CONCERTS AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

Under the direction of George Manos

JUNE 1995

18 Sharon Mabry, mezzo-soprano Patsy Wade, pianist Songs by Duparc, Ives, Lili Boulanger, Elizabeth Vercoe, John Jacob Niles, Katherine K. Davis, and others

25 Alexander Romanul, *violinist* Jonathan Feldman, *pianist*

Schubert: Sonata in D Major Brahms: Sonata No. 3

Szymanowski: Nocturne and

Tarantella

Franck: Sonata in A Major

Concerts resume after a summer recess on October 1, with a performance by the National Gallery Orchestra,
George Manos, Conductor.

The Fifty-third Season of

THE WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL and F. LAMMOT BELIN CONCERTS

at the

National Gallery of Art



2163rd Concert

MUIR STRING QUARTET

PETER ZAZOFSKY, violin BAYLA KEYES, violin STEVEN ANSELL, viola MICHAEL REYNOLDS, cello

Sunday Evening, June 11, 1995 at Seven O'clock West Building, West Garden Court

Admission Free

PROGRAM

Antonin Dvořák (1841–1904) String Quartet in E-flat Major, Opus 51 (1878–79)

Allegro non troppo Dumka (Elegia): Andante con moto; vivace Romanza: Andante con moto Finale: Allegro assai

INTERMISSION

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

String Quartet in F Major (1902–03)

Allegro moderato Assez vif Très lent Vif et agité

Concerts from the National Gallery are broadcast in their entirety at 7:00 p.m. on Sundays on radio station WGTS, 91.9 FM, four weeks after the live performance. The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed.

For the convenience of concertgoers the Garden Café remains open until 6:30 p.m.

Named after the great American naturalist and explorer, John Muir, the MUIR STRING QUARTET has made a significant reputation for itself with its performances of the quartets of Beethoven on major chamber music series in North America, including the Beethoven Slee Series in Buffalo, New York, and Canada's North York Performing Arts Centre Series. The members of the quartet met and began playing together in 1980, when all four were studying chamber music at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. They went on to further study as a quartet at Yale, thanks to a grant from the Edward R. Wardell Fellowship Fund, where their coaches were Oscar Shumsky and Raphael Hillyer. The Muir Quartet has commissioned and performed new works by Joan Tower, Richard Danielpour, and Richard Wilson, and gave the world premiere performance of a collaborative work by Native Americans, entitled *Circle of Faith*.

In keeping with the accomplishments of its namesake, which included founding the Sierra Club, the Muir Quartet donates proceeds from the sale of its CDs to a variety of environmental and conservation organizations. The ensemble, which is the string quartet in residence at Boston University's School for the Arts, records for EcoClassics, Music Masters, ADDA/Qualiton, and EMI, and appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Harold Shaw of New York City.

Dvořák's *E-flat Major String Quartet* was the result of a request from members of the Florentine Quartet for him to write a quartet in Slavic style. Fresh from the international success of his *Slavonic Rhapsodies* and *Slavonic Dances*, the composer was only too glad to oblige. The *Dumka* movement is the most apparent Slavic element in the work, with its alternation of a slow dance tune (dumka) with a fast variation of the same tune (furiant). The finale also draws from the Bohemian folk tradition, with a theme that is similar to the fast and boisterous reel dances called *skačna*. The exuberance of this music is enhanced by the device of scoring the first violin and cello on the same melody, four octaves apart.

The colorful impressionism of Debussy's *String Quartet in G Minor* served as the inspiration for Ravel's first and only string quartet, over which he labored intensely from late 1902 until April 1903. But Debussy's imaginative use of the string colors was not the only model Ravel had in mind. An avid admirer of Mozart's music, he strove for clear and transparent textures and logical formal relationships in his music, as well. There was considerable debate in the French press and in the circles of self-appointed music critics who met in the French cafés about the relative merits of the Debussy and Ravel string quartets. Before long, the composers themselves became entangled in the debate, which eventually brought about an attitude of frigid rivalry between the two men, who had started out as good friends.