

The Department of External Affairs announced today that a grant has been made to THE ORFORD STRING QUARTET enabling it to undertake a European tour during the month of October. Under the Department's continuing program of cultural relations with foreign countries, the Quartet will be performing in the U.S.S.R., Romania, Italy and Yugoslavia.

The Soviet section, which opens the tour on October 3, will constitute the musicians' first visit to the U.S.S.R. During their two-week stay, the Orford Quartet will be performing in Moscow, Leningrad and four other cities. Meetings with the Soviet Union of Musicians and Composers are included in their itinerary.

Two concerts in Romania will follow, with the Bucarest recital broadcast over the national radio and television network. The ensemble then proceeds to Rome for two concerts and to Yugoslavia for performances in Ljubljana and Zagreb. In addition, the Quartet has accepted an invitation from Les Jeunesses Musicales of Spain for a recital in Barcelona.

The tour is a presentation of the Canadian Department of External Affairs with the assistance of the Canada Council Touring Office.

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The four musicians: Andrew Dawes, violin; Kenneth Perkins, violin; Terence Helmer, viola; and Marcel St-Cyr, cello - first formed a professional quartet at the Jeunesses Musicales summer music camp at Mount Orford, Quebec. In July of this year, they performed at the 1975 International Series at Mount Orford, marking their 10th anniversary as an ensemble. Since 1965, they have toured extensively through Canada and the United States; and, under the auspices of the Canada Council and the Department of External Affairs, have performed in most major European capitals and at numerous international festivals.

In November 1974, they tied for first prize at the prestigious European Broadcasting Union Competition. This further testimony to their talent attracted offers from several important international agents who heard the Quartet during a series of European concerts in April 1975. The tour coincided with the launching of their first major international recording on the Concert Hall label. To fulfil a growing number of international requests for recitals, the Quartet is planning another overseas tour in the spring.