BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Seiji Ozawa, *Music Director*
Sir Colin Davis, *Principal Guest Conductor*
Joseph Silverstein, *Assistant Conductor*
Hundredth Birthday Season, 1981-82

PRE-SYMPHONY CHAMBER CONCERTS

Thursday, 1 October at 6
Saturday, 3 October at 6

FRANCESCO STRING QUARTET
Bo Youp Hwang, violin
Ron Wilkison, violin
Robert Barnes, viola
Joel Moerschel, cello

WEBERN — Rondo for string quartet

BEETHOVEN — Quartet in F minor, Opus 95, *Serioso*
Allegro con brio
Allegretto, ma non troppo
Allegro assai vivace, ma serioso
Larghetto espressivo—
Allegretto agitato

Baldwin piano
Please exit to your left for supper following the concert.
The performers appreciate your not smoking during the concert.

Anton Webern

Rondo for string quartet

Anton Webern's senseless, tragic death in 1945, when he was accidentally shot by a nervous American soldier detailed to arrest a suspected black-marketeer, brought to its untimely end the career of a composer of extraordinary refinement and idealism, a composer whose entire recognized life work of thirty-one opus numbers could be contained on four long-playing records. But no composer produces so well-crafted an Opus 1 as Webern's Passacaglia for Orchestra without having learned his art in years of study and practice, writing many compositions to develop and expand his skills. Still, no one knew of the existence of any Webern juvenilia for decades after his death; it seemed as if anything that might once have existed was lost or long since destroyed, perhaps by the composer himself.

Then in 1965, Hans Moldenhauer, who was preparing the first large-scale biography of the composer, made the acquaintance of Webern's daughter-in-law, who had remained in Vienna during the last months of World War II, after Webern and his wife had joined their daughter in Mittersill, near Salzburg, where the composer met his death. The daughter-in-law, Hermine von Webern (whose husband, Webern's son, had been killed in the war), recounted how she had tried to save what she could from the Webern home after it was taken over by Russian occupying forces, who smashed the composer's cello and his revered bust of Mahler and gathered his papers together for use as kindling. She had managed to salvage a substantial part of his personal library and many papers (though they were in disorder, torn and dirtied) and to cart these materials to her parental home in the village of Perchtoldsdorf, a few miles outside of Vienna, where they were stored in the loft of a barn. After the composer's death the mere sight of these materials had caused such anguish to his widow and daughter that no one had ever sorted through them again. Thus it was, on 26 October 1965, that Moldenhauer, rummaging eagerly through the cartons of books from Webern's library—with its volumes of the poetry he had set to music and the scores of works by Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, Wagner, and others that he had studied as a young musician—found a treasure-trove of manuscripts, ranging from the fifteen-year-old composer's first efforts in 1899 to sketches and complete unpublished pieces from as late as 1925.

The Rondo for string quartet dates from about 1906. Webern had begun lessons with Arnold Schoenberg in 1904; the influence of Schoenberg's teaching, his aesthetic philosophy, and the mutual respect between teacher and pupil were powerful forces in Webern's rapid development. At the same time, he was completing his doctorate in musicology with a study and edition of music by the great Renaissance composer Heinrich Isaac. His own music was still basically tonal in conception, but increasingly chromatic. Already he was writing for the string quartet with an extraordinarily perceptive ear for special colors and textures to produce variety even in the most straightforward, even "academic" formal repetitions.

The principal rondo theme is stated at the outset in the first violin with light accompanying material in the lower parts; it is colored by frequent use of segments of the whole-tone scale. Two episodes of varying character—one delicate and calmer, the other violent and energetic—lead back to the rondo theme, now stated in the viola, with the

first violin superimposing high pianissimo harmonics. Another episode, this time gently rocking in its 6/8 rhythm and played with mutes, brings on a fugato based on the rondo theme moving upward line by line from the cello to the first violin. A climactic passage, with all four instruments playing fortissimo, dies away to a final statement of the rondo theme, once again in a mood quite similar to the very opening. A coda brings together thematic ideas from all the sections of the piece and dies away with a last, slow suggestion of the principal theme.

Ludwig van Beethoven
Quartet in F minor, Opus 95, *Serioso*

Beethoven's tersest string quartet—a piece radically individual almost to the point of eccentricity—came in 1810, a year after Opus 74, which had to some extent represented a retrenchment to earlier expressive goals. Here all is abrupt, discontinuous, even jarring. Yet we should not make the easy assumption that some emotional crisis in Beethoven's life motivated this kind of writing, since he was composing at about the same time the serene and spacious *Archduke* Trio!

The entire first movement is not much longer than just the development section of one of the lengthy Opus 59 quartets. It sets off on its brief but intense journey with a unison roar, immediately broken off in silence, to be followed by a sharply contrasting dotted-note figure. Another silence. Then the cello offers to continue the opening figure, but the others decline the gambit with a lyrical phrase. The sequence of distinctive ideas all set off from one another by silence characterizes the disjunctions of this movement, and the brevity of the movement is accentuated by the fact that the exposition is not repeated but moves on instead to a middle section (hardly a "development" in the traditional sense) and an abridged recapitulation, expanded only by a brief coda at the end.

The slow movement continues the process of disjunction: it starts off with a solo cello scale in a distant key. A lyrical section yields to a fugue that gets hung up in chromatic entanglements; the cello returns as Alexander to cut the harmonic Gordian knot with further modulating scale passages before the fugue takes up again—more discreetly in its harmonic impact—and the lyric theme closes off the movement. But not quite: it ends on a diminished-seventh chord that leads directly on to the third movement, which can scarcely be called a scherzo (the word after all means "joke") with Beethoven's marking Allegro assai vivace *ma serioso*. The main section alternates the jagged dotted rhythms and scale passages with a more chorale-like Trio in which the three lower strings sustain long-breathed lines around the steadily rolling eighth-note figure of the first violin. The finale, following an expressively yearning slow introduction, takes off in an agitated rondo in F minor, but at the end this oh-so-serious quartet suddenly heads off into the major in a comically culminating Allegro. Beethoven himself had headed the manuscript of the quartet with the words "*Quartett[o] Serioso,*" but in the end he kicks seriousness out the window and chooses instead a vein of pawky humor.

—Steven Ledbetter

Francesco String Quartet

The Francesco String Quartet includes Boston Symphony violinists Bo Youp Hwang and Ron Wilkison, BSO violist Robert Barnes, and BSO cellist Joel Moerschel. Since the quartet was formed in 1979, its frequent local appearances have won critical praise; on Sunday afternoon, 11 October at 3 p.m., they begin their three-concert subscription season at the Longy School of Music in Cambridge.

Born in Korea, violinist Bo Youp Hwang studied at the Seoul School of Music and the University of Seoul, continuing his training with the Fine Arts String Quartet at the University of Wisconsin. While there, he became assistant concertmaster of the Milwaukee Symphony and second violinist of the Milwaukee String Quartet. Mr. Hwang joined the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1972.

Originally from Sacramento, California, Ron Wilkison was a member of the Baltimore Symphony and the Temple Institute String Quartet before joining the BSO in 1971.

Violist Robert Barnes was born in Detroit, where he won state-wide recognition at age eleven as a violinist in the All-City String Quartet. He became a member of the Detroit Symphony's violin section while attending Wayne State University, switching to viola his last year there and joining the BSO a year later, in 1967.

Cellist Joel Moerschel comes from Oak Park, Illinois, and joined the Boston Symphony in September of 1970. He received his education at Chicago Musical College and at the Eastman School of Music, and before coming to Boston he was a member of the Rochester Philharmonic.