

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

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PREVIEW
NOTES

Elias Quartet

Tuesday, March 28 – 7:30 PM

Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center

PROGRAM

Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 18, No. 6

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: December 16, 1770, Bonn, Germany

Died: March 26, 1827, Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1798-1800

Duration: 24 minutes

This was the last of the group of six quartets in the Op. 18 set. While that might appear obvious in perusing the headnote, in actuality the numbers in this collection do not necessarily correspond to their order of composition since Beethoven reordered all six works after finishing them in 1800. The third actually appears to have been composed first. The reason the composer changed the order was apparently due to the character of the quartets: the first three generally adhere to traditional forms, while the latter group are fairly unorthodox and varied in style. But there may have been another reason he arranged them so: the last three all contain substantial references to the past, the Fourth and Fifth showing deference to Mozart and the Sixth appearing as a patchwork of compositions out of Beethoven's own past. Still, both groups of quartets are worthwhile, and the Sixth especially, in its second and fourth movements, offers glimpses of the mature Beethoven.

Quartet in F Major, Op. 135

Ludwig van Beethoven

Composed: 1826

Duration: 25 minutes

Beethoven wrote the bulk of this, his final quartet, in a two-month burst of activity amid health problems and shortly after his nephew Karl attempted to commit suicide. But there's not a hint of self-pity or anguish in this compact, good-natured work. For Beethoven's valedictory composition, this quartet is surprisingly small-scaled, finding inspiration in the quartets of Beethoven's one-time teacher Haydn. The first movement, Allegretto, takes standard sonata form. Its principal theme in 2/4 hints at a march; this, the light textures, and Beethoven's

reliance on very short phrases give the movement a playful nature that is emphasized by Beethoven's abrupt melodic and harmonic shifts and frequent interruptions in mid-phrase.

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

Ludwig van Beethoven

Composed: 1806

Duration: 38 minutes

Beethoven's second set of quartets, Opus 59, inhabit a very different universe from that of his first set, Opus 18. Although only six years had passed since the publication of the Opus 18 quartets, Beethoven's style changed immensely. The Opus 59 quartets were composed in the wake of the "Eroica" Symphony, and the vastness of the individual movements; the symphonic, orchestral character of the string writing; and the stretched formal boundaries led some critics to dub the first of the set an "Eroica" for string quartet. The Bureau des Arts et d'Industrie in Vienna published the three Rasumovsky quartets in 1808 with a dedication to the Russian Ambassador in Vienna, Count Andreas Kirillovich Rasumovsky (1752-1836), who had commissioned them. Rasumovsky would also receive, with Prince Lobkowitz, the dedications of the Symphony No. 5 and No. 6. The Russian Ambassador was one of Beethoven's principal supporters until a fire destroyed much of his wealth in December 1814. More important to Beethoven was Rasumovsky's maintenance involved in the premieres of numerous works by Beethoven, including the quartets Opp. 18, 59, 95, 127, 130, 132, and 135; the "Archduke" Trio; and the Symphony No. 9.