# ANTONIO STRADIVARI ANNIVERSARY CONCERT MIRÓ QUARTET WITH RICARDO MORALES

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2012
8 O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING
COOLIDGE AUDITORIUM
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, THOMAS JEFFERSON BUILDING

In 1935 Gertrude Clarke Whittall gave the Library of Congress five Stradivari instruments and three years later built the Whittall Pavilion in which to house them. The Gertrude Clarke Whittall Foundation was established to provide for the maintenance of the instruments, to support concerts in which they are played, and to add to the collection of rare manuscripts that she had additionally given to the Library.

Every year since 1936 the Library of Congress has presented a concert featuring the Whittall instruments to commemorate Antonio Stradivari's death on December 18, 1737. The Whittall quintet of three violins, one viola and one cello are part of the Library's Cremonese collection, which also includes the "Tuscan Medici" Stradivari viola, the "Brookings" Amati violin, the "Kreisler" Guarneri, and most recently its sister violin, the "Baron Vitta-Goldberg" Guarneri.

The audio-visual equipment in the Coolidge Auditorium were funded in part by the Ira and Leonore Gershwin Fund in the Library of Congress.

Please request ASL and ADA accommodations five days in advance of the concert at 202-707-6362 or ADA@loc.gov.

Latecomers will be seated at a time determined by the artists for each concert.

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Please recycle your programs at the conclusion of the concert.

#### THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Coolidge Auditorium

Tuesday, December 18, 2012 — 8:00 pm

GERTRUDE CLARKE WHITTALL FOUNDATION

### Antonio Stradivari Anniversary Concert

## MIRÓ QUARTET

Daniel Ching and William Fedkenheuer, *violins*John Largess, *viola*Joshua Gindele, *violoncello* 

WITH

# RICARDO MORALES, CLARINET



#### PR OGR AM

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

String Quartet in G major, D. 887 (1826)

Allegro molto moderato

Andante un poco moto

Scherzo: Allegro vivace—Trio: Allegretto

Allegro assai

#### INTERMISSION

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Clarinet Quintet in B minor for clarinet, two violins, viola and violoncello, op. 115 (1891)

Allegro—Quasi sostenuto—(in tempo)

Adagio—Più lento—Tempo I

Andantino—Presto non assai, ma con sentimento
Con moto

#### ABOUT THE PROGRAM

#### FRANZ SCHUBERT, String Quartet in G major, D. 887

The final chamber works of Franz Schubert display his absolute mastery of instrumental media. They present Schubert in his best voice, distinct from the looming Titan, Beethoven, who shared his Vienna and for whom he served as a pallbearer in 1827. While Beethoven lived to a respectable age, Schubert did not, making his accomplishments all the more remarkable. When Schubert composed his String Quartet in G major, D. 887 in 1826, his last essay in the genre, he still had a few major chamber works to write, including the piano trios and the string quintet (with an extra cello instead of the usual viola). Yet the fifteenth and final quartet marks a satisfying culmination of his dramatic outpouring for the ensemble; it contains a remarkable combination of Schubert's trademark lyricism and sophisticated thematic integration/manipulation.

In the 1989 film Crimes and Misdemeanors, Woody Allen uses the opening of Schubert's last quartet for a pivotal sequence, underscoring the complexity of the situation in the film and the music. It was an excellent choice-Schubert's G-major quartet is one of his most powerful and intricate utterances. While a motivic analysis is helpful, Schubert's expressive textural and localized harmonic ideas must also be taken into account, serving in their way as "thematic" components. The very opening of the work exhibits a harmonic motive that permeates the movement, becoming of prime importance at moments of structural significance. The idea is simple: a major chord becomes a minor chord; it is the manner in which Schubert effects this change that makes it so momentous. The piece opens with a quiet, closed-position G-major triad in the upper voices that swiftly grows into a fortissimo, widely spaced G-minor chord. A distinctive rhythm accompanies this harmonic shift, and a variant of this is heard with each instantiation. After the first major/minor transit, a dotted-rhythm is introduced that will be explored throughout the movement. After two statements of these ideas and continuing with the mixedmode precedent, the flat-sixth (E-flat in the context of G major, which would normally include E natural as the unmodified modal pitch) is borrowed from the minor to set up what seems like the true main theme in G major.

Schubert is delightfully ambiguous with the material and structure, as will be seen. The music described above has the feeling of a brief introduction, yet its material is fundamental to the development of the piece, and the ideas make significant returns (though not as one would expect) at the recapitulation and conclusion of the movement. Before delving further into that, however, it is worth looking at how the music progresses as it would upon a first hearing, when one does not know what to expect. After the violence of the opening music, we are treated to what must be one of Schubert's most wonderful melodies, shimmering atop a hushed tremolo bed of sound. The melody is constructed from components already introduced (the dotted rhythm is easy to recognize), but its magical quality comes from two features: the tremolo (which along with the idea of the "repeated note" is of great textural significance to the quartet as a whole) and an irresistible harmonic sequence with a chromatically descending bass line. This type of sequence is not unique (the opening of Beethoven's "Waldstein" sonata (op. 53) comes to mind), but the characteristics of the setting in this string quartet are unprecedented. After the cello answers the violin's melodic statement, a

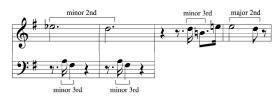
development of the material ensues (within the exposition proper). One important detail to note during this development is the specific interval involved in the shift from major to minor—namely, the semitone; Schubert's isolation of it motivically in the first handful of measures elucidates the intentionality of the semitone's use as a melodic means of slipping around harmonically, beyond its melodic motivic significance.

Another contrasting theme follows, now harmonically distinct but still incorporating familiar ideas (like the dotted rhythm, and repeated notes in both the theme itself -in an oft-syncopated guise—and the measured tremolo of the first violin when the melody passes to the second violin). The triplet measured tremolo assumes greater importance as the music intensifies. Variations appear (such as a cello solo with pizzicato accompaniment) as the exposition draws to a close. The last string standing is the cello, which if the repeat is not taken, continues its tremolando, oscillating descent into the development section, where the other instruments join. The sequential theme is heard again, this time in E-flat. Another "noodly" passage brings a statement of the same theme in E major, this time with the cello at the melodic helm. The remainder of the development section (a term used here only from a structural standpoint, as the material is developed throughout the movement) features transformations of the tremolo oscillation idea and a reinterpretation of the major/minor shift that uses the rhythm associated with that shift to move between alternative chords to the parallel minor. Familiar uses of the dotted rhythm return, leading to the astounding and dramatic recapitulation of the opening music.

Using the syncopated rhythm from the secondary theme combined with a nontremolando version of the wandering scalar idea. Schubert destabilizes the meter, undermining the sense of preparation for a return. When the recapitulation occurs, it is as if Schubert inverted the entire dramatic axis of the music. A quiet G-minor triad grows softly into a G major triad (the reverse of the opening direction of transformation) accompanied by quietly plucked strings and followed by a majorkey, non-dotted version of the expected material. It is a bold move to make, and a sophisticated one at that. It is an excellent example of Schubert's transformative thought at the service of drama that so influenced composers like Franz Liszt. The sequential theme has also been transfigured, now without tremolo and its melody more elaborately adorned. The remainder of the movement features material familiar from the exposition. A brief coda combines the measured tremolos with the harmonic shift rhythm, and the opening gesture is brilliantly combined with its recapitulatory antithesis, as a means to cement G major without losing the ambiguity that characterized the movement. A tonal tug-of-war ensues: G major in the violins leads to G minor in the lower strings, and then back to the major, then minor, then major a final time, giving the laurel to G major-the ultimate (but not inevitable) winner between these parallel polarities.

Following on the heels of such a momentous opening, the second movement manages to balance compelling new material with elements derived from the first—in a manner of speaking, Schubert is still working out some unresolved issues. *Forzando* B's in four octaves set the stage for a melancholy cello solo (this startling feature typically intrudes before each appearance of the movement's primary theme). The accompaniment plants the seed of an "insider" Beethoven quote (Schubert had recently heard Beethoven's op. 131 string quartet and quotes

the opening of the fugue in the second violin later in the movement).¹ One may notice the almost casual inclusion of a dotted-rhythm idea, initially in the accompaniment, but more prominently in the variant of the theme that appears starting at the pickup to the twentieth measure (this thematic unit has its own identity, but also bears hallmarks of the first theme, as in the modified "turn"). A quiet cadential passage leads to a sudden explosion of ferocious music in G minor, bearing the calling-card dotted-rhythm from the opening movement. This music is terrifying, flipping on its head the minor-third motive that lent such beauty to the opening of the quartet, in addition to reversing the order and inverting the "major/minor second:"



Extracted from Schubert, String Quartet D. 887; I: mm. 13-16



Extracted from Schubert, String Quartet D. 887; II: mm. 52-4

It is the juxtaposition of extremes in sonic content that stokes the drama; the new role for the tremolando texture in particular sets the stage for the further development of the repeated-note (in its varying degrees of attack speed, ranging from the very fast tremolo, to the measured tremolo or rhythmically significant but still fast groupings, usually in groups of three, to the slower, deliberate repetitions that emerge in the cello at the return of the first theme). The slower repeated notes link the return of the opening material to the next violent outburst, now using groupings of three repeated notes. A potentially difficult interpretational challenge arises with the return of the dotted-rhythm theme in the cello, echoed by its statement in the first violin. There is a sense of repose in this statement of the material, first accompanied by tremolo, and then heard again with repeated triplet eighth notes as accompaniment-the test here is to differentiate the material and effect a seamless transition to the return of the first cello theme, now accompanied by a combination of duple and triple note repetitions. Given the overall feel of the movement, it is perhaps surprising that Schubert ends in E major, the G-sharp of which only appears in that context four measures from the end.

However, it is in keeping with Schubert's already established gambit of major/minor alternation, as the E major (and its G-sharp) that concludes the second movement is immediately confronted by G natural in the opening of the scherzo (in this context the G is the sixth scale degree of B minor). This G in the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Special thanks to Peter Sheppard Skærved for pointing this out

viola appears in a group of six repeated notes followed by a triadic arpeggio, comprising the essential material of the scherzo theme. The music is energetic and demonstrates more of Schubert's excellent orchestrational choices and wit; the lines are interwoven with finesse, exploiting the mutability of the repeated-note and semitone harmonic moves explored earlier. The central trio section is introduced by a diminution of the repeated notes, leading to a graceful cello melody reminiscent of the previous movement. The music is charming, with unforgettable moments in the second half, such as the points of chromatic inflection and the sudden *pianissimo* presentation of the melody shared between the violin and viola an octave apart, yielding such a unique sonority.

As we move into the final movement, Schubert continues to play with the major/minor alternation. In this case the scherzo ends in B minor, and those B's clash with the *forzando* B-flats of the subsequent G-minor that opens the finale. With the exception of the absent lyric melody, Schubert's closing movement is essentially a synthesis and reinterpretation of what occurred in the previous three. The major/minor alternation is everywhere in evidence, and the motoric energy of the newly-cast repeated-note figure borders on the ecstatic. In the midst of this frenzied rondo are significant transformations of earlier ideas; even the rhythmic and melodic profile of the main rondo theme is clearly derived from earlier passages. The thrusting third of the second movement becomes a ferocious fourth, occasionally isolated as the third was previously, but also preordained in the first movement and surrounded by other salient intervals:



Extracted from Schubert, String Quartet D. 887; I: m. 15



Extracted from Schubert, String Quartet D. 887; IV: mm. 28-30

The cadential passage that led to the contrasting music in the second movement is here transformed into a massive accumulation of sound with the reverse end objective—instead of the highly charged G-minor arrival, Schubert presents a lithe and playful theme in G major that demonstrates his remarkable ability to shift character rapidly. Each idea is further developed, and the group-of-three repetition eventually comes to prominence, especially in the context of a new chordal idea that serves as an apotheosis-like transmutation of the quartet's opening. Schubert allows the music to run its course, without it ever losing its forward impulse. A quiet ending seems in the offing until the last two measures, in which Schubert finally offers an unadulterated affirmation of G major in the *fortissimo* final cadence.



## JOHANNES BRAHMS, Clarinet Quintet in B minor for clarinet, two violins, viola and violoncello, op. 115

When Brahms finished his second string quintet in 1890, various factors led him to consider the cessation of his compositional activity. Thankfully for posterity, Brahms felt a resurgence of interest in composition after hearing and befriending the Meiningen clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld. Their collaboration yielded Brahms' final chamber works: the Clarinet Trio, op. 114 (1891); the Clarinet Quintet, op. 115 (1891); and the two clarinet sonatas, op. 120 (1894). The latter were adapted into other versions, most successfully perhaps for viola and piano. This of course has led generations of violists, bless their hearts, to claim the sonatas as their own, answering the question, "do you know the Brahms clarinet sonatas?" with the following response after hearing them: "oh, you mean the viola sonatas?"

There is a concentration to the music of Brahms, even when at its most unbuttoned, that lends the music great solidity at the local and macro levels. It is not just the economic use of material that contributes to this sense (to paraphrase, Brahms famously suggested that composing was easy, but deciding what to leave out was the hard part); it is also due to a density of expression in which the dramatic possibilities are so compressed as to be carefully corralled. While these characteristics still apply to Brahms' late works, a repose does emerge that perhaps misleadingly suggests a relaxing of the tautness; at the opening of the clarinet quintet there is an expansiveness reminiscent of the sonic room Brahms allowed himself at times, as in the case of the opening of the *Andante moderato* of his fourth symphony, in which a pair of horns spaciously intone part of the theme.

The opening of the clarinet quintet is deceptively simple, yet full of pathos: a pair of violins in thirds and sixths presents music that will be variously transformed throughout the piece. It consists of two recognizable components that will be developed immediately. They can be parsed by the ear into groups of two measures each before the clarinet enters; both share parallel motion, but the first is diatonic and the second incorporates chromatic inflection. The great thing about such fundamental characteristics is that they allowed Brahms the harmonic flexibility to move about with motivic justification between areas of stability and instability. A contrasting theme with a dotted rhythm and deliberate attitude intrudes at measure 25, but upon a closer look it is clear that this new theme is partially derived from the first part of the opening theme. It serves the purpose of helping to propel the music forward, eventually arriving at a more lyrical melodic expanse. A combination of music exhibiting this lyricism and Brahms' further exploration of the opening chromatic material rounds out the exposition. A similar process is in play for the remainder of the movement, with special attention paid to alternative orchestrations of the material. It may have been the exceptional quality of the clarinet's integration that led people from the outset to view Brahms' quintet as such an important work in the clarinet literature. The initial movement ends on a mournfully reflective note, entirely in character with the forlorn feeling of the opening duo.

The beauties of the second movement lay not just in the thematic/harmonic constructions, but also in Brahms' characteristic use of unexpected and differing phrase lengths at the local level. At times, such as the opening of the movement, this leads one to feel uneasy, as if entering *in medias res*, in the middle of an intimate conversation. In a sense that is exactly what is happening, as the main theme's relationships to music from the opening (the re-contextualized retrograde inversion of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Malcolm MacDonald, *Brahms* (United States: Schirmer Books, 1990), 296-7.

the chromatic idea, an alternative form of the characteristic turn, etc.) begin to reveal themselves over time. At the core of the movement is a rhapsodic extended episode that more explicitly references the first movement (including moments such as the last cadence). It is here that Brahms utilizes the instrument's technical flexibility that makes the clarinet a joy for which to write.

The nostalgia brought to the fore by the return of the second movement's primary theme is dispelled by the seemingly artless start of the *Andantino* that follows. This opening bears a striking similarity in affect to the second movement of the third symphony, which also features the clarinet in a melodic forebear of the quintet theme. As per the wonderful norm with Brahms, things are not what they seem. After the initial presentation of the main theme (whose contours are echoes of what came before), Brahms employs accompanimental and melodic variants that cumulatively destabilize the serene picture, though not enough to derail the B-train. A *scherzando* version of the theme takes over the bulk of the remainder of the movement, and the writing becomes more flashy. Of great interest is the manner in which Brahms creates unusual passages using irregular phrase lengths in the strings beneath a syncopated clarinet line that sinuously moves in and out of sync with the ensemble, infecting it with its errant behavior. Instead of a full return to the opening material, Brahms constructs an arpeggiated return to a brief *Rückblick*, a reminiscence of the movement's opening colored by what had just transpired.

The finale is a variation set, quite strict in its structuring with repeats of the second half of each variation. The melodic contour of the theme should be familiar as having grown naturally from the Andantino theme that preceded it. There is a tinge of resignation to this music, which is held in restraint even when the material becomes more frenetic, as in the second variation. One of the silent achievements of Brahms in this movement is that the clarinet is not overused; at times it is reserved to poignantly illuminate through its commentary. By the time we arrive at the variation in 3/8 time, Brahms has prepared the listener to understand aurally the relationships between the opening movement's music and the final material-suddenly we are aware that the music is a hybrid of ideas collected along the way, with the integration of material first heard in the opening four measures of the work. One does not mind being thusly instructed by Brahms, as the effect can be revelatory, especially on a first listen. The music begins to dissipate into moments of ensemble unity punctuated by clarinet the increasingly forlorn sound of the solo clarinet. The ending is a subtle transformation of the first movement's final moments. Such an act is not foreign to Brahms (the F-major symphony comes to mind), but the familial nature of the clarinet quintet's musical ideas throughout the piece makes the circularity of this ending particularly successful, and an elegant close to his corpus of non-duo chamber works.

> David Henning Plylar Music Specialist Library of Congress, Music Division

#### ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

Hailed by *The New York Times* as possessing "explosive vigor and technical finesse," the dynamic **Miró Quartet** enjoys its place at the top of the international chamber music scene. Now in its second decade, the quartet continues to captivate audiences and critics around the world with its startling intensity, fresh perspective, and mature approach.

Founded in 1995 at the Oberlin Conservatory, the Miró Quartet met with immediate success winning first prize at the 50th annual Coleman Chamber Music Competition in April 1996 and taking both the first and grand prizes at the Fischoff National Chamber Music Competition two months later. Earning both the First Prize and the Piéce de Concert Prize at the 1998 Banff International String Quartet Competition, the Miró Quartet also won the prestigious Naumburg Chamber Music Award in 2000. In 2005, the Quartet received the Cleveland Quartet Award and was the first ensemble ever to be awarded the coveted Avery Fisher Career Grant. In the fall of 2011, violinist William Fedkenheuer joined the Miró Quartet as its newest member.

Recent Miró Quartet seasons have included concerts in some of the world's most important concert venues, such as Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, the Berlin Philharmonie's Kammermusiksaal, the Konzerthaus in Vienna, Italy's Festival Internazionale Quartetto d'Archi Reggio Emilia, the Dresden Music Festival, London's Wigmore Hall and the Palacio Real de Madrid. The Miró Quartet has been Quartet-in-Residence at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center Two in New York City, and was named to the Distinctive Debut Series of Carnegie Hall, which in conjunction with ECHO (European Concert Hall Organization) provided debut appearances in Cologne, Stockholm, Brussels, London, Vienna, Amsterdam and Athens. In recent seasons, the ensemble has collaborated with such artists as Leif Ove Andsnes, Joshua Bell, Eliot Fisk, Lynn Harrell, Midori, Jon Kimura Parker and Pinchas Zukerman. The Miró Quartet is also a favorite of numerous summer festivals, having appeared regularly at the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Sunflower Music Festival, the White Pine Festival, Chamber Music Northwest, San Miguel de Allende Chamber Music Festival, and the Sunflower Music Festival among others.

Recent seasons have included a critically acclaimed return performance at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., a residency with the actor Stephen Dillane at Lincoln Center in New York, and performances in New York, Philadelphia, La Jolla, Memphis, Kansas City, Montreal, Chicago, Cleveland, Phoenix and Miami among many others. They also brought successful collaborations with the celebrated British percussionist Colin Currie, pianist Shai Wosner, and cellist Lynn Harrell.

The Quartet has been heard on numerous national radio broadcasts, including American Public Media's *Performance Today* and Minnesota Public Radio's *Saint Paul Sunday*. Internationally, the Miró Quartet has been featured on radio networks across Europe, Canada and Israel. They have also been seen on ABC's *World News Tonight*, A&E's *Breakfast with the Arts*, and on various programs of the Canadian Broadcasting Company. At the invitation of Isaac Stern, the Quartet performed in a live broadcast at the Jerusalem Music Center in Israel and was featured in the PBS-TV *American Masters* documentary: *Isaac Stern: Life's Virtuoso*.

In addition to a mastery of the standard repertoire, the Quartet maintains a fierce devotion to contemporary music. The Miró Quartet has commissioned and performed music by such composers as Brent Michael Davids, Leonardo Balada, Kevin Puts, Chan Ka Nin, David Schober, and Gunther Schuller. The Miró Quartet serves as the Faculty String Quartet-in-Residence at the Sarah and Ernest Butler School of Music at the University of Texas at Austin. Its members—violinists Daniel Ching and William Fedkenheuer, violist John Largess, and cellist Joshua Gindele—teach private students and coach chamber music there, while maintaining an active international touring schedule. Deeply committed to fostering the next generation of musicians, the quartet was on faculty at the Hugh A. Glauser School of Music at Kent State University before their current position in Austin. In the summers, the Miró Quartet has taught and performed at the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, Lake Tahoe Music Festival, and the Kent/Blossom Music Festival. The Quartet gives frequent master classes at many institutions around the world.

The Miró Quartet has released several recordings, most recently a disc featuring live performances of works by Dvořák and Kevin Puts. Other releases include the op. 18 quartets of Beethoven on the Vanguard Classics label as well as a disc featuring music by George Crumb and Rued Langgaard for Bridge Records. The Miró Quartet's recording of Crumb's Black Angels received much international acclaim, including the French "Diapason d'Or." The Miró Quartet is also featured on an Oxingale release entitled "Epilogue", performing Mendelssohn's final string quartet (op. 80) and Schubert's Quintet with celebrated cellist Matt Haimovitz.

The Miró Quartet is named for the Catalan artist Joan Miró, whose surrealist works—with subject matter drawn from the realm of memory and imaginative fantasy—are some of the most original of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



Violin by Antonio Stradivari, Cremona, 1704, "Betts" Image by Michael Zirkle (Music Division, Library of Congress)

#### CONCERTS FROM THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The Coolidge Auditorium, constructed in 1925 through a generous gift from **Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge**, has been the venue for countless world-class performers and performances. **Gertrude Clarke Whittall** presented to the Library a gift of five Stradivari instruments which were first heard here during a concert on January 10, 1936. These parallel but separate donations serve as the pillars that now support a full season of concerts made possible by gift trusts and foundations that followed those established by Mrs. Coolidge and Mrs. Whittall.

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PRESENTED AS PART OF THE ATLAS INTERSECTIONS FESTIVAL AT THE ATLAS PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

Theo Bleckmann, composer/vocalist; Ben Monder, guitar

#### Saturday, March 2, 2013 – 2:00 pm

PAUL LEWIS

Pianist Paul Lewis performs works by Schubert

#### Tuesday, March 19, 2013 - 12:00 pm

#### AMERICAN MUSICOLOGICAL SOCIETY LECTURE

Dr. Todd Decker, "Making 'Show Boat': Jerome Kern, Oscar Hammerstein II, and the Power of Performers"

COOLIDGE AUDITORIUM

#### Friday, April 5, 2013 – 8:00 pm

GABRIEL KAHANE AND TIMOTHY ANDRES

Two composer-performers present their own music and selections from Eisler to Ives

COOLIDGE AUDITORIUM

#### Saturday, April 13, 2013 – 2:00 pm

CHRISTOPHE ROUSSET

Harpsichordist Rousset performs music by François Couperin and Rameau PRESENTED IN COOPERATION WITH THE MAISON FRANÇAISE AT THE EMBASSY OF FRANCE AND THE FRENCH-AMERICAN CULTURAL FOUNDATION COOLIDGE AUDITORIUM

For more information, visit www.loc.gov or call (202) 707-5502.

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## in AMERICA





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IMAGE: Edwin Chamberlain, Company G, New Hampshire Infantry Regiment (ca. 1862-1864) Liljenquist Family Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

