

Takács Quartet

With Marc-André Hamelin, *Piano*

WHEN:
FRIDAY,
FEBRUARY 23, 2018
7:30 PM

VENUE:
BING
CONCERT HALL



Artists

Takács Quartet

Edward Dusinberre, *violin*

Károly Schranz, *violin*

Geraldine Walther, *viola*

András Fejér, *cello*

Marc-André Hamelin, *piano*

Program

Franz Schubert: *Quartettsatz* in C minor, D. 703, (1820)

Ernö Dohnányi: Piano Quintet No. 1, in C minor, Op. 1 (1895)

Allegro

Scherzo: Allegro vivace

Adagio: Quasi Andante

Finale: Allegro animato

—Intermission—

Ludwig Van Beethoven: Quartet in C sharp minor, Op. 131 (1825–6)

Adagio, ma non troppo e molto espressivo

Allegro molto vivace

Allegro moderato

Andante, ma non troppo e molto cantabile

Presto

Adagio, quasi un poco andante

Allegro

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

Marc-André Hamelin appears by arrangement with Colbert Artists.

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

Notes

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

***Quartettsatz* in C minor, D. 703, (1820)**

The intense and almost orchestral scale of the *Quartettsatz* (Quartet Movement) shows that something profound was developing in the chamber music of the 24-year-old Franz Schubert. Ahead lay the quartets of his maturity and the Romantic age beyond. Behind him lay the classicism of Haydn and Mozart and life in the family home, where quartets were composed to be played by the family string quartet. The *Quartettsatz* is a chamber music torso that is analogous with the orchestral *Unfinished* symphony, written not long after. In 1820, however, there is no doubt that Schubert intended the *Quartettsatz* as the opening movement of a full string quartet, since he also completed 41 bars of a slow movement. But where the slow movement flounders, the *Quartettsatz* confidently progresses beyond traditional first-movement sonata form—telescoping the repeat of the main opening theme later in the movement, ranging far and wide in key development and only returning to the drama of the home key C minor in the coda. After the *Quartettsatz*, Schubert was to write no more chamber music

for four years. It was as though the fiery *Quartettsatz*, with its hushed tension and dark tremolos, represented too rapid a leap into the Romantic sound world and Schubert was unable at that time to sustain the implications of one of his most romantic and deeply poetic string quartet movements.

Ernö Dohnányi (1877–1960)
Piano Quintet No. 1, in C minor, Op. 1 (1895)

Though just five years older than Bartók and Kodály, Dohnányi's early success made him the senior member of the trio. Together, these three composers laid the groundwork for 20th-century Hungarian musical life. Dohnányi held positions as director of the Budapest Academy of Music, head of the music department of Hungarian Radio and chief conductor of the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra. In addition, shortly after he published his Op. 1, his appearances as a pianist in Germany and Britain established him as the greatest Hungarian pianist since Liszt. His international career as a pianist followed a roller-coaster pattern, often sinking for political reasons. But Dohnányi did substantially broaden the repertoire. He added neglected works by the great Viennese

composers, and performed complete cycles of all the Beethoven sonatas in 1920 and all the Mozart piano concertos two decades later. He was also the first major pianist with an international career to feature chamber music on a regular basis.

Dohnányi's music, however, does not sound particularly Hungarian. Although intensely patriotic, he did not feel a need to find a musical identity through Hungarian folksong. Like Brahms, he looked to classical forms and traditional harmonies for his starting point. He felt that there was still much to be said—often in a quite innovative way—within the traditional genres of suite, symphony, sonata and the like. His early Piano Quintet of 1895 was a strong start. With it, the 18-year-old composer came to the attention of the elderly Brahms in neighboring Vienna. Brahms said he could not have written better himself and commended the work of the young student from Budapest to the prestigious Tonkünstlerverein in Vienna, where it was premièred, with the composer at the keyboard. When he wrote the quintet, Dohnányi already had an astounding 67 works under his belt. He matured quickly as a composer and the basic stylistic framework for his entire career was established early on.

The piece opens confidently, resonant in Brahms-like opulence and richness of texture. The crisp scherzo that follows exuberantly exploits a favorite Brahms thumbprint where a pattern in two-beats is played against three. Schumann comes to mind in the lovely slow movement, while the finale introduces a characteristically Hungarian rhythm of five beats to a bar. Recurring echoes of the themes from the first movement throughout the work add a cyclical feel to the score, a technique familiar to Dohnányi from the music of Liszt. The quintet is a full-blooded piece and ends triumphantly.

Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770–1827)
Quartet in C sharp minor, Op. 131 (1825–6)

This, the greatest of Beethoven's quartets, was the music that the gravely ill Franz Schubert asked to be played five days before his death. More than any other work, it epitomizes the profundity, inwardness, idiosyncrasy and timelessness of Beethoven's late compositions. When he sent the score to his publisher, Beethoven rather flippantly scribbled an extraordinary note in the margin. "Patched together from pieces filched from here and there," he declared in one of the

biggest understatements of all time. Indeed, this quartet does contain themes and ideas that he worked with in other quartets he had written. But what ideas! What themes! And what working-out of their potential he reveals in its 40-minute expanse. Beethoven was less ambiguous in his true feelings for the work when he spoke to a violinist friend, Karl Holz. "My mind has been struck by some good ideas that I want to exploit," he said. "As for imagination, thank God, it abounds more than ever."

Throughout his later works, Beethoven tended less and less to cast his music in the traditional three or four movements. Op. 131 contains seven. Unusually for Beethoven, it begins with a slow movement, a calm yet gently forceful fugue that Wagner said 'floats over the sorrows of the world.' It gradually builds in intensity and prepares the listener for the scale and depth of what is to follow. The movement appears to explore every aspect of a four-note theme: G#, B#, C#, A. But then these four notes go on to provide the thematic underpinning of the entire quartet. They are, moreover, the recurring *motto* theme of two other late string quartets, Opp. 130 and 132, which Beethoven had already completed, and, additionally, the very bedrock of the *Grosse Fuge*.

A chromatic shift upwards leads to the second movement. It forms a bright and optimistic balance to the first, tempered by frequent hesitations. Two sharp chords herald a brief, recitative-like third movement, which is just 11 measures long. The slow movement follows without break. This is the emotional center of gravity of the entire quartet. It begins with another gentle theme marked *dolce* (sweetly) that Wagner called the 'incarnation of innocence.' The scale of the movement is huge: a theme with six variations and a coda. Contrast again follows with the *Presto*, a brilliant scherzo.

With its calm, ethereal mood, the brief *Adagio* enters another world. It serves as an introduction to the extended movement that follows. This final *Allegro* is the only movement written in sonata form. The profusion of themes, however, and the power of their utterance strain at the boundaries of the edifice. Wagner thought that the movement expressed "the fury of the world's dance—fierce pleasure, agony, ecstasy of love, joy, anger, passion and suffering, lightning flashes and thunder rolls."

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Biographies

TAKÁCS QUARTET

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 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 80 concerts a year worldwide.

In Europe during the 2017–18 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



Photo: Keith Saunders

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-Andre Hamelin. The latest Takács recording, to be released by Hyperion in September 2017, features Dvorák's viola quintet,

Opus 97 (with Lawrence Power) and String Quartet, Opus 105.

Last season, the Takács presented complete six-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 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 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 Dohnanyi 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 Takacs Quartet's website: www.takacsquartet.com.

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 Dushinberre 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.

MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN

Pianist Marc-André Hamelin is known worldwide for his unrivalled blend of consummate musicianship and brilliant technique in the great works of the established repertoire, as well as for his intrepid exploration of the rarities of the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries—in concert and on disc.

Among his summer 2017 concerts were the Brahms D major Concerto with Ludovic Morlot at the Aspen Music Festival, a recital at the Vienna Konzerthaus, Haydn with the Minnesota Orchestra and Osmo Vanska, a solo recital and the Trout Quintet at Austria's Schubertiade, the Chopin Concerto No. 2 with Jukka Pekka Saraste conducting the Scottish Chamber Orchestra at the Edinburgh Festival, Ravel and Gershwin concerti in Montreux with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Charles Dutoit conducting, and concerts at the Orford and Lanaudiere Festivals in Canada.

He was a distinguished member of the jury of the 15th Van Cliburn Competition in 2017 where each of the 30 competitors in the Preliminary Round were required to perform Hamelin's "L'Homme armé" which marked the first time the composer of the commissioned work was also a



member of the jury. Although primarily a performer, Mr. Hamelin has composed music throughout his career; his works are published by Edition Peters.

A feature of his 2017–18 season is a return to the Stern Auditorium of Carnegie Hall on the Keyboard Virtuosos series as well as recitals including the Seattle Symphony, Yale University, Wolf Trap, Denver, Cincinnati, Savannah, and internationally at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Munich, Moscow, and Vancouver. Orchestra appearances include the Orchestra de Paris, Alan Gilbert conducting the Ravel Left Hand Concerto, the Schoenberg concerto with the Rundfunk-

sinfonieorchester Berlin in the opening weeks of Vladimir Jurowski's inaugural season as Principal Conductor and Artistic Director, the Ravel Left Hand Concerto with Juanjo Mena and the Toronto Symphony, the Ravel G major Concerto with the St. Louis Symphony and John Storgards, Stravinsky with the Seattle Symphony and Ludovic Morlot conducting, Mozart with Nicholas McGegan conducting the Cleveland Orchestra, the two Brahms concerti with the Moscow Philharmonic, Brahms and Beethoven concerti with Symphony Nova Scotia and Bernhard Gueller conducting, and the Brahms D major concerto with Andrew Manze conducting the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic.



Photo: Richard Houghton

Mr. Hamelin records exclusively for Hyperion Records. His most recent releases are Morton Feldman's *For Bunita Marcus* and Medtner Piano Concerto No. 2 and Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No. 3 with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Vladimir Jurowski. His Hyperion discography of 57 recordings includes concertos and works for solo piano by such composers as Alkan, Godowsky, and Medtner, as well as brilliantly received performances of

Brahms, Chopin, Liszt, Schumann, and Shostakovich.

He was honored with the 2014 ECHO Klassik Instrumentalist of Year (Piano) and Disc of the Year by Diapason Magazine and Classica Magazine for his three-disc set of Busoni: Late Piano Music; and an album of his own compositions, *Hamelin: Études*, which received a 2010 Grammy nomination (his ninth) and a first prize from the German Record Critics' Association.

The Hamelin études are published by Edition Peters.

Mr. Hamelin makes his home in the Boston area with his wife, Cathy Fuller. Born in Montreal, Marc-André Hamelin is the recipient of a lifetime achievement award from the German Record Critic's Association. He is an Officer of the Order of Canada, a Chevalier de l'Ordre du Québec, and a member of the Royal Society of Canada.