



# White Rock Concerts *Presents*

The Penderecki String Quartet



*Friday, November 14, 2003*

## The Penderecki String Quartet

**Jeremy BELL**, violin      **Jerzy KAPLANEK**, violin  
**Christine VLAJK**, viola      **Simon FRYER**, cello

The Penderecki String Quartet, in the second decade of an extraordinary career, has become one of the most celebrated chamber ensembles in the music world. The Quartet's performing schedule takes them annually to the great concert stages of North and South America, Europe and the Far East.

The Penderecki Quartet's recent schedule has included concerts in New York, Amsterdam, St. Petersburg, Yale University, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Bloomington (Indiana University), Montreal, Vancouver, Winnipeg and Toronto. Their international schedule includes repeat performances at the prestigious Krakow Festival in Poland and the Festival Internacional de Musica in Venezuela. The Penderecki Quartet has collaborated with many eminent ensembles such as The Borodin Trio and The Fine Arts Quartet as well as with artists such as Vladimir Feltsman, James Campbell, Lev Natochenny, Tsuyoshi Tsutsumi, Jeremy Menuhin and Janina Fialkowska.

The Penderecki Quartet was founded in Poland in 1986 at the urging of the pre-eminent Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki. The fruit of their association includes the authoritative interpretation of Penderecki's complete works for String Quartet on CD. To this day the Quartet is a devoted champion of the music of our time, and has commissioned new quartets from numerous composers including Brian Cherney, Linda C. Smith, John Oswald, Randolph Peters, Glenn Buhr, Peter Hatch, Raymond Luedeke and Michel Tremblay with assistance from the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council.

### Concert Etiquette

For your enjoyment, and the enjoyment of others, please remember concert etiquette. Talking, coughing, leaning over the balcony railings, unwrapping cellophane-wrapped candies, and the wearing of strong perfume may disturb the artists as well as other audience members. Also, please turn off cell phones and please ensure that digital watches do not sound during performances.

## Programme

Italian serenade in G major for String Quartet  
molto vivo

Hugo Wolf  
(1860-1903)

Quartet no.16 Op.135 in F Major  
(1826) Allegretto Vivace  
Lento assai, cantate e tranquillo  
Der Schwer gefasste Entschluss (Grave-Allegro)

Ludwig van Beethoven  
(1770-1827)

## Intermission

Quartet in C minor Op.51 no.1 (1873)  
Allegro Romance, Poco adagio  
Allegretto molto moderato e comodo  
Allegro

Johannes Brahms  
(1833-1897)

## PROGRAM NOTES

HUGO WOLF (1860 - 1903)

Italian Serenade in G major (1887)

The span of Hugo Wolf's creative life can be divided into two entirely distinct phases. The first and lesser known, extending from 1875 to 1887, includes with the exception of a few songs, the whole of Wolf's instrumental output. The second, and by far the most important and celebrated phase, is exclusively devoted to vocal music. In lieder, he was able, like Schubert before him, to condense the dramatic intensity of opera into the song form, all the while advancing and intensifying the expressive vocabulary of the lied to a degree seldom since surpassed. The Italian Serenade, written in 1887 was originally titled only "Serenade"; the adjective "Italian", only appearing for the first time in a letter dated 1890, was kept by Wolf when the work was transcribed for small orchestra in 1892. The arrangement and development of this work pre-occupied Wolf for the greater part of ten years; a draft for a slow second movement was sketched in 1889 and up to the end of his life Wolf worked on a more developed piece in three movements, without however, completing it. A little masterpiece of refinement and wit, the work with its transparent lightness and delicacy of instrumental colour recalls in a unique way the Mediterranean magic of a scented summer night.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) Quartet in C minor Op.51 no.1 (1873)

Brahms destroyed nearly twenty of his first attempts at composing for string quartet. Brahms was over 40 in 1873 when he finally felt ready to release the Op. 51 Quartets to the public and to critics. The ongoing Wagner-vs-absolute music debate may have had something to do with Brahms's hesitancy. The towering shadow of Beethoven, whose 9 symphonies, and 16 string quartets appeared to many unsurpassable, seems however to have exercised the most daunting effect on Brahms. "You have no idea", wrote Brahms, "what it is to constantly hear footsteps behind you." Owing to his style of development

through thematic variation however, Brahms found his own way and eventually freed himself of these scruples.

The Op. 51 quartets follow the Classical scheme in four movements: a fast first movement in sonata form; a slow second movement in lied form; a fast scherzo and a fast finale that alternates between sonata form, rondo, and variation. The Quartet no. 1 in C minor displays two contrasting themes: the first one is built on an ascending motive in dotted rhythm, while the second is lyrical and moves in descending motion. The exposition continues with three other sections in which has been traditionally considered a third theme placed between two transitional passages. In light of Schoenberg's analysis however, these latter segments are actually a variation development of the two initial themes, which alternate or are superimposed within an extremely elaborate contrapuntal texture. This process extends to the rest of the first movement as well as to the three other movements, conferring a cyclical unity to the work. Indeed the theme of the second movement (Romanze), as well as that of the third and fourth movements are all in reality variations of the thematic material of the first movement.

#### STRING QUARTET IN F MAJOR Op 135

Beethoven's last completed composition (except for the second finale of Op 130) has the light touch of infinite wisdom and charity; smaller than the others, in scope as well as dimensions, it is nevertheless something only the vastly experienced Beethoven could have written. The first movement displays the exquisitely reticulated texture of which he had always been fond (we can find it as early as the coda to the 'Andante cantabile' of Op 18 No 5). The music ambles delicately, airily, with fine, free, strong part-writing and much variety of detail and subtlety of harmony. It is the most sensitively coloured quartet-writing in existence.

It leaves us unprepared for the fire-breathing, suppressed energy of the Scherzo, full of dislocated syncopations. The wild Trio, with its extraordinarily hectic violin solo, lets fly the force of an exploding atom. Its astonishing A major climax (tonally at polar opposition to the fierce E flats which from time to time interrupt the Scherzo) then subsides all at once, muttering, into the return of the Scherzo, one of Beethoven's weirdest transitions.

All this tension is not dispelled by the D flat major slow movement, utterly quiet though it is. The stasis of these variations seems to breed a new tension, equally great. There are three variations on a theme of complete simplicity, and the central one is in the minor, full of breathless oppressed pauses, more frozen than the *beklemmt* section of the Cavatina of Op 130. The last moves into a trance-like coda. No relaxation here - only an iron self-control, needed to cope with the enormous contrast from the Scherzo.

The reaction to this heavily subdued D flat music is F minor, and the famous Difficult Resolution. This originated in a joke of Beethoven's about someone who owed him money. On being asked to pay up, the fellow moaned 'Must it be?', and Beethoven replied 'It MUST be!', thereupon setting the words to an atrocious canon. Joke or not, some kind of difficult resolution has to be found after the fantastic Scherzo and the paralysis of the slow movement. The hard stepwise progression of this introduction to the finale, painfully edging its way up towards the light and freedom of movement, is inescapable, and breaks out with delighted relief into what MUST be - life again. The introduction recurs, intensified, more theatrical in an inextricable blend of humour and seriousness, and subdued questions precede the delicate laughter of the end. The gayest and simplest material in this finale is cast in A major, the key of the Trio's overwhelmingly vital climax, and the only traces of D flat are elliptically hinted at in the struggling introduction.

## Message From the President

An Artist paints on canvas and a musician paints on silence, a wise man once said. Tonight a few more exquisite brushstrokes are added to the canvas that is our 2003-2004 season.

The canvas is also being prepared for next season, and we hope to have exciting news for you very very soon about next year. I will just tease you now by saying that big things are in the works.

We continue to be sold out to the capacity of the hall, with literally hundreds wanting to come to our series that we, regrettably must turn away. Good music can find an audience and our series is proof of that. And, as many of you know, we do this with not one cent of government assistance.

This is a group effort, starting with the most important group, of which we are all members, the subscribers of White Rock Concerts.

Our Board puts in tireless hours not only at the concerts, but throughout the year. And we all value the leadership of our Artistic Director, George Zukerman.

Please welcome two new members to our Board, Margaret Wesemann and Elvina Stewart.

And so from me and the entire Board, welcome and enjoy the music.

Rick Gambrel  
President

## Meet your Executive Committee

Rick Gambrel, President  
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George Zukerman, Artistic Director  
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### Board Members:

David Cann	Joan Marsh	Val Marten	Elvina Stewart
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*Our Next Concert:*

*The Burney  
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