Takács String Quartet with Garrick Ohlsson, piano

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THE TAKÁCS QUARTET

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

With

Garrick Ohlsson, piano
PROGRAM

String Quartet No. 21 in D Major, K. 575  
Wolfgang A. MOZART (1756 - 1791)
Allegretto
Andante
Menuetto and Trio. Allegretto
Allegretto

String Quartet No. 11 in f minor, Op. 1  
Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH (1906 - 1975)
Introduction: Andantino -
Scherzo: Allegretto -
Recitative: Adagio -
Etude: Allegro –
Humoresque: Allegro –
Elegy: Adagio –
Finale: Moderato – Meno mosso - Moderato

***intermission***

Piano Quintet in f minor, Op. 34  
Johannes BRAHMS (1833 – 1897)
Allegro non troppo
Andante, un poco Adagio
Scherzo: Allegro
Finale: Poco sostenuto – Allegro non troppo – Presto, non troppo

with Garrick Ohlsson, piano

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
Web-site: www.takacsquartet.com

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It was the spring of 1789 and Mozart’s finances were in dismal shape. Life in Vienna had seemed initially promising for the young composer, but after suffering a string of failures, Mozart borrowed money from whomever he could. Desperate for cash, Mozart accompanied Prince Karl Lichnowsky to Potsdam, to the residence of the King of Prussia (and heir to Frederick the Great), Friedrich Wilhelm II. A cellist and a lover of music, the King commissioned from Mozart a set of six string quartets.

Mozart finished the first of the quartets, the Quartet No. 21 in D major, when he returned to Vienna later that summer; two additional quartets were completed the following year but Mozart never wrote the remaining three. The completed quartets are known as the “Prussian” quartets and are notable for the prominence of the cello, a nod to the cello-playing King. However, the commission did not bring Mozart the financial reward he had hoped for. He decided instead to sell the three quartets to a Viennese publisher for a small sum. These were the last string quartets Mozart ever wrote; they remained unpublished until a few weeks after Mozart succumbed to illness in 1791 at the age of 35.

In his String Quartet No. 21 in D major, Mozart distributes the workload between the four instruments fairly equitably, emphasizing the interplay between voices. The first movement, a good-natured Allegretto, sees the opening theme cheerfully bounced back and forth between the violin and viola. Next comes a tender nocturne leading to a playful Menuetto. In the work’s finale, the cello introduces the main theme, an example of the cello’s prominent role within the “Prussian” quartets.

Dmitri Shostakovich completed his String Quartet No. 11 in January of 1966. He dedicated the quartet to the memory of his close friend who had recently died, Vasily Pyotrovich Shirinsky, the original second violinist of the Beethoven String Quartet, an ensemble founded by graduates of the Moscow Conservatory in the 1920s. Shostakovich’s collaboration with the ensemble was a long and fruitful one; they premiered 13 out of 15 of his string quartets, among other works of his. In fact, Shostakovich’s quartets numbered 11–14 are each dedicated to an original member of the Quartet, and are sometimes referred to as “the quartet of quartets.” At the time of the Eleventh String Quartet’s premiere, Shostakovich was in ill health. He was experiencing pain and paralysis in his right hand due to poliomyelitis, and suffered a heart attack soon after the Leningrad premiere, for which he was hospitalized for three months.

Shostakovich’s Eleventh String Quartet consists of seven thematically interlaced miniatures played continuously. Taken as a whole, they are a multilayered expression of grief over a fallen comrade, as well as an abstract representation of the disruption caused by the loss of a member of the longstanding quartet. The choice of key is intentional, as F minor is associated with funereal music within the classical canon. The first movement begins with the solo violin playing a gently rising and falling melody, variations of which return throughout the piece. The “Scherzo” is anything but light-hearted, and features mechanically rhythmic passages punctuated by ascending glissandos; a low C in the viola links the “Scherzo” to a jarring “Recitative.” The “Étude” combines panicky-sounding passagework in the violin and cello with a simple melody. Next comes a brief “Humoresque” in which the second violin plays just two alternating notes. The “Elegy’s” somber funeral march leads to the “Finale” which restates and recombines material from the first and second movements. The work ends fatefully with the first violin holding its highest possible C.
Johannes Brahms was an extreme perfectionist; the Hamburg-born composer famously labored over his first symphony for over two decades before its premiere. Perhaps not surprisingly, the music that eventually became Brahms’ Piano Quintet in F Minor went through two complete resettings before evolving into its final form. Brahms began work on a string quintet (with two cellos) in 1862 when he was 29 years old. But when the violinist Joseph Joachim and his colleagues read the quintet for Brahms, the composer found it lacking. Joachim suggested that the seriousness of the music called for a more powerful instrument, so Brahms reworked the material into a sonata for two pianos.

It was Clara Schumann, one half of an esteemed 19th-century musical power couple, who provided the bit of advice that led Brahms to shape this music into its final form. In a letter, Clara urged Brahms to recast the sonata for two pianos as a work for orchestra. This prompted Brahms to combine the raw power of the piano with the sustaining ability of the strings. Thus Brahms’ Piano Quintet in F Minor, Op. 34 was born. This is extraordinarily powerful chamber music by a young Brahms, who had not yet completed his violin concerto or his symphonies. In this music we can hear the germ of some of the composer’s future large-scale works.

The first movement begins with the violin, cello and piano stating the opening theme; an eruption of harmony and energy follow as the theme is presented in a more fully realized form. A contrasting theme in E major, marked “Dulce,” is subsequently introduced. This second theme leads to a genteel dialogue between the piano and strings. The warmly serene second movement is a moment of calm respite before the nail-bitingly nervous Scherzo sends us back to the stormy waters of the first movement. The anxious mood continues in the finale, as the strings open this movement with an ascending chromatic figure. Eventually, the cello emerges with the movement’s main theme. After an unexpectedly muted string passage, the work barrels to its close with a dramatic coda.

Rose Gear served as WUD Performing Arts Committee Director for the Wisconsin Union Theater during its 2009–2010 season. She lives in Seattle, WA where she works as Personal Assistant to the Music Director & Artistic Coordinator at Seattle Symphony and performs regularly as a classical bassist.
ABOUT THE MUSICIANS

The Takács Quartet

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

The Takács Quartet, now entering its forty-third 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, the Takács Quartet performs eighty concerts a year worldwide.

In Europe during the 2017-2018 season, in addition to their 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 return to New Zealand and Australia, perform at Tanglewood with pianist Garrick Ohlsson, at the Aspen Festival, and in over forty other concerts in prestigious North American venues. They will also tour with pianist Marc-André Hamelin. The latest Takács recording, released by Hyperion in September 2017, features Dvorák’s viola quintet, Opus 97 (with Lawrence Power) and String Quartet, Opus 105.

Last season, the Takacs 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.

They 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. 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. 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 Shakespeare Festival and David Lawrence Morse on a drama project that explored the composition of Beethoven’s last 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 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.

Full details of all recordings can be found in the Recordings section of the Quartet’s website.

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 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 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 of 2011 each member of the Quartet was awarded the Order of Merit Commander’s Cross by the President of the Republic of Hungary.
ABOUT THE MUSICIANS cont.

Garrick Ohlsson

Since his triumph as winner of the 1970 Chopin International Piano Competition, pianist Garrick Ohlsson has established himself worldwide as a musician of magisterial interpretive and technical prowess. Although long regarded as one of the world’s leading exponents of the music of Frédéric Chopin, Mr. Ohlsson commands an enormous repertoire, which ranges over the entire piano literature. A student of the late Claudio Arrau, Mr. Ohlsson has come to be noted for his masterly performances of the works of Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert, as well as the Romantic repertoire. To date he has at his command more than 80 concertos, ranging from Haydn and Mozart to works of the 21st century, many commissioned for him. This season that vast repertoire can be sampled in concerti ranging from Rachmaninoff’s popular Third and rarely performed Fourth, to Brahms Nos. 1 and 2, Beethoven, Mozart, Grieg and Copland in cities including Philadelphia, Atlanta, Detroit, Dallas, Miami, Toronto, Vancouver, San Francisco, Liverpool, and Madrid ending with a spring US West Coast tour with the St. Petersburg Philharmonic conducted by Yuri Temirkanov. In recital he can be heard in LA’s Walt Disney Concert Hall, New York, New Orleans, Hawaii and Prague.

A frequent guest with the orchestras in Australia, Mr. Ohlsson has recently visited Perth, Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and Hobart as well as the New Zealand Symphony in Wellington and Auckland. An avid chamber musician, Mr. Ohlsson has collaborated with the Takacs, Cleveland, Emerson, and Tokyo string quartets, among other ensembles.

Together with violinist Jorja Fleezanis and cellist Michael Grebanier, he is a founding member of the San Francisco-based FOG Trio. Passionate about singing and singers, Mr. Ohlsson has appeared in recital with such legendary artists as Magda Olivero, Jessye Norman, and Ewa Podles.

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