

The Wister Quartet

Nancy Bean and Davyd Booth, violins; Pamela Fay, viola; Lloyd Smith, cello
Sunday, September 23, 2018, 3:00pm

Georg Friedrich Handel - Passacaglia in G Minor
Ludwig van Beethoven - String Quartet in Bb Major, Op. 18, No. 6
- INTERMISSION -

Marcel Farago - Prayer (World Premiere) Arr. for string quartet by Lloyd Smith
Antonin Dvorak - String Quartet in F Major, Op. 96 ("American")

The **Passacaglia by Handel** is a series of variations, all based upon an eight-measure long bass line. This work shows Handel's great gift for both entertaining and uplifting his listeners as he presents variations formal and intimate, eloquent and virtuosic. This arrangement for string quartet shows off the many sonic and emotional possibilities to great advantage.

Beethoven's String Quartet in Bb Major is the last of his six early quartets. Already fully formed as a composer, Beethoven paid homage to his teacher, Joseph Haydn, in these quartets but also began testing the boundaries of the genre in ways Haydn never did. In this quartet, Beethoven begins to explore the Romantic possibilities in music. As time went on, he developed this Romantic concept enormously and with unparalleled accomplishment. Here Beethoven interrupts the Classical flow of this quartet with a slow introduction entitled "La Malinconia" (the melancholy) before breaking into a very friendly and happy finale. Elements of this introduction are revisited from time to time, briefly, before the movement ends with an uproariously fast flourish.

Marcel Farago was a cellist in The Philadelphia Orchestra and one of our most beloved colleagues. A Holocaust survivor, as a teenager he wrote his very first work, a string quartet, while hiding out in Budapest between 1940 and 1945. He came to Philadelphia and joined the Orchestra in 1955. Many of us were unaware of the impressive number of compositions he wrote — symphonies, operas, concerti, and of course chamber works. His "**Prayer**" was originally the slow movement from his cello concerto, which he had arranged for cello with organ accompaniment but which was never performed. At the invitation of Marcel's publisher, Lloyd Smith arranged the work for string quartet. The serenity and soulfulness of the piece comes through with great effect in this arrangement.

Antonin Dvořák was named Director of the American Conservatory in New York (it later became the Juilliard School of Music). During his first season he became intensely homesick for his native Bohemia. His secretary knew of a Czech settlement in Spillville, Iowa and so the following summer Dvořák brought his whole family out to enjoy the camaraderie, the great church, the new sounds, and of course the local beer. He listened to American folk music sung and played for him, to Native American music and chanting, and to the unfamiliar birdsong of the area. All of this he incorporated into this irresistible masterwork, his "**American**" quartet. He also managed to interweave perfectly elements of Czech dance music, a tribute both to his beloved homeland and to this wonderful new country he had discovered. It is easily one of the most beloved pieces of chamber music ever written.