The Takács Quartet

Edward Dusinberre, violin
Károly Schranz, violin       Geraldine Walther, viola
András Fejér, cello

With Erika Eckert, viola

String Quartet No. 67 in F Major, Op.77 No. 2, Hob. III: 82       JOSEPH HAYDN
(1732 – 1809)

I. Allegro moderato
II. Menuetto: Presto – Trio
III. Andante
IV. Finale: Vivace assai

String Quartet in F minor, Op. 95       LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
(1770 – 1827)

I. Allegro con brio
II. Allegretto ma non troppo – attacca:
III. Allegro assai vivace ma serioso
IV. Larghetto espressivo – Allegretto agiato

—INTERMISSION—

String Quintet in E Major, Op. 97       ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK
(1841 – 1904)

I. Allegro ma non tanto
II. Allegro vivo
III. Larghetto
IV. Finale: Allegro giusto

With Erika Eckert, viola

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 are Associate Artists at Wigmore Hall, London

www.takacsquartet.com
About the Program

JOSEPH HAYDN
Born: March 31, 1732, Rohrau, Austria
Died: May 31, 1809, Vienna

String Quartet in F Major, Op. 77, No. 2
The F major, the last quartet that Haydn completed, was written when he was in his late 60s, in failing health, and deeply involved in composing his great oratorios and masses. Unaware that the F major was to be his last quartet, Haydn did not use it for any great summing up. Instead he composed a meticulous work that has all the characteristic drive and vigor of his more youthful works, yet is imbued with a certain wistful sadness.

The main theme of the first movement is essentially a melancholy descending F scale, but with many interruptions of its downward motion. To intensify the doleful impression, Haydn starts with a strong phrase, which fades away to a number of soft, weak extensions. Other motifs follow until the first violin introduces the new subsidiary melody while the second violin plays the opening of the principal theme. After a rather lengthy development section, which ends with a measure of silence, Haydn brings both subjects back for a truncated recapitulation.

There can be little doubt that Haydn wrote the humorous Menuetto with tongue in cheek. The first clue is the gay and skittish melody. Then, although the movement is in the traditional triple meter, Haydn goes out of his way to create duple-meter rhythmic patterns that go in and out of phase with the underlying beat. He also writes a cello part that at times makes the instrument sound like a timpani.

After the high spirits of the Menuetto, the trio, in a distant key, is quite unexpected. Smooth and sober, almost hymn-like, it is a sharp contrast to the impish playfulness of what came before. But Haydn’s high jinks are not over yet. In the transition back to the Menuetto, he throws in a few “wrong” beat entrances, just for fun.

In the strange, striking opening of the Andante, the violin plays the staid, deliberate theme (featuring the second violin, the cello, and the first violin respectively), which are separated by contrasting episodes between variations. A tremendous crescendo and climax precede the final variation, which nonetheless starts quietly, much as the movement began, and ends just as quietly.

The finale theme captures all the dash and fire of a fast dance. A slightly more subdued second theme characterized by misplaced accents, on the third beat instead of the usual first, follows. With great rhythmic vitality, Haydn then builds the rest of the movement almost exclusively on the first theme, although he brings both ideas back for the recapitulation. A few soft measures in the midst of the bustling coda heighten the impact of the exciting conclusion.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
Born: December 16, 1770, Bonn
Died: March 26, 1827, Vienna

String Quartet in F minor, Op. 95, “Serioso”
Beethoven’s Op. 95 quartet is the only one he supplied with a subtitle, “Serioso,” an obvious reference to the prevailing somber mood of the piece. The composer’s growing deafness precarious health, frustration in love, financial insecurity, and unhappy family life had combined to make him angry, bitter, and deeply despondent. In a letter to his old friend Dr. Franz Wegeler in May 2, 1810, he wrote, “If I had not read somewhere that no one should quit life voluntarily while he could still do something worthwhile, I would have been dead long ago and certainly by my own hand. Oh, life is so beautiful, but for me it is poisoned forever.”

Although extremely short, the “Serioso,” which Felix Mendelssohn called Beethoven’s most characteristic work, is not a miniature. It is a compressed, concentrated composition, highly integrated movement to movement, with an emotional range that far exceeds its limited size. Usually classified as one of the final works of Beethoven’s middle period, many of its pages anticipate the exalted third period quartets that were to follow some 14 years later.

Beethoven began the quartet late in the summer of 1810, and finished it in October of the year. His dedication to Nikolaus von Zmeskall is significant, because it is the first quartet inscribed to a friend from the middle
class rather than a noble patron. The work received its premiere in Vienna in May 1814, played by the Schuppanzigh Quartet.

The first movement, the shortest Beethoven ever wrote, lashes out with an angry, laconic phrase, played in unison by the entire quartet. Two features stand out: the five-note opening turn and the general descending and ascending contour. A suspenseful silence follows, after which the first violin whips up and down in forceful octave jumps. After briefly expanding the opening fragment, the quieter, rolling second theme is introduced by the viola and then picked up by the others. The violins state the tender third theme to complete the very concise, and not repeated, exposition. The short development, which opens in a fury based on the first theme, leads to a truncated recapitulation. The coda reaches a climax as the viola insistently repeats the opening five-note turn until, as though exhausted by the effort, it finally fades away.

Beethoven relates the second movement to the first by starting at the same soft level as the other ended and by giving the introductory cello phrase the same rising-falling shape as the quartet opening, although minus its decorative turns. The first subject then enters, a warm cantabile melody over a sinuous, weaving accompaniment. After a full stop, the viola announces the second theme, which Beethoven treats as a fugato, passing it from part to part in imitation. The fugato section is interrupted for the remainder of the cello opening before continuing with even more complex fugal treatment of the viola melody, including the addition of countermelody, shortening the gap between entrances and inverting the theme. An abbreviated restatement of the beginning section precedes the coda ending.

The third movement continues without pause, starting with a figure drawn from both the rhythm of the octaves and the sudden, dramatic silences of the first movement. The roughness and strong propulsive energy provide a sharp contrast to the contemplative mood that Beethoven has established. The middle section, resembling at once a solemn chorale and a grim march, is probably the source of the serioso in the movement and quartet titles. The lower instruments move along in grave block chords as the first violin weaves a decorative filigree around the measured tread. Beethoven then returns to the opening and finally provides brief glimpses of both parts concluding the movement.

The finale is related to the third movement by a slow introduction based on that movement’s opening rhythmic figure. To continue the chain of interconnections, the introduction’s repeated last pair of notes is transformed into the head of the first subject of the ensuing Allegretto agitato. The first part of the theme is restless and anxious; the second part, weak and listless. In contrast the following subject is blustery and violent, an evocation of a thunderstorm with flashing bolts of lightning. Unremitting restlessness and nervous anxiety pervade the movement until nearly the very end. Then, in an abrupt change of mood, Beethoven speeds up the tempo, changes mode from minor to major, and ends with a gay conclusion that attests to the indomitability of the human spirit, not matter how sorely tried by bad fortune.

During his stay in the United States from 1892 to 1895, Dvořák wrote three major works that best exemplify his so-called American Style—the “New world” Symphony, the “American” String Quartet, and the E flat viola quintet. All three compositions were influenced, to some degree, by the folk and popular music he heard here, superimposed on his basic European musical vocabulary.

Since the folk music of many lands share certain features—the use of pentatonic scale is a good example—it is often difficult to separate out the elements that characterize one country’s music from another’s. But in this case, there is general agreement that some of the tunes were inspired by a traveling troupe of Iroquois Indians, who performed their songs and dances to attract crowds and sell their herbal medicines and whom Dvořák heard while visiting the settlement of newly emigrated Czech farmers from Spillville, Iowa, during the summer of 1893. The rhythmic drumming effects heard in several places throughout the quintet are thought to be Dvořák’s evocation of Indian drumming.

Dvořák started work on the viola quintet on June 26, just after completing the “American” Quartet, and was finished in
just over five weeks, on August 1, 1893. The
Kneisel Quartet, with violist M. Zach, gave
the premiere in Boston on January 1, 1894,
on the same program that introduced the
“American” Quartet.

The opening melody, first heard in the
highly expressive augmentation and then
stripped down to its essentials is indistinguish-
able from any Bohemian-inspired tune that
Dvořák ever used. The second theme, though,
more energetic and rhythmical, is heard over
a drumming, dotted (long-short) rhythm, and
it is believed to be based on a known Indian
melody. The treatment of this material follows
the outline of traditional sonata forms.

The second viola starts the Allegro vivo,
really a scherzo, with an Indian-like drumbeat
pattern. To this background Dvořák adds melo-
dies and contrasting countermelodies of great
freshness and charm. The pensive central trio,
slightly slower and in the minor, features a soul-
ful melody presented by the first viola. The last
section is a literal repeat of the opening.

Formally, the Larghetto is a theme and five
variations. The first part of the theme, which is
heard at the outset, is characterized by a repeat-
ed descending motif; the second part, more lyri-
cal and chorale-like, is believed to be based on
sketches for a new American national anthem
that Dvořák had written in New York as a set-
ting of the words beginning, “My country ‘tis of
thee.” The first two variations essentially deco-
rate and ornament the original melody, the next
one imaginatively divides the theme between
instruments, the fourth gives the leading part
to the cello with a rapid tremolo in the others,
and the fifth is an impassioned conclusion that
quietly drifts away.

The Finale is an exhilarating rondo, with a
rollicking principal melody built on the same
dotted rhythm heard in the first movement.
The first contrast, with its rapid repeats of each
note and its percussive pizzicato accompani-
ment reminds us of traditional Indian music;
the cantabile second interlude seems more
Bohemian in character. Both contrasts and the
original theme are now quickly reviewed, lead-
ing to a joyful and exciting conclusion.

– © Guide to Chamber Music, Melvin Berger, 1985
**About the Artists**

**Takács Quartet**
Edward Dusinberre, violin  
Károly Schranz, violin  
Geraldine Walther, viola  
András Fejér, cello

The Takács Quartet, now entering its 42nd season, is renowned for the vitality of its interpretations. *The New York Times* recently lauded the ensemble for “revealing the familiar as unfamiliar, making the most traditional of works feel radical once more,” and the *Financial Times* described a recent concert at the Wigmore Hall: “Even in the most fiendish repertoire these players show no fear, injecting the music with a heady sense of freedom. At the same time, though, there is an uncompromising attention to detail: neither a note nor a bow-hair is out of place.”

The Takács became the first string quartet to win the Wigmore Hall Medal in May, 2014. The Medal, inaugurated in 2007, recognizes major international artists who have a strong association with the Hall. Recipients so far include Andras Schiff, Thomas Quasthoff, Menachem Pressler and Dame Felicity Lott. Appointed in 2012 as the first-ever associate artists at Wigmore, the Takács present six concerts every season there. Other European engagements in 2016-17 include Florence, Milan, Geneva, Amsterdam, and Paris. They will present concerts in Singapore, Japan and Hong Kong and will also tour New Zealand and Australia. A recent tour to South America included concerts in Chile and Brazil.

In 2012, *Gramophone* announced that the Takács was the only string quartet to be inducted into its first Hall of Fame, along with such legendary artists as Jascha Heifetz, Leonard Bernstein and Dame Janet Baker. The ensemble also won the 2011 Award for Chamber Music and Song presented by the Royal Philharmonic Society in London. Based in Boulder at the University of Colorado, the Takács Quartet performs 90 concerts a year worldwide.

During the 2016-17 season, the ensemble will perform complete 6-concert Beethoven quartet cycles in London’s Wigmore Hall, at Princeton, the University of Michigan, and at UC Berkeley. In preparation for these cycles Takács first violinist Edward Dusinberre’s book, called *Beethoven for a Later Age: The Journey of a String Quartet*, was published in the UK by Faber and Faber and in North America by the University of Chicago Press. The book takes the reader inside the life of a string quartet, melding music history and memoir as it explores the circumstances surrounding the composition of Beethoven’s quartets.

The Takács Quartet performed Philip Roth’s “Everyman” program with Meryl Streep at Princeton in 2014, and again with her at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto in 2015. The program was conceived in close collaboration with Philip Roth. The Quartet is known for such innovative programming. They first performed “Everyman” at Carnegie Hall in 2007 with Philip Seymour Hoffman. They have toured 14 cities with the poet Robert Pinsky, collaborate regularly with the Hungarian Folk group Muzsikas, and in 2010 they collaborated with the Colorado Shake-
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, Album of the Year at the Brit Awards 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 their 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, were released in the fall of 2008 and nominated for a Grammy. A disc featuring the Schumann Piano Quintet with Marc-André Hamelin was released in late 2009. The complete Haydn “Apponyi” Quartets, Op. 71 and 74 were subsequently released, followed in 2012 by the Schubert Quartet CD with Ralph Kirshbaum.

The three Britten Quartets were released with great acclaim in 2013, followed by the Brahms Viola Quintets with Lawrence Power, viola, and also nominated for a Grammy, the Shostakovich Piano Quintet with Mr. Hamelin. In 2015 the two Janacek Quartets and Smetana's "From My Life" was released, and after that, the Debussy Quartet and the Franck Piano Quartet, again with Marc-André Hamelin. Next to be released is the Dvorák Op. 105 Quartet and his Viola Quintet Op. 97 with Lawrence Power, viola, and after that, the Dohnanyi Piano Quintet Nos. 1 and 2 plus the Dohnanyi Quartet No. 2.

The Quartet has also made 16 recordings for the Decca label since 1988 of works by Beethoven, Bartók, Borodin, Brahms, Chausson, Dvořák, Haydn, Mozart, Schubert and Smetana. The ensemble's recording of the six Bartók 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 Dvořák’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 Notturno 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 members of the Takács Quartet are Christoffersen Faculty Fellows at the University of Colorado Boulder and play on instruments generously loaned to them by the Shwayder Foundation. The Quartet has helped to develop a string program with a special emphasis on chamber music, where students work in a nurturing environment designed to help them develop their artistry. The Quartet's commitment to teaching is enhanced by summer residencies at the Aspen Festival and at 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 Fejer, while all four were students. It first received international attention in 1977, winning First Prize and the Critics' Prize at the International String Quartet Competition in Evian, France. The Quartet also 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 violinist 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, and in March of 2011 each member of the Quartet was awarded the Order of Merit Commander’s Cross by the President of the Republic of Hungary.