December
22 Cantate Chamber Singers  
Gisele Becker, music director  
Christmas music by Benjamin Britten

29 Luigi Piovano, cellist  
Luisa Prayer, pianist  
Sonatas by Brahms, Schumann, and Saint-Saëns

January
5 National Gallery Orchestra  
Gala Viennese New Year Concert  
George Manos, conductor

12 Gary Graffman, pianist  
Reinicke: Sonata, Op. 179  
Von Sauer: Waldandacht  
Chopin/Godowsky: Etudes  
J. S. Bach/Brahms: Chaconne in D Minor  
Reger: Four Etudes  
Blumenfeld: Etude, Op. 36

19 The Verdehr Trio  
Walter Verdehr, violin  
Elsa Ludwig Verdehr, clarinet  
Sylvia Roederer, piano  
Mozart: Trio, K. 358  
Fanny Mendelssohn: Romance  
Armand Russell: Romance  
Tchaikovsky: Entr'acte from Sleeping Beauty  
Joan Tower: Rainwaves  
Bright Sheng: Reflections, Tibetan Dance

26 Thomas Zehetmair Quartet  
Schumann: String Quartet No. 1  
Cage: String Quartet in Four Parts  
Bartok: String Quartet No. 5

The Sixty-first Season of
THE WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL and  
F. LAMMOT BELIN CONCERTS

National Gallery of Art

2435th Concert

THE NEW ZEALAND STRING QUARTET

HELENE POHL, violin  DOUGLAS BEILMAN, violin  
GILLIAN ANSELL, viola  ROLF GJELSTEN, cello

Sunday Evening, 24 November 2002
Seven O'clock
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free
PROGRAM

Alexander Borodin
(1833–1887)
String Quartet No. 2 in D Major
(1881)
Allegro moderato
Scherzo: Allegro
Notturno: Andante
Finale: Andante; vivace

Zoltán Székely
(1903–2001)
String Quartet
(1937)
Moderato ma non troppo
Presto
Molto moderato
Andante sostenuto
Largamente, quasi cadenza
Presto grazioso, come una danza
Allegro appassionato
Molto vivace, con brio

INTERMISSION

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770–1827)
String Quartet in E Minor
Op. 59, No. 2 (1824)
Allegro
Molto adagio
 Allegretto
Finale: Presto

Musicians

Acclaimed for its powerful communication, dramatic energy, and unique voice, the New Zealand String Quartet has won the hearts of audiences all over the world. With annual tours of North America and Europe and regular visits to Korea, Japan, and Australia, the quartet plays more than seventy-five concerts annually at home and abroad. The New Zealand String Quartet has performed at such renowned North American summer festivals as the Tanglewood, Rutgers Summerfest and Monadnock Music Festival, and at the Mount Gretna, Olympic, and Banff International Festivals. The quartet members, who are dedicated teachers as well as performers, have been artists-in-residence at the Victoria School of Music at the University of Wellington, Canada, since 1991 and are also guest faculty at the Banff Centre in Alberta, Canada. The New Zealand string quartet appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Jonathan Wentworth Associates, Limited, of Mount Vernon, New York, and acknowledges the ongoing support of Montana Wines and Meridian Energy as sponsors of the first violin and viola chairs, respectively. Other sponsors are HSBC Bank, Air New Zealand, the Turnovsky Endowment, the Adam Foundation, and Creative New Zealand. The members of the quartet wear fashions by Blanchet.

Violinist Helene Pohl grew up in Ithaca, New York, and spent her childhood on both sides of the Atlantic, as her parents are of German extraction. Having begun her musical studies at the age of four, she was accepted at age seventeen at the Musikhochschule in Cologne, Germany. She later continued her studies with members of the Cleveland Quartet at the Eastman School of Music and with Josef Gingold at Indiana University. She joined the New Zealand String Quartet as first violinist in February 1994.

A native of Kansas, violinist Douglas Beilman studied with Dorothy Delay and Hyo Kang at the Juilliard School of Music and the New England Conservatory of Music. He continued his studies with Isadore Tinkleman at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where he received the master of music degree. Before joining the New Zealand...
String Quartet in 1989, Beilman was first violinist of the Sierra String Quartet, the first resident quartet at the Chamber Music Center at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. A founding member of the twentieth-century music ensemble CadeNZa, Beilman has participated extensively in premiere performances of New Zealand and international compositions.

Violist Gillian Ansell began the study of violin and piano at an early age in her hometown of Auckland, New Zealand. At age sixteen she made her concerto debut with the Auckland Symphonia (now known as the Auckland Philharmonia). As a recipient of an Associate Board Scholarship to study violin, viola, and piano, she studied at the Royal College of Music in London, where she won several prizes. After working professionally in London for three years, she returned to New Zealand to become a founding member of the New Zealand String Quartet. In 2001 Gillian Ansell became artistic director, with fellow quartet member Helene Pohl, of the Adam New Zealand Festival of Chamber Music.

Born in Victoria, British Columbia, cellist Rolf Gjelsten began his study of the cello at age fifteen under James Hunter and Janos Starker. At age twenty-one he obtained a position with the Berlin Symphony Orchestra, becoming its youngest member. He returned to North America to study with Zara Nelsova, which led to further study with the members of the La Salle, Hungarian, Vermeer, Cleveland, and Emerson String Quartets. Gjelsten continued his studies in 1980 at Rutgers University with the eminent Casals protégé Bernhard Greenhouse receiving the doctor of music degree in cello. Gjelsten joined the New Zealand String Quartet in May 1994 and became a New Zealand citizen in 1997.

Program Notes

The Quartet No. 2 in D Major by Alexander Borodin was not written, as might be expected, by someone who devoted an entire lifetime to perfecting the art of composition. Borodin was a world-renowned scientist, a chemist by profession, and he held various official positions that usurped much of his creative time. In addition, he was not only a composer but also a commissioner, philanthropist, artist, and doctor. It was his musical works, however, that made his name for posterity, despite the fact that they are few in number. They include several vocal compositions, an opera, two symphonies, and two string quartets. Of the two string quartets, the later one is the more popular—Broadway composers borrowed one of its themes for the musical Kismet. The widely recognized theme comes from the third movement of the quartet (Notturno), which is one of the most famous slow movements in the entire realm of chamber music.

One of Hungary’s preeminent violinists, the late Zoltán Székely was a pupil of the celebrated Hungarian violinist Janó Hubay (1858—1937) and a composition student of both Zoltan Kodály (1882—1967) and Béla Bartók (1881—1945) at the Ferenc Liszt Academy in Budapest. In late 1936 Székely entered his String Quartet in the Coolidge competition sponsored by the Library of Congress. The work did not win the Coolidge prize, but Székely took the matter in good spirits, claiming later: “If I had won the competition, I might have chosen to become a composer rather than a violinist.” Although written when the composer was thirty-three, the String Quartet is a mature work and was the last that he undertook. It is in eight short movements and explores many devices that were modern for its time, including polyrhythms.

The three string quartets that comprise Beethoven’s Opus 59 were commissioned by the Russian count Andreas Razumovsky, ambassador to the Royal Court in Vienna in 1806. Beethoven’s models were the paradigmatic string quartets of Haydn. Mozart, following Haydn’s example, raised the level of quartet writing to an even higher plane of perfection, and Beethoven, in his Opus 59, surpassed the achievements of both Haydn and Mozart to an extent that radiated shock waves among the cognoscenti of the musical world. These quartets enlarged upon the prevailing basic principles of chamber music writing: instrumental range, harmonic distribution, stylistic implication, and thematic indulgence or selection, as well as melodic and rhythmic articulation. Author Joseph de Marliave, in his book Beethoven’s Quartets, states: “Beethoven’s...
melodies have practically nothing in common with either the perfectly tuned phrases of Haydn or...Mozart’s perfect balance and symmetry.” The starkness that emanated from Beethoven’s bold adventure would last at least a century. It was the product of Beethoven’s “middle period,” during which he also produced such masterpieces as the “Waldstein” and “Appassionata” Piano Sonatas (Opp. 53 and 57, respectively) and the “Eroica” Symphony, Op. 55.

Each of the quartets of Opus 59 has established and sustained a personal, idiosyncratic voice. In the String Quartet in E Minor, two revelatory chords are interjected before the entrance of the first theme, each apparently designed to gain the listeners’ attention and at the same time announce the chordal nature of the work. After a dynamic pause, the main theme is introduced at the pianissimo level, using an arpeggiated E minor chord followed by a downward progression of a diminished seventh chord in B major that resolves logically to the tonic key of E minor. Following this opening statement, Beethoven introduces forceful drive through dynamic contrast, rhythmic diversity, chromaticism, and judicious placement of rests and silence. The movement is hypercharged with tension and intrigue and heralds the importance of these two elements in the quartet as a whole.

The tempo marking for the second movement (Molto adagio) is enhanced by Beethoven with the statement, Si tratta questo pezzo con molto di sentimento (Treat this piece with much feeling). Deeply expressive and shrouded in a chorale-like delivery, the main subject is poignantly decorated with an exhilarating display of charismatic and luxurious sounds. The third movement (Allegretto) is a scherzo with a trio, whose melody is a touching Russian folk tune that was also used in Mussorgsky’s opera Boris Godunov (in the Coronation Scene in Act I).

The finale (Presto) is set in a modified sonata-rondo form. The theme begins in the key of C major, followed by a second theme in E minor. This movement has been described as one of Beethoven’s great grotesques in the style of Charles Dickens. In place of the customary recapitulation, the developmental tension continues to the very end, prompting Harris Goldsmith to write: “One is left with exhaustion from the orgiastic excitement.” Moreover, in the closing section Beethoven allows no two instruments to play at the same time, leaving an indelible impression in the listener’s memory.

Program notes by Elmer Booze

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

Concerts at the National Gallery of Art
Under the direction of George Manos
December 2002 and January 2003

December 1, 8, and 15: The 60th American Music Festival
Presented in honor of the exhibition Drawing on America’s Past: Folk Art, Modernism, and the Index of American Design

1 Philip Quint, violinist
David Riley, pianist
Foss: Three American Pieces
Gershwin/Heifetz: Excerpts from Porgy and Bess
Corigliano: Sonata (1963)

8 Washington Men’s Camerata
Frank Albinader, music director
Songs for the Holiday Season by Conrad Susa and other American Composers

15 The American Chamber Ensemble
Muczynski: Fantasy Trio
Moore: Quintet for Clarinet and Strings
Schickele: Serenade for Three