

Recital Hall  
M.O. Morgan Building  
Monday, 5 March 1990  
8:00 p.m.

## SHOSTAKOVICH STRING QUARTET

ANDREI SHISHLOV, violin  
SERGEI PISHCHUGIN, violin  
ALEXANDER GALKOVSKY, viola  
ALEXANDER KORCHAGIN, 'cello

String Quartet in A minor, Op. 29

Franz Schubert  
(1797-1828)

*Allegro ma non troppo*  
*Andante*  
*Menuetto*  
*Allegro moderato*

String Quartet #4 in D major, Op. 83

Dmitri Shostakovich  
(1906-1975)

*Allegretto*  
*Andantino*  
*Allegretto*  
*Allegretto*

### INTERMISSION

String Quartet #3 in E flat minor, Op. 30

Peter Illyitch Tchaikowsky  
(1840-1893)

*Andante sostenuto - Allegro moderato - Tempo I*  
*Allegretto vivo e scherzando*  
*Andante funebre e doloroso ma con moto*  
*Finale: Allegro non troppo e risoluto*

Tour Coordination  
OVERTURE CONCERTS



## PROGRAMME NOTES

### String Quartet in A minor, Op. 29

Franz Schubert

The person Schubert is probably one of the most tragic figures in musical history. His short life was more or less a series of failures and frustrations, brought on by his own personal insecurity and shyness. The tireless production of music, some forgotten but most on the highest level of artistic achievement, was his escape. Informal gatherings at which he performed for his close friends were his social outlet and only source of musical encouragement.

Although Schubert seemed to turn out music effortlessly, the overpowering genius of Beethoven was a burden he struggled with most of his life. With the creation of the German Lied he found a medium which was untouched by Beethoven's influence. The immensely successful style of his song writing eventually spread into his instrumental music, thus creating a new freedom of expression.

In Schubert's mature string quartets the dramatic dualism of themes, one of the basic requirements of the classical sonata form, has been relaxed, and even the contrast in mood between individual movements has been reduced. Thereby, a certain continuity of thought is established within each work, similar to that of a song cycle. The dramatic aspect is not neglected; the stunning exchange between major and minor is ever-present. Furthermore, the mood often turns abruptly where one would least expect it.

The Quartet in A minor is a typical example of this style of writing. The basic framework is traditional, but is never allowed to disrupt the constant flow of melody. A quiet melancholy mood prevails throughout the work, occasionally optimistic enough to be called serene. The famous theme of the Andante is from the music to the drama **Rosamunde of Cyprus**, written one year before the quartet in 1823. Schubert used it again in a piano impromptu a few years later.

### String Quartet No. 4 in D major, Op. 83

Dmitri Shostakovich

Shostakovich wrote his first quartet in 1938, shortly after the powerful Symphony No. V. The writing skill he had acquired in his orchestral works proved to be advantageous for the breakthrough into a new field. As a result, none of the first quartets shows "growing pains".

As time went on, the string quartet played an increasingly important role in Shostakovich's work. During the last four years of his life, he shunned away from symphonic writing altogether, and focused only on chamber music.

The Quartet No. 4, written in 1949, contains neither tragic pessimism nor satirical wit - two predominant traits of Shostakovich's music. Instead, it is lyrical and transparent, written with a very light hand, but at the same time with firm control of the material.

The first movement is like an overture, setting the mood for the contemplative Andantino. A very colourful Scherzo follows, free of the Mahler-like visions of other pieces of the same category. The Finale provides the necessary drama for the whole work - but this time, it is drama in the shape of a heavy-footed folk dance rather than drama born out of distress. As one might expect, the piece returns to its basic lyrical mood and ends very quietly.

### String Quartet in E flat minor, Op. 30

Peter Illyitch Tchaikowsky

The last of Tchaikowsky's three string quartets is dedicated to the memory of violinist Ferdinand Laub, whose ensemble had premiered the earlier quartets. Laub's brilliant playing was often compared with that of his famous contemporary, Joseph Joachim. Had Tchaikowsky not set such a dignified memorial for his friend, the world would have probably forgotten him completely.

The extra-musical motivation of the Quartet No. 3 makes us think of Tchaikowsky's piano trio Op. 50, written in memory of the pianist Nicolai Rubinstein. Surprisingly enough, the quartet seems to be restrained and relatively unassuming compared with the monumental trio, which, through its powerful emotional outpouring, bears a closer relationship to the Symphony No. VI, the **Pathétique**.

The third string quartet displays Tchaikowsky's fine control of thematic material and sensitive choice of colours within the limitations of homogenous string quartet writing. For example, the touchingly simple ending of the first movement is dramatically contrasted by massive chords which introduce the Andante funebre, the focal point of the whole work. The emotional depth of this movement is tastefully balanced by a playful down-to-earth Finale.