

# Placitas Artists Series – January 15, 2017

## Program

The concert features Willy Sucre and Friends performing chamber music by Beethoven & Brahms.

**Awadagin Pratt, piano**  
**Krzystof Zimowski, violin**  
**Justin Pollak, violin**  
**Willy Sucre, viola**  
**James Holland, cello**

Beethoven: Piano Concerto No 4 in G major, op. 58 (modified for piano and string quartet)

- 1) Allegro moderato
- 2) Andante con moto
- 3) Rondo (vivace)

\*\*\*\* Intermission\*\*\*\*

Brahms: Piano Quintet in F minor Op.34

- 1) Allegro non Troppo
- 2) Andante un poco Adagio
- 3) Scherzo - Allegro
- 4) Finale - Poco Sostenuto

## Program Notes

*Piano Concerto No. 4 in G major, Op. 58 by Ludwig van Beethoven (arranged for piano & strings)*

Beethoven composed his Concerto in G major in 1805-06 and performed it in a private concert at Prince Lobkowitz's residence in Vienna before giving the public premiere on December 22, 1808. In addition to the solo piano, the score, dedicated to the Archduke Rudolph, calls for a flute, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, and strings.

This Concerto was an innovative break with traditional concerto format and content. The intimate character that prevails throughout the work makes itself felt in the very opening, stated by the piano alone in a mood of serene, contemplative self-confidence. The gesture is just long enough to announce that this is to be a different sort of concerto, with a conspicuously less "public" character than audiences were accustomed to in 1806 -- and from Beethoven's own earlier concertos in particular.

Felix Mendelssohn rescued the G-major Concerto from its undeserved oblivion and established it in its rightful place when he performed it in Leipzig in 1836. The 26-year-old Robert Schumann, who was present, reported being so transfixed by the work that "I sat in my place without moving a muscle or even breathing."

*Piano Quintet in F minor, Op. 34 by Johannes Brahms*

When Brahms ambled into his favorite Viennese café one evening, so the story goes, a friend asked him how he had spent his day. "I was working on my symphony," he said. "In the morning I added an eighth note. In the afternoon I took it

out." The anecdote may be apocryphal, but its intent faithfully reflects Brahms' painstaking process of creation, which is seen better, perhaps nowhere than in his F minor Piano Quintet.

The opening movement, tempestuous and tragic in mood, is in a tightly packed sonata form. The dramatic main theme is stated immediately in unison by violin, cello and piano, and then repeated with greater force by the entire ensemble. The complementary theme, given above an insistently repeated triplet figuration, is more subdued and lyrical in nature than the previous melody. The closing theme achieves a brighter tonality to offer a brief respite from the movement's pervasive strong emotions. The development section treats the main and second themes, and ushers in the recapitulation on a great wave of sound.

In the tender second movement the outer sections of its three-part form are based on a gentle, lyrical strain in sweet, close-interval harmonies, while the movement's central portion uses a melody incorporating an octave-leap motif.

The Scherzo proper contains three motif elements: a rising theme of vague rhythmic identity; a snapping motif in strict, dotted rhythm; and a march-like strain in full chordal harmony. These three components are juxtaposed throughout the movement, with the dotted-rhythm theme being given special prominence, including a vigorous fugal working-out. The central trio grows from a theme that is a lyrical transformation of the Scherzo's march strain.

The Finale opens with a pensive slow introduction fueled by deeply felt chromatic harmonies, exactly the sort of passage that caused Arnold Schoenberg to label Brahms a "modernist." The body of the movement, in fast tempo, is a hybrid of rondo and sonata forms. Despite the buoyant, Gypsy flavor of the movement's thematic material, the tragic tenor of this great Quintet is maintained until its closing page.