

Sunday, April 5, 2009, 3pm  
Hertz Hall

# American String Quartet

Peter Winograd, *violin*  
Laurie Carney, *violin*  
Daniel Avshalomov, *viola*  
Wolfram Koessel, *cello*

*with*

## Menahem Pressler, *piano*

### PROGRAM

Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) String Quartet in B-flat major, Op. 64, No. 3  
(H. III/67) (1790)

Vivace assai  
Adagio  
Menuetto: Allegretto  
Finale: Allegro con spirito

Alban Berg (1885–1935) String Quartet, Op. 3 (1910)

Langsam  
Mässiger viertel

INTERMISSION

Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904) Quintet in A major for Piano and Strings, Op. 81  
(1887)

Allegro, ma non tanto  
Dumka: Andante con moto — Vivace  
Scherzo (Furiant): Molto vivace  
Finale: Allegro

*The American String Quartet is represented by Melvin Kaplan, Inc.,  
115 College Street, Burlington, Vermont 05401, www.melkap.com.*

*Menahem Pressler is also represented by Melvin Kaplan, Inc.*

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### Sightlines

#### American String Quartet & Menahem Pressler

Sunday, April 5, 2009, 2–2:30 pm  
Hertz Hall

Pre-performance talk by Professor Beth Levy, UC Davis  
Department of Music.

This *Sightlines* talk is free to event ticket holders.

**Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)**  
**String Quartet in B-flat major, Op. 64, No. 3**  
**(H. III/67) (1790)**

Written in the spring and summer of 1790, Haydn's Op. 64 quartets were among the last pieces he wrote while still in the employ of the Esterházy family. Following the death of Prince Nicholas Esterházy in September, Haydn was discharged from his duties as *Kapellmeister* after nearly 30 years of service, albeit with a handsome pension requiring only that he supply music for a few ceremonial occasions. Free to pursue a musical career on his own, Haydn traveled to London for a concert tour, and the six quartets of Op. 64 were published there.

Rhythm was very much on Haydn's mind when he wrote the B-flat major quartet. The outside movements fairly crackle with vibrant energy. The second movement is a paradigm of intricate rhythmic figures that are combined with a slow-moving, cantabile melody. And the *Menuetto* is chock-full of dazzling cross-accents and syncopations.

While many of Haydn's first movements are monothematic, with essentially one melodic gesture, here there is a plethora of themes; at least seven distinct melodies can be counted in the exposition alone! The melodies follow one another in happy profusion, all rhythmically active either in melody or accompaniment. The development is quite sectional, as though Haydn wanted to work out each theme before proceeding to the next. Haydn restricts the recapitulation a bit, shortening or eliminating some of the tunes before reaching the quiet ending.

No single instrument provides the leading voice in the *Adagio*. Instead each one contributes generously to the richly textured effect so that the individual parts cannot easily be categorized as either melody or accompaniment. The theme is in two parts; each part is played twice, with some variation, essentially through rhythmic elaboration, in the repetition. Organized in a basic ternary, A–B–A form, the middle B section is a variation of the theme of the minor mode.

The metrical thrust of the *Menuetto* in very clearly three-beat time. But by including passages where the alternate notes have heavy accents,

Haydn creates the illusion of two-beat measure. Back and forth the *Menuetto* goes between triple and duple meter, before firmly ending in triple. Then, instead of allowing us to relax with a nice triple-meter trio, Haydn peppers the middle section with syncopations, so that after a while we are totally confused about the underlying meter.

The high-spirited *Finale* continues the syncopations that enlivened the *Menuetto*. There are two themes in this movement: the first, gaily leaping; the second, smoother and more sedate. The treatment is quite traditional. After the exposition, both themes are varied and transformed in the development section; the recapitulation proceeds as expected (except for a surprise pause before the return of the second theme); and a short coda wraps it all up.

**Alban Berg (1885–1935)**  
**String Quartet No. 3 (1910)**

Berg's musical talent grew and flourished under the tutelage of Arnold Schoenberg. The String Quartet, his last apprentice work, Berg later wrote, was "received directly from Schoenberg." Most experts, though, also consider the quartet Berg's first mature composition. Written during the spring and early summer of 1910, it exhibits freshness, assurance and mastery of technique.

The work approaches the boundary between tonality and atonality. Certain devices recall the musical vocabulary of Wagner, Mahler and other late-19th-century composers, who had already stretched the limits of tonal relationships. But in other respects it looks ahead to the 20th century's rejection of traditional tonality.

The quartet contains just two movements: the first, introspective and lyrical; the second, intense and agitated. There are the usual two subjects in the first movement. The opening theme includes all 12 notes of the chromatic scale, although it is not treated as a tone row. After a short silence and some portentous sounds, played *ponticello* (on the bridge), by the cello, the tender second subject is introduced by the violin. In the unusually brief development section that follows, Berg is mostly concerned with working out the second theme. A new

marchlike figure is introduced in the recapitulation, characterized by a glassy *ponticello* sound. An extended slow coda, based on the march melody and the other material heard before, ends with a reminder of the opening theme.

The second movement is in rondo form, with five repeats of one theme separated by four contrasting episodes. Each appearance of the melody, though, is not an exact restatement, but a free transformation of the original. Toward the end of the movement, Berg brings back the first movement's opening subject, effectively unifying the entire quartet.

The String Quartet, Op. 3, was first presented on April 24, 1911, in Vienna by an ad hoc quartet made up of Brunner, Holzer, Buchbinder and Hasa. It was, however, the performance by the Havemann Quartet at the First International Festival for Chamber Music in Salzburg on August 2, 1923, that attracted wide attention and established Berg's worldwide reputation in musical circles.

**Antonín Dvořák (1841–1904)**  
**Quintet in A major, Op. 81 (1887)**

Dvořák composed his first piano quintet (A major, Op. 5) in 1872, but, unhappy with the results, destroyed the score shortly after its premiere later that year. Some 15 years went by and Dvořák reconsidered his rash act. He retrieved a friend's copy of the music and made extensive revisions. Still not satisfied, he decided not to submit it for publication after all. Instead, he wrote the completely new Piano Quintet in A major, Op. 81, which is now one of the three acknowledged masterpieces in the form; the others are by Schumann and Brahms.

By 1887, Dvořák had achieved acclaim and acceptance for his nationalistic music, having passed through a few years of crisis in the early 1880s, a time when he was torn between his desire to continue incorporating national musical elements into his compositions and the urging of Brahms and other friends to live in Vienna and devote himself to the creation of operas in German. As part of his renewed devotion to the Bohemian folk idiom, Dvořák composed the piano quintet, the E-flat piano quartet, and the "Dumky" Trio, works that

have come to epitomize the composer's nationalistic style.

Fresh and lovely, gleaming with bright melodies, glowing harmonies and piquant rhythms, the Quintet opens with a wonderfully lyrical theme in the cello. Dvořák immediately puts the melody through a succession of transformations before the viola introduces the second subject, less cantabile than the first, and with a slight tinge of sadness. Here, too, Dvořák varies the melody at once, changing its serious character to one of increasing jubilation. After a full development of the two subjects, Dvořák has a free recapitulation that is much shorter than the exposition.

The *Dumka* is modeled on an old folk-ballad form, with repetitions of a sober, pensive melody separated by fast, happy interludes. It can be diagrammed as A–B–A–C–A–B–A. The A section consists of the refrain (piano) and variations on the melancholy principal theme (viola); B is a contrasting melody, fast and sunny, shared by both violins and the piano. After the return of A, the quick and vigorous C section, which is derived from the opening refrain, is announced by the viola. The overall elegiac tone, alternating with abrupt changes in mood and tempo, readily conveys the spirit of the Slavonic folk ballads that were Dvořák's source of inspiration.

Although Dvořák parenthetically adds *Furiant* after the title, *Scherzo*, this movement lacks some of the customary characteristics of the folk-dance form. It sounds rather liked a fast waltz, with a slow middle section that is really a nostalgic reminder of the *Scherzo* section and a shortened repeat of the first part in conclusion.

The *Finale* is a high-spirited, lightsome cap to the entire quintet. Combining the vigor of a peasant dance with the playful badinage of a humorous folk song, the entire movement, including the fugal section in the development and chorale in the coda, coruscated brilliantly throughout.

Dvořák composed the quintet from August 18 to October 8, 1887, and it was first heard in Prague on January 6, 1888.

*Notes from Guide to Chamber Music by Melvin Berger (1985), used with permission.*



Peter Schaaf

Internationally recognized as one of the world's finest quartets, the **American String Quartet** (Peter Winograd and Laurie Carney, *violins*; Daniel Avshalomov, *viola*; Wolfram Koessel, *cello*) recently celebrated its 30th anniversary. Highlighting the anniversary was the Quartet's debut in a new series of recordings on the Arabesque label, including quartets of celebrated composer Richard Danielpour, and the launch of the complete Brahms string chamber music featuring a stellar list of collaborative artists. The Quartet was honored to be selected to represent the chamber music field in a series of retrospective concerts celebrating the Naumburg Foundation's 80th anniversary, performed by previous winners of the Naumburg Award.

In three decades of touring, the American has performed in all 50 states and appeared in virtually every important concert hall throughout the world. Their presentations of the complete quartets of Beethoven, Schubert, Schoenberg, Bartók and Mozart have won widespread critical acclaim. The Quartet performs frequently with celebrated guest artists, including clarinetist Richard Stoltzman

and pianist Menahem Pressler, with whom the American will tour in Europe and South America during the 2008–2009 season.

The American's innovative approach to concert programming has won them a number of notable residencies in recent years, including *Beethoven the Contemporary* at the University of Michigan, the six Mozart viola quintets at the Aspen Music Festival with Guarneri Quartet violist Michael Tree (broadcast live nationally via Chicago superstation WFMT), and a recently concluded four-year cycle titled *4–5–6...* at Princeton University, where the Quartet performed the complete quintets and sextets of Mozart and Brahms, joined in each concert by renowned guest artists.

Resident quartet at the Aspen Music Festival since 1974 and the Manhattan School of Music in New York since 1984, the American has also served as resident quartet at the Taos School of Music (1979 to 1998), the Peabody Conservatory and the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. The Quartet's diverse activities have also included numerous international radio and television broadcasts, tours of Asia and performances with the New York City Ballet, the Montreal Symphony and the Philadelphia Orchestra. In summer 2008, the Quartet returned to Beijing for its fourth residency at the Great Wall International Music Academy.

As champions of new music, the American has given numerous premieres, most recently including Richard Danielpour's String Quartet No. 4, commissioned by Kansas City Friends of Chamber Music, and Curt Cacioppo's *a distant voice calling*, commissioned by Arizona Friends of Chamber Music. Albany Records released their recording of three quartets by Kenneth Fuchs in 2001. In January 2009, the American premiered Tobias Picker's String Quartet No. 2 in New York City.

Their extensive discography can be heard on the Albany, CRI, MusicMasters, Musical Heritage Society, Nonesuch and RCA labels. The 1998 MusicMasters *Complete Mozart String Quartets*, performed on a matched quartet set of instruments by Stradivari, are widely considered to have set the standard for this repertoire. Additionally, the Quartet is popular with national radio audiences and has been featured on Minnesota Public Radio's *St. Paul Sunday Morning*, National Public Radio's *All Things Considered* and live broadcasts on WFMT.

Formed in 1974, when its original members were students at The Juilliard School, The American String Quartet was launched by winning both the Coleman Competition and the Naumburg Award in the same year. Individually, the members devote additional time outside the quartet's active performance and teaching schedule to solo appearances, recitals and master-classes.



Pianist **Menahem Pressler**, founding member and pianist of the Beaux Arts Trio, has established himself among the world's most distinguished and honored musicians, with a career that spans over five decades.

Mr. Pressler's world-renowned career was launched after he was awarded first prize at the Debussy International Piano Competition in San Francisco in 1946. This was followed by his successful American debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra under the baton of Maestro Eugene Ormandy. Since then, Mr. Pressler's extensive tours of North America and Europe have included performances with the orchestras of New York, Chicago, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Dallas, San Francisco, London, Paris, Brussels, Oslo, Helsinki and many others.

In 2007, Menahem Pressler was appointed an Honorary Fellow of the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance in recognition of a lifetime of performance and leadership in music. In 2005, Mr. Pressler received two additional awards of

international merit: the German President's *Deutsche Bundesverdienstkreuz* (Cross of Merit) First Class, Germany's highest honor, and France's highest cultural honor, the Commandeur in the Order of Arts and Letters award.

Mr. Pressler has received honorary doctorates from the University of Nebraska and the North Carolina School of the Arts, five Grammy Award nominations (including one in 2006), a lifetime achievement award from *Gramophone*, Chamber Music America's Distinguished Service Award, and the Gold Medal of Merit from the National Society of Arts and Letters. He has also been given the German critics' *Ehrenurkunde* award, and was elected into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Internationally active as soloist and chamber musician, Mr. Pressler has also received England's Record of the Year Award and Ensemble of the Year from Musical America in 1997. In addition to his busy schedule as a performer, he has given master-classes in Germany, France, Canada and Argentina, and continues to serve on the jury of the Van Cliburn, Queen Elisabeth and Artur Rubenstein competitions.

The 1955 Berkshire Music Festival saw Menahem Pressler's debut as a chamber musician, where he appeared as pianist with the Beaux Arts Trio. This collaboration quickly established Mr. Pressler's reputation as one of the world's most revered chamber musicians. His other chamber music collaborations have included performances with the Juilliard, Pacifica, Emerson, Guarneri, American and Cleveland quartets.

In addition to more than 50 recordings with the Beaux Arts Trio, Mr. Pressler has compiled over 30 solo recordings, ranging from the works of Bach to Ben Haim, released by the Musical Heritage Society, Monitor, Philips and Deutsche Grammophon labels, among others.

The pianist fled the Nazis from his hometown of Magdeburg, Germany, in 1938, emigrating to Israel. His life has always been completely devoted to his music. When he is not collaborating in chamber performances, appearing as a soloist, or teaching master classes, Mr. Pressler can be found teaching at Indiana University, where he holds the rank of Distinguished Professor. Mr. Pressler lives in Bloomington, Indiana, with his wife, Sara.