

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

Parker Quartet

Kim Kashkashian, *viola*

Efe Baltacıgil, *cello*

Wednesday, December 16 – 6:00 PM

PROGRAM

Capriccio for String Sextet

Richard Strauss

Born: June 11, 1864, Munich, Germany

Died: September 8, 1949, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany

Composed: 1943

Duration: 12 minutes

The musical style of the sextet, in keeping with the opera's historical setting and its philosophical message, is certainly backward-looking, at least with respect to the revolutionary musical developments of the early 20th century. The spiky neo-classicism of Stravinsky's own look-back at the 18th century, his ballet *Pulcinella*, is nowhere to be heard in this score. Richard Strauss is here writing in the post-Wagnerian Late Romantic style of extended tonality with which he began his career in the 1880s and 1890s. This is a style of writing in which even the most remote key centres are made instantly accessible by means of smooth, but highly chromatic voice-leading practices, with the aim of bringing wondrously varied harmonic colourings to the surface of the music. The result is a radiant brightness of tone, enhanced by Strauss' skillful disposition of his six instruments in sonic space to produce the silken sheen that is the trademark of his string writing, so different from the 'thick chunky soup' texture of Brahms's string quartets.

Quartet in C Minor, Op. 51, No. 1

Johannes Brahms

Born: May 7, 1833, Hamburg, Germany

Died: April 3, 1897, Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1866-1873

Duration: 32 minutes

Brahms's attitude toward the importance of the string quartet as the ultimate expression of the composer's craft can be understood when it is considered that he reputedly

sketched and destroyed some 20 quartets before creating one worthy of publication. Also, when it is considered that Haydn produced 68, Mozart 23 and Beethoven 16 quartets, Brahms's three quartets stand as a testament to his own harsh standards. The publication of the Quartets, Op. 51, then, represented for Brahms a milestone in his career similar to the publication of his First Symphony: he had taken on the masters of the past and now deemed himself worthy of comparison. These first two quartets were completed just before Brahms seriously embarked upon his almost exclusive engagement with orchestral works and as such represent not only a culmination of everything he had learned to this point, but as models for all that was to follow.

Verklärte Nacht, Op. 4

Arnold Schoenberg

Born: September 13, 1874, Leopoldstadt, Vienna, Austria

Died: July 13, 1951, Los Angeles, CA

Composed: 1899

Duration: 30 minutes

Although Schoenberg's earliest published works were written for the voice, the composer had by then produced much other music, including a number of pieces incorporating strings. Indeed, Schoenberg had studied, at least informally, both the violin and cello, and thus was well equipped to meet the compositional challenges of his Op. 4, the substantial string sextet *Verklärte Nacht* (*Transfigured Night*). Its great success in Europe opened the gates of fame for the young composer, and even today, it remains one of Schoenberg's most familiar works—and certainly one of the least "difficult" for listeners.