

# PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW  
NOTES

**Parker Quartet**

**Kim Kashkashian, *viola***

**Thursday, May 6 – 6 PM**

*American Philosophical Society*

## PROGRAM

### ***Cypresses* [Selections]**

**Antonín Dvořák**

***Born:* September 8, 1841, Nelahozeves, Czech.**

***Died:* May 1, 1904, Prague, Czech.**

***Composed:* 1887**

***Duration:* 10 minutes**

The provenance of Dvořák's charming instrumentals for string quartet titled *Cypresses* is somewhat complicated. They originated as a cycle of 18 love songs for voice and piano setting texts by the Moravian poet Gustav Pflieger-Moravský. Dvořák spent years variously arranging the songs and, 23 years later, finally sent them to his publisher with the title *Love Songs*. Around the same time, he selected 12 of the songs and transcribed them for string quartet. As Dvořák transcribed the songs quite faithfully, each of the *Cypresse* pursues a lyrical song form typically featuring a solo vocal line (most often in the first violin) set within the four-part texture of the string quartet. The accompaniments feature rich, colorful textures using a range of string techniques, counterpoints, and rhythmic nuances. Both the scoring and the endearing melodic invention of these pieces identify their composer almost immediately. One of his earliest compositions (in original form), the *Cypresses* reveal a youthful ardor as well as mature skill with nascent features that would prevail as part of Dvořák's enduring musical personality.

### **Quartet No. 3**

**Béla Bartók**

***Born:* March 25, 1881, Sânnicolau Mare, Romania**

***Died:* September 26, 1945, New York, NY**

***Composed:* 1927**

***Duration:* 16 minutes**

Bartók's String Quartet No. 3 shared first prize with a quartet by Alfredo Casella at the 1927 Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia Competition. Its striking qualities could not have escaped the judges' notice. Of Bartók's six quartets, the third is the most concentrated in thematic material and structure.

In this quartet, Bartók subjected folk-style themes and motifs to a technique he called "expansion in range," wherein melodic shape and intervallic relations were stretched to produce themes that develop freely without compromising musical unity. Bartók scholar Elliott Antokoletz suggests that this new approach was partly due to the Treaty of Trianon, signed in 1920 by the Allied forces and Hungary. The Treaty's punitive partition of Hungary effectively moved much of Bartók's folk-music hunting grounds outside the borders of Hungary (which in fact lost two-thirds of its land and population under the Trianon terms). With his primary source cut off, Bartók integrated folk material into a more cosmopolitan style, such as he had encountered during his tours of post-war Europe.

### **Quintet in E-flat Major, Op. 97**

**Antonin Dvorák**

***Born:* September 8, 1841, Nelahozeves, Czech.**

***Died:* May 1, 1904, Prague, Czech.**

***Composed:* 1893**

***Duration:* 33 minutes**

Dvorak'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 Dvorák'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. Dvorák 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.