



presents

## PAVEL HAAS QUARTET

Veronika Jaruskova, violin  
Pavel Nikl, viola

Eva Karova, violin  
Peter Jarusek, cello

Sunday, April 3, 2011, 7pm

Herbst Theatre

### SCHULHOFF

#### Quartet No. 1

*Presto con fuoco*

*Allegretto con moto e con malinconia grottesca*

*Allegro giocoso alla slovacca*

*Andante molto sostenuto*

### DEBUSSY

#### Quartet in G minor, Op. 10

*Animé et très décidé*

*Assez vif et bien rythmé*

*Andantino doucement expressif*

*Très modéré; Très mouvementé et avec passion*

INTERMISSION

### HAAS

#### Quartet No. 2, Op. 7

##### “From the Monkey Mountains”

*Landscape (Andante)*

*Coach, Coachman and Horse (Andante)*

*The Moon and I (Largo e misterioso)*

*Wild Night (Vivace e con fuoco)*

This performance is made possible in part through the generous support of James and Kathleen Leak.

Discography: Supraphon

Exclusive Management: Arts Management Group, Inc., 37 West 26th Street,  
New York, NY 10010

For Tickets and More: [sfperformances.org](http://sfperformances.org) | 415.392.2545



Photo: Marco Borggreve

## Artist Profiles

*Pavel Haas Quartet makes its San Francisco debut.*

Since winning the Paolo Borciani competition in Italy in spring 2005, the **Pavel Haas Quartet** has performed at the world's most prestigious concert halls and recorded three award-winning CDs, receiving great acclaim from audiences and critics alike.

In the 2010–11 season the Quartet returns to the Edinburgh International Festival (where it performs a two-concert focus), the Schubertiade, the Dvořák Festival in Prague and Wigmore Hall. It also visits major venues in Berlin, Munich, Geneva, Madrid and San Francisco. In the fall of 2010, the Quartet performed a four-concert residency for the BBC in London, and shortly after this the Quartet gave its inaugural concerts as the first ever artists-in-residence of Glasgow Royal Concert Halls.

Recent highlights for the Quartet include performances at Carnegie Hall, Lucerne Festival, Vienna Konzerthaus, Barcelona Palau de la Musica, BBC Proms, the Mariinsky Concert Hall in St. Petersburg and performances at the Louvre, Paris. The Quartet recently toured Australia, the US and Japan, where it recorded a concert of Janáček and Haas for NHK television. In 2007, the Cologne Philharmonic nominated the Quartet as ECHO Rising Stars, resulting in a tour to major concert halls worldwide. The Quartet took part in the BBC New Generation Artists scheme from 2007 to 2009. Most recently, the Quartet was awarded the 2010 Special Ensemble Scholarship of the Borletti-Buitoni Trust.

The Quartet has released three discs on the Supraphon label. The first recording of Janáček's *Quartet No. 2* “Intimate Letters” and Haas's *Quartet No. 2*, “From the Monkey Mountains” was voted one of the CDs of 2006 by *The Daily Telegraph*, CD of the Week by BBC Radio 3 and Chamber Choice by *BBC Music Magazine*. The Quartet's second disc was released in Fall 2007, featuring the string quartet works by Haas and Janáček, featuring Janáček's *Quartet No. 1*, “Kreutzer Sonata” and Haas's *Quartets Nos. 1 and 3*. *Gramophone* commented, “To describe a

CD as musically important is to court a certain level of controversy but I'll stick my neck out and claim extreme importance for this particular release." Early 2010 saw the Quartet release its most recent disc: Prokofiev's *Quartets Nos. 1 and 2*, which was described as "an instant classic."

Based in Prague, the Quartet studied with some of the masters of the quartet world including members of Quartetto Italiano, Quatuor Mosaiques, Borodin and Amadeus Quartets, as well as with Walter Levin in Basel. The Quartet has worked particularly closely with Milan Skampa, the legendary violist of the Smetana Quartet, and continues to enjoy a close relationship with him.

The Quartet takes its name from the Czech 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.

## Program Notes

### String Quartet No. 1

#### ERWIN SCHULHOFF

Born June 8, 1894, in Prague

Died August 18, 1942, in Wülzburg, Bavaria

The composer Erwin Schulhoff turned 30 in 1924. He was a native of Prague, Jewish, upper, upper middle class by birth, cultured and cosmopolitan, a virtuoso pianist from late childhood, trained in composition by—among others—Claude Debussy and Max Reger. His name was getting out in the world by way of his performances and compositions, joined with the likes of Paul Hindemith, Béla Bartók and Arnold Schoenberg in programs of new music. His interest in jazz was deep and vital, and so was his feeling for the folk music of his native land, the new First Czech Republic.

This single decade saw the peak of Schulhoff's career. The political and economic turmoil of the time drew him into the Communist orbit early in the 1930's, and led to a substantial change in his musical style. His performance activities continued, linked to political theater music, broadcast work, and an interest in music for the masses paralleling, and to some extent, prefiguring the Soviet doctrine of Socialist Realism. By the time his jazz-imbued *Symphony No. 2* came to its premiere in Prague early in 1938, it no longer represented the composer's current style. In the wake of the Munich agreement, Czechoslovakia was occupied and dismembered by the Nazis, and Schulhoff was unemployed and in hiding.

He was given Soviet citizenship, which protected him from the Nazis until June of

1941 and the German invasion of the USSR. At that time, Erwin Schulhoff was quickly taken into custody, and sent with his son Peter to a concentration camp in Wülzburg, Bavaria. He died there 14 months later, of the typhus fever endemic to such camps. His son survived, to die in Prague 50 years later.

We cannot say why Schulhoff did not emigrate, east or west, while he had time. Many eminent musicians did, to live out their more or less normal life-spans and achieve greater or lesser degrees of world recognition. After the end of the war and the ultimate inclusion of Czechoslovakia in the Soviet orbit, Erwin Schulhoff's music had a shadowy currency, no more. The strong jazz elements of much of his best work were out of line with Soviet aesthetics. In postwar Prague, it must also be noted, Schulhoff's German cultural orientation and Jewish family background did not count as political advantages. Token performances and broadcasts of his music took place, occasional recordings were made (never packaged for export), and in the 1970's, some of his previously unpublished work was brought into print by the Czech state music publisher, in very limited editions. Earlier work published by Schott in Mainz and Universal-Edition in Vienna, went out of print or was withdrawn when the Nazis took over, and none of this material was reprinted after the war. This is surely as near to total oblivion as any composer of Schulhoff's stature has gotten in the 20th century.

In 1923, after five years spent in Germany's Weimar Republic, Schulhoff returned to settle in his native Prague. In the midst of a great deal of other work, he accomplished one string quartet per year for the next three years: *String Quartet No. 1* (1924); *String Quartet No. 2* (1925); and earlier, *Five Pieces* (1923). *String Quartet No. 1* is a sonata-sequence in which movements of extreme formal compression and high rhythmic energy alternate with slower, more expansively lyrical movements. The opening *Presto con fuoco* is a flurry of gestural exposition, functioning largely as a prelude to the second movement. This is a *Serenade*, in which a simple tune is articulated with satirical broadness and with grotesquely winsome inflections which seem aimed at the complexities of certain turn-of-the-century German masters. Vivacious Slovak folk rhythms imbue the brief third movement, which drives with ever-increasing intensity to its abrupt finish. The *Finale* is the quartet's only truly slow movement, with an icy melody in highest register and harmonics supported by a ticking whisper of simple figuration. For a composer whose natural medium was the piano, Schulhoff shows remarkable grasp of the string quartet medium's

potential for overtone-dominated color, and for the clean, forceful articulation of rhythm.

### String Quartet in G minor, Op. 10

#### CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Born August 22, 1862, in Saint-Germain-en-Laye

Died March 25, 1918, in Paris

It is often said that the era of modern music began with a single work in 1894, Claude Debussy's *Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune* for orchestra. Before Schoenberg, Stravinsky or Bartók, Debussy was the first major composer to radically break from the continuous evolution of 19th century Romantic music from Beethoven to Wagner. As if from another world, Debussy appeared, bearing his magical music, novel in nearly every dimension. Reacting against the dominant influence of Germanic music with its logical rigors of form and development, he sought a new music of color, sensation, fleeting mood and relaxed form that would be distinctively French, as well as distinctively his own. Debussy established a new style known as "Impressionism" (a term he eschewed) and, more than any of his previous countrymen, a new, internationally recognized school of modern French music. His subsequent influence was immense, both on classical and popular music.

In 1893, Debussy composed his first important work, the *String Quartet in G minor, Op. 10*. It was the only work to which he attached an opus number or a key designation and it was the only work Debussy wrote in a conventional form. Outwardly, the quartet assumes the mold of a traditional string quartet comprising four movements: a first movement sonata, a rhythmic scherzo, a slow, lyrical movement and an energetic finale. But within this unremarkable template, the music sounds completely new. Debussy expanded the sound of the string quartet with a variety of novel textures and tonal effects ranging from delicate subtlety to ravishing grandeur. With exotic scales, unconventional chords, progressions and key changes, the music features melodies and harmonies unique for their time. Especially striking is the quartet's rhythmic vitality, spontaneous agility and poetic subtlety. With swiftly changing tempi, a wealth of dazzling figurations, cross-rhythms and the special shimmering or hovering pulsations typical of his music, Debussy captures a nuanced experience of time. With the benefit of hindsight, it is easy to see many elements of Debussy's signature style within this early work: the sensuous languor of *l'après-midi d'un faune*, the kinetic energy of *La Mer*, the spice and color of his Iberian *Images*.

Debussy's quartet is equally fascinating for its cyclic design. César Franck based several of his compositions on a cyclic principle where a signature musical theme recurs in every movement. Earlier, Hector Berlioz featured his *idée fixe*, a signal leitmotif in every movement of the *Symphonie fantastique*. Debussy applied the same concept: The opening theme of his quartet recurs in all four movements. But unlike earlier designs where the theme appears, essentially unchanged, within each movement as an isolated, nearly extraneous element, Debussy uses his theme to generate the majority of the quartet's intrinsic music. Using ingenious transformations of melody, harmony, texture and rhythm, Debussy creates a diversity of music that clearly derives from the initial theme. The first and second movements together contain at least seven variations. The last movement supplies its own new variations as well as a cyclic reprisal of the previous movements in reverse order, leading the quartet right back to the beginning. That such an apparently rigid thematic unity is unobtrusively disguised within a rich variety of music is testament to Debussy's fertile imagination and his remarkable skill as a composer.

Initial reactions to his quartet ranged from praise, to bewilderment and scorn including such wonderfully revealing sneers as "orgies of modulation" and "rotten with talent." Debussy shortly set to work on another quartet, but abandoned the project, turning instead to the orchestra, a more potent vehicle for his visionary music. Debussy wrote very little additional chamber music, returning to the genre only at the end of his life to complete three of six planned sonatas. It is amazing to consider the many first-rate composers who labored over numerous string quar-

tets, destroyed early works or cautiously approached the genre for the first time as mature artists, while Debussy, at just 31, wrote a single quartet, a brilliant work of stunning originality, now a masterwork secure in the chamber music repertory.

## String Quartet No. 2

### PAVEL HAAS

Born June 21, 1899, in Brno, Moravia

Died October 17, 1944, in Auschwitz

Pavel Haas was born into a wealthy and prominent Jewish family in the Moravian capital of Brno. He became an important composer of theater and film music, though the war years severely limited his professional development and in 1941 he was sent to Terezín. Although at first he was too ill and depressed to compose, he later became part of the rich musical life of the camp, writing several works that are considered classics of that time. He was deported to Auschwitz in mid-October 1944 and immediately killed.

A compositional prodigy, Haas studied at the school of the Philharmonic in Brno until he was drafted into the Austrian army in 1917. He remained in Brno during that time, and in 1919 began the serious study of composition at the Brno conservatory. Later (1920–22) he became a part of the master class of the conservatory led by Leoš Janáček, whose effect on Haas was profound.

Starting in his early 20s, Pavel Haas wrote several notable scores for both stage and film, and reached his maturity as a composer in the mid-1930s with such works as the opera *The Charlatan*, *String Quartets 2 and 3*, and the *Suite for Oboe*. A major work from this period, a large symphony, was left un-

finished and completed only after his death.

When Czech society began to break down under the pressure of the Nazi presence, Haas, like other Jewish composers, took whatever steps he could to protect his interests. In his case, this included divorcing his wife in order to shield her from anti-Semitic policies. Haas was deported to Terezín in 1941.

Reports of Haas's life there usually include the information that he was ill and depressed upon his arrival and only returned to some kind of creative productivity when the energetic and intrepid Gideon Klein put several sheets of blank music paper in front of him and urged him to return to his work. While in Terezín, Haas wrote several works including, most notably, the *Study for Strings*, immortalized in a clip from the 1944 Nazi propaganda film created to show the camp as a kind of idyllic spa for Jews. On October 16, 1944, Haas was placed in a transport to Auschwitz, and upon arrival, was immediately gassed.

Haas's *String Quartet No. 2* is a suite of four programmatic essays inspired by his vacations spent in the rustic Vysočina highlands (popularly known as the Monkey Mountains), nestled between Bohemia and Moravia, not far from Brno. Haas was a master tone painter. The first movement evokes colorful images of nature—chirping birds, mist-shrouded hills and scudding clouds. The second movement brilliantly mimics the squeaks and groans of a wobbly cart careening down a country road. The third movement is a wistful meditation in the muted hues of a Whistler "nocturne," the fourth a kind of modern-day Walpurgis Night.