

C a r t h a g e

2004-05 Chamber
MUSIC *series*

Supported by the
Helen C. Smolenski
Chamber Music Fund of
the Racine Community
Foundation, Inc.

The Czech Nonet

80th Anniversary Tour

Sunday, October 10, 2004, 3 p.m.

A. F. Siebert Chapel



2001 Alford Park Drive
Kenosha, WI 53140-1994
www.carthage.edu



History of the Czech Nonet

“...positively effervescent...”

—*Cleveland Plain Dealer*

“...one of the season’s finest concerts...impeccable ensemble playing...”

—*The Washington Post*

“...Bohemian musicality and aristocratic elegance...”

—*Esslingen Zeitung, Germany*

The Czech Nonet is one of the oldest and most original chamber ensembles in the world. It was founded in 1924 by a group of students of the Prague Conservatory according to the instrumental requirements of Louis Spohr’s 1813 composition, *Grand Nonetto, Op. 31*, for violin, viola, cello, contrabass, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and horn. Invited by leading festivals of the time, Salzburg in particular, the Czech Nonet quickly was recognized as both an important interpreter of classical repertoire and an ardent champion of new music, inspiring the composition of more than 300 works by some of the greatest living composers, including Prokofiev, Lutoslawski, Martinů, and Schoek. American Pulitzer prize-winning composer Robert Ward continues the tradition with his recent composition, *Raleigh Divertimento for Nonet*. His work marks the first composition by an American composer written for the ensemble.

The Czech Nonet’s specific combination of instruments works well with music from the Baroque (e.g., Myslivecek, Mozart) the Classical (e.g., Oketekm, Beethoven) and the Romantic (e.g., Schubert, Brahms) periods. Together with later 20th century works, their repertoire has become exceptionally deep, rich, and varied. The single-voicing of such a wide range of instruments offers a truly broad harmonic and acoustical texture which has, undoubtedly, served the ensemble’s longevity and singular appeal.

The Czech Nonet’s survival is an achievement nearly unparalleled in the history of chamber music. It has rigorously survived the travails of World War II, the communist occupation of the former Czechoslovakia, the Cold War, and the transition back to the democratic Czech Republic beginning in 1989. In April 2002, the Czech Nonet toured the United States for the first time in nearly 25 years. The ensemble continues to play a leading role on the world stage of chamber music as it celebrates its 80th anniversary.

Program

October 10, 2004

Václav Dvořák
violin

Jan Nykrýn
viola

Simona Hečová
violoncello

Radovan Heč
contrabass

Jiří Skuhra
flute

Aleš Hustoles
clarinet

Jiří Krejčí
oboe

Pavel Langpaul
bassoon

Vladimíra Klánská
horn

Quintet in G minor Antonín Vranický (1761 – 1820)
Adagio
Rondo Allegro
Andante
Finale. Allegro con fuoco ma non troppo

Nonet No. 2 (1959) Bohuslav Martinů (1890 – 1959)
Poco allegro
Andante
Allegretto

Intermission

Septet in E-flat Major Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)
Adagio. Allegro con brio
Adagio cantabile
Tempo di minuetto
Andante – Tema con Variazioni
Scherzo – Allegro molto e vivace
Andante con moto alla Marcia. Presto

*The Czech Nonet has recorded for Champion, Praga Digital, and Supraphon, among others.
The Czech Nonet appears by exclusive arrangement with Stanton Management,
Astoria, N.Y. (www.stantonmgt.com).*

This concert is another installment of the Carthage Chamber Music Series, made possible with support from the the Helen C. Smolenski Chamber Music Fund of the Racine Community Foundation, Inc.

Program Notes

Antonín Vranický: *Quintet in G minor*

Antonín Vranický (1761–1820), a Lobkowitz Kapellmeister, together with his brother Pavel Vranický, is among the list of prominent Czech composers. Both a violinist and pedagogue, he spent most of his life in Vienna. Many consider Vranický one of the founders of the Vienna school of violin. His output contains numerous symphonies and concertos, particularly for violin, and follows in the Haydn-Mozart tradition. Much of his compositional style may be related to his years of study under both Mozart and Haydn. Chamber music played a very important role in Vranický's life, and he composed a large number of chamber music works for varied instrumentations. The *Quintet in G minor* is a very good example of his writing for strings and showcases the lyrical qualities inherent in the voice of the oboe.

Bohuslav Martinů: *Nonet No. 2, H374*

Bohuslav Martinů (1890–1959) undoubtedly belongs among the Czech modernist musical geniuses. He studied violin in his birthplace of Polička and then in Prague, but was expelled from the Prague Conservatory due to his negligence. Soon afterward, he became a violinist with the Czech Philharmonic.

In Paris, he studied under various members of Les Six and was greatly influenced by the works of Igor Stravinsky. Martinů belongs to the second generation of the Czech modernist composers—those who entered their musical lives before World War I and those who were influenced by the atonality of the Second Viennese School's chamber compositions. Martinů differs from all these composers in his distinctive musical development. While he spent a considerable amount of time living abroad (including the United States), he was greatly influenced by his roots, which is apparent in his music (e.g., his choice of themes, reflections of folk music, and poetry). His way of expression underwent a complex development and led to a great distinctiveness in melody, harmony, and rich metre-rhythmics.

Martinů dedicated several of his works to the Czech Nonet: *Nonet, H144's fragment* (1924), *Serenade No. 1, H217* (1932), *Pastorals from Stowe, H335* (1951), and *Nonet, H374* (1959). His numerous compositions for chamber music vary both in the number and instrumental character of the classical quartet or quintet. The set of instruments for the Czech Nonet's traditional instrumentation had not occurred in his output until the *Nonet H 374*. The exception is the *Nonet H144*, which Martinů composed during his early stay in Paris. It was not performed for many years after its completion.

The origin of the *Nonet H374* was inspired by the Czech Nonet, which first performed it in public at the Salzburg Festival in 1959. Martinů composed it for the prevailing nonet ensemble with a certain inner hesitation. Prior to beginning the work, he wrote, "Well, in order to get some change of air, I started the chamber work and am writing the nonet for that wonderful society of ours, as they have been asking for that for years. Although it is not a very practical composition (who plays a nonet nowadays, there aren't any of those interested even for a piano quintet anymore) but it makes me happy, and I hope they won't be disappointed"

Martinů's *Nonet No. 2, H374*, one of his final compositions, has been performed by the Czech Nonet for more than 45 years, satisfying audiences worldwide.

Program Notes *(continued)*

Ludwig van Beethoven: *Septet, Op. 20*

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) experienced a busy childhood at an age when most children are carefree. He began playing in the theatre orchestra at age 11 and was a performing organist at age 13.

He was born in Bonn, but he spent nearly his whole life in Vienna. Just as Julius Caesar uttered the words, “Veni, vidi, vici” (*I came, I saw, I won*) after one of his triumphs, the young Beethoven could have said the same after his arrival in Vienna. His compositions quickly attracted attention, especially his piano, violin, and cello sonatas; piano trios; and string quartets. He experienced a series of successes that created a heavy demand for his compositions. But an ominous cloud was approaching, one that would impact him greatly. The composer, whose artistry and livelihood hinged on his precise sense of hearing, began approaching deafness in his late twenties. Reluctant to give into despair, Beethoven conquered his inner battles and disability and continued to compose, producing such masterworks as the *Symphony No. 5 in C minor*.

Beethoven's *Septet, Op. 20*, for clarinet, French horn, bassoon, violin, viola, violoncello, and the contrabass is a breezy and joyful piece of music, first performed in Vienna in 1799. The great epoch of musical classicism culminates with Beethoven and marks the beginning of the Romantic period. *Septet, Op. 20* demonstrates this emergent composition style.