

# *Tafelmusik*

## THE FORTEPIANO

The piano used in these performances was made by **Thomas and Barbara Wolf** in 1997 in The Plains, Virginia, outside Washington, DC. It is modeled on the work of the 18th-century Viennese maker **Anton Walter**, and has a keyboard range of FF to g'''. Knee levers are used to raise the dampers, and a handstop operates the moderator (a muted effect). Veneered in curly cherry, the case is primarily of spruce.

**Gabriel Anton Walter** (1752-1825) was part of a cadre of piano makers, performers, and composers living in Vienna. That Walter and his colleagues Stein, Hofmann, Kober, Schantz, and numerous others worked closely with Haydn, Mozart, Hummel, and Beethoven is well documented. Each maker had his own designs and brought special qualities to the instruments, which the composers used to advantage. Haydn praised Walter's pianos for their brilliance and complained about the prices he charged, but ultimately preferred the pianos of Schantz. Beethoven, while liking Walter's instruments, also expressed concern about their economics. Acquainted with most of the German and Austrian makers and often praising them, at the time of his death Mozart owned an early-period Walter of a slightly different design than the more usual model heard tonight.

The fortepiano belongs to the **University of Toronto**, and we are very grateful to the Faculty of Music for permission to use it this week.

**Thomas and Barbara Wolf** have made reproductions of historical keyboard instruments since 1969. Originally trained as musicians (he a bassist, she a pianist), they apprenticed in the workshops of Frank Hubbard and Eric Herz in Boston. In 1974 they moved to Washington, DC to begin a long association with the keyboard collection at the Smithsonian Institution, filling the roles of restorer, conservator and technician. Established in 1975, the Wolf shop has been located in a century-old former schoolhouse in The Plains, Virginia (near Washington) since 1992. The Wolfs make a wide variety of clavichords, harpsichords, and fortepianos based on originals from the 17th to the early 19th centuries. Restoration and maintenance of antique instruments is also important to the Wolfs; their work can be found in the collections of several museums.