

Sunday, February 19, 2012, 3pm
Hertz Hall

Takács Quartet

Edward Dusinberre *first violin*
Károly Schranz *second violin*
Geraldine Walther *viola*
András Fejér *cello*

PROGRAM

- Leoš Janáček (1854–1928) String Quartet No. 2, “Intimate Letters” (1928)
Andante
Adagio
Moderato
Allegro
- Benjamin Britten (1913–1976) String Quartet No. 3, Op. 94 (1975)
Duets: With moderate movement
Ostinato: Very fast
Solo: Very calm
Burlesque: Fast, con fuoco
Recitative and Passacaglia (La Serenissima):
Slow — Slowly moving

INTERMISSION

- Claude Debussy (1862–1918) String Quartet in G minor, Op. 10 (1893)
Animé et très décidé
Assez vif et bien rythmé
Andantino, doucement expressif
Très modéré — Très mouvementé et avec passion

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Leoš Janáček (1854–1928) String Quartet No. 2, “Intimate Letters”

Composed in 1928. Premiered on September 11, 1928, in Brno by the Moravian String Quartet.

In the summer of 1917, when he was 63, Leoš Janáček fell in love with Kamila Stösslová, the 25-year-old wife of a Jewish antiques dealer from Písek. They first met in a town in central Moravia during World War I, but, as he lived in Brno with Zdenka, his wife of 37 years, and she lived with her husband in Písek, they saw each other only infrequently thereafter and remained in touch mostly by letter. The true passion seems to have been entirely on his side (“It is fortunate that only I am infatuated,” he once wrote to her), but Kamila did not reject his company, apparently feeling admiration rather than love for the man who, with the successful staging of his *Jenůfa* in Prague in 1915 eleven years after its premiere in Brno, was at that time acquiring an international reputation as a master composer. Whatever the details of their relationship, Kamila’s role as an inspiring muse during the last decade of Janáček’s life was indisputable and beneficent—under the sway of his feelings for her he wrote his greatest music, including the operas *Katya Kabanova*, *The Cunning Little Vixen* and *The Makropoulos Affair*, the song cycle *The Diary of the Young Man Who Disappeared*, the two String Quartets (the second of which he titled “Intimate Letters”), the *Glagolitic Mass* and the *Sinfonietta* for Orchestra.

It seems fitting, perhaps inevitable, that Janáček’s last work—the Second String Quartet—was the one most closely bound to his love for Kamila. By the beginning of 1928, a decade after they first met, he had sent her over 500 letters which revealed his innermost thoughts and feelings; his most recent ones even referred to her as his “wife,” in quotation marks. He was then seriously considering ending his own long-time marriage, which had never been very happy and had turned absolutely icy after Zdenka came to realize the depth of her husband’s passion for Kamila the preceding spring. (Janáček even re-wrote his will to make Kamila his

primary beneficiary; Zdenka had to go to court to get that provision overturned.) The domestic tensions between the Janáčeks flared into a nasty quarrel on New Years Day 1928, and Leoš determined to retreat to his cottage in his native village of Hukvaldy, but he was stuck in Brno for a week finishing the opera *The House of the Dead*. He visited Kamila for two days before arriving in Hukvaldy on January 10th, and saw her again at the performance of *Katya Kabanova* in Prague on the 21st. A week later, from Hukvaldy, he wrote to Kamila that he was beginning “a musical confession,” a new string quartet that he proposed titling “Love Letters,” and which would call for a *viola d’amore*—the “viol of love”—rather than the usual viola. “Our life is going to be in it,” he promised. The Quartet, ultimately subtitled “Intimate Letters” and scored for standard string quartet (the soft tones of the *viola d’amore* made it a poor partner for other strings), was finished in just three weeks. Janáček reported to Kamila the intense, almost frantic passion that drove him during its creation: “I’m so glad at how my pen was burning when I wrote it! How quickly, how pantingly I wrote! How it didn’t want to stop! Oh, little soul, we’ll flicker together! All this feeling, as if it were piled upon itself...as if it had lifted you and me from this earth, as if everything was joyfully, lovingly hovering; and in that feverish mood, these *Intimate Letters* were born.” He fretted that the Quartet was not a suitable match for his fiery emotions: “Feelings on their own are sometimes so strong that the notes hide, run away. A great love—a weak composition. But I want it to be: a great love—a great composition.” He did not present the score to Kamila until a private reading in his home on May 18th had soothed his apprehensions about the piece. On July 29th, Kamila and her husband joined Janáček for a holiday in Hukvaldy. Despite David Stössel’s presence and an alarming change in his health three weeks before, Janáček wrote in Kamila’s album that he was contented: “You are sitting beside me and I am happy and at peace. In such a way do the days pass for the angels.” On a walking expedition into the surrounding hills on August 8th, eleven-year-old Otto Stössel went missing, and

Janáček, though seriously ill, joined the search party. He became flushed and overheated, took to his bed, and the following day was diagnosed with pneumonia. On August 12, 1928, five weeks after his 74th birthday, he died in the hospital at Ostrava. His last composition, his testament to the love that had renewed his passions and fired his creative spirit, his “Intimate Letters,” was premiered just a month later in Brno by the Moravian String Quartet.

Janáček explained to Kamila that the Quartet’s opening movement depicted “my impression when I saw you for the first time.” A bold motive of halting gestures, probably representing the composer, is given by the violins above a tremulous note in the cello. The viola, glassy-toned in its *sul ponticello* (“at the bridge”) effect, gives out a haunting phrase of unsettled tonality that the composer’s biographer Jaroslav Vogel wrote “expresses the chilling mystery of an encounter with an utterly new and potentially great experience.” A leaping, flickering arpeggio for the first violin completes the thematic material, whose three elements are varied, superimposed and abutted throughout the remainder of the movement.

The *Adagio*, according to the composer, concerns “the summer events at Luhacovice Spa in Moravia,” where Janáček saw Kamila for the first time in a year-and-a-half in July 1921. The sad, arching, short-breathed melody first sung by the viola suggests the months of their separation. This theme is expanded and transformed by the other instruments, sometimes quietly, sometimes forcefully, and acquires as accompaniment the flickering arpeggio from the opening movement as it unfolds. The sudden intrusion of an excited dance tune in limping meter conjures a tea-time salon orchestra at the spa. The dance disintegrates, the sad opening music returns, and the composer is again left alone, with only the remembered thoughts of his first meeting with his beloved to comfort him.

Janáček told Kamila that he intended to make the third movement “particularly joyful and then dissolve it into a vision that resembles your image.” An extraordinary formal plan resulted. The first portion of the movement,

despite Janáček’s claim to jollity, is occupied by a frozen drudge of a theme in plodding rhythms, the sort of music that Shostakovich used to portray emotional numbness. The heartbeat of this theme’s rhythm is sustained by the viola as the underpinning for a warm melody—Kamila’s theme—that is yet another variant of the Quartet’s opening gesture. This music grows to a climax before the first subject returns; the movement ends with a brief review of its themes.

“The finale,” Janáček explained, “won’t finish with fear for my pretty little vixen, but with great longing and its fulfillment.” The movement, a quirky hybrid of sonata and rondo, returns often to its boisterous opening strain, though in modified forms. A leaping motive of trilled notes, a sort of second subject, provides thematic contrast. The two ideas are played against each other throughout the movement in unpredictable, frequently startling ways before the Quartet arrives at a triumphant exclamation in its closing measures.

Benjamin Britten (1913–1976) String Quartet No. 3, Op. 94

Composed in 1975. Premiered on December 19, 1976, in Aldeburgh by the Amadeus Quartet.

Mozart, Schubert, Bruckner, Mahler, Puccini, Shostakovich—all set down their last creative thoughts under the specter of their own imminent deaths. Their visions ranged from terror (the *Dies Irae* of Mozart’s Requiem) and abysmal nothingness (the *Andantino* of Schubert’s A major Sonata), from heartbreaking farewell (Mahler’s Ninth Symphony) and bleak pessimism (Shostakovich’s String Quartet No. 14), to dutifully finishing up a life’s work before time ran out (Bruckner’s Ninth Symphony, Puccini’s *Turandot*).

In 1972, Benjamin Britten, not yet sixty, learned that he had a faulty heart valve, and could not expect to live long, or well, without surgery. He was then composing *Death in Venice*, based on Thomas Mann’s novella, for his life companion and greatest interpreter, the

tenor Peter Pears, and he told his doctors that he would not submit to surgery until the score was finished. The opera was sketched by the end of the year, and orchestrated and completed by March 1973. In May, Britten entered a London hospital for his surgery, but he suffered a slight stroke during the operation, and he was generally weakened and without full use of his right arm thereafter. He convalesced during the summer by reading Haydn and Eliot, and strengthened his right hand by writing letters to friends. He had to miss the premiere of *Death in Venice* at the Aldeburgh Festival in June, but was cheered by good reviews for the opera and excellent ones for Pears in the role of Aschenbach. Britten was able to attend a private performance of *Death in Venice* in September at Aldeburgh, and he traveled to London when the opera was given at Covent Garden the following month.

By spring 1974, Britten was again up to doing some creative work, first revising his early String Quartet in D and the 1941 opera *Paul Bunyan*, and then composing a setting of Eliot’s *The Death of Saint Narcissus* for Pears and harpist Osian Ellis. The *Suite on English Folk Tunes* (“A time there was...”) followed later that year, and the cantata *Phaedra*, for Janet Baker, and some small vocal works in 1975. Britten was well enough by November to travel to Venice, where he was able to visit many of his favorite palaces, gardens and galleries with the help of his nurse and some devoted friends. He had begun composing a string quartet, his first work in that form in thirty years, before he left England, and completed the score in Venice on November 16th. Though greatly worn down by the heat wave and drought of the summer of 1976, that year he managed to make eight new settings of folk songs for Pears and Ellis, arrange his 1950 *Lachrymae* (originally for viola and piano) for string orchestra, and compose a *Welcome Ode* for school musicians for the Queen’s Jubilee visit to Suffolk. In June, it was announced that he had been made a life peer, with the title Baron Britten of Aldeburgh. In September, the Amadeus Quartet came to rehearse the new Third Quartet for him, but when Mstislav Rostropovich visited Britten in late November,

he reported that his old friend was “very sick, his hands trembling.” On December 4, 1976, Britten died at Aldeburgh. Exactly two weeks later, the Amadeus Quartet gave the premiere at Aldeburgh of the Quartet No. 3, Britten’s last major composition.

Peter Evans, who published a study of Britten’s music in 1979, wrote of the Quartet No. 3, “The profound impression the work made at its premiere might appear an inevitable consequence of the occasion, but greater familiarity confirms that the simplicity of the Quartet’s language and the serenity to which it aspires represent a distillation, not a dilution, of Britten’s expressivity during the most poignant period of his life.” Britten himself said that he wanted the Quartet “to end with a question,” and the five movements that lead to that closing moment are introspective and contemplative and equivocal, and even, in the *Burlesque*, wryly humorous. There is no hint here of anger or fear, of cold resignation or hopeless pessimism. This is instead music of one of the modern era’s greatest tracers of the heart’s most subtle emotions viewing the mystery of death, with acceptance, with questioning wonder, with a seeking for serenity, and, inevitably, with touching sadness. “What will it be like?” Britten asked his nurse as his strength ebbed during his final months. The Quartet No. 3 poses that very question in ineffable, heart-piercing tones.

The Third Quartet’s five movements are arranged, arch-like, around the central third movement, the *Solo*, whose stratospheric, keening cantilena for the first violin (marked “Very calm”) is disturbed at its mid-point by nervously jumping gestures placed above murmuring figures in the low strings. Two scherzo-like movements flank the *Solo*. Preceding it is a strident *Ostinato* based on repetitions of a vaulting four-note pattern that sounds like a string tune-up gone wild. Following the *Solo* is a *Burlesque*, whose sardonic character and grotesque waltz-trio pay tribute to Britten’s much-admired colleague Dmitri Shostakovich, who died in Moscow two months before the Third Quartet was begun. The opening movement, *Duets*, exploits the various pair groupings within

the ensemble. Britten organized the finale as a *Recitative and Passacaglia*, and subtitled it “La Serenissima,” referring (at least) to the city of Venice, where the Quartet was completed, and to his own *Death in Venice*, which he quoted in the *Recitative*. Autobiographical association seems inescapable here. Aschenbach, the central figure of the opera, is a renowned writer who travels from Munich to Venice to revive his flagging creativity, and discovers there, before he dies, a vision of perfect, unattainable beauty in the Polish boy Tadzio. The *Recitative* borrows five melodic phrases from *Death in Venice*, one for each of the players and a final one for the ensemble, separated by previews of the gently pulsing theme of the *Passacaglia*: the barcarolle motive, associated with Aschenbach’s dramatically significant rides in a gondola (cello); the theme of Aschenbach’s longing for and pursuit of Tadzio (second violin); a phrase from the music accompanying the “Games of Apollo” scene, in which Aschenbach sees Tadzio as the incarnation of a Greek god (first violin, pizzicato); Aschenbach’s line, “When the Sirocco blows, nothing delights me” (viola); and a united statement of the moment of crushing realization when Tadzio passes by him at the close of Act I and Aschenbach utters the words, “I love you.” Britten said that he derived the recurring theme of the *Passacaglia*—two solemn three-measure phrases, mostly confined to the cello—from the tolling sounds of Venetian bells. The music moves at a steady, inexorable gait, a kind of serious, though not solemn processional, and reaches, in its last, weightless page, Britten’s unanswerable question.

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)
String Quartet in G minor, Op. 10

Composed in 1893. Premiered on December 29, 1893, in Paris by the Ysaÿe Quartet.

By 1893, when he turned 30, Claude Debussy had acquired a modest reputation in Paris as the composer of a number of songs, piano pieces and miscellaneous vocal and orchestral works, as a

winner of the *Prix de Rome*, and as a bohemian musician much under the sway of the Symbolist poets Mallarmé and Régnier. His distinctive creative personality had already been demonstrated to the city’s circle of progressive music lovers by the *Petite Suite*, the *Arabesques* and the *Suite Bergamasque* (from which comes the well-known *Clair de Lune*), but the wider recognition of his genius began when the cantata *La Damselle élue* (“The Blessed Damzel”) was premiered at a concert of the Société Nationale on April 8, 1893. By that time, he had already begun sketching out an opera based on Maeterlinck’s newly published drama *Pelléas et Mélisande*, a project that would take him a decade to complete, and written much of a ballet score inspired by Mallarmé’s voluptuous poem *L’Après-midi d’un faune* (“The Afternoon of a Faun”). The other major endeavor of 1893 was a String Quartet, a curious undertaking, perhaps, for a composer of Debussy’s decidedly impressionistic proclivities, but one which he apparently felt necessary to show that he could handle the Classical forms which had occupied much of his long study at the Conservatoire and as a *Prix de Rome* recipient—it is indicative in this regard that the Quartet is the only one of his works to which he formally assigned an opus number.

Though the Quartet is rich in melody and harmony, and evidences Debussy’s ability to elicit glowing sonorities from his ensemble, it shows the young composer’s discomfort in handling the form, relying on an episodic construction rather than on a motivically developed one. He threaded the whole together by the cyclical technique (i.e., the appearance of a theme in more than one movement) favored by César Franck, whose own String Quartet had appeared as recently as 1890. When his friend and colleague Ernest Chausson pointed out the deficiencies in Classical structure, Debussy promised to write him another quartet “with more dignity of form,” but he never did. (Indeed, he wrote no more chamber music until the three sonatas that he composed at the end of his life.) The composition drew mixed reactions when it was premiered by the Quartet of the celebrated violinist Eugène Ysaÿe at a concert of the Société

Nationale on December 29, 1893. One critic accused its exotic sonorities, notably the pervasive use of *pizzicato*, of being “strange and bizarre, with too many echoes of the streets of Cairo and the gamelan,” the Balinese percussion ensemble that had overwhelmed Debussy when he first heard it at the Paris International Exposition of 1889. The noted composer Paul Dukas, however, hailed Debussy as “one of the most gifted and original artists of the young generation of musicians...a lyricist in the full sense of the term.” When Debussy submitted the score to his then-friend Maurice Ravel (the fastidious Ravel and the profligate Debussy later had a falling out, in some measure prompted by the public disputes over the relative merits of their respective String Quartets), he was advised, “In the name of the gods of music and of my own, do not touch a thing you have written in your Quartet.” Opinion soon sided with Dukas and Ravel, and the Quartet was quickly embraced by chamber players following its publication by Durand in 1894; it has remained one of the most popular works in the chamber repertory.

The Quartet opens with a distinctive, modally inflected motive (marked by a quick, three-note ornamental cell) that serves both as the melodic germ from which the first movement grows and as the motto theme that returns in later movements to unify the work’s

overall structure. The frequent recurrences of the motto throughout the opening movement, usually in transformations of sonority, harmony and mood, are separated by episodes of mildly contrasting character. The second movement is a free adaptation of the form and manner of a scherzo. The opening section posits a repetitive viola ostinato built from the motto theme around which swirl sparkling *pizzicato* effects for the other instruments. The center of the movement is occupied by a rhythmically augmented version of the motto theme first given by the violin above a rustling accompaniment. A modified return of the opening section rounds out the movement. The *Andantino*, sensual, lyrical, permeated with the sweet sensations of early spring, evokes a similar expressive and stylistic world to the one that Debussy conjured in the contemporaneous *Prelude to “The Afternoon of a Faun.”* The two-part introduction to the finale comprises a slow-tempo transformation of the motto and a quicker mock-fugal passage derived from the scherzo theme. The viola initiates the main part of the movement with a rapid motive that is tightly restricted in range. This phrase and further transformations of the motto theme occupy the remainder of the movement, which ends with a sun-bright flourish.

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RECOGNIZED AS one of the world's great ensembles, the Takács Quartet plays with a unique blend of drama, warmth and humor, combining four distinct musical personalities to bring fresh insights to the string quartet repertoire. Winners of the 2011 Award for Chamber Music and Song presented by the Royal Philharmonic Society in London, the Takács Quartet is based in Boulder at the University of Colorado. The Quartet performs 90 concerts a year worldwide, throughout Europe as well as in Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea. The 2010–2011 season included a Bartók cycle in Sydney, and a three-concert series focusing on Schubert in New York City (92nd Street Y) and at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. The 2011–2012 season will focus on the music of Janáček, Britten, Debussy and Ravel, with performances in major cities across the United States, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. This season also finds the Quartet collaborating with pianists Garrick Ohlsson and Joyce Yang, and cellist Ralph Kirschbaum.

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 the Chamber Award from *BBC Music Magazine*, a *Gramophone* Award 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 Award and two further awards from the Japanese Recording Academy.

In 2006, the Takács Quartet made their first recording for Hyperion Records, of Schubert's D804 and D810. A disc featuring Brahms's Piano Quintet with Stephen Hough was released to great acclaim in November 2007 and was subsequently nominated for a Grammy. Brahms's Quartets Opp. 51 and 67 were released in fall 2008, and a disc featuring the Schumann Piano Quintet with Marc-André Hamelin was released in late 2009. The complete Haydn "Apponyi" Quartets, Opp. 71 and 74, were released in November 2011.

The Quartet has also made 16 recordings for the Decca label since 1988 of works



by Beethoven, Bartók, Borodin, Brahms, Chausson, Dvořák, Haydn, Mozart, Schubert and Smetana. The ensemble's recording of the six Bartók string quartets received the 1998 *Gramophone* Award for chamber music and, in 1999, was nominated for a Grammy. In addition to the Beethoven string quartet cycle recording, the ensemble's other Decca recordings include Dvořák's String Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 51 and Piano Quintet in A major, Op. 81, with pianist Andreas Haefliger; Schubert's Trout Quintet with Mr. Haefliger, which was nominated in 2000 for a Grammy; string quartets by Smetana and Borodin; Schubert's Quartet in G major and "Notturmo" Piano Trio with Mr. Haefliger; the three Brahms string quartets and Piano Quintet in F minor with pianist András Schiff; Chausson's *Concerto* for violin, piano and string quartet with violinist Joshua Bell and pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet; and Mozart's String Quintets, K. 515 and 516, with György Pauk, viola.

The Quartet is known for innovative programming. In 2007 it performed, with Academy Award-winning actor Philip Seymour Hoffman, *Everyman* in Carnegie Hall, inspired by the Philip Roth novel. The group collaborates regularly with the Hungarian folk ensemble Muzsikás, performing a program that explores the folk sources of Bartók's music. The Takács performed a music and poetry program on a 14-city U.S. tour with the poet Robert Pinsky. In 2010, the Quartet collaborated with the Colorado Shakespeare Theatre and playwright

David Morse in a production of *Quartet*, a play set in Beethoven's later years when he was writing the A minor quartet, Op. 132.

At the University of Colorado, the Takács 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 Dusinberre 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 2011 each member of the Quartet was awarded the Order of Merit Commander's Cross by the President of the Republic of Hungary.

Edward Dusinberre (*first violin*) was born in 1968 in Leamington Spa, England, and has enjoyed playing the violin from a young age. His early experiences as concertmaster of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain encouraged him to choose music as a profession. He studied with the Ukrainian violinist Felix Andrievsky at the Royal College of Music in London and with Dorothy DeLay and Piotr Milewski at the Juilliard School.

In 1990, he won the British Violin Recital Prize and gave his debut recital in London at the Purcell Room, South Bank Centre. Upon completion of his studies at Juilliard, Mr. Dusinberre auditioned for the Takács Quartet, which he joined in 1993.

In July 2010, Mr. Dusinberre released a recording of Beethoven's Violin Sonatas No. 9 and 10 with pianist David Korevaar on the Decca label. Future projects include a performance of Brahms's Double Concerto with András Fejér, and performances at the Plush Festival Dorset, where he will play Beethoven's Piano Trio, "The Ghost," with Charles Owen and Louise Hopkins, to be broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

Mr. Dusinberre enjoys writing about music. In connection with the Takács Quartet's recent Beethoven cycles in London and Madrid, he has written articles for *The Strad* and *The Guardian*.

Mr. Dusinberre lives in Boulder, Colorado, with his wife Beth, an archeologist who teaches at the University of Colorado, and their son Sam. He enjoys hiking in the mountains near Boulder and going to the theater. Never known as one of the more athletic members of his family, Mr. Dusinberre has nonetheless benefited from Boulder's healthy culture of embracing the outdoors. He currently has plans to start training for the 2020 Bolder Boulder, sometime in the future.

Károly Schranz (*second violin*) was born in 1952 in Budapest, Hungary. His first musical experiences were listening to gypsy bands in restaurants, which he has always admired for their virtuosity and musicianship. He began playing the violin at age four, and at age 14 he entered the Béla Bartók Secondary Music School, where he met his future wife, also a violin student at the school. He was the recipient of the Franz Liszt Prize in 1983. Since 1986, Mr. Schranz, his wife and their three daughters have made their home in Boulder, Colorado, where they often go hiking. He also loves to play tennis.

Geraldine Walther (*viola*) was Principal Violist of the San Francisco Symphony for 29 years, having previously served as assistant principal of the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Baltimore Symphony and the Miami Philharmonic.

A native of Florida, she first picked up the viola in a public school music program in Tampa. She went on to study at the Manhattan School of Music with Lillian Fuchs and at the Curtis Institute with Michael Tree of the Guarneri Quartet. In 1979, she won first prize at the William Primrose International Competition.

As soloist with the San Francisco Symphony, she performed the U.S. premieres of such important works as Takemitsu's *A String Around Autumn*, Lieberon's Viola Concerto, Holloway Viola Concerto and Benjamin's *Viola, Viola*. In May 2002, she was soloist in William Schuman's *Concerto on Old English Rounds* and the Britten Double Concerto for violin and viola.

In 1995, Ms. Walther was selected by Sir Georg Solti as a member of his Musicians of the World, an orchestra composed of leading musicians from around the globe, for concerts in Geneva to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. She has participated in leading chamber music festivals, including Marlboro, Santa Fe, Tanglewood, Bridgehampton, Cape Cod, Amelia Island, the Telluride, Seattle and Green music festivals, and Music@Menlo. She has collaborated with such artists as Isaac Stern, Pinchas Zukerman and Jaime Laredo, and has appeared as a guest artist with the Tokyo, Vermeer, Guarneri, Lindsay, Cypress and St. Lawrence quartets. She joined the Takács Quartet as a regular member in fall 2005.

In addition to her recordings for Hyperion with the Takács Quartet, Ms. Walther's recordings include Hindemith's *Trauermusik* and *Der Schwanendreher* with the San Francisco Symphony (London/Decca), Paul Chihara's *Golden Slumbers* with the San Francisco Chamber Singers (Albany), Lou Harrison's *Threnody* (New Albion) and, as a member of the Volkert Trio, *Delectable Pieces* (Con Brio).

Ms. Walther is the mother of two grown daughters and lives in Longmont, Colorado, with her husband Tom.

András Fejér (*cello*) was born in 1955 into a musical family. His father was a cellist and conductor, and his mother was a pianist. He began playing the cello at age seven because, as legend has it, his father was unwilling to listen to a violin-upstart practicing. Since an early age, his parents have held string quartet weekends, which for the young cellist were the most memorable of occasions—if not for the music, then for the glorious desserts his mother would prepare for those sessions.

Mr. Fejér was admitted to the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in 1975, where he was a pupil of Ede Banda, András Mihály, Ferenc Rados and György Kurtág. That same year he founded the Takács String Quartet with three fellow classmates. Although the Quartet has been his sole professional focus since then, he does perform as a soloist occasionally as well.

Mr. Fejér is married to a literature teacher. They have three children and live in the Rockies, where they enjoy year-round sunshine in beautiful Boulder. When he is not on tour, he enjoys reading, photography, tennis and hiking.

Sightlines

Takács Quartet

Sunday, February 19, 2012, 2–2:30 pm

Pre-performance talk by Scott Foglesong, Chair, Department of Musicianship and Music Theory, San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

This event is free to concert ticket holders.