



Central Library Lawn  
Friday, June 14, 2019

**BRAHMS String Quartet No. 2 in A minor, Op. 51**

- I. Allegro non troppo
- II. Andante moderato
- III. Quasi Minuetto: Moderato - Allegro vivace
- IV. Finale - Allegro non assai

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) was a composer of the Romantic era who composed a total of three string quartets during his lifetime. String Quartet No. 2 in A minor, Op. 51 dates back to 1873 and was among the first string quartets Brahms published, although far from the first he had ever written. Brahms often felt the pressure of following in the footsteps of Beethoven, one of the greatest composers of his generation. Due to this pressure, Brahms didn't publish a symphony or string quartet until he was forty years old.

The set of string quartets in the Op. 51 are very rich in texture, mimicking full symphonic works. Brahms uses minor keys for both quartets in the set, yet contrasts the minor feeling with a variety of different themes and motifs that transform the character of the pieces and add drama.

The opening movement of this string quartet is in sonata form, with an exposition, development, and recapitulation. Brahms uses rhythmic complexity in this movement by setting counts of two against counts of three simultaneously. The next movement contrasts the first by offering slow and soothing melodies. This calmness gets interrupted at times, but the main theme ultimately prevails. The third movement, the scherzo, is more tentative and quiet at first, and is then contrasted by a more upbeat trio in a major key. The final movement is high drama, with a triple meter feeling and a continuous feeling of drive and pushing forward. This drive is juxtaposed with sweet, lyrical segments, and the movement ultimately ends with the recurring theme from the beginning.