

1) From My Life

Bedřich Smetana wrote his “autobiography in tones” while afflicted with serious illness – in this context, he passes his life in review in his quasi-symphonic String Quartet in E minor.

The death of his beloved sister Fanny prompted Felix Mendelssohn to write one of his most famous works, the String Quartet, op. 80. In it we hear rebellion, despair, and inner turmoil – tragically, it was to be the composer’s final work.

In contrast, the old master Haydn appears to have been spared any major life adversity, his works practically sparkling with humor and energy. In the “Fifths” Quartet, he draws inspiration from his travels in England, which is particularly apparent in the central fifth motif – the chimes of London’s famed Big Ben.

Joseph Haydn: String quartet in D minor op.76/2 "Fifths"

Felix Mendelssohn: String quartet No. 6 in F minor, Op. 80

Bedřich Smetana: String quartet No. 1 in E minor, „From my life“

2) Folklore

Many composers were influenced time and again by the love of their homeland, from the varied and ravishing sound worlds of the Norwegian Romanticist Edvard Grieg to the explosive rhythms and frenetic energy of the Argentinian Ginastera. Joseph Haydn also drew on the sounds of folk music, as can be clearly heard in his “Fifths” Quartet: with temperament and verve, he creates a stirring connection with the Hungarian origins of Count Erdödy, who commissioned the work.

Joseph Haydn: String quartet in D minor op.76/2, "Fifths"

Alberto Ginastera: String quartet No. 2, op. 26

Edvard Grieg: String quartet No. 1 in G minor, op. 27

3) Intimate Letters

“Think of a boy who is in love” – with these words, Antonín Dvořák described his song cycle Cypresses, in which – in his sensitive transcription for string quartet – he longingly and wistfully looks back on an unhappy childhood love. The 74-year-old Leoš Janáček was significantly older, but burning with the same passion when he created an ecstatic musical memorial to the young Kamila Stösslova in his Intimate Letters.

This emotional program concludes with Franz Schubert’s celebrated “Rosamunde” Quartet. Inspired by the Romantic play of the same name full of love, passion, and intrigue, he succeeds in creating a profound and ambiguous work that is rightly considered one of the greatest of the string quartet literature.

Antonín Dvořák: Cypresses for String Quartet, excerpts (Nos. 1, 2, 6, 7, 11, 12)

Leoš Janáček: String Quartet No. 2 ("Intimate Letters")

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Franz Schubert: String Quartet in A minor, Op. 29, D. 804 (“Rosamunde”)

4) **Classics**

This program features two great “classics” of the string quartet literature: Mozart's revolutionary “Dissonance” Quartet and Schumann's gripping String Quartet in A major are regarded as groundbreaking for the genre. The fact that the composer Fanny Mendelssohn – who was close friends with the Schumann couple – was denied comparable recognition can only be explained by the outdated social roles of her time – after all, her profound and subtle String Quartet in E-flat major clearly demonstrates great musical genius.

W.A. Mozart: String Quartet in C major, K. 465 (“Dissonance Quartet”)

Fanny Mendelssohn: String Quartet in E-flat major

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Robert Schumann: String Quartet in A major, Op. 41, No.3

5) **„Contemporary friendships“**

For years, we have enjoyed a wonderful friendship with Munich composer Pierre-Dominique Ponnelle – how lucky we are to be able to premiere his Fifth String Quartet this season! A major source of inspiration for Ponnelle has always been the great Franz Schubert, whose intimate and varied “Rosamunde” Quartet then logically concludes this program.

At the beginning we will play the Officium breve by Hungarian master György Kurtág, who opens up an entire universe of tone colors with the smallest forms and most subtle contrasts.

György Kurtág: Officium breve in memoriam Andreae Szervánszky, Op. 28

Pierre-Dominique Ponnelle: String Quartet No. 5

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Franz Schubert: String Quartet in A minor, Op. 29, D. 804, (“Rosamunde”)