

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

DORIC QUARTET

Tuesday, February 19 – 7:30 PM

Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center

PROGRAM

String Quartet in B Minor, Op. 33, No. 1

Franz Joseph Haydn

Born: March 31, 1732, in Rohrau, Austria

Died: May 31, 1809, Rohrau, Austria

Composed: 1781

Duration: 25 minutes

Franz Haydn said that his Op. 33 string quartets were done "in quite a new, special way." This is no mere marketing hype, for the quartets have more varied and fluent rhythms than the previous set. The Op. 33 set appeared in Vienna just as the 26 year-old Mozart arrived there in pursuit of a freelance career. Haydn's new quartets catalyzed Mozart into writing more quartets of his own, resulting in the famous set of six quartets that he dedicated to Haydn. The B Minor Quartet is the most intense of the six Op. 33 and the only one in a minor key.

String Quartet No. 3, Op. 94

Benjamin Britten

Born: November 22, 1913, in Lowestoft, UK

Died: December 4, 1976, in Aldeburgh, UK

Composed: 1975

Duration: 28 minutes

In 1973, Benjamin Britten—frail and facing a heart operation—composed his final opera, *Death in Venice*. Based on Thomas Mann's 1913 novella, the opera summed up many of the themes of Britten's artistic career: as the aging novelist Aschenbach embarks on a quest for spiritual redemption in a city assaulted by the plague, he is torn between his search for beauty and the corrupting force of his own physical desires. Two years later, in the fall of 1975, Britten composed his String Quartet No. 3. It would be (except for a short choral piece

for children) his final composition, for Britten died of heart failure the following year. The String Quartet No. 3 is in five unrelated movements, and Britten at first thought of titling this music Divertimento rather than Quartet; he finally became convinced that it had sufficient unity and seriousness to merit the latter name. Though Britten's Third String Quartet does not sound like Bartók, it has some of the same arch-structure favored by the Hungarian master: the three odd-numbered movements are at slower tempos while the two even-numbered movements are fast.

String Quartet in E Minor, Op. 44, No. 2

Felix Mendelssohn

Born: February 3, 1809 in Hamburg, Germany

Died: November 4, 1847, in Leipzig, Germany

Composed: 1837, rev. 1839

Duration: 28 minutes

The Op. 44 quartets were composed in 1837 and 1838, a time of great personal happiness for Mendelssohn. His marriage on March 28, 1837, and the birth of his son less than one year later gave him great pleasure, and every composition was eagerly awaited and immediately performed. Under his baton, the Gewandhaus Orchestra rose to first-rank status in Europe, and Mendelssohn toured actively as conductor and performer. The Op. 44 Quartets were dedicated to the Crown Prince Gustavus of Sweden. Of the three, the middle quartet, that in E Minor, has become his most popular work for the chamber ensemble. Throughout the string quartet, there is a curiously resonant conflict between the fanciful and the rigorous—played out in many ways and on many different scales.