

**JULY 16—NOTABLE ENCOUNTER AT DOLPHIN BAY**

**Thursday, July 16, 2009, 4-5 PM**

**The Lido Restaurant at Dolphin Bay Resort, Pismo Beach**

***String Quintet No. 2 in G Major, op. 111*** (comp 1890; pub'd 1891)

**Johannes BRAHMS** (1833–1897)

The virtuoso violinist Joseph Joachim did not believe in encores—but when he participated in a performance of Brahms' *String Quartet No. 2 in G* in December 1890, not long after the work's official premiere, the continued cheering of the audience forced Joachim to play the slow movement a second time ("against my principles," as he wryly informed the composer). It is not hard to see what the audience found so appealing: the viola starts the "Adagio" with a luscious, Hungarian-tinged tune that is then used as the basis for a series of free variations.

The quintet's first movement opens with a vigorous pulsation, preparing the way for the dramatic melody that is played by—the cello (!)—instead of the customary violin. Brahms, as many listeners know, wrote only four symphonies, but he had sketched ideas for a fifth symphony, and the quintet's energetic opening is borrowed from those sketches. As is typical in a four-movement work, Brahms composed a dance as the third movement, but he set it in the minor mode, giving this "Andantino" an unexpected poignancy. The finale begins quietly, but soon yields to exuberant high spirits.

Max Kalbeck, attending a rehearsal of the quintet, suggested that the work might represent "Brahms in the Prater," referring to a park where the Viennese enjoyed public recreation. Brahms, laughing, agreed: "You've hit it! Among all the pretty girls there, eh?" When Brahms sent the quintet to his publisher, he announced that it represented his retirement. Fortunately for posterity, Brahms couldn't stop himself; he continued to compose for the next seven years.

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