

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

Orion Quartet

Kim Kashkashian, *viola*

Marcy Rosen, *cello*

Sunday, April 16 – 3 PM

Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center

PROGRAM

Quartet in C Major, Op. 33, No. 3, *Bird*

Franz Joseph Haydn

Born: March 31, 1732, Rohrau, Austria

Died: May 31, 1809, Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1781

Duration: 23 minutes

Nicknamed “The Bird,” this quartet has one of the most magical openings in all Haydn. The Allegro moderato starts with a little motor rhythm in the inner voices, the first violin takes the theme, and the cello opens up with resonance below. Grace notes suggest chirping birds without resorting to literal impression. The work sheds much of the drama and gloom of the composer’s middle period, showing subtler inflections and contrasts.

Quartet in F Major, Op. 135

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: December 16, 1770, Bonn, Germany

Died: March 26, 1827, Vienna, Austria

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

Sextet in B-flat Major, Op. 18

Johannes Brahms

Born: May 7, 1833, Hamburg, Germany

Died: April 3, 1897, Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1859-60

Duration: 37 minutes

There are few string sextets in the traditional repertory, beginning with Brahms and followed by Dvořák, Tchaikovsky, Schoenberg, and Strauss. A few less-known composers wrote for the ensemble before Brahms, but it was this splendid youthful work that placed the string sextet in the limelight. The sextet features three pairs of instruments: two violins, two violas, and two cellos. The additional members in the lower range are free to pursue featured melodic roles, enriching the deeper voices of the ensemble, adding new contrapuntal lines, and reinforcing the composite ensemble. The young Brahms struggled with string quartets (which he destroyed) and likely sought the novelty of the string sextet to explore a green field away from any daunting comparisons with Beethoven. A second sextet followed four years later, preceding his eventual string quartets by nearly a decade. Both are early but masterful works highlighting the bright, warm, and noble side of Brahms in the manner of a serenade.