

PRAZAK QUARTET

Pavel Hula, violin
Vlastimil Holek, violin
Josef Kluson, viola
Michal Kanka, cello

The Prazak Quartet—one of today's leading international chamber music ensembles—was established in 1972 while its members were students at the Prague Conservatory. Since then, the quartet has gained attention for its place in the unique Czech quartet tradition, and its musical virtuosity.

The 1974 Czech Music Year saw the Prazak Quartet receive the first prize at the Prague Conservatory Chamber Music Competition. Within twelve months their international career had been launched with a performance at the 1975 Prague Spring Music Festival. In 1978 the quartet took the first prize at the Evian String Quartet Competition as well as a special prize awarded by Radio France for the best recording during the competition. Further prizes were awarded at various other Czech competitions.

For over 30 years, the Prazak Quartet has been at home on music stages worldwide. They are regular guests in the major European musical capitals—Prague, Paris, Amsterdam, Brussels, Milan, Madrid, London, Berlin, Munich, etc.—and have been invited to participate at numerous international festivals, where they have collaborated with such artists as Menahem Pressler, Jon Nakamatsu, Cynthia Phelps, Roberto Diaz, Josef Suk, and Sharon Kam.

In North America, the Prazak Quartet has performed in New York (Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, 92nd St. Y), Los Angeles, San Francisco, Dallas, Houston, Washington, Philadelphia, Miami, St. Louis, New Orleans, Berkeley, Cleveland, Tucson, Denver, Buffalo, Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal.

Their 2010/11 tours bring them to 20 North American cities, including New York (Carnegie Hall), Los Angeles, Houston, Dallas, Philadelphia, Salt Lake City, Tulsa, Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver.

The Prazak Quartet records exclusively for Praga/Harmonia Mundi which, to date, has released over 30 award-winning CDs. In addition to numerous radio recordings in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the Czech Republic, the Prazak Quartet has also made recordings for Supraphon, Panton, Orfeo, Ottavo, Bonton, and Nuova Era.

In 2010 Pavel Hula succeeded founding first violinist Vaclav Remes, who was unable to continue performing due to a medical condition in his left hand. Pavel Hula was the longtime first violinist with the Czech-based Kocian Quartet, and has been a close friend of the Prazak Quartet for many years.

July, 2010--Please discard previously dated materials.

EXCERPTS FROM THE PRESS:

(NOTE: When searching for suitable pull-quotes, be sure to check through the “Full reviews” section. The “Press excerpts” are not comprehensive, and do not necessarily display the best selections.)

“Thoroughly engaging...a warm, mellow, burnished sound that never hinted at stridency even during the most intense passages.”

“Riveting...a thrilling, knife-edge exactitude.”

“Definitive may be the most overused adjective in the critic’s vocabulary, but no other single word more aptly describes the achievement by this superb foursome.”

-Chicago Tribune

“The Prazak’s performance was authentic to the marrow.”

-Houston Chronicle

“You rarely hear it [Janacek’s 2nd Quartet] performed the way the Prazak played it, but then they are Czech, as was Janacek. It had the emotional immediacy of something torn from his life, pain and pleasure intensified by selective memory. Other versions of it by great quartets are cool by comparison.”

“Urgent and visceral, a grab at your sleeve...It’s hard to imagine Janacek disapproving of an interpretation so searingly intense and ardent.”

-Vancouver Sun

“This ensemble is now in the top echelon of its kind.”

“The Prazak Quartet’s account of Beethoven’s first *Rasumovsky*, on Thursday, was stunningly good—virile, gripping and absolutely satisfying.”

-The Globe and Mail (Toronto)

“A tone that was warm and shapely yet sufficiently crystalline to allow the textures and individual lines to be savored. It was the kind of virtuosity that does not call attention to itself, but leaves a listener feeling secure that the music is in capable hands....
A hotblooded, richly textured reading.”

--The New York Times

“Performed with mastery and the freedom that comes with deep identification with the music....
Luminous and opulent....the members perform rhapsodically and flamboyantly but in absolutely effortless synchronicity with one another....
Often the music took on a three-dimensional physicality....Clearly this is a quartet you can trust.”

--Philadelphia Inquirer

“The Prazak explored every expressive corner of the piece. Janacek’s explosive episodes rarely have sounded more vibrant or unsettling....The vehemence and poetry the Prazak brought to the score made this an engrossing experience....

Bold, sweet and always imaginative, the Prazak honored the piece [Beethoven Op. 131] as the splendidly varied journey it is when inspired musicians put minds and hearts together.”

--The Plain Dealer (Cleveland)

“Outstanding...Extraordinary...A vivid and moving experience....A compelling performance....An exceptional evening of music-making.”

--The Dallas Morning News

“Near ideal.”

--BBC Music Magazine

“The Prazak plays with the great tonal warmth and beauty of the Guarneri, the huge dynamic range of the Alben Berg, [and] the superb intonation of the old Quartetto Italiano.”

--Fanfare

“A warmth that recalled the proximity of coffee house and concert hall in the old Austro-Hungarian empire.”

--The Strad

“The Prazak’s excellent sense of rhythm and meticulous attention to dynamics is allied to a high level of musical understanding....beautifully poised...splendid.”

--Gramophone

“Poetic...powerful...It was the kind of performance that grabbed you by the collar and refused to behave.”

--Los Angeles Times

“Every challenge, technical and stylistic, was met and conquered as one by the Czech ensemble, which received a standing ovation.”

--Denver Post

“The performance was Electrifying...The playing was brilliant and impassioned, giving us chamber music at its best.”

--Evening Post, Wellington, NZ

“Singularly compelling.”

--San Francisco Chronicle

“They touched the heart constantly”

De Telegraaf, Amsterdam

DISCOGRAPHY--PRAZAK QUARTET (09/07)

(Note: all recordings on the **Praga** label. Distributed in North America by Harmonia Mundi USA.)

BEETHOVEN. Complete string quartets.
Item number: PRD 350 013
(Also available separately)

BERG. Quartet Op. 3; Lyric Suite.
WEBERN. Quartet Op. 28
Item number: PRD 250 161

BORODIN. Quartet No. 2, Piano Quintet, Cello
Sonata.
Item number: PRD 250139

BRAHMS. Quartet Op 67 in Bb-Major. Piano
Quintet.
Item number: PRD 250 220

DVORAK. Quartet Op 61 in C-Major.
Cypresses.
Item number: PRD 250 198

DVORAK. Piano Quintets, Op 5 & 81.
Item number: PRD 250175

DVORAK. Quartets Op. 105 & 96
("American").
Item number: PRD 250 136

DVORAK. Quartet No.12 in F. American.
Terzetto. Bagatelles.
Item number: PRD 250110

DVORAK. String Quartets No.10 & 13.
Item number: PRD 250102

HAYDN. String Quartets ("Lark", "Emperor",
Op. 20/6)
Item number: PRD 250169

HAYDN. String Quartets Op.76/4-6 (Vol.2).
'Erdödy'
Item number: PRD 250070

JANACEK. String Quartets No.1 'Kreutzer' & 2
'Intimate Letters'.
Violin Sonata
Item number: PRD 250108

MOZART. Prussian Quartets, Nos.21-23.
K.575, 589, 590.
Item number: PRD P250026

SCHOENBERG. String Quartets No.1 & 2.
Item number: PRD 250112

SCHOENBERG. String Quartets No.4 &
Transfigured Night.
Item number: PRD 250234

SCHULHOFF. Chamber Music.
Item number: PRD 250203

SCHUBERT. Quartets No.13 'Rosamunde' &
14 'Death & the Maiden'.
Item number: PRD P250091

SMETANA. String Quartets No.1 & 2, duos.
Item number: PRD 250128

ZEMLINSKY. String Quartets No.1 & 4.
2 Movements for String Quartet.
Item number: PRD 250107