

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

Cuarteto Casals

Thursday, February 16 – 7:30 PM

Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center

PROGRAM

Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 20, No. 1

Franz Joseph Haydn

Born: March 31, 1732, Rohrau, Austria

Died: May 31, 1809, Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1772

Duration: 22 minutes

In her guide to the Haydn quartets, Rosemary Hughes memorably described this work as springing from “that central core of tranquility that lies at the heart of Haydn’s music.” The easy interplay in the opening Allegro moderato, with the instruments nonchalantly swapping roles, is a world away from the violin-dominated first movements in the Op. 9 and Op. 17 quartets. This movement, too, is a classic example of Haydn’s inspired thematic economy, with the whole varied narrative evolving from the opening phrases.

Quartet No. 1, *Métamorphoses nocturnes*

György Ligeti

Born: May 28, 1923, Târnăveni, Romania

Died: June 12, 2006, Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1953-54

Duration: 22 minutes

“The first word of the sub-title *Metamorphoses nocturnes* refers to the form. It is a kind of variation form, only there is no specific ‘theme’ that is then varied. It is, rather, that one and the same musical concept appears in constantly new forms - that is why ‘metamorphoses’ is more appropriate than ‘variations’. The quartet can be considered as having just one movement or also as a sequence of many short movements that melt into one another without pause or which abruptly cut one another off. The basic concept, which is always present in the intervals but which is in a state of constant transformation, consists of two major seconds that succeed each other transposed by a semitone. In this First String Quartet there are certainly some characteristics of my later music, but the writing is totally different, ‘old-fashioned’; there are still distinct melodic, rhythmic and harmonic

patterns and bar structure. It is not tonal music, but it is not radically atonal, either. The piece still belongs firmly to the Bartók tradition (remember my situation as a composer in Hungary at the beginning of the fifties), yet despite the Bartók-like tone (especially in the rhythm) and despite some touches of Stravinsky and Alban Berg, I trust that the First String Quartet is still personal work.” —György Ligeti

Quartet in E Minor, Op. 59, No. 2

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: December 1770, Bonn, Germany

Died: March 26, 1827, Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1806

Duration: 38 minutes

Beethoven’s friend and student Carl Czerny reported that the second movement of the master’s Op. 59, No. 2 was inspired by contemplation of the starry firmament and the music of the spheres. Indeed, there is a deep sense of awe and wonder in this music. It inhabits the same revelatory space we encounter in the *Holy Song of Thanksgiving* that forms the heart of Beethoven’s Op. 132 Quartet. In the score, Beethoven asks performers to “treat this piece with a great deal of feeling.” In the opening bars, the four voices enter one at a time as individual strands that form a celestial chorale. As the music continues, a rhythmic “heartbeat” emerges that is reminiscent of the second movement of Beethoven’s Fourth Symphony.