

2017 Preview Notes • Week Four • Persons Auditorium

Saturday, August 5 at 8:00pm



En blanc et noir (1915)

Claude Debussy

Born August 22, 1862 • Died March 25, 1918

Duration: approx. 15 minutes • Marlboro Premiere

Denounced by Saint-Saëns as the aural equivalent of Cubist artwork, this piano duet indeed renders familiar subjects in unexpected and fragmented ways. Each movement is dedicated to a different person and paired with an epigraph, and that the richness of the written music, accompanying texts, and piano keys themselves—all black and white—contribute to the many colors of the piece is one example of Debussy's wit. The first movement, a reimagined waltz, is dedicated to Serge Koussevitzky, who is remembered as a great champion of contemporary music. The second movement's suggestion of distant bugle calls laced with quotations from the hymn "Ein Feste Burg ist unser Gott" is a haunting homage to Debussy's friend Jacques Charlot, who perished in WWI. The work concludes with a rippling scherzando dedicated to Igor Stravinsky.

Participants: Xiaohui Yang, *piano*; Cynthia Raim, *piano*



Voices of Angels (1996)

Brett Dean, *in-residence 2017*

Born October 23, 1961

Duration: approx. 25 minutes • Marlboro Premiere

Brett Dean is no stranger to working with great literary texts, having just premiered his second opera, *Hamlet*, this summer at Glyndebourne. Like the Debussy, this piece is prefaced by an epigraph. Dean quotes the first of Rilke's ten *Duino Elegies*: "Angels (it's said) are often unable to tell whether they move/amongst the living or the dead. An eternal current/hurtles all ages through both realms for ever, and drowns out their voices in both." As the elegy questions the conventional distinctions between beauty and terror, life and the afterlife, myth and reality, so does Dean's composition introduce a range of seemingly contradictory perspectives. The first movement, *Evocation*, begins with one stuttering voice repeating a single note, but the piece swells to include the entire quintet with moments of great vigor and swooning tenderness, arriving in the dynamic soundscapes of the second and final movement, *Different Realms*.

Participants: Andrew Hsu, *piano*; Alexi Kenney, *violin*; Sally Chisholm, *viola*; Sujin Lee, *cello*; Nathaniel West, *double bass*



Piano Trio in F Minor, Op. 65, B. 130 (1883)

Antonín Dvořák

Born September 8, 1841 • Died May 1, 1904

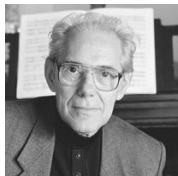
Duration: approx. 40 minutes • Last Marlboro performance: 2006

Written in the decade after the initial international acclaim of Dvořák's spirited, Slavonic-tinged music, this piano trio is often singled out as being the most Brahmsian of his compositions. Indeed, Brahms had fostered the young Czech composer's success, and the trio begins with a searching theme in the first movement that unfolds by turns tempestuous, brooding, and noble. Though conceived on a larger scale than his other compositions, the trio doesn't miss chances to look back on the *furiant* dance rhythms that made Dvořák's earlier work so infectiously popular. Flashes of the *furiant* are heard in the second and fourth movements, enlivening a piece whose inspiration is often otherwise identified as the death of the composer's mother just two months before the trio was written.

Participants: Anna Polonsky, *piano*; Kobi Malkin, *violin*; Peter Wiley, *cello*

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Sunday, August 6 at 2:30pm



Písně nelaskavé [Unkind Songs] (1963)

Petr Eben

Born January 22, 1929 • Died October 24, 2007

Duration: approx. 15 minutes • Marlboro premiere

Petr Eben's work has never before been performed at Marlboro. Born to a Jewish father, Eben was captured by the Nazis as a teenager and survived internment at Buchenwald for two years. Raised Catholic, he resisted the persecutions of the Czech Communist Party and remained a fervent believer and defiant churchgoer. He was most prolific as a composer for organ, but he also wrote five song cycles, including this one, which is variously translated as Unkind or Loveless Songs. Though written in the middle of his life, this collection of songs is often referred to as a later composition, one that is thornier and not as clearly related to the Czech melodies that pepper his earlier cycles.

Participants: Sara Couden, *alto*; Kim Kashkashian, *viola*



Piano Quintet in F Major, Op. 59 (1940)

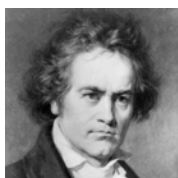
Dmitri Shostakovich

Born September 25, 1906 • Died August 9, 1975

Duration: approx. 30 minutes • Last Marlboro performance: 2005

This piano quintet was written at the beginning of Shostakovich's collaboration with the Beethoven Quartet, which premiered 13 out of 15 of his string quartets and which commissioned this work to be premiered with Shostakovich at the piano. The first two movements are a Prelude and Fugue inspired by Bach yet exhibit Shostakovich's characteristic driving fervor. The bouncy texture at the outset of the third movement's scherzo is also reminiscent of Bach, but Shostakovich overlays fanciful melodies before their impish abandon are balanced by the measured pathos of the following movement. The original first violinist of the Borodin Quartet recounted that the final movement of the quintet was so popular that it "was discussed in trams" and "people tried to sing in the streets the second defiant theme of the finale."

Participants: Xiaohui Yang, *piano*; Alina Kobialka, *violin*; Christine Lim, *violin*; Sally Chisholm, *viola*; Sasha Scolnik-Brower, *cello*



String Quartet in F Major, Op. 59, No. 1 (1806)

Ludwig van Beethoven

Baptized December 17, 1770 • Died March 26, 1827

Duration: approx. 40 minutes • Last Marlboro performance: 2013

At over 40 minutes long, this piece is almost double the size of Beethoven's earlier quartets and includes four movements that each adhere to sonata form, establishing themes, developing them thoroughly—in the case of the first movement, with a fugue—and returning to their opening statement. Much has been said about how Beethoven revitalized the form of the quartet by preserving but playing with traditional aspects of its form. Though he uses sonata form when expected in the first movement, he also uses it in the scherzo, enriching the movement that would otherwise be light fare; though he returns to the proper key of the piece to resolve the end of the first movement, he delays in returning to the main theme in order to put off full satisfaction; and though he utilizes a Russian tune in the final movement as a nod to its patron, Prince Razumovsky, Beethoven embroiders it with further development, leading the piece out of its dark adagio into the triumphant finale of this substantial piece.

Participants: David McCaroll, *violin*; Itamar Zorman, *violin*; Hélène Clément, *viola*; Marcy Rosen, *cello*

Preview notes compiled by Marina Weber, communications assistant