



TAKÁCS
QUARTET

TAKÁCS QUARTET

March 11-12, 2018

CU ★ PRESENTS

Program

String Quartet No. 21 in D Major, K.575

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

- I. Allegretto
- II. Andante
- III. Menuetto: Allegretto
- IV. Allegretto

Guitar Quintet No. 4 in D Major, G. 448

Luigi Boccherini (1743–1805)

- I. Pastorale

Quintet for Guitar and String Quartet, Op. 143

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895–1968)

- II. Andante Mesto

Guitar Quintet No. 4 in D Major, G. 44

Luigi Boccherini

- IV. Fandango

Nicolò Spera, guitar

INTERMISSION

String Quartet No. 14 in C-sharp minor, Op. 131

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

- I. Adagio ma non troppo e molto espressivo
- II. Allegro molto vivace
- III. Allegro moderato—Adagio
- IV. Andante ma non troppo e molto cantabile—Più mosso—Andante moderato e lusinghiero—Adagio—Allegretto—Adagio, ma non troppo e semplice—Allegretto
- V. Presto
- VI. Adagio quasi un poco andante
- VII. Allegro

Program Notes

Notes by Marc Shulgold

STRING QUARTET NO. 21 IN D MAJOR, K.575

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Mozart's final set of three string quartets carries the nickname "Prussian"—an unfortunate moniker that calls up a frustrating episode late in the composer's life. The name stems from the misconception that these works, written in 1789 and 1790, were commissioned by Friedrich Wilhelm II, King of Prussia, whose love of music was inherited from his uncle, Frederick the Great. In perhaps an act of wishful thinking, Mozart had written his wife Constanze of this supposed royal request, as he set off for Berlin in April of 1789 with young Prince Karl Lichnovsky, later to become a patron of Beethoven's. He also shared news of his visit in a letter to his friend Michael Puchberg, requesting a loan and promising the quartets' payment as collateral. This was a journey borne out of desperation: Mozart was heavily in debt, and he probably hoped that an audience with Friedrich might lead to a commission. That said, there were good reasons for such optimism: A colleague of the composer had relayed to him the king's love of chamber music in general and the string quartet in particular—along with an apparent interest in Mozart himself. Yet there are no records of a meeting at court, other than perhaps a formal greeting or a brief performance, and no report of any commission from the Prussian monarch.

Evidently, the Berlin visit was a failure (it's revealing that Mozart made no mention of it in any of his subsequent correspondences). Undaunted, upon leaving Berlin he worked laboriously on a projected set of six quartets for the king—finishing the first, K.575 in D, on his way back to Vienna. That work, incidentally, is the only one of the completed three listed with a dedication to Friedrich in the composer's thematic catalog. Glancing at the scores of the three completed quartets, it appears that Mozart was consciously out to please the monarch, since each piece shows particular attention to the cello, an instrument the king played exceptionally well, having studied with Jean-Pierre Duport, a noted cellist and director of the court's chamber music. In K.575, the cello is given numerous soloistic opportunities, notably in the Trio section of the *Menuetto*. (Nothing too difficult for His Majesty, mind you.) Also, notice the frequent use of the cello's higher range—perhaps inspired by the superior sound of the gorgeous Stradivarius owned by the court. Overall, K.575 demonstrates Mozart's remarkable ability to maintain a balance among the four voices, keeping things moving with a steady, confident hand as he introduces one lovely melody after another.

There is a remarkable transparency in Mozart's writing, even in the ambitious finale, which cleverly hints at a recall of the first movement's opening theme. How sad that this brilliant work, and the other two completed later, failed to fulfill Mozart's hopes of financial success. Later, he wrote sadly to his publisher Artaria about the quartets' eventual sale, "I have now been forced to give away my quartets, that laborious work ... for a mere song." One last irony: They were finally published on Dec. 28, 1791—23 days after Mozart's death.

A MEDLEY OF GUITAR QUINTETS

Luigi Boccherini and Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco

Yes, it looks odd, mixing a guitar quintet from 1798 with another such work composed some 150 years later. But it won't sound all that strange, promises guitarist Nicolò Spera. The respected musician, a faculty member at CU Boulder's College of Music, reports that he suggested the "medley" in a note to Takács violinist Edward Dusinberre: "How would you feel about juxtaposing two great composers from Tuscany, who both loved guitar (but did not play it!), and traveling in time through the Italian quintets with guitar?"

Worried that preparing a complete performance of the Quintet by the 20th-century, Italian-born composer Castelnuovo-Tedesco would be too time-consuming, Spera pointed to the slow movement of the Quintet with its "Spanish flavor," feeling that this would be the perfect calm before the exciting storm of Boccherini's finale—a rousing, castanet-accompanied *Fandango*. In fact, the guitarist added, Castelnuovo-Tedesco had earlier written a guitar sonata as an homage to Boccherini. What Spera could have also pointed out is

Program Notes

that Boccherini's D Major Quintet is itself a pastiche, blending the first two movements of his Quintet, Op. 12 No. 6 (from 1771), and the final linked movements (*Grave assai-Fandango*) from another Quintet, Op. 40, No. 2 (1788). What's more, his dozen or so guitar quintets were all arranged from his string quintets. These reworkings (of which only eight survive) came through a request from a Spanish nobleman, offered during Boccherini's 40 years as a court composer in Madrid. He'd settled in Spain after being encouraged to do so by the Spanish ambassador to Paris, a city where Boccherini and his music had been the hit of the town. The move delighted the composer, who relished the sights and sounds of Spain, incorporating its bird calls, church bells, military bugles and hunting horns into some of his quintets.

Now, to the Castelnuovo-Tedesco. His Guitar Quintet emerged from a request by Andrés Segovia, following his 1950 performance in Los Angeles of the composer's popular Guitar Concerto. The famed guitarist had agreed to appear in a chamber concert series in L.A., but only if his dear friend wrote the music. The composer described the resulting Quintet as being "clear, simple, smooth, (possessing) almost a Schubert-like lyricism." As for the gentle *Andante Mesto* heard here, he pointed to a central theme above which he wrote "Souvenir d'Espagne." That said, there is a touch of Brahms among the subtle touches of Spain.

STRING QUARTET NO. 14 IN C-SHARP MINOR, OP. 131

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

By the end of the 18th century, Haydn and Mozart had meticulously uncovered some wondrous possibilities in the string quartet. Yet neither of those giants could have foreseen the formula-busting efforts of Beethoven during his last years on Earth. The so-called "late quartets" bring us into worlds undreamed of—and even among those autumnal masterpieces, Op. 131 stands alone. Written between November 1825 and July 1826, this work brazenly discards the established four-movement structure designed and perfected by Beethoven's predecessors. Yes, he'd already done that in the five movements of Opp. 130 and 132 (the latter was completed in the summer of 1825). But this was something different: a quartet of seven linked movements resulting in one uninterrupted musical journey. In his typical self-deprecating wit, he sent the work to his publisher with a note that described Op. 131 as "put together from stolen this and that." He had already completed the three quartets commissioned by the Russian prince Nikolas Galitzin (Opp. 127, 130 and 132), but seemed inspired as he dove back into the genre that would occupy him almost exclusively for the rest of his life.

Op. 131, incidentally, is dedicated to Baron Joseph von Stutterheim, a lieutenant field marshal, perhaps as a show of gratitude to Stutterheim for admitting the composer's nephew Karl into his regiment. This work seemed to be a favorite of Beethoven's, who was said to be intently engaged during a private readthrough by his dedicated colleagues in the Schuppanzigh Quartet. And he was not alone in his admiration. Schubert requested the work be played as he lay on his deathbed. A friend who was present wrote that "The King of Harmony has sent the King of Song a friendly bidding to the crossing." Years later, Wagner was even more flowery, writing of the Quartet, "This is the fury of the world's dance ... and above the tumult the indomitable fiddler whirls us on to the abyss."

It might be better to rely on Beethoven's self-mocking description, for Op. 131 does seem at first hearing to be a collection of separate ideas "of this and that." A deeper examination, however, reveals an amazing abundance of extraordinary original thoughts and, throughout, a masterful ability to organize those ideas into a comprehensible whole. There are scherzos that bubble with energy and wit, slow sections of heartbreaking profundity and endless moments of sheer technical brilliance that test the musicians' individual skills and ensemble discipline. And it begins with a slowly unfolding fugue, of all things. At the Quartet's center, we hear a masterful set of variations on a theme introduced by the two violins, featuring several changes in tempo and time signature. But that's nothing unusual in Op. 131: There are no fewer than 31 tempo shifts and six principal changes in key. This is music of celestial complexity, and so there's really no purpose in trying to outline or follow a detailed musical map. One need only travel blissfully through this magical land, a place previously unknown to us until Beethoven showed the way.



FOUNDING TAKÁCS QUARTET VIOLINIST SCHRANZ TO RETIRE

After a distinguished career spanning more than 40 years, founding second violinist of the Takács Quartet **Károly Schranz** will retire from the Grammy-winning chamber ensemble effective May 1, 2018. CU Boulder Assistant Professor of Violin **Harumi Rhodes** has been appointed the new second violinist. “Károly brought extraordinary abilities to the group,” said the members of the quartet. “We were all inspired by his lively, characterful playing and imaginative approach to music.”

The other members of the quartet are Edward Dusinberre, first violin; Geraldine Walther, viola, and András Fejér, cello. “Individually, I have learned a huge amount from Károly and will always be profoundly grateful for the support he gave me after I joined the quartet,” Dusinberre said.

Schranz came to Boulder in 1986 when he and the other original members of the quartet, Gábor Takács Nagy, Gábor Ormai and Fejér, became artists-in-residence at the College of Music. In addition to a prolific international performance career, the group has developed a deep connection with the College of Music and the Boulder community, performing in a regularly sold-out concert series and helping guide future musicians through the college’s Graduate Quartet Program. “How proud we are to be able to call the members of the Takács Quartet colleagues and friends,” said CU College of Music Dean Robert Shay. “They’ve contributed in so many ways beyond their highly popular concert series, steadily guiding students toward bigger and better things.”

Schranz has received awards from the Hungarian Government of the Knight’s Cross and the Commander’s Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary. As a member of the Takács Quartet, he was awarded one Grammy and four nominations, several Gramophone Awards, as well as other awards of excellence. In 2012, the ensemble became the first associate artists of the Wigmore Hall, receiving the Wigmore’s prestigious

Gold Medal in 2014. Schranz plans to continue an active career as a chamber musician and teacher.

The members of the Takács Quartet are delighted to welcome Harumi Rhodes as their new second violinist. “We are thrilled that Harumi has accepted our invitation to join the quartet,” the members of the quartet said. “She is a wonderfully versatile violinist and chamber musician, and we greatly look forward to working with her.” As colleagues at the University of Colorado, the members of the Takács have had many opportunities to play with Rhodes in different combinations. In the summer of 2016, she performed with the quartet at the Ravinia Festival and for Austin Chamber Music.

“Immersing myself in a life of string quartet playing is a dream come true,” Rhodes said. “I have been a fan of the Takács Quartet for as long as I can remember. It is with great excitement that I join Ed, Geri, and András in taking the quartet’s vision into the future.”

Rhodes has been at the College of Music since 2015. Before that, she served as head of strings and chamber music at Syracuse University and assistant violin faculty at the Juilliard School. An avid supporter of contemporary music, Rhodes has been actively involved in commissioning and premiering new works. “It’s a significant testament to the strength of our faculty that the quartet looked to one of our own in seeking Károly’s replacement,” Shay said. “Harumi has displayed such tremendous talent and thoughtfulness in her solo and chamber performances, while establishing herself as a profoundly committed teacher.”

Rhodes will join the quartet for the second half of its Boulder concerts on April 29 and 30, performing Pytor Ilych Tchaikovsky’s “Souvenir de Florence” with CU Boulder colleagues Erika Eckert and David Requiro. She will be fulfilling all of the quartet’s engagements from then onwards.

Biographies

The **Takács Quartet**, now in its 43rd 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 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.” Based in Boulder at the University of Colorado, the Takács Quartet performs 80 concerts a year worldwide.

In Europe during the 2017–2018 season, in addition to its four annual appearances as Associate Artists at London’s Wigmore Hall, the ensemble returns to Copenhagen, Vienna, Luxembourg, Rotterdam, the Rheingau Festival and the Edinburgh Festival. They perform twice at Carnegie Hall, presenting a new Carl Vine work commissioned for them by Musica Viva Australia, Carnegie Hall and the Seattle Commissioning Club. In 2017, the ensemble joined the summer faculty at the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara. They will return to New Zealand and Australia, and they will perform at Tanglewood with pianist Garrick Ohlsson, at the Aspen Festival and in more than 40 other concerts in prestigious North American venues. They will also tour with pianist Marc-André Hamelin. The latest Takács recording, to be released by Hyperion in September 2017, features Dvorák’s viola quintet, Op. 97 (with Lawrence Power) and String Quartet, Op. 105.

Last season, the Takács presented complete 6-concert Beethoven quartet cycles in London’s Wigmore Hall, at Princeton, the University of Michigan and at UC Berkeley. Complementing these cycles, Edward Dusinberre’s book, *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 became the first string quartet to win the Wigmore Hall Medal in May 2014. 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.

The Takács Quartet performed Philip Roth’s *Everyman* program with Meryl Streep at Princeton University in 2014, and again with her at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto in 2015. They first performed *Everyman*, conceived in close collaboration with Roth himself, at Carnegie Hall in 2007 with Philip Seymour Hoffman. The Quartet is known for such innovative programming: They have toured 14 cities with the poet Robert Pinsky; they collaborate regularly with the Hungarian Folk group Muzsikás; and in 2010 they collaborated with the Colorado Shakespeare Festival and David Lawrence Morse on a drama project that explored the composition of Beethoven’s last quartets.

The Takács Quartet’s releases with Hyperion Records include string quartets by Haydn, Schubert, Janáček, Smetana, Debussy and Britten, as well as piano quintets by César Franck and Shostakovich (with Marc-André Hamelin), and viola quintets by Brahms (with Lawrence Power). Future releases for Hyperion include the Dvořák disc with Lawrence Power, the Dohnányi Piano Quintets with Marc-André Hamelin, and piano quintets by Elgar and Amy Beach with Garrick Ohlsson. For their CDs on the Decca/London label, the Quartet has won three Gramophone Awards, a Grammy Award, three Japanese Record Academy Awards, Disc of the Year at the inaugural BBC Music Magazine Awards, and Ensemble Album of the Year at the Classical Brits.

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 a family foundation. The Quartet has helped develop a string program at CU with a special emphasis on chamber music, where students work in a nurturing environment designed to help them develop their artistry. 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. 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 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, and in March 2011 each member of the Quartet was awarded the Order of Merit Commander's Cross by the President of the Republic of Hungary.

Italian guitarist **Nicolò Spera** brings to his teaching and performing a unique synthesis of European and American traditions. Spera is one of the few guitarists in the world to perform on both six-string and 10-string guitars, as well as on theorbo. His wide-ranging repertoire includes the extraordinary music of the Franco-Andalusian composer Maurice Ohana. He has given lecture-recitals on the music of Ohana at different institutions and festivals, including the Mediterranean Guitar Festival, Arizona State University, Conservatorio della Svizzera Italiana, Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi in Milan, San Francisco Conservatory and the University of Surrey for the launch of the International Guitar Research Centre. His CD of Ohana's complete works for solo guitar (Soundset Recordings), presenting the world première recording of *Estelas*, was awarded the 5-star "Disco del mese" review by *Seicorde*, the major Italian classical guitar magazine, and it was described as "a disc of the highest value." In 2017, the Anglo-Spanish label *Contrastes Records* presented Spera's recording of his transcriptions for the 10-string guitar of works by Catalan composers Federico Mompou and Enrique Granados.

With *Soundset Recordings*, Spera has also published his own transcriptions of Bach's Cello Suites No. 4, 5 and 6 for the 10-string guitar. About this recording, cellist Judith Glyde wrote that "it is a refreshing, captivating perspective on these boundless works, and a breathtaking discovery of an unprecedented sound world."

Spera is equally at home in outreach concerts for the young, master classes for all ages, solo recitals and concerti with orchestra. As a soloist, he has performed with conductors Andrés Cárdenes, Alejandro Gómez Guillén, Cynthia Katsarelis and Leonardo Vordoni. About his performance of Rodrigo's "Concierto de Aranjuez," Robin McNeil of *Opus Colorado* wrote: "I have heard this piece performed several times, and the performance

that Nicolò Spera gave was the best I have ever heard. First of all Spera is a virtuoso guitar player, and second, he is a superb musician." In 2017, together with violinist Chas Wetherbee and the Boulder Philharmonic Orchestra, he commissioned and performed the world premiere of "Invisible Cities," a double concerto for guitar, violin, strings and percussion, written by the Welsh composer Steve Goss, who based this work on Italo Calvino's visionary book.

He has won top prizes at several Italian and international competitions and is regularly invited to play in music festivals such as the Strings Music Festival in Steamboat Springs, the Tangents Guitar Series in San Francisco, the Mediterranean Guitar Festival in Italy and the Sauble Beach Festival in Canada. Thanks to his passion for contemporary music, Spera had the privilege of collaborations with composers such as John Drumheller, Ryan Fiegl and the accomplished Italian conductor Simone Fontanelli, giving premières and performances of their guitar works. Together with his CU colleagues, he has also given the US première of Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco's "Morning in Iowa" for guitar, banjo, accordion, clarinet, sax, double bass, percussion and narrator, a unique musical fresco based on the homonymous poem by Robert Nathan.

A versatile chamber musician, in 2012 Spera co-founded the ensemble *Duo Chagall* with violinist Jenny Diaz. Previously, he worked on an unusual chamber music project with clarinetist Andrew Dykema, and together they performed the complete guitar and clarinet repertoire by the late romantic Viennese composer Ferdinand Rebay.

His most influential teachers are Oscar Ghiglia, Jonathan Leathwood and Lorenzo Micheli. Spera holds degrees from the Claudio Monteverdi Conservatory in Bolzano and the prestigious *Accademia Musicale Chigiana* in Siena, an artist diploma in guitar performance from the University of Denver and a DMA from the University of Colorado Boulder.

In 2011, Spera was appointed to the faculty at the University of Colorado Boulder, where he is assistant professor in the Ritter Family Classical Guitar Program. He is also on the faculty of the International Studies Institute at Palazzo Rucellai in Florence. In 2013, he founded the University of Colorado International Guitar Festival and Competition, an unprecedented event that attracts prestigious guests, guitar performers and students from all over the world.



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