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St Lawrence
String Quartet

Intimate, Intense, In Concert In 2010

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And as our way of marking this auspicious occasion, and thanking you for your support, we are gifting all 2010 subscribers a free concert - the season finale Schubertiade!



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Welcome

A very warm welcome to this evening's concert by the St Lawrence String Quartet. We are delighted to have them back in the country as part of their 20th anniversary season, and that they have brought with them a brand new work by John Adams, written for their particular talents. Our thanks go to the Southern Trust, who have generously assisted with funding for this tour.

This is the final concert in our 59th year and we are preparing for our diamond anniversary season, which will begin in March 2010 with a nationwide tour by one of the most revered ensembles in the world. We look forward to celebrating Chamber Music New Zealand's enduring success with you.

In the meantime, enjoy tonight's varied programme and thank you all for your incredible support this year.



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Euan Murdoch

Chief Executive, Chamber Music New Zealand

PROGRAMME 1

Haydn	Quartet in E flat Opus 9 No 2	Page 3
John Adams	String Quartet	Page 4

INTERVAL

Dvořák	Quartet in G Opus 106	Page 5
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HAMILTON 13 OCTOBER	MANAWATU 19 OCTOBER
CHRISTCHURCH 21 OCTOBER	DUNEDIN 24 OCTOBER

PROGRAMME 2

Haydn	Quartet in F Opus 77 No 2	Page 6
John Adams	String Quartet	Page 4

INTERVAL

Mendelssohn	Quartet in F minor Opus 80	Page 7
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NEW PLYMOUTH 12 OCTOBER	HAWKES BAY 14 OCTOBER
SOUTHLAND 20 OCTOBER	NELSON 23 OCTOBER

Please respect the music, the musicians, and your fellow audience members by switching off all cellphones, pagers and watches.

Taking photographs or sound and video recordings during the concert is strictly prohibited unless with the prior approval of Chamber Music New Zealand.

St Lawrence String Quartet

Geoff Nuttall: violin
Scott St John: violin

Lesley Robertson: viola
Christopher Costanza: cello



The St Lawrence String Quartet is known for its dynamic musical style, with reviewers commenting on their freshness, precision and imaginative approach. On previous tours of New Zealand in 2003 and 2006 they established a reputation as engaging performers, and presented exciting new works by contemporary composers Oswaldo Golijov and Jonathan Berger. The group has just celebrated its 20th anniversary with commissioned works by both Golijov and John Adams, performances of five new quartets by Canadian composers, and tours of Europe and North America.

Labelled ‘a benchmark recording’, the group’s debut CD of Schumann quartets received the coveted German critics award, the Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik, as well as Canada’s annual Juno Award. That has been followed by CDs of Tchaikovsky, Golijov and Shostak-

ovich on the EMI label, and the St Lawrence String Quartet is currently preparing a recording of Haydn and Dvořák quartets through ArtistShare, a web-based company that enables audiences to become involved in the process.

Since 1998 the Quartet has been ensemble-in-residence at Stanford University in California, where they teach and run an annual summer chamber music seminar. Violinists Geoff Nuttall and Scott St John both grew up in London, Ontario and they alternate in the role of first violin. Geoff is a founding member of the group and Scott joined in 2006. Violist Lesley Robertson is also a founding member, and hails from Edmonton, Alberta. Cellist

Christopher Costanza is from Utica, New York and joined the Quartet in 2004.

“Play every concert like it’s your last; every phrase like it’s the most important thing you’ve ever said. Remember that the only reason you’re there is to make people cry and sweat and shiver, and give them that incredible sense of creation happening before your eyes. That’s the reason we all play. Otherwise there’s no point.”

Geoff Nuttall

Joseph Haydn

Born Rohrau, Lower Austria, 31 March 1732

Died Vienna, 31 May 1809

Quartet in E flat Opus 9 No 2

Moderato

Menuetto

Adagio - Cantabile

Finale: Allegro di molto

At the age of eight, Joseph Haydn, son of a farmer and wheelwright of German heritage, was taken into the cathedral choir of St Stephen's in Vienna. In addition to choral training, he also received elementary instruction on the violin and piano, and later commented: "I was a wizard on no instrument but I knew the strength and the working of all". When his voice broke at the age of 17, Haydn was thrown out of the choir with few clothes and no money, and for a time he was an itinerant musician, busking and "trailing around wretchedly giving lessons to children". More importantly, he spent much of his time teaching himself to compose, and his earliest quartets, which he called 'divertimenti' or 'cassations', were written during this period.

In the mid-1750s he obtained work with aristocratic families – one of the few employment avenues available to musicians at that time. This led, in 1761, to the position he held for 30 years as musical director to the Esterházy family. Haydn was a liveried servant, but of the highest rank, and had a footman, maid and handsome salary. He was expected to provide orchestral concerts, opera performances, music for church services, and chamber music evenings, and was able to experiment with an augmented orchestra of 22 players. In 1768, after a ten year gap and perhaps because he had some particularly talented players available, he again composed string quartets, producing the Opus 9, Opus 17 and Opus 20 sets in quick succession in the early 1770s.

In the early 1770s a wave of Romanticism was surging over Europe. In Germany, Goethe was leading the 'Sturm und Drang' [storm and stress] movement with its emphasis on individual emotions, and music inevitably followed in the footsteps of those literary developments, with the 'galant' divertimento style giving way to expressiveness, inspiration, directness and passion. Haydn still called the Opus 9 set 'divertimenti a quattro' [entertainments for four], though he later indicated that he saw these six works as his first real string quartets. They display some distinct characteristics that were developed further during Haydn's career. A four-movement structure was established, and in the Opus 9 set the order and importance of the movements is consistent: a substantial sonata form first movement, a lighter minuet, a central and melodic slow movement, and a short romp to finish with.



Quartet in E flat Opus 9 No 2

The Quartet No 2 in E flat is an early example of Haydn providing a sense of unity in the work by the reuse of a motivic idea, with elements such as a rising semitone, and a three-note figure formed by a downward leap of a sixth followed by a semitone, featuring in all four movements. It also shows the influence of the Italian virtuoso style of violin playing, very likely due to the engagement of a performer named Luigi Tomasini to lead the Esterházy orchestra. Pauses marked in the score at cadence points may well have been used for Tomasini to ornament the work with a short cadenza.

The opening of the Quartet is deceptively simple, and it is not until the development section that Haydn shows his skill in recombining and intertwining the arpeggio and scale-based elements.

The second movement is an elegant and formal minuet, enlivened by a quirky, stop-start trio section. Vocal music has had an obvious influence on the *Adagio*, in which the initial recitative leads into an aria-like movement. The work closes with a lively *Finale* that displays Haydn's typical sense of musical fun.

*Programme note from
Chamber Music New Zealand files*

John Adams

Born Worcester, Massachusetts, 15 February 1947



String Quartet

John Adams began his musical career as a clarinetist, but by the time he was ten he was studying composition and playing in marching bands, and by fourteen he was conducting his local community orchestra, which also performed his first piece. He went on to study composition at Harvard University, then taught for ten years at the San Francisco Conservatory. Between 1979 and 1985 he was composer-in-residence to the San Francisco Symphony, and during that time he established an international reputation with works such as *Harmonium* and *Grand Pianola Music*.

Now one of America's best-known composers, his music combines elements of minimalism with expressive post-romanticism, and his works frequently use contemporary events as their basis. *On The Transmigration of Souls* was commissioned by the New York Philharmonic as a memorial to the September 11 attack on New York and was premiered in 2002. The work earned Adams three Grammy Awards and the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for Music.

The ground-breaking opera *Nixon in China* (1987) also won a Grammy Award, as did the orchestral piece *El Dorado* (1991). Adams has been honoured with the 1994 Royal Philharmonic Society Music Award for *Chamber Symphony* and the 1995 Grawemeyer Award for his Violin Concerto.

In 2008 he published a volume of memoirs and commentaries on American musical life, entitled 'Hallelujah Junction'.

String Quartet

John Adams was inspired to write his String Quartet after he heard the St Lawrence String Quartet play his earlier work for quartet and electronics, *John's Book of Alleged Dances*. The new work was commissioned for the St Lawrence String Quartet by the Juilliard School, Stanford Lively Arts and The Banff Centre, and received its première on 29 January 2009 at the Juilliard School in New York.

Reviewers have been enthusiastic about String Quartet.

"The real draw was the concert's closing work, John Adams's String Quartet (2008) in its première performance. This 30-minute work, Mr Adams's first full-length quartet without an electronic track, is a stylistically fluid extended fantasy, with the players moving seamlessly through a colorful sequence of episodes. It begins with a touch of Minimalist chugging but moves far afield, with scampering chase figures as well as hushed, introspective moments and solo passages for each player. The St Lawrence String Quartet played the work with the passionate intensity that has long been its hallmark."

Alan Kozinn, New York Times, January 2009

"Like a perpetuum mobile, motion sweeps through the parts: it hums and purrs on the stage. The Canadians play the work as a scherzo with few points of repose. Electrified, like music which is in a constant current. The lively, rhythmically-charged, wild style of playing suits the 20-year-old ensemble, for which Adams has written the perfect work."

Ruhr Nachrichten, Germany, March 2009

"A stunner ... the piece boasts all the attributes audiences have come to associate with Adams' best music ... Its controlled restlessness yields to tremendous fervency, from the 'ghostly' elements of the first part to the second, with its ascending lines that rise and shimmer like heat off a highway ... Adams at his most gripping, and the St. Lawrence players gave the work a fierce, go-for-broke reading."

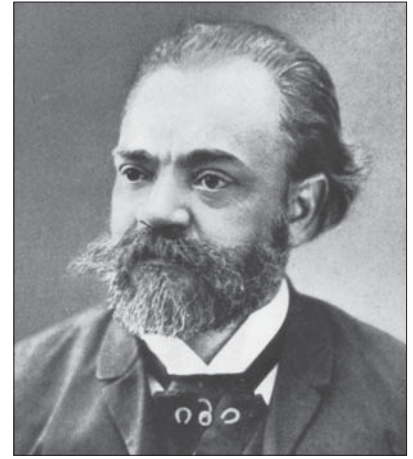
Georgia Rowe, San Jose Mercury News, April 2009

Programme note by Jane Dawson

Antonín Dvořák

Born Nelahozeves, near Prague, 8 September 1841

Died Prague, 1 May 1904



Dvořák was born in Bohemia and as a child would accompany his zither-playing father on the fiddle at weddings and village events. His schoolmaster and music teacher persuaded his parents to send young Antonín to study music at the organ school in Prague. After graduation, he worked for eleven years as a violist at the Prague Opera. His folk music inspired *Moravian Duets* brought him international recognition as a composer, particularly after support from Brahms, and in 1873 Dvořák decided to dedicate himself to composing and teaching.

He was invited to become head of the new National Conservatory of Music in New York in 1891, but suffered from severe homesickness. Early in 1895 he wrote a mere 70 bars of a string quartet Opus 105 before sailing for Europe, but even after arriving back in Prague he was not inspired to continue with it: "My muse is now quite silent. For four months I have not even taken up my pen."

The academic year at the Prague Conservatorium, where he had been appointed Professor of Composition, did not begin until November, so the composer spent the summer mainly at his home in the village of Vysoká. There he was able to enjoy the beauties of the Bohemian countryside of which he was so fond. He also took the opportunity to visit friends and colleagues who he had not seen for some time. By Dvořák's prolific standards, it was a 'lazy' year, but he is recorded as saying to friends that he felt a need to stop composing for a spell to gather his thoughts.

After this period of emotional and artistic reflection and internal renewal, he returned to Prague, where he re-connected with his old musical and intellectual circles. This combination of a restful summer followed by urban cultural stimulation seems to have restarted his creative processes, and he wrote a new string quartet - Opus 106 in G - and completed the Opus 105 quartet shortly afterwards.

String Quartet in G Opus 106

Allegro moderato

Adagio ma non troppo

Molto vivace

Finale (Andante sostenuto)

String Quartet in G Opus 106

The opening *Allegro moderato* is full of high spirits and introduces three main thematic ideas. These receive an ingeniously worked development, which includes the introduction of attractive counter-melodies.

At the heart of the Quartet is the second movement, one of the finest slow movements the composer ever wrote. It consists of freely-written variations on a theme that itself includes both positive and melancholy aspects. It is possible that the atmosphere was influenced by the memory of Josefina Cermaková, Dvořák's friend and first love, who died shortly before the Quartet was written.

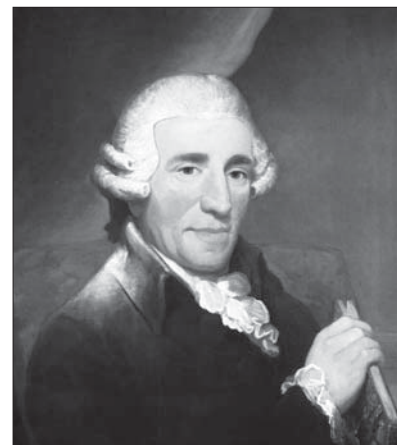
The *Molto vivace* is written in the style of a bubbly scherzo, with two contrasting and lyrical trio episodes. Contrasting themes appear throughout the *Finale*, including some melodic material drawn from the first movement. The principal theme first appears in an extended slower version at the opening, and the musical flow is further enhanced by the inclusion of a section marked *Allegro con fuoco*, which is reminiscent of a Czech *furiant* dance.

Programme note from Chamber Music New Zealand files

Joseph Haydn

Born Rohrau, Lower Austria, 31 March 1732

Died Vienna, 31 May 1809



String Quartet in F Opus 77 No 2

Allegro moderato

Menuetto. Presto ma non troppo

Andante

Finale. Vivace assai

In April 1798 Haydn's oratorio *The Creation* received its première at a private concert in Vienna, sponsored by an association of aristocratic patrons. At this time Haydn was approaching the height of his fame and juggled his official duties as Kapellmeister to Prince Nikolaus Esterházy with his own private composition projects.

Haydn numbered many members of Viennese society among his patrons and pupils. He had, for several years, been on good terms with Prince Franz Joseph Lobkowitz, a wealthy Bohemian nobleman who assisted in the sponsorship of *The Creation*. Quite apart from being a talented musician, Prince Lobkowitz was the most generous patron of the arts in Vienna, and in the early months of 1799 he commissioned from Haydn a set of six string quartets.

Composer and patron entered into what had become a standard arrangement whereby the quartets would remain the private property of the Prince for three years, after which Haydn was free to negotiate their publication.

In the event, Haydn completed only two of the quartets and modern scholars have speculated at length as to the reasons. According to Howard Robbins Landon, Prince Lobkowitz had approached the young Beethoven at around the same time with an identical commission, and Haydn, unwilling to invite a direct comparison with his erstwhile pupil, simply did not complete the set.

If this indeed was the case, Haydn need not have worried since his Opus 77 quartets stand among the finest of the classical era. The second quartet, in F, was the last Haydn completed and with it his instrumental composition reached its apogee. Both quartets were published in 1802 bearing a dedication to Prince Lobkowitz, and appeared simultaneously in Vienna, Leipzig and London.

String Quartet in F Opus 77 No 2

In the *Allegro moderato* both the principal theme and the secondary theme derived from it have a stately elegance, and it is the busy transitional material that provides contrast. The latter is contrapuntally worked out in the development section through a sequence of ever-flatter minor keys until the return of the sunny major mode at the recapitulation.

The *Menuetto* is set in the flattened submediant key of D flat and is really a dynamic scherzo with some subtle accent displacement. The central trio section has an unaffected melody that anticipates Schubert, and the appended coda modulates ingeniously back to F.

The *Andante*, in D, is an inspired essay in variation technique. At each repetition freshly woven counterpoint adds yet another dimension to the simple march-like theme. At the movement's climax, the ever-present theme is held in abeyance while the first violin executes an accompanied cadenza.

The *Finale* is a monothematic sonata form movement laid out on a grand scale and its thoroughly boisterous mood is East European in flavour. The development section, in particular, is notable for strictly imitative counterpoint, and the first violin's cadenza-like ascent into the stratosphere heralds the conclusion of the movement.

Programme note by Paul Maskill

Felix Mendelssohn

Born Hamburg, 3 February 1809

Died Leipzig, 4 November 1847

String Quartet No 6 in F minor Opus 80

Allegro vivace assai – Presto

Allegro assai

Adagio

Finale: Allegro molto

Felix Mendelssohn was one of the most successful musicians of the nineteenth century, enjoying a career that suffered few of the disappointments or rejections that dogged other Romantic composers. The prodigiously talented young Felix had perfect pitch and an astonishing musical memory, and could also draw well and spoke several languages fluently. At nine, he made his debut on the piano, and heard his choral setting of the Nineteenth Psalm performed. His equally talented elder sister Fanny became Felix's closest musical confidante and critic.

From the age of 20, Mendelssohn travelled extensively in Europe as a pianist, conductor and composer, establishing a following in London in particular. In 1833 he was appointed Director of the Lower Rhein Music Festival in Dusseldorf, a position which allowed him three months vacation each year, during which he continued his travelling and music-making, as well as maintaining contact with his family. Three years later he became conductor of the Gewandhaus orchestra in Leipzig, with annual leave of six months. In 1840 he was appointed General Music Director at the court in Berlin, a position that allowed him to keep his Leipzig role.

It is little wonder that by 1845 he was tired of spreading his energies and wanted to just concentrate on composing. However, his travel schedule showed no signs of slowing, and by May 1847 he was exhausted after a frantic round of concerts in London, Manchester and Birmingham. On his return to Germany he learned that his sister Fanny had died, and the news devastated him. That summer he wrote the String Quartet Opus 80 and began another oratorio and an opera, and in the autumn he resumed his conducting duties in Leipzig. By late October, though, a series of strokes had incapacitated him, and he died shortly after.



String Quartet No 6 in F minor Opus 80

The raw emotions of Mendelssohn's last quartet may come as a shock to listeners who are used to his carefully modulated forms and light-footed scherzos. Unsettled rhythms, fragmented motifs, and an extended level of dissonance make this quartet exceptional in his output.

A sense of urgency is apparent in the rapidly shifting moods and textures of the first movement. Although it gives the impression of being a free outpouring of emotion, the movement is in strict sonata form, with a coda that rises to fever pitch. The second movement occupies the place of a scherzo and has a more focused sense of anguish, with regular repeated sections that give it some stability. The dark, brooding Trio section returns at the end.

In contrast, the intermingling contrapuntal lines of the *Adagio* have a song-like quality, though this music is also created from small motivic elements. The *Finale*, which is another sonata form movement, returns to the distracted mood of the opening.

An unsigned article about the Quartet in F minor, published in the *London Musical World* in about 1853, captures the mood of Mendelssohn's music.

"The complete unity of feeling that assimilates the several portions of the composition, the entire absence of research throughout the whole, the conciseness yet comprehensiveness of the plan of each movement - these are among the characteristics ... that give the work the character of being an improvisation; and it is this effect that most closely appeals to our sympathies, making us feel that the music is an unrestrained, unstudied outpouring from the innermost heart of one whose passion was as a fire intense and irresistible, igniting the sense of all whom it touches, and making us to burn with his emotion."

Programme note by Jane Dawson

Happy 80th Birthday to the Auckland Chamber Music Society!

In October 1929 a group of Auckland music lovers, led by Roger and Julia Fenton, decided to form a society “for the purpose of giving concerts at which chamber music could be performed”. An initial concert was held on 18 November, and the inaugural Auckland Chamber Music Society committee began planning its first season for the following year. Contact between the Auckland Society and similar groups around the country gradually increased, enabling them to share the costs of bringing overseas artists to New Zealand. The establishment of the Federation of Chamber Music Societies (now called Chamber Music New Zealand) in October 1950 was a logical next step, and Auckland supplied the first President of the new national organisation, Julius Hogben.



During the early days of Chamber Music New Zealand, member societies were independent and run by volunteers, so Auckland Chamber Music Society chose its own subscription series from the national roster of artists, organised the concerts, and did its own marketing. In 1964, the original logo changed to one designed by Auckland artist Kees Hos. This was based on the ‘harmonogram’, and expressed “the essence of music as an inspiring movement in the space of sound”.

In 1988 the Auckland branch of Chamber Music New Zealand was established, but the Auckland Chamber Music Society remained as a parallel entity, and now uses its accumulated funds to provide a prize for the best student chamber music group at the Auckland University School of Music each year.

Members of the committee have produced a detailed history of the Auckland Chamber Music Society to celebrate its 80th anniversary. It is available from the Secretary, Anne Bonning (email handabon@ihug.co.nz or phone 09 476 9195), and the Society would be delighted to receive any additional information from past or current audience members.



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