

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

Musicians from Marlboro I

Mitsuko Uchida, *piano*; Stephanie Zyzak, *violin*; Beth Guterman Chu, *viola*; Oliver
Herbert, *cello*

Friday, November 8 – 7:30 PM

Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center

PROGRAM

Play with Infinity, from Játékok

György Kurtág

Born: February 19, 1926

Composed: 1973

Duration: Approx. 2 min.

In 1973, Kurtág began an ongoing project of composing imaginative and experimental miniatures inspired by the innocent approach children have toward piano playing—hence the title *Játékok* (*Games*). In *Play with Infinity*, the pianist plays nearly every note on the keyboard in a hushed, descending chromatic scale, interrupted by splashes of color.

Piano Trio in E-flat Major, Op. 70, No. 2

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: December 16, 1770, Bonn, Germany

Died: March 26, 1827, Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1808

Duration: 35 minutes

Composed in 1808 during a period of intense creativity, Beethoven's *Op. 70, No. 2* piano trio emerged alongside other monumental works, such as the *Symphony No. 5* and *Symphony No. 6*. This was a time when Beethoven was grappling with his increasing deafness, yet his music became more adventurous and profound. The *Op. 70* trios, including the *E-flat Major* and its more dramatic counterpart, the *Ghost Trio*, were dedicated to Countess Marie von Erdödy, a close friend and supporter of Beethoven. While the *E-flat Major* trio doesn't possess the eerie, supernatural qualities of the *Ghost Trio*, it stands out for its grace and serenity. The work's lyrical and conversational style, with its intricate dialogue between the piano, violin, and cello, offers a reflective contrast to

the more turbulent pieces Beethoven was composing at the time. The trio showcases Beethoven's ability to blend classical forms with his own distinctive voice, pushing the boundaries of chamber music while maintaining elegance and clarity. This trio, full of warmth and intimacy, reflects Beethoven's mature style, where even in the face of personal challenges, his music conveys a sense of optimism and composure.

Selections from *Signs, Games, & Messages*

György Kurtág

Born: February 19, 1926

Composed: 1973

Duration: 7 minutes

Signs, Games, & Messages is a collection of brief enigmatic works that exemplifies Kurtág's minimalist and deeply expressive style. Composed between the 1960s and 2000s, these miniature pieces reflect Kurtág's fascination with fragmented forms, intimate gestures, and personal expression. Each piece is like a musical aphorism, often lasting only a few minutes or even seconds, but packed with emotional depth and meaning. The title itself offers insight into the work's nature: *Signs* suggests coded communication or a personal language; *Games* refers to the playful and experimental approach Kurtág often takes, a nod to his larger series *Játékok* (*Games*); and *Messages* evoke a more introspective, intimate dialogue. Many of these miniatures were written in memory of friends, colleagues, and mentors, giving them a highly personal, almost confessional character.

Kurtág's music, with its economy of notes and gestures, invites the listener into a space of contemplation, where silence and sound interact in profound ways, and where even the smallest musical gesture can carry great emotional and intellectual weight.

Piano Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 47

Robert Schumann

Born: June 8, 1810

Died: July 29, 1856

Composed: 1842

Duration: approx. 35 minutes

Schumann composed his *Op. 47 Piano Quartet* during what is often referred to as his “chamber music year.” This period marked a turning point in his creative life, when he immersed himself in writing some of his most significant chamber works, including the celebrated *Piano Quintet in E-flat Major, Op. 44*. The *Piano Quartet*, written shortly after the quintet, displays Schumann’s gift for lyrical beauty and structural clarity while capturing a range of emotions, from joyful exuberance to deep introspection. Beloved for its seamless blending of emotional depth and technical craftsmanship the *Piano Quartet* showcases Schumann’s characteristic lyricism, his deep understanding of instrumental color, and his ability to create intimate musical dialogues. At the premiere, which featured his newlywed Clara Wieck on piano, the piece was well received. Today, it is recognized as the culmination of virtually all previous exploration of the piano quartet as a genre up to that time, forming the foundations for later composers to build on.