



# Takács Quartet Beethoven String Quartet Cycle

Concerts V and VI

March 25–26, 2017  
Rackham Auditorium  
Ann Arbor

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# Takács Quartet

Concert V

Edward Dusing / *Violin*

Károly Schranz / *Violin*

Geraldine Walther / *Viola*

András Fejér / *Cello*

Saturday Evening, March 25, 2017 at 8:00

Rackham Auditorium

Ann Arbor

51st Performance of the 138th Annual Season

54th Annual Chamber Arts Series

This evening's presenting sponsor is the William R. Kinney Endowment.

Media partnership provided by WGTE 91.3 FM and WRCJ 90.9 FM.

Special thanks to Steven Whiting for his participation in events surrounding this weekend's performances.

The Takács Quartet 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.

The Takács Quartet appears by arrangement with Seldy Cramer Artists.

In consideration of the artists and the audience, please refrain from the use of electronic devices during the performance.

The photography, sound recording, or videotaping of this performance is prohibited.

## **PROGRAM**

### **Beethoven String Quartets Concert V**

#### **String Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 18, No. 6**

Allegro con brio

Adagio ma non troppo

Scherzo: Allegro

La malinconia: Adagio — Allegretto quasi Allegro

#### **String Quartet in F Major, Op. 135**

Allegretto

Vivace

Lento assai e cantante tranquillo

Grave — Allegro — Grave, ma non troppo tratto — Allegro

## **Intermission**

#### **String Quartet in C Major, Op. 59, No. 3 “Rasumovsky”**

Introduzione Andante con moto — Allegro vivace

Andante con moto quasi Allegretto

Menuetto: Grazioso —

Allegro molto

*The third and fourth movements are played attacca (without pause).*

**STRING QUARTET IN B-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 18, NO. 6  
(1798–1800)**

Ludwig van Beethoven

*Born December 16, 1770 in Bonn, Germany*

*Died March 26, 1827 in Vienna*

UMS premiere: Flonzaley Quartet; November 1928 in Hill Auditorium.

**Snapshots of History...In 1800:**

- The first smallpox vaccination is made in North America, at Trinity, Newfoundland
- Voting begins in the US presidential election in April and lasts until October; the result is not announced until February 1801
- The US Congress holds its first Washington, DC session

Beethoven's appropriation of the musical style of Haydn and Mozart could be compared to someone moving into an old house and immediately starting to remodel it from top to bottom. He had learned a great deal from his elders — above all, an incredibly varied quartet texture in which the four instruments could blend together as equals, or take turns as leaders. Yet his first set of quartets, published as Op. 18, is nothing less than revolutionary, and the present work, with its mysterious section marked "La malinconia" (melancholy), is one of the most innovative of all.

The Quartet opens with a spirited melody spanning more than two octaves and played by the first violin and the cello in alternation. It sets a cheerful tone that prevails throughout the movement despite brief moments of tension. The second movement, "Adagio ma non troppo," combines subtle lyricism with a rhythmic pulsation that recalls Haydn, though the modulations to which the melody is later subjected and the surrounding

figurations are entirely original. So are the rhythmic ambiguities of the third-movement "Scherzo," which again brings a Haydn-esque idea to new levels of complexity. The greatest marvel of the work, however, is the aforementioned "La malinconia," an *adagio* that, according to Beethoven's performance instructions, has to be treated "with utmost delicacy." As one recent commentator has put it, "its emotional force is enormous... and its labyrinthine harmonic scheme is extraordinary." As a total contrast, the finale opens with a carefree tune in the style of a *Ländler* (an Austrian folk dance that inspired countless symphonic and chamber works from Haydn to Mahler). Twice, the somber world of "La Malinconia" intrudes upon the dancers but it cannot permanently alter the happy mood of the music.

## Beethoven's Impact

by Steven Mackey

I started my musical life as a blues guitar player forever in search of the right wrong notes — digging, bending, and scratching in search of the note that hurt so good. It wouldn't be much of an exaggeration to say that my life was changed by one note — the most outrageous blue note I'd ever heard — written by a dead German guy, surprisingly. From that moment on I wanted to be a composer. The note in question is the 'E-flat' in bar 16 of the "Vivace" in Beethoven's last String Quartet, Op. 135, which I first heard when I was 19 years old. This is an exalted clinker, at once comical and terrifying. It is preceded by a repeated eight-bar theme and it takes longer than that, nine or 10 bars, for the music to get back on its feet. The impact is in part due to the vividness of the contrast that the 'E-flat' delineates. The first 16 bars have a naive, nursery rhyme quality. The four instruments interlock cooperatively and then...bang! The 'E-flat' changes everything. Gone is the sing-song. The triadic harmony collapses into eerie octave and unisons. The wheels fall off the happily ticking triple meter and the music stutters in a disoriented rhythm and claws its way through 'E-natural' to get back to something like the beginning...although you can never trust the beginning again because the 'E-flat' casts a shadow over everything. The bright 'A-natural,' major third of the nursery rhyme, is colored by a sinister tritone. Sure, you could give the 'E-flat' a name and call it a flattened seventh of the scale and be done with it, but that explains

nothing. It doesn't go down like a flattened seventh should, it goes up to a normal seventh. It is as if the music was aiming to just take a step down but slipped past the mark and now has to struggle to climb back aboard. It's a wrong note made right by the gesture. The gestalt of that note delineates an extraordinary character. In short, I am more satisfied with a description of how the note feels than I am with giving it a functional label and that sensation has been informing my sensibility ever since.

*Steven Mackey is a composer and professor of music at Princeton University where he has been the chair of the department of music. He has written nine string quartets.*

## STRING QUARTET IN F MAJOR, OP. 135 (1826)

Beethoven

UMS premiere: Roth String Quartet; March 1939 in Hill Auditorium.

### Snapshots of History...In 1826:

- The first train operates over the Granite Railway in Massachusetts
- Former US Presidents Thomas Jefferson and John Adams both die on the 50th Anniversary of the signing of the United States Declaration of Independence
- The French newspaper *Le Figaro* begins publication in Paris, initially as a weekly

Beethoven had much on his mind during the summer and fall of 1826 at the time he wrote what was to remain his final string quartet. Already plagued by severe illness, the 55-year-old master suffered the heaviest blow of his life when his nephew Karl attempted suicide and was subsequently hospitalized for two months. For years, Beethoven had fought his sister-in-law in court for custody of the boy, who was at this time the only human being he really cared about; but he exerted a tyrannical control over Karl that drove the young man to utter despair. It was during this traumatic period that Beethoven began work on the F-Major Quartet. The work was completed after the boy, just released from the hospital, accompanied his uncle to Gneixendorf, a two-day trip from Vienna up the Danube, where his other uncle, Johann van Beethoven, owned an estate.

The last movement of Op. 135 is preceded by an enigmatic line of musical notation by Beethoven, containing the themes of the “Grave” introduction and the “Allegro” section,

with the question and answer “*Muss es sein? — Es muss sein!*” (Must it be? — It must be!) underlaid. Above the line appear the words “*Der schwer gefasste Entschluss*” (The Difficult Decision). There have been numerous attempts to explain what Beethoven was referring to. There is a humorous canon Beethoven wrote in the spring of 1826 using the words “*Es muss sein*” with almost the same music as in the quartet; the occasion for the canon was that a certain Ignaz Dembscher had failed to pay for the parts of Beethoven’s Op. 130 Quartet that he had ordered. In a letter to the publisher Moritz Schlesinger, Beethoven wrote:

*Here, my dear friend, is my last quartet. It will be the last; and indeed it has given me much trouble. For I could not bring myself to compose the last movement. But as your letters were reminding me of it, in the end I decided to compose it. And that is the reason why I have written the motto...*

Surely, however, there is more to this “decision” than these two rather mundane stories suggest. We

can tell from the complex ways the characteristic descending fourth of the “*Es muss sein*” motif is woven into the fabric of the whole piece, starting from the very opening of the first movement. This innocent-looking “Allegretto” has often, but somewhat misleadingly, been described as a nostalgic look back on the bygone days of Mozart and Haydn. The simple harmonies that evoke the memory of the older Viennese classics are combined with some extremely intricate textures. The melodic material is passed back and forth among the four instruments with great sophistication, and the sudden changes between motion in quarter notes and 16th triplets (the latter going six times as fast as the former) are extremely striking. There is a hidden, mysterious tension behind the Haydnian façade, waiting to explode.

The explosion comes in the second-movement scherzo, whose rough humor, once again, derives its power from the simplicity of the means employed. The first violin’s theme goes down and up, outlining a three-note scale fragment, somewhat like “Three Blind Mice.” The second violin plays a drone, the viola alternates between only two notes, and the cello intones a motif that, like that of the first violin, outlines a circular (rising and falling) motion. Then the note ‘E-flat,’ foreign to the key of F Major, appears seemingly out of nowhere, and is repeated several times as the whole harmonic direction of the movement becomes uncertain before the previous motivic material re-establishes itself and, slightly developed, completes the scherzo proper. The middle section

is a wild romp where the first violin’s ascending scales and wide leaps are offset by a pulsating quarter-note accompaniment in the other instruments. The ascent in keys (from ‘F’ to ‘G’ to ‘A’) is highly unusual and adds considerably to the excitement. The scherzo proper then returns after a re-transition section in which the first violin’s “Blind Mice” motif is mysteriously repeated by the four instruments in unison.

The sublime third movement brings us one of Beethoven’s most heartfelt, hymn-like melodies. On closer look, however, it turns out that its descending and ascending scale figures are almost identical to those in the scherzo, only in slow motion! Its middle section is even slower; the melody of the violin, accompanied by the other instruments in identical rhythm, seems to be choking back tears. Afterwards, the hymn-like melody returns, embellished by ornamental figures that, although marked *semplice*, actually verge on the ecstatic.

It is after three movements of such contrasting characters (that nevertheless share a great deal of motivic material) that we arrive at the “Difficult Decision.” The brief “Grave” introduction, which asks the question “*Muss es sein?*” functions as a recitative to the “Allegro” section’s aria, in which the affirmation of “*Es muss sein*” is followed by a positively playful and humorous second theme, as if all doubts had been laid to rest once and for all. Yet that is not quite the case just yet: the question, in the minor mode, is restated as the “Grave” tempo returns. The repeat of the positive

answer is interrupted before the end when the “*Es muss sein*” motif itself is turned into a question. Played at a slower tempo and its straightforward perfect fourth distorted into an anguished diminished interval, this momentary *poco adagio* provides a last-minute suspense. The dilemma is definitively resolved when the second theme appears *pizzicato* (with plucked strings), leading into a final confirmation on all four instruments: “*Es muss sein, es muss sein!*” Thus, Beethoven’s last quartet ends on a positive and highly confident note. (It was almost his last completed composition, as it was followed only by the new and even more exuberant “*Allegro*” for the *String Quartet in B-flat Major* that replaced the *Grosse Fuge* when that quartet was published as Op. 130.)

# STRING QUARTET IN C MAJOR, OP. 59, NO. 3 “RASUMOVSKY” (1806)

Beethoven

UMS premiere: Budapest String Quartet; January 1945 in Rackham Auditorium.

## Snapshots of History...In 1806:

- The British occupy the Cape of Good Hope
- The Lewis and Clark Expedition reaches St. Louis, Missouri, ending a successful exploration of the Louisiana Territory and the Pacific Northwest
- Noah Webster publishes his first American English dictionary

The third “Razumovsky” Quartet is a lively and dynamic work that is definitely “heroic” in the boldness of its themes. The first movement begins with a slow introduction consisting of a mysterious sequence of chords that do not define any particular tonality and do not arrive at the home key of C Major until the very end. (It was evidently influenced by the famous opening of Mozart’s “Dissonant” Quartet [K. 465], also in C Major.) Even the “Allegro vivace” gets off to a somewhat tentative start, with an unaccompanied flourish for the first violin, punctuated by brief chords in the other instruments. Despite the obvious allusions to Mozart, there is a fierce intensity here that we never find in earlier music. The principal generating idea of the movement is to make amorphous material gradually more organized. By the development section, the loose textures of the exposition are solidified into a strict canon based on a two-note pattern. The violin flourish that serves as the movement’s first theme is lavishly ornamented when it returns to announce the recapitulation.

The second movement, “Andante con moto quasi Allegretto,” has “an aura of remote, almost mythical melancholy and remoteness,” in the words of musicologist William Kinderman. Unlike the first two “Razumovsky” quartets, the C-Major Quartet does not contain an original Russian melody, identified as such in the score. Yet, in a 2014 study, Mark Ferraguto traced the theme of this “Andante” to a Russian song published in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, which Beethoven read regularly. But Beethoven did not quote the tune in its original form and only used a characteristic melodic turn from it, making the melody even more exotic by adding an augmented second that was not present in the original. This mysterious first theme is followed by a second idea, which evokes a graceful dance. A haunting new melody is heard at the end of the movement, in a coda that seems to vanish in a Romantic mist.

The graceful third-movement “Menuetto” is a nostalgic evocation of the past. The choice of a minuet

is significant, for by 1806 Beethoven was much more likely to write fast-paced, surprise-filled scherzos in both chamber and symphonic music. In the trio section Beethoven strikes a more modern note, with some characteristic offbeat accents (a device he was particularly fond of) and an unusually high first violin part. The recapitulation of the minuet is followed by an extensive coda, introducing a sad, minor-key variation of the minuet theme that leads directly into the last movement — a perpetual motion that begins as a fugue, its lengthy subject introduced by the viola. By the time all four instruments have entered, fugal counterpoint gives way to chordal writing; the two kinds of texture alternate throughout the movement. The extremely fast tempo generates a high level of excitement that culminates in the surprise rest just before the end, after which the mad rush continues with even more fire than before.

*Program notes by Peter Laki.*

## **Beethoven's Impact**

by Adam Sliwinski

It might seem on the surface like Beethoven would have had very little influence on a modern percussion quartet. But Beethoven was a master of two important musical elements: rhythm and the idea of four parts. In his string quartets, an efficient sense of rhythmic invention keeps motives bouncing among the four voices, making them feel almost equal. The percussion quartet genre is animated by this same spirit of dialogue among equals. John Cage, the greatest early percussion composer, was fond of saying "BEETHOVEN WAS WRONG" — about what, he wasn't entirely clear — but his early percussion quartets bear the unmistakable balance and rhythmic curiosity that Beethoven made possible. When the members of SO Percussion were graduate students together at Yale, we would attend concerts by the Tokyo String Quartet and marvel at the intimacy and communication that such a group could have with this kind of music. We aspired to see if a motley assortment of random sounds on a table could achieve anything like what a great string quartet could, and that's a huge part of our ethos today.

*Adam Sliwinski is a member of SO Percussion and performed at the U-M Museum of Art under UMS auspices in February 2010.*



# Takács Quartet

Concert VI

Edward Dusing / *Violin*

Károly Schranz / *Violin*

Geraldine Walther / *Viola*

András Fejér / *Cello*

Sunday Afternoon, March 26, 2017 at 4:00

Rackham Auditorium

Ann Arbor

52nd Performance of the 138th Annual Season  
54th Annual Chamber Arts Series

Media partnership provided by WGTE 91.3 FM and WRCJ 90.9 FM.

Special thanks to Ed and Natalie Surovell for their generous support of the Beethoven String Quartet Cycle Finale Celebration.

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## PROGRAM

### Beethoven String Quartets Concert VI

#### String Quartet in F Major, Op. 59, No. 1

Allegro  
Allegretto vivace e sempre scherzando  
Adagio molto e mesto —  
Thème russe: Allegro

*The third and fourth movements are played attacca (without pause).*

#### Intermission

#### String Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 130

Adagio ma non troppo — Allegro  
Presto  
Andante con moto, ma non troppo  
Alla danza tedesca: Allegro assai  
Cavatina: Adagio molto espressivo —  
**Grosse Fuge, Op. 133**

*The final movement of Op. 130 and Op. 133 are played attacca (without pause).*

## **Beethoven's Impact**

by Lowell Liebermann

The Beethoven String Quartets are, to a composer, both an inspiration and an intimidation. They are the yardstick to which all other quartets are invariably compared, and to which most others fall short. It was as a 17-year-old composer that I was first introduced to them by my composition teacher David Diamond, a composer of 10 string quartets in his own right. The "mighty 17" have remained an active presence in my compositional life and thought ever since, a pinnacle of perfection achieved, miraculously, in the adolescence of the medium; a goal to be striven for and probably never reached. My personal favorite amongst the Beethoven Quartets, from the moment I first heard it, has always been Opus 131. In it Beethoven seems to speak with an intimacy and directness that is almost occult in its communicative power. Coincidentally, the latest composition I finished was my Opus 131. It was an unsettling feeling, writing that number on the title page of my manuscript: it seemed as if it should have been retired long ago in deference to Beethoven's accomplishment.

*Lowell Liebermann is one of America's most frequently performed and recorded living composers. He has composed five string quartets...so far.*

# STRING QUARTET IN F MAJOR, OP. 59, NO. 1 “RASUMOVSKY” (1806)

Ludwig van Beethoven

*Born December 16, 1770 in Bonn, Germany*

*Died March 26, 1827 in Vienna*

UMS premiere: Flonzaley Quartet; January 1911 in University Hall.

## **Snapshots of History...In 1806:**

- Andrew Jackson kills a man in a duel after the man had accused Jackson's wife of bigamy
- Construction is authorized for the National Road, the first US federal highway
- Prussia declares war on France, joined by Saxony and other minor German states

One of the most striking features of Beethoven's "heroic" style is a reduction of the thematic material to a small number of motifs and an expansion of the techniques which serve to develop those motifs. The most extreme example is probably the first movement of the Fifth Symphony, but the opening of the *String Quartet in F Major, Op. 59, No. 1* shows the same tendency. The main melody, introduced by the cello, is rather simple in its outline; it only takes its full meaning as Beethoven makes it rise through the higher and higher registers of the first violin. It is a gently singing, lyrical theme, but the pulsating accompaniment of the second violin and the viola, which sometimes clashes with the melody at unusual intervals, gives it a certain edge that foreshadows some more dramatic moments to appear very soon. Beethoven subjected his theme to more far-reaching transformations than he had ever done before, especially in the development section

which unites such textural extremes as a long solo line for first violin and a densely woven four-part *fugato* passage. The range of modulations also far exceeds Beethoven's earlier practice. As often in his middle period, Beethoven appended a coda in which the theme, consistently accented on the "wrong" part of the beat (on the second and fourth quarter notes instead of the first and the third), shows yet another of its many sides. Then the theme is taken up in canon by the viola and the cello. The texture finally stretches out into a second space spanning a full five octaves from the lowest note of the cello to the highest of the violin.

The second movement is sometimes referred to as a scherzo, yet Beethoven's title "*Allegretto vivace e sempre scherzando*" is more precise: *scherzo* is a musical form, but *scherzando* is a general character. In fact, Beethoven aimed for something more ambitious here than the usually playful and fast movement with a

contrasting trio section in the middle. Instead, he composed a complex movement that doesn't quite fit any of the standard classical schemes such as sonata or rondo. The opening is as playful as any scherzo: the dance rhythm of the cello, consisting of a single pitch, the unaccompanied melody of the second violin, and a repeat of this whole exchange a step lower, thrusting the music into an unexpected new tonality. Two more dance melodies are added in due course, one reminiscent of an Austrian *Ländler*, the other, perhaps, of a melancholy Polish mazurka in the minor mode. (Or could Beethoven have intended an allusion to Russia at this point? In the finale, of course, he would honor the dedicatee of the Quartet with an authentic *thème russe*.) With boundless imagination, Beethoven sends these three themes on a journey full of surprising turns and fantastic adventures. It is musical humor at its most sublime, where the wit of a genius gives us access to something transcendent.

We move into even more transcendent realms with the "Adagio molto e mesto" in f minor. Its noble and elegiac melody, played by the first violin and repeated by the cello, becomes more agitated when the higher registers are reached. The melody is developed amidst dramatic outbursts, lavish embellishments, occasional imitation among the voices, and moments of major-mode sunshine. The movement ends with a brilliant cadenza for the first violin, then leads without pause into the finale, based on a Russian melody Beethoven had found in the collection of folk melodies published by Nikolai

Lvov and Ivan Prach. This melody begins in F Major and ends in d minor, and Beethoven made the most of this peculiarity not often found in Western European themes of the Classical era. He used the tonal ambivalence to build a spirited sonata movement that nevertheless has its wistful moments. As the theme already has a double character (and in order not to slight his *thème russe*), Beethoven did not introduce a second theme, only a short and harmonically very simple closing idea in a lively dotted rhythm. After an unusually active development section, which turns the previously presented motifs upside down and inside out, a modified recapitulation reveals yet other potentials in those motifs. One of Beethoven's favorite closing devices, the sudden slowdown before the end, makes the *presto* ending all the more irresistible.

## **Beethoven's Impact**

by Augusta Read Thomas

Beethoven's six late quartets have had a profound impact on my life and work and the *Grosse Fuge* (Op. 133) expanded and amplified my perspective when, at about age 10, I first heard its impossible-for-me-to-describe intense humanity.

Images instantly start flashing through my mind and ear when I recall the music of his great double fugue: ...motivated blocks, colorful braids, spontaneous streams, radiant sparkling stars, vast spaces, dramatic unfoldings, punchy rhythmic cells, virtuosic calisthenics, a mammoth arch with extensive development of musical material, themes, and motifs, remarkable textures, teamwork, colorful modulation through many keys, loaded silences, lyric outpourings...all woven together by Beethoven who reached beyond the Classical and Romantic eras into an ever-new, ever-fresh music which feels eternal.

Beethoven said, "Music is the mediator between the spiritual and the sensual life." The *Grosse Fuge* cuts right to the depths of the soul and exemplifies the fact that the history of civilization is written in art, whose creation and appreciation is universal across continents, cultures, and languages and, at the same time, is intensely personal. Beethoven's individual vision allowed him to further music's flexible, diverse capacity and innate power. The energy and inner force that he gave to and in his music remains vivid.

*Augusta Read Thomas is an American composer. She was the Mead Composer-in-Residence for Pierre Boulez and Daniel Barenboim at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from 1997–2006, and is currently professor of composition at the University of Chicago. She has written three string quartets.*

## STRING QUARTET IN B-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 130 (1825–26) GROSSE FUGE, OP. 133

Beethoven

UMS premieres: Paganini Quartet; January 1948 in Rackham Auditorium (Op. 130).  
Budapest String Quartet; January 1950 in Rackham Auditorium (Op. 133).

### Snapshot of History...In 1826:

- Samuel Morey patents an internal combustion engine
- The first railway tunnel is built en route between Liverpool and Manchester in England
- Congress gives Fort Shelby, a military fort central to the War of 1812, to the city of Detroit, and it is dismantled the following year

Of the five string quartets Beethoven wrote between 1822 and 1826, Op. 130 in B-flat Major is the longest and most complex. Together with Op. 127 (E-flat Major) and Op. 132 (a minor), the B-flat-Major work was dedicated to Prince Galitzin, a Russian aristocrat and accomplished amateur cellist. In this work, as Joseph Kerman writes in his classic book on the Beethoven quartets, “suspiciously normal features jostle with abnormal ones.” And how right Kerman is to talk about *suspiciously* normal features! He elucidates that expression by discussing the opening of the Quartet, a slow introduction that looks conventional enough, but it doesn’t quite lead into the subsequent “Allegro” as slow introductions usually do. Instead, the music seems to vacillate between the slow and the fast tempos, with the “Adagio” and the “Allegro” interlocking and interrupting one another, until the “Allegro” finally wins out and the principal section of the movement begins. But the “Adagio” returns for short moments several more times, both in the middle

and at the end of the movement. The other irregularities, harmonic and thematic, are too numerous to list, but it is clear that a unique musical story is being told in a highly dramatic form through the unpredictable alternations of agitated and calmly lyrical passages.

The second movement is a brief scherzo in duple meter with an almost blatantly simple theme. It is in the minor mode, followed by a foot-stomping “trio” section in the major. As a whole, this movement is in the greatest imaginable contrast with the opening of the work.

A slow (but not too slow) movement is next, bearing the marking “Andante con moto, ma non troppo — poco scherzoso” (Moving along, but not too much, and just a little bit jocular, in Michael Steinberg’s apt translation). It is a nostalgic look at the serenade music of the bygone days of Mozart and early Beethoven; the rather simple melodic material is ornamented with extremely elaborate inner voices.

This movement in D-flat Major is followed by one in G Major; these two keys are at the greatest possible distance from one another in the classical tonal system. The sound of G Major, considered to be cheerful and innocent, was important enough for Beethoven in this *danza tedesca* (German dance) to make the highly unusual tonal leap between the two movements. The dance itself, like the preceding “Andante,” has a touch of nostalgia in it as it revisits the Austrian *Ländler* that has inspired so many classical minuets. It is a more or less classical ABA form with a central trio section, but at the very end a surprising thing happens: the theme is broken up into small fragments and repeated with the fragments in reverse order, played by one instrument at a time.

The heartpiece of the Quartet is the heavenly “Cavatina.” The name comes from the world of opera and indeed, the movement is an extended aria with the first violin as the soloist. Yet while an operatic hero or heroine sings *out* on the stage in a performance that invites stormy applause at the end, this “Cavatina” is directed entirely inward and reaches depths of expression unique even for Beethoven. Karl Holz, who played second violin in Schuppanzigh’s famous quartet and who was close to the composer in his last years, recalled Beethoven telling him “that the “Cavatina” was composed in the very tears of misery, and never had one of his own pieces moved him so deeply, and merely to relive it in his feelings always cost him a tear. The most extraordinary moment comes when, after a sudden change of keys,

the volume (not loud to begin with) drops to *pianissimo* and the first violin begins a new melody constantly interrupted by rests, indeed as if choking back tears. The performance instruction, *beklemmt*, which occurs nowhere else in Beethoven, means something like “oppressed, suffocated, straitened, anxious” (Michael Steinberg’s suggestions).

Movements 1–5 have already stretched the string-quartet genre almost beyond recognition. Beethoven’s finale is extraordinary even after one has learned to let go of all expectations based on the past. The *Grosse Fuge* is much more than a movement: it can be regarded as an entire composition by itself, and it is easy to see the point of Beethoven’s friends and publishers when they persuaded him to remove it from Op. 130 and publish it separately. Beethoven did just that and, in the fall of 1826, composed a new finale that became the last music he ever wrote. In our time, the Quartet is performed sometimes with the *Grosse Fuge* and sometimes with the new finale. In their complete Beethoven cycle, the Takács Quartet has presented the work in both versions.

Like the last movement of the Ninth Symphony, the *Grosse Fuge* fuses fast, slow, and scherzo-like characters. But whereas the symphony movement uses the variation principle to organize those different characters into a coherent whole, this time everything results from different contrapuntal elaborations of a single fugue theme. The theme — a chromatic idea with a distinguished Baroque ancestry — is presented at the beginning and treated, in the first

section of the piece, with a great deal of rhythmic energy. “*Tantôt libre, tantôt recherchée*,” as Beethoven described his fugue on the title page (in part free, in part studied), this section traverses many keys before it stops on a *fermata* (long-held note) introducing a change in tempo. In the new section, the fugue theme is presented *legato* (with connected notes rather than separated ones as before); the music assumes a calm and gentle flow. The following section, though still strictly contrapuntal, is like a scherzo or a dance, with the fugue theme ornamented by scintillating trills. The earlier sections are briefly evoked, causing momentary interruptions, but on the whole, the dance character prevails all the way through the work’s startling conclusion.

*Program notes by Peter Laki.*

## UMS ARCHIVES

This weekend’s concerts mark the **Takács Quartet**’s 23rd and 24th performances under UMS auspices, and their final concerts of this season’s complete Beethoven String Quartet Cycle. The ensemble made its UMS debut in February 1984 at Rackham Auditorium, and most recently appeared under UMS auspices in January 2017 at Rackham Auditorium for the third and fourth concerts in this season’s Beethoven cycle.

## ARTISTS

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 András 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 concerts in 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 six-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 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 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 Award, another *Gramophone* Award, a Chamber Music of America



Drawing by *New Yorker* cartoonist Tom Bachtell, commissioned and reprinted courtesy of Cal Performances, UC Berkeley.

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."



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 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 Dusing 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.

SATURDAY'S VICTOR FOR UMS:



## William R. Kinney Endowment

*Supporter of Saturday's performance by the Takács Quartet.*

### MAY WE ALSO RECOMMEND...

- 4/1 Michael Fabiano, tenor with Martin Katz, piano
- 4/22 Yo-Yo Ma, Edgar Meyer, and Chris Thile: *Bach Trios*
- 4/25 The English Concert: Handel's *Ariodante*

*Tickets available at [www.ums.org](http://www.ums.org).*

### ON THE EDUCATION HORIZON...

- 3/25 Pre-Concert Lecture Series: Exploring Beethoven's String Quartets (Michigan League Koessler Room, Third Floor, 911 N. University Ave., 7:00 pm)
- 3/30 Renegade Pre-Performance Talk: *The Encounter* (Power Center Lobby, 121 Fletcher Street, 7:00 pm)  
*Must have a ticket to the 3/30 performance to attend.*

*Educational events are free and open to the public unless otherwise noted.*