

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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on an amazing,
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OLD GOLD AND BLACK

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Quartet plays in international style

In the second Secrest Artists Series performance, the Takács String Quartet brought to campus a grace that has been heard all over the world.

By Alannah Dibona
Old Gold and Black Reviewer

Sounds that have been heard from Budapest to New York's Carnegie Hall were brought to the university's own Brendle Recital Hall Oct. 17 for a special performance. The Takács String Quartet, the second performance featured as part of the year's Secrest Artists Series, is experiencing their 25th year of tremendous success on a multinational level.

In 1975, while students at Budapest's Liszt Academy, Károly Schranz and András Fejér joined musical forces with two other Hungarian students to form the quartet.

After playing together for only two years, the group achieved international attention after winning First Prize and Critics' Prize at the International String Quartet Competition in Evian, France. After winning several other competitions, Schranz, Fejér, Tapping, and Dusingberre embarked on their first North American tour in 1982. The group's dreams came true, however, when they were invited to perform in New York's Carnegie Hall in 1992, and took off on a cycle of Mozart and Beethoven on world tour, playing cultural meccas such as Paris, London, Zurich and Sydney.

The quartet came very close to a full house for their appearance in Brendle. The audience – filled with students, faculty and patrons of the Secrest Artists Series – was quietly entranced by the music emanating from the four men onstage with two violins, a viola and a cello.

The four coaxed and wheedled their instruments into a passionate production of Ludwig Van Beethoven's *String Quartet in D Major, Opera 18, Number 3*. The classical piece flowed smoothly along, as the notes spun from a single thread of commonal-



Chris Carlstrom/Old Gold and Black

As the second installment of this year's Secrest Artists Series, the Takács String Quartet performed in Brendle Recital Hall Oct. 17 to a large audience. The quartet has been playing together for the last 25 years, and has made a name for itself around the world.

ity.

The Beethoven selection was followed by Béla Bartók's *String Quartet Number 4*. Bartók, a 20th century composer, provided a completely contrasting musical experience when compared to the preceding piece. Bartók's modern work, Dusingberre explained, formed an "arc," beginning and ending with a "gutsy mood" centered on the happy, upbeat *Non Troppo Lento*.

The third selection was a sample of the work of

Bedich Smetana, namely *String Quartet No. 1 in e minor, From My Life*. The audience rose and fell with the pace and tones of the romantic piece, ending with a superior rendition of *Vivace*.

"The relaxing sounds and tones presented throughout the performance lead to an atmosphere of comfort and serenity," said freshman Jason Romaine. The audience, enraptured, seemed to silently agree.

Recordings of the quartet are released through

Decca of London and feature the group performing Bartók and selected pieces by Dvorak. Although more difficult to locate, the hunt is certainly worth the effort, because the Takács String Quartet are an established artistic talent that should not be missed.

Some of the Secrest Artists Series events still to come this season are the Bang on a Can All Stars, which will hit the Brendle stage at 8 p.m. Nov. 9, and Irish fiddler Eileen Ivers and her band appearing at 8 p.m. March 22.

Eclectic jazz trio to perform in chapel

By Travis Langdon
Arts & Entertainment Editor

Student Union has put together an impressive lineup this month, beginning at 8 p.m. Oct. 23 with a Wait Chapel performance by one of the hottest up-and-coming jazz ensembles in music – Medeski Martin & Wood.

Recognized by young fans and jazz aficionados alike for the group's mesmerizing blend of traditional jazz, fusion, trance beats and groove, MMW has steadily been gaining momentum over the last nine years with its studio work and live performances. The show at Wait will mark the trio's first visit to the university, which is sure to be an intimate showcase of the daring musicianship in this unique band.

Keyboardist John Medeski first hooked up with bassist Chris Wood and percussionist Billy Martin in 1991 on the New York City music scene. Although the three musicians were involved in different projects at the time, each describes their initial jam session as a completely natural and expressive musical experience.

Since then, MMW has evolved both individually and collectively with an ardent fanbase quickly spreading around the country. Medeski said that he attributes this to the band's consistent ability to take risks.

"We're all improvising musicians at heart if we get in any kind of rut, we get really cranky," Medeski said. "It's important for us to keep growing and evolving and to feel like we're expanding."

MMW's first studio contribution came in 1992 with the acoustic release, *Notes from the Underground*. Shortly thereafter, the trio signed with Gammavision and almost immediately released *It's a Jungle in There*. For this sophomore release Medeski plugged into his arsenal of keys, which laid down the framework for the organ-driven sound that has come to distinguish the group.

The band's 1994 release *Friday Afternoon in the Universe*, is a studio snapshot of MMW's wildly unpredictable stage show, with extended improvisational tunes scattered throughout. The trio brought things back together for its



Courtesy of www.mmw.net

Bassist Chris Wood helps lock down the groove for MMW, who will play at 8 p.m. Oct. 23 in Wait Chapel.

final Gammavision release *Shack Man*, which came out in 1996. Recorded in a solar-powered shack in Hawaii, *Shack Man* is the band's best selling record to date and opened doors for bigger gigs in the United States and abroad.

After signing with Blue Note Records, MMW teamed up with DJ Logic for *Combustion* – a daring collection of music mixing hip-hop and fusion, which led to a collaborative tour with Logic on the turntables. For its latest release, *Tonic*, MMW returned to the acoustic sound of its first album but in a live format. Taken from a nine-show run at a New York club called Tonic, the album is MMW's only live release.

MMW is set for the Oct. 24 release of *The Dropper*, which takes another stab at the dance groove established on *Combustion*.

"We like to think of ourselves as an American band," Wood said. "We've become who we are because we've toured so much in this country. In America, people like to dance. That's inspired us to play grooves."

Tickets are still available in Benson 335 for the Wait Chapel performance, with lower level seats on sale for \$20 and balcony seats for \$17.50.

Film's message covers faults

By Brent McConkey
Old Gold and Black Reviewer

It's neat when a film contains elements of your other interests.

This assumes that you actually have other interests besides watching movies. But even then you would know what I'm talking about if you saw a movie that perhaps dealt with, say, making movies. So, for me, the perfect film would somehow manage to encompass politics, baseball, camping, warm laundry, maraschino cherries, the North Carolina Outer Banks and blonde girls. This, my friends, is the stuff of which dreams are made.

In the absence of this Perfect Film, I'm willing to settle for a good old-fashioned political drama like *The Contender*. Following the death of the sitting vice president, President Jackson Evans (Jeff Bridges) is seeking to nominate a new candidate who could enhance his legacy.

When he passes over popular Democratic governor Jack Hathaway in favor of a lesser-known female candidate, Ohio Senator Laine Hanson (Joan Allen), the Washington wheels, led by Republican Congressman Shelly Runyon (Gary Oldman), start spinning.

What they churn up is a kinky, scandalous sexcapade allegedly starring Hanson, which threatens to derail her nomination. As her nomination hearings unfold and new facts come to light, the film explores the current state of politics and the impossible standards to which we hold our nation's politicians.

Writer/director Rod Lurie crafts *The Contender* as a taut political thriller, and in terms of two exciting performances it succeeds. Joan Allen, as the beleaguered vice presidential nominee, and Gary Oldman, as the weasel-like nomination committee chair, stand out as potential Academy Award material. Allen in particular lends her character the necessary amounts of credibility and vulnerability that make Hanson such an intriguing choice.

Hanson is obviously qualified, but at the same time appears susceptible to her foes; the balance adds to the compelling nature of her character. Oldman performs his usual magic by disappearing into a role that possesses more potential for complexity than the script ultimately allows. Despite the film's shortcomings, he meets some success in creating a despicable but



Courtesy of www.movies.yahoo.com

Jeff Bridges stars as the president of the United States in Rod Lurie's latest film, *The Contender*. Although the film has a few glaring weaknesses, its message about politics makes it a worthwhile picture.

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understandable character.

Other casting decisions seem less inspired, such as the choice of Jeff Bridges for the Most Powerful Man in the World. Although some will be thrilled no doubt to see *The Big Lebowski*'s "Dude" as the president, in this film he won't win any elections. Is he the cunning, ruthless man who is able to stymie his enemies at the most critical times? Is he the bumbling funny man enamored with the White House kitchen and bowling alley? Is he the high-minded leader who wishes to set a powerful social precedent with his nomination? Although some would argue that the president must be equal parts petty and great to achieve that status (as Evans

himself asserts in a closing speech), the lack of coherence and extreme cynicism in his character seems to indicate a failing of the script itself and also Bridges.

The Contender also encounters problems late in the film, as Lurie shifts the focus from making a thoughtful, valid statement about principals in politics, to making an overtly ideological political declaration.

Nowhere is this more obvious than in a scene in which the Democratic Hanson, frustrated with weeks of allegations regarding her sexual history, religious beliefs and policy leanings at the hands of the Republican-dominated committee, delivers the closing speech of her nomination hearing. As Hanson begins to detail what she stands for, the music swells for the first time in an utterly jarring manner while she ticks down a list of her own liberal ideals.

While I found myself in profound agreement with most of her Democratic opinions, at this point any ounce of subtlety disappears as the film unfortunately devolves into mere propaganda. Up until this moment the film seemed to have aspirations greater than promoting Lurie's personal agenda, only to disappoint by

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