

accompaniment." Imperfections in construction and style can be expected from a young person's initial attempt at composition. On the other hand, even as a jeweler finds gems among raw stones, the members of the National Gallery Chamber Players String Quartet have found three nearly perfect and polished "gems" from the young Rossini's collection. The outer movements, taken from the first sonata, are lively and charming, while the inner movement, from the second sonata, has a lyrical melody that is hauntingly beautiful. Taken together, the three movements afford a satisfying sample from the great Italian opera composer's youthful precocity.

Bartók was twenty-seven years old when he composed his first major chamber work, the *String Quartet No. 1 in A Minor, Op. 7*. Subsequent generations of performers and musicologists have agreed that it is a masterpiece. The string quartets of Bartók and Beethoven have often been compared and were found to have striking similarities. For example, each quartet represents a particular creative period in the composer's life. Both composers wrote quartets over the entire span of their lives, and the quartets became the vehicle for the composers' deepest and most personal thoughts and feelings, a distillation of their art in its purest terms. The opening movement (*Lento*) of the *A Minor Quartet* begins with a fugue, at the end of which the tempo quickens, connecting it to the second movement, a quasi *scherzo-intermezzo* (*Allegretto*). Although the first and second movements contain touches that mimic Brahms and Wagner, the highly animated third movement (*Introduzione: Allegro vivace*) incorporates vigorous Hungarian dance rhythms and veiled folk songs, Bartók's special gift to the medium.

Like Bartók's *Op. 7, No. 1*, Mendelssohn's *Quartet No. 2 in A Minor, Op. 13*, is his first work in this genre. In the first movement (*Adagio; allegro vivace*), Mendelssohn borrows a three-note motive from the song, *Frage* (*Question*), from his *Twelve Songs, Op. 9*, which forms the kernel of the first theme. A fugal subject is the second theme. A *cavatina*, reminiscent of a theme in Beethoven's *String Quartet, Op. 130*, is employed in the second movement (*Adagio non lento*) with a short *recitativo*. The third movement (*Intermezzo: Allegretto con moto; allegro di molto*) has a refined and elegant melody over a pizzicato accompaniment played by the violins, with a *scherzo* middle section that reminds the listener of Mendelssohn's gift for expressing the entertaining world of the make-believe. The fourth movement (*Presto; adagio non lento*) is markedly majestic. Whereas the flavor of *Frage* is present to some extent in each of the previous movements, this movement utilizes the entire second half of the song, including a lengthy *recitativo*. This material is woven into the framework of the sonata form, bringing the entire work to a splendid conclusion.

Program notes by Elmer Booze

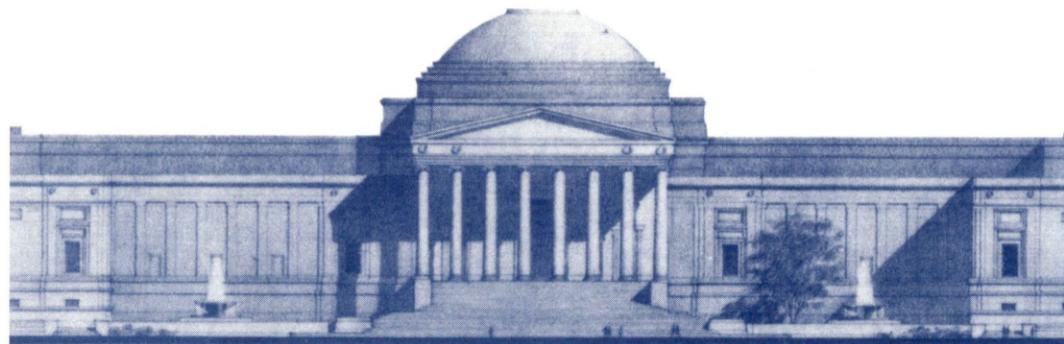
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The Fifty-eighth Season of

THE WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL and
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National Gallery of Art



2353d Concert

NATIONAL GALLERY CHAMBER PLAYERS
STRING QUARTET

GEORGE MANOS, *artistic director*

CLAUDIA CHUDACOFF, *violin* ERIC deWAARDT, *viola*
MARGARET SOPER GUTIERREZ, *violin* DIANA FISH, *cello*

Sunday Evening, 18 June 2000
Seven O'clock
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

