

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

Brentano Quartet
Hsin-Yun Huang, *viola*
Sunday, October 20 – 3 PM
Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center

PROGRAM

Quartet in E-flat Major, K. 428

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Born: January 27, 1756, in Salzburg, Austria

Died: December 5, 1791, in Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1783

Duration: 28 minutes

Of Mozart's six quartets dedicated to Haydn, this is one of the most genial and, in some respects, most Haydn-esque in its delight in unexpected shifts of harmony. Mozart worked on this quartet over the course of two months in summer 1783; perhaps he had this piece in mind when in his dedication he described the group as "the fruit of a long and laborious effort" -- it seems he knocked each of the others off in as little as a single day. It is believed that this may have been one of the pieces performed at a quartet party the following year in which the players were violinists Haydn and Dittersdorf, violist Mozart, and cellist Vanhal.

String Quintet in C Minor, K. 406

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Composed: 1787

Duration: 25 minutes

In 1788, Mozart transcribed his Serenade for Winds in C minor, K. 388/384a for string quartet. Some of the shades of contrast in timbre are lost in translation. Imbued with an intensity that belies its purpose of social entertainment, the Serenade features chromaticism and irregular phrase structures that make it a more personal work than most of Mozart's occasional pieces. Thus, his transference of the piece to the more "serious" chamber music idiom of the string quintet seems quite natural. Unlike the transcription of the B flat major Serenade, K. 361/370a, that of the C minor Serenade is generally ranked with the original string quintets.

Quartet in F major

Maurice Ravel

Born: March 7, 1875, in Ciboure, France

Died: December 28, 1937, in Paris, France

Composed: 1902-1903

Duration: 30 minutes

The similarities between Maurice Ravel's only work for string quartet, the String Quartet in F major, and Claude Debussy's only work for string quartet, the String Quartet in G minor, Op. 10, can hardly be avoided or ignored. During the early years of his career, Ravel was frequently and sometimes vehemently criticized for having copied Debussy, and it was only later that musical society began to realize that, in the realm of piano music at least, it was equally possible that Debussy had imitated his younger colleague. With the String Quartet in F, composed in 1902 and 1903 and then revised up to 1910, however, Ravel seems more certain to have relied on Debussy's 1893 Op. 10; as emotionally, psychologically, and even structurally different as the two works are, one could never accuse them of having a language barrier. But, whereas Debussy's quartet is the work of a headstrong progressive still on his way to developing a mature, personal style, Ravel's is the work of an already mature artist more concerned with craftsmanship and traditional structure than with innovation.