

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

Orion Quartet
Kim Kashkashian, *viola*
Marcy Rosen, *cello*
Sunday, November 17 – 3 PM
Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center

PROGRAM

Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 33, No. 2, *Joke*

Joseph Haydn

Born: March 31, 1732, in Rohrau, Austria

Died: May 31, 1809, in Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1781

Duration: 18 minutes

The joke of the quartet's title doesn't come until the last movement. The Presto, a rondo finale, is based entirely on a quick, silly little repeated-note tune of four giddy two-bar clauses. After a couple of variations, the music pulls up short for a brief, bleak Adagio passage, whereupon the inane theme starts up again. But now in the coda—here comes the joke—the tune is split into its four tiny components, with a two-bar rest after each one. And just when the melody seems finally to have spurted its final section, Haydn inserts a four-measure rest, suggesting that the work is over, but then has the quartet blurt out the tune's first clause again—taking the audience by surprise, and leaving the movement hanging in mid-air with an unfinished phrase.

Quartet in C Major, K. 465, *Dissonance*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Born: January 27, 1756, in Salzburg, Austria

Died: December 5, 1791, in Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1785

Duration: 30 minutes

The last of the six quartets Mozart dedicated to Haydn, K. 465 is officially in the sunny key of C major, but it owes its "Dissonant" nickname to its slow, tense introduction, full of unresolved harmonies over a throbbing cello line. Soon enough, this disorienting Adagio gives way to the first movement's bright, Allegro main matter. The first violin sings

out the short-phrased principal theme, which the other instruments soon pick up in contrapuntal imitation. A second, more jittery melody and a third in triplets all become fodder for a brief development section, although it's the first theme, now with a minor cast, that dominates the proceedings until the recapitulation soothes the troubled quartet -- the exposition returning, of course, without the baggage of the "dissonant" introduction.

String Sextet in A Major, Op. 48

Antonín Dvořák

Born: September 8, 1841, in Nelahozeves, Austria

Died: May 1, 1904, in Prague, Czechoslovakia

Composed: 1878

Duration: 34 minutes

Antonín Dvořák wrote his String Sextet in A Major, Op. 48, just after finishing his first set of Slavonic Dances, the work that introduced him to audiences outside his homeland; he was also in the midst of completing his Slavonic Rhapsodies for Orchestra. Not surprisingly, this part of Dvořák's life (1878–early 1880s) is often referred to as his "Slavonic" period because his music often featured, by popular demand, Czech/Bohemian/Moravian elements, especially folk dances or melodies modeled after folk songs. Renowned violinist/composer Joseph Joachim championed the sextet and performed in its premiere in Berlin in 1879. Thanks to Joachim, Opus 48 was Dvořák's first chamber work heard outside Bohemia, and helped boost Dvořák's reputation in Europe and elsewhere. After the work's German premiere, Joachim took the sextet to London, where it was warmly received. Over the following year, several other ensembles presented the sextet in venues throughout Europe and New York City.