

# PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW  
NOTES

**Belcea Quartet**

**Friday, October 22 – 7:30 PM**

*Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center*

## PROGRAM

### **Quartet in C Major, Op. 37**

**Karol Szymanowski**

*Born: October 3, 1882, Tymoshivka, Ukraine*

*Died: March 29, 1937, Lausanne, Switzerland*

*Composed: 1917*

*Duration: 18 minutes*

This fine string quartet is exciting and moving in its own right. Fans of Szymanowski may find it particularly illuminating because it is a significant work of a period during which the composer was making a drastic transition of his style. The earlier half of his career saw him adopt the hot-blooded, erotic romanticism of Scriabin and take an interest in music of the Near East. However, by the time World War I ended, he had shifted to a much less lush, harmonically harder-edged, yet more tonal, musical language. Philosophically, Szymanowski during the same period lost his interest in the ego-driven Romanticism of Wagner, Richard Strauss, and Nietzsche. And personally his life changed drastically, as well: Polish independence and Communist seizure of his family property in the Ukraine required him, for the first time, to make his entire living as a musician, composer, and teacher. The quartet is in three movements and totals a bit less than 20 minutes. Szymanowski had intended a four-movement work ending with a fully fugal final movement, but he dropped the final movement and moved the scherzo (which does have a fugato section) from second to final position.

### **Quartet in D Minor, D. 810, *Death and the Maiden***

**Franz Schubert**

*Born: January 31, 1797, Himmelpfortgrund, Vienna, Austria*

*Died: November 19, 1828, Vienna, Austria*

*Composed: 1824*

*Duration: 45 minutes*

In March 1824, having endured the symptoms of syphilis for nearly two years, he wrote, "Each night when I go to sleep, I hope never to wake again, and each morning serves only to recall the misery of the previous day." Since the still-youthful composer was not yet consigned to the grave, he continued to develop his musical genius, and in this same month he completed the original version of the String Quartet in D minor, "Der Tod und das Mädchen" (Death and the Maiden). Based on the opening theme from his song of the same name (1817), this quartet clearly illustrates Schubert's sympathy, even longing, for death. By appropriating the music of the song, Schubert also imbues the quartet with the sentiments of the original text, in which Death urges a frightened maiden to trust him: he means her no harm, and she will sleep soundly in his arms.