

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

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PREVIEW
NOTES

Vienna Piano Trio
Friday, February 21 – 7:30 PM
Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center

PROGRAM

Trio in E Minor, Hob. XV:12

Franz Joseph Haydn

Born: March 31, 1732, in Rohrau, Austria

Died: May 31, 1809, in Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1788-1789

Duration: 8 minutes

Haydn's keyboard trios were written in response to commercial stimuli, and for the most part they work reasonably well on any keyboard instrument. These pieces, however, mostly written in London and all from the 1790s, are genuine piano trios, and they exploit the possibilities of the then-new piano with dynamic contrasts, emphasis on the composer's striking late-life harmonic boldness, and a tendency toward Hungarian rhythmic zip that works better on a piano than on a harpsichord.

Sonata in G Major, Op. 31, No. 1

Johannes Brahms

Composed: 1886

Duration: 22 minutes

Of Brahms's three known piano trios, plus one other which is attributed to him, this is by far the shortest and most compact work. By the summer of 1886, Brahms had finished and seen to the premiere of the last of his four symphonies, and he would not produce another large-scale orchestral work. During an extended stay at Thun, Switzerland, Brahms perhaps turned inward and was beginning to distill his musical thoughts down to purer forms. Always expansive, Brahms had been known for employing large four-movement structures in his piano concertos and trios. Although still a four-movement work containing a three-minute presto as second movement, the C minor trio is terse. And even though it has much to say, it is, by Brahmsian standards, positively taut and pithy.

Trio in B-flat Major, Op. 97, Archduke

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: December 16, 1770, in Bonn, Electorate of Cologne

Died: March 26, 1827, in Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1810-1811

Duration: 39 minutes

Beethoven himself, looking back at his life's work, considered the Piano Trio in B flat major, Op. 97, of 1810-1811, to be among his very finest creations. (The work is universally known as the "Archduke" Trio because, like many Beethoven works, it is dedicated to the composer's patron Archduke Rudolph; less justifiable is its place in the catalog as the Piano Trio No. 7 -- for, while there are piano trios to which the numbers 8 through 12 have been assigned, the "Archduke" is actually Beethoven's last finished utterance in the medium.) Generations of performing pianists and string players have agreed with Beethoven's judgment, and the work has, perhaps to the unjust neglect of Beethoven's many other piano trios, cornered the market for late Classical piano trios. In the "Archduke" Trio, for really only the second or third time in piano trio history, both the violin and cello achieve a status truly equal to that of the piano.