

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

TAKÁCS QUARTET

Friday, March 15 – 7:30 PM

Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center

PROGRAM

String Quartet in G Major, Op. 76, No. 1

Franz Joseph Haydn

Born: March 31, 1732, in Rohrau, Austria

Died: May 31, 1809, Rohrau, Austria

Composed: 1797

Duration: 22 minutes

When Count Joseph Erdödy asked Haydn for a set of quartets, probably early in 1796, the 64-year-old composer brought to the task his newly developed musical outlook along with 40 years of continuous growth and maturation in writing for the medium. Among the new features he incorporated into these Op. 76 quartets are more profound and emotional slow movements that move at an extremely deliberate pace and, as Haydn biographer H.C. Robbins Landon finds, “are also bathed in a curiously impersonal and remote melancholy.”

String Quartet No. 4, Op. 83

Dmitri Shostakovich

Born: September 25, 1906, in St. Petersburg, Russia

Died: August 9, 1975, in Moscow, Russia

Composed: 1949

Duration: 25 minutes

The Quartet No. 4 was composed in 1949 for the Beethoven Quartet, the ensemble that premiered all of Shostakovich’s quartets from the Second onwards, though the work’s premiere was withheld until December 3, 1953, nine months after Stalin’s death. During the ominous, unsettled time of the Quartet’s creation, Shostakovich came to identify himself closely with other victims of persecution, namely the Jews of Russia. Shostakovich spoke of the inspiration behind the Fourth Quartet: “Jewish folk music has made a most powerful impression on me. I never tire of delighting in it; it’s multifaceted, it can appear to be happy while it is tragic. It’s almost always laughter through tears.... [But] this is not

purely a musical issue, this is also a moral issue. The Jews became the most persecuted and defenseless people of Europe [during World War II]. It was a return to the Middle Ages. Jews became a symbol for me.”

String Quartet in G Minor, Op. 27

Edvard Grieg

Born: June 15, 1843, in Bergen, Norway

Died: September 4, 1907, in Breggen, Norway

Composed: 1877-78

Duration: 33 minutes

After busy years in Oslo teaching and conducting to make a living, Edvard Grieg and his wife Nina left for Hardanger in 1877. In the course of a couple of years, there he wrote several masterworks, among them the Quartet in G Minor. On hearing Grieg’s quartet, Franz Liszt declared “It is a long time since I have encountered a new composition, especially a string quartet, which has intrigued me as greatly as this distinctive and admirable work by Grieg.” The musical language is rather radical, and in many ways Grieg’s quartet is a bridge between the late Beethoven quartets and Debussy’s quartet, composed 15 years after Grieg’s. Working hard to find a thematic and formal framework, Grieg decided to build the whole quartet on the melody of his Ibsen song *Spillemænd* (“Minstrel,” Op. 25, No. 1), which underlies all four movements.