Music in Review

American Composers Orchestra Adds Electronics to Zankel Hall Pro...  http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/28/arts/music/28round.html?_r=1...
smoothly. **STEVE SMITH**

**PAVEL HAAS QUARTET**

*Weill Recital Hall*

Leos Janacek’s career bloomed unusually late, and he was almost 70 when he wrote his String Quartet No. 1 (“Kreutzer Sonata”). The work had fine champions at Weill Recital Hall on Friday evening in the Pavel Haas Quartet, which has enjoyed success since its founding in 2002, collecting prizes and awards including this appearance in Carnegie Hall’s Distinctive Debuts series.

Based in Prague, the group — Veronika Jaruska and Maria Fuxova, violinists; Pavel Nikl, violist; and Peter Jaruscek, cellist — is named after a Czech composer who perished in Auschwitz. Its empathy for Czech repertory was immediately apparent in its performance of the Janacek quartet, inspired by Tolstoy’s novella “The Kreutzer Sonata.”

With full-blooded passion and finely nuanced playing, the young musicians conveyed the yearning of the opening Adagio, the urgency of its bittersweet motif and the ironic joviality of the second-movement polka. Ms. Jaruska and her group suitably branded the finale’s violin solo, marked “like in tears,” with soulful pathos.

Tears were replaced by sunshine in Dvorak’s smiling String Quartet No. 12 (“American”), played with graceful charm and lilting dynamic contrast, the second movement enhanced by Mr. Jaruscek’s voluptuous cello tone.

The performance of Beethoven’s String Quartet in A minor (Op. 132) suggested that the group needed a little more time to grow in this work. But its encore, the Largo from Smetana’s String Quartet No. 1 (“From My Life”), was another showpiece for its tonal beauty and polish. **VIVIEN SCHWEITZER**

*The next Distinctive Debuts recital is on Friday at Weill Recital Hall, with the violinist Christian Svarfvar and the pianist Anders Kilstrom; (212) 247-7800, carnegiehall.org.*

**TAKACS QUARTET**

*Zankel Hall*

Lucid investigations of the standard repertory have earned the Takacs Quartet a sterling reputation, and a slightly rough-hewn, earthy quality that has emerged in recent performances has made the group even more compelling. The latest reminder came on Saturday night, when it completed a seasonlong survey of Haydn’s Opus 74 quartets and the three string quartets of Brahms at Zankel Hall.

Haydn, of course, is a dietary staple for any quartet; Brahms, if less ubiquitous, is hardly exotic. Much to the credit of these players, nothing sounded less than fully energized and committed on Saturday.

Intensity and drama abounded in a lively account of Haydn’s Quartet in G minor (“Rider”). Edward Dusinberre, the first violinist, sounded slightly strident at times but offered sweetly spun embellishments during the Largo.

Brahms, usually branded a conservative, sounds like anything but in the Vivace of his Quartet No. 3 in B flat. The Takacs players sounded suitably impulsive in its mercurial shifts and rhythmic frictions. Geraldine Walthier, the violist, brought a warm, throaty beauty to the Andante and was a strong protagonist in the subsequent Agitato. Karoly Schranz, the second violinist, and Andras Fejer, the cellist, contributed with dignity and heart.

After intermission the suave pianist **Jean-Yves Thibaudet** joined the quartet in Franck’s Piano Quintet in F minor. Swept up in chromatic themes of surging romance, the players struck an ideal balance between rigor and abandon. **STEVE SMITH**