

Sunday, May 7, 2006, 3pm  
Hertz Hall

# Jerusalem Quartet



Alexander Pavlovsky, *violin*  
Sergei Bresler, *violin*  
Amihai Grosz, *viola*  
Kyril Zlotnikov, *violoncello*

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## PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) String Quartet in B-flat major, Op. 18, No. 6 (1800)

Allegro con brio  
Adagio ma non troppo  
Scherzo: Allegro  
*La Malinconia*: Adagio — Allegretto quasi  
Allegro — Tempo I — Allegretto —  
Prestissimo

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847) String Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 12 (1829)

Adagio non troppo — Allegro non tardante  
Canzonetta: Allegretto  
Andante espressivo — Molto allegro e vivace

## INTERMISSION

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975) String Quartet No. 8, Op. 110 (1960)

Largo  
Allegro molto  
Allegretto  
Largo  
Largo

*Played without pause.*

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**Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)**  
**String Quartet in B-flat major, Op. 18, No. 6**  
 (1800)  
 Premiered in 1800 in Vienna.

“He was short, about 5 feet, 4 inches, thickset and broad, with a massive head, a wildly luxuriant crop of hair, protruding teeth, a small rounded nose, and a habit of spitting whenever the notion took him. He was clumsy, and anything he touched was liable to be upset or broken. Badly coordinated, he could never learn to dance, and more often than not managed to cut himself while shaving. He was sullen and suspicious, touchy as a misanthropic cobra, believed that everybody was out to cheat him, had none of the social graces, was forgetful, and was prone to insensate rages.” Thus the late *New York Times* critic Harold Schonberg, in his book about *The Lives of the Great Composers*, described Ludwig van Beethoven, the burly peasant with the unquenchable fire of genius who descended, aged 22, upon Vienna in 1792. Beethoven had been charged by his benefactor in his hometown of Bonn, Count Ferdinand von Waldstein, to go to the Austrian capital and “receive the spirit of Mozart from the hands of Haydn.” He did study for a short time with Haydn, then universally regarded as the greatest living composer, but young Ludwig proved to be a recalcitrant student, and the sessions soon ended, though the two maintained a respectful, if cool, relationship until Haydn’s death in 1809.

In a world still largely accustomed to the reserved, genteel musical style of pre-Revolutionary Classicism, Beethoven burst upon the scene like a fiery meteor. The Viennese aristocracy took this young lion to its bosom. Beethoven expected as much. Unlike his predecessors, he would not assume the servant’s position traditionally accorded to a musician, refusing, for example, not only to eat in the kitchen, but becoming outspokenly hostile if he was not seated next to the master of the house at table. The more enlightened nobility, to its credit, recognized the genius of this gruff Rhinelander, and encouraged his work. Shortly after his arrival, for example, Prince Lichnowsky provided

Beethoven with living quarters, treating him more like a son than a guest. Lichnowsky even instructed the servants to answer the musician’s call before his own should both ring at the same time. In large part, such gestures provided for Beethoven’s support during his early Viennese years. For most of the first decade after he arrived, he made some effort to follow the prevailing fashion in the sophisticated city, but, though he outfitted himself with good boots, a proper coat and the necessary accouterments, and enjoyed the society of Vienna’s best houses, there never ceased to roil within him the untamed energy of creativity. It was inevitably only a matter of time before the fancy clothes were discarded, as a bear would shred a flimsy paper bag.

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. These first Quartets stand on the brink of this great crisis in Beethoven’s life.

The string quartet, perfected by Haydn, was a favorite form of musical entertainment in the salons of Vienna at the turn of the 19th century. As early as 1795, Count Anton Georg Apponyi had suggested to Beethoven that he undertake some works in the form, but the proposal did not bear fruit until three years later, when the Op. 18 set was begun. In 1798, Beethoven was closely associated with the noted composer and theorist Emanuel Alois Förster, perhaps as a student.

(Beethoven later referred to him as his “old master.”) Förster was one of the era’s foremost composers of string quartets, and his influence may have inspired Beethoven to undertake his first works in the genre. Beethoven, at that time of his life still determined to impress the aristocracy, probably wished to have his name attached to the most elegant musical form of the day. At any rate, the Quartets were begun in mid-1798 (though some sketches apparently date back to the early 1790s), mostly composed the following year, and completed in 1800. They were first played by the ensemble of Ignaz Schuppanzigh either (reports differ) in the home of Förster or in the Viennese palace of Prince Karl Lobkowitz, to whom they were dedicated upon their publication in 1801. Lobkowitz was so pleased with the Quartets that he pledged Beethoven an annual stipend of 600 gulden. With their respectful renewal of the Classical style and technique of Haydn, the Quartets enjoyed a good (though, as was always the case with Beethoven’s works when they were new, not unanimous) success, and were frequently heard during the composer’s lifetime. Looking back on Op. 18 in 1811, a critic for the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* wrote, “In them the loveliest melodies appeal to the feelings, and the unity, the supreme simplicity, the particular and firmly sustained character in each individual piece making up those Quartets raise them to the level of masterworks, and join Beethoven’s name with the revered names of Haydn and Mozart.”

Though the B-flat Quartet was apparently the next-to-last number of Op. 18 to be composed, Beethoven chose to publish it at the end of the set because of its extraordinary finale, subtitled *La Malinconia*, which Joseph Kerman called “an arresting premonition of achievements to come.” As if to serve as a foil for the daring ending of the work, the first two movements, for all their characteristically Beethovenian energy and ingenuity, are conservative in form and idiom. A vigorous, leaping melody in the first violin serves as the main theme of the opening movement. Long ribbons of scales provide the transition to the second theme, an amiable strain of limited range in dotted rhythms. The leaping main theme and the scalar transition motive are explored

in the development. A long preparation that finally settles on a quiet, held chord ushers in the recapitulation. The *Adagio*, built in a simple three-part form, begins with a suave theme presented by the violin above a sparse accompaniment in the lower strings; the center section is initiated by an attenuated line given in unison by the first violin and cello. The *Scherzo* is an elaborate, almost quirky, exploration of the ways in which triple-meter measures can be divided into unusual rhythms and ambiguous groupings through syncopations and cross accents; the tiny central trio is occupied by a flippant melody for the violin. The finale, like a number of movements from the compositions of Beethoven’s last period, is constructed in several continuous but highly contrasted sections. It begins with a slow introduction, almost a movement in itself, labeled *La Malinconia*—“Melancholy”—which Beethoven instructs is to be played “with the greatest delicacy.” So advanced is the harmony of this passage that Philip Radcliffe suggested that, reworked for orchestra, it would not be out of place in a Wagner opera. Daniel Gregory Mason wrote, “These measures carry us into new regions of musical expression. In this strange half-light, this mystical atmosphere of trance and the sense of something unknown impending, we are far indeed from the gay sunlight of 18th-century finales.” The main body of the movement, in rondo form, is fast and cheerful, though the pensive strains of the slow opening are recalled before a furious dash to the end closes the Quartet.

**Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)**  
**String Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 12 (1829)**

Despite the academic and social obligations of Mendelssohn’s years at Berlin University, from 1825 to 1829, he continued the remarkable outpouring of creative work that had marked his youth: the Octet, the *Midsummer Night’s Dream Overture*, the opera *Die Hochzeit des Camacho*, the String Quartet in A minor (Op. 13), the *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage Overture* (inspired by a poem of his friend Goethe), and numerous piano, vocal and chamber works sprang from that time.

Early in 1829, Mendelssohn became absorbed in preparations for the revival of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, which he performed in Berlin on March 11, 1829, thus inspiring the restoration of that master's legacy and the interest in Baroque music that continues to this day. A month later, he set out on a grand tour of Europe, a graduation gift from his family, that was to take him from Scotland to Rome over the next three years. The first leg of the journey led him to London, where he recovered sufficiently from a highly unpleasant crossing from Hamburg to dispatch the following report to his beloved sister, Fanny: "London is the grandest and most complicated monster on the face of the earth. [In 1829, Berlin was only about one-tenth the size of London.] How can I compress into one letter what I have been seeing during the three days since I arrived? I hardly remember the chief events, and yet I must not keep a diary, for then I should see less of life, and that must not be. On the contrary, I want to catch hold of whatever offers itself to me. Things whirl and roll round me and carry me along as in a vortex."

Two friends—the pianist Ignaz Moscheles and Karl Klingemann, secretary of the Hanover Legation in London—settled him into his lodgings and guided him through the city's geographical and social maze. Mendelssohn—elegant, witty, educated, handsome, well-mannered, almost fluent in English—made an immediate impression upon the cultural lions of London, especially since he observed the gentlemanly custom of not asking for a fee when he played in their salons. His public debut was set for May 25, 1829 in the Argyll Rooms in Regent Street at a concert of the Philharmonic Society, which had cemented its position in the city's artistic life seven years earlier by commissioning a symphony from no less a figure than Ludwig van Beethoven. (That work, the "Choral" Symphony, was finally heard in London in 1825, a full year after its premiere in Vienna.) Mendelssohn created a sensation. "At the end of the concert," he wrote home, "they kept applauding as long as I kept thanking the orchestra, and I handsshakte till I left the hall." Thus began the artistic love affair between Felix Mendelssohn and the musical

cognoscenti of Britain. He further impressed his hosts by performing Weber's *Konzertstück* as piano soloist five days later from memory, an unusual feat in those days, and completely won them over by conducting his *Midsummer Night's Dream Overture* in June. He remained in Britain that summer to take a walking tour of Scotland, whose lore and countryside inspired him to write the *Hebrides Overture* and the "Scottish" Symphony, which he later declared to be his finest work in the form. In November, shortly before he returned home to Berlin, he was elected an honorary member of the Philharmonic Society by unanimous vote. After his spectacular debut season, Mendelssohn visited England nine more times during the remaining 18 years of his too-brief life. "The people here like me for the sake of my music and respect me for it," he wrote to his friend, the singer Eduard Devrient. "This delights me immensely."

One of the products of Mendelssohn's first visit to England was the String Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 12, completed in mid-September 1829. (The A minor Quartet, though written two years earlier, was published after this work, as Op. 13.) The warmth and euphony that Mozart associated with the key of E-flat major finds a Mendelssohnian progeny in the first movement. A thoughtful introduction, piquantly harmonized, opens the Quartet. The main theme, in quicker tempo, is a flowing hymnal melody whose strong beginning phrases are nicely balanced by quieter gestures as the melody unfolds. The subsidiary subject ("dolce"—"sweetly"—instructs the score) outlines a downward shape. The development section is based largely on transformations of the main theme which are impelled by urgent accompanimental figurations. A full recapitulation completes the movement. The *Canzonetta*, whose name derives from a 16th-century vocal genre of light expression and dancing nature, acts as the Quartet's scherzo. The outer sections of the movement's three-part form (A–B–A) are delicate and mysterious, a kind of ghostly processional. The center is occupied by a winsome trio of brighter harmonic cast whose diaphanous style Mendelssohn summoned better than any other composer. The *Andante* follows

no fixed form, but is instead a lyrical flight, grown from the opening theme, that becomes more elaborate as it proceeds. A tranquil coda returns the mood of the first phrases. The finale, in the key of C minor, is a whirling tarantella, the traditional Italian dance whose exertions are said to rid the body of the poison of the tarantula spider's deadly bite. (Mendelssohn's "Italian" Symphony, composed at the end of his European grand tour, in 1831–1833, closes with a similar breakneck dance in minor mode.) To re-establish the Quartet's nominal tonality and to round out the work's formal cycle, the important motives of the first movement are used to form a substantial coda.

**Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975)**  
**String Quartet No. 8, Op. 110 (1960)**  
**Premiered on October 2, 1960 in Leningrad by the Beethoven Quartet.**

In the autumn of 1941, midway through the devastating 18-month siege with which the Nazi forces tried to strangle Leningrad into submission, Dmitri Shostakovich (who served as a fireman in the city because his health precluded active military duty) was inspired to write his gigantic Seventh Symphony in tribute to the courage and determination of his fellow citizens. Two decades later, Shostakovich was again stirred to translate his feelings about the war into tones. In July 1960, he was in Dresden composing the background music for a joint Soviet–East German film about the Second World War called *Five Days, Five Nights*. (He issued an orchestral suite from the score the following year as his Op. 111a.) So moved was he by the subject of the story and by the still-unhealed scars of the city, which the Allies had reduced to rubble in 1945 in a single night of the most fearsome bombing in the history of warfare, that he poured his feelings into the musical form that he had entrusted with his most personal thoughts ever since the 1936 attack on his opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*—the string quartet. The Eighth Quartet was composed in three days in Dresden in July 1960, and dedicated to "the memory of the victims of fascism and the War." It was premiered on October 2nd in

Leningrad by the Beethoven Quartet, though the composer had to miss the performance because he was hospitalized for treatment of a broken leg he had suffered in September at the wedding festivities of his son, Maxim. The Quartet has become his most frequently performed chamber work, and it is generally regarded as one of the 20th-century's masterworks in the genre, "a perfect communicative balance between the public and the private dimensions," according to Christopher Norris.

In *Testimony*, Shostakovich's purported memoirs, edited by Solomon Volkov, the composer stated that the Eighth is "an autobiographical quartet." Without giving elucidating details, he implied that its essential message is carried by the title of a well-known song of the Russian Revolution that he quoted in the fourth movement: *Exhausted by the Hardships of Prison*. Indeed, quotation and reference, and the world of associations that they open, provide the very substance of this work. The chief motive running through the Quartet, and providing the germ for much of its thematic material, is Shostakovich's musical "signature"—DSCH, the notes D–E-flat–C–B. (The note D represents his initial. In German transliteration, the composer's name begins "Sch": S [ess] in German notation equals E-flat, C is C, and H equals B-natural.) He incorporated the same theme into his Tenth Symphony (1953) and his First Violin Concerto (1948), as well as into the curious 1965 song set to the text of the *Preface to the Complete Collection of My Works, and Brief Reflections on the Preface*, where he used it to accompany the words of his own name.

The Quartet is in five continuous movements. The DSCH motive is heard immediately in imitation as the somber opening of the first movement. Three other themes are provided for contrast: a quotation in dotted rhythms from the First Symphony; an eerie descending chromatic scale; and a reminiscence of the Fifth Symphony in the violins above the drone of the low strings. The four thematic elements are recapitulated to round out the movement, and lead without pause to a furious *toccata*, brutal, hammering music, depicting the cruel destruction of war, that drops

below the dynamic level of *fortissimo* only once. Shostakovich inserted into this movement the modal theme based on Jewish models that he had used for the finale of his Piano Trio No. 2 of 1944. (Shostakovich's sympathy for the Jewish victims of the War was made clear by his Symphony No. 13, "Baba Yar," of the following year. "Jewish folk music," he said in *Testimony*, "has made a powerful impression on me.... It's almost always laughter through tears. This quality is close to my ideas of what music should be.")

The third movement is a scherzo, by turns sardonic and lyrical. Its main theme is a snapping version of the DSCH motive, and it is succeeded by a restless waltz melody in the first violin. Metric uncertainty troubles the movement's trio, which quotes the principal theme (and its harsh, repeated-note accompaniment) of the composer's Cello Concerto No. 1, written in 1959 for Mstislav Rostropovich. The slow fourth movement explodes with the Concerto's accompaniment figure transmogrified into gunshots, which temporarily cover the sound

of a distant siren implied by the first violins. The three lower voices in unison play a melody from the Eleventh Symphony ("The Year 1905") of 1957. After a repetition of the gunshots, the Russian song *Exhausted by the Hardships of Prison* is intoned by the first violin above a drone. The cello is then granted a lovely fragment from the opera *Lady Macbeth of Mzensk*, which Shostakovich was revising at just that time as the more politically acceptable *Katerina Izmaylova*. The gunshots, the Russian Revolutionary song and the Eleventh Symphony motive in condensed versions serve as the movement's coda. The finale of the Eighth Quartet, like those of several of Shostakovich's important late works, eschews Romantic apotheosis in favor of 20th-century doubt. The austere mood and the DSCH theme of the first movement return, and the music seems hardly able to maintain its forward motion. Its energy dissipated, perhaps through catharsis or just from weariness, the music dies away with an inconclusive open-interval harmony.

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One of the most dynamic and exciting young quartets currently performing, the **Jerusalem Quartet** is in great demand throughout the world. In 2006, to mark the Shostakovich centenary, the Quartet will perform quartet cycles in the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, London's Wigmore Hall, the Konzerthaus Berlin and at the Vancouver Recital Series. They will also perform in the Herkulessaal, Munich; the Bruges Concertgebouw; the Vienna Konzerthaus; Symphony Hall, Birmingham; twice in the Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris (including one concert with Hélène Grimaud); and will give a performance of Beethoven quartets as part of a gala concert to celebrate the composer's birthday at the Beethovenhalle in Bonn.

The Quartet's additional engagements include concerts in Cologne Philharmonie and for Bozar in Brussels, plus substantial tours of Australia (where they will be Musica Viva's Quartet-in-Residence from 2006 to 2009), New Zealand, the United States and Japan, and a residency at the Verbier Festival and a series of concerts for the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, both in summer 2007.

Adding to the Quartet's growing discography with Harmonia Mundi, a CD of Shostakovich's Quartets 1, 4 and 9 was released in May 2005 and an all-Haydn CD was released last year. Their third CD, released in 2006, is a recording of Dvořák's "American" Quartet and the Piano Quintet with Stefan Vladar. In spring 2001, EMI released a CD of the Quartet's performances of music by Shostakovich and Tchaikovsky. The Quartet has also recorded two cover CDs for *BBC Music Magazine*.

The Jerusalem Quartet were recipients of the first Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award in 2003, part of the first-ever BBC New Generation Artists scheme between 1999 and 2001. They received first prize (as well as the prize for the best interpretation of 20th-century music) in 1997 at the Franz Schubert and the Music of the 20th Century Competition in Graz, Austria, when they performed György Kurtág's *Twelve Microludes* and Bartók's Quartet No. 6. They were also awarded first prize at the Jerusalem Academy Chamber Music Competition in 1996.

The Quartet has performed alongside such eminent musicians as Mitsuko Uchida, Jessye Norman, Daniel Barenboim, Elena Bashkirova, Tabea Zimmermann, Natalia Gutman, Itamar Golan, Natalie Clein, Boris Pergamenshikov and the Vermeer and Pražák quartets. As students, they participated regularly in master classes and courses with such renowned musicians as Isaac Stern, György Kurtág and members of the Amadeus Quartet. The Quartet was founded within the framework of the Young Musicians' Group of the Jerusalem Music Centre and the America-Israel Cultural Foundation in co-operation with the Conservatory of the Jerusalem Rubin Academy of Music and Dance, where they studied under Avi Abramovich.

The Jerusalem Quartet are very grateful to Daniel Barenboim, who generously loans Jacqueline Du Pré's "Sergio Perresson" cello to Kyril Zlotnikov.