

Concerts at the National Gallery of Art

Under the direction of George Manos

Concerts in March and April 2003

March

30 **Ralph Votapek, pianist** Debussy: *Twenty-four Preludes*

April

6 **Louis Lortie, pianist** Schumann: *Frühlingsnacht
Phantasiestücke, Op. 111*
Presented in honor of Liszt: *Transcendental Etudes
the exhibition Frederic Nos. 5 and 6
Remington: *The Color Hungarian Rhapsody No. 9
of Night Carnival de Pest*
Elliott Carter: *Night Fantasies*
Ravel: *Gaspard de la nuit**

13 **Valerie Tryon, pianist** Chopin: *Two Nocturnes*
Presented in honor of Liszt: *Harmonies du soir*
the exhibition Frederic Granados: *The Lover and the
Remington: *The Color Nightingale*
of Night Poulenc: *Three Nocturnes**

20 **No concert**

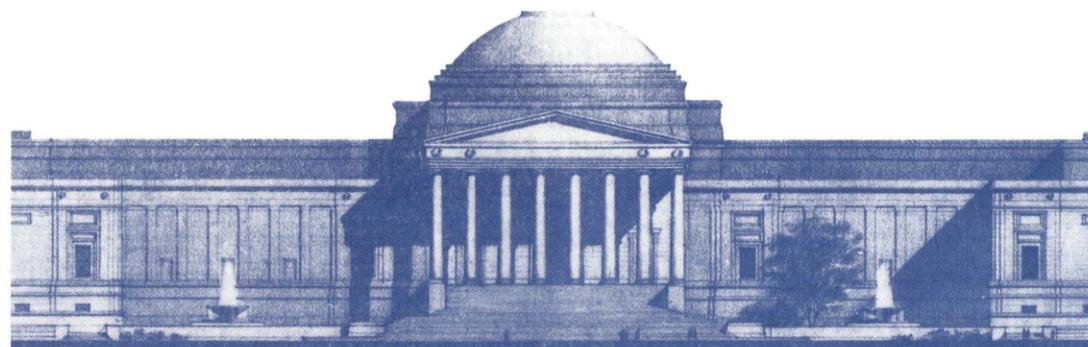
27 **Zuill Bailey, cellist** Mendelssohn: *Variations
j. y. song, pianist concertantes*
Beethoven: *Cello Sonata No. 4*
Crumb: *Sonata for Solo Cello*
Prokofiev: *Sonata, Op. 119*

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

The Sixty-first Season of

THE WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL and
F. LAMMOT BELIN CONCERTS

National Gallery of Art



2452d Concert

LOS ANGELES PIANO QUARTET

MICHI WIANCKO, violin **KATHERINE MURDOCK, viola**
PETER REJTO, cello **XAK BJERKEN, piano**

Sunday Evening, 23 March 2003
Seven O'clock
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

University of Maryland and SUNY at Stony Brook and spends her summers on the artist faculty of the Yellow Barn and Kneise Hall Festivals.

Cellist **Peter Rejto** has appeared throughout the United States and abroad in solo recitals and as a concerto soloist. He recently recorded Gerard Schurmann's *The Gardens of Exile* and Miklos Rozsa's *Cello Concerto* on the Silva Classics label. Rejto is the artistic director of the Tucson Winter Chamber Music Festival. Winner of the 1972 Young Concert Artists International Auditions, he is currently a professor of cello at the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music. His instrument is a Montagnana cello dating from 1721.

Pianist **Xak Bjerken** has given solo and chamber music recitals throughout Europe and the United States and appeared with orchestras in Edinburgh with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and in Rome with the Spoleto Festival Orchestra. A professor of piano at Cornell University, Bjerken has held chamber music residencies at the Tanglewood Music Center and the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy. His first solo recording for CRI, released in 2001, is entitled *High Rise*. He has also recorded for Chandos and Koch International, and has made two recordings with violist Michael Zaretsky for the Artona label.

Program Notes

When first published in 1801, Beethoven's *Quartet in E-flat Major for Piano, Violin, Viola, and Cello, Op. 16*, appeared both as a quintet for piano and winds as well as a quartet for piano and strings. Both versions had the same opus number and were nearly identical, in spite of the different number and capabilities of the instruments. It is believed that the string transcription was intended to make the music more accessible to a wider public, including the many amateur piano and string groups active in Vienna at that time. The opening movement (*Grave; allegro ma non troppo*) begins with a slow, dignified, and rather long introduction in the pompous style of the late seventeenth-century French overtures marked by a dotted eighth- and sixteenth-note rhythm. The subsequent *Allegro* strips away any hints of pretentiousness as the three main

themes, all characterized by a simple, relaxed charm, are introduced one after another. Beethoven underscores the lightness of mood by playfully inserting a false recapitulation in an erroneous key before reintroducing the themes in the proper and expected way. In the same frisky manner, he omits the second part of the first subject near the end of the recapitulation until after a short written-out piano cadenza is played.

The principal theme of the second movement (*Andante cantabile*) is a long-phrased melody that is introduced by the piano and then taken up by the other instruments. After a contrasting episode in the minor mode, the melody returns, slightly embellished with additional counter melodies. This is followed by another minor key interlude, after which the main melody again returns, further ornamented and with an even richer contrapuntal texture. A coda, with scale fragments in contrary motion between the piano and the other instruments, brings the movement to a quiet close.

Usually described as three repetitions of a theme separated by contrasting episodes, the *Rondo* third movement (*Allegro ma non troppo*) can be described as A-B-A-C-A; A is the theme, and B and C are the contrasts. In this movement, however, C is really a development of the A section. When the B section is brought back at the end, the organization comes closer to the sonata form. The writing, typical of Beethoven, is witty and high-spirited throughout.

Born in Orange, New Jersey, in 1952, and raised in Manhattan, composer **Stephen Hartke** was hailed recently by Paul Griffiths in the *New York Times* as one of America's "young lions." Hartke's music reflects the diversity of his musical background, from medieval and Renaissance polyphony, of which he was once an active performer, to a very personal synthesis of diverse elements from nonwestern and western popular music. Since settling in California in the 1980s, Hartke has enjoyed ever wider circulation of his chamber and orchestral compositions. In addition, he has received commissions from such prestigious sources as the National Symphony Orchestra, the Koussevitzky Music Foundation, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, among numerous others. He has received awards from the American Academy in Rome, the American Academy of Arts and

Letters, and the ASCAP Foundation. Much of his music is available on the CRI, ECM New Series, EMI Classics, and New World Records labels. Stephen Hartke is a professor of composition at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

Composed in 1988 on commission from the Los Angeles Piano Quartet with the assistance of a grant from Chamber Music America, *The King of the Sun* has been synopsised by Stephen Hartke as follows: "Its individual movements take their titles from paintings by Joan Miró, being musical reflections both on the titles themselves, as well as on the arrangement of pictorial elements within. My aim has been to create a work that, like Miró's paintings, is whimsical and serious by turn through the presentation of seemingly disparate yet related shapes and gestures. The title [of] the work as a whole is from a different source: a late fourteenth-century canon dubiously ascribed to the Flemish composer Johannes Ciconia. The exact solution to the canon has proved elusive, but one version published in the 1950s, while clearly incorrect, produces such delightfully spiky collisions between its three voices that I decided to use it as raw compositional material in the second and fourth movements, much as Miró used a painting by the Dutch painter Jan Steen as a basis for his *Dutch Interior*."

Composed in 1861 and published in 1863, the *Piano Quartet No. 1 in G Minor, Op. 25* (along with its companion, *Op. 26*) was given its premiere in Hamburg on 16 November 1862, with Brahms' beloved friend Clara Schumann as the pianist. In his book entitled *The Literature of Chamber Music*, Arthur Cohn states that "Beethoven's mantle is over Brahms' shoulder in the proportioned architecture of this work; in its format, the full romantic [mode of expression] is present..." The first movement (*Allegro*) sets the stage for the entire work as a perfect example of contrapuntal writing. Brahms' economical use of masterfully developed thematic material ushers in a torrent of melodic ideas that are both novel and full of ardency. In her book, *The Life of Johannes Brahms*, Florence May observes: "One seems to hear the bounding gladness of the artist-spirit which has attained freedom through submission to law, and revels in its emancipation."

The splendid second movement (*Intermezzo*), with its gentle lullaby motion, typifies Brahms' inimitable style as it acts as a precursor to the unfurling of the glorious third movement (*Andante con moto*). The grand overall conception is built on an expansive sonority that is derived from the opening theme and that glows celestially until the very end of the movement. The last movement (*Rondo alla Zingarese: Presto*) appears to be a race to the finish line and is, according to Cohn, "an exploitation of the Hungarian idiom." Brahms' trusted friend and colleague, the great Austro-Hungarian violinist Joseph Joachim (1831–1907), after examining a copy of the manuscript sent to him, admitted: "In the last movement, you have outstripped me on my own territory by a considerable track." The movement not only generates great excitement but also demands an enormous amount of energy from each player. It is that energy that creates the synergism in this work, the aftermath of which is a state of exaltation for both performers and listeners. As a tribute to what he considered the quartet's divine quality, the distinguished Austrian-born American composer Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951) dubbed it "Brahms' Fifth Symphony" and orchestrated it for a full symphonic ensemble. It proved to be one of his most successful orchestral transcriptions.

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Program notes on *The King of the Sun* by Stephen Hartke,
edited and adapted by Elmer Booze
Program notes on Brahms by Elmer Booze