

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

Musicians from Marlboro III
Tuesday, May 5 – 7:30 PM
Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center

PROGRAM (Selection of Program Notes)

Epitaphs for String Quintet

Brett Dean

Born: October 23, 1961, in Brisbane, Australia

Composed: 2010

Duration: 23 minutes

Composed in 2010 and premiered by the Australian String Quartet in Cheltenham, *Epitaphs* are five musical obituaries of friends or colleagues who died in 2008-9. For this performance, Dean joins the ensemble himself, supplying the second viola. He aptly sums up the work as ‘a celebration of the personal qualities, characteristics and achievements ... also an expression of loss and contemplations of energetic lives fulfilled as well as lives cut short’. Dean’s string-playing credentials are displayed in the many effects he incorporates into the score – such as harmonics and the requirement of the players to move the hair of the bow across the wood of their instruments.

String Quintet in E-flat Major, Op. 97

Antonín Dvořák

Born: September 8, 1841, in Nelahozeves, Czechia

Died: May 1, 1904, in Prague, Czechia

Composed: 1893

Duration: 33 minutes

Dvořák 's E-flat String Quintet ("American") was written around the same time as the Symphony No. 9 ("New World"); like that famous work, it is based partly on Native and Black American themes. Unlike the salon atmosphere that characterized string quartets of the era, the American Quintet is full of wonderful, populist tunes, even though their pentatonic origins may be more Slavonic than American. The String Quartet No. 2 received its premiere on January 12, 1894, at New York's Carnegie Hall.

The direct impetus for this quintet came on Dvořák's first long vacation in the United States, at the Czech settlement of Spillville in northeast Iowa. During his stay, a band of American Indians arrived to sell medicinal herbs to the locals and stage a celebration. Dvořák came into contact with the Indians on a daily basis, and on two or three occasions he attended small gatherings at a local inn, where they performed their traditional songs and dances for him.