

PROGRAM NOTES BY KEN MELTZER

DANIEL HOPE & FRIENDS III

Thursday, April 4 at 11 am
Trinity United Methodist Church

MAX BRUCH (1838–1920)
String Quintet in A minor, Opus posth.
(1918)

- I. *Allegro*
- II. *Allegro molto*
- III. *Adagio non troppo*
- IV. *Allegro*

CÉSAR FRANCK (1822–1890)
Piano Quintet in F minor (1879)
I. *Molto moderato quasi lento; Allegro*
II. *Lento, con molto sentimento*
III. *Allegro con troppo ma con fuoco*

Daniel Hope, violin
Benny Kim, violin
Simos Papanas, violin
Paul Neubauer, viola
CarlaMaria Rodrigues, viola
Eric Kim, cello
Keith Robinson, cello
Simon Crawford-Phillips, piano

String Quintet in A minor, Opus posth.
(1918)

Max Bruch was born in Cologne, Germany, on January 6, 1838, and died in Friedenau, near Berlin, Germany, on October 2, 1920.

 *Approximate performance time is 25 minutes.*

 *SMF performance history: SMF premiere*

On January 6, 1918, German composer Max Bruch observed the 80th anniversary of his birth. During this time, both Bruch and his wife, Clara, found themselves in poor health (Clara would die in August of 1919). Coupled with these physical hardships were economic struggles, as Germany's defeat in World War I was on the horizon.

The despair Bruch suffered during these years was similar to what Richard Strauss (1864–1949) experienced at the end of World War II. Bruch and Strauss responded to their trials by composing a series of brilliant musical works. In Strauss' case, it was such masterpieces as his final opera, *Capriccio* (1942), the Second Horn Concerto (1942), *Metamorphosen* (subtitled "A Study for 23 Solo Strings") (1945), the Oboe Concerto (1945), and *Four Last Songs* (1948). In the final two years of his life, Bruch composed three marvelous chamber works: the String Quintets in E-flat Major and A minor (1918), and the Octet for Strings (1920).

In their final works, Bruch and Strauss eschewed the kinds of revolutionary, and sometimes shocking, musical expression embraced by many of their contemporaries. Instead, the two German composers wrote music that harkened to past, happier times. Bruch's final chamber compositions nostalgically evoke the height of the Romantic era in the mid to late 19th century. It is music brimming with melodic inspiration, and rich, varied writing for the string ensembles.

After Bruch's death, the composer's friend, German violinist Willy Hess, maintained the scores of the two Quintets and Octet. It appears that Hess and a group of his students performed the A minor String Quintet as a memorial to Bruch. Eventually, the music came into the possession of English violinist Isidore Schuller, one of the performers in the world premieres of Ralph Vaughan Williams' String Quartet No. 1 (November 8, 1908), and *On Wenlock Edge* (November 15, 1909).


Schuller organized English radio broadcast performances of the Bruch String Quintets and Octet that took place between July 1937 and February 1938. Thanks to the tireless work of Bruch biographer Christopher Fitfield, these works have in recent years enjoyed well-deserved rediscovery, performances, and recordings.

The A minor String Quintet (pairs of violins and violas, and cello) is in four movements. The first (*Allegro*), in sonata form, opens with a brief introduction, followed by the first of two principal themes, agitated and yearning. The contrasting lyrical second theme follows. The development and recapitulation of the principal themes leads to the whirlwind final bars. The second movement scherzo (*Allegro molto*) is a joyful dance in 6/8 meter. The slow-tempo third movement (*Adagio non troppo*) is a gorgeous song without words. The rondo finale (*Allegro*) juxtaposes the vigorous principal theme, introduced at the outset, with more lyrical episodes, as the Quintet sprints to a joyful resolution.

Piano Quintet in F minor (1879)

César Franck was born in Liège, Belgium, on December 10, 1822, and died in Paris, France, on November 8, 1890.

 *Approximate performance time is 40 minutes.*

 *SMF performance history: 4/03/12*

César Franck composed his Quintet, scored for piano and string quartet (two violins, viola, and cello) in 1878–9. Franck dedicated the score to his friend, the great French composer and pianist Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921).

Saint-Saëns and the Marsick Quartet first performed, the Quintet at the Paris Salle Pleyel on January 17, 1880. After the successful premiere, Franck came on stage and, as a token of gratitude, offered the manuscript to Saint-Saëns. But Saint-Saëns, who did not find the stormy, intense music to his liking, hurried off the stage, leaving the score on the piano.

Saint-Saëns was not the only person who found the Franck Piano Quintet problematic. Franck's wife, Félicité, once remarked: "His organ pieces are everything that is admirable; but that quintet! Ugh!" Félicité Franck refused to attend any performances of the Quintet. Biographer Léo

Vallas suggests that at the time Franck composed the Piano Quintet, he was deeply in love with one of his music students, a beautiful woman by the name of Augusta Holmès. Perhaps the Quintet's passionate music was an expression of Franck's love for Augusta. If so, Madame Franck's antipathy requires no further discussion.

The public disagreed with Saint-Saëns's and Madame Franck's assessment, demanding the Société Nationale de Musique Français give a repeat performance, which took place four months after the premiere. And the Franck Piano Quintet remains one of the most compelling works in the chamber music literature. As with the composer's great Symphony in D minor (1888), the Piano Quintet's passionate expression and brilliant manipulation of central thematic material produce a work of extraordinary momentum and drama.

I. *Molto moderato quasi lento; Allegro*—The Quintet opens with an extended and dramatic slow-tempo introduction (*Molto moderato quasi lento*). The introduction features two principal ideas, presented at the very outset. The first violin, accompanied by the remainder of the strings, plays a stark, descending theme, featuring dotted rhythms, and marked both *fortissimo* and *dramatico*. The meter switches from 4/4 to 12/8, as the piano responds with a flowing, *espressivo* melody. These two ideas form the basis for the principal thematic material of the ensuing *Allegro*. First is the dotted-rhythm motif, now launched by the piano. The piano also introduces the lovely second theme, marked *tenero ma con passione* (tender but with passion). This theme will return throughout the Quintet. The traditional development and recapitulation of the principal themes in this sonata-form movement lead to an extended coda that, for all its fireworks, finally yields to a *pianissimo* resolution.

II. *Lento, con molto sentimento*—The Quintet's slow-tempo movement is in A–B–A form. Over throbbing piano accompaniment, the first violin sings the *dolce* principal melody. In the central episode, the key shifts from A minor to D-flat Major, as the opening movement's second theme returns. A varied reprise of the "A" section brings the movement to a hushed close.

III. *Allegro con troppo ma con fuoco*—The second violin launches a repeated, scurrying figure. Hints of the finale's initial theme finally coalesce into a powerful, dotted-rhythm statement that recalls its counterpart in the opening movement. The second theme is based upon a fanfare motif. The development and recapitulation of the themes lead to the coda. There, the opening movement's second theme make its final appearance, now cast in triple meter, as the Quintet hurtles to a brilliant close.