



Clarice Presents

TAKÁCS QUARTET WITH SIR STEPHEN HOUGH

Tuesday, February 18, 2025 • 7:30PM

GILDENHORN RECITAL HALL

AT THE CLARICE SMITH PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND

Clarice Presents

TAKÁCS QUARTET WITH SIR STEPHEN HOUGH**Edward Dusinger**, *violin***Harumi Rhodes**, *violin***Richard O'Neill**, *viola***András Fejér**, *cello***Sir Stephen Hough**, *piano***Ludwig van Beethoven**
(1770-1827)String Quartet No. 1 in F Major, Op. 18
Allegro con brio
Adagio affettuoso ed appassionato
Scherzo: Allegro molto
Allegro**Stephen Hough**
(b. 1961)*Les Six Recontres*
Au boulevard
Au parc
A l'hôtel
Au théâtre
A l'église
A la marché**INTERMISSION****Johannes Brahms**
(1833-1897)Piano Quintet in F Minor, Op. 34
Allegro non troppo
Andante, un poco adagio
Scherzo: Allegro
Finale: Poco sostenuto - Allegro non
troppo - Presto, non troppo

This performance is supported in part by the Maryland State Arts Council and The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation.

THE MORRIS AND GWENDOLYN
CAFTRITZ FOUNDATION**MAKE YOUR GIFT
TO THE CLARICE TODAY!**

String Quartet No. 1 in F. Major, Op. 18

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

The year of the completion of the six Op. 18 Quartets—1800—was an important time in Beethoven's development. He had achieved a success good enough to write to his old friend Franz Wegeler in Bonn, "My compositions bring me in a good deal, and may I say that I am offered more commissions than it is possible for me to carry out. Moreover, for every composition I can count on six or seven publishers and even more, if I want them. People no longer come to an arrangement with me. I state my price, and they pay." At the time of this gratifying recognition of his talents, however, the first signs of his fateful deafness appeared, and he began the titanic struggle that became one of the gravitational poles of his life. Within two years, driven from the social contact on which he had flourished by the fear of discovery of his malady, he penned the Heiligenstadt Testament, his *cri de cœur* against this wicked trick of the gods. The Op. 18 String Quartets, his first in the genre, stand on the brink of that great crisis in Beethoven's life.

The F Major Quartet was the second of the Op. 18 set to be composed, but Beethoven, aware of the music's dramatic sweep and emotional range, placed it at the head of the collection when the set was published. The opening Allegro grows from a terse, pregnant opening motif heard almost constantly throughout the movement that is, according to Joseph Kerman, like "a coiled spring, ready to shoot off in all directions." The expressive second movement is marked to be played "tenderly and passionately." Beethoven wrote at the end of one of his sketches for this music, *les derniers soupirs* ("the last breath"), and confided to his friend Karl Amenda that he had in mind the burial vault scene from *Romeo and Juliet* when he wrote it. The Scherzo is enlivened by a generous dose of Haydnesque humor, while the finale is a display of ensemble virtuosity unfolded in sonata-rondo form.

– Program Note by Dr. Richard E. Rodda

Les Six Recontres

STEPHEN HOUGH

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 flavour more than a style—and it's a flavor rarely found in the music of Ravel and Dutilleux. In *Les Six* 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 which escaped the fastidiousness of those other two composers. Stravinsky, one of the godfathers of Les Six, supposedly 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 godfathers) opening yet another bottle of Bordeaux.

The subtitle for my Quartet No. 1 has in 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' which are unspecified, their phantom occurrence leaving only a trace in the memory of the places where the meetings might have taken place.

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.

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.

A l'hôtel

A bustling fugato, its short subject incorporating repeated notes, an arpeggio and a scale, patters 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.

Au théâtre

A spiccatissimo skeleton of a motif dances in a recurring harmonic sequence, decorated with each repetition in more and more lurid colours, 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 1st 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.

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.

A la 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 1st movement's Stravinskian spikes, interrupted in the penultimate bar with a feroce quote of the opening of the third movement.

– Program Note by Sir Stephen Hough

Piano Quintet in F Minor, Op. 34

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Brahms began the work that became his Piano Quintet in early 1862 as a string quintet with two cellos, the same scoring as Schubert's incomparable C major quintet, and by August he had the first three movements ready to send to his friend and mentor Clara Schumann and to Joseph Joachim, for whom he was to write his Violin Concerto 16 years later. They both responded enthusiastically at first, but expressed reservations about the piece during the following months. "The details of the work show some proof of overpowering strength," Joachim noted, "but what is lacking, to give me pure pleasure, is, in a word, charm." By February 1863, the string quintet had been recast as a sonata for two pianos, which Brahms performed with Karl Tausig at a concert in Vienna on April 17, 1864. The premiere met with little favor. Clara continued to be delighted with the work's musical substance, but thought that "It cannot be called a sonata. The first time I tried the work I had the feeling that it was an arrangement.... Please, remodel it once more!" One final time, during the summer of 1864, Brahms revised the score, this time as the Quintet for Piano and String Quartet, an ensemble suggested to him by the conductor Hermann Levi. "You have turned a monotonous work for two pianos into a thing of great beauty, a masterpiece of chamber music," Levi wrote.

The Quintet's opening movement, tempestuous and tragic in mood, is in a tightly packed sonata form. The outer sections of the Andante's three-part form (A-B-A) are based on a gentle, lyrical strain in sweet, close-interval harmonies, while the central portion uses a melody incorporating an octave-leap motive. The Scherzo contains three motivic elements: a rising theme of vague rhythmic identity; a snapping motif in strict, dotted rhythm; and a march-like strain in full chordal harmony. These three components are juxtaposed throughout the movement. The central trio grows from a theme that is a lyrical transformation of the Scherzo's chordal march strain. The Finale opens with a pensive slow introduction fueled by deeply felt chromatic harmonies. The body of the movement is a hybrid of rondo and sonata forms that maintains its tragic tenor until the close.

– Program Note by Dr. Richard E. Rodda

ENGAGEMENT ON CAMPUS AND IN THE COMMUNITY

The Takács Quartet taught a masterclass to students in the strings division of the UMD School of Music. Sir Stephen Hough also taught a masterclass to students in the school's piano division.

TAKÁCS QUARTET

Edward Dusinberre, Harumi Rhodes (violins), Richard O'Neill (viola) and András Fejér (cello) are excited about projects including a new concerto for them and the Colorado Music Festival orchestra by Gabriela Lena Frank. In November the group will release its latest Hyperion project, 'Flow' by Nokuthula Ngwenyama. A new album with pianist Marc Andre Hamelin will be released in the spring featuring works by Florence Price and Antonín Dvořák.

The Takács maintains a busy international touring schedule. In 2025 the ensemble will perform in South Korea, Japan and Australia. The Australian tour is centered around a new piece by Kathy Milliken for quartet and narrator. As Associate Artists at London's Wigmore Hall, the group will present four concerts featuring works by Haydn, Britten, Ngwenyama, Beethoven, Janáček and two performances of Schubert's cello quintet with Adrian Brendel. During the season the ensemble will play at other prestigious European venues including Barcelona, Budapest, Milan, Basel, Bath Mozartfest and Bern.

The group's North American engagements include concerts in New York, Vancouver, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Lajolla, Berkeley, Ann Arbor, Chicago, Tucson, Portland and Princeton, and collaborations with pianists Sir Stephen Hough and Jeremy Denk.

The members of the Takács Quartet are Christoffersen Fellows and Artists in Residence at the University of Colorado, Boulder. During the summer months the Takács join the faculty at the Music Academy of the West, running an intensive quartet seminar.

The Takács has recorded for Hyperion since 2005. Their most recent album includes Schubert's final quartet, D. 887. In 2021, the Takács won a Presto Music Recording of the Year Award for their recordings of string quartets by Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn, and a Gramophone Award with pianist Garrick Ohlsson for piano quintets by Amy Beach and Elgar. Other releases for Hyperion feature works by Haydn, Schubert, Janáček, Smetana, Debussy and Britten, as well as piano quintets by César Franck and Shostakovich (with Marc-André Hamelin), and viola quintets by Brahms 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.

The Takács Quartet is known for its innovative programming. In 2021-22, the ensemble partnered with bandoneon virtuoso Julien Labro to premiere new works by Clarice Assad and Bryce Dessner, commissioned by Music Accord. In 2014 the Takács performed a program inspired by Philip Roth's novel *Everyman* with Meryl Streep at Princeton, and again with her at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto in 2015. They first performed *Everyman* at Carnegie Hall in 2007 with Philip Seymour Hoffman. They have toured 14 cities with the poet Robert Pinsky, and played regularly with the Hungarian Folk group Muzsikás.

In 2014, the Takács became the first string quartet to be awarded the Wigmore Hall Medal. In 2012, Gramophone announced that the Takács was the first string quartet to be inducted into its Hall of Fame. The ensemble also won the 2011 Award for Chamber Music and Song presented by the Royal Philharmonic Society 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. The group 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. Members of the Takács Quartet are the grateful beneficiaries of an instrument loan by the Drake Foundation. We are grateful to be Thomastik-Infeld Artists.

SIR STEPHEN HOUGH

Named by *The Economist* as one of Twenty Living Polymaths, Sir Stephen Hough combines a distinguished career of a concert pianist with those of a composer and writer. In recognition of his contribution to cultural life, he became the first classical performer to be given a MacArthur Fellowship, and was awarded a Knighthood for Services to Music in the Queen's Birthday Honours 2022.

In a career spanning over 40 years, Stephen Hough has played regularly with most of the world's leading orchestras, including televised and filmed appearances with the Berlin, London, China, Seoul and New York philharmonic orchestras, and the Concertgebouw, Budapest Festival and the NHK symphony orchestras. He has been a regular guest of recital series and festivals including Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium, London's Royal Festival Hall, Salzburg, Verbier, La Roque-d'Anthéron, Aspen, Tanglewood, Aldeburgh and Edinburgh.

He began his 2024-25 Season with his 30th appearance at the BBC Proms, performing at Last Night of the Proms to a live audience of 6,000 and televised audience of 3.5 million. Over the course of the following 12 months Hough performs over 80 concerts on four continents, opening Philharmonia Orchestra's season at the Royal Festival Hall, performing a solo recital at Barbican Centre and giving the world premiere of his Willa Cather-inspired Piano Quintet at Lincoln Center's David Geffen Hall. Following the 2023 world premiere of his own Piano Concerto (*The World of Yesterday*), named after Stefan Zweig's memoir, Hough brings the work to Adelaide, Bournemouth, Oregon, Singapore and Vermont symphonies.

Hough's discography of 70 recordings has garnered awards including the Diapason d'Or de l'Année, several Grammy nominations, and eight Gramophone Awards including Record of the Year and the Gold Disc. For Hyperion he has recorded the complete piano concertos of Beethoven, Brahms, Liszt, Mendelssohn, Rachmaninov, Saint-Saëns and Tchaikovsky as well as celebrated solo recordings of the Final Piano Pieces of Brahms, Chopin's complete nocturnes, waltzes, ballades and scherzi, as well as recitals of Schumann, Schubert, Franck, Debussy and Mompou. Upcoming releases include a Liszt Album, a recital of encores, including arrangements made for Lang Lang's Disney project, and Hough's own piano concerto.

As a composer, Hough's *Fanfare Toccata* was commissioned for the 2022 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition and performed by all 30 competitors. His 2021 String Quartet No.1 *Les Six Rencontres*, was written for and recorded by the Takács Quartet for Hyperion Records. Hough's body of songs, choral and instrumental works have been commissioned by Musée du Louvre, National Gallery of London, Westminster Abbey, Westminster Cathedral, the Wigmore Hall, the Genesis Foundation, Gilmore International Keyboard Festival, the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation, BBC Sounds, and the Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet. His music is published by Josef Weinberger Ltd.

As an author, Hough's memoir *Enough: Scenes from Childhood*, was published by Faber & Faber in Spring 2023. It follows his 2019 collection of essays *Rough Ideas: Reflections on Music and More* which received a Royal Philharmonic Society Award and was named one of the Financial Times' Books of the Year. His novel *The Final Retreat* was published in 2018 (Sylph Editions). He has also written for *The New York Times*, *The Telegraph*, *The Times*, *The Guardian* and *the Evening Standard*.

A resident of London, Hough is an Honorary Bencher of the Middle Temple, an Honorary Member of the Royal Philharmonic Society, an Honorary Fellow of Cambridge University's Girton College, and holds the International Chair of Piano Studies at his alma mater, the Royal Northern College in Manchester. He is also on the faculty of The Juilliard School in New York.