University of Florida Performing Arts

presents

**Talich String Quartet**

Sunday, October, 14, 2007, 5 p.m.

Jan Talich, violin
Petr Macecek, violin
Vladimir Bukac, viola
Petr Prause, cello

**PROGRAM**

**Ludwig van Beethoven**

(1770-1827)

Quartet in C minor, Op. 18, No. 4
   Allegro ma non tanto
   Scherzo: Andante scherzoso quasi allegretto
   Menuetto: Allegretto
   Allegro

**INTERMISSION**

Quartet in B-flat major, Op. 130, *Liebquartett*
   Adagio ma non troppo; Allegro
   Presto
   Andante con moto, ma non troppo
   Alla danza tedesca: Allegro assai
   Cavatina: Adagio molto espressivo
   Finale: Allegro

**PROGRAM NOTES**

**Ludwig van Beethoven**

(1770-1827)

Quartet in C minor, Op. 18, No. 4
   Allegro ma non tanto ~ Scherzo: Andante scherzoso quasi allegretto
   Menuetto: Allegretto ~ Allegro

Curiously, no notebook sketches have ever been uncovered for Beethoven’s fourth quartet, probably the last one composed in Opus 18. This has led to speculation that the composer did not go through his usual throes in working out the problems, or that he based it on a previous composition in which he had already resolved any problems. The
The only minor-key quartet in Opus 18, the C minor, is probably the most popular work in the group, and like all of Beethoven’s works in this key, it is a musical statement with an especially heightened dramatic tension throughout.

The first theme, dark-hued and throbbing with an inner passion, traces an irregular path up from the violin’s lowest note to the top of its range. Beethoven caps off the climb with a series of powerful chords and a final outcry, before a sudden hush falls and the bridge passage leads to the second subject. This melody, first stated by the second violin, is very obviously derived from the second part of the first theme, but in a different key. After some concluding episodes in the exposition, Beethoven works through the material in the development section. During the transition to the recapitulation, the rapidly repeated notes in the second violin and viola give the effect of a tremolo, creating an almost orchestral sound. The first subject, even more agitated than before due to the syncopated figure in the two middle voices; the second subject, now stated by the first violin; the little changed concluding themes; and a climatic coda fill out the remainder of the movement.

Instead of following the powerful first movement with a conventionally slow and emotional second movement, Beethoven treats us to a moderately paced, witty Scherzo. Although there are three distinct themes: the first heard at the opening, the second a turning-on-itselt line shared by the two violins, and the third a descending and ascending scale introduced by the second violin, they all include a figure of three repeated notes either in the theme or the accompaniment. The texture is mostly polyphonic, with the tunes being blithely tossed from instrument to instrument in a proliferation of canons and fugati.

The somber and serious Menuetto recaptures to some extent the mood of the first movement. Beethoven’s recurrent use of third-beat accents distances it from typically dance like minuets. The middle section, or trio, is essentially a dialogue between second violin and viola, to which the cello supplies a bass line and the first violin contributes a running triplet commentary. The Menuetto is repeated after the trio, but Beethoven directs that this time it be played at a faster tempo.

Ferdinand Ries, a pupil of Beethoven, recounted an anecdote connected with the last movement of the C minor quartet that gives an insight into his teacher’s independent and unorthodox spirit of composition. In response to Ries’ discovery of an instance of parallel perfect fifths in the last movement, a practice forbidden by all teachers of composition, Beethoven replied, “Ah! Well, who is it who says perfect fifths are wrong?” After Ries named several leading music theorists of the day who forbade them, Beethoven said simply, “Very well, I allow the use of them!”

There are few other surprises in the final movement, a clearly defined rondo, very much in the style of Haydn. The sparkling main theme melody, played by the first violin, has elements of the Turkish style so favored by 18th century composers, including Haydn and Mozart. The second violin has almost exclusive rights to the richly lyrical episode that follows. A varied return of the main theme leads another constraint in which the instruments enter one after the other a gruff, pyramid like sequence. After the third reprise of the opening melody, there is a lengthy coda, ending with a rapid-fire finish.

Notes from: Guide to Chamber Music by Melvin Berger, © 1985
For several decades, the Talich Quartet has been recognized internationally as one of Europe’s finest chamber ensembles, and as the embodiment of the great Czech musical tradition. The quartet was founded in 1964 by Jan Talich, during his studies at the Prague Conservatory, and named for his uncle Václav Talich, the renowned chief conductor of the Czech Philharmonic. Over the decade of the 1990s, there was a gradual and complete change in personnel, rejuvenating the quartet while continuing the tradition of its predecessors through involvement in a wide spectrum of musical engagements and recording activities. Jan Talich Jr., the current first violinist, is the son of the quartet’s founder.

The Talich Quartet is regularly invited to prestigious chamber music festivals such as the Pablo Casals Festival in Prades, Prague Spring Music Festival, Europalia Festival, Printemps des Arts in Monte Carlo, Tibor Varga Festival of Music and the International String Quartet Festival in Ottawa. In addition, the quartet frequently visits such venues as New York’s Carnegie Hall, le Théâtre des Champs-Elysées and Salle Gaveau in Paris, and London’s Wigmore Hall.

The Talich’s recordings of the complete string quartets by Felix Mendelssohn, released on the Calliope label between 2001 and 2004, have been widely praised. Other recent recording projects include, also for Calliope, Dvořák’s American quartet and viola quintet (2003), Smetana’s two string quartets (2003), and a live recording of Schubert’s Death and the Maiden Quartet and the Dvorák Quintet (2004). The quartet’s recent Janacek recording was honored by Gramophone with a nomination for the best chamber recording of 2006—the only recording by a string quartet to be selected.

Jan Talich, Jr., violin (J.B. Vuillaume—1845)
Petřík Maceček, violin (Francesco Ruggieri—1694)
Vladimir Bukac, viola (Lorenzo Guadagnini—1740)
Petr Prause, cello (J. Gagliano—1795)

JAN TALICH Jr., violin, is a member of the Czech Republic’s premier musical family and son of the founder of the Talich Quartet. A member of the quartet since 1997, he has been honored throughout Europe as both a soloist and chamber musician, and has won numerous distinctions and prizes. He is the Founder and Director of the Talich Chamber Orchestra, and is particularly noted for his recordings of Czech music. He studied at the Prague Conservatory and in the United States and England.

PETR MACEČEK, violin, has served as concertmaster of the Prague Chamber Orchestra, the Slovak Chamber Orchestra and the Suk Chamber Orchestra, of which he was also Artistic Director. A graduate of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, his numerous awards include the Special Prize at the Henryk Wieniawski Competition in Poland. He has recorded for Naxos, Vox Classics and Koch. He currently performs in a piano trio as well as with the quartet, which he joined in 1998.

VLADIMIR BUKAC, viola, has been first violin of the Czech Philharmonic, concertmaster of the Chamber Orchestra of the Music University Prague and a member of the Prague Chamber Orchestra and the Suk Chamber Orchestra. From 1990 to 1993, he lived in Japan, performing as a soloist and chamber musician. His recordings include the Complete Suites for Solo Viola by Max Reger (Calliope). A graduate of the Prague Conservatory, he also studied in Freiburg. Currently, he is Professor of Viola at Carl Maria von Weber Music University in Dresden. He has been a member of the quartet since 1993.
PETR PRAUSE, cello, has been a member of the quartet since 1997. Prior to that, he served as first cello in the Prague Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra and was a member of numerous orchestras including the Beethoven Chamber Orchestra and Czech National Symphony. He has also performed as soloist with orchestras in France, Germany, Denmark, England and throughout Eastern Europe. A graduate of the Prague Academy of Performing Arts, he also attended the Menuhin Academy in Switzerland, and won top honors at the Guildhall School of Music in London.