

20th Anniversary Season

Performing Arts Series

presents

Takács Quartet

Edward Dusingberre, violin

Károly Schranz, violin

Geraldine Walther, viola

András Fejér, cello

Friday, September 10, 2010

Yardley Hall

Johnson County Community College

*Underwritten in part by the
Arthur and Alma Yardley Endowment in the JCCC Foundation*

Program

String Quartet No. 56 in E-flat Major, Op. 71, No. 3, Hob. III:71

Franz Josef Haydn
(1732 - 1809)

- I. Vivace
- II. Andante con moto
- III. Menuet
- IV. Finale: Vivace

String Quartet No. 2 in A Major, Op. 68

Dmitri Shostakovich
(1906 - 1975)

- I. Overture: Moderato con moto
- II. Recitative and Romance: Adagio
- III. Waltz: Allegro
- IV. Theme with Variations: Adagio

~INTERMISSION~

String Quartet No. 14 in D minor, D. 810, “Death and the Maiden”

Franz Schubert
(1797 - 1828)

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante
- III. Scherzo
- IV. Presto

The Takács Quartet appears by arrangement with Seldy Cramer Artists, and records for Hyperion and Decca/London Records.

The Takács Quartet is Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Colorado in Boulder and Associate Artists at the South Bank Centre, London.

Website: www.takacsquartet.com

Program Notes

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String Quartet, Op. 71, No. 3 in E-flat Major. . . Joseph Haydn
(Born March 31, 1732, in Rohrau; died May 31, 1809, in Vienna)

In 1793, while he was home in Vienna between his two long stays in London, Haydn composed a set of six string quartets for Count Anton Apponyi, who seems to have governed the huge Hungarian county of Tolna from Vienna, where he was a chamberlain at the Imperial Court. We do not know much about Apponyi, but we do know that he was the first person to offer the young Beethoven a string quartet commission in 1795, and in 1784, Mozart had proudly named Countess Apponyi among the noble subscribers to his concerts in Vienna. Haydn apparently gave Apponyi exclusive rights to the six quartets for a year, as was the custom of the time, and in 1795, he broke them up into two sets of three that he sold to different publishers. They are now generally known with the opus numbers 71 and 74.

Haydn had long been Europe's most famous composer, and in the six new symphonies he wrote for his London audiences, he revealed a creative imagination that only Mozart equaled and that only Beethoven would surpass. The forceful expression that he gave his work in these years, his freedom in dealing with complex musical ideas, and his facility in giving them form opened the way for the new music of the 19th century.

This quartet begins in an unusual way: there is an introduction before the exposition which consists of a single E-flat chord joined together with an expressive, extended full bar's rest. This chord becomes the first center of attention, an integral part of both the serious and the humorous side of the opening Vivace theme. Here, Haydn was able to join the profound and the light. This unusually structured first movement has been much discussed by the critics for its dramatic introductory chord, as well as for the atypical crossing of the cello and the viola parts, which causes some rare harmonies.

The variations in the slow Andante con moto second movement are more predictable than the form of the preceding movement, and they follow the established major-minor sequence, but yet here Haydn combines the double variation form with the more expected variation form and with rondo form. The third movement, a Menuet, has a trio which contrasts strongly with the main body of the movement. The finale, another Vivace movement, takes an exceptional form of a rondo with a fugue enmeshed in it.

Quartet No. 2, Op. 68 . . . Dmitri Shostakovich
(Born September 25, 1906, in St. Petersburg; died August 8, 1975, in Moscow)

Shostakovich's family, originally Polish, settled in Russia two generations before the composer's birth, when his grandfather was released from exile in Siberia. The composer received his first piano lessons from his mother, and at the age of 13, entered the Petrograd Conservatory. His graduation piece was his *Symphony No. 1*, a brilliant work that was soon performed widely. He proved to be music's last great classicist, the composer of 15 symphonies, two operas, three ballets, 15 string quartets and many other works including

36 film scores. Curiously enough, however, he did not show much interest in writing string quartets early in his career.

Shostakovich came to maturity in an era when the rulers of Russia felt that their communist society should support new kinds of art. Russian composers, poets, novelists and painters soon formed a true avant-garde, but before long, official ideas changed. Shostakovich's next symphonies and his two operas of the late 1920s and early 1930s were attacked by Communist aesthetic theoreticians for such faults as "bourgeois decadence" and ideological "formalism," and were withdrawn from circulation. With his *Symphony No. 5* of 1937, which he humbly described as "a composer's reply to just criticism," he re-entered the mainstream of Russian musical life. He was to have difficulties of one kind or another with the authorities all the way until the time of his *Symphony No. 13* (1962), which was dedicated to the memory of the victims of the Nazi's wartime mass murders at Babi-Yar. By the time he wrote *Symphony No. 13*, his acknowledged position as one of the world's greatest living composers could not preserve him from public indignity, but nevertheless, it prevented him from being silenced for long.

Shostakovich wrote his *Quartet No. 2* at Ivanovo, during the second of three productive summers (1943-45) he spent there in what was called a "House of Rest and Creativity," and which was actually a government-sponsored country retreat for writers and composers. Another composer who was at Ivanovo in the summer of this work's composition, named Mikhail Meyerovich, commented: "I discovered him to be a very lively man who was always in motion. I wondered when he did the actual composing. The Quartet [No.2] was written in under four weeks before my very eyes. But nobody saw him at the desk or at the piano. I began to observe him closely. He would play football and fool around with friends; then he would suddenly disappear. After 40 minutes or so he would turn up again. 'How are you doing? Let me kick the ball.' Then we would have dinner and drink some wine and take a walk, and he would be the life and soul of the party. Every now and then he would disappear for a while and then join us again. Towards the end of my stay he disappeared altogether. We didn't see him for a week. Then he turned up, unshaven and looking exhausted. 'Let's go to a cottage with a piano in it.' He played us the Second Quartet. It had that very day's date on it [20 September.]"

Shostakovich wrote a letter to Vissarion Shebalin, his friend and the director of the Moscow Conservatory and the dedicatee of *Quartet No. 2*, two weeks before completing the quartet, about his compositional routine: "I worry about the lightning speed with which I compose. Undoubtedly this is bad. One shouldn't compose as quickly as I do. It is exhausting, rather unpleasant, and at the end of the day you lack any confidence in the result. But I can't rid myself of the bad habit." The musicologist Paul Epstein concluded, from this evidence: "He worked out his compositions in his head in remarkable detail and then simply notated the finished product."

String Quartet No. 2 premiered November 9, 1944. This work has been seen to reflect the Russian mindset at the time, blending the symphonic and dramatic, the old and the new, and heroic aspirations, all with a distinctly Russian sound. The quartet, which often has an unsettling effect on the listener, has remained one of the least-known of the cycle of Shostakovich's 15 string quartets. Its music is definitely dark and powerful, but it does not make obvious reference to any events occurring at the time of its composition. Shostakovich remarked in his autobiographical *Testimony*, "In other countries, war probably interferes with the arts. But in Russia - for tragic reasons - there was a flowering of the arts."

The first movement, Overture: moderato con moto, in sonata form, begins abruptly, with a riveting, confident violin motif that many commentators call Neo-Classical in quality; nevertheless, the movement is tense and dissonant. The development section is very complex with the first theme becoming a kind of waltz-melody, accompanied by a gentle pizzicato. The viola is highlighted in the exploration of the second subject.

The second movement, Recitative and Romance, Adagio, opens and closes with a protracted recitative by the first violin, punctuated and supported by an unbarred, but simple chordal accompaniment. The central episode, the Romance, is slow and reflective, seeming to grow from ideas expressed in the first movement. It gradually turns strident and reaches a notable climax before the return of the opening recitative.

The third movement, a Waltz, Allegro, has often been described as one of the most remarkable movements in Shostakovich's output. Set in basic 3/4 rhythm, the movement requires muted instruments, giving the music a sinister and eerie feel, as well as a mysterious end. Shostakovich admitted to the writer Daniil Zhitomirsky, that the movement "is a 'valse macabre.' And if it were compared to the classics, it should be compared to the Waltz from the Third Suite by Tchaikovsky." This waltz includes several episodes of different character, before the original material returns to bring the movement to its conclusion.

The last movement, a Theme with Variations finale, is begun with a short Adagio. The viola lengthily presents the Russian-sounding theme, which is followed by four protracted variations, which are full of contrasts and often virtuosic. During the course of these, some of the character of the first movement returns. A final restatement of the original theme rounds out the movement.

String Quartet No. 14, in D minor, D. 810 ("Death and the Maiden") . . . Franz Schubert (Born January 31, 1797, in Lichtenthal; died November 19, 1828, in Vienna)

The quartet known as *Death and the Maiden* was first performed in January 1826 in the Viennese home of two amateur musicians, Karl and Franz Hacker. This beautiful quartet, which Schubert began in 1824, is exciting for its rhythm and scope, but it did not have a particularly successful reception at first. In fact, the first violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh of the famed Schuppanzigh Quartet, which premiered many of Beethoven's quartets, had trouble playing the first violin part because of his advanced age, and he said to Schubert after the play-through, "Brother, this is nothing at all, let well alone: stick to your *Lieder*." Yet Schubert, who wrote 15 string quartets in all, composed one more after this one. Although he sent it, along with two other quartets, three operas, a mass and a symphony to the publisher Schott, Schott returned it all, replying that Schubert's price was much too high, and that he should "send them something less difficult in easier keys." Consequently, the quartet was not published until after Schubert's death. One contemporary review from the *Weimar Musikalische Eilpost* in 1826 at least was short and sweet, noting that in performance the piece had "the highest artistic endeavor . . . clearly expressed. Profound feeling, force and charm, significance and vitality and poetic fire characterize [it]."

The long first movement, Allegro, demonstrates great power and is both dramatic and tragic. In it, Schubert also displays his mastery of modulation. Because the movement contains so many ideas, Paul Griffiths focuses on the unit of the triplet figure, which

emblematically seems to shape the form of the thematic motives. Each of the triplet figurations functions like a link to connect the musical thought from one idea to the next. Schubert diverges from strict classical structures quite innovatively, and in this restless sonata form opening movement, he extends the second subject material. Thus, the exposition of the theme and its recapitulation are large in scope, partly because each also includes some of its own development. The development itself is, therefore, brief and takes the listener to the coda, which grows to a climax before the movement ends quietly.

Although Schubert had used the theme and variations form in his *Trout Quintet*, he never returned to it again in any quartet except in this quartet's second movement, Andante con moto, and here it suits his expressive purpose admirably. The quartet takes its subtitle, *Death and the Maiden*, from this theme, which is a slightly altered version of the piano introduction to Schubert's song, "*Der Tod und das Madchen*" ("*Death and the Maiden*"), which he composed in 1817. The Matthias Claudius text is a dialogue in which the maiden begs Death to pass her by, and he replies, "I do no harm. Come, sleep peacefully in my arms." (While Schubert was being buried only a few yards from Beethoven, a small band of wind instruments played these five variations.)

Grief and desolation are most evident in this movement. Schubert's choice of thematic material for the quartet was, however, presumably prompted by a request from friends who loved the melody, rather than, as some commentators have contended, because the composer was contemplating and anticipating his own mortality.

The energetic third movement takes much of its rough vigor from the displaced accents of its syncopated theme, and it is Schubert's first scherzo, Allegro molto, in a quartet. For it, he borrows from his own *German Dance, D. 790*. The Scherzo's binary structure follows that of the Classical minuet with both sections repeated. The trio provides a contrast and contains a warm lyrical theme. The Scherzo returns to end the movement.

The last movement, Presto, has characteristics of the form and the rhythm of a tarantella, a Neapolitan folk dance in 6/8 rhythm, and the movement binds the other movements together tonally as well as brings the quartet to a stormy, galloping close. Here Schubert also takes elements of rondo form and sonata form and joins them with characteristics of the tarantella. Interpretations of this movement with its return to the D minor tonality have focused on its being a dance of death, but music historians have no evidence that suggests that this analysis has any basis in Schubert's intentions. Less controversial is the fact that the modulations and dynamics indicate the Romantic character of this distinguished work.

Takács Quartet

Recognized as one of the world's great ensembles, the Takács Quartet plays with a unique blend of drama, warmth and humor, combining four distinct musical personalities to bring fresh insights to the string quartet repertoire. Commenting on its latest Schubert recording for Hyperion, *Gramophone* magazine noted, "The Takács have the ability to make you believe that there's no other possible way the music should go, and the strength to overturn preconceptions that comes only with the greatest performers."

Based in Boulder at the University of Colorado, the Takács Quartet performs 90 concerts a year worldwide, throughout Europe as well as in Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea. The 2010-2011 season includes a Bartok Cycle in Sydney, and a three-concert series focusing on Schubert in New York City (92nd Street Y) and at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. The series will feature the New York premiere of a new work composed for the Quartet by Daniel Kelloff, based on the slow movement theme of Schubert's "Death and the Maiden" Quartet.

The Quartet's award-winning recordings include the complete Beethoven Cycle on the Decca label. In 2005 the Late Beethoven Quartets won Disc of the Year and Chamber Award from *BBC Music Magazine*, a Gramophone Award and a Japanese Record Academy Award. Their recordings of the early and middle Beethoven quartets collected a Grammy, another Gramophone Award, a Chamber Music of America Award and two further awards from the Japanese Recording Academy. Of their performances and recordings of the Late Quartets, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* wrote, "The Takács might play this repertoire better than any quartet of the past or present."

In 2006 the Takács Quartet made its first recording for Hyperion Records, of Schubert's D804 and D810. A disc featuring Brahms' Piano Quintet with Stephen Hough was released to great acclaim in November 2007 and was subsequently nominated for a Grammy. Brahms' Quartets Op. 51 and Op. 67 was released in the fall of 2008, and a disc featuring the Schumann Piano Quintet with Marc-Andre Hamelin was released in late 2009. The complete Haydn "Apponyi" Quartets, Op. 71 and 74, will be released in early 2011.

The Quartet has made 16 recordings for the Decca label since 1988 of works by Beethoven, Bartok, Borodin, Brahms, Chausson, Dvorak, Haydn, Mozart, Schubert and Smetana. The ensemble's recording of the six Bartok String Quartets received the 1998 Gramophone Award for chamber music and, in 1999, was nominated for a Grammy. In addition to the Beethoven String Quartet cycle recording, the ensemble's other Decca recordings include Dvorak's String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 51, and Piano Quintet in A Major, Op. 81, with pianist Andreas Haefliger; Schubert's Trout Quintet with Mr. Haefliger, which was nominated in 2000 for a Grammy Award; string quartets by Smetana and Borodin; Schubert's Quartet in G Major and Notturmo Piano Trio with Mr. Haefliger; the three Brahms string quartets and Piano Quintet in F minor with pianist András Schiff; Chausson's Concerto for violin, piano and string quartet with violinist Joshua Bell and pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet; and Mozart's String Quintets, K515 and 516 with Gyorgy Pauk, viola.

The Quartet is known for innovative programming. In 2007 it performed, with Academy Award-winning actor Philip Seymour Hoffman, *Everyman* in Carnegie Hall, inspired by the Philip Roth novel. The group collaborates regularly with the Hungarian folk ensemble Muzsikás, performing a program that explores the folk sources of Bartok's music. The

Takács also performed a music and poetry program on a 14 city US tour with the poet Robert Pinsky.

At the University of Colorado, the Takács Quartet helped to develop a string program with a special emphasis on chamber music, where students work in a nurturing environment designed to develop their artistry. The Quartet's commitment to teaching is enhanced by summer residencies at the Aspen Festival and the Music Academy of the West, Santa Barbara. The Takács is a Visiting Quartet at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London.

The Takács Quartet was formed in 1975 at the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest by Gabor Takács-Nagy, Károly Schranz, Gabor Ormai and András Fejér, while all four were students. They first received international attention in 1977, winning First Prize and the Critics' Prize at the International String Quartet Competition in Evian, France. The Quartet won the Gold Medal at the 1978 Portsmouth and Bordeaux Competitions, and First Prizes at the Budapest International String Quartet Competition in 1978 and the Bratislava Competition in 1981.

The Quartet made its North American debut tour in 1982. Violinist Edward Dusinberre joined the Quartet in 1993 and violist Roger Tapping in 1995. Violist Geraldine Walther replaced Mr. Tapping in 2005. In 2001 the Takács Quartet was awarded the Order of Merit of the Knight's Cross of the Republic of Hungary.

Bios

Edward Dusinberre (violin) was born in 1968 in Leamington Spa, England, and has enjoyed playing the violin from a young age. His early experiences as concertmaster of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain encouraged him to choose music as a profession. He studied with the Ukrainian violinist Felix Andrievsky at the Royal College of Music in London and at the Juilliard School with Dorothy DeLay and Piotr Milewski. In 1990 he won the British Violin Recital Prize and gave his debut recital in London at the Purcell Room, South Bank Centre. Upon completion of his studies at Juilliard, Mr. Dusinberre auditioned for the Takács Quartet, which he joined in 1993.

Future projects include a recording of Beethoven's violin sonatas No. 9 and 10 with David Korevaar and recitals in England with Charles Owen, including the world premiere of a recently discovered violin sonata by Mr. Dusinberre's grandfather, John R. Stainer.

Mr. Dusinberre enjoys writing about music. In connection with the Takács Quartet's forthcoming Beethoven cycles in London and Madrid, he has written articles for the *Strad* magazine and *Guardian* newspaper that will be published in the fall.

Mr. Dusinberre lives in Boulder, Colorado, with his wife Beth, an archeologist who teaches at the University of Colorado, and their son Sam. He enjoys hiking in the mountains near Boulder and going to the theatre. Never known as one of the more athletic members of his family, Mr. Dusinberre has nonetheless benefited from Boulder's healthy culture of embracing the outdoors. He currently has plans to start training for the 2020 Bolder Boulder, sometime in the future.

Károly Schranz (violin) was born in 1952 in Budapest, Hungary. His first musical experiences were listening to the Gypsy bands in restaurants, which he has always admired for their virtuosity and musicianship.

Mr. Schranz began playing the violin at the age of 4 under the very strict supervision of his mother, who often resorted to unconventional methods of teaching and encouraging practice. (“To improve my bowing technique, she devised a method of attaching a string to my arm, and pulling in the desired direction. When this approach failed, she spanked me with a wooden spoon, which resulted in my hatred towards practicing.”)

At the age of 14, he entered the Béla Bartók Secondary Music School, where he met his future wife, also a violin student at the school. In 1980, he received his music diploma from the Franz Liszt Academy of Music where he studied with Mihály Szücs, András Mihály and György Kurtág.

Geraldine Walther (viola) was Principal Violist of the San Francisco Symphony for 29 years, and previously served as assistant principal of the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Baltimore Symphony and the Miami Philharmonic. A native of Florida, she first picked up the viola in a public school music program in Tampa. She went on to study at the Manhattan School of Music with Lillian Fuchs and at the Curtis Institute with Michael Tree of the Guarneri Quartet. In 1979 she won first prize at the William Primrose International Competition.

Among the many works Ms. Walther performed as soloist with the San Francisco Symphony are Mozart’s Sinfonia concertante, Telemann’s Concerto in G Major, Berlioz’s *Harold in Italy*, Hindemith’s *Trauermusik*, *Der Schwanendreher*, and *Kammermusiken* Nos. 5 and 6, Tippett’s Triple Concerto, Martinu’s Rhapsody-Concerto, and the viola concertos of Walton, Piston, Henze, Musgrave, Bartók, Schnittke and Penderecki. She performed the US premieres of several important works with the Orchestra, including Takemitsu’s *A String Around Autumn* in 1990, Lieberman’s Viola Concerto in 1999, Holloway Viola Concerto, and Benjamin’s *Viola, Viola* (together with SFS Associate Principal Violist Yun Jie Liu), also in 1999. In May 2002 she was soloist in William Schuman’s *Concerto on Old English Rounds* and the Britten Double Concerto for violin and viola.

András Fejér (cello) was born in 1955 into a musical family. His father was a cellist and conductor, and his mother was a pianist. He began playing the cello at the age of 7, because, as legend has it, his father was unwilling to listen to a violin upstart practicing. Since an early age, his parents have held string quartet weekends, which for the young cellist were the most memorable of occasions, if not for the music, then for the glorious desserts his mother used to prepare for those sessions.

After attending a music high school, Mr. Fejér was admitted to the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in 1975, where he was a pupil of Ede Banda, András Mihály, Ferenc Rados and György Kurtág. That same year he founded the Takács String Quartet with three fellow classmates. Although the Quartet has been his sole professional focus since then, he does perform as a soloist occasionally as well. Mr. Fejér is married to a literature teacher. They have three children and live in the Rocky Mountains, where they enjoy year-round sunshine in beautiful Boulder, Colorado. When he is not on tour, he enjoys reading, photography, tennis and hiking.