

# FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

## **Pacifica Quartet**

Simin Ganatra, violin  
Sibbi Bernhardsson, violin  
Masumi Per Rostad, viola  
Brandon Vamos, cello

2:30 PM, February 9, 2003

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

In cooperation with the Conservatory of Music  
University of Pacific  
Stockton, California



### **Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 12**

Adagio non troppo; Allegro non tardante  
Canzonetta: Allegretto  
Andante espressivo  
Molto allegro e vivace

### **Felix Mendelssohn**

(1809-1847)

### **Quartet No. 5 (1995)**

### **Elliott Carter**

(b. 1908)

*—Intermission—*

### **Quartet in a Minor, Op. 132**

Assai sostenuto; Allegro  
Allegro ma non tanto  
Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit,  
in der lydischen tonart: Molto adagio; Neue Kraft  
führend: Andante  
Alla marcia, assai vivace  
Allegro appassionato

### **Ludwig van Beethoven**

(1770-1827)



## Pacifica Quartet

One of today's most dynamic and exciting string quartets, the Pacifica Quartet formed in 1994 and burst onto the chamber music scene when it captured three of the nation's most important awards: Grand Prize at the 1996 Coleman Chamber Music Competition, top prize at the 1997 Concert Artists Guild Competition, and the 1998 Naumburg Chamber Music Award.

Enjoying an active international touring schedule, the Pacifica has played Australia, Greece and Panama, and coast-to-coast from Los Angeles and San Francisco to Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall. The quartet is regularly featured on NPRs Performance Today. Festival appearances include Aspen, Bellingham, Vermont Mozart and Santa Fe Chamber Music. They have recently been named the next Quartet in Residence for Lincoln Chamber Music Society II. The quartet currently serves as faculty and Quartet in Residence at both Northwestern University and the University of Chicago, the first in that institution's history.

Cited as "having a knack for the new" and "poised to take over from the likes of the Kronos", the Pacifica is a leading advocate of contemporary music. Eight new string quartets were written for the Pacifica in the 2001-02 season.

## Program Notes

### *Mendelssohn—Quartet in E-flat*

"People often complain that music is too ambiguous; that what they should think when they hear it is so unclear, whereas everyone understands words. With me, it is exactly to opposite and not only with regard to an entire speech but also with individual words. These too seem to me so ambiguous, so vague so easily misunderstood in comparison to genuine music which fills the soul with a thousand things better than words." Perhaps this self-evaluation by Mendelssohn throws some understanding on the ease with which he assimilated Baroque and Classical techniques with such perfection at an early age. Yet, he was a linguist, a

friend of Goethe, and attended the lectures of Hegel. He excelled in other accomplishments as well: that of pianist, conductor, organizer of musical events, and educator, activities of his public career that taxed his strength and shortened his life.

As a composer, he saw as his mission to preserve the Classical forms with their serene and elegant expressions. Romantic traits—passion, tenderness and melancholy—also characterize his works. The young Mendelssohn was deeply influenced by Beethoven's most advanced works and correspondences are found in Mendelssohn's early works. Especially remarkable are those in his two mature quartets, with Opus 12 composed in 1829, two years after Beethoven's death and Opus 13 (1827). The influence does not extend to characteristics of the spiritual depth of Beethoven's last quartets, for Mendelssohn maintained their character on a level of civilized discourse. He patterned Op. 12 after Beethoven's "Harp" quartet, but it has similarities to Op. 132 of Beethoven. The adagio introduction recalls Beethoven's adagio introduction; two motifs are stated in the first four measures. This motto reoccurs in this movement and again in the third. A cantabile melody begins loudly but drops off and is followed by another richly melodious theme whose contour descends, as did the volume of the first. The melodies throughout the movement are broad and passionate with a tender and poetic beauty.

The second movement is a *canzonetta* (16<sup>th</sup> century dance song). It is often played as a separate piece or an encore. The A-section has a folksy charm produced by the pizzicato and staccato effects, in contrast to a scherzo B-section in which rapid violins underpinned by held notes in the lower strings are reminiscent of the Scherzo in *Midsummer Night's Dream* with its low woodwind drones. The A-section returns, abridged, and concludes with a few measures of elfin-like humor.

The opening motto from the first movement leads into the *Andante espressivo* followed by a theme suggest-

ing the nobility of a thanksgiving hymn. The violin, marked by Mendelssohn *con fuoco* (with fire), offers a brief improvisatory recitative. He elaborates the whole, and the motto from the first movement appears more prominently.

The *Andante* leads directly into a high-spirited *Finale*, a wild Taran-tella. After a held note in the middle of the movement, the mood grows more serious as the second violin plays its melody from the first movement but the animation returns in a recapitulation. The main theme of the first movement is heard, and after a coda of other references to the first movement themes, softly dies away.

### *Carter—Quartet No. 5*

Carter's quartets written between 1950 and 1996 form a kind of spinal column for his works, and like Beethoven's, a kind of spiritual autobiography. The Fifth Quartet came as a surprise at its premiere for it views his materials from a new vantage point, surrounding them with a contemplative silence; the work served to redefine the medium.

Among contemporary composers, Carter is widely admired by musicians, for though his work does not win easy popularity, it contains profundity of thought and maturity of workmanship. It took Carter years to find his authentic voice. As a youth he was inspired by Charles Ives who took him to concerts, interpreted the works heard as well as his own. Ives sought an original technique to express his musical American vernacular. At Harvard, Carter did not develop his compositional techniques as he found the school hopelessly conservative, and Piston encouraged him to study with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, where most American composers flocked. There he was exposed to the modernist school of Europe—Stravinsky, Bartók, Schoenberg and Berg. It remained for him to find his own voice and this he did in the manner of

Henry James, who among others had to stride the Atlantic culturally. Like James, he chose to create an art of ideas and perception. He was not to portray the American scene, as did Copland and Bernstein, but presented the workings of a mind engaged in the possibilities and perplexities of American life. The instruments are often given different music, tempos and dynamics, in constant change and argument, yet the music must reach across the gap, a musical ocean.

Commissioned for the Arditti Quartet, the Fifth Quartet marks the beginning of Carter's late style. He explained its novel form: "One of the fascinations of attending rehearsals of chamber music, when excellent players try out fragments of what they later will play in the ensemble then play it and then stop abruptly to discuss how to improve it, is that this pattern is so similar to our inner experience of forming, ordering, focusing and bringing to fruition our feelings and ideas. These patterns of human behavior form the basis of the fifth string quartet."

There are six movements in three pairs, each movement separated by an interlude, giving the impression that the music is a collection of Bagatelles. The quartet consists of two fast movements (*Giocoso, Allegro energico*), two slow (*Lento espressivo, Adagio sereno*), and two scherzos (*Presto scorrevole, Capriccioso*). They are heard in the sequence *Giocoso, Lento espressivo, Presto scorrevole, Allegro energico, Adagio sereno, Capriccioso*. The paired movements are contrasted in mood and tone color. The first violin dominates the lighthearted *Giocoso* while the other strings play pizzicato. The more violent *Allegro energico* centers on the viola. The *Lento espressivo* is a chorale with an adagio section played entirely in harmonics. While the *Presto* is a rapid legato, the *Capriccioso* is pizzicato.

The interludes vary in length and are rather shapeless so as to vary the focus of the movements and to "deconstruct" them. Here Carter has created two worlds with a mental ocean between.

### **Beethoven—Quartet in a, Op. 132**

Who would have predicted that the last years of Beethoven's life would have been devoted to a single medium—that of the string quartet, his supreme achievements in the genre. Beethoven's quartets, the form closest to his heart in chamber music, spanned his life as a kind of autobiography. In his growing isolation, Beethoven's gaze became more and more focused within and his last music encompassed depths of power and expressiveness not known before. His last quartets were commissioned by Prince Nikolai Golitsin, a cellist and music lover of St. Petersburg, and were already sold to the publisher before he could compose them. The demands of the Ninth Symphony and *Missa Solemnis* occupied him. He completed Opus 132 by 1825, two years after it had been promised.

Beethoven's treatment of themes was being changed by a fresh concept of musical unity, seen more as an evolution from within than a conciliation of contrasting forces. He became preoccupied with contrapuntal forms in his late years, and his later works included impressive fugal sections. He used it as a means of flattening out the Classical dramatic force of the tonic-dominant relationship. Other preoccupations showed a retrospective current, and an archaizing urge as he began to study Gregorian chant and ancient modalities. Whereas in the 1800s, he had spoken of Cherubini, now his interest was settled on Palestrina and Bach. However, he used them for his own fresh purposes, molding fugue, variation, and lyricism so that they were embedded in sonata style.

The *sostenuto* opening with its mysterious solemnity uses contrapuntal devices with a motif appearing at the outset in the cello both right-side up and up-side down. The *Allegro* theme is conceived of as a counterpoint to the *Assai sostenuto* and he reinterprets the materials through the movement.

The second movement, *Allegro ma non tanto*, is planned as a dance in Menuetto rhythm. All the players play an idea to be used in counterpoint by two violins. In contrast to this weight is the trio of rustic charm with high-pitched folk like tunes over bagpipe drones. A sober return to the first part follows.

The following movement is one of the most extraordinary in all Beethoven's works illustrating his command of musical expression and a forward looking use of antiquarianism. While composing, Beethoven had suffered a serious illness and he titled the movement "*Holy Song of Thanksgiving to the Divinity by a Convalescent, in the Lydian mode*". Beethoven simply saw the Lydian mode as the scale of F major without a B-flat. The hymn consists of five lines of solemn chordal music; each line is preceded by a faster contrapuntal prelude. The hymn reappears three times alternating with a faster section in D major titled "*Feeling New Strength*", music that is elaborately ornamented. The last return of the hymn marked "With the most intimate feeling" leads to a rich and austere climax.

Rather than proceed directly to a minor key finale, Beethoven presents a march movement in A major that is never completed. One commentator remarked that it was the mundane following the ethereal. The violin links this to the finale *Allegro appassionato* by an instrumental recitative.

In the last movement, he used material originally intended for the Ninth Symphony and here it becomes a rondo, not a lighthearted romp like most rondos, but one of breadth and pathos. The cello in its tense high register brings in the final rondo theme while the violins reiterate the F-E semitone from the motto opening of the first movement. The *Presto* is followed by a coda that sustains the taut nervousness of the work, even though in A major.

—Notes by Dr. Catherine Roche

## 47<sup>th</sup> SEASON

2002-2003

*Presented in Cooperation with University of  
the Pacific and the UOP Conservatory of  
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### Los Angeles Piano Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, September 15, 2002

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

RECEPTION FOLLOWING

### Ariel Winds

2:30 PM Sunday, October 27, 2002

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### Elements Quartet

7:30 PM Sunday, November 17, 2002

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

RECEPTION FOLLOWING

### Pacifica Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, February 9, 2003

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

RECEPTION FOLLOWING

### The Vega String Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, March 23, 2003

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

DINNER FOLLOWING

### Turtle Island String Quartet

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AT THE HAGGIN MUSEUM, STOCKTON

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