then dances toward a burst of joy. On February 6, after finishing the second movement, he confessed: "Today I wrote in tones my most tender desire." This lyrical *Adagio* is filled with almost unbearable tenderness. In another letter, dated February 8, he boasted: "Today I succeeded with the number in which the earth trembles. This will be the best one." Here Janáček refers to the third movement (*Moderato; adagio; allegro*), a bittersweet waltz. Finally, on February 9, he reported: "The last one won't finish with fear for my pretty weasel, but with longing." The standard role of a finale is abandoned in this movement (*Allegro; andante; adagio*), which moves from faster to slower tempos as the composer struggles to express emotions beyond the limits of the musical form. Janáček died on August 12, 1928, within a few months of writing the last of his fervid letters. He did not hear the first public performance of this quartet, which took place in September of that year.

Felix Mendelssohn's chamber music shows his gift for precision, elegance, and superb craftsmanship, and it is surprising that it is not heard in concert more often. The years 1837 and 1838 were filled with great personal happiness for the composer, who married Cécile Jeanrenaud (1818–1853) in March 1837 and celebrated the birth of a son ten months later. His music from this period, including the quartets of opus 44, reflects his contented state. The *Quartet in E-flat Major*, op. 44, no. 3, opens with a movement marked *Allegro vivace*, which sets the mood for the entire work. It features thematic contrasts and close interaction among the four instruments. The coda displays Mendelssohn's uncanny knack for producing satisfying string timbres. Famous for delightful scherzos, Mendelssohn does not disappoint with the second movement of the quartet (*Scherzo: Assai leggiro vivace*). Its sylphlike textures lead to a fugato passage, introduced by the viola. The fleeting opening theme returns to create a double fugue, and the scherzo concludes with all four instruments playing in unison. The third movement (*Adagio non troppo*) begins with a fragment that recalls the opening *Allegro vivace*. After highly expressive treatment of this theme, the composer links this movement to the one that is to follow by concluding with a rising arpeggio, which becomes the opening motif of the final movement (*Molto allegro con fuoco*). Its fiery energy and bravura are briefly interrupted by a quiet subsidiary theme, but before long, the joyful exuberance returns to provide a quintessential Mendelssohnian ending.

Program notes by Sorab Modi