

Martinů Quartet

Lubomír Havlák – violin
Adéla Štajnochrová – violin
Martin Stupka – viola
Jitka Vlašánková – cello

The beginnings of the **Martinů Quartet** date back to its members' student days at the Prague Conservatory and the Academy of Performing Arts. It has existed since 1976, when it was established under the name Havlák Quartet. Their first teachers were members of the legendary Quartets Smetana and Vlach. They also studied with members of Amadeus, Juilliard, Guarneri and Alban Berg Quartet. Subsequently, pursuing the tradition of the Czech quartet "school", the ensemble won a number of awards both at home and abroad including prizes at the ARD competition Munich, Evian (France), Yehudi Menuhin (Portsmouth, Britain) and The Prague Spring competitions.. In 1985 it named itself after Bohuslav Martinů.

The quartet has performed in the majority of European countries, in the USA, Canada and Japan, and has been invited to prestigious festivals and concert stages (Europamusicale, City of London Festival, Orlando Festival in the Netherlands, Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival in Finland, Prague Spring, Janáček festival – Ostrava, Wigmore Hall, Opera de Bastille Paris, Berlin, Tokyo, Basel, etc.). Its members have shared their experience as lecturers at international master classes.

Although the main weight of its repertoire is centred on the music of the world's great composers, the Quartet takes pleasure in seeking out neglected works and in giving first performances of pieces by contemporary composers. The quartet's repertoire naturally contains works by Bohuslav Martinů. It has received the MIDEM award for the best CD of 20th-century chamber music (Cannes 2004). Over the long term, the ensemble has performed and recorded quartets by the US-based composer Tomáš Svoboda. Their double CD of Taneyev Quintets (Supraphon) received great recognition (see reviews below) and was introduced in Radio France and BBC.

In August 2017 the Czech leading CD publisher Supraphon released their recording of chamber works by one of the foremost composers from the Czech Republic Petr Eben. Another recording – Oboe Quartet by prominent American 20th century composer Elliot Carter – was made for the Czech Radio. Collaboration with an American composer of younger generation Elliot McKinley resulted in three CD with his music.

The MQ has made recordings for Czech Radio, Radio France, the BBC, ARD and ORF, and for a number of Czech and foreign labels. The ensemble has received the Czech Chamber Music Society Award and a special prize from the Bohuslav Martinů Foundation.

During the last three years Martinů Quartet toured and played concerts in USA, Switzerland, Belgium, UK including Gibraltar, Holland, Izrael, France, Spain, Japan, Korea. The quartet was invited to play concerts at major Czech international festivals: Dvorak's Prague 2016, Prague Spring 2017, Concentus Moraviae 2016 or Days of Bohuslav Martinů 2016, VIAF Gozo, Malta,.

Their Chamber music courses PLAYWIP are very popular and have participants from all the World including Japan, USA, Canada and Taiwan.

www.martinuquartet.com

REVIEWS :

GRAMOPHONE October 2017

Eben Piano Trio. String Quartet, 'The Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart'. Piano Quintet, Supraphon SU4232-2 (69' • DDD)

"This new Supraphon release, then, is particularly welcome, venturing beyond Eben's more familiar organ music to showcase his equally affecting but relatively little-known chamber output."

"what is most remarkable is the economy with which Eben amplifies those personalities, a talent that pays dividends in his 1992 Piano Quintet. Not a note in this – the grittiest, most uncompromising piece on the disc – is wasted."

"The Martinu Quartet give all three works the flexibility they demand, tracing their angular contours like a musical cardiogram. Meanwhile Karel Košárek does full justice to the capricious piano parts. There is real vigour and enthusiasm here, reminding us that this is not punishing contemporary music to be held at arm's length, but simply music"

HARMONIE music magazine (Czech chamber music society, Rudolfinum, Prague April 2017

<http://www.ceskafilharmonie.cz/koncert/1183-kvarteto-martinu-k-kosarek>):

"...the ensemble is in top form and is a top interpreter of quartet music. The Martinů Quartet has its own distinctive style of expression and an exquisite culture of sound, and it needs no extreme effects to emphasise its individuality. The ensemble is exemplary in respecting the author's notation and renders the author's idea and intention perfectly."

CLASSICA, November 2015:

„Thanks to the Martinu Quartet, the genius of Taneyev, the Russian creator of melodies, and teacher of Scriabin, Rachmaninoff and Medtner, lives again today. A magnificent recording.

The Martinu Quartet give an opulent account of this music and make no attempt to persuade us that a sparer rendering will render it more modern. Unlike Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff, Taneyev does not go in for drama or theatrical expression. This is borne out by the Largo of the Piano Quintet (Op.30), a true masterpiece. In the simplicity of its inspiration Haydn comes to mind. The two String Quintets reveal a wealth of inspiration and a freshness that the musicians express with an elegance unparalleled in the modern readings.

In the Piano Quintet they surpass the up to now excellent version by Repin, Gringolts, Imai, Harrell and Pletnev (DG)."

The Telegraph, 21st March 2015:

"Taneyev: Complete Quintets, review: 'fascinating'

The Martinu Quartet do full justice to Taneyev's dynamic, romantic impulse

[Taneyev] had a musical heart, often passionately expressed and with a dynamic, romantic impulse.

Those are qualities that come across clearly in these performances: they have a strong backbone, but equally are alert to the lithe interplay between the five instruments to create substantial canvases in sound."

*BBC Music Magazine, June 2015 *****

"The string quintets emerge as near-orchestral giants, hard to categorise...The finest performance here is undoubtedly the perfectly-integrated sound of piano (Olga Vinokur, superlative) and string quintets I can imagine performances running a greater gamut of dynamics. But a thousand thanks to the Martinu and their colleagues for enlightenment."

*Classical Music, January 2016 *****

“Taneyev’s chamber works are cast on a big scale, infused with a nostalgic late-romanticism that is both winning and slightly cloying. The Martinu Quartet, however, makes the strongest possible case for them”

Gramophone Magazine, May 2015

“the artists have an exceptional understanding of what Taneyev is doing...very appealing work, sensitively understood and played”

The Plain Dealer – Cleveland, April 2001:

“World-class quartets enrich Cleveland.

*.....The players’ definitive performance of Martinu’s Quartet No.5 introduced an intense pre-war work
..... Performed with conviction, the ominous piece made a dramatic effect.*

Passauer Neue presse, 4.2.2016

PERFECTION UND KLANGSCHÖNHEIT MALL VIER

Es gibt viele Spitzen-Quartette auf der Welt. Doch bei weitem nicht alle besitzen diese durchatmende Musikalität, diese geistige Durchdringung einer Komposition und die Fähigkeit, deren musikalische Seele so "ungehemmt" zu offenbaren: Im Zusammenspiel aus einem Guss. Zum Schluss reine Klang-Kulinarik, Virtuosität, romantischer Zauber, ein wenig "Sommernachtstraum": Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdys 4. Quartett in e-Moll op. 44/2. Er soll es gar nicht so gemocht haben. – Hätte er am Dienstag den Martinus dabei nur zuhören können . . .