

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

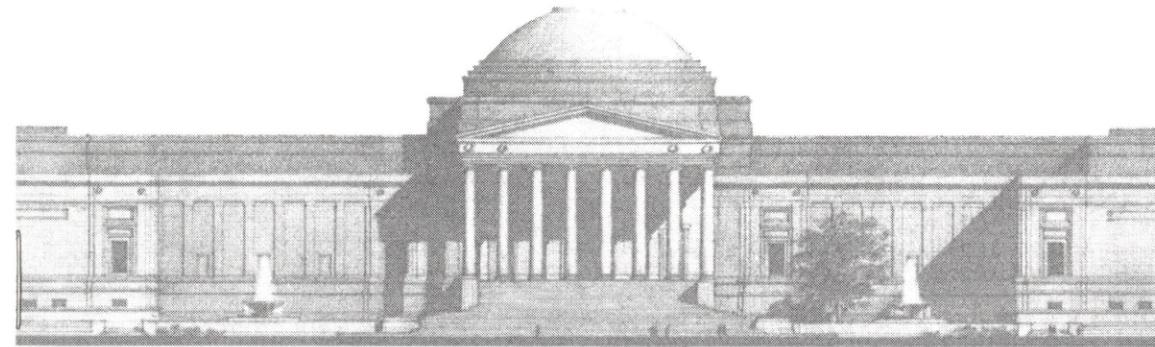
Please note that late entry or reentry of the West Building after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

For the convenience of concertgoers, the Garden Café remains open for light refreshments until 6:00 pm on Sundays.

Music Department
National Gallery of Art
Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC

www.nga.gov

Concerts are made possible in part through the generosity of donors to the National Gallery of Art through The Circle. Reserved seating is available in recognition of their support. Please contact the development office at (202) 842-6450 or circle@nga.gov for more information.



The Seventy-first Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,946th Concert

Members of the Vlach Quartet Prague
with
Helena Suchárová-Weiser, pianist

Presented in collaboration with the
Delegation of the European Union to the United States

May 12, 2013
Sunday, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Music by Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)

Piano Quartet no. 1 in D Major, op. 23 (1875)

Allegro moderato

Andantino con variazioni

Finale: Allegretto scherzando

INTERMISSION

Piano Quartet no. 2 in E-flat Major, op. 87 (1889)

Allegro con fuoco

Lento

Allegro moderato, grazioso

Finale: Allegro ma non troppo

This concert is made possible in part by the Embassy of the Czech Republic.

The Musicians

VLACH QUARTET PRAGUE

In 1982 the Czech violinist Jana Vlachová founded the Vlach Quartet Prague, more than thirty years after her father, violinist, conductor and teacher Josef Vlach, established the original Vlach Quartet with musicians from the Czech Chamber Orchestra. Known initially as the New Vlach Quartet, the ensemble soon established an individual tone and sound, enabling it to expand beyond the Czech romantic repertoire it had inherited. In addition to successful appearances in Denmark, Germany, Greece, Luxembourg, and Sweden, the Vlach Quartet Prague has toured Japan, New Zealand, and the United States. Its debut concert in Japan was broadcast by NHK, the country's largest television station, and in 1997 the ensemble was the quartet-in-residence at Gifu University. *The Strad* magazine praised their 2004 New York City debut as one of the "musical highlights" of the season.

For tonight's concert, first violinist Jana Vlachová, violist Karel Stadtherr, and cellist Mikael Ericsson form a piano quartet with Helena Suchárová-Weiser. A native of Brno, Czech Republic, she studied piano at the Conservatory of Music and the Music Academy in Prague before continuing her studies at Roosevelt University in Chicago.

In 1995 the Vlach Quartet Prague began a long-term project with Naxos to record the complete chamber music of Antonín Dvořák. Their recording of *Esquisses Hébraïques: Clarinet Quintets on Jewish Themes* with clarinetist Dieter Klöcker received the Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik in 2000. In addition to Klöcker and pianist Suchárová-Weiser, the quartet collaborates with cellist Maria Kliegel, clarinetist Eduard Brunner, guitarist Maximilian Mangold, and pianists Jenö Jandó and Ivan Klánský. Its master classes have inspired students at universities in Gothenburg and Inggesund, Sweden, as well as high schools in Japan and the United States. In 2009 the quartet was invited by the Royal Palace in Madrid to play a concert on the palace's famous collection of Stradivari instruments.

Program Notes

Tonight's concert continues a series generated by the Delegation of the European Union to the United States in collaboration with the National Gallery of Art and the Katzen Arts Center at American University, the Kennedy Center, and the Phillips Collection. Dubbing the month of May as "The European Month of Culture," the Delegation is presenting twenty-nine concerts in the above-mentioned venues that represent all twenty-seven countries in the European Union. Focusing on the music of Antonín Dvořák, this evening's concert represents the Czech Republic. The next concert in the series to take place at the Gallery will feature performers and music from Finland. On May 22, at 12:10 pm, soprano Meri Siirala and pianist Marja Kaisla will perform music by Saariaho, Sibelius, and other Finnish composers.

Dvořák composed his first piano quartet in 1875, when he was thirty-four. In spite of a great deal of hard work, he was still a few years away from his international "breakthrough" with the *Slavonic Dances*. Nevertheless, within the first few measures of the quartet, Dvořák's distinctive musical personality emerges. Along with his gift for lyricism and color, this early quartet demonstrates his ability to evoke the Slavonic national character in music. The initial themes of the first movement suggest the folk-like modal simplicity that some associate with his "American" phase, which occurred nearly two decades later. If one looks for any particularly youthful trait in this quartet, it might be sheer, undaunted ambition: even though it has only three movements, the quartet is grand in scale, prompting some musicologists to place Dvořák in the same category with Franz Schubert, as composers who delighted in going to "heavenly lengths."

The opening movement, in expanded sonata form, has a wealth of themes that range from brief motifs to melodies that surge with stormy romantic bravado. Due to the overall integration of voices and strong independence of individual string parts, the quartet works as a unified whole, rather than a division between piano and strings, which characterized the work of some earlier composers.

The central movement is a theme and variations in minor key that establishes a somber and melancholy mood. Variety is provided by a progressively growing sense of rhythmic lilt, a heartwarming bloom into a major key, and, toward the end, a darkening, cooling effect that leads to a coda that bears only an oblique relation to what came before it.

The Finale, marked *allegretto scherzando*, appears at first to be a rather conventional rondo in a moderate *allegretto* triple meter with a light, easy-going theme. Emphasizing the word *scherzando* (playfully) in his movement title, Dvořák places quasi-humorous strong offbeat accents, rhythmic displacements, and disintegrations that summon the flavor of vigorous eastern European folk dances and rustic, virile humor, such as is found in Beethoven's music. A deft use of rapid scale passages and Dvořák's uncanny gift for varying textures and tone colors add yet additional layers to this cornucopia of music, which leaves the listener almost reeling.

Composed fourteen years later, the *Piano Quartet no. 2 in E-flat Major*, op. 87, reveals a more mature Dvořák. The introduction to the first movement is a powerful statement by the unison strings, and the movement continues with considerable division between the strings and the piano, almost as if the composer is recalling the approach to chamber music with piano that typified the early classical period. After positing a second theme in G minor (as opposed to the traditional dominant key for a second theme), Dvořák carries the listener through a development and a recapitulation. These are replete with unison passages that push the instruments into an almost severe outpouring of tone.

The second movement, marked *Lento*, is one of Dvořák's most purely lyrical, with a sequence of five themes, each presenting a shift in mood. Choosing an unusual key relationship for this movement, Dvořák opts for G-flat major, a key that has six flats and is not particularly comfortable for string instruments. The cello takes the lead in this movement, which is at times pensive and at other times as dramatic.

In the third movement, a graceful waltz in the strings is contrasted with a melody in G minor. Introduced by the piano, its frequent use of the augmented second gives it a Middle Eastern flavor. Opening, as did the first movement, with a dramatic passage in unison, the Finale features a dense texture, providing a rich dessert for a very satisfying musical meal.

Notes on Piano Quartet no. 1 by Danielle DeSwert Hahn, music program specialist, National Gallery of Art; notes on Piano Quartet no. 2 by Stephen Ackert, head, music department

Upcoming Concerts at the National Gallery of Art

Robert Berkman, pianolist

Music from ballets performed by
the Ballets Russes

Presented in honor of *Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes, 1909–1929:*
When Art Danced with Music

Sponsored in part by the
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May 15, 2013
Wednesday, 12:10 pm
East Building Mezzanine



Alexandria Symphony Orchestra
Kim Allen Kluge, music director
with Bowen McCauley Dance

Music by Rimsky-Korsakov
and Stravinsky

Presented in honor of *Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes, 1909–1929:*
When Art Danced with Music

Sponsored in part by the
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May 19, 2013
Sunday, 6:30 pm
East Building Atrium