

## PROGRAM NOTES

Franz Josef Haydn (1732-1809): String Quartet in F Major, Op. 77, No. 2 (1802)

Haydn's three opus 77 string quartets are the last of nearly seventy quartets (some accounts say 68, others, 78, while Haydn himself claimed 83) in his oeuvre. Commissioned in 1799 by Prince Lobkowitz, one of Haydn's and Beethoven's major patrons, it is believed Haydn intended to write a set of six quartets, as was the fashion, but only completed two due to ill health. The F Major quartet is the composer's final completely finished quartet. Later he allowed an incomplete work consisting of two middle movements to appear as Op. 103, adding to the print the portentous words: "Gone is all my strength, old and weak am I."

Musically, however, these works are anything but weak; they represent the aged composer virtually at the zenith of his powers. Haydn even went so far as to call Op. 77, No. 2, his "most beautiful string quartet." Completed in 1799 and published in 1802, the F Major quartet starts with a calm and graceful theme. The inner movements reverse their usual order, with the Minuet as the second movement. Here Haydn plays jokes with rhythm with a peasant dance theme, and keeps us guessing about the meter, including a few "wrong beat" entrances. Clearly the aged composer has not lost his sense of humor. The third movement, Andante, begins with a stately duet between the first violin and the cello. Each instrument takes a turn with this theme as the material surrounding it becomes more complicated. The last movement, Vivace, is in the spirit of a lively and radiant "polonaise à la hongroise" (Hungarian style).

-Steve Siegel

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937): Sonata for Violin and Piano (1923-27)

Ravel's approach to composing was, in spite of the rich sound of many of his works, essentially intellectual. Each composition was a problem to be solved. In this instance, he wished to see how far it would be possible to write a concerted work allowing maximum independence to both instruments. "It was this independence I was aiming at when I wrote a sonata for violin and piano, two incompatible instruments whose incompatibility is emphasized here, without any attempt to reconcile their contrasted characters."

The first movement is an Allegretto in a free sonata form. It is said to have been plotted as to the number of bars, key changes, modulations, etc. before he had any idea what the musical content would be.

The second movement, Blues, reflects the fascination that New Orleans jazz had on European composers of this era. The nostalgic atmosphere of the blues is enhanced by the acrid harmonies and the perverse contortions of both instruments. Ravel became interested in jazz by listening to black players in Paris nightclubs. He assimilated its essential features into his own idiom, making it something personal without losing the flavor of the model. His notions of the ancestry of jazz are decidedly different from those of most authorities. He traced its beginnings to certain old Scottish melodies and even to some eighteenth century French and Italian folk music, which contained rhythms that anticipate modern jazz. Ravel saw two distinct characteristics in jazz: (1) an underlying pathos from the days of slavery and (2) an arrogant will-to-power of a new people rising to world domination. Bear in mind that these opinions date from the 1920's.

The finale is a Perpetuum mobile. Introduced by a staccato phrase from the first movement, the violin takes the lead in a non-stop delivery of pyrotechnics with support from the piano sometimes recalling the Blues.

-Hoyle Carpenter

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897): Piano Quartet in C Minor, Op. 60 (1874)

The C Minor Quartet was revised and worked on for many years and shows a mixture of early and late stylistic features that are not usually present in Brahms' music. He must have had a fondness for it since, rather than destroying it as he did with many works that did not please him, he tinkered with it until he was satisfied.

As early as 1854, he sketched a piano quartet in C-sharp Minor (the so-called first piano quartet is dated 1863) that consisted of three movements—an allegro using themes that are in the present C-Minor Quartet, a slow movement (probably the present one), and a finale different from the one we now know. There was no scherzo. In October of 1854, Clara Schumann wrote in her journal, "Brahms has composed a wonderful adagio for his C-sharp Minor Quartet—full of deep feeling." Two years later, he went over the quartet with his friend, the violinist Joachim. As a result of this, he wrote to Clara Schumann. "It seems to be very hard to play. Can you study it and practice it for some time? Otherwise, it will sound abominable." He worked

off and on with this quartet for twenty years. When the work was about to be published, he wrote to the publisher, “On the cover you must have a picture, a head with a pistol pointed toward it. Now you can form an idea of the music! For this purpose, I will send my photograph! Blue coat, yellow breeches and top-boots would do well, as you seem to like color printing.” All this seemingly irrelevant matter refers to the garb of Goethe’s Werther—the archetype of the nineteenth century German lover about to do away with himself.

The last revision before publication in 1875 includes a change of key to C Minor, adding a newly composed scherzo, retaining the adagio in its original key of E Major (E-flat would be normal here) and a new finale. With typical modesty, Brahms wrote to the publisher, “The quartet is half old, half new—the whole thing isn’t worth much.”

-Hoyle Carpenter

Musicians:

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**Katie Hyun, violin** – Katie has performed as soloist with the Houston Symphony, Dallas Chamber Orchestra, the Columbia Festival Orchestra as well as the Busan Sinfonietta and Incheon Philharmonic Orchestra in South Korea. She is founder and director of the Quodlibet Ensemble and founding member of the award-winning Amphion String Quartet which was a member of Lincoln Center’s CMS Two. On Baroque violin, she frequently appears with Trinity Baroque Orchestra, the Sebastians and New York Baroque. She holds degrees from the Curtis Institute of Music, SUNY Stonybrook and the Yale School of Music.

**Kobi Malkin, violin** – Kobi Malkin is making his mark as both an exciting soloist and a perceptive chamber musician. He was praised by the New York Times for his “aptly traversed palette of emotions, from languid introspection to fevered intensity with gorgeous tone and an edge-of-seat intensity”. As a soloist, Malkin has appeared with the Ashdod Chamber Orchestra, the Haifa Symphony Orchestra, the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, the Saint Louis Symphony and the Chicago Philharmonic. As a chamber musician he has performed at numerous festivals, such as Ravinia, Music@Menlo, Yellow Barn, and the Marlboro Music Festival. He holds degrees from the New England Conservatory and the Juilliard School.

**Dana Kelley, viola** – Violist Dana Kelley is an Artistic Director and member of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. Praised for her rich and beautiful tone, she has been a top prizewinner in the Sphinx Music Competition, the Irving M. Klein International String Competition, the M-Prize Chamber Arts Competition and the Concert Artists Guild Victor Elmaleh Competition. She received the Artist Diploma from The Juilliard School as member of the Argus String Quartet and was 2016 Fellow in Ensemble Connect, the performance and teaching program of Carnegie Hall. She has performed with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and Orchestra of St. Luke’s.

**Alberto Parrini, cello** - Born in Italy, Alberto Parrini has been principal cellist of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Philharmonic since 2007 and a member of the American Symphony since 2010; he also performs regularly with the New York Philharmonic and Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. In 2008, 2010 and 2011 he toured Japan as principal cellist of the New York Symphonic Ensemble. He performed throughout the U.S. with the American Chamber Players and with the St. Lawrence String Quartet. He toured with the White Oak Dance Project and performed with Continuum, Proteus Ensemble, New Jersey Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra and Metamorphosen Chamber Orchestra. He teaches at Princeton University.

**Marcantonio Barone, piano** – Marcantonio Barone has performed with major orchestras on four continents and has given solo recitals at the Wigmore Hall in London, the Great Hall of the Saint Petersburg Filarmoniya, Weill Recital Hall in New York, and the National Gallery in Washington, and on the recital series of the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society. He has been a member of the Lenape Chamber Ensemble since 1987, and he performs annually as a member of 1807 and Friends and the Craftsbury Chamber Players. He teaches at the Bryn Mawr Conservatory of Music and at Swarthmore College. His recordings are available on the Albany, Bridge, Centaur, and Innova labels. Mr. Barone is a Steinway Artist.

We thank and appreciate all of our wonderful volunteers and contributors who help to make these concerts possible! And we give special thanks to Upper Tincum Lutheran Church and Delaware Valley University for hosting these concerts. We also give credit to the Bucks County Tourism Grant Program for outreach support and to the Lehigh Valley Community Foundation for Upper Bucks outreach support.