October 15, 2015 at 8:00pm
Pre-concert talk by Professor Scott Burnham at 7:00pm
Richardson Auditorium in Alexander Hall

PAVEL HAAS QUARTET

Veronika Jarůšková, *violin*
Marek Zwiebel, *violin*
Pavel Nikl, *viola*
Peter Jarůšek, *cello*

BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ (1890 – 1959)
String Quartet No. 3, H. 183
- Allegro
- Andante
- Vivo

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841 – 1904)
String Quartet No. 9 in D Minor, Op. 34, B. 75
- Allegro
- Alla Polka: Allegretto Scherzando
- Adagio
- Finale: Poco Allegro

— INTERMISSION —

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770 – 1827)
String Quartet No. 8 in E Minor, Op. 59, No. 2 “Razumovsky”
- Allegro
- Molto adagio: Si tratta questo pezzo con molto di sentimento
- Allegretto
- Finale: Presto

ABOUT THE PAVEL HAAS QUARTET

The Pavel Haas Quartet have been called "the world's most exciting string quartet" (*Gramophone*). Garlanded with numerous prestigious awards and having released many acclaimed recordings, they are now firmly established as one of the world's foremost chamber ensembles, since winning the Paolo Borciani Competition in Italy in Spring 2005. 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 – 2016 season the quartet will make their South Korea debut in Seoul, and will tour North America, including concerts in Boston, Washington, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Vancouver and Montreal, in addition to Princeton. They will also perform concerts at the Wigmore Hall in London, 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 record exclusively with Supraphon, and their most recent recording of Smetana's String Quartets Nos. 1 and 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." 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 account 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* (of London) commented: "Their account of 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 and 2, and they received yet another Gramophone Chamber Music Award in 2007 for their recording of Janáček's Quartet No. 2 "Intimate Letters" and Haas' 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 they were 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. This concert marks the Pavel Haas' Princeton debut.

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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

By Peter Laki, ©2015

BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ (Polička, Bohemia [now Czech Republic], December 8, 1890 – Liestal, Switzerland, August 28, 1959)
String Quartet No. 3, H. 183 (1929, rev. 1931)

Bohuslav Martinů, born 125 years ago this year, wrote seven string quartets, spanning almost thirty years in a compositional career that took him from his native Bohemia to Paris, then to the United States, and finally back to Europe. The third quartet was written in Paris, where Martinů lived from 1923 to 1940. It was dedicated to, and premiered by, the Roth Quartet, which, during the late 1930s, was to hold the position of quartet-in-residence at Westminster Choir College in Princeton.

In a letter to his friend and future biographer Miloš Šafránek, Martinů said about his quartet that it was "as if made of china." What he probably meant was the delicacy, clarity and precision of the texture. However, the piece has little to do with the neo-classicism of many of Martinů's best-known works of the concerto-grosso type; most commentators have found it "avant-gardistic" in the context of the 1920s. The first movement has been cited by several commentators for the amorphous, non-thematic nature of its opening material; out of these unusual sounds (the cello plays *pizzicato* [plucked notes], the viola, *col legno* [with the wood of the bow], and the second violin, *con sordino* [with a mute]) grows an Allegro of remarkable dramatic intensity. The middle movement combines melodies of a speech-like, pleading character with a high level of dissonance in the harmony that, however, periodically resolves to clear major triads, and the movement ends on an ethereally pure final cadence. The last movement, which begins as perpetual motion, brings the excitement to its high point. After some passages where lyrical, contrapuntal and dance-like characters merge, the perpetual motion returns to give the quartet an energetic conclusion.

> "The (too) well-kept Princeton secret? Martinů actually taught at Princeton!"

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (Nelahozeves, Bohemia [now Czech Republic], September 8, 1841 – Prague, May 1, 1904)
String Quartet No. 9 in D Minor, Op. 34, B. 75 (1877, rev. 1879)

On April 3, 1878, Johannes Brahms wrote in a letter to his publisher Fritz Simrock, "Dvořák has all the best qualities that a musician must possess, and they are all present in these pieces." He was referring to the string quartets in E Major and D Minor (now known as Nos. 8 and 9), in which Dvořák, in his mid-thirties, has clearly moved past his early period and entered the mature phase of his career. By this time he had already completed four symphonies, a piano concerto and his magnificent *Stabat Mater*, to say nothing of the *Slavonic Dances*, which went a long way towards establishing his international reputation. Brahms had been a staunch supporter ever since being a judge in a competition that gave Dvořák an award in 1875; this was a major break for the Czech composer who was still struggling, both financially and existentially. The friendship between the two composers lasted until Brahms's death in 1897, and one token of that friendship was the dedication of Dvořák's D Minor quartet to his distinguished colleague. Brahms accepted the honor with gratitude.

In the 1870s, there was certainly no other composer in Europe, besides Dvořák, who could stand next to Brahms as a composer of chamber music. For proof, one need look no further than the opening of

Op. 34, where a gentle melody is presented in a richly sonorous yet wonderfully transparent quartet texture. The outlines of classical sonata form are always clear, but the details are worked out with extraordinary imagination. Dvořák touches on a large number of keys even in the exposition (to say nothing of the development section), with seamless and elegant modulations at every turn.

This quartet is the first among Dvořák's chamber-music works to replace the traditional Scherzo with a movement of Czech national character. The second movement is marked "Alla Polka," yet Dvořák didn't write a simple folk dance; he used the rhythm of the dance to create a complex movement in which the lively major-mode tune unexpectedly veers off into the minor. In general, the movement conveys "a suggestion of underlying pain," as pioneering Dvořák scholar Otakar Šourek put it many years ago. The "yearning heartache" (Šourek) even continues in the central Trio section.

If the "polka" resists the boisterous accents the genre would seem to call for, the heartfelt Adagio takes us even deeper into the composer's inner emotional world. (We should remember that Dvořák and his wife Anna lost all three of their children between 1875 and 1877; in 1878, they started a new family, and eventually had four daughters and two sons, all of whom reached adulthood.) The soaring melody of the Adagio is subjected to a rich motivic development; when the theme returns (played by the viola, Dvořák's own instrument), it is embedded in a magical sound tapestry made up of the extreme high notes of the first violin, the sensitive pizzicatos of the second violin, and the rapid tremolos of the cello.

The final movement is a typical *Reiterstück* – a piece evoking a galloping horse – building on several well-known models in Schumann's works. Yet there is also a fleeting reminiscence of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony (the Trio of the third movement), and a fair amount of contrapuntal imitation serving to darken the mood of the music. Unlike what we find in many minor-mode pieces from the Classical and Romantic eras, there is no chance of a final switch to the major here; the conclusion is just as dramatic as the whole movement has been.

STUDENT VOICES

An important part of our mission is to engage and educate Princeton students. As part of our Creative Reactions Program, we have asked students to tell us their thoughts about the artists we are presenting. We will be sharing them with you throughout our programs this year.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

(Bonn, 17 December 1770 – Vienna, 26 March 1827)

String Quartet No. 8 in E Minor, Op. 59, No. 2 "Razumovsky" (1806)

Prince Andrey Razumovsky, the Russian Ambassador in Vienna, and the Princes Lichnowsky and Lobkowitz, two Viennese aristocrats to whom he was related by marriage, together received the dedications of more than a dozen major works by Beethoven. One might almost say that their "clan" underwrote a great part of what later became known as Beethoven's "heroic" or middle period.

The three quartets of Op. 59, known as the "Razumovsky" quartets, were written shortly after the third symphony ("Eroica") and the F-Minor piano sonata ("Appassionata"). In those works, Beethoven made a bold leap into the future: music had never expressed such intense emotions before, nor had the formal conventions of music been changed so radically in such a short time. With Op. 59, Beethoven extended his musical revolution to the quartet medium, producing three masterworks after which the genre was never the same again.

> "I have to say that Beethoven's Quartet Op. 59, No. 2 has a special place in my heart. I never really listened to Beethoven's string quartets until I was forced to listen to this one for a music class. What really amazed me were the stark contrasts in the piece; one minute I would be listening to forceful and rambunctious chords struck with frenzy, and the next, a gentle melody floating on a soft breeze."
>
> — Ellen Zhou,
> Princeton Class of '16

One of the most striking features of Beethoven's "heroic" style is a reduction of the thematic material to a small number of motifs and an expansion of the techniques that serve to develop those motifs. The most extreme example is probably the first movement of the fifth symphony, with its famous four-note theme, but the opening of the E-Minor quartet is equally striking. Beethoven begins suspensefully with a pair of chords, followed by a short phrase, which is punctuated by rests and repeated a half-step higher, immediately calling the E Minor tonality into question. Eventually, continuity is restored, but the form remains rather fragmented, reflecting an agitated state of mind. We hear many insistent syncopated rhythms and rapid passages in unison or parallel motion, in dramatic contrast with the occasional gentler moments. In associating minor mode with emotional turbulence, Beethoven followed the tradition of Haydn and Mozart, though his radically new way of writing gave

this "Allegro" a very special edge.

It was not for nothing that Beethoven inscribed the second-movement "Molto adagio" with the words "Si tratta questo pezzo con molto di sentimento" ("This piece must be played with much feeling"). Here is one of his great hymn-like slow movements, with the quiet majesty of the later "Emperor" concerto and ninth symphony – yet entirely within the intimate world of chamber music. The melody is enriched by chromatic harmonies and surrounded by complex figurations. Then, at the end of the movement, all embellishments are stripped away and the melody is stated by the four instruments in bold fortissimo chords, with harsh harmonies and strong accents – before the gentle closing measures end the movement in an idyllic mood.

Beethoven refrained from calling the third movement a "scherzo," and surely the first section of the movement is too serious to qualify as a "joke." Yet its syncopated motion and sudden dynamic and harmonic changes are definitely scherzo-like features. The high point of the movement, however, is the second section (which elsewhere would be called "Trio"). In honor of his dedicatee, Beethoven inserted a Russian theme here (marked "thème russe" in the score). The source of the theme was the influential folk-song collection published by Nikolai Lvov and Ivan Prach in 1790. (This melody, "To the Red Sun, Glory!" was famously used again by Mussorgsky in the coronation scene of *Boris Godunov*.) Beethoven had the four instruments take turns in repeating this melody identically over and over again, against a fast-moving counterpoint that also makes its rounds among the four players. As in several other Beethoven works, the usual A-B-A scheme of the scherzo is expanded to A-B-A-B-A, with the *thème russe* section appearing twice and the opening section three times.