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ONSTAGE



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CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS AT PENN STATE

presents

The Takács Quartet

Edward Dusinberre, violin

Károly Schranz, violin

Geraldine Walther, viola

András Fejér, cello

7:30 p.m. Wednesday, October 1, 2014
Schwab Auditorium

The performance includes one intermission.

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PROGRAM

String Quartet No. 50 in B-flat Major, Op. 64, No. 3

Joseph Haydn

(1732–1809)

Vivace assai

Adagio

Menuetto. Allegretto

Finale. Allegro con spirito

String Quartet No. 2, *Intimate Letters*

Leoš Janáček

(1854–1928)

Andante—Con moto-Allegro

Adagio-Vivace

Moderato—Andante-Adagio

Allegro—Adante-Adagio

INTERMISSION

String Quartet in G minor, Op. 10

Claude Debussy

(1862–1918)

Animé et très décidé

Assez vif et bien rythmé

Andantino, doucement expressif

*Très modéré—En animant peu à peu—Très mouvementé
et avec passion*

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

The quartet musicians are Christoffersen Faculty Fellows at the University
of Colorado in Boulder and members are associate artists
at Wigmore Hall, London.

takacsquartet.com

PROGRAM NOTES

BY SUSAN HALPERN

String Quartet No. 50 in B-flat Major, Op. 64, No. 3

In 1790, Joseph Haydn's thirty-year tenure as a composer and conductor for the wealthy Esterházy family concluded and his career took a sudden turn. He had been a servant-musician, although an honored one, when Prince Nikolaus Esterházy I died. Haydn then became a successful freelance musician. In effect, he became a touring celebrity, and by 1795, he had become quite wealthy.

Even before his separation from the Esterházy court, Haydn was widely admired as the most formidable composer of his time. Mozart, who was his only equal, was still a relatively obscure figure outside of Austria. The six quartets of Haydn's Op. 64, written in 1790, were not dedicated to a nobleman but to Johann Tost, a bourgeois violinist who was believed to have been in the Esterházy Orchestra. Tost became a businessman, made a fortune as a wholesale merchant, and became wealthy enough to commission chamber music from Haydn and Mozart. However, he had angered Haydn with some suspect dealings in the publication rights to several of his important compositions. This commission may have been his peace offering. Although string quartets were then still largely reserved for private music performances, Haydn took the Op. 64 quartets to London in 1791, where they were featured in concerts that helped make his fortune. These highly original—even daringly advanced—works had great appeal to that

time's taste for the new, and they were quickly published in Amsterdam, Paris, London, and Vienna. Each of the six has a different style, character, and construction; and each offers novelty in form and substance.

The Op. 64 quartets are among the finest works of Haydn's mature years. Works of great originality in form and substance, they seem to have been consciously matched by the composer with his great set of six quartets—Op. 33—of nine years earlier. Those quartets so struck young Mozart that he wrote a set of six quartets and dedicated them to Haydn. Each of the Op. 64 quartets is quite different in style, character, and construction.

Op. 64, No. 3, opens *Vivace assai* with a movement light in spirit but complex in the demand for delicate balance of its elements. Multiple themes are stated, but those that are treated to extensive development are never restated. The theme maintains a rich texture while quickly shifting between loud and soft; it is interrupted to break into a gallop and arrives eventually at a contrasting lyrical second subject—then rushes on until a sudden pause. In the remainder of the movement, even the tiniest fragment of a musical idea is discussed and developed with an intensity of creative imagination coupled with difficulty for the players. It is one that no other composer of the time would have risked. The *Adagio* begins as a beautiful duet for the two violins, shifts into a touching minor key solo for the first violin, and then brings back a highly ornamented version of the opening music. The long, dancing minuet, *Allegretto*, is full of trick trills, displaced accents,

and other rhythmic games in the spirit that led a generation of composers to replace the minuet with the scherzo—whose name is the Italian word for joke or jest. The witty finale, *Allegro con spirito* brings back elements heard earlier: a hammering rhythm from the first movement and syncopation from the third. The movement is written in a sonata-allegro form full of wit and mirth.

String Quartet No. 2, *Intimate Letters*

Leoš Janáček, a musician from the Moravian region of what is now the Czech Republic, was born near the middle of the nineteenth-century. His late flowering and his independent musical thought made him a significant figure of the twentieth-century. He began his music studies in a monastery at Brno, where he was a choirboy and continued to study in Prague, St. Petersburg, Leipzig, and Vienna. He later returned to Brno, where he founded and directed a school of organ playing that developed into the Brno Conservatory of Music.

Janáček devoted much of his work to two causes that gripped his interest. One was the advancement of the native Slavic cultures in the regions under Austrian rule that became the Republic of Czechoslovakia. The other was a profound concern for the human condition, especially that of women, which became the subject of several of his operas and other works. Perhaps the source of this concern was his unhappy marriage of almost fifty years, from which he retreated into an infatuation for another married woman almost forty years his junior. He

met Kamila Stösslová in 1917. Since the two lived in cities more than 100 miles apart, they rarely met and hardly knew one another. He seems to have been aware that his interest in Stösslová far exceeded hers in him, as she never returned any of his expressions of great emotion; he said their attachment was “purely spiritual.”

Janáček’s thoughts about women were certainly reflected in his String Quartet No. 1 of 1923, which was based on Tolstoy’s *The Kreutzer Sonata*, a story of music and extra-marital love (rediscovery of a lost quartet that the composer did not admit to the canon of his works has resulted in occasional reference to his late quartets as Nos. 2 and 3, but his own numbering is used here). Quartet No. 2 was completed in the spring of 1928. Moravian Quartet read through the music for the composer and gave the first public performance on September 11, in Brno, a month after his death.

In private correspondence, Janáček called the movements of this quartet *Love Letters*. The music does not follow classical structures but rather is free in form and entirely appropriate to its emotional expression. Janáček changed the manuscript score title of *Love Letters* since he did not want to “present his feelings for the discretion of stupid people.” The quartet might seem to be a non-linear narrative; elements of it, such as its wealth of musical ideas, motives, themes, and melodies, pour out freely but with a passion that has no rules of order. Janáček described his feelings about Stösslová in a letter he wrote to her: “For eleven years you have been mine without your knowing

it, all-embracing protectress. You have been everywhere in my compositions, wherever there are deep feelings of sincerity, truth, passion, and love.”

The viola, at the start, has been compared with a male lover’s voice. This might have been the composer’s intention when he indicated in the scoring that he was writing for a *viola d’amore* or a viola of love, rather than a regular viola. The obsolete instrument of that name is a fourteen-stringed instrument. It is doubtful Janáček could have expected one to be used in performance of this quartet.

The topical nature of the music and its chronology is traceable in Janáček’s letters to Stösslová. Of the *Andante* first movement, he said on February 1, 1928, that it describes his impression of their meeting.

“Our life is going to be ... my impression on seeing you for the first.”

Then on February 8, he wrote of the *Adagio* slow movement, in which he depicted his feelings about summer events at a spa where they stayed together.

“Today I described in music my most tender desire. I struggle against it. It prevails. You are giving birth. What would the destiny of that son be? What will be your destiny? Just like you, falling from tears into laughter, that is what it sounds like.”

On February 6, he wrote:

“I am writing the third of the *Love Letters*, a gay one, *Moderato*, that will dissolve into a vision, like your face.”

In other words, it includes a musical image of the beloved.

Later, he described his last movement, in which he longs for her and for love’s fulfillment.

“The last one, *Allegro*, will not finish with fear for my pretty pet, but with great longing which will be its own fulfillment.”

The music’s simple beginning is in the manner of a folk dance, and as it progresses, it becomes furiously complex. Interrupted by quietly touching moments as it proceeds to the abrupt ending, we can only understand it to be programmatic.

“Sometimes,” Janáček wrote, “feelings are so powerful that the music hides behind them—a great love and a weak composition, but I want this to be a great love and a great composition.”

String Quartet in G minor, Op. 10

Claude Debussy finished his only String Quartet in February 1893 and then traveled to Ghent to visit the playwright Maeterlinck, whose *Pelleüs et Mélisande* he wanted to adapt as an opera. He stopped in Brussels to show some of his works to the violinist Eugène Ysaÿe. In December, in Paris, the Ysaÿe Quartet—to whom this quartet is inscribed—debuted this masterpiece. The music puzzled everyone: the audience, the conservative critics, and those in the vanguard, too.

Perhaps the trouble was that Debussy had arrived at too advanced a solution to a problem not yet known to ordinary auditors. He was grappling with how to reconcile classical forms of

chamber music in which a high degree of independence among the movements exists, with cyclical forms in which musical ideas are carried forward from one movement to the next.

The master of cyclical form, César Franck, found Debussy's quartet too nervous. "All pins and needles," he said, perhaps because the structure of the quartet fuses cyclical and variation form with a minimum of thematic development.

Debussy makes great formal advances in this work. Even though it is his only published work in a specific key—because it has a key signature—it never really looks backward.

Debussy reuses fragments of melody in successive movements to give unity to the whole; he bases all four movements on a single theme plainly stated at the outset. The simplicity of this idea shocked early listeners, who failed to grasp the nature of the piece. The execution of the idea was not simple, for it places an enormous burden on the creative imagination.

Debussy begins with a theme both original and striking, which the listener can follow—through its transformations and displacements, its dismemberment, and its reassembly—tracing it through changes of tempo and mood. At the end, the listener feels the unitary power Debussy created—yet his ideas are brief—taking up only one or two measures, relying more on allusive connections than on repetition. Also, Debussy adapts procedures from Richard Wagner and various Russian performers, whose music he heard during his travels. He casts four movements

in forms not very different from those of past masters, dressing his new ideas in warm colors and rich harmonies. His writing is intricate and elegant.

With this work, Debussy moves chamber music into a new era of ambiguous impression and suggestion that he evokes again a year later in *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*. Debussy did not compose chamber music again until 1915, and he did not write another string quartet. He objected to the term Impressionism, but it accurately defines his aesthetic.

In *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* and his opera, *Pelleús et Mélisande*, he freed musical language from tradition in his search for a music that he said was "supple enough to adapt itself to the lyrical effusions of the soul and the fantasy of his dreams."

Paul Griffiths contends that Debussy's quartet influenced the future of the string quartet "by indicating that new sounds could be achieved by forgetting the old conversational mode."

As a result of the use of flexible speeds with many tempo changes within a section, Debussy also achieves a wide variety of texture by joining instruments together in different ways. It was what he calls a search for "fluidity, and for constant alteration."

The first movement, *Anime et très decide*, is firmly declarative but turns vigorously rhythmic and gracefully lyrical. The main theme and the principal harmonic setting are based on the Phrygian mode. Debussy introduces many tempo changes—some unusually swift, as

well as frequently rhythmic—and modal recasting of the germinal theme. Then comes a playful scherzo, *Assez vif et bien rythmé*, in which a motif from the opening theme, faster, is restated repeatedly (an ostinato or repeated figure) with virtuosic pizzicatos. The germinal theme almost disappears from the slow, somewhat funereal third movement, *Andantino, doucement expressif*, but frequent

subtle hints of its elements remain. Debussy enhances the tone with mutes. As Griffiths notes, this movement is less innovative and more conventionally Romantic than the others. The repeated motif reappears in the finale's slow introduction, *Très modere*, and dominates the concluding movement, *Très mouvementé et avec passion*, which accelerates to the quartet's end.



THE TAKÁCS QUARTET

Recognized as one of the world's great ensembles, The Takács Quartet plays with a unique blend of drama, warmth, and humor. The ensemble combines four distinct musical personalities—violinists Edward Dusinberre and Károly Schranz, violist Geraldine Walther, and cellist András Fejér—to bring fresh insights to the string quartet repertoire.

The quartet performs more than ninety concerts a year, including an innovative program featuring a performance of Franz Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* accompanied by excerpts from Philip Roth's novel *Everyman*. The program has been performed most recently with Meryl Streep and previously with the late Philip Seymour Hoffman.

The ensemble became the first string quartet to win London's Wigmore Hall Medal recognizing major international artists. When *Gramophone* launched its first Hall of Fame inductees in 2012, Takács was named along with legendary artists Jascha Heifetz, Leonard Bernstein, and Dame Janet Baker.

The quartet's award-winning recordings include the complete Ludwig Van Beethoven Cycle on the Decca label. *Beethoven: The Late Quartets* won Disc of the Year and Chamber Award from *BBC Music Magazine*, a *Gramophone* Award, Album of the Year at the Brit Awards, and a Japanese Record Academy Award. The group's recordings of the early and middle Beethoven quartets collected a Grammy, another *Gramophone*, a Chamber Music of America Award, and two awards from the Japanese Recording Academy.

The members of Takács: are Christoffersen Faculty Fellows at the University of Colorado; have summer residencies at the Aspen Festival and the Music Academy of the West, Santa Barbara; are visiting fellows at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London; and associate artists at Wigmore Hall.

Gabor Takács-Nagy, Schranz, Gabor Ormai, and Fejér began the quartet in 1975 when they were students at the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest, Hungary.

EDWARD DUSINBERRE first violinist

A native of England, Edward Dusinberre attended the Royal College of Music in London and The Juilliard School in New York City. His early experiences as concertmaster of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain inspired him to choose music as a career. Dusinberre joined The Takács Quartet in 1993.

KÁROLY SCHRANZ second violinist

Károly Schranz, a founding member of The Takács Quartet, began playing the violin when he was 4. He studied at the Béla Bartók Secondary Music School and received his diploma from Hungary's Franz Liszt Academy of Music.

GERALDINE WALTHER violist

Geraldine Walther was principal violist of the San Francisco Symphony for twenty-nine years before joining The Takács Quartet in 2005. Previously, she served as assistant principal violist of the Pittsburgh and Baltimore symphony orchestras and the Miami Philharmonic. The Florida native studied at the Manhattan School of Music and the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia.

ANDRÁS FEJÉR cellist

Born into a family of musicians, András Fejér began playing the cello when he was 7. He attended a music high school, and then studied at the Franz Liszt Academy. Fejér is a founding member of The Takács Quartet.

Toronto's Tafelmusik unites Baroque music and images of space in *The Galileo Project*

BY JOHN MARK RAFACZ

Art, science, and culture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries come together when Toronto's Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra performs an imaginative concert commemorating Galileo's first public demonstration of the telescope.

The 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, November 5, performance at Schwab Auditorium features the artists playing timeless music before a backdrop of high-definition images from the Hubble telescope and other sources.

Conceived, scripted, and programmed by Tafelmusik double bassist Alison Mackay, creator of the *House of Dreams* program performed at Schwab in 2013, *The Galileo Project* features poetic narration, choreography, and music by Monteverdi, Vivaldi, Bach, Handel, and others.

Jeanne Lamon, music director of the early-music ensemble for thirty-three years, says *The Galileo Project* has toured more than any other program in Tafelmusik's history.

"It's taken us literally around the world," says Lamon, who with the orchestra has performed the work throughout North America and in China, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and Malaysia. "We love doing it so much. It's the first program we ever learned entirely by heart as an orchestra."

Lamon, who is retiring from full-time duty with Tafelmusik to become the ensemble's part-time artistic advisor, is a violinist and will perform at Penn State.

"I would say that it's a concert, but it is equally a visual treat. The images are astronomical images, for example from the



Double bassist
Alison Mackay,
creator of
The Galileo Project
photo by Sam Richards

Hubble spacecraft or images from Galileo's books that he wrote on astronomy," she says. "... So it's all just visually rich. And musically, wonderful music. There's an actor who sort of ties it all together. The actor moves amongst the musicians and the images and just basically makes the whole thing hold together in a very beautiful way."

The experience is unique, Lamon insists, because the musicians perform from memory.

"It only works because we know everything by heart. ... Because we know it by heart, we can move around on the stage," she says. "We even move around in the audience sometimes. We go out into the audience and perform from there. It gives a sort of very real surround-sound kind of impression."

When the notion of remembering a concert's worth of music was suggested to Lamon, she initially opposed the idea.

**Want tickets for
The Galileo Project?
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"At first I thought, *Oh, you got to be crazy* when Allison Mackay, who is the creator of the program, said, 'We've got to do this by heart, or it won't be the same.' And I said, 'You're insane. You can't ask orchestra players to memorize that,' " Lamon recalls. "And then she convinced me. And now I think it's the most wonderful thing that ever happened to Tafelmusik."

Plenty of critics agree that the project, like Galileo's invention four centuries ago, is a marvelous creation.

"The narration incorporated texts by and about Galileo and Newton, poetry by Ovid and Shakespeare, and modern commentary; and a stream of colorful astronomical images were projected onto a round screen, as if viewed through a giant telescope," recounts a *New York Times* reviewer. "... That the musical performance, through it all, was of the highest order hardly needs saying. ... The bursts of virtuosity were too widespread and numerous to list."

Gay D. Dunne and James H. Dunne sponsor the performance. WPSU is the media sponsor. John Mark Rafacz is the editorial manager at the Center for the Performing Arts. Christie Black, OnStage editor, contributed to this article.