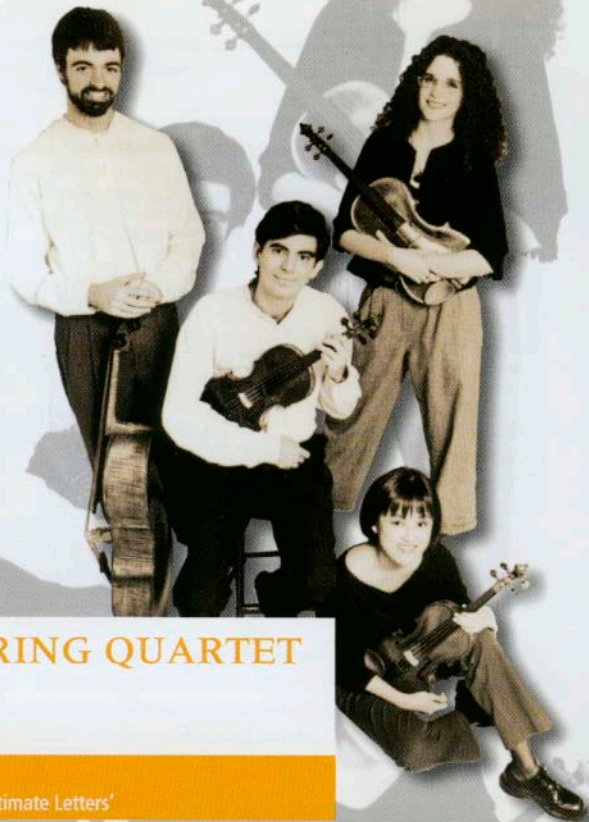




CHANNEL CLASSICS

CCS 14898



**AVALON STRING QUARTET**  
**DAWN TO DUSK**

Ravel    Quartet in F  
Janáček    Quartet No. 2 'Intimate Letters'



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## AVALON STRING QUARTET

Blaise Magnière | *violin*  
Marie Wang | *violin*  
Anthea Kreston | *viola*  
Jason Duckles | *cello*

### Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) *String Quartet F Major, 1903*

- |   |                                 |       |
|---|---------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | <i>Allegro moderato</i>         | 08.14 |
| 2 | <i>Assez vite – Très rythmé</i> | 05.58 |
| 3 | <i>Très lent</i>                | 08.01 |
| 4 | <i>Vif et agité</i>             | 04.49 |

### Leoš Janáček (1854-1928) *String Quartet no. 2, 1928 | Intimate Letters*

- |            |                 |       |
|------------|-----------------|-------|
| 1          | <i>Andante</i>  | 05.45 |
| 2          | <i>Adagio</i>   | 05.40 |
| 3          | <i>Moderato</i> | 05.10 |
| 4          | <i>Allegro</i>  | 07.21 |
| Total time |                 | 51.41 |

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Made in Germany

Recording date: April 2000

"...They demonstrated their superior feel for drawing out and balancing structures. It was marvelous how naturally they made music."- *Sddeutsches Zeitung, Munich*

Critically acclaimed for its bold and passionate performances, the Avalon String Quartet has quickly established itself as one of America's most exciting young ensembles since its formation in 1995. The Avalon Quartet was the top prize winner at the 2000 ARD Munich Competition

and also won First Prize at the 1999 Concert Artists Guild International Competition. At the invitation of Isaac Stern the quartet made its Carnegie Hall debut at Weill Recital Hall. The group has also appeared at Lincoln Center, the 92nd St Y, Merkin Hall, the Caramoor Music Festival in NY, the Gardner Museum in Boston, the La Jolla Chamber Music Society and the Ravinia Festival

in Chicago. In 2001, the quartet will begin a three-year appointment as Artists-in-Residence at Harvard University, and has previously served as the Quartet-in-Residence at the Caramoor International Music Festival in New York.

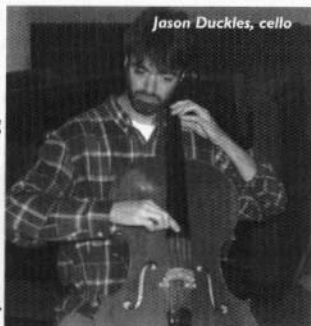


*Blaise Magniere and Marie Wang, violin*

The Avalon enjoys exploring new repertoire. The ensemble's recent performance of the Berg 'Lyric Suite' with the long lost soprano part, was received with much critical acclaim. The quartet is also interested in the contemporary American works by such composers as Gunther Schuller, John Harbison, Philip Glass, Michael Torke, John Zorn and Ned Rorem. The Caramoor Music Festival recently commissioned *Fugitive Star* (2000) from Augusta Read-

Thomas for the quartet, who premiered it at Caramoor in the summer of 2000.

The Avalon is actively involved in arts education and dedicates much of its time to educational projects, giving master classes and coaching children and young adults. Most recently, the Quartet received an educational outreach award from Chamber Music America to work with abused children and AIDS patients. As part of the Caramoor residency, the ensemble gave outreach concerts and master classes in the community, schools and hospitals. The quartet also holds an annual workshop for young quartets in Wisconsin.



The members of the Avalon String Quartet are from France, Canada and the United States.



*"...Four different personalities are at work...they are all so engrossed, impassioned and imaginative...their youthfulness is so musically fruitful..."*  
- New York Times

## **'Dawn to Dusk'**

*It was a very hard decision to decide what to record for our first CD with Channel Classics. We felt honored to join the Channel Classics roster, as we had often admired their thoughtful and wide-ranging programming. In this vein, we chose pieces that meant a great deal to us, and which explore the emotional ranges of the string quartet repertoire. The title 'Dawn to Dusk' represents some of the contrast between the two works: Ravel's string quartet can be seen as his first substantial musical statement, while Janáček completed the quartet 'Intimate Letters' only a few months before his death.*

Maurice Ravel wrote only one string quartet, but it is one that dramatically expanded the coloristic boundaries of the genre. Completed in 1903, while Ravel was still a student, he dedicated the work to his teacher, Gabriel Fauré. Over time, Ravel's quartet has become known as one of the most innovative and vibrantly dynamic quartets in the repertoire.

The opening statement of the first movement is deceptively simple: an easy 'walking' theme, even and balanced, that sets the mood for the entire movement. The second theme, played in octaves by the violin and viola, expresses a poignant, hushed sense of longing. What makes Ravel's style so poetic is this constant sense of veiled statement, similar to the indirect statement of metaphors in poetry. The second movement's ternary form is marked by the use of pizzicati in the outer sections, a choice that is certainly inspired by the Debussy string quartet. The constant shifts of meter between two and three beat divisions, sometimes even juxtaposed, impart a strong sense of rhythm. The middle section, lyrical and much slower in feeling (although the main beat stays the same), has an expansive flexibility, with all the instruments taking a turn playing the melody. Ravel enjoys superimposing different rhythms; at one point the pizzicato opening theme reappears in the second violin, while the main melody of the middle section is heard in a different beat in the first violin. The next movement is broad and contemplative, with the viola carrying the main theme. Brackets of nearly static statement are headed by the words 'Très calme', very calm. The movement's shimmering tremolos, arpeggiations, and

alternations between muted and open sounds imbue the melody with a halo of colors. Ravel creates a unique landscape in which the colors become as important as the motives. This mood is brutally interrupted by the final movement, driven by a relentless rhythm and spiraling forward through the movement. A slower theme in a lilting three-meter offers brief periods of repose but is quickly discarded for the final brilliant conclusion to the whole work.

Leos Janáček was a composer who poured the events of his life, both personal and cultural, into his compositions. The results of this approach are stunning, with vivid emotions and startling changes of mood. Janáček's second string quartet was his last work, and in some ways it represents the culmination of his entire life. It is an autobiographical journal of his feelings for a younger woman, and it is these feelings that dictate the structure of the piece.

Unlike the fluid quality of the Ravel quartet, the unusual style of the Janáček quartet, 'Intimate Letters', owes much to its use of striking contrasts of sections, usually without transitions. The architecture is original, based on a complex psychological journey. The story of the piece is based on his relationship with Kamilla Stösslova, a much younger married woman he had met in 1917. Janáček wrote her nearly a thousand letters, of which only a handful were answered! The 'affair' was no more than an unfulfilled infatuation that tormented him emotionally yet inspired him musically during the last ten years of his life. In 1928 he wrote to her: "Now I have begun something nice. Our life will be in it. It will be called 'Love Letters'. I think that it will sound delightful". He later changed the title to 'Intimate Letters' so as not to reveal his feelings too openly. In subsequent letters to her he went on to describe some of the programmatic elements of this piece. The first movement was to represent the impression of when he first met her. The second describes the summer events at the spa where they met. The third movement is gay, but melts into 'a vision which resembles (her) image'. The last movement describes a 'great longing' that may have been fulfilled.

# colophon

Production	Channel Classics Records by
Producer, recording engineer, editing	C. Jared Sacks
Photo cover	Jeffrey Hornstein
Cover design	David Louf, Utrecht
Liner notes	Avalon String Quartet

## *Technical information*

Microphones	Bruel & Kjaer 4003, Schoeps
Digital converter	24 Bit Prism / Genex Recorder
Recording location	Hervormde Kerk, Renswoude, The netherlands
Recording dates	April 2000

## *Instruments*

- Blaise Magnière: Rodolfo Fredi, 1933*  
*Marie Wang: Greg Alf, 1996*  
*Anthea Kreston: Lorenzo di Lorenzi, 1881*  
*Jason Duckles: Paul Schuback, 1990*