

Daedalus String Quartet

MIN-YOUNG KIM, VIOLIN

KYU-YOUNG KIM, VIOLIN

JESSICA THOMPSON, VIOLA

RAMAN RAMAKRISHNAN, CELLO

with

JAMES DUNHAM, VIOLA

TUESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2005

– PROGRAM –

String Quartet No. 12 in C Minor, D. 703,
“*Quartettsatz*”

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

Allegro assai

String Quartet in F Major (1902-3)

MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)

Allegro moderato - Très doux

Assez vif - Très rythmé

Très lent

Agité

– INTERMISSION –

String Quintet No. 2 in G Major, Op. 111

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Allegro non troppo, ma con brio

Adagio

Un poco allegretto

Vivace ma non troppo presto

Please turn off all cellphones, pagers and chiming watches.
Also, taking photographs (with cameras, phones or any media device)
or making recordings is strictly prohibited. *Thank you.*

FRANZ PETER SCHUBERT (1797-1828)
Quartettsatz in C Minor (1820), D. 703, Op. posth.

The *Quartettsatz* (Quartet Piece) is the first of the four great late string quartets Franz Schubert wrote in the last eight years of his life. A compact powerhouse of writing, it remained, like his famous *Eighth Symphony* and Schubert himself, unfinished at the time of his death. Yet it set the tone for the three completed masterpieces which followed. At his death at the wrenching age of thirty, Schubert was known mostly for his vocal works and dances, and some piano music. Even his companions knew of little more. It was Schumann, in 1839, eleven years after Schubert's death, who discovered the instrumental music in Vienna, during an impulsive visit to Schubert's brother. It was Mendelssohn, in Leipzig, who introduced it to the German public. The *Quartettsatz* was published in 1870, fifty years after Schubert wrote it down.

The opening bars pull the listener into a drama of anguish, starting with an urgent, murmuring undertow, then exploding like fireworks into a "Neapolitan sixth" cascading in a descending arpeggio. The theme is immediately repeated in a more subdued color, falling this time into a less dramatic harmonic region from which it melts into a yearningly tender second theme. The driving drama of the movement, its structural unity and brevity, its swings between urgent anguish and profound tenderness, are reminiscent of the passionate quartet Beethoven wrote for himself (Op. 95, the "Serioso") ten years earlier. Even its format recalls the Beethoven work, a double statement of the explosive first theme played initially in unison, immediately repeated by a single voice accompanied by the others, and leading to a second theme of great sweetness. In Schubert's work, however, it is the tender second theme which goes on to dominate the movement, passing through a variety of harmonic placements as the work progresses. A third thematic motif briefly interrupts the calm in the form of a series of ascending, darkly-colored, windswept scales accompanied by thunderous rumbling in the lower strings. Oddly, it is the second and third motifs that dominate the development and recapitulation sections, while of the fiery opening theme, subtly suggested by a replay of its harmonic coloration, there is only a hint. But these opening measures reappear intact at the end, as a coda to the movement, this compact circular form contributing to the work's power.

Schubert was forty measures into a second movement when he dropped the project for reasons unknown. What was left was a sharply cut gem, impelled by deepest passion and crafted with the greatest artistry. One can point to the technical innovations in this work, the extraordinary first theme whose short rhythmic motor serves to generate the entire movement, the lovely harmonies, the use of three key centers in the exposition (C minor, A-flat major and G major) and the originality of the recapitulation in which the themes return out of order. But in the end, no analysis explains the haunting magic of this great work, composed by a twenty-four year old boy.

MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)
Quartet in F Major (1902-03)

The direction taken by French artists after their nation's defeat in the Franco-Prussian war was the result of a deliberate albeit spontaneous impulse to distance themselves from the Germans. Thus, post-war France saw the explosive emergence of a distinctive voice in literature, poetry, painting and music. Into this environment Ravel was born in 1875, to a Swiss-French father and a Spanish-Basque mother. The father, an engineer-inventor with a degree in music harmony, was in Spain building railways when he met, and in 1874 married, the young Basque. Their first child, Maurice, was born there. The Ravels soon moved to Paris where they seem to have provided their young son with a happy and music-filled childhood. At age fourteen he entered the Paris Conservatory as a piano student. Although admired for his compositions by fellow-classmates, he failed to impress the staid faculty of the Conservatory, won no prizes, and, by age twenty, he left. Away from the Conservatory, he worked with Stravinsky in Switzerland while continuing to experiment on his own, viewing with admiration the iconoclasts Eric Satie and Debussy, while at the same time he was drawn to the individuality of the self-taught composers Chabrier and Mussorgsky. He ultimately returned to the Paris Conservatory now guided by the more forward-looking Gabriel Fauré with whom he would study until age twenty-nine. This second apprenticeship at the Conservatory was again characterized by disappointments, frustrated by an academic hierarchy largely uninterested in contemporary ideas. Despite Fauré's support, Ravel four times failed to win a Prix de Rome even though he had already attained a reputation outside the school. When, now aged twenty-eight, Ravel showed him the mostly finished score of his string quartet, Fauré criticized it severely and asked for a revision. Instead, Ravel sent it to Debussy whose own string quartet was a success of ten years' standing. Debussy's famous response: "In the name of the gods of music and for my sake personally, do not lay another finger on your Quartet." At publication it was dedicated to Fauré.

The *Quartet* is in four luminous movements. The first, marked *très doux*, starts with deceptive simplicity—an ascending diatonic scale underpinning a guileless melody. Although tonality is never in doubt, Ravel makes great use of the ambiguous parallel chord progressions so characteristic of the modern French School. The effect is surreal. The second movement is rhythmically complex, with many passages written simultaneously in 6/8 and 3/4 time, evoking the vigorous cross accents of music from the Iberian Peninsula. Ravel makes extensive use of plucked strings in this movement, alternating with the muffled sound of muted strings in the middle section. The slow third movement introduces thematic material from the first while employing a variety of meters and a lush palate of colors. The *Finale* is rhythmically bold, opening with a meter of 5/8, then changing to 5/4 and 3/4. A rambunctious Spanish dance influence is unmistakable, as is the music's debt to the new French School.

Program notes © by Nora Avins Klein, July, 2002

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)
String Quintet in G Major, Op. 111

Brahms's second *String Quintet*, Op. 111 is almost the last piece of chamber music to come from his pen. By the time of its writing, in 1890, he was at his most mature and concise. This work may be his most problematic chamber piece as well, with difficulties arising from rhythmic complexities, denseness of texture, lightning-quick changes of mood, and the technical demands placed on the players. But perhaps the greatest challenge is that of balance: which instrument needs to be heard above the others? and how can one find the right balance and still carry out the wishes of the composer?

The opening measures are notorious. Here is the poor cello playing the main motive *forte* in its lower register, while the four upper strings are also playing *forte* in an accompanying figure above. If the upper four follow the directions in the score, they will drown out the cello; no self-respecting cellist will allow that to happen, and so there is trouble. Trouble indeed is what there was at the first performance, in Vienna. The cellist refused to play, and Brahms had to agree that ("for this performance only") the upper strings would play softly. But Brahms disliked the Viennese habit of accompanying every "solo" *pianissimo*. He wanted the opening to sound loud. Within the year he wrote to another musician struggling with the beginning and offered this solution: "The violins have to fake a *forte*", he said, and with a Brahmsian twinkle gave assurance that peace would then ensue. How that "fakery" is accomplished you will have a chance to hear tonight.

The work is in four movements. The first is a sonata-allegro form with a vigorous opening theme, marked "Allegro not too much but in a brisk spirit." Brahms preferred words to metronome markings. The opening theme is contrasted with an exceptionally benign second theme in two parts, a kind of question and answer. The entire movement radiates good will, displayed variously with Brahmsian complexity.

In somber contrast, the second movement is dark in timbre (the opening is given to the three lower instruments, with a viola solo coveted by every violist). You may hear hints of the Gypsy music heard in Vienna's famous park, the Prater: the *tremolo* reminiscent of the Hungarian cimbalom that ends the first phrase, sharply dotted rhythms used throughout, and the quasi-improvisatory viola passage near the end of the moment. The ABA form of this movement features "mutual reflection and enhancement" rather than the more usual contrast.

The third movement is a wistful and delicate Intermezzo in ABA form which replaces the more usual Scherzo. Its surface of simplicity evaporates upon further investigation! The last movement, "Lively but not too fast" is in a highly condensed sonata-allegro form in which the first and second themes have very little to do with each other: the first is a little worried figure, the transition to the second theme hints at the *czardas* which is yet to come, and the second theme is, to my ears, decidedly reminiscent of a Scottish jig. How Brahms juggles these diverse elements and ends with a mad-cap *czardas* provides the fun of listening to this work.

Program notes © by Styra Avins, October, 2004. Styra Avins is the author of *Johannes Brahms, Life and Letters* (Oxford University Press, 1997) and "Performing Brahms's Music: clues from letters" in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Daedalus String Quartet

The Daedalus Quartet takes its name from the mythical Greek inventor, artist, and architect celebrated for creating the art of sculpture, designing the Labyrinth, and above all for regaining his freedom by devising wings that made it possible for him to fly. The Daedalus Quartet was founded in the summer of 2000 at the Marlboro Music Festival. In 2001 the quartet was the Grand Prize Winner of the Banff International String Quartet Competition, and it has quickly established itself as one of the most in-demand young ensembles performing today.

The Quartet performed fifty concerts during the 2003-2004 season, including recitals in major cities of the United States and in the Republic of Panama. They also served as the Ernst Stiefel Quartet in Residence at the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts, and performed Erwin Schulhoff's *Concerto for String Quartet* with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra.

The Daedalus Quartet has been selected by Carnegie Hall to participate in the ECHO (European Concert Hall Organization) Rising Stars program, through which it will make debuts during the 2004-2005 season at prestigious halls in London, Cologne, Vienna, Paris and other European cities. Additionally they will be presented by Carnegie Hall as part of its "Distinctive Debuts" series at Weill Recital Hall. They also have been given the distinct honor of performing the opening program of the Library of Congress's 2005-2006 season.

The Daedalus Quartet has been named by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center to be the Chamber Music Society Two string quartet for the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 seasons. As a member of Chamber Music Society Two, the quartet will be invited by the Society to perform on numerous occasions at Lincoln Center in its own concerts, in collaboration with artist members of the Society, and with other Chamber Music Society Two artists. The quartet will also participate in many of the Society's educational programs. In addition, the Daedalus Quartet has been a recipient of a residency grant from Chamber Music America.

Violinist Min-Young Kim has performed in a wide variety of styles on concert series and festival programs across the United States and abroad. A graduate of Harvard University and The Juilliard School, Ms. Kim made her New York recital debut at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall in January 2001 as winner of the Artists International Competition. Her strong commitment to contemporary music has led to numerous premieres in the New York and Boston areas and at new music festivals in Spain and Greece.

Hailed by the *Chicago Tribune* for his "flawless musical and technical command," violinist Kyu-Young Kim is an award winning soloist and chamber musician. Mr. Kim has been soloist with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, of which he serves as Associate Concertmaster, and the Amadeus Chamber Orchestra of Poland. He has pre-

sented solo recitals throughout the United States, Japan, Germany, and New Zealand. Mr. Kim was educated at the Curtis Institute and the Juilliard School.

Violist Jessica Thompson has been soloist with the Minnesota Orchestra and has performed in recital in Philadelphia, Minneapolis, and Washington, D.C. While a student at the Curtis Institute, she was a member of the Grancino Quartet and participated in Isaac Stern's Chamber Music Seminar in Jerusalem. As a result she was chosen for the singular honor of performing at the Isaac Stern Memorial Concert at Carnegie Hall.

Cellist Raman Ramakrishnan has toured with Musicians from Marlboro and performed frequently with such ensembles as the Metamorphosen Chamber Orchestra and the contemporary chamber ensemble Proteus 5. As a member of Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble, he has collaborated with musicians from the Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra and will perform in Agra, India in the 2004-2005 season. Mr. Ramakrishnan holds a Bachelor's degree with honors in physics from Harvard University and a Master's from The Juilliard School.

James Dunham, Viola

Soloist, chamber musician, and teacher, James Dunham is active internationally as a recitalist and guest artist. Formerly violist of the Grammy Award winning Cleveland Quartet and Naumburg Award winning Sequoia Quartet, he has collaborated with such renowned artists as Richard Goode, Emanuel Ax, Joshua Bell, Sabine Meyer, Bernard Greenhouse, and members of the Guarneri, Juilliard, and Tokyo Quartets. An advocate of new music, he has worked with many prominent composers, and in July 2001, gave the premiere of a new sonata for viola and piano written for him by Libby Larsen. In addition to his solo and chamber music activities, Mr. Dunham has served as guest principal viola with the Boston Symphony under Seiji Ozawa and the Dallas Symphony under Andrew Litton. From 1987 through its final recordings and concerts in December 1995, Mr. Dunham was violist of the renowned Cleveland Quartet. The Quartet won the 1996 Grammy for "Best Chamber Music Performance" for their Telarc recording of John Corigliano's *String Quartet* written for their final tour.

Prior to becoming Professor of Viola at the Shepherd School of Music, Mr. Dunham served as Professor of Viola at the New England Conservatory and the Eastman School of Music. His summer activities include teaching and performing at many festivals, including those of Marlboro, Aspen, Sarasota, Yale at Norfolk, Bowdoin, and Musicorda. He has served as principal violist of the San Diego Mainly Mozart Festival for ten seasons, and last summer celebrated his ninth year as violist of the Festival der Zukunft in Ernen, Switzerland. He is featured on a compact disc of recent music for viola and winds on the Crystal Records label, and has recorded with the Sequoia Quartet for Nonesuch and Delos and with the Cleveland Quartet for Telarc.