

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

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PREVIEW
NOTES

Vertavo Quartet

Sunday, December 5 – 3 PM

Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center

PROGRAM

Quartet in D Minor, Op. 56, *Voces Intimae*

Jean Sibelius

Born: December 8, 1865, Hämeenlinna, Finland

Died: September 20, 1957, Ainola, Järvenpää, Finland

Composed: 1908-1909

Duration: 30 minutes

Sibelius' String Quartet in D minor, Op. 56 (1908-1909) -- his only mature string quartet, and indeed, the only substantial chamber work he produced after the turn of the century -- dates from the period between the Third and Fourth symphonies. Like the Fourth Symphony, the quartet is an introspective work; however, as the subtitle, "Intimate Voices," suggests, Sibelius creates a profoundly intimate, even mysterious, atmosphere of a sort that would be impossible to realize in a symphonic work. The quartet's five movements are thematically interrelated, each movement beginning with a motivic alteration of material from its predecessors. Such connections, however, are primarily superficial, and each of the movements has a fundamentally distinct character.

Quartet in F Major, Op. 96, *American*

Antonín Dvorák

Born: September 8, 1841, Nelahozeves, Czechia

Died: May 1, 1904, Prague, Czechia

Composed: 1893

Duration: 25 minutes

Antonín Dvorák hadn't composed a string quartet in 12 years when, in the summer of 1893, he sat down to compose the String Quartet No. 12 in F major, Op. 96; the resulting "American" String Quartet is, along with the "New World" Symphony and perhaps a handful of the Slavonic Dances, the only Dvorák music that many music-lovers have ever learned to recognize. Dvorák spent three years in the United States (1892-1895) as the director of the newly-founded National Conservatory of Music in New York; it was during a vacation in rural Iowa that this beloved string quartet was written. Dvorák's progress on the work was so quick and satisfying that he scrawled out a sentence of gratitude to God at the end of his first draft! On the following New Year's Day the quartet received its Boston premiere, and it lost little time sewing itself into the fabric of the world's quartet repertoire. There is more of America to the Opus 96 quartet than just its name and place of composition -- Dvorák was fascinated by Native American and African American music, and throughout the "American" Quartet we can hear these new colors mixing in with his own usual quartet method. Many of the themes are pentatonically derived (the pentatonic scale being composed of five notes and containing no semitones); syncopation and snappy rhythm are found in abundance.