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PAVEL HAAS
QUARTET

Friday, October 23, 2015 - 8 pm
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The Library of Congress
Coolidge Auditorium
Friday, October 23, 2015 — 8 pm

THE GERTRUDE CLARKE WHITTALL FOUNDATION
IN THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

PAVEL HAAS QUARTET

VERONIKA JARŮŠKOVÁ
& MAREK ZWIEBEL, VIOLIN
PAVEL NIKL, VIOLA
PETER JARŮŠEK, VIOLONCELLO



Program

BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ (1890-1959)

String Quartet no. 3, H. 183 (1929)

I. *Allegro—Poco meno—Tempo I—Vivo—Tempo I—Poco meno*

II. *Andante*

III. *Vivo—Poco meno—Tempo I—Vivo*

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)

String Quartet in D minor, op. 34, B. 75 (1877)

I. *Allegro—Piú mosso*

II. Alla Polka: *Allegretto scherzando—Poco meno mosso— Piú mosso—Trio:
Quasi l'istesso tempo*

III. *Adagio*

IV. Finale: *Poco allegro— Piú mosso*

INTERMISSION

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)

String Quartet in F major, op. 96 ("The American") (1893)

I. *Allegro, ma non troppo*

II. *Lento*

III. *Molto vivace*

IV. Finale: *Vivace, ma non troppo—Meno mosso—Tempo I—Meno mosso*



About the Program

BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ, String Quartet no. 3

Bohuslav Martinů¹ is considered one of the great Czech composers of the twentieth century, although circumstances led him to live abroad for over half of his life. Martinů was prolific in many genres, gaining steam especially in the latter part of the 1920's, when the String Quartet no. 3 was composed. Composing a great deal in search of his trademark style (which was arguably a moving target) allowed Martinů to experiment—for Martinů to be *Marti-new*. Composed in Paris in 1929 and dedicated to the Roth Quartet that premiered it, Martinů's quartet further cemented his abilities as a chamber music composer, offering the next in a string of remarkable contributions to the literature.

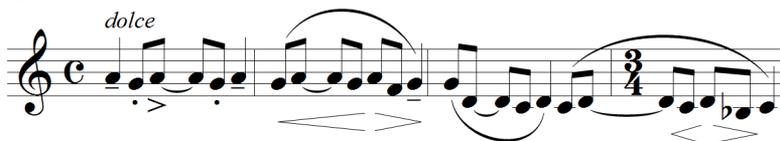
Martinů's third string quartet is a compact, tightly wound work that can hardly contain its roiling energy. Given the amount of activity happening at any given moment, it is remarkable at first blush to note that the piece holds together with more coherence than might be expected. This is due to Martinů's remarkable command of the medium—his orchestrational considerations successfully take into account each instrument's strengths in all tessiturae, allowing the composite buzz of activity to obscure only when desired.

The work opens with a textural layering of four quiet, distinctive sonorities: the cello plucks all four strings (with only the middle two stopped); the viola plays with the wood of the bow (a very light sound that obscures pitches, especially in a soft context); the second violin plays muted whole-step trills; and the first violin bows a highly-articulate, rhythmically active line. It is this line that the ear tends to follow above the *pizzicato/col legno* patterns of the cello and viola (respectively), while the trills in the other violin follow the contour of the first violin's line, creating an otherworldly gloss. A secondary idea is introduced in the viola, starting as scalar triplets moving down and up, periodically accelerating to sixteenth notes when Martinů revs the engine, so to speak.

1 The Library interacted with Martinů and his music in many ways during his lifetime; Martinů dedicated his 1927 String Quintet to Mrs. Coolidge, and his 1932 String Sextet won the Coolidge Prize. His request for Serge Koussevitzky to consider a commission led to his first symphony being funded by Koussevitzky, who continued to champion Martinů and his music for the remainder of Koussevitzky's life.

These ideas are varied and recast in different roles, but retain a presence until a transitional passage in which the viola posits a very high three-note idea that is immediately imitated by a violin and the cello in swift succession. Martinů then introduces a new set of textures in 5/8 (bowed fifths in the cello against plucked fifths a minor ninth higher in the second violin) and then immediately undermines that with a mixed-meter melodic duet in the first violin and viola. The new melody as articulated in the first violin is then presented against a new configuration of earlier textures. In a sense, this theme is the melodic "realization" of the contours suggested earlier; in this more settled state the theme will reappear throughout the remainder of the movement, with especially effective settings in the viola and cello. Here is this theme in its prominent presentation by the violin at the first *Poco meno*:

Example 1



Martinů, String Quartet no. 3, I: mm. 43-46, violin

The presentation of melodic material and the effect of motoring upwards become more rhythmically homogenous, and much of the remainder of the movement's dramatic arguments can be discussed in terms of the greater or lesser unification of rhythmic material, along with degrees of clarity in the presentation of the ideas. Even when there is a rhythmic unison, the pitches are often representative of multiple motivic ideas or have contour-inversional relationships. Despite the highly imaginative disposition of the material, Martinů cannot be accused of an "everything-but-the-kitchen-sink" approach to achieve such variety. Rather, he cleverly deploys the carefully prepared and introduced ideas in multitudinous ways across the spectrum of quartet medium, simultaneously developing the motivic/gestural material and its timbral presentation. The clarity achieved in the movement dissipates as the viola offers a final statement of the Example 1 melody, and then the music evaporates back into the constituent parts that opened the movement.

The viola takes primacy in the tense but beautiful second movement, displaying its derring-do² in a melodic sweep of nearly three octaves that revels in the palette available to the skilled violist. The other three lines generally move in rhythmic unison as a counterbalance to the viola theme. This continues until a striking passage in which the viola is prominently perched above the others as they move together—another fine example of how the decision to place the melodic line in the viola's upper tessitura allows it to continue to be the leading voice in what is usually the violin's normal range. As the viola and cello continue a descending duet, Martinů inflects the passage with "glossing" trills in the violins that cover a three- to four-note chromatic block as they descend. The arrival point feels like G major, despite the continued presence of A and A-flat in the violins. The other instruments are allowed a go at the melody, but the final privilege is

2 It is a question as to whether this is a derring-do or -don't, but Martinů knew his players, and the quartet benefited from his courage.

given to the cello. Given the recurrence of the G-major triad and the melodic hints at C minor, the unalloyed arrival at a sonorous C-major chord at the movement's conclusion somehow feels both natural and unexpected.

The final movement is fleet and frantic, operating a bit more clearly in the key world of C. This movement is a remarkable study of the dramatic consequences of different basic bowing techniques. By this I mean very basic—at such a fast pace, the character and timbral shifts that occur between rapidly bowed (each note) versus slurred passages (in which multiple notes are taken under a single bow stroke) are hugely evident. Martinů masterfully handles their interplay in what is essentially an extended scale study; he also thoughtfully utilizes special articulations to further his goals. Set against the generally-rising scales are plucked fourths and repeated notes (both of motivic significance in the opening movement). The *pizzicati* in particular offer a striking timbral counterpoint in the context of the super-speed bowing. At the *Poco meno*, an ostinato figure is introduced in the viola that plays a contrasting role, especially when juxtaposed with a violin melody with a first phrase entirely in artificial and natural harmonics (yielding a high, flute-like sound):

Example 2



Martinů, String Quartet no. 3, III: mm. 79-80, viola ostinato

The cello eventually takes over the role played by the viola in the second movement, presenting a melody that takes it into the stratosphere; at the peak of this line the music occupies a strangely ethereal (yet still highly active) space for three measures before returning to the more *de rigueur* features of the movement. The final push to the end begins at the *Vivo*, and a remarkable unison (at three octaves) E-flat that quickly diverges as the scales continue after a chordal sequence that reinforces the local importance of C. Returning to the scales but maintaining the octave-unison collaboration between the instruments, Martinů ultimately breaks the unison in favor of the obscurant seconds and sevenths that so nicely colored the music throughout the quartet, finally arriving firmly on accented, *forzando* C's.



ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK, String Quartet in D minor, op. 34

And now I venture to address another respectful request to you, highly revered Master. Permit me that I might offer you, out of gratitude and deepest respect for your incomparable creations, the dedication of my D-minor quartet. It would indeed do me but the greatest honor, and I would be the happiest of

men, who has the honor to sign himself obliged to Your Nobleness in eternal thanks, and very devoted servant

Anton Dvořák³

Dvořák's ninth string quartet was something of a breakout work for him, since it came at the time of his budding relationship with Johannes Brahms. Brahms, who tended not to take composers under his wing, took note of Dvořák's talent after sitting on a jury that awarded the younger composer a monetary prize.⁴ Brahms had been particularly impressed with a set of duets that Dvořák had submitted, and Brahms recommended to the publisher Fritz Simrock that he take on these works for publication. As David Beveridge points out, Brahms made his recommendation without knowledge of what the songs were about—they were in Czech only, and he naturally advised that a good translation be found.⁵ After some initial correspondence Dvořák ventured his dedication request (see above), and Brahms' response was typically Brahmsian; he was as positive as he could ever get, but still suggests there is room for improvement. After wishing that he could just tell him in person since he hates writing, Brahms offers:

...I say only that the study of your pieces gives me the greatest joy, but that I would also give a lot to be able to discuss some individual points with you. You write somewhat hurriedly. When you add the many missing [accidentals], however, perhaps look also now and then rather closely at the notes themselves, the voice leading, etc.

I hope you will forgive me; to express such wishes in these matters to a man like you is very presumptuous! For I also accept them very thankfully as they are, and the dedication of the quartet I would regard as an honor done to me.⁶

Dvořák, at this point no spring-compositional-chicken, took the criticism in stride and in fact made alterations to the score based on Brahms' feedback. The holograph manuscript of Dvořák's op. 34 quartet contains the dedication to Brahms, in the form of "An Johannes Brahms" (with an additional "Johannes Brahms gewidmet" struck out),⁷ and the first edition of the quartet published by Schlesinger appends an exclamation point to "An Johannes Brahms" to emphasize the connection.

While a vote of confidence from one of the most prominent living composers undoubtedly helped Dvořák's career prospects (both immediately with Simrock and long-term), it was predicated on a foundation of music that was good enough to draw that approbation in the first place. The D-minor quartet is the work of an assured composer who has had significant experience in the medium, and if we go by the dates Dvořák indicated in the

3 Beveridge, David, "Dvořák and Brahms: A Chronicle, an Interpretation," in *Dvořák and His World*, ed. Michael Beckerman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 64-65. Letter from Dvořák to Brahms, January 23, 1878; all letter quotations are as compiled and quoted in this article.

4 *Ibid.*, 59.

5 *Ibid.*, 62, and endnote 12, 88.

6 *Ibid.*, 66.

7 Šourek, Otakar, "Editor's Notes," from Antonín Dvořák, *Quartet D Minor*, op. 34 (Prague: Artia, 1955), 47.

manuscript, the piece was completed in only twelve days.⁸

The opening theme is simple, presented in the violin against quietly murmuring inner voices. It is the type of melody that lends itself to variation and some parsing of its constituent parts to generate additional material. We hear the beginning of this process in the ornamented melody at measure 7, but the variation sometimes migrates to the accompaniment while the melody retains its shape, as happens after chordal arrival at A major. Here a truncated (to six measures) version of the melody is presented intact while the first violin adorns it with a triplet idea along with a previously introduced dotted rhythm, derived from the opening melody. The melodic relationship between the opening theme and the secondary theme in F major is literal. If you compare the violin lines, measure three of the first is the same as measure one of the later melody (marked "X" in each):

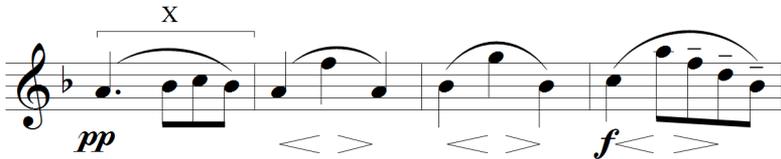
Example 3

a)



Dvořák, String Quartet no. 9, op. 34, I: mm. 1-4, violin I

b)



Dvořák, String Quartet no. 9, op. 34, I: mm. 63-66, violin I

The places where Dvořák makes less-expected harmonic moves tend to be quite interesting, especially when accented chords move from B major to F-sharp minor before returning to F. I mention this here because after the exposition, Dvořák makes a stunning move from F major to B major (a tritone away) with only one intervening chord, and the new presentation of the main theme is magical atop the sustained D-sharp in the cello's bass. In the next section Dvořák develops his material (at points you may hear the combination of the themes), and allows himself greater harmonic license, including a beautifully rendered sequence. The activity becomes more driven and focused until the action stops, and the recapitulation is signaled by silence. The inner moving voices of the main theme are now presented as measured *tremoli*, creating an effect reminiscent of the similar texture to be found near the opening of Schubert's "unfinished" symphony. Just because the main ideas return does not mean that their development stops; Dvořák continues to revel in the variational potential of his ideas as the movement comes to a close. A final *Più mosso* doubling of the melody in the violins is set against a rough viola

8 Ibid., VIII.

line and the triplet idea in the cello. The viola and the second violin interpolate this triplet motive in turn between the cadential chords, before the ensemble collectively ends with a unison (at the octave) triplet statement.

The second movement bears the heading "Alla Polka," and Dvořák does not disappoint with a *scherzando* dance movement that comes into its own especially when the cello takes the melody. The contrasting trio is more fluid in nature with a lilt of its own. After the return of the polka's main sections concludes the movement, Dvořák moves to the sonorous yet muted world of the *Adagio*. There is something almost sacrosanct about this movement, and while Dvořák references earlier ideas (like the melodic groupings of four sixteenth notes and accompanimental triplets in a certain configuration), it occupies a space of its own making. The finale of the quartet seems to possess qualities of dance and summation, with its moderately-paced melodies occasionally giving way to localized imitative behavior. B major again comes to the fore in a series of passages that present a distinctive secondary melody in a transfigured state that suggests a detached kinship with the movement's music, at roughly the midpoint of the movement:

Example 4

The musical score for Example 4 consists of four staves: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. The key signature is B major (one sharp) and the time signature is 6/8. The Vln. I staff begins with a triplet of eighth notes (F#, G, A) followed by a rest. The Vln. II staff starts with a triplet of eighth notes (F#, G, A) and continues with a melodic line. The Vla. staff features a triplet of eighth notes (F#, G, A) and then a series of chords. The Vc. staff starts with a triplet of eighth notes (F#, G, A) and continues with a melodic line. Dynamic markings are *f* for Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. at the beginning, *fz* for Vln. II and Vc. in the middle, and *p* for Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. at the end.

Dvořák, String Quartet no. 9, op. 34, IV: mm. 104-108

The music continues with exploratory passages alongside deliberate statements of the main theme. Dvořák contrasts moments of repose, where several instruments hold a chord while a single instrument isolates a melodic idea, with passages of greater activity. The violin figuration near the end reminds one of the triplet accompaniment from the very opening of the quartet, with its distinctive octave leaps. At the final *Più mosso* a quick call-and-response is followed by a unified push to the work's close.

David Henning Phylar
Music Specialist
Library of Congress, Music Division

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK, *String Quartet in F major, op. 96* ("The American")

From 1892 to 1895 Antonín Dvořák was quite a novelty in the American music scene. At the invitation of Jeannette Thurber, who presided over the fledgling National Conservatory of Music in New York City, Dvořák accepted the position of artistic director and professor of composition for the institution. These years, known as the “American period,” produced some of his most popular works: the Symphony no. 9 in E minor, “From the New World” (1893), “The American” quartet and the Quintet in E-flat major, for two violins, two violas and violoncello (1893). Dvořák approached his time in the United States with a focus on capturing and expressing a uniquely American musical idiom. In a November 1892 letter to a friend he explained the “Americans expect great things of me. I am to show them the way into the ‘Promised Land,’ the realm of a new, independent art, in short a national style of music!” His position at the National Conservatory afforded him the potential influence upon a generation of American musicians, but instead the legacy of his time here remains focused on his compositions.

It would be a mistake to afford Dvořák credit for establishing America’s voice in western art music. An American style emerged as early as the Colonial Era with composers such as Francis Hopkinson (1737-1791) and William Billings (1746-1800). A long lineage continues through the narrative of American history through modern times, which confirms that Dvořák’s American period ought to be considered a successful adaptation of inherently American musical styles for the traditional European genres of string quartets and symphonies. This was achieved by the composer’s immersion in music native to the United States, such as the time spent listening to National Conservatory student Henry T. Burleigh (1866-1949) sing songs of the African-American spiritual and plantation traditions. It is striking that certain musical practices which Dvořák found to be uniquely American are present in some of his strictly Czech works. The use of pentatonic scales in melodies, certain rhythmic patterns and flat-seven minor keys are a mainstay in several of his pre-American period works, rooted in folk traditions of Slovakia and Hungary. From an anthropological perspective, this connection provides an opportunity to view the music of the United States as representative of the country’s cultural diversity.

Dvořák’s F-major quartet was composed from June 8-23, 1893, during his summer retreat to Spillville, a Czech community in Northeast Iowa. The composer led a private premiere of the quartet in Spillville while the professional premiere was performed by the Kneisel Quartet in Boston on January 1, 1894, just two weeks following the premiere of the New World Symphony at Carnegie Hall. The Quintet, op. 97 was premiered on January 12. These few weeks were remarkably potent for Dvořák, despite the fact that he increasingly longed for his Czech homeland. That sentiment, in combination with the rapid financial ruin of the National Conservatory, prompted Dvořák to remain in Prague permanently at the conclusion of his 1886 summer holiday.

The *Allegro ma non troppo* captures the raw spirit of America as a young and innocent nation exploring the unknown frontiers of possibility. Each voice holds its own, injecting its own unique sonorities and flavors into the themes. Dvořák’s treatment of the F-major tonality offers excitement and just enough grit to provoke a sense of nervous exhilaration.

The first violin's melodies in the *Lento* verge on virtuosic, while the carefully crafted accompaniment ensures that a bucolic sentiment maintains primacy. Rhythmic motives advance the narrative, creating a sense of motion through space. Musicologist John Clapham described the *Lento* as the "crowning glory" of the quartet. A cacophony of birds takes hold in the *Molto vivace*, representing a bird song Dvořák heard in the Iowa woods during his time in Spillville. The "chirpy" sections contrast with calm legato sections of birds in flight, pushing majestically and gently against a breeze. The Finale: *Vivace ma non troppo* is the most overtly American movement in sentiment—a rustic country dance with clapping, knee-slapping and genuine excitement. An *espressivo meno mosso* section offers momentary relief from the action, only to be swept back into the rush of unabashed glory.

Nicholas A. Brown
Music Specialist
Library of Congress, Music Division



About the Artists

The **Pavel Haas Quartet** has been called "the world's most exciting string quartet" (*Gramophone*). Garlanded with numerous prestigious awards and having released many acclaimed recordings, it is now firmly established as one of the world's foremost chamber ensembles.

Since winning the Paolo Borciani competition in Italy in Spring 2005, the Pavel Haas Quartet has become one of the great chamber ensembles of today, performing at the world's most prestigious concert halls and recording six award-winning CDs. Based in Prague, the Quartet studied with Milan Skampa, the legendary violist of the Smetana Quartet, and still enjoys a close relationship with him.

In the 2015/16 season the quartet will return to LSO St Luke's for a BBC Radio 3 residency in February 2016, they will make their South Korea debut in Seoul and embark on a North America tour in autumn 2015 including concerts in Boston, Washington, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Vancouver and Montreal. They will perform concerts at the Wigmore Hall, Philharmonie Berlin, Munich Herkulessaal, Palau de la Musica Barcelona, Stockholm Konserthuset and the Schubertiade. Last season's highlights included the quartet's 'Bohemia' series exploring Czech repertoire at major European concert halls, a residency at the Bodenseefestival and appearances at the Verbier, Edinburgh and Aldeburgh festivals.

The Pavel Haas Quartet records exclusively with Supraphon, and its most recent recording of Smetana's String Quartets nos. 1 & 2 was awarded Best Chamber Music Recording at the 2015 *Gramophone* Awards. This is the fourth time the quartet has received this prestigious award, and *Gramophone* commented: "Their sound is, as always,

immediately recognisable—partly due to the sheer richness of timbre but also the sense of four personalities at play... at times it's hard to believe you are in the presence of only four players, so intense is the sound." *BBC Music Magazine* remarked that these were "definitive performances in which nothing is taken for granted," and the *Sunday Times* wrote "it's hard to imagine a more compelling or harrowing take on the less frequently programmed D-minor quartet." The quartet won the same prize in 2014 for their recording of Schubert's String Quartet "Death and the Maiden" and the String Quintet with cellist Danjulo Ishizaka, and their recording of Dvořák's String Quartets no. 12 'American' and no. 13 was awarded both the Chamber Music award and the most coveted prize, Recording of the Year in 2011. The *Sunday Times* commented: "Their account of the "The American" Quartet belongs alongside the greatest performances on disc." The quartet also won the Diapason d'Or de l'Année in 2010 for their disc featuring Prokofiev's String Quartets nos. 1 & 2, and received yet another *Gramophone* Chamber Music Award in 2007 for their recording of Janáček's Quartet no. 2 "Intimate Letters" and Haas's Quartet no.2 "From the Monkey Mountains."

In 2007, the Cologne Philharmonic nominated the Quartet as ECHO Rising Stars, resulting in a tour to major concert halls worldwide. The Quartet took part in the BBC New Generation Artists scheme between 2007-2009, and in 2010 was awarded the Special Ensemble Scholarship of the Borletti-Buitoni Trust.

The Quartet takes its name from the Czech composer Pavel Haas (1899-1944) who was imprisoned at Theresienstadt in 1941 and tragically died at Auschwitz three years later. His legacy includes three wonderful string quartets.

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