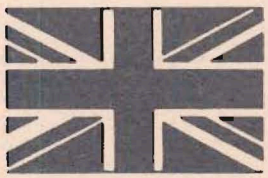
FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

Academy of St. Martin-In-The-Fields Octet

8:00 p.m., Saturday, November 21, 1987
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
University of the Pacific
Stockton, California



Octet in C, Op. 176 Allegro Allegro molto Andante moderato Vivace	Joachim Raff Composed in 1872
Verklaerte Nacht in D-Minor (sextet), Op. 4	Arnold Schoenberg Composed in 1905
Intermission	
Octet for strings in Eb-Major, Opus 20 Allegro moderato, ma con fuoco Andante Scherzo (Allegro leggierissimo) Presto	Felix Mendelssohn Composed in 1825

Program Notes

By Lloyd Elliott
Merced Symphony
Conductor/Artistic Director

Octet in C, Op. 176 (1872)
Joachim Raff (1822-1882)

Joachim Raff was born in Switzerland in 1822. Although very poor and largely self-taught, he became a prominent figure in the music world in Germany. After he died in 1882, his music gradually fell into oblivion. During his lifetime, however, many of his compositions enjoyed wide popularity.

In 1872, he was encouraged by Lizst and Mendelssohn, whose famed Octet we also will hear tonight, to compose his own octet. Raff's Octet in C was clearly influenced by the young Mendelssohn's inspired example, but it also speaks effectively in its own voice.

Raff's work makes full use of the sonorities of an eight-player ensemble, whether in the dramatic elan of the first movement or the singing romance of the third. The second movement is a rhythmically tense scherzo and the finale abounds in dancing figurations and brio.

Verklarte Nacht, Op. 4
"Transfigured Night" (1899)
Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951)

In September, 1899, at the age of 25, Arnold Schoenberg composed the string sextet Verklarte Nacht, finishing the work during a three-week holiday. In melody, harmony and polyphony, the sextet reveals all the character of the composer's exalted writing.

The music follows the text of the poem taken from Zwei Menschen, whose atmosphere seems dark and feverish. There is more than a trace of Wagner in it. In both syntax and harmonies, where lines develop in a manner close to that of Tristan, the work is developed in the key of D minor, an obsessive key in Schoenberg to be found later in Op. 11 and 16.

In 1903 the Sextet met with total incomprehension and intimidated music lovers, just as the dodecaphonic works did twenty years later. Yet today, Verklarte Nacht almost resembles a patheticism that is quite romantic. It was the first of all his works to appear in print.

Octet for Strings in Eb, Op. 20
Felix Mendelssohn (1808-1847)

Having grown up with readings and regular Sunday concerts in his Berlin home, it was natural for the 16-year-old Mendelssohn to write the Octet in Eb for one of the family's closest friends and regular performer, the violinist Edward Rietz. This no doubt explains the greater difficulty of the first violin part in comparison with the other parts.

The Octet was influenced in its structure by the classical literature. The first movement, with its broad main theme, covers an enormous range, its con fuoco impulse supplied through both rhythm and dynamics. The first and second movements are highly contrasted with a simple melody of the andante and interesting polyphony in the following variation.

Of the third scherzo movement, Mendelssohn's sister Fanny has written: "The lone shivering tremolado, the lightly flickering mordents, everything is new, strange, and yet so attractive, sympathetic — one feels close to the spirit world." The fourth movement reveals Mendelssohn's musical academic studies in his brilliant, and difficult, eight part fugue.

The Octet was Mendelssohn's first mature work, and throughout his life he held a special affection for it.

Academy of St. Martin in the Fields Octet

Violin: Kenneth Sillito
Malcolm Latchem
Roger Garland
Andrew McGee
Viola: Rusen Gunes
Robert Smisson
Cello: Dennis Vigay
Roger Smith

The Octet is composed of the eight principal string players of the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields Orchestra under the artistic direction of Sir Neville Marriner.

For the past ten years, the ensemble has presented concerts of the larger chamber works,

from quintets to octets. Usually these works are played by a string quartet and a guest or by two different quartets. But the Academy Octet brings to its performances the subtlety of nuance and the unsurpassed finesse of five to eight players intimately accustomed to playing together.

The Washington Post called the Octet "a chip off the old block. Like its parent orchestra, it is an ensemble of rare suaveness and delicacy."

The Octet has drawn critical praise in concerts throughout the world, most recently in Germany, Spain, Switzerland, Norway and Yugoslavia. Their successful North American tours have taken them to all the major music centers, including Los Angeles, Washington, Montreal, Minneapolis, Cincinnati, Dallas, Toronto, Seattle and Kansas City.

Their repertoire encompasses almost the entire range of chamber music — including the often neglected repertory of the quintet, sextet, septet and octet — from works by Boccherini and Mozart to those of Schoenberg and Martinu.

Their recordings of the Schubert Octet and Mozart's Wind Quintet and quartets have won prestigious European recording prizes. The ensemble has recorded the familiar Mendelssohn Octet, which will be heard tonight, and the Boccherini Guitar Quintets with Pepe Romero. The ensemble is currently recording all of Handel's chamber music and Mozart's divertimenti.

Friends of Chamber Music
32nd Anniversary Year
1987-88 Season

International Chamber Ensemble of Rome (non-subscription)
Friday, September 18, 8:00 p.m., Faye Spanos Concert Hall, UOP
Underwritten in part by a generous grant from American Savings and Loan Association

Mendelssohn String Quartet
Saturday, October 10, 8:00 p.m., Long Theatre, UOP

Academy of St. Martin-In-The-Fields Octet
Saturday, November 21, 8:00 p.m., Faye Spanos Concert Hall, UOP
Underwritten in part by a generous grant from the National Endowment for the Arts

Los Angeles Brass
Sunday, January 24, 3:00 p.m., Long Theatre, UOP
Underwritten in part by a generous grant from the California Arts Council

Hagen String Quartet
Thursday, March 3, 8:00 p.m. Long Theatre, UOP

The Kronos Quartet (non-subscription)
Wednesday, April 6, 8:00 p.m. Long Theatre, UOP
Underwritten by generous grants from the City of Stockton and the California Arts Council

Cantilena Piano Quartet
Sunday, April 24, 3:00 p.m., Long Theatre, UOP

To Our Audience

Use of cameras and recording devices, and smoking in the lobby and auditorium, are prohibited.

Latecomers will not be seated until a suitable break.

Please disengage pagers and electronic watches.

FOCM concerts are presented in cooperation with University of the Pacific, whose students are admitted free on space availablity.

Programs are subject to change without notice.

Tickets

Season $40, Single, $12, Children $4
Ticketron 209/486-7469

University Box Office, Long Theatre, 1040 Stadium Drive, Stockton, California 95211, 209/946-2474, Mon-Fri 10:00 am - 5:30 pm, Sat 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Advance tickets may be purchased with Visa, MasterCard or personal checks at the box office up until two hours prior to the performance, at which time ticket sales are cash only.

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Friends of Chamber Music is grateful to Michelle Manos Inc. for the design and production of the 1987-88 printed program, to American Savings and Loan Association for the printing of the program, and to Stockton Savings and Loan Association for the printing of the tickets.