

Sunday 7th July 2024 at 20:00

Pavel Haas Quartet

Veronika Jarůšková and Marek Zwiebel – violins, Šimon Truszka – viola, Peter Jarůšek – cello



Josef SUK (1874 – 1935)

Meditace na staročeský chorál „Svatý Václave“ (Meditation on an old Czech Chorale, St. Wencelas), op. 25 (1914), 7'

Pavel HAAS (1899 - 1944)

String quartet No. 2, *Z opičích hor* (From the monkey mountains), op. 7 (1925), 32'

1. *Krajina (Landscape) - Andante*
2. *Kočár, kočí a kůň (Coach, Coachman and Horse) - Andante*
3. *Měsíc a já (The moon and I) - Largo e misterioso*
4. *Divá noc (Wild night) - Vivace e con fuoco*

--- intermission ---

Antonin DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)

String quartet No. 11, Op. 61 in C Major (1881), 38'

- I. Allegro
- II. Poco adagio e molto cantabile
- III. Scherzo. Allegro vivo
- IV. Finale. Vivace

15:30 Alexander Malofeev, piano

20:00 Pavel Haas Quartet

About the Music

Josef Suk (1874-1935): Meditation on an old Czech chorale, Svatý Václav (1914)

Czech Josef Suk's national romantic idiom is clearly influenced by his more famous compatriot Dvořák. And it's no wonder. Suk was both Dvořák's student and son-in-law.

Josef Suk played violin in the *Bohemian String Quartet*. Bohemia was part of the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary. In 1914, when World War I broke out, the ensemble was forced to begin all concerts with the Austrian national anthem. In protest, Suk made it routine that the concerts always included his newly written meditation on a religious hymn to the Bohemian patron saint, Saint Václav. The message of the music - a prayer for the well-being of the Bohemian people - was immediately understood by the audience.

Pavel Haas (1899-1944): String Quartet No. 2, Opus 7 "From the Monkey Mountains" (1925)

As a Jew, Czech Pavel Haas' fate was unforgiving. Having fought in the Austro-Hungarian army during World War I, interwar anti-Semitism hindered a career as anything but a reclusive film and theatre composer. Only gradually did Haas fight his way to fame. But in 1941, he was captured by the Nazis. Three years later, he was killed in Auschwitz.

The accidents are not immediately audible in Haas' charming String Quartet No. 2 from a productive and bright period in the tortured composer's life. The four programmatic movements are inspired by summer holiday memories from the Vysočina region, popularly known as the Monkey Mountains.

The first movement, *Landscape*, conjures up colourful nature motifs. Chirping birds, mist-shrouded hills and drifting clouds. The second movement, *Coach, Coachman and Horse*, imitates the creaking and creaking of a wobbly cart travelling down a potholed country road. The third movement, *The Moon and I*, is a longing meditation, a subdued nocturne. The fourth movement, *Wild Night*, reflects Walpurgis Night, which in Bohemian folklore is associated with eeriness and witches' coven. Along the way, Haas even imitates a Latin American rumba. He also gives the musicians the opportunity to include percussion instruments that are reminiscent of the jazz music that made its way into Europe.

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904): String Quartet No. 11 in C major, opus 61 (1881)

The violin was Dvořák's own instrument. Chamber music for strings was his great passion. Dvořák's opus 1 was a string quintet, opus 2 a string quintet, and throughout his life he wrote major works in genres such as piano trio, quartet and quintet, violin and cello sonatas and not least string quartets of which there are 14 numbered plus a few other works for the constellation.

In 1878, Johannes Brahms had fallen in love with Dvořák. This attention led to a European breakthrough and a contract with a leading German music publisher who wanted Dvořák to 'internationalise' his musical language. Until then, Bohemian folk music had been Dvořák's primary musical building block. The demand for a more universal style was also linked to a growing dislike of Bohemian culture among the Habsburgs in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Dvořák was forced to change course. Now he had to sound German.

From the very first note of *String Quartet No. 11*, you realise that Dvořák has left his folk music inspiration behind. The great first movement has the rhythmic energy of Beethoven, the lyrical grace of Schubert and the harmonic progression that characterised both Viennese models. The second movement is a dreamy adagio that never becomes sentimental. With abrupt contrasting elements, the melodic harmony never wallows in nostalgia.

But in the high-intensity third movement, it is as if Dvořák returns to his native inspiration. A scherzo with fragments of folk dance and imitation of birdsong from the Bohemian forests. And in the finale, the bright and joyful main theme is also gradually transformed into a characteristic folk dance.

Perhaps with String Quartet No. 11, Dvořák wants to show that he can compose in a new way. But at the same time, he reminds the world that Bohemian folk music is his favourite and that we should not forget that his breakthrough work was Slavonic Dances. That's how we like him best.

Mathias Hammer

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Pavel Haas Quartet

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 Awards and numerous others for their recordings, the Quartet is firmly established as one of the world's foremost chamber ensembles.

The Quartet appears at major venues including Wigmore Hall, London; Philharmonie and Konzerthaus, Berlin; Musikverein, Vienna; Elbphilharmonie, Hamburg; Concertgebouw and Muziekgebouw, Amsterdam; Tonhalle, Zürich; Théâtre de la Ville, Paris; Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Rome; BOZAR, Brussels; NCPA, Beijing; LG Arts Centre, Seoul and Carnegie Hall, New York. In celebration of its 20th anniversary, the Quartet was invited to be on the cover of The Strad's June 2022 issue and was the featured interview in BBC Music Magazine in the same month. They were included in the latter magazine's 10 greatest string quartet ensembles of all time and were described as "stylistically powerful and richly sonorous, [and] known for its passionate and fearless performances".

Since September 2022, the Pavel Haas Quartet has been Artist-in-Residence at the Dvořák Prague Festival and curate the chamber music concerts including programming all the Dvořák String Quartets and chamber music works over the three seasons.

The Pavel Haas Quartet records exclusively for Supraphon. Their most recent recording of the Brahms Viola and Piano Quintets with Boris Giltburg and their former member, Pavel Nikl, was released to critical acclaim in May 2022. The recording was described as "radiant and vivacious" by The Strad, and was Presto Classical's Recording of the Week. For their previous album of Shostakovich String Quartets (2019), they received the Recording of the Year

by Classic Prague Awards and were named one of the 100 best records of the year by The Times.

The Quartet received their five Gramophone Awards for their recordings of Dvořák, 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.

Since winning the Paolo Borciani competition in Italy in 2005, further highlights early on in their career have included 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 to them in 2010.

The Quartet is based in Prague and studied with the late Milan Škampa, the legendary violist of the Smetana Quartet. They take their name from the Czech-Jewish 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.

<https://www.pavelhaasquartet.com>

15:30 Alexander Malofeev, piano
20:00 Pavel Haas Quartet



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