

**White Rock  
Concerts**  
*Presents*

**THE VLACH QUARTET  
PRAGUE**



*Friday, February 11, 2005*

## The Vlach Quartet Prague

The Vlach Quartet Prague follows in the rich tradition of Czech chamber music. It is rooted especially in the artistic legacy of the distinguished violinist, conductor and teacher Josef Vlach, primarius of the Vlach Quartet. This extraordinary figure initiated creation of the then New Vlach Quartet and had a decisive influence on its artistic development. Uncompromising genuineness and sedulousness coupled with a creative devotion to music, imprinted by J. Vlach to the quartet, lead soon to a distinctive and characteristic expression of the ensemble.

The quartet was founded in 1982. A year later, in 1983, it won the Czech Competition of String Quartets, gaining the prize for the best performance of a contemporary composition. In 1985, it achieved another major success - prize and primacy at the International Competition of String Quartets in Portsmouth, England. In 1988, the Hindemith Foundation invited the quartet to the international master courses held by the famous Melos Quartet in Switzerland.

The quartet was chosen among numerous Czech excellent quartets by Naxos - one of the world's biggest recording companies - to record fifteen CDs with complete chamber works by A. Dvorak. Its completion is timed for the centennial anniversary of Dvorak's death in 2004.

The Vlach Quartet Prague has performed not only in Europe (including Germany, Sweden, Denmark and Spain) but also in the USA, Japan and New Zealand. It participated in several famous festivals, and has given concerts at important concert halls in Prague, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Luxembourg, Stuttgart, and others. Their concerts were recorded and broadcast by several radio stations, including a direct broadcasting by all radio stations associated in the European Radio Union. Japanese TV station, NHK, recorded and broadcast the quartet's concerts. Czech Television made an hour long documentary on the Vlach Quartet.

The rich repertoire currently consists of about 150 compositions of all styles, including remarkable pieces by less known authors (Arriaga, Fernstrom, Fuchs, etc.). It cooperates with various outstanding musicians in quintets and other ensembles - E. Brunner, D. Klocker, M. Kligel, E. Trenkner, J. Jando, I. Klansky, P. Verner, L. Peterkova, J. Simon, Janacek Quartet and others.

## Programme

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
[1756-1791]

Quartet No. 17 in B major, K. 458  
("Hunt")

*Allegro vivace assai – Menuetto: Moderato – Adagio – Allegro assai*

Leos Janacek  
[1854 – 1928]

String Quartet No. 1 "Kreutzer"

*No. 1, Adagio - No. 2, Con Moto – No. 3 Con Moto – No. 4, Con Moto*

## Intermission

Antonin Dvorak  
[1841 – 1904]

String Quartet No. 12  
"American"

*Allegro ma non troppo – Lento, Molto vivace – Finale, Vivace ma non troppo*

### The Vlach Quartet Prague

Jana Vlachova	Violin I
Karel Stadtherr	Violin II
Petr Verner	Viola
Mikael Ericsson	Cello

## PROGRAMME NOTES

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

**Quartet No. 17 in B major, K. 458**  
**("Hunt")**

Nicknamed the "Hunt" because of the hunting-call motif that opens the work, the B flat quartet is the fourth of six string quartets composed by Mozart between 1782 and 1785. The string quartet was also, at this time, a relatively new medium still in the process of development. From the genre's beginnings in works that were little more than divertimenti, one man above all others was bringing the string quartet toward the point where it would ultimately be recognized as the most challenging of all forms of composition. That man was Joseph Haydn, whose long effort would be fully acknowledged by Mozart. It is therefore hardly surprising that on completing six quartets of his own, Mozart's publication would bear a famous dedicatory preface to Haydn. In the course of Mozart's touching tribute to the older master, he refers to the "long and laborious endeavor" that had gone into them, a unique admission from a man who normally composed with extraordinary facility, and a pointed reminder of the extreme challenge posed by this most pure of musical forms.

The B flat quartet was entered in Mozart's own catalog on November 9, 1784. Like all its companions, it is cast in four movements. The jaunty opening of the Allegro vivace assai with its hunting call prefaces a movement whose ease seems at odds with compositional problems, yet sketches show that it took the composer several attempts to satisfy himself. As in the case of all but two of the six quartets, the Menuetto is placed second, a brief movement not without its moments of gentle humor. The Adagio that follows is dominated by a long, decorated theme in the first violin and a quietly eloquent dialogue between violin and cello. The final Allegro assai returns to the opening movement's mood of good-humored ease.

**Leos Janacek**

**String Quartet No. 1 "Kreutzer"**

Leos Janacek's String Quartet No. 1 is subtitled "The Kreutzer Sonata," after the story by Leo Tolstoy upon which it is based; the title of Tolstoy's story, of course, is taken from Ludwig van Beethoven's ninth violin sonata. This was not the first work Janacek wrote based on this Tolstoy story; a piano trio from 1908 is now lost. According to Josef Suk, who led the premiere of the quartet on October 17, 1924, Janacek wished with this work to protest the tyranny of men over women; in the story, a female heroine seeks refuge from an unhappy marriage in the arms of an amoral seducer, and dies tragically

after doing so. Although Janacek did not attempt a line-by-line recreation of Tolstoy's story, the music clearly suggests certain programmatic correspondences. The first movement seems to depict the heroine's unhappy situation, with a yearning, almost questing theme bracketed by agitated figures; a pastoral theme that follows breaks up and then suddenly cuts off, yielding to an even more passionate version of the yearning theme. The second movement takes the approximate form of a Czech polka, and introduces a theme which seems to belong to the seducer; this theme has to contend with both agitated ponticello and quiet, private music, but keeps popping back up, as suave as ever. The third movement begins with a canonic duet between first violin and cello; the music they play recalls the gorgeous second subject of the first movement of Beethoven's Kreutzer Sonata. Even this music, however, is broken up by spasms of dissonance in the other two instruments, suggesting doubts and fears. These are realized in a violent middle section in which the violin and cello trade hysterical phrases, before collapsing into a somewhat uneasy intimacy again. The fourth movement begins slowly and sadly, and after the music speeds up, it seems all too eager, and winds itself up too tightly. The middle section of the third movement reappears, transformed, and the music reaches a wrenching climax, followed by a pathetic coda. Janacek's passion for the rights of women is as evident here as his typically sensitive use of programmatic material and his impeccable craftsmanship, making the "Kreutzer Sonata" a memorable quartet.

## **Antonin Dvorak**

## **String Quartet No. 12 "American"**

Antonín Dvořák hadn't composed a string quartet in 12 years when, in the summer of 1893, he sat down to compose the String Quartet No. 12 in F major, Op. 96; the resulting "American" String Quartet is, along with the "New World" Symphony and perhaps a handful of the Slavonic Dances, the only Dvořák music that many music-lovers have ever learned to recognize.

Dvořák spent three years in the United States (1892-95) as the director of the newly-founded National Conservatory of Music in New York; it was during a vacation in rural Iowa that this beloved string quartet was written. Dvořák's progress on the work was so quick and satisfying that he scrawled out a sentence of gratitude to God at the end of his first draft! On the following New Year's Day the quartet received its Boston premiere, and it lost little time sewing itself into the fabric of the world's quartet repertoire.

There is more of America to the Opus 96 quartet than just its name and place of composition — Dvořák was fascinated by Native American and African American music, and throughout the "American" Quartet we can hear these

## Programme Notes continued.

new colors mixing in with his own usual quartet method. Many of the themes are pentatonically-derived (the pentatonic scale being composed of five notes and containing no semitones); syncopation and snappy rhythm are found in abundance.

The viola gets things moving in the *Allegro ma non troppo* first movement with a happy, workaday tune that exploits the warm growl of its lowest register. The inviting A major melody that rounds off the exposition has just the slightest touch of America to it, and we are made to love it all the more for its reticence on that matter. A peculiar fugato in F minor, begun with enthusiasm by the second violinist, intrudes upon the development just before the lovely recapitulation.

It may have been 12 years since he had last produced a slow movement for quartet, but Dvorák's legendary slow-movement touch is as golden as ever in the *Lento* second movement of Op. 96 (no mean feat, as the previous quartet slow movement — that of Op. 61 in C major — is a masterpiece of its kind). The scherzo is Dvorák's usual rhythmically playful thing; according to Dvorák, birdsong is quoted by the first violin in the main music.

The finale hustles and bustles along on a very energetic, syncopated rhythm in the second violin and viola that shortly transforms itself into a patchwork of shifting accents. The first violin sings, first capriciously and then voluptuously, atop this motoric accompaniment. A completely different tone is drawn during the somber central portion

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In just a month, it will be time to renew for what surely will be another season. We are proud to present the following artists:

Cellist DENIS DJOKIC is establishing herself as one of the most exciting young talents of her generation. The youthful vigour, confidence, and passion of her playing have made her a much sought after soloist. Her appearance at the Grammy Awards confirms her recognition as a young star of the classical music world.

From a nation renowned for world-wide for the excellence of its vocal traditions, comes the CORO NACIONAL DE CUBA. The 38-voice national chorus has never before been permitted to tour abroad. While its repertoire is solidly based in the classical choral tradition, the CORO NACIONAL never fails to inject some of the winning folkloric music of their own land.

Since winning the 1995 Queen Elizabeth Competition in Brussels, MARKUS GROH has confirmed his position in the top echelon of the new generation of pianists. Frequently cited for the richness of his "sound imagination," he has recently performed with the London, San Francisco and National Symphonies.

We continue our tradition of presenting an exciting programme of wind music to "warm the air" during those dark winter months, featuring Québec oboist PHILIPPE MAGNAN. An international prize winner, he has pursued an active solo career, with major appearances with orchestras at home and abroad.

The JUPITER STRING QUARTET won first prize at the 2004 Banff International String Quartet competition. That prize includes a concert tour of Canada, of which White Rock Concerts is a part. From Boston, the Quartet has performed to critical acclaim across the United States and abroad. In May 2004, the quartet received the Grand Prize at the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition.

The chamber orchestra LES VIOLONS DU ROY borrows its name from the renowned string orchestra of the court of the French kings. The group, founded in 1984 by Bernard Labadie, plays chamber orchestra from 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present. They have made hundreds of concert appearances all over the world.

Rick Gambrel  
President, White Rock Concerts



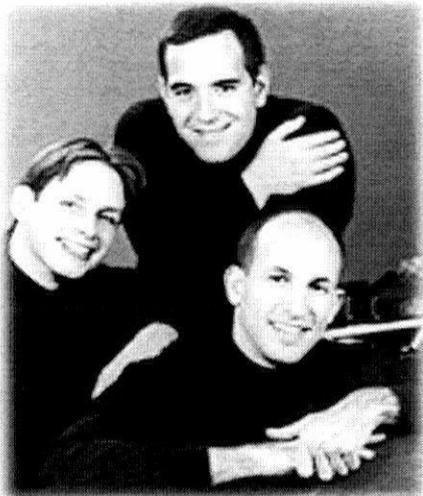
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Coast Capital Savings has taken a lead role in enhancing the lives of people living and working within our communities. We proudly support initiatives in the areas of arts and culture, education, health care, family services, and the environment.



*How can we help you?*

*Our Next Concert:  
The Jerusalem Trio*



*Friday, March 11, 2005*