



Johnston Public Library
Sunday, June 30, 2019

BEETHOVEN String Quartet No. 6 in B \flat Major, Op. 18

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Adagio ma non troppo
- III. Scherzo - Allegro
- IV. La Malinconia – Adagio, Allegretto quasi allegro

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 no assai

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) published String Quartet No. 6 in B \flat Major, Op. 18 in 1801. Beethoven composed this set of string quartets in a transitional time period between the Classical and Romantic eras. The sixth string quartet is the final one in Opus 51, and Beethoven dedicated it to Joseph Franz von Lobkowitz, a Bohemian aristocrat with a great interest in music.

The first movement starts off with the main theme in B \flat in a bold tempo. The second theme of the first movement is slightly less energetic, with the instruments moving in rhythmic unison. The second movement is slow and ornate, and briefly restates the music in C Major towards the end, a juxtaposition to the minor keys it was previously heard in. The third movement features syncopated rhythms and is broken up by a trio with contrasting themes. The final movement is titled “La Malinconia” or “Melancholy,” which is evident in the extended slow opening. The sadness is interrupted by sections of a quick, cheerful theme.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) published String Quartet No. 2 in A minor, Op. 51 in 1873. The two string quartets in Opus 51 were the first string quartets that Brahms published, although not the first he attempted. Brahms composed the quartets for nearly a decade before publishing them. He dedicated the A minor string quartet to his friend Theodor Billroth, a Viennese surgeon and amateur string player.

The theme in the first movement uses the note progression F-A-E, which stood for “frei aber einsam” or “free but lonely” the motto of Brahms’s friend, Joseph Joachim. The second movement is in A Major and has beautiful expansive phrases interrupted by an accented, marcato passage. The third movement showcases Brahms’s use of counterpoint and has a fast and animated trio section in the middle. The final movement plays with rhythm as the melody is felt in double meter, while the accompaniment is felt in triple meter.