

Next Week at the National Gallery of Art

Chris Brubeck's Triple Play

Jazz, blues, and folk music for the holidays

December 23, 2007

Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm

West Building, West Garden Court

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.

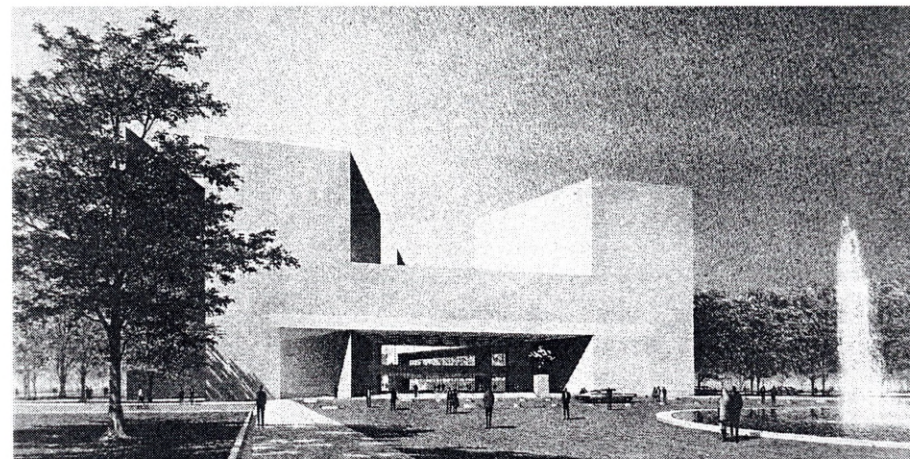
Please note that late entry or reentry of the East Building after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

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National Gallery of Art
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Washington, DC

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www.nga.gov

COVER: Paul Stevenson Oles, 1971, National Gallery of Art Archives



The Sixty-sixth Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lamot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,650th Concert

Leipzig String Quartet
Andreas Seidel and Tilman Büning, *violin*
Ivo Bauer, *viola*
Matthias Moosdorf, *cello*

December 16, 2007
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
East Building Auditorium

Admission free

Program

Music by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

String Quartet in B-flat Major, op. 18, no. 6 (1798–1800)

Allegro con brio

Adagio ma non troppo

Scherzo: Allegro; Trio

La malincolia: Adagio; allegretto quasi allegro

String Quartet in F Minor, op. 95 (“Serioso”) (1810)

Allegro con brio

Allegretto, ma non troppo

Allegro assai vivace, ma serio

Larghetto espressivo; allegretto agitato

INTERMISSION

String Quartet in A Minor, op. 132 (“Heiliger Dankgesang”) (1825)

Assai sostenuto; allegro

Allegro ma non tanto

Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen, in der Lydischen Tonart

Alla Marcia, assai vivace

Allegro appassionato

This concert is made possible in part by funds provided by the Embassy Series and is presented in cooperation with the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The Musicians

Formed in 1988, the Leipzig String Quartet is widely acclaimed as one of the most exciting string quartets on the international chamber music scene. Its availability at this time in Washington provides an ideal opportunity for the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Embassy Series, and the National Gallery of Art to join in celebrating the birthday of Ludwig van Beethoven (born December 16, 1770). The ensemble has been described as “one of the towering and most versatile quartets of our time” (*Neue Zuercher Zeitung*), and a *New York Times* critic wrote, “if there is a Leipzig sound, this is it!” Three members of the Leipzig String Quartet occupied first chairs in the famous Gewandhaus Orchestra. Among prizes awarded to the group are the 1991 International Competition of ARD Munich (Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik) and the Busch and Siemens prizes.

The quartet has concertized throughout Africa, Australia, Central and South America, Europe, Israel, Japan, and Southeast Asia. North American engagements include a recent appearance with pianist Christian Zimmermann at Lincoln Center’s Alice Tully Hall, Carnegie Hall’s quartet series in Weill Recital Hall, the 92nd Street Y, The Frick Collection, the Library of Congress, and Wolf Trap as well as engagements at the Casals Festival in San Juan, Puerto Rico, the Orford and Toronto Summer Music Festivals, and the Ottawa Chamber Music Festival. The quartet was one of the initiators of the 1996 and 1997 Beethoven Quartet Cycles, offered jointly with five other quartets in more than fifteen European music centers as a sign of European friendship.

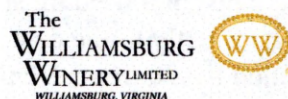
The quartet’s more than sixty recordings include a broad repertoire that stretches from Mozart to Cage and have garnered international critical acclaim and awards. The Leipzig String Quartet records exclusively for MDG (Musikproduktion Dabringhaus und Grimm) and appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Shupp Artists Management of Port Jefferson, New York.

precede it with a large sonata form. The opening *Allegro* is craggy and even belligerent in tone, based on several terse ideas which include a slow-moving motive in melodic half-steps, a melancholic violin line. The second movement, *Allegro ma non troppo*, is a long *Scherzo* in the key of A major, developed almost entirely from an initial violin motive, and paired with a central trio whose flowing themes feature frequent rhythmic displacements. The pivotal middle movement, *Heiliger Danksagung*, uses the Lydian mode to create an antique religious flavor. The theme is treated as a chorale prelude, with each phrase preceded by a brief introduction, followed by two variations with increasingly elaborate counterpoint. An atmosphere of timeless piety is unmistakable. What follows seems almost incongruous, an *Alla marcia* that seems blatantly out of place following the exalted realms of the *Adagio*. Soon the *Finale* itself appears, based on a theme that had originally been intended for the Ninth Symphony, but which was replaced by the famous choral ending. Here it becomes the subject for a vast sonata-rondo that proclaims victory in its closing pages. For the noted French music critic Romain Rolland this quartet was “the work that is the most difficult, perhaps the most profound of all Beethoven’s works.”

Program notes by Louis J. Reith, Georgetown University Library

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We are also indebted to The National Gallery of Art and Mr. Stephen Ackert, Head of the Music Department, and to The Ambassador of The Federal Republic of Germany and Mrs. Scharioth for their kind cooperation.



CONCERTS IN EMBASSIES AND AMBASSADORS' RESIDENCES- WWW.EMBASSYSERIES.ORG

Program Notes – Music by Ludwig van Beethoven (December 16, 1770 – March 26, 1827)

Beethoven composed sixteen highly acclaimed string quartets. These quartets can be divided into three more or less distinct periods of the composer’s life between the years 1798 and 1825. Each of the three quartets comprising this program comes from a different stage in the composer’s musical development, hence each sings with its own unique voice.

The *String Quartet in B-flat Major, op. 18, no. 6*, was composed sometime between 1798 and 1800 and was published in 1801 as the last of a cycle of six quartets. These early efforts, which owe much to the inspiration of Haydn and Mozart, were inspired in part by Carl Amenda (1771-1836), a theological student from Latvia who was also a gifted violinist. He came to Vienna in 1798 and found posts as a music teacher in the house of Mozart’s widow, and also as tutor to the children of Prince Joseph von Lobkowitz (1772-1816), a scion of the Bohemian nobility who became one of Beethoven’s great patrons and a celebrated lover of music in his own right. Already in 1798 Beethoven promised Lobkowitz his first set of string quartets. When Amenda had to return to Latvia in June 1799 for family reasons, Beethoven presented him with the first set of the Lobkowitz quartets as “a small memorial of our friendship.” The B-flat quartet is the last of the set, but in many ways it is the most forward looking of the group. The first movement, an *Allegro con brio*, opens with a conversation between the first violin and the cello. As Geraint Lewis has observed: “Haydn nevertheless remains a ubiquitous and creative presence.” The theme of the second movement, *Adagio ma non troppo*, likewise bears the imprint of Haydn. But the extraordinary *Scherzo* takes us into uncharted waters of rhythmic ambiguity and

cross-accents. It is followed by the highlight of the quartet, a *Finale* which opens softly with the composer's instruction: "This piece is to be played with the greatest delicacy." He styled the movement *La Malinconia*, and, according to Geraint Lewis: "It is full of disturbing jabs and rumblings and clearly has some programmatic or autobiographical significance," though a connection to the composer's growing deafness may be too facile. Perhaps the intended effect is intentionally ironic, for soon we are either back in a Viennese ballroom or part of a German country dance. Lewis concludes that Beethoven's imitation of Haydn "while sincere enough is also a symptom of his deep desire to stretch his claws and jump decisively into the nineteenth-century."

The *String Quartet in F Minor, op. 95 ("Serioso")* is one of the shortest and most compact of all the Beethoven quartets. The autograph manuscript for this quartet is marked October 1810, fully a decade later than the first quartet on this program. It is more likely that he finished it around 1811, premiered it in 1814 and published it in 1816. In defense of this late publication date, Beethoven alleged that "it is written for a small circle of connoisseurs and is never to be performed in public." A historical survey of the year 1810 may help to put the piece in context. Napoleon had invaded Vienna earlier that year, and this upset Beethoven greatly. All of his aristocratic friends had fled Vienna, but Beethoven stayed and then complained about the loud artillery volleys which occurred. The quartet is dedicated to a Slovak civil servant, Nikolaus Zmeskall von Domanovecz (1759-1833), an excellent cellist who took part in Prince Lichnowsky's chamber music concerts, where Beethoven's works were frequently on the program.

The opening *Allegro con brio* presents a terse motto, played by the four instruments in unison, which sets the tone for the entire work. A persistent turbulent undercurrent can be felt beneath the lyrical surface of the movement. According to Harry Haskell: "In music, as in life, Beethoven struggled to find a balance between heroic affirmation and near-suicidal depression." A descending cello scale introduces a song of touching beauty, marked *Allegretto, ma non troppo*. But instead of a tranquil close, we return to a bracing *Allegro assai vivace, ma serioso* (quite lively, but serious), whose rugged chords seem to have been

hewn out of stone. The *Finale* opens quietly but soon moves into an *Allegretto agitato* that runs the gamut from wistful tenderness to fierce, almost savage despair. A breathless *Coda* (which has frustrated countless music critics) brings the quartet to an unexpectedly upbeat conclusion.

The *String Quartet in A Minor, op. 132 ("Heiliger Danksagung")* was the second of a pair commissioned by Prince Nikolai Galitzin (1794-1866), a Russian nobleman whose relative was Russian ambassador to the Viennese court from 1762 to 1792. In November 1822 the prince commissioned Beethoven to write "one, two, or three new quartets, for which labor I will be glad to pay you whatever amount you think proper." As a competent cellist, he delighted in playing Beethoven's string music. Beethoven accepted immediately and set the fee of 50 ducats for each quartet. "I am really impatient to have a new quartet of yours," the prince wrote, "nevertheless, I beg you not to mind and to be guided in this only by your inspiration and the disposition of your mind." The first (Op. 127), promised for the end of March 1823, was not completed until February 1825. The A Minor quartet was finished five months later and was given its public première on 6 November 1825. Composing this quartet was a painful physical experience for Beethoven, who complained to Dr. Anton Braunhofer on 18 April 1825: "I am not feeling well. I hope that you will not refuse to come to my help, for I am in great pain." The good doctor, alarmed by Beethoven's condition, prescribed: "No wine, no coffee; no spices of any kind." He also advocated recuperation in the country with plenty of "fresh air" and "natural milk." By 7 May, Beethoven had recovered sufficiently to move to Baden, on the edge of the Vienna Woods, where he composed most of this quartet. The illness and recovery apply directly to the centerpiece of the work, a magnificent *Adagio* entitled the *Heiliger Danksagung*, or, *Sacred Song of Thanks from One Made Well to the Divine, in the Lydian Mode*. Maynard Solomon observes that "music here appears to have become an implicit agency of healing, a talisman against death."

To support a slow movement of such magnitude requires surrounding music of worthy proportions, and Beethoven chose to