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22|23 SEASON

 UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

presents

PAVEL HAAS QUARTET

VERONIKA JARŮŠKOVÁ, violin

MAREK ZWIEBEL, violin

ŠIMON TRUSZKA, viola

PETER JARŮŠEK, cello

MON, MAR 13, 7:30 pm

Hodgson Concert Hall

North American representation: Kirshbaum Associates Inc.,
307 7th Ave., New York, NY 10001.
KirshbaumAssociates.com

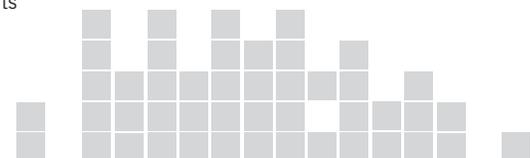
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PROGRAM

Josef Suk (1874-1935)

Meditation on an old Czech Hymn, “Zláty Václav”
[St. Wenceslas], Op.35a

Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957)

String Quartet No. 3 in D major, Op.34

I. Allegro moderato

II. Scherzo. Allegro molto

III. Sostenuto. Like a Folk Tune

IV. Finale. Allegro con fuoco

INTERMISSION

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

String Quartet No. 13 in G Major, Op. 106

I. Allegro moderato

II. Adagio ma non troppo

III. Molto vivace

IV. Finale. Andante sostenuto – Allegro con fuoco

Program is subject to change.

PROGRAM NOTES

By Laurie Shulman

Meditation on an old Czech Hymn, “Zláty Václav” [St. Wenceslas], Op. 35a

Josef Suk (1874-1935)

The son of a schoolteacher and choirmaster, Josef Suk studied piano, violin, and organ with his father, pursuing his formal musical education at Prague Conservatory. He undertook composition while at the Conservatory, and composed his Opus 1, a piano quartet, as a graduation piece. An excellent violinist, Suk was keenly interested in chamber music. He remained at the conservatory for an extra year to pursue additional study in chamber music with cellist Hanuš Wihan and in composition with Antonín Dvořák. He became Dvořák's favorite protégé, and married the composer's daughter Otilie in 1898.

Suk spent the most celebrated years of his career as second violinist in the Czech Quartet, an ensemble he co-founded in the early 1890s, when he was a student in Prague. He subsequently gained a distinguished reputation as a composer as well. Suk retained his passion for playing chamber music, but oddly wrote relatively little of it after his student years. This Meditation was a *pièce d'occasion* with a pointed nationalist message.

The Czech speaking lands — modern day Czech Republic and Slovakia — had been under Austrian Habsburg rule since the early 16th century. German language and culture were imposed on the Moravian and Bohemian peoples, though a nascent nationalist spirit was growing throughout the 19th century.

In 1914, political tensions across Europe erupted into the Great War, catalyzed by the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Ferdinand and his wife Sophie in Sarajevo in late June. By April 1915, multiple declarations of war effectively embroiled most of the planet. (The USA would join the Allies in April 1917, declaring war on Germany.)

Suk composed his Meditation for a Czech Quartet concert in late September 1914. Habsburg policy mandated that each concert open with a performance of the Austrian national anthem. Suk's quartet followed it with the newly-composed Meditation, a free fantasy on the ancient Bohemian 'St Wenceslas' hymn. Wenceslas, a tenth century Duke, was Bohemia's patron saint. The hymn, whose text beseeches Wenceslas to protect future generations from perishing, delivered a powerful message of nationalist spirit that resonated with the public. Within two months, Suk had crafted a version of Meditation for string orchestra; the Czech Philharmonic introduced it that November. Its haunting sonorities and powerful roots in Bohemian history and culture spoke eloquently to Suk's audiences, and he soon arranged Meditation for piano and organ as well. In its original version for string quartet, it retains both sacred dignity and emotional power.

String Quartet No. 3 in D major, Op. 34

Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957)

Remember those swashbuckling and romantic Errol Flynn movies from the 1930s and 1940s— *The Sea Hawk*, *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, *Captain Blood*, *Anthony Adverse*, and *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex*? A substantial part of their aura was

the sweeping, lush music of Erich Wolfgang Korngold, one of the greatest film composers in Hollywood history.

Born in Brno (now in the Czech Republic), Korngold grew up in Vienna, where his father was a prominent music critic. Young Erich was a child composition prodigy. As an adolescent, he produced scores that elicited praise from Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler. Korngold published a piano trio at age 12; by the time he was 16, both Arthur Nikisch and Felix Weingartner had conducted his music in Vienna.

Korngold's meteoric career expanded to cinema in 1929, when he began working with the Austrian director Max Reinhardt. Inevitably, involvement in the film industry took him across the Atlantic to Hollywood. Reinhardt was the catalyst: He invited Korngold to America's film capital to collaborate on a cinematic adaptation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. That triumph led to additional work in cinema and the classic scores for which Korngold remains best known.

With the rise of Nazism, Korngold's music (and that of other Jewish composers) was banned in Germany. Conditions for Jews grew ever more fraught. Korngold and his wife Luzi fled Austria right after the Anschluss in 1938, along with Korngold's father Julius. They settled permanently in Southern California, adopting American citizenship in 1943. When the war in Europe erupted in September 1939, Korngold abandoned concert music. Deeply depressed throughout the war, he vowed not to return to absolute music until Hitler was defeated.

The conflict in Europe ended in May 1945; the Pacific theater followed suit with Japan's surrender in August.

Korngold's father Julius died in late September; he had been a domineering force in his son's life since childhood. His death on the heels of the war's end lifted another cloud for Erich. The Third Quartet, composed in 1945, was Korngold's return to classical music and an expression of his renewed spirit. He presented the score to his wife, Luzi, at Christmas 1945. She subsequently declared, "Erich had come back to himself."

Though classical in structure, Korngold's quartet is somewhat bipolar in its musical language. The opening movement is in sonata-allegro form. Its first theme feels quasi-atonal, a far cry from the lush sonorities of Korngold's cinema music. We hear hints of that romanticism in the second theme, but jarring major sevenths recur to unsettle the ear. Korngold's string writing is dense and complex, with frequent tempo and meter changes that also keep the listener on edge. Ideas are exchanged freely among the four players. The movement ends with an extended sigh. The viola states a final pair of descending major sevenths before resolving in a clear D major chord. It is as if Korngold has taken the quartet's first six minutes to find his way to his stated home tonality.

The scherzo is skittery and nervous, punctuated by a good deal of pizzicato and rapid melodic fillips. However, Korngold switches gears for the trio, borrowing a theme from his score to *Between Two Worlds* (1944). Warm and tender, this trio section is worlds away from the agitated scherzo that frames it.

Film music makes another appearance in the slow movement, which re-purposes a theme from *The Sea Wolf* (1941). (Apparently that film's music was his favorite among his Hollywood

scores.) Korngold instructs the quartet musicians to play "Like a Folk Tune." He wanted it simple and melodic. Harmonies are traditional, unfolding almost like a chorale. Two episodes marked *Appassionato* interrupt the calm, but Korngold finds his way back to folk-like serenity.

The finale is a little bit variations, and a little bit sonata-rondo. The mood is energetic and driven. Korngold introduces a second theme, which he would later re-use in the 1946 film *Devotion*. Toward the end, he quotes gestures from the first movement, lending some cyclic unity to the quartet. The work ends with unmistakable and mischievous joy.

The Roth Quartet played the premiere of this work in Los Angeles in 1946. Korngold dedicated the piece to the conductor Bruno Walter (who had conducted two of Korngold's one-act operas in 1916). Walter had also fled the Nazis in 1933, and became Korngold's neighbor in Beverly Hills.

String Quartet No. 13 in G Major, Op. 106

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

In certain respects, Dvořák's late works were retrospective. He was trained in the Germanic school and struggled, successfully, to develop a highly personal nationalistic style. During his final creative years, however, he was drawn to the programmatic tone poem style of Franz Liszt, which had found new energy in the more recent works of Richard Strauss. After a distinguished career with strong commitment to the forms of absolute music, Dvořák wrote five symphonic poems based on Bohemian legend.

Before turning to these late orchestral pieces, however, he made his musical farewell to absolute music with two string quartets, published as Opp. 105 and 106. He began the A-flat major work in 1895 while in New York City, during the final month of his lengthy stay in the United States. He returned to Prague in late April 1895. Within a month, he was relaxing at his beloved country house, Vysoká. Enormously happy to be back in his homeland but exhausted from travel, Dvořák took an unprecedented seven months' leave from composing. That autumn, he resumed teaching at the Prague Conservatory, and soon took pen to music paper. In a fever of inspiration, he composed the G major quartet from 11 November to 9 December 1895, and finished the A-flat major work shortly afterward. Fritz Simrock published the pair in summer 1896. These final quartets are widely considered to be the crowning glories of Dvořák's chamber music.

The overall impression the G major quartet communicates is a marvelous sense of movement. Each player has singular importance in a constantly shifting landscape of textural variants and countermelodies. The quartet opens with more of a gesture than a theme: a rising sixth and a brief trill followed by a cascade of triplets. This is Bohemian birdsong, and a clear reflection of Dvořák's untethered joy at being home. The second theme is—remarkably—in B-flat major, a daring harmonic move that works beautifully. While embracing the disciplined craftsmanship of the Viennese classical tradition, Dvořák is clearly comfortable with diverging from expected norms.

The heartfelt and introspective slow movement has a hymn-like reverence

reminiscent of the “Going Home” movement in the *New World* Symphony. In *dumka*-like style, Dvořák alternates between peaceful sections in major mode and passages of increased agitation in minor mode. The structure is free variations.

His scherzo, nominally in B minor, pulsates with the energy of the analogous movement in the *New World* Symphony, and continues the adventuresome modulations and extended chromaticism of the preceding movements. An interlude in A-flat major introduces polyrhythms, including duplets against a pulse in triple meter. The central trio, now in

D major and a relaxed tempo, suggests more bird song.

A brief slow introduction opens the finale, before launching into a rumbustious Bohemian folk dance. The movement is in the home key of G major, but Dvořák spends a considerable amount of time in E-flat major. Here again, shifts between major and minor mode cast occasional shadows. Triplet figures provide textural variety to the strong duple pulse. A mysterious, vaguely Arabian passage over a bass drone frames reminiscences of themes from the first movement. The coda is a frenetic, dizzying dash, bringing this monumental quartet to a convincing close.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

PAVEL HAAS QUARTET

Named by *BBC Magazine* as one of the Top 10 string quartets of all time, the Pavel Haas Quartet is revered across the globe for its richness of timbre, infectious passion, and intuitive rapport. Performing at the world’s most prestigious concert halls and having won five *Gramophone* and numerous other awards for their recordings, the quartet is firmly established as one of the world’s foremost chamber ensembles.

Beginning in September 2022, the Pavel Haas Quartet will be Artists in Residence at the Dvořák Prague Festival for three years. They will curate the chamber music concerts including programming all the Dvořák String Quartets and chamber music works. In North America, the Quartet tours to Melbourne, FL, Storrs, CT, Athens, GA, Cincinnati, OH, Montgomery, AL, and Houston, TX.

The Pavel Haas Quartet records exclusively for Supraphon. Their most recent recording of Brahms Quintets Op. 34 & 111, featuring violist Pavel Nikl—a founding member of the ensemble—and the pianist Boris Giltburg, was released in 2022 and garnered instant critical acclaim, including from *BBC Music Magazine*, which stated, “the String Quintet is sharing the undoubtedly thrilling qualities of innate ensemble playing, strong instinct for tempo and the sense of sheer love for the music.”

The quartet’s recording of Shostakovich String Quartets was released in 2019 and received outstanding acclaim including being named as one of The 100 best records of the year by *The Times* and Recording of the Year by Classic Prague Award. Their disc of Dvořák’s Piano Quintet No. 2 and String Quintet No. 3—also featuring Giltburg and Nikl—was released in 2017 and earned the group their fifth *Gramophone* Chamber Music Award. Diapason d’Or chose the disc as Album of the Month and commented: “It is difficult to overestimate their expressive intensity and opulent sound production.”

The Quartet received further *Gramophone* Awards for their recordings of Smetana, Schubert, Janáček, and Haas, as well as Dvořák’s String Quartets No.12 ‘American’ and No.13, for which they were awarded the most coveted prize, *Gramophone* Recording of the Year in 2011. *The Sunday Times* commented: “their account of the ‘American’ Quartet belongs alongside the greatest performances on disc.” Further accolades include *BBC Music Magazine* Awards and the Diapason d’Or de l’Année in 2010 for their recording of Prokofiev String Quartets Nos 1 & 2.

In spring 2005, the Quartet won the Paolo Borciani competition in Italy. Further highlights early on in their career were the nomination as ECHO Rising Stars in 2007, the participation in the BBC New Generation Artists scheme between 2007-2009 and the Special Ensemble Scholarship the Borletti-Buitoni Trust awarded them in 2010. The Quartet is based in Prague and studied with the late Milan Skampa, the legendary violist of the Smetana Quartet. They take their 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.

