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PREVIEW
NOTES

Emerson Quartet
Friday, October 21 – 8:00 PM
Perelman Theater

Background

Drawing inspiration from the great American poet and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, the Emerson Quartet approaches each performance with an insight, enthusiasm and technical mastery easily connected to its namesake. It stands alone in the history of string quartets with an unparalleled list of achievements over three decades: more than 30 acclaimed recordings, eight Grammy Awards (including two for Best Classical Album, an unprecedented honor for a chamber music group) and the coveted Avery Fisher Prize. Their PCMS return is an all-Mozart affair featuring the composer's final three quartets and the Adagio and Fugue in C Minor.

All-Mozart Program

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Born: January 27, 1756 in Salzburg, Austria

Died: December 5, 1791 in Vienna, Austria

Quartet in D Major, K. 575

Composed: 1789

Last PCMS performance: Tokyo Quartet in 2010

Duration: 25 minutes

The first of Mozart's "Prussian" quartets, the K. 575 quartet as a whole is notable for its understated, almost secretive mood. As in other works from the last years of Mozart's life, it features a delightful incorporation of counterpoint into a texture of Classical ease.

Quartet in B-flat Major, K. 589

Composed: 1790

Last PCMS performance: Artemis Quartet in 2008

Duration: 23 minutes

A work of enigmatic beauty typical of his late works, Mozart's second "Prussian" quartet gives the cello a dominant role, often pushing the second violin and viola into the background to enable the cello to present thematic material or engage in dialogue with the first violin. The opening Allegro is followed by a relatively brief Larghetto, a Minuet of almost symphonic proportions and a finale marked Allegro assai.

Adagio and Fugue in C Minor, K. 546

Composed: 1788

Last PCMS performance:

Musicians from Marlboro in 2006

Duration: 7 minutes

The fugue of this pair was originally composed for keyboard duet (K. 426) in 1783, a period during which Mozart was greatly interested in studying and learning from the contrapuntal techniques of Bach and Handel. The same summer of 1788 witnessed the composition of the three great final symphonies. Perhaps it would not be too far-fetched to link the orchestration of the fugue with the composition of the greatest of all Mozart's contrapuntal essays, the Finale of the Jupiter Symphony.

Quartet in F Major, K. 590

Composed: 1790

Last PCMS performance: Daedalus Quartet in 2011

Duration: 28 minutes

Mozart's final string quartet was to have been the third of six the composer intended to dedicate to the cello-playing monarch King Frederick William II of Prussia. An advertisement for these "Prussian" quartets describes them as "concertante quartets," thus paying due recognition to the prominence of their cello parts, which were obviously designed in deference to the king.