

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

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PREVIEW
NOTES

Belcea Quartet

Wednesday, March 18 – 7:30 PM

Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center

PROGRAM

Quartet in A Major, Op. 18, No. 5

Ludwig van Beethoven

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

Died: March 26, 1827, in Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1798-1800

Duration: 28 minutes

Despite its numbering, this quartet was probably the fourth of the six that comprise Beethoven's Opus 18 set, dedicated to Prince Lobkowitz. The composer reordered the entire group upon its completion in 1800. The musicologist Brandenburg claimed that the chronological order of the six works was 3, 1, 2, 5, 4, and 6. Beethoven's rearranging was logical, based apparently on the character of the quartets. In general, the first three (in the final numbering) are fairly faithful to Classical forms, while the second three tend to be unorthodox and somewhat experimental. In certain respects, the latter trio of quartets might be viewed as a significant part of the composer's transition to the methods and styles of his so-called middle period.

Quartet in C Major, Op. 59, No. 3

Ludwig van Beethoven

Composed: 1806

Duration: 31 minutes

Beethoven's second set of quartets, Opus 59, inhabit a very different universe from that of his first set, Opus 18. Although only six years had passed since the publication of the Opus 18 quartets, Beethoven's style changed immensely. The Opus 59 quartets were composed in the wake of the "Eroica" Symphony, and the vastness of the individual movements, the symphonic, orchestral character of the string writing and the stretched formal boundaries led some critics to dub the first of the set an "Eroica" for string quartet.

Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 127

Ludwig van Beethoven

Composed: 1823-1824

Duration: 37 minutes

This work may well be the most mild-mannered and conventional of Beethoven's late quartets. It is ironic that he originally had more grandiose ideas for it, intending it to contain six movements, including one subtitled "La Gaieté" and an Adagio apparently of darker character. In any event, Beethoven settled on this less ambitious, but still effective scheme of four movements, with an Adagio theme and variations second movement, followed by a scherzo and a jovial finale.