

## String Program Notes

### **Joseph Haydn, Quartet in D minor, Op. 42**

Born in 1732 in Rohrau, Austria, Joseph Haydn is one of the most well-known composers of the Classical Period. He served as a mentor to both Mozart and Beethoven. He struggled for a bit as a freelance musician during which he learned the basics of composition and counterpoint, citing CPE Bach as an influence. He then became a music director under Count Morzin and wrote his first symphonies for the orchestra before moving on to larger roles for the Esterhazy court. He later spent some time in London composing for the Solomon Concerts. After years of success in Vienna and around Europe, Haydn's health declined and prevented him from composing, so he slowly started back away from his roles and died in 1809.

--Bridget O'Neill

An innovator in the genre, Haydn composed a staggering 108 symphonies. The most famous of these symphonies include the London Symphonies (#93-#104), and "the Bear" (#82). Haydn also composed 20 operas, 14 masses, 6 oratorios, and several concertos, the best known of which include his trumpet concerto and his first cello concerto. Haydn was also very influential in the progression of music through the Classical period and was a major influence in the work of Beethoven's middle period. Also a friend of Mozart, Haydn is perhaps one of the most underappreciated composers in the development of Western music and is often overshadowed by his top student, Ludwig van Beethoven.

--Cole King

Instrumental in the founding of modern chamber music, Haydn is known as the "Father of the String Quartet". He wrote 68 string quartets, his first written around 1756 while working for Baron Carl Josef Fürnberg. Haydn's string quartet repertoire spans his "Sturm und Strang" (Storm and Stress) period from the late 1760s to early 1770s, where his pieces flourish in expressiveness and passion. After a break working on comic operas, Haydn returned to chamber music in the early 1780s to work on more "pure" music in the new Classical style, motifs flowing from one to the next, before developing into his "popular" style, incorporating folk music into his work. Haydn's most noteworthy and famous string quartets include his Op. 33 "Russian" quartets, 20 "Sun", 54 "Tost", 71 & 74 "Apponyi", and 76 "Erdödy".

--Blake Modean

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) composed 68 quartets, far surpassing his contemporaries in his prolificacy. One of his most fascinating works is his String Quartet No. 35 in D minor, Op. 42. Unlike his other quartets, this piece stands alone as a separate work. Beginning with a grandiose and melancholy Andante and finishing with a somewhat abrupt Finale movement, No. 35 is a testament to Haydn's creativity and willingness to experiment with new ideas during the Classical Period. In his own words, Haydn was "forced to become original." The nuanced character of this stand-alone quartet testifies to the ingenuity of its composer.

--Emily Keeley

### **Dmitri Shostakovich, Quartet No. 8, Op. 110**

Dimitri Dmitriyevich Shostakovich is one of the most notable and recognizable Soviet-era Russian composers. Dimitri was born on the 25th of September in 1906 in St. Petersburg, Russia. His father was a chemical engineer and his mother was a pianist who helped teach Dimitri. At a young age Dimitri had shown a high musical ability and his works are heavily influenced by Igor Stravinsky and Gustav Mahler. Dimitri was not only musically inclined, but also participated in bureaucratic functions and delegations throughout his life. Shostakovich attended Petrograd Conservatory after which he continued composing and performing, keeping a heavy performance schedule until 1930. His career during the Soviet Russia era was met with scrutiny and had many critics disliking his musical style and had Shostakovich in fear of arrest. The harsh critiques of his style caused a sharp decline in his commissions, concert appearances, and performances of his music. Shortly after this in 1933, the beginning of the period of Great Terror led to many of his friends and relatives being imprisoned or killed. Shostakovich remained extremely patriotic to Soviet Russia and was commissioned to write several symphonies one of which, his 8th, met with harsh criticism as people felt as if he was writing against the ideals of Soviet Russia and the war they were fighting and was hence banned until 1956. Shostakovich had many of his works banned by Soviet Russia and struggled to pay his rent because of this. By around 1961 Shostakovich's health began to deteriorate. That year, he wrote his 8th string quartet as a "biography" for his life. He died in 1975 due to heart failure. Shostakovich remains one of the greatest Russian composers of all time and his works and his career was filled with many ups and downs, yet he continued to compose until his death.

--Jared Long

Shostakovich's output is dominated by his cycles of fifteen symphonies and fifteen string quartets. The symphonies were distributed throughout his career while the quartets are concentrated towards the latter part of his life. Shostakovich's other works include two operas, six concertos, two piano trios, and a large quantity of film music. His music shows influence from a range of composers including Bach, Mahler, and Russian composers like Mussorgsky, but with a special affection for Stravinsky. In his works, Shostakovich combined a variety of musical techniques to capitalize on sharp contrasts and elements of the grotesque.

--Abby Mason

Shostakovich wrote fifteen string quartets, as well as other various chamber music such as two piano trios, a cello sonata, and a viola sonata. Among his string quartets, the third and the ninth rank as most popular, while his viola and cello sonatas stand out among the remaining chamber music. Shostakovich dedicated many of his chamber works, with the first string quartet dedicated to composer Vissarion Shebalin, the seventh dedicated to his late wife Nina, and the eighth famously

dedicated to "the victims of fascism and the war." In 1941, Shostakovich's Piano Quintet in G Minor was awarded the Stalin Prize after it was debuted by the Beethoven Quartet on November 23, 1940.

--Zach Terrell

Written over the course of three days in Dresden, Germany, Dmitri Shostakovich's 8th String Quartet is one of the composer's most famous works. Written shortly after Shostakovich joined the Communist Party, the quartet, as printed at the top of the score, is dedicated "to the victims of fascism and the war." There are differing interpretations as to what exactly Shostakovich was thinking when writing this dedication—his son, Maxim, says it is dedicated to all those who have suffered under totalitarian regimes. His daughter Galina, however, says that he dedicated it to himself and that the Russian government imposed the dedication printed on the score. Shostakovich's friend, Lev Lebedinsky, even says that this quartet rather served as a suicide note for the composer.

Consisting of five interconnected movements, the quartet's primary theme is based around the composer's initials, DSCH. These initials manifest into the notes D, E-flat, C, and B. This motif is heard at the very beginning of the piece and appears in every movement in a variety of styles, tempos and characters. The piece's dark timbre is displayed through extensive use of dissonant harmonies, intense articulations and powerful melodic gestures. One could say that when listening to this quartet, you are catching a glimpse of what Shostakovich himself was experiencing those three days in Dresden.

--Ryan Keith