

JERUSALEM QUARTET

ALEXANDER PAVLOVSKY, violin

SERGEI BRESLER, violin

ORI KAM, viola

KYRIL ZLOTNIKOV, cello

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN **Quartet in E-flat Major, Op. 76, no. 6 (Hob. III:80)**
(1732-1809)

Allegretto – Allegro
Fantasia. Adagio
Menuetto: Presto
Finale. Allegro spiritoso

PAUL BEN-HAIM
(1897-1984)

Quartet No. 1, Op. 21
Con moto sereno
Molto vivace
Largo e molto sostenuto
Rondo—Finale (Allegretto comodo)

INTERMISSION

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH **Quartet No. 2 in A Major, Op. 68**
(1906-1975)

Overture (Moderato con moto)
Recitative and Romance (Adagio)
Valse (Allegro)
Theme and Variations

No Photography or video is allowed during the performance.



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violin

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violin

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viola

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violoncello

JERUSALEM QUARTET

Since the ensemble's founding in 1993 and subsequent 1996 debut, the four Israeli musicians of the Jerusalem Quartet have embarked on a journey of growth and maturation. This journey has resulted in a wide repertoire and stunning depth of expression, which carries on the string quartet tradition in a unique manner. The ensemble has found its core in a warm, full, human sound and an egalitarian balance between high and low voices, an approach that allows the quartet to maintain a healthy relationship between individual expression and a transparent and respectful presentation of the composer's work. It is also the motivation for continuing refinement of its interpretations of the classical repertoire as well as exploration of new epochs.

The Jerusalem Quartet is a regular and beloved guest on the world's great concert stages. Recent appearances include a Beethoven quartet cycle at Wigmore Hall in London; a Bartók cycle at the Salzburg Festival; their third annual String Quartet seminar in Crans Montana Switzerland; and a residency at the Jerusalem Academy of Music.

Since 2005, the Jerusalem Quartet has released 16 albums for Harmonia Mundi, which have been honored with numerous awards such as the Diapason d'Or and the *BBC Music Magazine Award* for chamber music. Their latest releases include a unique album exploring Jewish music in Central Europe between the wars, including a collection of Yiddish Cabaret songs from Warsaw in the 1920s featuring Israeli Soprano Hila Baggio. In 2020, the Jerusalem Quartet released the second (and last) album of their complete Bartók cycle.

Highlights of the upcoming 2023/2024 season include tours of Sweden, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland; and appearances in the quartet Biennales in Paris, Lisbon, and Amsterdam. Alongside the quartet's regular programs, they will bring back the "Yiddish Cabaret" and will perform a Bartók cycle in the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg. October and April feature return tours to North America, with visits to New York, Miami, Denver, Houston, Montreal, Pittsburgh, Ann Arbor, and Portland, among others. In June, the quartet will tour China, South Korea, and Japan.

The Jerusalem Quartet appears by arrangement with David Rowe Artists, www.davidroweartists.com. The Jerusalem Quartet records for Harmonia Mundi. www.jerusalem-quartet.com

IN BRIEF

BORN: March 31, 1732, Rohrau, Austria

DIED: May 31, 1809, Vienna, Austria

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: Tonight marks the first performance of this work on our series.

DURATION: 25 minutes

NOTES

FRANZ JOSEPH
HAYDN: QUARTET
IN E-FLAT MAJOR,
OP. 76, NO. 6 (HOB.
III:80)

The six quartets of Haydn's Op. 76 are the music of a great master at the apogee of his powers. The set was probably composed in 1797, when Haydn was 65. He had returned to Vienna in 1796 from a second, highly successful trip to London. He was financially well off and secure in the knowledge that he was the most famous and most revered living composer. Count Joseph Erdödy's commission for these works was to yield the last completed set of quartets. Haydn only composed two of the projected six for Op. 77. The two isolated movements published as Op. 103 must be considered incomplete.

Haydn's publisher Artaria originally issued Op. 76 in two sets of three, as Op. 75 and 76. Curiously, they were not published until 1799. There is some evidence that publication may have been postponed for quite a while after the works were presented to Erdödy. A letter from Haydn to Artaria in 1799 states:

I am most grateful to you for the copies of the Quartets you sent me, which are a great credit to me and—because of the legible engraving and the neat title page—to you. Herr Count Joseph Erdödy wrote me many kind things and thanked me for having made them available to the world at last. His Excellency will have received his copy by now. In a little while I will send the 5th Quartet in D major, and then the last in E-flat.

From this we may infer that there was an unusual time lapse following composition of the works. In an era without recordings or concert life as we know it, chamber music became known via live performances in the salons of the nobility. Count Erdödy "purchased" the exclusive rights to

these new works for a period of time after Haydn fulfilled the commission.

In some respects, this is the forgotten quartet in the set; its siblings include the famous “Fifths,” “Emperor,” and “Sunrise” quartets, which are more frequently performed and recorded. The lack of a nickname for the E-flat major quartet is no reflection of lesser musical substance, however. Throughout Op. 76, Haydn carries forth his characteristic experimentation with forms and distant key relationships.

He opens the E-flat quartet with a theme and variations rather than a sonata form. This is vintage Haydn: the theme is of the utmost simplicity, yet he spins magic from it. At first the variations favor the two violins, but we never lose track of the theme; both cello and viola have their turn with it. Haydn’s invention stays fertile: his final variation is a full-blown fugue.

The second movement Fantasia: Adagio is one of the most extraordinary movements of Haydn’s maturity. The key signature—no sharps, no flats—implies C major, but the accidentals (in this case, sharps) he writes in each part clearly sound as B major. He then migrates through multiple modulations, flirting momentarily with a dozen different tonalities, including a passage in the distant key of *A-flat major*. Essentially the tonal migration serves as the middle section in a ternary form. When he reprises the first section, the five-sharp key signature of B major is notated. While these may seem like technicalities to the non-musician, the effects of Haydn’s tonal meandering are still adventuresome and striking to the attentive listener. The reprise takes its time with several additional modulations, expanding the initial material. For the 1790s, all this was daring, even radical.

The Menuetto is a dashing affair marked Presto. In all but name, it is a scherzo, with one beat to the measure rather than the three of the more dignified minuets. Haydn shows his wit with emphases on weak beats that momentarily

confuse the rhythm. His trio, marked *Alternativo*, builds itself from descending scales layered one instrument at a time, then ascending scales reversing those layers. He remains in E-flat major for both minuet and trio, but somehow manages to make everything sound fresh and light.

The jolly mood continues in the finale, which again makes much of a simple descending five-note scale—a subtle motivic link to the preceding movements. Once again, Haydn departs from conventional form. This *Allegro spiritoso* is a full-fledged sonata form, complete with repeated exposition and repeated development/recapitulation. Haydn works wonders manipulating that opening five-note motive. But what you notice most is the playful (and challenging) interplay among the four musicians bringing this delightful music to life.

IN BRIEF

BORN: July 5, 1897, Munich, Germany

DIED: January 14, 1984, Tel Aviv-Yafo, Israel

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: Tonight marks the first performances of this work on our series.

DURATION: 30 minutes

PAUL BEN-HAIM:
QUARTET NO. 1,
OP. 21

Born in Germany—his family name was originally Frankenburger—Paul Ben-Haim attended the Munich Academy of Music after serving in World War I. He served as choral director and vocal coach at the Bavarian State Opera under Bruno Walter, later taking on the Kapellmeister position at the Augsburg Opera. Frankenburger earned recognition as a composer in the 1920s, drawing on elements of jazz and neoclassicism, though by about 1930 he showed a predilection for Old Testament choral settings. With the rise of Nazism, he emigrated to Palestine in the fall of 1933 and changed his last name to Ben-Haim. He was soon deeply embedded in Palestinian musical culture, teaching at the Shulamit Music School, Jerusalem Academy of Music, and the Music Teachers' Training College. After he mastered Hebrew, he began setting modern Hebrew poetry, later expanding his repertoire to traditional Middle Eastern

music. He remained preoccupied with incorporating the colors of local folk and traditional music into his original compositions. After World War II, his work was commissioned by such luminaries as Yehudi Menuhin, Jascha Heifetz, and Menahem Pressler.

Ben-Haim composed his Op. 21 String Quartet in 1937. It was his first major work following his emigration to Israel, and his first composition in four years. During that time, he had absorbed the music and traditions of his new home. Israeli and Middle Eastern scale patterns found their way into the quartet, but he did not abandon his Austro-Germanic training. The quartet comprises four large movements that adhere broadly to classical tradition. He opens with *Con molto sereno*, a sonata structure. The viola introduces the principal theme, heralding the prominent role that the viola plays throughout the work. That theme serves as a major building block for much of the movement. A more agitated chromatic section heralds the second theme, but one still hears that opening motive. Throughout the movement, modal scales dominate, lending harmonic tension as the quartet never quite settles into major or minor mode.

Ben-Haim's scherzo is a nervous, skittish affair, a wild Eastern European-style dance. One senses the elfin lightness of Mendelssohn but crossed with the bitter sarcasm of Ben-Haim's Russian contemporaries Prokofiev and Shostakovich. The movement is ternary; its middle section, marked *Più tranquillo*, changes meter, texture, and tempo, and places all four players in their upper register. When he returns to the initial tempo, the music is distorted, using *col legno* (striking the string with the wood of the bow rather than the hair) and *pizzicato*. Ben-Haim drives the music to the edge as it eventually disappears into the ether.

The slow movement contains a theme (initially stated by the viola) and followed by three variations that shift which player presents the theme. Modal scales predominate, and the mood is somber and heartfelt. Ben-Haim concludes Op. 21 with a sonata-rondo that is arguably the most Israeli of the quartet. The recurring rondo subject has the cadence and tonal inflection of cantorial chant. The cello provides

an *ostinato* to anchor the movement, while considerable imitation occupies the upper voices. The first episode is another wild—even violent—dance whose harmonic tension is exacerbated by extensive use of tritones, the most dissonant interval in traditional harmony. Each restatement of the rondo alters it, almost as a variation. The second episode quotes from the first movement, in a nod to the late 19th-century cyclic principle of unity. A mini-cadenza for viola heralds the jarring conclusion, which has been interpreted as an anguished pre-echo of the cataclysm that lay ahead for European Jews.

Ben-Haim dedicated the quartet to violinist Andreas Weissgerber and cellist Joseph Weissgerber, both members of Bronislav Huberman’s newly-formed Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. In a 1973 interview with *Tazlil*, an Israeli forum for music research, Ben-Haim said of the quartet, “Here I had written with good inspiration, and I still consider it one of my most successful pieces.”

IN BRIEF

BORN: September 25, 1906, St. Petersburg, Russia

DIED: August 9, 1975, Moscow, Russia

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: May 15, 2019, Emerson String Quartet

DURATION: 34 minutes

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH: QUARTET NO. 2 IN A MAJOR, OP. 68

Shostakovich’s music from the war years is, for the most part, notoriously dark. Consider the Seventh (“Leningrad”) and Eighth Symphonies, which describe and assess the horrors of war and the enormous suffering of the Russian people. In many respects, Soviet composers had an easier time of it during the war than the rest of the populace. Beginning in 1943, the Organizational Committee of the Union of Composers arranged for summer composers’ retreats called “Houses of Rest and Creativity.” Shostakovich spent a couple of summers at one near Ivanovo, where he was given a room for his family, meals, and a studio in which to work. By our standards these accommodations were spartan, but in the wartime USSR, it was a good deal. In 1944, Shostakovich composed his Piano Trio, Ninth Symphony, and the Second Quartet while at Ivanovo.

The Second Quartet and the Piano Trio were premiered at the same concert on 14 November 1944 in Leningrad. Two compositions further apart in atmosphere can hardly be imagined. The traditional view of the Second Quartet is that it is lighter and more poetic than other war works, merging sonata and suite. But it is a work of depth and not inconsiderable pain: an *opera seria* for string quartet.

Consider the movement titles. By calling the opening movement *Overture*, Shostakovich immediately suggests a non-chamber music environment, implying a stage work to follow. *Recitative* is a specifically operatic technique, and *Romance* is a term often applied to strophic arias (usually love songs) as well as lyrical instrumental compositions. The *Waltz* has almost as firm a hold in French and Russian opera as it does in Viennese ballroom dancing. Only in the concluding Theme and Variations does Shostakovich adhere to a more conventional chamber music-like form. Even there, he quotes from music of the earlier movements. The strongest argument for an operatic subtext to this quartet is the music itself, which communicates passion, coloratura virtuosity, and the emotional intensity of a diva in her big aria.

Shostakovich was a relatively late bloomer with string quartets. He did not attempt one until 1934, when he was nearly 30. By that time, he had published nearly 50 compositions (the Quartet No. 1 was issued in 1935 as Op. 49) and was well established in Soviet cultural circles. Many observers consider that Shostakovich reserved his most personal music for the quartets, making his more public statements in the symphonies. Perhaps that is the reason there is no mention of the quartets in Testimony, his controversial memoir as related to Solomon Volkov.

The overture is straightforward, diatonic, and folk-like. Despite its tempo marking of 3/4, it has the resolute character of a march. The development section reveals a more mournful aspect of the Russian temperament. The two inner movements communicate anguish and turmoil that take us to the private domain of the composer's soul. The first violin is cast as the soprano in *Recitative and Romance*, framing its "aria" with an extended cadenza over a chordal pedal point. At 12 minutes, this is the longest

segment of the quartet, inviting comparison to the large and emotionally taut slow movements of Beethoven's Quartets Op. 131 and 132. Shostakovich surely intended this, for there are also some allusions to Beethoven in the music. A recapitulation of the recitative at the conclusion of the *Romance* lends the movement a broad song-like structure.

The *Waltz* is, once again, very Russian. Shostakovich entrusts the cello with the first statement of the theme, allowing the first violin a momentary reprieve. One senses the limpid strains of Tchaikovsky coursing through this movement, for which all four players are muted. Shostakovich's early biographer Martynov wrote:

The music of the waltz seems to be woven of cobwebs — so fine are the polyphonic designs, so dainty the melodic outlines, so light the fluttering rhythms.

This waltz is not for ballroom dancing, but is rather a nervous whirl for the soul, more in keeping with Chopin's waltzes.

The concluding theme and variations are another tacit salute to Beethoven, who favored variations throughout his career. In this case, Shostakovich has chosen the Baroque *passacaglia* form (sequential variations played without pause). He treats it as a large-scale sonata movement with a slow introduction, exposition, development (echoing the textures and musical material of the two inner movements), and recapitulation. The principal theme is another melancholic Russian folk song, resurfacing in ingenious guises among all four instruments in the course of the variations sequence. Both the elaborate structure of the finale and the grand conception of the whole lend the Second Quartet a sense of symphonic importance along with operatic impact.

Program notes by Laurie Shulman ©2023



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