



The Sixty-fourth Season of  
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin  
**Concerts**

National Gallery of Art  
2,545th Concert

**The Takács String Quartet**  
Edward Dusinberre, *violin*  
Károly Schranz, *violin*  
Geraldine Walther, *viola*  
András Fejér, *cello*

October 23, 2005  
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm  
West Building, West Garden Court

*Admission free*

## Program

Joseph Haydn (1732 – 1809)

*String Quartet in C Major*, op. 76, no. 3 (1797)

Allegro

Poco adagio, cantabile

Menuet: Allegro

Finale: Presto

Aleksandr Borodin (1833 – 1887)

*String Quartet no. 2 in D Major* (1881)

Allegro moderato

Scherzo: Allegro

Notturmo: Andante

Finale: Andante; vivace

## INTERMISSION

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)

*String Quartet in E-flat Major*, op. 127 (1824)

Maestoso; allegro

Adagio ma non troppo e molto cantabile;  
andante con moto; adagio molto espressivo

Scherzando vivace; presto

Finale

## The Musicians

Recognized as one of the world's premiere string quartets, the Takács ensemble plays with a virtuosic technique, intense immediacy, and consistently burnished tone. In the thirty-one years since it was founded, the group has explored the string quartet repertoire with passion and intellectual curiosity, creating performances that are probing, revealing, and constantly engaging. The quartet is based in Boulder, Colorado, where it has been in residence at the University of Colorado since 1983. Its members were also recently named associate artists of the South Bank Centre in London.

The Takács Quartet's repertoire ranges from Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert to Bartók, Britten, Dutilleux, Janáček, and Sheng. It has performed in virtually every music capital in North America, Europe, Australasia, and Japan as well as at such prestigious festivals as Aspen, Berlin, Cheltenham, City of London, Mostly Mozart, Ravinia, Salzburg, Schleswig-Holstein, and Tanglewood. The ensemble is also known for its award-winning recordings on the Decca label, including its versions of the late quartets by Beethoven, which won the Gramophone Award for best chamber music performance in 2005, and its two-CD set of Beethoven's three "Rasumovsky" string quartets, which won the Grammy Award and the Gramophone Award for best chamber music performance in 2002. According to the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, "The Takács might play this repertoire better than any quartet of the past or present."

The Takács String Quartet was formed in 1975 at the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest, Hungary, by Gabor Takács-Nagy, Károly Schranz, Gabor Ormai, and András Fejér, who were students at the academy at that time. It first received international attention in 1977, winning first prize and the critics' prize at the International String Quartet Competition in Evian, France. The group also won the gold medal at the 1978 Portsmouth and Bordeaux Competitions and first prizes at the international chamber music

competitions in Budapest (1978) and Bratislava (1981). The quartet made its North American debut tour in 1982. In 2001 the Takács Quartet was awarded the Order of Merit of the Knight's Cross of the Republic of Hungary.

Violinist Edward Dusinberre joined the quartet in 1993, and violist Roger Tapping in 1995. Violist Geraldine Walther replaced Tapping in summer 2005. Of the original ensemble, violinist Károly Schranz and cellist András Fejér remain. The Takács Quartet records exclusively for Decca/London Records and appears at the National Gallery by arrangement with Seldy Cramer Artists of Lafayette, California.

### Program Notes

Once a staple of string quartet concerts, compositions by Joseph Haydn were included in the very first such program at the National Gallery in April 1943 (with the United States Navy Band String Quartet performing). Haydn string quartets were played in many Gallery concerts until the early 1960s, but between 1962 and 1994 only three were performed here, and none have been on the program during the past eleven seasons. With the presentation in this concert of Haydn's *Quartet in C Major*, op. 76, no. 3, the Takács Quartet is restoring this great music to its proper prominence.

The works in opus 76 are known as the "Erdödy" quartets, as they were created for Count Joseph Erdödy, a Hungarian nobleman who heard Haydn's compositions while a guest at the estate of Haydn's patron, Prince Esterhazy. By the time Haydn received Erdödy's commission in 1796, he was a mature composer who had developed a musical outlook and techniques that greatly enhanced the string quartet, a genre he had originated in the 1750s. His late quartets are distinguished by slow movements that adopt an extremely deliberate pace and express deep melancholy, minuets that are rapid in tempo and light in mood—more like the scherzos of later composers—and final movements imbued with seriousness and pathos.

The quartet performed here carries a subtitle “Emperor,” which refers to one of the themes Haydn used in it. He borrowed the tune from a hymn he had written to honor Emperor Franz II of the Hapsburg dynasty, who reigned from 1792 to 1806. This melody achieved widespread popularity and was later matched with various texts to become the national anthems of both Austria and Germany, a Masonic anthem, and an American Protestant hymn. The theme of the first movement (*Allegro*) undergoes several transformations. It is first heard as a bright, sunny opening statement, then later in a murky, low-pitched rendering, and finally as a rough peasant dance. The melody of the second movement is at once simple and highly emotional. It serves as the theme for four variations, in which it is passed from the first violin to the second, then on to the viola and the cello. The final variation serves as an apotheosis in which all four instruments take equal part.

Aleksandr Borodin’s *String Quartet no. 2* was presented in a National Gallery program by the Gordon String Quartet in January 1945, during the Gallery’s third season of concerts. The same ensemble returned in 1946 to play Borodin’s *String Quartet no. 1*, which was the last performance of any work by that composer at the Gallery until 1990, when conductor George Manos included *In the Steppes of Central Asia* in a concert by the National Gallery Orchestra. Borodin composed his second quartet while on holiday at a country estate near Moscow, and it was first performed in Saint Petersburg on January 26, 1882. The Italian term *cantabile* (in a singing style) is the perfect adjective for this work, which is replete with lyrical themes. The tender third movement (*Notturmo: Andante*) is one of the best known movements in the entire string quartet repertoire. It inspired the song “And This Is My Beloved” from the Broadway musical *Kismet*. The passionately romantic melody is introduced by the cello and later combined with rapid ascending and descending scales.

Although most of the string quartet ensembles that have appeared at the National Gallery have included at least one Beethoven quartet in their presentation, some of that composer's eighteen quartets have not yet been played here. That is the case with the *Quartet in E-flat Major, op. 127*, which receives its first Gallery performance in this program. According to critics who attended its premiere on March 6, 1825, the work received a lackluster rendition at the hands of the Schuppanzigh Quartet. Stung by the criticism, Beethoven arranged for a second reading by a different quartet under his direct supervision. The rehearsals for that second performance, which occurred twenty days later, must have been remarkable, as the completely deaf Beethoven commented on the players' interpretation based on his observation of the their bow and finger movements.

The first movement fulfills the requirements of standard sonata form (first theme, second theme, development, recapitulation, and coda) but presents a number of surprises. After a short introduction, themes are presented in groups, the first of which contains melodies ranging in mood from lively to forceful; this is followed by a second group, in which the prevailing mood is gentler. The development begins with a reiteration of the introduction, as expected, but at a louder dynamic level. Before the development is finished, the introductory material reappears a surprising third time, even louder than before. Beethoven enters into the recapitulation so subtly that most listeners miss it on first hearing, and the coda brings the movement to an unexpectedly quiet close.

The second movement of the Beethoven quartet (*Adagio ma non troppo e molto cantabile*) is a set of five variations based on two themes. Unlike Beethoven's earlier examples of this genre, in which a theme is presented with recognizable permutations, these variations explore complex transformations of the original material. The third movement (*Scherzando vivace*) is as rambunctious as the preceding movement is reflective. The cello states the rhythmically incisive main theme, which is developed in ways that call for virtuosic feats from each instrumentalist. The *Finale* is one of the very

few instances in Beethoven's scores where there is no tempo indication. Most performers infer that the pace is meant to be fast, taking their cue from the lighthearted first theme, the sharply accented second theme, and the rhythmic patterns of the coda.

This is the first of seven string quartet concerts to be included in the 2005–2006 season at the Gallery. Lovers of this repertoire will have an opportunity to hear other rarely played works on December 11, 2005, when the Pacifica String Quartet includes Janáček's *Quartet no. 2* ("Intimate Letters") in a program that will also include quartets by Mendelssohn and Beethoven, and on February 12, 2006, when the Auryn String Quartet plays Haydn's *Quartet no. 76* ("The Fifths") as well as masterpieces by Bartók and Dvořák. Equally stimulating programs will be provided by the Kronos Quartet (April 2) and the Kijiken, Eusia, and National Gallery String Quartets (February 19, April 9, and June 4, respectively).

For the convenience of concertgoers  
the Garden Café remains open until 6:00 pm.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the  
performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones,  
pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

Please note that late entry or reentry after 6:30 pm  
is not permitted.

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