CONCERTS AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
Under the Direction of George Manos

FEBRUARY 1997
9  Bradford and Maribeth Gowen, piano, four hands
   Music of Franz Schubert for piano, four hands
16  Fabio Bidini, pianist  Beethoven: Sonata, Opus 101
      Chopin: Scherzo No. 2
      Sonata No. 3
23  Catherine Robbin, mezzo-soprano  Songs by Schubert and Brahms
   Michael McMahon, pianist
   Miles Hoffman, violist

MARCH 1997
2   National Gallery Orchestra  Brahms: Alto Rhapsody
   George Manos, Conductor,  Schubert: Symphony No. 3
   Guest Artist Beverly  Gesang der Geister über den Wassern
   Benso, contralto, and The  Von Weber: Hunters' Chorus
   Washington Men's Camerata  Schubert: Symphony No. 3
9   Beethoven Trio Vienna  Brahms: Piano Trio, Opus 8
   Christiane Karajeva, piano  Gerhard Scheld: Piano Trio
   Markus Wolf, violin  Ravel: Piano Trio
   Howard Penny, cello
16  Corey Cerovsek, violinist  Brahms: Sonata in D Minor
   Katya Cerovsek, pianist  Ravel: Violin Sonata
   Bartok: Rhapsody No. 1

Concerts from the National Gallery are broadcast in their entirety at 7:00 p.m. on Sundays on radio station WGTS, 91.9 FM, four weeks after the live performance. The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed.

For the convenience of concertgoers the Garden Café remains open until 6:30 p.m.
Program

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)  
Overture to “Ruy Blas”  
Opus 95 (1839)

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)  
Symphonic Movement: “Blumine”  
(1884-1888)

César Franck (1822-1890)  
Symphonic Poem: “Redemption”  
Opus 52 (1871-72)

Intermission

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)  
Symphony No. 39 in E-flat Major  
K. 543 (1788)

Adagio; allegro  
Andante con moto  
Menuetto: Allegro  
Finale: Allegro

As were many of his contemporaries, Felix Mendelssohn was stirred and inspired by the intense romanticism of the writings of Victor Hugo. His first reaction to the play, Ruy Blas, however, was negative. Evidently its main character, a lackey-hero in the Spain of Charles II, was a stumbling block for Mendelssohn and others who looked in literature for heroes of exemplary character and accomplishments. Eventually, however, the power of the tragedy overcame Mendelssohn’s initial repulsion, and he accepted a commission to write an overture for a production of Ruy Blas in Berlin. Mendelssohn alludes to the tension and dramatic power of the play right from the start, with the contrast between the three powerful opening chords that dominate the introduction and the lyrical main theme that follows. In keeping with the drama it was intended to introduce, the overall atmosphere of the overture is tragic.

The symphonic movement that carries the name Blumine was originally one of the five movements of Mahler’s First Symphony. The Symphony was subtitled “Titan” and was provided with a programmatic scheme. Later, Mahler was persuaded to delete the Blumine movement and to publish the symphony without the programmatic titles of the remaining four movements. The Blumine movement remained unpublished until 1967, when it was released for publication by the owners of the manuscript, the New Haven (Connecticut) Symphony Orchestra.

César Franck’s large-scale oratorio, Rédemption, is a little-known work today, largely because its length and grandiose scale make its performance in its entirety a difficult and expensive undertaking. The work was well received by late nineteenth-century French audiences and music critics, although not until some years after the composer’s death. The symphonic poem was intended as a prelude to the oratorio. Although it was omitted from the first performance in 1873, it has stood the test of time better than the oratorio as a whole, and is usually performed as an independent work.

1788 was not a good year for Mozart and his family. It was the second year in a row in which he had not received an opera commission, and his debts had piled up to such an extent that he was writing letters to friends, begging them to send more piano students in his direction. He finally received the long-awaited appointment of Court Composer to the Emperor, but at the paltry and almost insulting salary of only 800 Gulden per year. (His predecessor had received 2,000.) In the summer of that year, the Mozarts had to move to less expensive lodgings in the suburbs of Vienna, a humiliating and depressing experience. In spite of all that was going wrong around him, Mozart came up with three magnificent symphonies in 1788. The one on tonight’s program, in E-flat major, is a thoroughly cheerful work, brimming with graceful melodies and good humor.