



Taurus Quartet

Taurus Quartet is a new Belgian string quartet, which was founded in May 2012. The quartet consists of four experienced musicians who each have an established reputation in the chamber music world. The love for the quartet repertoire, the joy of digging deep into these masterpieces together and the search for harmony, electricity and a unique sound in their quartet playing, are the driving forces behind the Taurus Quartet.

After one year of intensive rehearsing and giving private performances, Taurus Quartet made its debut in June '13, with a concert of both Janáček quartets at Festival Musiq3 in Flagey, Brussels. Both these performances were broadcast live on Belgian radio and received critical acclaim. Their following concerts in the Festival de Wallonie Stavelot were also broadcast for radio in 24 European countries.

In its first season, the quartet presented itself with a wide range of diverse and challenging programmes and performed at the Festival of Flanders (Gent, Antwerp, Brussels) and Festival de Saintes (Radio France) as well as giving many other concerts elsewhere. And supported by the Singel (Antwerp), the quartet worked together with Antje Weithaas and the Artis Quartett Wien.

In the 2014-2015 season, the Taurus Quartet gave concerts at Bozar (Brussels), Concertgebouw (Bruges), Handelsbeurs (Gent), de Singel (Antwerp), Flagey (Brussels) and performed at all other major concert halls and festivals in Belgium as well as at festivals in Holland, France and Ireland.

The Taurus Quartet is looking forward to the forthcoming seasons and will offer some exciting programme proposals. A great personal affinity with the proposed repertoire and the desire to play these works are our main starting point. Obviously, we are open to adapt our programmes to themes or to specific wishes from organizers.

Do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or would like to receive more information.

We would look forward to hearing from you!

Taurus Quartet

contact: info@taurus-quartet.be

taurusquartet@gmail.com

00 32 485 190078 (Martijn Vink)

Taurus Quartet: programme proposals

“Extreme emotions”

Schubert	Quartettsatz in c minor, D 703 (1820) ca. 10’
Janáček	String quartet no.2, “ <i>Intimate letters</i> ” (1928) 25’
Schubert	String quartet no.15 in G major, D 887 (1826) 45’

In this program, Janáček's ultimate love-manifest is placed next to the last string quartet by Schubert, both in size and depth a magnum opus!



In his dying years Janáček wrote a musical reflection of the 600 letters written to his great platonic love, the 38 years younger Kamila. The extremes that resound here are overwhelming. An ideal sparring partner for the last quartet of Schubert, a final farewell to classicism, with its rich polyphony, great structural complexity and extreme contrasts.



“(Extra-)terrestrial Beauty”

Haydn	String quartet op. 54 no.2 in C major(1788) 20’
Goeyvaerts	De Zeven Zegels (1986) 15’
Beethoven	String quartet op.130 in B-flat major with the Grosse Fuge (1825) 50’

In 1977, the people launched a spacecraft containing a selection of sounds , languages and music of our own earthly life , as a message to possible extraterrestrial beings . The



Cavatina , the slow movement of the powerful , six-part string quartet op.130 by Beethoven , was the last piece of this " *golden record* " ... chosen as the ultimate example of earthly beauty , spirituality and human genius ! The powerful Great Fugue, that follows immediately after, radically breaks all taboos: never before had music sounded so extreme and destructive. That the two thousand years of the Age of Aquarius dawns , is known to astrologers; this elegiac quartet Goeyvaerts looks forward to this time of ecstatic purity and immense faith in the human spirit .

Haydn, grandfather of the string quartet , was a great source of inspiration for Beethoven. This

quartet op.54 no.2 is full of surprising twists and has an amazing , visionary slow movement : the inspiration for the Cavatina ?

Taurus Quartet: programme proposals

“Soulmates”

Webern	'Langsamer Satz' (1905) 10'
Mendelssohn	String quartet no.2 in A minor, op.13 (1827) 30'
Beethoven	String quartet no.15 in A minor , op.132 (1825) 45'

Mendelssohn wrote his first string quartet (although it was later cataloged as no.2) at the age of 18, inspired by Beethoven's late string quartets which had just been published, and only a few months after the death of his great predecessor. The late string quartets of Beethoven were reviled by many, including Mendelssohn's own father, as "un-decipherable, uncorrected horror". The young Mendelssohn though was so fascinated by those works, that in his opus 13 he derives the keys, form, structure and the idea of leitmotifs from opus 132. Two soulmates... and two absolute highlights in the string quartet repertoire! The old man introspective and existential, the young man deeply romantic ... just like the young Webern in his Langsamer Satz, the lyrical work that opens this program.



“Le lyrisme franco-belge”

Lekeu	Molto adagio (1877) 10'
Debussy	String quartet op.10 in G major (1893) 25'
Lekeu	Meditation (1877) 10'
Ravel	String quartet in F major (1903) 27'

Ravel and Debussy are both composers who, while maintaining their own personal style, are symbols of the changing French music around 1900. The search for harmonic innovation, the experimenting with sounds and timbres, and the use of new playing techniques link the works in this programme.

The Belgian composer Lekeu described his two pieces for string quartet as "*melodies of such length, that a single exposure is sufficient to perfect a piece of music*". Both are very melancholic works because "*joy is a thousand times more difficult to paint than suffering*" says Lekeu.

The poetry, rhetoric and romanticism that feature in these three compositions, make this programme varied and challenging.

Taurus Quartet: programme proposals

“English influences”

Haydn	String quartet in G minor, op 74 no.3 “ <i>Rider</i> ” (1793) 20’
Elgar	Piano quintet in A minor, op. 84 (1918) 25’
Mendelssohn	String quartet in E minor, op 44 no.2 (1837) 30’

The piano quintet is one of the main chamber works by Sir Edward Elgar. Along with the violin sonata (op.82) and the string quartet (op.83) it was written at the end of the First World War and it shares both the typical English poetry as the intense passion with the famous cello concerto (op.85), that was composed shortly after.

Mendelssohn wrote his quartet in e minor, 44 no.2 in 1837, after a long period of concerts and travels to London. The piece has a dark intensity that Elgar might well have identified with. Both these works seem to work wonderfully together.

The quartets of Haydn opus 74 were written in his London period. The “Rider” quartet from this series may be the most well-known and is an appropriate ‘upbeat’ for this ‘English’ program!

“Russia & Vienna; mutual inspiration”

Borodin	String quartet no.2 in D major (1881) 30’
Janáček	String quartet no.1 “ <i>Kreutzer-sonate</i> ” (1923) 18’
Beethoven	String quartet op.59, “ <i>Razoumovsky no.2</i> ” in E minor (1803) 25’

These works form together a triptych based on their mutual inspiration.

Beethoven dedicated his middle string quartets opus 59 to the Russian ambassador in Vienna, Andreas Razumovsky. To honor his employer, he incorporated Russian themes into this work.

Beethoven’s violin sonata no. 9 “Kreutzer Sonata”, composed in the same period, acts as a leitmotif in the novella from 1889 by the Russian writer Tolstoy, in which marriage, passion and jealousy end fatally.

And this book subsequently inspired Janáček to write an intense musical story, his Kreutzer Sonata. To start the programme, the lyrical second string quartet of Alexander Borodin, who was a contemporary of Tolstoy.



Taurus Quartet: programme proposals

“Music and power: powerful music!”

Haydn	String Quartet op.76, no.3 in C major 'Kaiser Quartet' (1797) 25'
Britten	String Quartet No.2 in C major, op.36 (1945) 30'
Shostakovich	String Quartet no.15 in E flat major, op. 144 (1974) 35'

There has always been a tension between the rulers and musicians ... but it has certainly led to powerful music!

Haydn wrote the six string quartets op.76 for his employers in Esterhazy and Count Georg Erdödy. The third quartet in this series gets the nickname "Emperor", because in this piece he quotes a hymn, which he had written for Emperor Franz II ... a melody that still serves in the German national anthem today.

At the end of the Second World War, Britten who was a convinced pacifist, wrote his "Purcellian" second string quartet in which he tries to fight the poison of the tarantula spider (here the symbol of the cruel war) by a wild tarantella dance.

Shostakovich spent his life as a tightrope walker, balancing between the expectations of the Communist Party and the desires of an innovative artist. In his last quartet, he suggests the bitterness of a man who was bullied throughout his life, suffocated in the dream of what he could have written "if they had let me do it". An introspective meditation on mortality, consisting of six movements ... all adagio's!



“Dark Romanticism”

Haydn	String quartet op.20 no.5 in F minor (1772) 20'
Beethoven	String quartet no.11 in F minor, op.95 “ <i>Serioso</i> ” (1810) 20'
Brahms	Piano Quintet op.34 in F minor (1864) 30'

These works form together an intense triptych in F minor: warm and dark romanticism from Vienna.

With his string quartets Opus 20, Haydn laid the foundation for his honorary title "Father of the String Quartet". Written in a turbulent period of his personal life, the quartet no.5 is perhaps the most personal and emotional outpouring from that series.

Beethoven's String Quartet op.95 is the last quartet he wrote before he started composing his late quartets. It is the shortest of all his quartets, with a dramatic and dark atmosphere.

To end this programme, inevitably, the majestic Piano Quintet by Brahms. Written in the romantic Viennese tradition, it is one of our very favorite pieces!

Taurus Quartet: programme proposals

“Luft von anderem Planeten”

Mozart	Quartet no.19 in C major, 'Dissonanzen' (1785) 25'
Schönberg	Quartet no.2 in F# minor, Op. 10 (1908), for soprano and string quartet 25'
Brahms	Quartet op.51 no.2 in A minor (1873) 30'

Some works are milestones: groundbreaking compositions, crossroads in time ...

"You can really say that I owe many, many thanks to Mozart; for example, if you examine how I write for string quartet, you can not deny that I have learned this directly from Mozart. And I'm proud of it! "(Schönberg, 1949).

So, Mozart should open this wonderful programme. The visionary and modern sounding introduction of Mozart's famous nineteenth string quartet led to its nickname "dissonances quartet", already alluding to the limits of harmony.

The second string quartet of Schönberg is widely regarded as the turning point in the history of music. In the first two movements romanticism and its rich harmony reaches its limits; after that, for Schönberg there was no return. In the fourth movement, the soprano sings one of the most moving phrases in the music literature: "ich fühle Luft von anderem Planeten", an announcement of his departure from the tonal system.

In his famous essay "Brahms the Progressive," Schönberg praises Brahms's string quartets for their progressive harmony and the unprecedented perfection with which each part is built from a small motif. Brahms' second string quartet, romantic and uplifting, is a wonderful example and a beautiful ending to this concert.



“Harmonic sophistication”

Ravel	String quartet in F major (1903) 27'
Respighi	Quartetto Dorico (1924) 22'
Enescu	String Quartet op.22 no.2 in G major (1952) 30'

At the time of modernist movements in the twentieth century, Ravel, Respighi and Enescu were composers who clung to their own personal style, while maintaining a tonal system. The concept of harmonic innovation by using old church modes connects the work in this programme. The poetry, rhetoric and romanticism that features their personal style, make this programme varied and challenging.

“Death and the Maiden”

Mozart	String quartet no.15 in D minor (1783) 25’
Martinu	String quartet no.7 “ <i>Concerto da Camera</i> ” (1947) 20’
Schubert	String quartet no.14 in D minor, “ <i>der Tod und das Mädchen</i> ” (1824) 30’

We feel that two absolute highlights of the string quartet repertoire seem to share a hidden theme of restless fear and feminine vulnerability...

Mozart dedicated his late string quartets to Haydn and from this series No.15 is the only in a minor key. Mozart composed the piece in the night that his wife gave birth to their first child. It is a perfect piece, with fully loaded tension and inner turmoil, a testimony of a genius in expectation!

After a serious illness in 1824, Schubert wrote his String Quartet "Death and the Maiden", based on a song with the same title. It's a musical testament and a tribute to his impending death. The finale is most definitely in the character of a dance of death; ghastly visions whirl past in the inexorable uniform rhythm of the tarantella.

Martinu's 7th String quartet, *Concerto da Camera*, has both the sparkling playfulness of the classical masters, as the distinctive Slavic drama. A discovery in this classical programme!



Repertoire list

- Bach: Kunst der Fuge Contrapunctus n° 1 in d minor*
Bach: Kunst der Fuge Contrapunctus n° 5 in d minor
Beethoven String Quartet op.18 no.1 in F major (1798) 25 ‘
Beethoven String Quartet op.18 no.4 in c minor (1798-1800) 23’
Beethoven String Quartet op.18 no.6 in B flat (1799) 25 ‘
Beethoven String Quartet op.59, “Razoumovsky no.2” (1803) 25 ‘
Beethoven String Quartet op.95 in F minor, “Serioso” (1810) 20 ‘
Beethoven String Quartet in B flat op.130 with the Grosse Fuge (1825) 50 ‘
Borodin String Quartet No.2 in D (1881) 30 ‘
Brahms String Quartet op.51 no.2 in a (1873) 30’
Brahms Clarinet Quintet in b op. 115 (1891) 35 ‘
Brahms Piano Quintet op.34 in f minor (1864) 35’
Britten String Quartet op.36 no.2 in C (1945) 30 ‘
- Celis ‘Il Canto della Piccina sirena’ for String Quartet, op.48 (1994) 8’*
Ciurlionis String Quartet no.1 in c 18 ‘
- D’hoë String Quartet no. 1 ‘Resonances’, (2015) 20’*
Dvořák String Quartet no.14 in A flat major, Op. 105, B. 193 (1895) 35’
- Elgar Piano Quintet op.84 (1918) approx 30 ‘*
Enescu String Quartet op.22 no.2 in G (1952) 28 ‘
- Glass String Quartet No 3 “Mishima” (1985) 15’*
Goeyvaerts the Seven Seals (1986) 15 ‘
- Haydn String Quartet op.20 no.5 in f (1772) 20 ‘*
Haydn String Quartet op. 54 no.2 in C (1788) 20 ‘
Haydn String Quartet No. 53 in D “Lark”, Op. 64, No. 5 (1790) 20 ‘
Haydn String Quartet in G, on 74 no.3 “Reiter” (1793) 20 ‘
Haydn String Quartet op.76 no.1 in G (1796) 18 ‘
Haydn String Quartet No. 61 d “Kwinten”, Op. 76, no.2 (1796) 20 ‘
- Janáček String Quartet no.1 “Kreutzer Sonata” (1923) 18 ‘*
Janáček String Quartet no.2, “Intimate Briefe” (1928) 25 ‘
- Martinu String Quartet no.7 “Concerto da Camera” (1947) 20 ‘*
Mendelssohn String Quartet No. 2 in A minor, Op. 13 (1827) 30 ‘
Mendelssohn String Quartet in E, 44 no.2 (1837) 30 ‘
Mozart String Quartet no.15 in d (1783) 25 ‘
Mozart String Quartet no.19 in C, ‘Dissonanzen’ (1785) 25 ‘
Mozart Adagio and Fugue in C minor, K. 546 (1788) 9’

Taurus Quartet: programme proposals

Prokofiev String Quartet No. 1 in B minor, Op. 50 (1931) 25 ‘

Purcell A selection of Fantasias

Ravel String Quartet in F (1903) 27 ‘

Respighi Quartetto Dorico (1924) 22 ‘

Schönberg String Quartet No. 2 in F sharp minor, Op. 10 (1908) 30 ‘

Schubert Quartettsatz in C, D 703 (1820) 10 ‘

Schubert String Quartet no.14 in d, “der Tod und das Mädchen” (1824) 30 ‘

Schubert String Quartet no.15 in G (1826) 45 ‘

Schubert String Quintet in C, D956, opus posthumous 163 (1828) 45 ‘

Shostakovich Piano Quintet in G, op.57 (1940) 35 ‘

Shostakovich String Quartet no.15 in es, op. 144 (1974) 35’

Sibelius String Quartet “Voces Intimae”, op.56 in d minor (1909) 30 ‘

Szymanowski String Quartet no. 2 op. 56 (1927) 20’

Sibelius String Quartet op.56 in g ‘Voces Intimae’ (1909) 30’

Vasks String Quartet no.4 , (2003), 30 ‘

Verdi String Quartet in E (1873) 28 ‘

Webern Fünf Sätze (1909) 12 ‘

Webern ‘Langsamer Satz’ (1905) 10 ‘

Webern Quartet 1905 (1905)) 15 ‘

Wolf Italienische serenade in G, WW XV / 3 (1887) 8 ‘

Ysaye ‘Harmonies du soir’ for quartet and string orchestra, op.31 (1924) 15 ‘