

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

Brentano Quartet

Mark Steinberg, *violin*; Serena Canin, *violin*;

Misha Amory, *viola*; Nina Lee, *cello*

Joseph Conyers, *double bass* & Jonathan Biss, *piano*

Sunday, May 12 – 3 PM

Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center

PROGRAM

Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 130

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: December 17, 1770, Bonn, Germany

Died: March 26, 1827, Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1825

Duration: 41 minutes

Op. 130's wit and charm, and the sheer variety of characters it contains, reminds us of watching an opera full of ever changing sets and costumes; the constant contrasts keep the listener entertained and guessing from beginning to end. It contains Beethoven's shortest movement of the quartet cycle, the longest movement, two folk dances, his own avowed "favorite" slow movement, an overture, and an intermezzo. The relationship between form or language and meaning is one that seems an obsession in Op. 130. Pushing at the boundaries of what music can or perhaps can't do, Beethoven wrestles with these question in ways that at times have the nature of curious puzzles, and at other times profoundly grapple with the association between intimate experience and art. Beethoven uses music to refer to and ask questions of itself, writing in Op. 130 a precarious piece that investigates and attempts to define the limit of what can be expressed.

Quintet in A Major, D. 667, "Trout"

Franz Schubert

Born: January 31, 1797, Vienna, Austria

Died: November 19, 1828, Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1819

Duration: 40 minutes

Schubert wrote his Piano Quintet when he was just 22 but it wasn't published until 1829, a year after his death. Schubert's quintet is scored for the unusual combination of piano, violin, viola, cello, and double bass. This is the same instrumentation for Johann Hummel's Piano Quintet—a favorite of amateur cellist and wealthy music patron Sylvester Paumgartner. Paumgartner approached Schubert to write a work for this instrumentation. The work was given the moniker *Trout* because the fourth movement is a set of variations on Schubert's Lied "Die Forelle" ("The Trout"). A rising sextuplet figure from the "Die Forelle" accompaniment is used as a unifying motif throughout the quintet, and related figures appear in four out of the five movements. Similarly to the song, this figure is usually introduced by the piano. The first movement is disproportionately long at 13 minutes, nearly a third of the length of the entire five-movement work. The brief third movement, a presto, begins aggressively but becomes a sort of "dance poem" containing Austrian folk tunes. The rhythmic impetus is unflagging. The final movement is simple and light with a swirling, almost "gypsy" sound that can be reminiscent of Dvorák at times.