



## **Program I: Perfect Fifths**

Thursday, August 8, 2024

### **Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805): String Quintet in E Major, Op. 11, No. 5 (1771)**

Luigi Boccherini was born into a musical household in Lucca, Italy, the son of a noted cellist and double-bass player and the brother of poet Giovanni Boccherini, who wrote opera librettos for Haydn and Salieri. Luigi was a talented cellist, and around the age of 20, he moved to Madrid, where he was employed by the younger brother of King Charles III.

Boccherini excelled in the composition of chamber music for strings, and pioneered the cello quintet genre: the string quartet with an additional cello. His six Opus 11 quintets were likely composed in 1771 for his patron, the king's brother, Don Luis. This one, No. 5, begins with a gentle *amoroso* that moves on to a lively *allegro con spirito*. The minuet movement is one of Boccherini's most famous pieces, and may be familiar to most listeners from numerous arrangements and use in popular media. The closing rondo is gentle and not overly virtuosic, but listen closely for the first cellist playing in the upper range of the instrument, often in close harmony with the violins or viola.

### **Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904): Piano Quintet No. 2 in A Major, Op. 81 (1887)**

Antonín Dvořák was the first Bohemian composer to achieve worldwide recognition, noted for turning folk material into 19th-century Romantic music. He became an accomplished violinist as a youngster, joining in the amateur music-making that accompanied the dances at his father's inn. A contemporary of Brahms and Tchaikovsky, Dvořák infused western European classical structures with a profound commitment to his Bohemian roots.

While not a keyboard virtuoso, by the time of this composition Dvořák was an experienced composer for the piano, having learned in a preceding piano quartet and three piano trios how to blend the instrument forcefully with the strings. Perhaps the most pervasive characteristic of the Op. 81 Piano Quintet is its alternating moods—an idiosyncrasy Dvořák absorbed from Czech folk music.

In the first movement, the cello presents the dreamy and soulful main theme over an undulant piano accompaniment. Soon the theme becomes energetic and brilliant, but the second theme, introduced by the viola, injects a tinge of sadness. The contrast in moods reaches its greatest extreme in the second movement, *Dumka*. Titled "Scherzo" to conform to convention, the third movement also carries the far

more meaningful subtitle *Furiant*, an energetic Slavonic dance. The last movement, *Allegro*, offers a dazzling variety of dance-like rhythms, sentimental strains and playful tunes. There is even a fugal passage in the development and, late in the movement, a chorale before the frantic windup.