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PREVIEW
NOTES

St. Lawrence Quartet w/ Michael Tree, viola
Friday, February 11 • 8:00 PM • Perelman Theater

Background

Since winning the Banff International String Quartet Competition in 1992, the St. Lawrence Quartet has delighted audiences with its spontaneous, passionate, and dynamic performances. Alex Ross of *The New Yorker* magazine writes, "the St. Lawrence are remarkable not simply for the quality of their music making, exalted as it is, but for the joy they take in the act of connection." The group recently celebrated its 20th anniversary and since 1998 has been Ensemble in Residence at Stanford University. Formerly the violist of the legendary Guarneri Quartet, Michael Tree appears regularly with PCMS as a guest artist – most recently with the Jupiter Quartet and Peter Wiley in April 2010.

Program

Quartet in C Minor, Op. 18, No. 4
Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: Dec. 16, 1770 in Bonn, Germany

Died: Mar. 26, 1827 in Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1798-1800

Last PCMS performance: Miró Quartet in 2010

Duration: 24 minutes

The only quartet from Beethoven's Opus 18 set to be cast in a minor key, this was also, despite its number, the last of the six to be completed. C Minor would come to be a key Beethoven reserved for highly dramatic works, including most famously the Fifth Symphony.

Yiddishbuk

Osvaldo Golijov

Born: Dec. 5, 1960 in La Plata, Argentina

Composed: 1992

Last PCMS performance: PCMS premiere

Duration: 14 minutes

Written specifically for the St. Lawrence, this visceral quartet is a work of almost Webern-like compression. It was inspired by drawings of children who were imprisoned at Theresienstadt, and by *Yiddishbuk*, a collection of apocryphal psalms that survive only in the notebooks of Franz Kafka. Golijov drew particular inspiration from its closing lines: "No one sings as purely as those who are in the deepest hell. Theirs is the song which we confused with that of the angels."

Quintet in G Minor, K. 516
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Born: Jan. 27, 1756 in Salzburg, Austria

Died: Dec. 5, 1791 in Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1787

Last PCMS performance: Orion Quartet

w/ Ida Kavafian in 2006

Duration: 36 minutes

Mozart's choice of two violins, two violas, and cello for all of his string quintets is unusual in the Classical era; composers like Boccherini generally opted for the use of viola and two cellos. Mozart composed his earlier quintet in B-flat nearly 15 years before this one, and while there is no documentary evidence to explain why he returned to the medium after so many years, there seems to be little doubt that the two quintets he composed in 1787 (K. 515 and K. 516) were composed as a contrasting pair in much the same manner as the Symphonies Nos. 40 and 41.