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Cal Performances

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Jeremy Geffen

Whenever I find myself walking across campus on a cool autumn or winter Sunday afternoon, on my way to a chamber music performance at Hertz Hall, I can't help but think how lucky I am to work with the audiences, artists, and supporters we daily come into contact with at Cal Performances. Our chamber music audience, in particular—and we hear this over and over from our guest artists—stands out as a brilliant example of all that an audience can be—thoughtful, curious, enthusiastic, involved. These are rare occasions of musical fellowship for all concerned, gatherings of like-minded listeners and players who couldn't be happier to spend a sunny Sunday afternoon at Hertz Hall with “old friends” like (as in today's program) Haydn and Dvořák and newer ones like pianist/composer Stephen Hough. I can't adequately thank the terrific **Takács Quartet** for bringing yet another insightful program to our campus. Over many memorable concerts, they have taught us—over and over again—volumes about the mysteries and wonders of great music. More than anything, I'm pleased that you could be here today to experience the finest in string quartet playing, music brought to us by one of the world's most accomplished and beloved string ensembles.

I'd also like to take a moment to make sure you know about another season highlight scheduled for next month (Mar 12), the West Coast premiere of *Place*, Ted Hearne and Saul Williams' bold meditation on the topographies of gentrification and displacement. Another of this season's *Illuminations* events, *Place* is a remarkable work, something I don't think you'll want to miss. (The recording for the New Amsterdam label captured the attention of the music world, earning two 2021 Grammy nominations—for Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance and Best Contemporary Classical Composition.)

February marks the time each year when Cal Performances' programming shifts into high gear. From now through the beginning of May, the remainder of our 2021–22 season is packed with ambitious and adventurous programming. You won't want to miss...

- sensational dance performances like *Memphis Jookin': The Show*, featuring Lil Buck (Feb 25–26); **The Joffrey Ballet** (Mar 4–6); and the **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater** (Mar 29 – Apr 3)
- the peerless **London Symphony Orchestra** (Mar 20), appearing under the direction of superstar conductor **Sir Simon Rattle** in a program of orchestral masterworks
- early-music masters **Jordi Savall** and **Le Concert des Nations** (Mar 4) performing selections from the classic 1991 film soundtrack to Alain Corneau's *Tous les matins du monde*
- the renowned **English Baroque Soloists** with conductor **Sir John Eliot Gardiner** in a transfixing program of works by Mozart and Haydn (Apr 10)
- pianist *extraordinaire* **Mitsuko Uchida** playing and directing Mozart with the **Mahler Chamber Orchestra** (Mar 27)
- our 2021–22 artist-in-residence **Angélique Kidjo** in her brand new music-theater piece *Yemandja* (a highly anticipated Cal Performances co-commission and *Illuminations* event, Apr 23).

Fasten your seatbelts; we have all of this—plus much more—in store for you!

We're very proud of our new and updated winter brochure and know that a few minutes spent reviewing our schedule—in print or online—will reveal a wealth of options for your calendar; now is the perfect time to guarantee that you have the best seats for all the events you plan to attend.

I know you join us in looking forward to what lies ahead, to coming together once again to encounter the life-changing experiences that only the live performing arts deliver. We can't wait to share it all with you during the coming months.

Jeremy Geffen
Executive and Artistic Director, Cal Performances



Sunday, February 20, 2022, 3pm
Hertz Hall

Takács Quartet

Stephen Hough, *piano*

Takács Quartet

Edward Dusinberre, *violin*

Harumi Rhodes, *violin*

Richard O'Neill, *viola*

András Fejér, *cello*

PROGRAM

Franz Josef HAYDN (1732–1809) String Quartet in B-flat Major, Op. 76,
No. 4, *Sunrise*
Allegro con spirito
Adagio
Menuetto. Allegro
Finale. Allegro, ma non troppo

Stephen HOUGH (b. 1961) String Quartet No. 1 (*Les Six Recontres*)
(Bay Area Premiere)
Au boulevard
Au parc
À l'hôtel
Au théâtre
À l'église
Au marché

INTERMISSION

Antonín DVOŘÁK (1841–1904) Piano Quintet in A major, Op. 81
Allegro, ma non tanto
Dumka: Andante con moto
Scherzo (Furiant): Molto vivace
Finale. Allegro
featuring Stephen Hough, *piano*

The Takács Quartet appears by arrangement with Seldy Cramer Artists,
and records for Hyperion and Decca/London Records.

The Takács Quartet is Quartet-in-Residence at the University of Colorado in Boulder;
the members are Associate Artists at Wigmore Hall, London.

www.takacsquartet.com

This performance is made possible, in part, by Patron Sponsors Jeffrey MacKie-Mason and Janet Netz.

Newly reinvigorated, the Takács Quartet brings its latest musical thinking to two of the brightest gems in the chamber music literature while making space to introduce a brand-new string quartet by the acclaimed pianist Stephen Hough. First up is an account of a quartet from Joseph Haydn's final completed set, the fruit of his enormously successful penultimate decade and one of the benchmarks that defined the genre. The delectability of musical invention itself is the narrative of works like the *Sunrise* Quartet. Haydn's ingenious twists and surprises can seem elevated or mischievous, philosophical or full of humor, spinning even the simplest, folkier raw material into gold.

This is the tradition Antonín Dvořák revered in his chamber music. When writing his *American* Quartet in 1893, for example, he remarked: "I had Papa Haydn in mind the whole time." His Second Piano Quintet, a cornerstone of that genre, additionally draws on the legacy of Schubert and Schumann, balancing Romantic pathos, sophisticated techniques, and the vibrant gestures of Bohemian folk idioms.

Stephen Hough's new quartet, his first, emerges from a different heritage, having been commissioned as a companion for the string quartets of two French luminaries, Ravel and Dutilleux. Hough imagines "phantom" encounters with the interwar Parisian composers known as "Les Six"—survivors of the early 20th century's cataclysm—and constructs a labyrinthine memory palace of echoes, ironies, and pleasures.

Sunrise and Surprise: Haydn's Quartet in B-flat major, Op. 76, No. 4

Commissioned in the mid-1790s and dedicated to Count Joseph Georg von Erdödy, the six Op. 76 quartets are the last complete set in Joseph Haydn's catalogue. In 1799, the year they were officially published, he undertook another commission for a set of quartets but managed to complete only two (published as Op. 77); these were written for Prince Lobkowitz—the patron who also commissioned Beethoven's first set (Op. 18), which would appear only one year after Op. 76 was published. After that came the fragmentary D minor Quartet, Op. 103, likely

intended as part of the Op. 77 project that remained incomplete.

On the manuscript score of Op. 103 appear the words "gone is all my strength, old and weak am I." But the Haydn who emerges from the Op. 76 set represents the zenith of creative power and self-confidence. He had already become an internationally acclaimed celebrity, riding a new wave of success after his two residencies in London, which resulted in the magnificent final dozen symphonies of the composer's catalogue.

Haydn had since returned to Vienna and was spending the summers as Kapellmeister on the Esterházy Estate in Eisenstadt when he took up this quartet commission in 1796–97. It represented an exception to the new creative orientation of this period, as Haydn's focus otherwise shifted from instrumental composition toward producing sacred choral music: he would soon embark on the oratorio *The Creation*, the work that crowned his final decade with glory.

In Op. 76, Haydn synthesizes decades of trailblazing experience in shaping the modern string quartet. These works are replete with his trademark inventiveness and genius for upending expectations—expectations that Haydn had himself helped establish in earlier achievements. The chronological closeness to the London experience is not irrelevant. As the Haydn scholar James Webster observes, "the quartets of the 1790s adopt a demonstratively 'public' style (often miscalled 'orchestral'), usually attributed to his experience in London," and Haydn "expands the dimensions [of quartet form] still further," to the point of "becoming extroverted and at times almost eccentric" in the Op. 76 works.

The very idea of the string quartet, in Haydn's hands, like Shakespeare's treatment of the theater, provides a framework to juxtapose comic and tragic modes within a single work. Along with formal conceptualization, Haydn expands the "conversational" dimension of the genre (to allude to Goethe's famous metaphor of the quartet as "four intelligent people conversing among themselves").

The Quartet in B-flat major is one of the three in the Op. 76 set to bear a nickname (the others

are No. 2—*Fifths*—and No. 3—*Emperor*). No. 4 has become known as *Sunrise* (*Sonnenaufgang*) because of the preludial opening gambit, in which the first violin serenely rises above a chordal grounding in the other strings, its melody encompassing an octave-and-a-half ascent. This metaphorical “sunrise” happens twice, before the seeming “first movement proper” takes off—yet Haydn stages all of this in the same *Allegro con spirito* tempo. The idea is also reversed, with the cello moving in the opposite direction against the ensemble harmony of the others. The movement sustains this extraordinary sense of organic interconnection that nevertheless encompasses surprising contrasts and detours.

The Adagio, in E-flat major, anticipates the profound, hard-won simplicity and emotional complexity of late Beethoven. Even the ornamentation of this sacred secular song is revelatory, no mere decoration. By its end, Haydn has approached a pathos-tinged twilight, setting up the most pleasant contrast with the cheerful, indeed “sunny” and very physical, minuet. Its irresistible waltz impulse frames a peculiar outing to the countryside by way of dreamy drones—another extension of the chordal anchor that opened this quartet—and unexpected pauses.

Haydn’s transformational art again impels the finale, building from a folk-like main theme that is subjected to delectable variations and re-considerations. The tempo accelerations in the final pages—virtuosic gear shifts—leave the listener with ever giddier pleasure.

—© 2022 Thomas May

Stephen Hough’s String Quartet No. 1, *Les Six Rencontres* (Bay Area Premiere)

This piece was conceived after an invitation from the Takács Quartet: to write a companion work for a recording of the quartets of Ravel and Dutilleux. It was a thrilling if daunting challenge and it gave me an immediate idea as I considered these two colossi who strode across the length of the 20th century—not so much what united their musical languages but what was absent from them, not to mention the missing decades between the Ravel Quartet of 1903 and Dutilleux’s *Ainsi la Nuit* from the mid-1970s.

The term “Les Six,” referring to the group of six French composers most prominently active around the interwar years, evokes a flavor more than a style—and it’s a flavor rarely found in the music of Ravel and Dutilleux. Here, it’s not so much a lack of seriousness, although seeing life through a burlesque lens is one recurring ingredient; rather it’s an aesthetic re-view of the world after the catastrophe of the Great War. Composers like Poulenc and Milhaud were able to discover poignance in the rough and tumble of daily human life in a way that escaped the fastidiousness of those other two composers. Stravinsky referred to Ravel as “the most perfect, Swiss watchmaker.” Poulenc and his party could never be accused of being clock-watchers; their social hours were dimly lit by sputtering candles as the parties continued through the night, with Jean Cocteau or Picasso (other god-fathers) opening yet another bottle of Bordeaux.

• • •

The subtitle for my Quartet No. 1 has within it a pun and a puzzle: the six movements as an echo of “Les Six,” although there are no quotes or direct references from those composers; and “encounters” that are unspecified, their phantom occurrence leaving only a trace in the memory of the places where the meetings might have taken place.

I) *Au boulevard*

Stravinskian spikes elbow across the four instruments, with jagged accents, darting arpeggios, and bracing white-note harmonies. Indeed, no sharps or flats appear until bar 35, when the main theme is suddenly transformed into technicolor for the central section, blushed with sentiment, and exactly half-tempo.

II) *Au Parc*

Under a pizzicato accompaniment a gentle, melancholy melody floats and is passed around the players in a haze of decorative variations, the central section warming the trope like vermouth around a bitter olive.

III) *À l’hôtel*

A bustling *fugato*, its short subject incorporating repeated notes, an arpeggio, and a scale, pat-

ters in metronomic conversation until it suddenly finds itself swept off its feet on a decadent dance floor. It is soon exhausted and the opening material returns, now inverted and condensed, until a hectic coda hurries the theme through many keys with offbeat, snapping chords in pursuit.

IV) Au théâtre

A *spiccatissimo* skeleton of a motive dances in a recurring harmonic sequence, decorated with each repetition in more and more lurid colors, smeared with lipstick *glissandos*. Then comes a sudden change of mood with the viola's plangent *amoroso* melody pushing the music forward to a splashing climax. The swirls of arpeggios segue to ferocious tremolos underneath the first violin's *piangendo* statement of the opening theme. As the music totters on the edge of despair, there is a meltdown into a coda of consolation where the viola reimagines the opening skeleton theme in smooth, consoling D-flat major.

V) A l'église

We remain in D-flat major for this serene hymn, which is sewn together into one four-part seam across the *con sordino* instruments—with a glance perhaps back to Ravel's teacher, Gabriel Fauré.

VI) Au marché

This whole movement energetically tosses material from one player to the other in a *moto perpetuo* of exuberance. Material from the rest of the piece reappears (most prominently the harmonic progression from the central section of the second movement) until the work ends as it began with the first movement's Stravinskian spikes, interrupted in the penultimate bar with a *feroce* quote of the opening of the third movement.

—© 2022 Stephen Hough

Second Time's a Charm: Antonín Dvořák's Piano Quintet No. 2 in A major, Op. 81

A good deal of obscurity and myth-making surrounds the origins of Antonín Dvořák's career as a composer. Several of his youthful

works, including his earliest essays in chamber music, fell into oblivion—nearly or indeed successfully destroyed during his lifetime. This fate almost befell his first attempt at the challenging format of the piano quintet. The work in question, the Quintet No. 1 in A major, Op. 5, was written and premiered in 1872. Dvořák was so dissatisfied that he rejected the idea of publishing the score and lost track of the autograph manuscript. Later, he was able to reconsider the piece by tracking down a copy from the pianist of the first performance.

In 1887, by now internationally sought after, Dvořák took another look at the piece and decided it was worth a second go. He reworked the quintet yet was again dissatisfied and withheld publication. That frustrating experience fueled an urge to start over and write an entirely *new* quintet for piano and strings, in the same key as the first. The result, the Piano Quintet No. 2 in A major, Op. 81, is of epic proportions and has become widely treasured as among the finest contributions to the genre.

Dvořák composed Op. 81 between late summer and early autumn of 1887. The premiere took place in Prague in January 1888. The A major Quintet is typically classified as one of his “Slavonic” works because of its more overt references to Bohemian national elements. Yet, as David Hurwitz observes in his survey of Dvořák, “the vast majority of his work in general reflects the influence of Czech folk music and dance rhythms, whether he explicitly says so or not.”

The A major Quintet persuasively fuses folk idioms with structural principles from the Classical tradition of Haydn & Co. that he also deeply loved—all the while organizing the interplay between the sound worlds of the piano and string ensemble to wonderful effect. Dvořák also holds in his inner ear such preceding models as Schumann's Piano Quintet and Schubert's *Trout* Quintet (likewise in A major, although Schubert trades one of the violins for a double bass).

The piano launches the expansive first movement with quietly rippling motion; against this, the cello spells out the unforgettable main theme. A dramatic transition in-

trudes, setting the stage for the striking contrasts—between major and minor, loud and soft, lyrical and propulsive, piano and string textures—that play out in this movement.

The two middle movements are associated with specifically Czech elements suggested by their subtitles. First is the *Andante con moto* in the form of a *dumka*—the longest example of Dvořák’s treatment of this folk idiom whose name derives from Ukrainian ballads associated with introspective melancholy. Yet its elegiac poetry brings to mind the “heavenly lengths” of Schubert as well. The refrain-like opening section in F-sharp minor alternates with a consoling D major response, while a brisk interlude whirls in and out of the picture with manic intensity—but it is the melancholy that remains.

The Scherzo in turn draws on the Czech dance known as *furiant*, although the music is not as syncopated as it tends to be in its original Bohemian folk source (where duple and triple rhythms alternate). Dvořák calls for the piano to reach to the highest note available on contemporary keyboards. The Trio slows down the *furiant* idea, with the piano and violin vying for the spotlight. The rondo finale teems with Dvořák’s characteristically irrepressible rhythms, fusing folk impulses with the “learned” devices of Classical tradition. Anticipating a strategy he would use in his Op. 96 (*American*) String Quartet six years later, Dvořák closes with an episode evoking a church-like solemnity, played very softly. But the cheerful mood cannot be suppressed and inevitably, thrillingly, takes over to close the work.

—© 2022 Thomas May

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The **Takács Quartet**, now in its 47th year, is excited to bring to fruition several innovative projects in 2021–22. The first part of the season saw the world premiere of a new quartet written for the ensemble by Stephen Hough, *Les Six Rencontres* (included on today’s program). The Takács will record this extraordinary work for Hyperion Records, in combination with quartets by Ravel and Dutilleux. With bandoneon/accordion virtuoso Julien Labro, the musicians will also perform throughout the US new works composed for them by Clarice Assad and Bryce Dessner.

During the last year, the Takács marked the arrival of its newest member, Grammy-award-winning violist Richard O’Neill, by making two recordings for Hyperion: quartets by Fanny Hensel Mendelssohn and Felix Mendelssohn in November 2021 will be followed by Haydn’s Opp. 42, 77, and 103 in May 2022.

In 2021–22, the Takács Quartet continues its role as Associate Artists at London’s Wigmore Hall, performing four concerts there this season. In addition to many concerts in the UK, the ensemble will play at prestigious European venues including the Paris Philharmonie, Berlin Kon-

zerthaus, and Teatro Della Pergola, Florence. The Takács will perform throughout North America, including concerts in New York, Boston, Washington (DC), Princeton, Ann Arbor, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Vancouver, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Cleveland, and Portland.

In June 2020 the Takács Quartet was featured in the BBC television series *Being Beethoven*. The ensemble’s 2019 CD for Hyperion of piano quintets by Amy Beach and Elgar, with pianist Garrick Ohlsson, won a Presto Classical Recording of the Year award.

In 2014, the Takács became the first string quartet to receive the Wigmore Hall Medal. The award, inaugurated in 2007, recognizes major international artists who have a strong association with the hall. Past recipients include András Schiff, Thomas Quasthoff, Menahem Pressler, and Dame Felicity Lott. In 2012, *Gramophone* announced that the Takács was the first string quartet to be inducted into its 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.



The Takács Quartet is known for innovative programming. The ensemble performed a program inspired by Philip Roth's novel *Everyman* with Meryl Streep at Princeton in 2014, and again with her at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto in 2015. The musicians first performed *Everyman* at Carnegie Hall in 2007 with the late Philip Seymour Hoffman.

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), Amy Beach, and Elgar (with Garrick Ohlsson), and viola quintets by Brahms and Dvořák (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. Full details of all recordings can be found in the Recordings section of the quartet's website.

Based in Boulder at the University of Colorado, the members of the Takács Quartet are Christoffersen Faculty Fellows. 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 also on the faculty at the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, where they run an intensive summer string quartet seminar, and they are Visiting Fellows at the Guildhall School of Music in 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. In 2001, the members of the Takács Quartet were awarded the Order of Merit of the Knight's Cross of the Republic of Hungary, and in March 2011 the Order of Merit Commander's Cross by the President of the Republic of Hungary.

Stephen Hough is one of the world's leading pianists, winning global acclaim and numerous awards for his performances and recordings. In 2001, he was the first classical performing artist to receive a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, and in 2013, he was named a Commander of the Order of the British Empire. He has appeared with virtually all major American and European orchestras, has given recitals at the most prestigious concert halls around the world, and has recorded more than 60 albums for Hyperion. Hough is also a writer, composer, and painter and was included in *The Economist's* list of "20 Living Polymaths." His writing has appeared in *BBC Music Magazine*, *Gramophone*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, and *The Times* (London). Hough has also authored *Rough Ideas: Reflections on Music and More*, a major anthology of essays on musical, cultural, lifestyle, and spiritual subjects, and a novel titled *The Final Retreat*. As a composer, he has written for orchestra, choir, chamber ensemble, and solo piano, and his compositions are published by Josef Weinberger, Ltd. Last fall, the Takács Quartet premiered his newest work, a quartet titled *Les Six Rencontres*, a work that will be heard on today's program.

Hough resides in London and is a visiting professor at the Royal Academy of Music and Juilliard. He holds the International Chair of Piano Studies at his alma mater, the Royal Northern College in Manchester, and he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Liverpool in 2011. To learn more, visit stephenhough.com and follow him on Twitter @houghhough.

Memphis Jookin': The Show featuring Lil Buck

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In the West Coast premiere of this dazzling show, Lil Buck—along with a DJ and an expert eight-dancer crew—transports us to the streets, the hallways, and the clubs where Memphis Jookin' was born.

"His agile physical instrument is astounding... [and] fueling it all is the emotion that drives his magnetic dancing. There is struggle and pain, joy and healing, and ultimately, a transformation."

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