

anniversary

season



QUARTET

PRESENTS
THE CZECH AFFAIR

Indulge in an evening of

Bohemian Rapture

www.tangquartet.co


NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL
SINGAPORE

a.r.t.s.fund



From left: Ng Yu-Ying (1st Violin), Ang Chek Meng (2nd Violin), Wang Zihao (Cello), Han Oh (Violist)

AUG 29 2022: With a combination of biography, cultural commentary and personal reflection, the third edition of the T'ang Quartet's 30th Anniversary Season is one flavoured by Eastern Europe. The upcoming show on Oct 4 at Victoria Concert Hall harks back to the T'ang Quartet's Czech connection, and the ensemble has assembled a programme devoted to Czech music of the 19th and 20th-century – a refreshing detour from the old world classics, representing a part of the Quartet's illustrious 30-year musical journey.

First violinist Ng Yu-Ying and second violinist Ang Chek Meng were mentored by former Singapore Symphony Orchestra's violist Jiri Heger from Czech Republic. He taught the two members during their formative years as musicians. Jiri, who played an instrumental role in the T'ang Quartet's development, went on to help the ensemble record their 2005 debut album, *The Art of War*, as well as the 2006 *Made in America* album (featuring Jiri), in Prague.

On Oct 4, classical music fans will be treated to a stunning fare of quartet masterpieces by three Czech composers – Josef Suk, Antonin Dvořák and Pavel Haas.

Yu-Ying says: "The programme speaks a common language of the rhythms, novel harmonies and lyrical melodies from Eastern European folk traditions."

OF CZECH SPIRIT & ESSENCE

The evening begins with Suk's nationalistic Czech piece, *Meditation on the Old Czech Chorale "Saint Wenceslas" Op.35a*. Suk, who studied under Dvorak, is the turn-of-the-century composer, and one of the leading composers in Czech Modernism.

Stunning, contemplative as well as emotional and nostalgic, the four-part polyphonic work was written in 1914 in World War I in a time when the Czechs hoped to gain independence from the Austrian Empire, of which they were part of. The composer wanted to ignite the Czech nationalist movement, while the old Bohemian chorale on which it was based on honours Svatý Vaclav (St. Wenceslas), the patron Saint of Bohemia. "The second piece by composer Antonin Dvořák is a well-loved one," says Chek Meng of *The String Quartet in F Major, Op.96 "American"*. "This work is very much idiomatic of his Czech roots but he combined the best of Czech folk tunes with New World spirituals and drum rhythms. It's one of the most popular works in the string quartet repertory.

"Dvořák's 'American' and Haas' quartets are also featured on our critically-acclaimed albums *The Art of War* and *Made in America* albums."

Post intermission, the Quartet turns their attention to the third piece – Pavel Haas'

String Quartet No. 2 "From the Monkey Mountains". "This piece was chosen in our programme as it is considered to be one of Haas' first high points of his oeuvre," adds cellist Zihao.

The Czech-Jewish composer, who was greatly influenced by his teacher Leo Janáček, combined the neo-classicist techniques of Igor Stravinsky with a very personal adaptation of jazz elements as well as the melodic and harmonic features Czech folk music and Jewish synagogue music.

THE CZECH AFFAIR

CONCERT INFO

When: Oct 4, Tuesday, 7.30pm
Venue: Victoria Concert Hall
Sistic Tickets: \$40, \$30, \$20
 Buy [here](#)

PRESS QUERIES

Cara Van Miriah
Mail: cara@infected.studio
Cell: +65.9066.3440

 Download images

THE CZECH AFFAIR



JOSEF SUK [1874-1935]

*Meditation on the Old Czech Chorale
"Saint Wenceslas" Op.35a*

Josef Suk wrote this piece to resonate with Czech nationalistic pride. Tensions between Protestants and the ruling Habsburgs led to a failed Protestant revolt in the 17th century and Bohemia came under Austrian rule.

Suk, who was Antonin Dvořák's composition student and son-in-law, was second violinist in the Bohemian Quartet. The quartet was forced to play the Austrian national anthem at the opening of each concert from 1914. In response, Suk wrote this single-movement piece that very year and based it on a hymn to St Wenceslas, the patron saint of Bohemia, intending for it to resonate with the Czech nationalist spirit. The hymn on which the *Meditation* is based is known as the *Svaty Václave* (St Wenceslas). It was written as early as the 12th century and it remains popular today. Dvořák references it in his *Hussite Overture* of 1883 while Suk's *Meditation* was written nearly three decades later, less than two months after World War I.

Two days after the work was finished, it premiered on Sept 27, 1914 – on the eve of the Feast of St Wenceslas.

The Slovaks, who are closely related to the Czechs, also opposed Habsburg rule, and at the end of World War I in 1918, Czechs and Slovaks combined to form the Republic of Czechoslovakia, of which Bohemia was a part.



ANTONIN DVOŘÁK [1841-1904]

*The String Quartet in F Major,
Op.96 "American"
I. Allegro ma non troppo
II. Lento
III. Molto vivace
IV. Finale: vivace ma non troppo*

Dvořák's 12th string quartet got its nickname, "*American*", possibly because of a comment that it was his "second composition written in America" after his Ninth Symphony "*From the New World*". However, the only thing vaguely American about this piece is Dvořák's use of the pentatonic scale, which is common in American folk music. It is not exclusive to that genre, though, and is evident in ethnic music worldwide.

Dvořák himself had employed this scale in compositions that predated his time in the United States, and it probably came from his familiarity with Slavonic music. The American Quartet was where Dvořák's chamber music work finally took off, having battled for decades between gushing melodic beauty and structure. While the pentatonic scale gives it an open and simple nature, the composer defended it, saying, "When I wrote this quartet in the Czech community of Spillville in 1893, I wanted to write something for once that was very melodious and straightforward, and dear Papa Haydn kept appearing before my eyes, and that is why it all turned out so simply. And it's good that it did."

Dvořák wrote the outline of the piece in three days and completed it 13 days later. It remains one of the most loved chamber works ever written.



PAVEL HAAS [1899-1944]

*String Quartet No 2
Op.7 "From the Monkey Mountains"
I. Landscape – Andante
II. Coach, Coachman and Horse – Andante
III. The Moon and I... – Largo e misterioso
IV. Wild Night – Vivace e con fuoco*

Haas, who was among Leos Janacek's most accomplished students, wrote this piece in 1925 in Brno. The piece is written as a programmatic music suite (as opposed to a classical quartet) in memory of a summer holiday spent in the Czecho-Moravian Highlands, and it is from these hills that the piece derives its subtitle, "*From the Monkey Mountains*", as this was how youngsters of Haas' time living in Brno referred to the area.

The piece combines Janacek's exquisite compositional techniques with jazz, and was written three years after Haas completed his studies with his master. The work also marks the first high point of Haas' stature as a composer.

The titles of the movements of this piece are what the atmospheric music depicts – the piece opens gently before rising into an opulent "*Landscape*", a postcard to set the mood; the second movement, "*Coach, Coachman and Horse*", will make you feel you're riding in a rickety horse-drawn coach; the third, "*The Moon and I...*", is deeply introspective and mysterious; and the finale. "*Wild Night*" is a celebration of a mash-up of folk melodies and elements of jazz music – possibly evocative of an evening of dancing and partying, with a tender love encounter emerging towards the end of the movement.

T'ANG QUARTET
PRESENTS

THE CZECH AFFAIR

Josef Suk
Meditation on the Old Czech
Chorale "St Wenceslas" Op.35a

Antonin Dvořák
String Quartet No.12
Op.96 "American"

INTERMISSION

Pavel Haas
String Quartet No.2 Op.7
"From the Monkey Mountains"

October 4 2022, Tuesday
Victoria Concert Hall
7.30pm



Sistic Tickets \$20, \$30, \$40

