TAKÁCS
QUARTET

Takács Quartet

Haydn, Shostakovich and Schubert

Sunday, Sept. 23, 2018
Monday, Sept. 24, 2018

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Haydn, Shostakovich and Schubert

Sunday, Sept. 23, 4 p.m.
Monday, Sept. 24, 7:30 p.m.

Takács Quartet
Edward Dusinberre and Harumi Rhodes, violins
Geraldine Walther, viola
András Fejér, cello

Guest artists on this program
David Requiro, cello

Program

String Quartet No. 4 in D Major, Op. 20 — Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)
I. Allegro di molto
II. Un poco adagio affettuoso
III. Allegretto alla zingarese
IV. Presto scherzando

String Quartet No. 4 in D Major, Op. 83 — Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975)
I. Allegretto
II. Andantino
III. Allegretto
IV. Allegretto

Intermission

String Quintet in C Major, D. 956 — Franz Schubert (1797–1828)
I. Allegro ma non troppo
II. Adagio
III. Scherzo presto
IV. Allegretto

with David Requiro, cello

Program Notes

Program Notes by Marc Shulgold

String Quartet No. 4 in D Major, Op. 20
Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)

He may wear the crown as the "father of the string quartet," but Haydn was not present at its birth. The string quartet was already around, having evolved from the trio sonata, so popular in the baroque era. Haydn clearly loved toying with this bare-bones structure: consider that Op. 20, No. 4 is his 27th! What an enormous breakthrough were the six "sun" quartets of that opus, written in 1772 and published two years later. (The illustration of a sun on a 1779 edition's cover gives the set its nickname.)

More important is the historical context of these remarkable works. As a reaction against the learned style of the baroque, early classical era composers had embraced a thinner, galant musical approach—an idea rejected by numerous influential philosophers and writers, such as Rousseau and Goethe. Instead, they promoted the notion of individuality and expressions of human emotion. Perhaps these new concepts were what guided Haydn to explore new ideas and to envision the four voices in a string quartet as equals, replacing the practice of giving all of the important music to the first (and occasionally second) violin. No further proof of that groundbreaking concept is needed than in the cello's emergence in this D major quartet.

Consider its slow movement, a set of variations in D minor marked "Un poco adagio affettuoso." The first variation is a duet between second violin and viola, while the third spotlights the cello. It is only in the final variation that the first violin gains our attention. And what of the fading popularity of the gentle minuet? Here it is a deliciously syncopated gypsy tune (alla zingarese). It's hard to imagine a camp full of gypsies politely dancing a minuet.

A close look at the six quartets of Op. 20 reveals more than increased democratic sharing. The ever-popular sonata form (an exposition of two contrasting themes, then a development of those ideas and a recapitulation of the opening tunes) was being examined closely by Haydn. For example, the return of the exposition slides in almost invisibly; here, it is no simple reprise but an expansion, as if the tunes had somehow evolved after the exploration in that middle development section. This is big stuff, concepts that would impact Mozart and all quartet composers who followed him. Historical music indeed.

But let's not forget that this D major quartet unfolds with clarity, accessibility, some very lovely melodies and a good dose of fun. It's easy to follow Haydn's manipulation of the work's initial three-note idea and impossible not to delight in the non-stop antics (and unexpectedly relaxed ending) of the *Presto scherzando*.

String Quartet No. 4 in D Major, Op. 83
Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975)

In 1937, Shostakovich and the music world heaved a collective sigh of relief when the premiere of his "redeeming" Fifth Symphony was greeted with public and governmental praise, thus liberating him from Stalin's dangerous unhappiness with an earlier opera by the composer. But the Soviet bureaucracy's continued insistence on "Socialist Realism" did not make life any easier for Shostakovich—in spite of a personal call in February 1949, from Stalin himself, who named the composer as a representative to a world cultural conclave in New York. It was quite a surprise, considering that in February of the previous year, he (and several other brilliant composers) fell victim to a fresh Soviet crackdown that stripped him of teaching positions at conservatories in Moscow and Leningrad, and banned much of his music.

Knowing Papa Joe's mercurial moods, Shostakovich continued to compose in two categories: public works (such as the overtly pro-Stalinist, happily accepted "Song of the Forests") and music "for the drawer"—potentially dangerous works kept secret until things hopefully eased up. Among those

locked away was the fourth string quartet, Op. 83. How tenuous was the composer's life in those dangerous times? On May 15, 1950, a few months after the work was completed, some friends joined Shostakovich and his wife at a private reading attended by Alexander Kholodilin, head of the Committee for Artistic Affairs' music division. The Beethoven Quartet played it twice, after which all in attendance agreed it was best to keep Op. 83 in a drawer—where it remained until its first public performance in 1953, the year of Stalin's death.

Hearing this dark, fascinating quartet, we are immediately caught by its striking, perhaps off-putting shift from relaxed harmonies (along with unison passages) to jarring dissonances. But what might have really bothered Kholodilin was Shostakovich's obvious fondness for Jewish music, heard most clearly in a playful syncopated tune with oom-pah plucked accompaniment in the final *Allegretto*, which grows out of the previous movement. It's known that Shostakovich reacted strongly to the horrors inflicted by Germany on Europe's Jews during the war. But then, there was also something irresistible about the minor-key danceability of Jewish folk songs. In 1948, he'd written a song cycle, "From Jewish Folk Poetry," that was quickly assigned to "the drawer" when Stalin abandoned his earlier support of Jewish organizations. His latent anti-Semitism suddenly exploded with a wave of damning articles in Pravda and the closing of Yiddish theaters, schools and newspapers. (Ironically, many Russian Jews had joined the Communist Party's hierarchy as thanks for the army's role in crushing Hitler.) This turnaround was possibly Stalin's jealous reaction to the Russian public's embracing of Golda Meir, and to the creation of Israel in 1948, once he realized that the new nation would not become an ally.

The ever-shifting world of Soviet politics must have driven Shostakovich and his colleagues bonkers—and yet he continued to compose. By consciously incorporating a Jewish flavor into his fourth quartet, he must have understood the possible consequences and probably didn't argue with those suggesting he keep it hidden from view. On its surface, Op. 83 is a restrained work, lasting just 24 minutes and built on the traditional structure of four movements, with three of them titled *Allegretto*. One hears some of the composer's trademarks, such as the galloping rhythms in the energetic third movement. There is an undercurrent of quiet anguish and uncertainty, however. Considering the inescapable tension and fatalism of the late 40s and early 50s, it's no surprise that the endings of three of the four movements evaporate with the instruction to play "morendo" (dying away).

String Quintet in C Major, D. 956
Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

The life and early death of Schubert have been romanticized to the extreme, painting a portrait of a dying genius all but left alone, cruelly ignored by the thriving world of musical Vienna just outside his door. It's a lovely myth. The truth is that, even in his final, illness-plagued year of 1828, he was very much a social animal finding generous public admiration for his music. The previous year he had joined the committee of the prestigious Vienna Philharmonic Society. A concert featuring his B-flat trio had received glowing reviews, as had the publication of some songs from "Winterreise." A concert of his music in March 1828, presented on the first anniversary of Beethoven's death, was a huge and profitable success.

Just as Mozart's last year had produced a dazzling variety of songs, chamber pieces, operas and more, Schubert wrote unceasingly in several genres, composing a mass, three expansive piano sonatas and a pair of song cycles. Oh yes, and one glorious string quintet—his final chamber work. It now seems incredible that, while his publisher, Heinrich Probst, showed interest in the submitted songs and sonatas, he all but ignored the quintet. Even more remarkable is the fact that this celestial masterpiece remained hidden from the world until a public reading in 1850, to be published at last three years later. It was written in September of that final year and rehearsed the following month (Schubert died on Nov. 19).

Other than that, not much is known about what inspired its creation or why it was set on the unusual combination of viola and pairs of violins and cellos. Mozart, one of Schubert's idols, had written six string quintets that utilized two violas instead of the cellos. Perhaps he liked the idea of a central string trio of violin, viola and cello, with the remaining instruments on either side, providing high and low accompaniments and embellishments (featured prominently in the *Adagio*). That array of voices

is used in marvelously inventive ways. After an extended and unsettling introduction, the *Allegro* leads us into the unforgettable two-voice tune that begins in a unison note and is sung with inventive harmonies first by the cellos, then the violins. A generation later, the *Allegro* would be universally embraced by music lovers—one of whom had it etched onto his tombstone, so he could have it nearby through eternity.

The soul of the quintet is found in the following Adagio, launched with an almost invisible melody of serene, motionless beauty—its magical world shattered by an agonizing middle section that seems to express Schubert's anger at his deteriorating health, due mostly to the effects of syphilis. But observe how the peacefulness of the Adagio returns swiftly and effortlessly. A dance-like Scherzo follows, with another stark contrast emerging in the meditative trio section.

Much has been made of the Allegretto finale, which it is too light and frivolous in comparison to its spiritually deep predecessors. Yet, as a welcome dessert from all that had transpired earlier, this gypsy-like frolic works perfectly, briefly stepping aside for yet one more fragrant Schubert melody in the form of a lilting Viennese waltz. None of this can prepare us for those two startling final unison notes: a D flat that falls quickly into the quintet's home note of C.

About the Takács Quartet

The Takács Quartet, now entering its 44th 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." Based in Boulder at the University of Colorado, Edward Dusinberre, Harumi Rhodes (violins), Geraldine Walther (viola) and András Fejér (cello) perform 80 concerts a year worldwide.

During the 2018-19 season, the ensemble will continue its four annual concerts as associate artists at London's Wigmore Hall. In August 2018, the quartet appeared at the Edinburgh, Snape Proms, Menton and Rheingau festivals. Other European venues later in the season include Berlin, Cologne, Baden-Baden, Bilbao and the Bath Mozartfest. The quartet will perform extensively in the U.S., including two concerts at New York's Lincoln Center and at the University of Chicago, Princeton and Berkeley. A tour with Garrick Ohlsson will culminate in a recording for Hyperion of the Elgar and Amy Beach piano quintets. The latest Takács CD, to be released in summer 2019, features Dohnányi's two piano quintets and his second string quartet, with pianist Marc-André Hamelin.

In 2014, the Takács became the first string quartet to win the Wigmore Hall Medal. 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, Menahem Pressler and Dame Felicity Lott. 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 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. The quartet has toured 14 cities with the poet Robert Pinsky, collaborates regularly with the Hungarian Folk group Muzsikas, and in 2010 collaborated with the Colorado Shakespeare Festival and David Lawrence Morse on a drama project that explored the composition of Beethoven's last quartets. Aspects of the quartet's interests and history are explored in Edward Dusinberre's book,

"Beethoven for a Later Age: The Journey of a String Quartet," which 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 records for Hyperion Records, and their releases for that label include string quartets by Haydn, Schubert, Janáček, Smetana, Debussy and Britten, as well as piano quintets by Franck and Shostakovich (with Marc-André Hamelin), and viola quintets by Brahms (with Lawrence Power). 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. The quartet has helped 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. Through the university, two of the quartet's members benefit from the generous loan of instruments from the Drake Instrument Foundation. The members of the Takács are on the faculty at the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, where they run an intensive summer string quartet seminar, and visiting fellows at the Guildhall School of Music.

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. After several changes of personnel, the most recent addition is second violinist Harumi Rhodes, following Károly Schranz's retirement in April 2018. 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.

Guest Artists

First Prize winner of the 2008 Naumburg International Violoncello Competition, **David Requiro** (pronounced re-KEER-oh) is recognized as one of today's finest American cellists. After winning first prize in both the Washington International and Irving M. Klein International String Competitions, he also captured a top prize at the Gaspar Cassadó International Violoncello Competition in Hachioji, Japan, coupled with the prize for the best performances of works by Cassadó.

Requiro has appeared as soloist with the Tokyo Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra, Seattle Symphony and numerous orchestras across North America. His Carnegie Hall debut recital at Weill Hall was followed by a critically acclaimed San Francisco Performances recital at the Herbst Theatre. Soon after making his Kennedy Center debut, Requiro also completed the cycle of Beethoven's Sonatas for piano and cello at the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. Actively involved in contemporary music, he has collaborated with many composers, including Krzysztof Penderecki and Bright Sheng, and gave the Dutch premiere of Pierre Jalbert's Sonata for cello and piano at the 2010 Amsterdam Cello Biennale. Requiro has performed with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Seattle Chamber Music Society and Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players, and is a founding member of the Baumer String Quartet. The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center recently appointed Requiro to its prestigious CMS Two residency beginning in 2018.

In 2015, Requiro joined the faculty of the University of Colorado Boulder as assistant professor of cello. He has previously served as artist-in-residence at the University of Puget Sound as well as guest lecturer at the University of Michigan. His artist faculty appointments include the Bowdoin International Music Festival, Giverny Chamber Music Festival, Innsbrook Music Festival and Institute, Maui Classical Music Festival and Olympic Music Festival.

A native of Oakland, California, Requiro began cello studies at age six and his teachers have included Milly Rosner, Bonnie Hampton, Mark Churchill, Michel Strauss and Richard Aaron.

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