



2021 - 2022
36TH SEASON
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CONCERT ONE

THE "B" TEAM

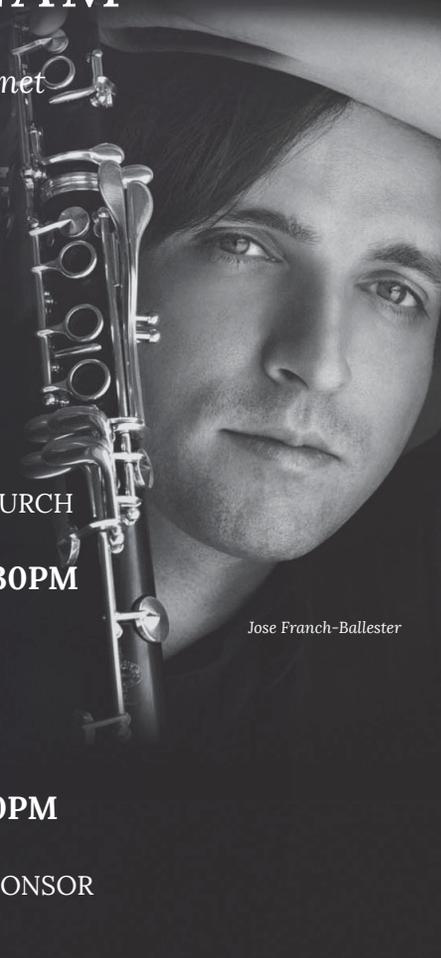
Jose Franch-Ballester, *clarinet*
Joan Blackman, *violin*
David Gillham, *violin*
Emilie Grimes, *viola*
Zoltan Rozsnyai, *cello*

FRIDAY OCT. 22ND at 2PM
WEST POINT GREY UNITED CHURCH

SATURDAY OCT. 23RD at 7:30PM
PYATT HALL

SUNDAY OCT. 24TH at 2PM
PYATT HALL

TUESDAY OCT. 26TH at 7:30PM
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Jose Franch-Ballester

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770- 1827)
String Quartet No. 1 in F major, Op. 18, No. 1

I. *Allegro con brio*
II. *Adagio affettuoso ed appassionato*
III. *Scherzo: Allegro molto*

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
Quintet for Clarinet and String Quartet in B minor, Op. 115

I. *Allegro*
II. *Adagio*
III. *Andantino - Presto non assai, ma con sentiment*
IV. *Con moto - Un poco meno mosso*

Ludwig van Beethoven

String Quartet No. 1 in F major, op. 18, No. 1 (1801)

The String Quartet No. 1 in F major, Op. 18, No. 1, was written by Ludwig van Beethoven between 1798 and 1800, and published in 1801. Beethoven's Opus 18 quartets are his earliest compositions for the medium, and the F minor quartet did not come to birth easily, as Beethoven surely felt the burden of proving himself with a form that Haydn and Mozart had mastered. An early version of the F major Quartet was sent as a gift to his friend Karl Amenda, but Beethoven soon rewrote the entire composition, writing to Karl, "Don't let anyone see your quartet as I have greatly changed it, as only now do I know how to write quartets properly". Perhaps Beethoven chose this quartet to begin his set because it is so succinct. It's a brilliant work, full of youthful energy, yet crafted with a maturity beyond his years.

The first movement is focused on developing the opening idea, a short and direct unison statement. Beethoven shows off his skill of motivic writing, using this one idea in different ways throughout the movement. While the first movement might seem a little intellectual, the second movement is pure opera. According to one of Amenda's letters, Beethoven sought to depict, in musical terms, the tomb scene of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. In the dark tragic key of D minor, with sweeter passages interrupting in parentheses, we feel Beethoven's rage against fate, from the first hushed theme to the frenzied climax.

By the time this F major Quartet appeared, audiences were prepared for a fiercely aggressive Beethoven scherzo, but this one is surprisingly calm, contrasted with a humorous Trio with skipping octaves. In the witty finale, it is interesting to note that when he revised it, Beethoven changed the marking from 'Allegretto' to 'Allegro'. Certainly, quicksilver finesse is required to navigate the returns to triplet and duplet figures passed between players. The motivic writing mirrors that of the first movement which sandwiches the inner movements for a perfect sense of balance and form. It is clear with this quartet that Beethoven was well on his way to finding his unique voice and full creative powers.

Johannes Brahms

Quintet for Clarinet and String Quartet in B minor, Op. 115 (1891)

Brahms' Clarinet Quintet is one of his final works, written in 1891 as part of a surprising re-emergence from intended retirement. Inspired by hearing the virtuoso clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld, Brahms set about to write a masterpiece if there ever was one, with some of the most exquisitely beautiful musical lines and colors of any chamber work ever composed. The quintet received its first private performance on 24 November 1891 with Richard Mühlfeld and the Joachim Quartet, led by violinist Joseph Joachim who often collaborated with Brahms.

This work is often described as autumnal, and there is a great depth of sadness in the piece, with dark tonal hues and lush textures, but Brahms provides more than glimmers of hope, including tender vocal lines, wildly rhapsodic "Gypsy" clarinet improvisations and ecstatic and swooping arpeggios. Brahms maintains tight thematic unity throughout the work by keeping the main themes of all four movements closely related, especially in the first and last movements. The opening Allegro begins with a sweet, reflective violin duet, from which much of the piece grows. Wavering between major and minor, it builds to a staccato statement and transitions to a more flowing second theme announced by the clarinet. Listen for contrasts in texture between the sound of the strings and the clarinet, and how Brahms has the clarinet switch from soloist to colour commentator as he mixes his luscious sound pallet.

The second movement Adagio begins with three simple but grieving notes, which the clarinet and violin intone together, apart and in canon as if in disbelief at what the world has come to. Meanwhile the strings murmur below in offbeat and triplet ostinatos. While the strings continue to repeat this motive, suddenly the clarinet breaks into a lassu, the slow part of a Hungarian Csardas, with wild rhapsodic gestures up and down the range of the instrument. The strings join in with stirring tremolos, imitating the cimbalom or hammer dulcimer. But reality sets in again, and the movement ends in the wistful mood in which it began, recalling the rising arpeggio that announced the first entry of the clarinet in the first movement.

Brahms takes a breather from such depth of emotion with the Andantino, which contains a quick, flighty presto within bookends of the Andante, a relaxed pastorale with a folk-like tune. The finale begins almost as a continuation of the pastorale theme, but no, it becomes a theme and five variations. The first variation features the cello. The second recalls the gypsy style, the third is a conversation between clarinet and first violin, and the fourth is a sweet melody mostly performed by the clarinet, which brings back some of the mood of the second movement. Suddenly, in the fifth variation and coda, the opening of the first movement returns, at first tentatively, but after a recitativo passage which seems like a question yearning for an answer, the quintet ends full circle with a memory of how it began.

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