

# PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW  
NOTES

## Escher Quartet

Jordan Bak, *viola*

Adam Barnett-Hart, *violin*; Brendan Speltz, *violin*; Pierre Lapointe, *viola*; Brook Speltz, *cello*

Wednesday, October 30 – 7:30 PM

Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center

### PROGRAM

#### Quartet in B Minor, Op. 11

Samuel Barber

*Born:* March 9, 1910

*Died:* January 23, 1981

*Composed:* 1936

*Duration:* approx. 25 minutes

Samuel Barber is regarded as one of the great American composers of the 20th century, a period that saw the emergence of truly remarkable American classical music. Barber published two string quartets: an early serenade that he later transcribed for orchestra and the astonishing Op. 11, which he composed at the age of 26. The centerpiece of this quartet is the famous, monolithic, and transcendent *Adagio*, which has also been transcribed as an independent piece for string orchestra and, most strikingly, as an a cappella choral mass. Even in the realm of instrumental music, Barber keenly evokes the human voice and our deep, enduring connection to song.

#### Quartet No. 2 in A Minor

Florence Price

*Born:* April 9, 1887

*Died:* June 3, 1953

*Composed:* 1935

*Duration:* approx. 30 minutes

Florence Price's second string quartet is her largest-scale chamber work currently extant. Beautifully romantic and deeply infused with the rich cultural heritage of African-American idioms, her music is an integral part of America's musical history. While her characteristic influences from Romanticism, spirituals, and blues are present, the quartet also features more modern elements, including extensive

chromaticism, shifting tonal areas, and quasi-improvisatory sections in the final movement. This is one of Price's most adventurous and emotionally charged works, making it a valuable addition to any serious string quartet's repertoire.

#### String Quintet in E-flat Major, Op. 97, *American*

Antonín Dvořák

*Born:* September 8, 1841

*Died:* May 1, 1904

*Composed:* 1893

*Duration:* approx. 35 minutes

Composed during Dvořák's stay in the United States, the String Quintet in E-flat Major, Op. 97, scored for string quartet with an additional viola, is often referred to as the "American." This quintet, written in Spillville, Iowa, captures the vibrant spirit of the New World, reflecting Dvořák's fascination with American folk music and Native American melodies, while still remaining deeply rooted in his Bohemian heritage. The work is characterized by lively rhythms, rich harmonies, and a distinctive sense of nostalgia. The unusual percussive opening of the *Scherzo* (second movement) may be influenced by tribal music that Dvořák heard in Spillville. Additionally, the theme of the third movement is thought to be related to Dvořák's known interest in creating a new American national anthem. This quintet, blending diverse influences, stands as a testament to Dvořák's ability to infuse his music with both personal and cultural significance.