



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

National Gallery of Art
2,654th Concert

Vilnius String Quartet

Audronė Vainiūaitė and Artūras Šilalė, *violinists*

Girdutis Jakaitis, *violist*

Augustinas Vasiliauskas, *cellist*

January 13, 2008
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

String Quartet in D Major, op. 18, no. 3

Allegro

Andante con moto

Allegro

Presto

Onute Narbutaite (b. 1956)

String Quartet no. 2: Atverk uzmarsties vartus

(Open the Gates of Forgetfulness)

INTERMISSION

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

String Quartet in A Minor, op. 51, no. 2

Allegro non troppo

Andante moderato

Quasi minuetto, moderato—Allegretto vivace

Allegro non assai

The Musicians

The Vilnius String Quartet made its debut in 1965 and, three years later, began to concertize intensively when the members of the quartet finished their post-graduate studies under Professor Gvozdetzky at the Moscow Conservatory. They received further training in Budapest under Professor Andras Mihaly. In 1972 the quartet won the highest award at the international competition of string quartets in Liege, Belgium.

The Vilnius Quartet has toured in fifty countries and each year gives approximately eighty concerts in Lithuania and abroad. It has represented the musical culture of Lithuania at international festivals, such as the Bregenz (Austria), Burlingster (Luxembourg), Cervantes (Mexico), December Evenings (Moscow), Musica Viva (Germany), West-East (France), and West Cork (Ireland) festivals. The quartet has performed in renowned music halls worldwide, including the Bayerischer Rundfunk in Munich, the Beethoven Haus in Bonn, the Glenn Gould Studio in Toronto, Merkin Concert Hall and Weill Recital Hall in New York City, and the Mozarteum in Salzburg. Its wide repertoire of 450 works contains more than 150 quartets by contemporary composers, about 100 of whom are Lithuanian. To date, fifty Lithuanian composers have dedicated works to the Vilnius Quartet. Its deep comprehension of music of diverse epochs enables the ensemble to employ a wide range of musical expression in interpreting Beethoven, Brahms, Cage, Haydn, Schnittke, Schönberg, or Schulhoff.

First violinist Audronė Vainiūaitė is the daughter of the famous Lithuanian composer Stasys Vainiūnas. She studied at the state conservatories of music of Vilnius and Moscow, where her teacher was David Oistrakh. A member of the Vilnius Quartet since 1965, she has been awarded the Order of Grand Duke Gediminas, fourth class.

Second violinist Artūras Šilalė studied at the Lithuanian Music Academy under Professor J. Urba. He has played with the Vilnius String Quartet since 1999.

Violist Girdutis Jakaitis studied at the Lithuanian Music Academy and in Salzburg. He joined the quartet in 1996.

Cellist Augustinas Vasiliauskas studied at the state conservatories of Vilnius and Moscow. A member of the quartet since 1970, he has received the Order of Grand Duke Gediminas, fifth class. He is a professor at the Lithuanian Music Academy.

Program Notes

Despite the opus number assigned by Beethoven's publisher, the *String Quartet in D Major*, op. 18, no. 3, is his first completed work in this genre. It bears a strong resemblance to the late quartets of Haydn, which were written during the same period (1795–1800), but Beethoven's work is distinguished by a more democratic distribution of important themes and motives among the four instruments. The most innovative movement is the last (*Presto*), which scampers along in a breathtaking jig and ends with a puckish grimace.

The imagery of Onute Narbutaitė's *String Quartet no. 2: Atverk uzmarsties vartus* (Open the Gates of Forgetfulness) is both tragic and lyric. The quartet is a single movement marked by a minimal use of resources. The transparent polyphonic texture renders each detail clearly. Individual sections of the quartet are separate domains of sound that reflect one another and intertwine only at transitional moments. The course of development of the quartet is based upon the juxtaposition of passive and active elements. Serene melancholy is dominant in the first section—the sound is muffled while new rhythmic pulsations of repeated seconds and thirds seem to strike new poetic associations. The unreal, dreamy, and subconscious moods of the first section are overcome by the active element of the second, as diverse rhythmic patterns are achieved by the movement of sixteenth notes. Gradually rising to a higher register, the music moves to a climax that, in fact, brings no resolution. It is rather a kind of question mark, which is followed not by an answer but by a micro-reprise of the first section, a reminder only of the initial melancholy.

Brahms composed the two string quartets in his opus 51 as a contrasting pair. *Opus 51, no. 1*, is gloomy and moody, but far from boring, due to its bold and elaborate format. The quartet on this program, *Opus 51, no. 2*, is imbued with the pale warmth of Indian summer and serves as a relaxing foil to the first quartet when both are heard in sequence. The first movement is drenched with thirds and sixths in the manner of the great opera composers Bellini and Rossini, giving it vocality and sweetness at the same time. The slow movement (*Andante moderato*) features deleting downbeats within a melodic line to give it

insistence and forward thrust. This movement has, uncharacteristically for Brahms, only one theme. The third movement (*Quasi minuetto, moderato—Allegretto vivace*) shows Brahms in an experimental mood. The lean and bare perfect fifths, the unexpected double interruption of the *Vivace* passage, and the absence of a recognizable trio in what is supposed to be the minuet movement, leave the listener who thought he knew Brahms scratching his head. The final movement (*Allegro non assai*) is marked by syncopations, cross accents, and other rhythmic surprises. These are used to supreme effect by the master composer to add interest and energy to the music through to its conclusion.

Notes on Beethoven and Brahms by Stephen Ackert

Notes on Narbutaite by Rūta Gaidamavičiūtė

Next Week at the National Gallery

Jeni Slotchiver, *pianist*

Music with North and South American origins by
Busoni, Gottschalk, Guarnieri, Guastavino,
Mignone, Viana, and Villa-Lobos

January 20, 2008
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

For the convenience of concertgoers
the Garden Café remains open until 6:00 pm.

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.

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