



Takács Quartet

Anthony McGill

Edward Dusinberre / *Violin*

Harumi Rhodes / *Violin*

Geraldine Walther / *Viola*

András Fejér / *Cello*

with

Anthony McGill / *Clarinet*

Sunday Afternoon, April 7, 2019 at 4:00

Rackham Auditorium

Ann Arbor

This afternoon's performance is supported by the Ilene H. Forsyth Chamber Arts Endowment Fund.

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The Takács Quartet appears by arrangement with Seldy Cramer Artists.

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.

Mr. McGill appears by arrangement with MKI 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

Franz Joseph Haydn

String Quartet No. 60 in G Major, Op. 76, No. 1

Allegro con spirito

Adagio sostenuto

Menuet: Presto

Finale: Allegro ma non troppo

Dmitri Shostakovich

String Quartet No. 4 in D Major, Op. 83

Allegretto

Andantino

Allegretto —

Allegretto

Third and fourth movements performed attacca (without pause).

Intermission

Johannes Brahms

Clarinet Quintet in b minor, Op. 115

Allegro

Adagio

Andantino — Presto non assai, ma con sentimento

Con moto

Mr. McGill

STRING QUARTET NO. 60 IN G MAJOR, OP. 76, NO. 1 (1796-97)

Franz Joseph Haydn

Born March 31, 1732 in Rohrau, Lower Austria

Died May 31, 1809 in Vienna

UMS premiere: Flonzaley Quartette; November 1912 in University Hall.

Snapshots of History...In 1797:

- John Adams is sworn in as second President of the United States
- John Hetherington causes a riot in London by wearing his newly invented top hat in public for the first time
- The first ship of the US Navy, the frigate USS *United States*, is commissioned

After returning from his second and last London sojourn, Haydn composed no more symphonies. Before turning his attention to the two great oratorios, *The Creation* and *The Seasons*, he completed what would remain his last full set of string quartets in 1796–97, and dedicated them to a Hungarian aristocrat, Johann Georg von Erdödy. This opus contains several of Haydn's most celebrated quartets, including the C-Major work with the variations on the Imperial Hymn, the B-flat Major Quartet nicknamed "The Sunrise," and a d-minor work, one of the most dramatic compositions Haydn ever wrote, known as "The Fifths," on account of its opening motif.

The present Quartet is the first in the set of six. Unlike the early quartets, in which the first violin part tends to predominate, Haydn's mature works show that "conversation between four equals," which we have come to associate with the quartet genre, in full bloom. Haydn makes this unmistakably clear when (following a "curtain-raiser" made up of three

chords) he has all four instruments play the opening theme one after the other. The rest of the opening "Allegro" is a remarkable synthesis of simplicity and complexity: the main theme, fairly straightforward in itself, is soon subjected to considerable harmonic and contrapuntal elaboration, but then all the accumulated tension is suddenly brushed aside, yielding to a closing theme that could almost be a folk song. The entire Quartet alternates between tension and relaxation, including the warmly lyrical "Adagio" and the exceptionally dramatic finale, which, surprisingly, remains in the key of g minor for most of this duration and doesn't switch to the Major until close to the end.

The third-movement "Menuet" deserves special mention because it doesn't remotely resemble a traditional minuet but is, for all intents and purposes, a scherzo of the kind we would find in Beethoven. Haydn had previously introduced the designation "Scherzo" in the fast middle movements of his Op. 33 (1781),

but here, without using the name, he went even further in creating a scherzo *character*. The *presto* tempo and the extreme concision of the thematic material are just two of the hallmarks of what would soon turn into a new movement type, gradually eclipsing the minuet in the course of the 19th century. Haydn contrasted this revolutionary minuet-scherzo with a rather traditional trio section, in which he revisited the Austrian *Ländler* dance that was so close to his heart.

STRING QUARTET NO. 4 IN D MAJOR, OP. 83 (1949)

Dmitri Shostakovich

Born September 25, 1906 in Saint Petersburg, Russia

Died August 9, 1975 in Moscow

UMS premiere: Borodin String Quartet; January 1994, U-M Museum of Art.

Snapshots of History...In 1949:

- World heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis retires
- Winston Churchill makes his landmark speech in support of a European Union
- The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is established

There was a time when composition could be an extremely dangerous activity, one that could earn a composer high accolades but could also threaten his (or her) very existence. After defeating Nazi Germany in World War II, Stalin turned increasingly against the perceived internal enemy, and his paranoia was particularly strong in the cultural area. Any writing, painting, or musical composition that did not explicitly sing his praises could be a target for censure, and any work of art that failed to deliver the officially mandated “hurrah optimism” had to be suppressed, and its author punished.

At 43, Dmitri Shostakovich had already suffered far too much to be a “hurrah optimist.” He had been the subject of two devastating attacks from the Communist Party, one back in 1936 and one just recently in 1948. He had endured wartime privations and evacuation along with millions of his fellow citizens. He had seen close friends and colleagues disappear in Stalin’s purges or in the “Great Patriotic War,” which cost the country a staggering 27 million lives. Shostakovich could write patriotic

cantatas on commission, like *The Song of the Forest* (Op. 81, 1949), but he was ever more strongly drawn to the intimate genre of the string quartet, in which he could speak in a very different voice — even if those works sometimes had to remain in his desk drawer for years.

Shostakovich composed his fourth string quartet soon after a trip to the US he had undertaken much against his will. He had been sent there by the government to represent the Soviet Union at the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace, held at the Waldorf Hotel in New York City. The composer had to give a prepared speech along the ideological lines of the Communist Party. There was little about this trip that could possibly be enjoyable, except for the fact that Shostakovich had the opportunity to hear some new music, including Bartók’s String Quartet No. 6 (1939), which ends with a deeply tragic slow movement and which he liked very much — if we can believe an article that was published under his name after his return to the Soviet Union. The juxtaposition of grotesque and

tragic characters in Bartók's last quartet must have held great appeal for Shostakovich, in whose music such juxtapositions occur with great frequency.

All four movements of Shostakovich's Fourth Quartet end softly, and in three cases out of four, Shostakovich used the marking *morendo* (dying). No "hurrah optimism" for him: each movement represents a new start, an attempt to advance in a certain direction. Each time, the music invariably erupts in powerful climactic passages, only to be reduced to silence soon afterwards. The first movement introduces a quietly meandering melody in a bright D Major over a drone played by the viola and cello. But the drone stays on much longer than one would expect, while the melody ceases to meander quietly and is whipped up into a frenzy as the first violin ascends to a stratospheric register, only to subside again. Throughout the movement, the mood remains somewhat uneasy, and one feels that a great deal has been left unresolved at the end.

A heartfelt "Andantino" follows, dominated by a beautiful, song-like solo of the first violin that reaches its own climax before the original melody returns, played with even more tenderness than the first time. Shortly before the end, a brief fragment from a Russian Orthodox funeral chant is heard.

With its pulsating rhythms, the whimsical third movement promises some kind of relief from the dark mood of what we have heard so far. But the music remains oddly subdued for a long time, and a mysterious unison melody does little to clear the air. Even when the rhythm changes to a livelier

pattern in the middle section, it serves only to make the music more agitated, not necessarily more lighthearted. (This passage is very similar in its rhythm to the Overture from Rossini's *William Tell*, which Shostakovich quoted, many years later, in his Fifteenth Symphony.) A long-held note in the viola connects this movement to the finale, which is the most talked-about part of the piece on account of its overt allusions to Jewish folk music. Yet Shostakovich reduces the klezmer patterns to just a few basic motivic figures, never allowing a full-fledged tune to emerge. For the most part, what we hear is more like the shadow of a Jewish tune than the real thing, which is hardly surprising four years after the end of the Holocaust. Once again, the music increases in volume and dissonance level until it positively cries out in despair. The Russian chant motif returns for a fleeting moment, before the evanescent ending.

The Quartet was dedicated to the memory of Shostakovich's friend, the painter and set designer Pyotr Vilyams (1902–47), one of whose paintings hung in Shostakovich's studio. In her beautiful book on the Shostakovich quartets, Wendy Lesser reminds us that Vilyams had created the sets for the Bolshoi Theater's 1942 production of *William Tell*, which might help explain the allusion in the third movement of the Quartet.

The melancholy tone and the sacred quotations did not exactly endear the Quartet to the powers that be. Although the Ministry of Culture gave an official commission for the Quartet (and paid the composer a fee), the work was not allowed to be heard in public until after Stalin's death.

CLARINET QUINTET IN B MINOR, OP. 115 (1891)

Johannes Brahms

Born May 7, 1833 in Hamburg, Germany

Died April 3, 1897 in Vienna

UMS premiere: New York Chamber Music Society; December 1919 in Hill Auditorium.

Snapshots of History...In 1891:

- Carnegie Hall (then known as The Music Hall in New York) holds its first public performance
- Production of the Swiss Army Knife begins
- James Naismith invents basketball in the US

The clarinet was the only woodwind instrument Johannes Brahms ever included in his chamber music works. Clarinetists have to be eternally grateful to Richard Mühlfeld, a member of the excellent Meiningen Orchestra, for inspiring no fewer than four magnificent late works by Brahms: the Trio (Op. 114), the Quintet (Op. 115), and the two Sonatas (Op. 120).

Brahms was a frequent visitor to the German city of Meiningen, whose orchestra had become one of the best in Europe under the great Hans von Bülow. (The premiere of Brahms's Fourth Symphony was given there in 1885.) Mühlfeld was already a member of the orchestra at that time, but his personal friendship with Brahms did not begin until 1891, when Brahms came to town to hear the orchestra under Bülow's successor. The Clarinet Trio and the Clarinet Quintet were composed that same summer.

The one great clarinet quintet before Brahms was, of course, Mozart's masterpiece in A Major. To revisit this genre in 1891, exactly 100 years after Mozart's death, was clearly an

act of homage. Brahms did not need to allude directly to Mozart's style to make that explicit. The connection is unmistakable: in his own style, Brahms managed to recreate that perfect beauty in music that he and every musician of the last 200 years have always associated with Mozart's name. It is, without a doubt, Brahms at his most idyllic — which is not to say that it doesn't have plenty of that autumnal nostalgia that is present in so many of his later works.

Brahms's letters attest that he associated the sound of the clarinet with the voice of a beautiful woman (he liked to refer to the instrument as "Fräulein Klarinette" [Miss Clarinet]). In his excellent Brahms biography, Jan Swafford calls the clarinet works "perhaps the only true love songs to an instrument Brahms ever wrote." That love is to be felt in all four of the work's movements, starting from the sweet thirds and sixths of the opening (which will return at the end of the finale). In another fine book on Brahms, written by Malcolm MacDonald, we read: "No other

work of Brahms is more consistently euphonious in sonority.” For once, a sonata “Allegro” does not emphasize contrast and struggle among the themes, but rather harmony and unity.

The second-movement “Adagio,” whose function would normally be to provide some respite after a hectic opening, now plunges into a “profound mood of nature-mysticism,” reaching the “*ne plus ultra* of Brahmsian Romanticism” (MacDonald). In the middle of this “Adagio,” there is an astonishing episode in Gypsy style. The last passage Brahms was to write in this idiom, it is completely different from such earlier instances as the finales of the Violin Concerto and the Piano Quartet in g minor, to say nothing of the *Hungarian Dances*. To quote MacDonald: “It is a desolately beautiful series of florid clarinet arabesques that spiral and swoop over a fantastic string texture.... The effect is of wild, spontaneous improvisation.”

The third movement begins with a dreamy “Andantino” that soon turns out to be a mere introduction to the main body of the movement in a faster tempo (*presto*), based on the same melody. It is a nimble and delicate scherzo, somewhat reminiscent of Mendelssohn. The opening “Andantino” is briefly recalled just before the end.

The finale is a set of variations — perhaps the only direct allusion to the Mozart Quintet, which also ends that way. A theme of classical simplicity is followed by five variations, which take on different characters and highlight different instruments in the group, as usually happens in variation

movements. In variation No. 1, the cello weaves elegant ornaments around the melody; in No. 2, the mood suddenly becomes passionate and agitated; in No. 3, the clarinet and the first violin jointly demonstrate their virtuosity. In No. 4, the tonality changes from minor to major; in No. 5 (back in minor), the duple meter gives way to the “one-two-three” of a romantic “love-song waltz,” in the manner of Brahms’s popular *Liebeslieder-Walzer*. Finally, the opening of the first movement (whose rhythm comes as a natural continuation of the waltz we have just heard) reappears to bring the work to a quiet and wonderfully understated close.

Program notes by Peter Laki.

ARTISTS

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, the Quartet performs 80 concerts a year worldwide.

During the current season the ensemble will continue its four annual concerts as associate artists at London’s Wigmore Hall. Other European venues later in the season include Berlin, Cologne, Baden-Baden, Bilbao, and the Bath Mozartfest. The Quartet will perform extensively in US, 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 Dohnanyi’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, and in 2012, *Gramophone* announced that the Takács was the only string quartet to be inducted into its first Hall of Fame. The ensemble also won the 2011 Award for Chamber Music and Song presented by the Royal Philharmonic Society in London.

The Quartet is known for its innovative programming. They first performed *Everyman* at Carnegie Hall in 2007 with Philip Seymour Hoffman, and in subsequent seasons with Meryl Streep. 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. Aspects of the Quartet’s interests and history are explored in Edward Dusinger’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 César 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 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. 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 are 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. After several changes of personnel, the most recent addition is second violinist Harumi Rhodes, following Károly Schranz's retirement in April 2018.

Clarinetist **Anthony McGill** is one of classical music's most recognizable and brilliantly multifaceted figures. He serves as the principal clarinet of the New York Philharmonic, that orchestra's first African-American principal player. Hailed for his "trademark brilliance, penetrating sound, and rich character" (*New York Times*), as well as for his "exquisite combination

of technical refinement and expressive radiance" (*Baltimore Sun*), Mr. McGill also serves as an ardent advocate for helping music education reach underserved communities. Mr. McGill was honored to take part in the inauguration of President Obama, premiering a piece by John Williams alongside violinist Itzhak Perlman, cellist Yo-Yo Ma, and pianist Gabriela Montero.

Mr. McGill appears regularly as a soloist with top orchestras around North America, including the New York Philharmonic, Metropolitan Opera, Baltimore Symphony, San Diego Symphony, and Kansas City Symphony, and is a favorite collaborator of the Brentano, Daedalus, Guarneri, JACK, Miró, Pacifica, Shanghai, Takács, and Tokyo quartets, as well as Emanuel Ax, Inon Barnatan, Yefim Bronfman, Gil Shaham, Midori, Mitsuko Uchida, and Lang Lang.

A graduate of the Curtis Institute, Mr. McGill previously served as the principal clarinet of the Metropolitan Opera. He serves on the faculty of The Juilliard School, the Curtis Institute of Music, Bard College's Conservatory of Music, and the Manhattan School of Music.

UMS ARCHIVES

This afternoon's concert marks the **Takács Quartet's** 25th performance under UMS auspices. The ensemble made its UMS debut in February 1984 at Rackham Auditorium, and most recently appeared under UMS auspices in six performances during the 2016–17 season at Rackham Auditorium, performing a complete Beethoven cycle. **Anthony McGill** performs for the eighth time under UMS auspices following his UMS debut in October 2015 as principal clarinetist of the New York Philharmonic in three concerts conducted by Alan Gilbert at Hill Auditorium. Mr. McGill appeared alongside pianist Inon Barnatan and cellist Alisa Weilerstein for a trio performance in Rackham Auditorium in January 2017, and most recently with the New York Philharmonic in three performances in November 2017 in Hill Auditorium. UMS welcomes violinist **Harumi Rhodes** as she makes her UMS debut with the Takács Quartet today.

THIS AFTERNOON'S VICTOR FOR UMS:



Ilene H. Forsyth Chamber Arts Endowment Fund

*Supporter of this afternoon's performance by the Takács Quartet
and Anthony McGill.*

MAY WE ALSO RECOMMEND...

- 4/12 The English Concert: Handel's *Semele*
- 4/14 Monterey Jazz Festival on Tour featuring Cécile McLorin Salvant &
Christian Sands
- 4/26–27 Martha Graham Dance Company

Tickets available at www.ums.org.

ON THE EDUCATION HORIZON...

- 4/14 UMS 101: Jazz (Monterey Jazz Festival on Tour)
(Earl Lewis Room, Rackham Graduate School, 2:00 pm)
*Paid registration is required for this event; please visit
bit.ly/UMSClasses (case sensitive) to register.
In partnership with Ann Arbor Public Schools Rec & Ed.*
- 4/26 Post-Performance Q&A: Martha Graham Dance Company
(Power Center)
*Must have a ticket to that evening's performance by the
Martha Graham Dance Company to attend.*
- 4/27 You Can Dance: Martha Graham Dance Company
(Ann Arbor Y, 400 W. Washington Street, 1:30 pm)

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