

RiverArts®

Music Tour 2019

June 1, 2019

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Duo & Trio Masterpieces

for Violin, Cello & Piano

~ * ~

5 Incomparable Violin & Piano Sonatas

5 Magnificent Cello & Piano Sonatas

6 Ravishing Piano Trios

~ * ~

Our Violinists

Kate Ashby
Joyce Balint
Shawn Barnett
Larissa Blitz
Samuel Cohen
Silvia Grendze
Lori Horowitz

Our Cellists

Jacqueline Bergson
Bethany Bobbs
Howard Cohen
Seth Jacobs
Maureen Kelly
Teresa Kubiak
Lisa Olsson
Bernard Tamosaitis

and Pianist: Alan Murray

at Studio Hollywood

41 Hollywood Drive, Hastings-on-Hudson

www.studio-hollywood.com

RiverArts Music Tour 2019

Duo & Trio Masterpieces for Violin, Cello & Piano

Session 1 - Noon

Sonata No. 1 for Violin & Piano in G major Johannes Brahms

Vivace ma non troppo
Adagio – più andante – adagio
Allegro molto moderato

Kate Ashby, violin
Alan Murray, piano (all works)

Sonata No. 1 for Cello & Piano in E minor Johannes Brahms

Allegro non troppo
Allegretto quasi Menuetto – Trio
Allegro – più presto

Teresa Kubiak, cello

Session 2 - 1:00 pm

Sonata No. 2 for Violin & Piano in A major Johannes Brahms

Allegro amabile
Andante tranquillo – vivace
Allegretto grazioso (quasi Andante)

Joyce Balint, violin

Sonata No. 2 for Cello & Piano in F major Johannes Brahms

Allegro vivace
Adagio affettuoso
Allegro passionato – Trio
Allegro molto

Maureen Kelly, cello

Session 3 – 2:00 pm

Sonata No. 3 for Violin & Piano in D minor Johannes Brahms

Allegro
Adagio
Un poco presto e con sentimento
Presto agitato

Samuel Cohen, violin

Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor

Felix Mendelssohn

Molto allegro ed agitato
Andante con moto tranquillo
Leggiero e vivace
Allegro assai appassionato

Lori Horowitz, violin
Lisa Olsson, cello

Session 4 – 3:00 pm

Sonata for Violin & Piano in A major

César Franck

Allegretto moderato
Allegro - quasi lento – tempo I – quasi presto
Recitativo-Fantasia: Moderato – molto lento e mesto
Allegro poco mosso

Lori Horowitz, violin

Sonata for Cello & Piano in D minor

Dmitri Shostakovich

Allegro non troppo - largo
Allegro
Largo
Allegro

Seth Jacobs, cello

Session 5 – 4:00 pm

Sonata for Cello & Piano in G minor

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Lento – Allegro moderato
Allegro scherzando
Andante
Allegro mosso – meno mosso – vivace

Session 5 (continued)

Piano Trio 'Elegiac' No. 1 in G minor Sergei Rachmaninoff

Lento lugubre – più vivo – risoluto – tempo I - alla marcia funebre

Larissa Blitz, violin
Jacqueline Bergson, cello

Session 6 - 5:00 pm

Sonata for Cello & Piano in A minor

Edvard Grieg

Allegro agitato – molto più tranquillo – presto
Andante molto tranquillo
Allegro – più animato e stretto

Bernard Tamosaitis, cello

Piano Trio in A minor

Maurice Ravel

Modéré
Pantoum: Assez vif
Passacaille: Très large
Final: Animé

Shawn Barnett, violin
Bernard Tamosaitis, cello

Session 7 - 6:00 pm

Sonata No. 2 for Violin & Piano in D major Sergei Prokofiev

Moderato
Presto
Andante
Allegro con brio

Silvia Grendze, violin

Session 7 (continued)

Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor

Anton Arensky

Allegro moderato – più mosso - Adagio
Scherzo: Allegro molto – meno mosso – tempo I
Elegia: Adagio
Finale: Allegro non troppo – più vivo – andante – adagio – allegro molto

Kate Ashby, violin
Seth Jacobs, cello

Session 8 – 7:00 pm

Piano Trio in A minor

Pyotr I. Tchaikovsky

Moderato assai – allegro giusto – tempo I
Tema con variazioni – Coda

Silvia Grendze, violin
Howard Cohen, cello

Piano Trio in G major

Claude Debussy

Andantino con moto allegro – allegro appassionato – tempo I
Scherzo – Intermezzo: Moderato con allegro
Andante espressivo
Finale: Appassionato

Shawn Barnett, violin
Bethany Bobbs, cello

Performances are being recorded and will be posted to YouTube, for private use, available exclusively at www.Studio-Hollywood.com

Special Thanks to:

Doug Coe and RiverArts.org (Music Tour 2019 Sponsors)
Rivertowns Enterprise (Outreach)
Calvin Wiersma (Expert Coaching)
Mihai Cuibus (Piano Tuner & Technician)
Daniel Halloran (Video Recording Engineer)
Studio Hollywood (Performance & Rehearsal Venue)
Amada Abad and Celia Murray (Refreshments and Hospitality)
and to

Our Distinguished Musicians (for their generous musical contributions)

OUR PERFORMERS



KATE ASHBY, violinist, is an associate artist manager at Primo Artists, based in New York, representing leading international touring musicians in both the US and internationally. Kate is a member of Yonkers Philharmonic Orchestra and plays regularly at Hudson Valley Music Club and with various chamber ensembles. Kate played Beethoven's *Spring Sonata* at the 2018 RiverArts Music Tour and is delighted to return this year. As a singer, Kate has performed with a variety of chamber ensembles and highlights include Monteverdi *Vespers* at Concordia, Bach's *St. John Passion* at Lincoln Center, and Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* with John Eliot Gardiner.



JOYCE BALINT, violinist and mandolinist, has been the mandolin soloist with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra since 1974. One of the country's foremost classical mandolinists, she has performed many solo recitals and orchestral performances, including the Paris Opera, Dallas Opera, and the Boston Symphony. As a violinist, she has been an active free-lance performer in the New York metropolitan area, including the MET Opera, the Caramoor Festival Orchestra, the Westchester Symphony, and several opera companies. She currently performs with the Amore Opera in New York City. She also performed duo recitals with her late husband Sandor Balint, as the Balint Duo. "Joyce Balint Shines in a String Recital" was the headline in the New York Times of her

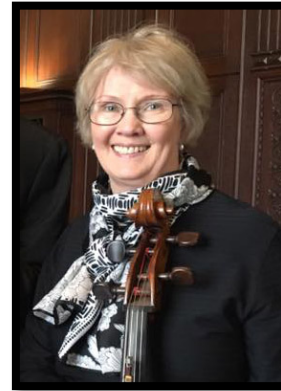
Carnegie Recital Hall debut where it said her playing of the mandolin "came close to the ideal" and she played with a "musicianly verve" on the violin. Ms. Balint lives in Bronxville, is on the faculty of the Mozartina Musical Arts Conservatory in Tarrytown, and is the current president of the Westchester County Federation of Women's Clubs.



SHAWN BARNETT, violinist, teaches violin in New York City and performs in orchestras, chamber ensembles and recitals.

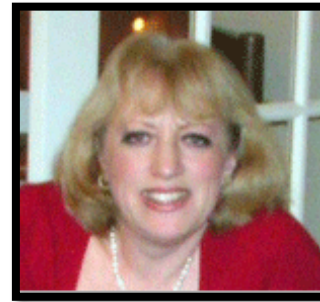
He also plays Irish and American fiddle, experimental music and improvises with singer songwriters throughout the United States.

Shawn received his Bachelor of Music degree from DePaul University in Chicago.



JACQUELINE BERGSON, cellist, has played the 'cello since being introduced to it at a young age by her musician/teacher parents. She studied with Leslie Parnas and Michael Finckel, among others.

Now retired from a career in librarianship, she has more time to devote to her love for chamber music and orchestral performance, currently playing with St. Thomas Orchestra, attending chamber music seminars, and playing with many friends who enjoy exploring the vast array of chamber music. She plays a 1700's Andrea Castagneri 'cello.



LARISSA BLITZ, violinist and violist, was born in St. Petersburg, Russia and received her BA from St. Petersburg's Conservatory. While in Russia she worked in the Opera House of St. Petersburg and was an assistant to her violin professor as well as having a private teaching studio of her own. In 1987 she received her Masters degree in violin performance from Manhattan School of Music where she studied with renowned professors Rafael Bronstein and Arianna Brone. Since then Ms. Blitz has had an extensive performing and teaching career playing in orchestras such as

Brooklyn Philharmonic, North Eastern Pennsylvania Philharmonic, Springfield Symphony, Stamford Symphony, Savannah Symphony, Berkshire Opera, Manchester Music Festival Chamber Orchestra, Tchaikovsky Chamber Orchestra and many others. She also has worked on Broadway and in the recording studio. From 1994 to 1996 she was concertmaster for a touring production of "Fiddler on the Roof" starring Theodore Bikel. As a teacher, Ms. Blitz enjoys a large private studio in New Jersey and since January 2001 teaches violin for the Spring Creek Youth Orchestra in Brooklyn, NY. She also has been a violin coach in a special school program in Long Island. In 2004 she joined the faculty of the RiverArts Music Program, where she gives private lessons on violin and viola. In February 2005 Ms. Blitz joined the part-time faculty of Franklin Pierce University, teaching viola.

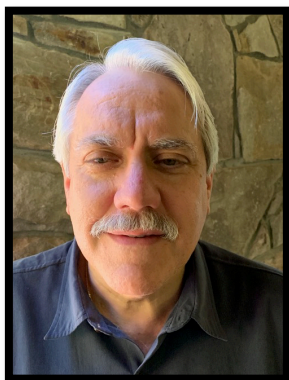


BETHANY BOBBS, cellist, is a scholarship student in the Juilliard School Pre College. Bethany studies cello with Sieun Lin and Astrid Schween, and piano with her mother, Catherine Bobbs. She has won awards in many prestigious concerto competitions, most recently first prize in the Yonkers Philharmonic Orchestra's 2019 Youth Concerto Competition, performing Samuel Barber's Cello Concerto in competition, and subsequently Dvorak's Cello Concerto with the Philharmonic this May. Bethany was the youngest

winner of the Cleveland Cello Society Scholarship competition when she was 7 years old, was the youngest competitor in the Houston Symphony League Concerto Competition and this year won the Merit Award with the YoungArts program.

Bethany made her cello solo orchestra debut at the age of 9, also performing with the Cleveland Institute Chamber Orchestra. Some of the other orchestras she has soloed with include the Georgia Philharmonic, Delaware Symphony, North Houston Symphony, Sewanee Symphony, Brazosport Symphony, Fort Bend Orchestra, and Houston Youth Symphony. She has also won scholarships through the Music Doing Good program, the Rachel Pine Barton Foundation, The Chaminade Club of Yonkers, and Mary Alice Cox Award. She is grateful for the full scholarships from Juilliard and Perlman Music Program to allow her to continue her music studies.

Bethany has enjoyed performing summer study in several festivals including the Conservatory of Music in the Mountains in 2013, and on the Spotlight Recital Series at Aspen Music Festival in 2016. These last two summers in their winter residency program and Israel residency program, Bethany attended the Perlman Music Program where she studied with Astrid Schween, Clara Kim, Paul Katz, Zvi Plessner, and Ronald Leonard. In addition to performing solo, Bethany enjoys playing chamber and orchestral music. Bethany has been selected to perform in several master classes. Bethany is the 7th of 8 children, and is home-schooled.



HOWARD COHEN, cellist, performs with numerous groups including the Chappaqua Orchestra, St. Thomas Orchestra, Newburgh Symphony, Yonkers Philharmonic and Westchester Klezmer. He is also a soloist at over 25 elder facilities (hospice, rehab, memory and independent living) where he plays a wide range of musical styles from “Bach to Beatles” including classical, jazz and popular tunes. He plays with numerous chamber music ensembles and attends the Bennington Chamber Music Conference each summer. Howard studied with Sharon Robinson, Maxine Newman, Donald McCall and William Klenz. He attended Binghamton University, University of Copenhagen and Carnegie-Mellon University.

After a long career as an IT director for NYC’s Department of Environmental Protection and account executive/consultant for government clients, Howard is now focused on nonprofits. He is the Board VP for Friends of Music, an organization that just celebrated its 65th anniversary and brings to Westchester the world’s most renowned chamber music ensembles, including the Emerson Quartet. Friends of Music also offers full-day chamber music workshops and master classes free of charge to Westchester schools. Howard is the Community Outreach Coordinator for Fred’s Pantry, a choice food pantry in Peekskill, NY, that provided 162,000 meals in 2018. He lives in Cortlandt Manor with his wife Lori, an early childhood educator and professional knitter.



SAMUEL COHEN, violinist, born in Iassi, Romania, began his professional career as a violinist at the age of fourteen with the Iassi National Opera Orchestra. He emigrated to Israel in 1961 where he studied music and violin with Eden Partosh at the Tel Aviv Music Academy. Mr. Cohen was a member of the Jerusalem Radio Orchestra from 1967-69 and then joined the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra under Maestro Zubin Mehta from 1969-74, when he came to the US, joining the Baltimore Symphony. In 1978 he became a first violin position with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra in 1978, a position he held for many years until his recent retirement. Besides teaching/coaching he enjoys chamber music and world travel.



LORI HOROWITZ, violinist, is a Westchester native whose musical training began at the Westchester Conservatory of Music with Gabriel Banat. During a foreign exchange program in Brazil during her senior year of high school, she served as a volunteer member of the Sao Paulo State Symphony Orchestra. Lori continued her musical studies at Oberlin College before embarking on a medical career. While in medical school she was a founding member of, and soloist with, the Albert Einstein Symphony Orchestra. During her medical and post-medical training she could also be found serving in the ranks of the Riverside Orchestra, the New Amsterdam Symphony, The 92nd Street Y Orchestra, and the Bronx Chamber Orchestra. After settling back in

Westchester, she has performed in numerous chamber music concerts around the county and has played with several amateur and semi-professional orchestras, such as The Chappaqua Orchestra. Lori has enjoyed a longstanding involvement with the Westchester-based St. Thomas Orchestra and serves as their concert-master. Lori returned to school several years ago to pursue her musical studies more formally at Purchase College, studying first with Calvin Wiersma and later with Carmit Zori. She received a Performer’s Certificate in 2014 and completed a Master’s Degree in 2016. She now studies privately with Eriko Sato. When not playing her violin, Lori maintains a part-time practice of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry.



SETH JACOBS, cellist, studied with Alexander Goldfield, Donald McCall and William Klenz. He has been a member of the Chappaqua Orchestra, Westchester Collegium, and St. Thomas Orchestra. In recent years he has appeared in Westchester with a number of professional chamber music ensembles. Seth is also a lawyer at Pfizer and lives in Cortlandt Manor with his wife, pianist Cynthia Peterson.



MAUREEN KELLY, cellist, has performed extensively in the United States, Canada, Central America, Asia, Australia, and Europe as a chamber and orchestral musician. As a chamber musician she has performed alongside artists such as Bill Preucil and Scott St. John. She serves as the Music Program Director of River Arts, and her love of teaching has led to the positions she holds on the faculty of River Arts and Opportunity Music Project. She performs with ensembles in New York such as Mimesis Ensemble, Fresh Squeezed Opera, and the Curiosity Cabinet.

Maureen is a native of Wisconsin who carries her mid-western roots around her home country of the United States and beyond. She obtained her Master's in cello performance from the University of Kentucky studying with Benjamin Karp, where she was a member of the fellowship graduate quartet, and taught extensively in the area as a private teacher, chamber coach, and at an El Sistema based program called MusicWorks. She completed her first degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison under Uri Vardi, where she was a founding member of the scholarship Perlman Piano Trio. Maureen has performed and studied abroad, including time spent playing as a substitute cellist in the Costa Rica National Symphony, and studying privately at the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance in Israel. She has attended a variety of summer music festivals, including the Luzerne Music Festival, Bowdoin International Music Festival, Kent/Blossom, Jerusalem Summer Strings Institute, AIMS in Gratz, Austria, the Brevard Music Festival, Scotia Fest, and Music Mountain Chamber Music Masterclasses. She lives in Brooklyn, and in her free time enjoys running, cooking, and drinking coffee.



TERESA KUBIAK, cellist, is a concert artist and freelance musician working in and around the New York City area. She is the principal cellist of the Bronx Opera Company and the Orchestra of The Bronx. She is well-versed as a recital artist and chamber musician. Ms. Kubiak teaches cello privately in Westchester County, NY, where her students also participate in her long-standing cello ensemble classes. She has been incorporating Skype lessons into her practice for

the past several years and works with students from around the globe. Her teaching combines elements of the Suzuki approach with the principles of Feldenkrais, Tai Chi, and a cutting edge understanding of the human nervous system and its relationship to music and the process of learning. www.teresakubiak.com



ALAN MURRAY, pianist, makes his third appearance as Music Tour host and performer, his prior events having included a 2016 program comprising 10 piano concertos accompanied by pre-recorded orchestras, and a 2018 All-Beethoven program comprising the composer's complete sonatas for violin and piano and for cello and piano, as well as his 'Archduke' Trio, joined by many of the same musicians appearing today. Alan is delighted to welcome back many of last year's participants as well as a number of first-timers for the 2019 Tour.

Alan has appeared extensively in solo and chamber music recitals and as concerto soloist with symphony orchestras in the US and abroad. The 2019 season marks his seventh consecutive as soloist, having previously performed Bartók (No.2), Beethoven (No.4), Brahms (Nos. 1 & 2), Chopin (Nos. 1 & 2), Prokofiev (Nos. 2 & 3), Rachmaninoff (Nos. 2 & 3 and Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini), Saint-Saëns (Nos. 2 & 4) and Tchaikovsky (No. 1). His remaining 2019 concerto engagements include Ravel's *Left Hand Piano Concerto* and Liszt's *Totentanz* in Newark, Delaware in early June, and Ravel's G major and Scriabin's concertos this August in Europe, followed by Saint-Saëns No. 2 with the ProArte Chamber Orchestra (Washington, DC) and Prokofiev No. 3 with the Yonkers Philharmonic (New York). His concerto and other performance recordings and schedule can be found at www.studio-hollywood.com.

In prior seasons, Mr. Murray presented the *Masters Series* and *Sunrise Series* Concerts in the New York area, over 100 recital programs in total, comprising multiple performances of the cycles of solo piano music of Chopin, Schumann, Debussy, Ravel and J.S. Bach, as well as Beethoven's 32 Piano Sonatas and *Diabelli* Variations and major works of Schubert, Brahms, Liszt, Albeniz (Iberia), Granados (Goyescas), Rachmaninoff, Prokofiev and Stravinsky. Mr. Murray also initiated *Collectanea*, a series of multi-media performances in collaboration with other distinguished artists, combining art/poetry/dance-inspired classical piano masterpieces with simultaneous on-stage illuminated displays of still art, live modern dance and poetry readings; the initial program featured Bach-Busoni's *Chaconne*, Ravel's *Gaspard de la Nuit*, Liszt's *Vallée d'Obermann*, and Granados' *Goyescas*.

A career professional in finance, Alan was a long-term member of the Global Financial Institutions Group management team at Moody's Investors Service in New York, where he oversaw the firm's operations in the Latin America region and managed client portfolios in the US, Canada, Bermuda, Europe and the Asia-Pacific regions, prior to which he served as a corporate actuary with American International Group. He resides in Westchester County, New York with his wife Amada, daughter Celia and cavalier King Charles spaniel Lizzy, where they also own and operate an independent specialty bookstore, *Galápagos Books*. He began his music studies with Frances Wazeter and Allen Weiss, and continues with his long-time performance coach Robert Preston, distinguished piano soloist and chamber music collaborator with the very finest of his generation, as well as professional artistic photographer. Alan holds a degree in theoretical physics and languages from Cornell University, where he also received a special *University Award* for distinguished piano soloist.



LISA OLSSON, cellist, is also a poet and artist, who grew up in Hastings and lives in Dobbs Ferry. She studied at the School for Strings in NYC and teaches cello in her home studio and at the Hudson River School of Music. She was formerly Design Director at Pearson Education, designing textbook programs. Her poems have been published online and in print, and she is recently a winner in the "Poetry in the Pavement" contest in Sleepy Hollow. On weekends she likes to explore the metro area on foot with friends.



SILVIA PADEGS GRENDZE, violinist, is a freelance performer and violin teacher and Rivertowns native, raised in Hastings. She began violin studies began at age 3, studying with disciples of Mr. Suzuki in Hastings, and received her Bachelor of music degree from Manhattan School of Music studying with Erick Friedman and Burton Kaplan. Silvia has been freelancing primarily on the East coast, playing with orchestras and ensembles of various sizes in cities from Boston

to Charleston. She also has sung professionally with choirs and is currently assistant conductor of the NY Latvian Concert Choir, a choir specializing in performing new cantatas. Silvia has played in major music centers such as Alice Tully Hall, Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center and Boston's Symphony Hall and continues to perform internationally in such countries as Canada, Austria, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Venezuela, and Australia. Ms. Grendze currently resides in Irvington, NY where she offers private lessons. Silvia Padegs Grendze plays on a 1864 Samuel Nemessanyi violin.



BERNARD TAMOSAİTIS, cellist and conductor, was born in Brooklyn, New York and studied at the Juilliard School with Channing Robbins, where he graduated with a B.A. in violoncello. As principal of the Bellas Artes Orchestra of Mexico City and subsequently as a member of the Quinteto de Xalapa, a resident chamber ensemble at the University of Veracruz, Mr. Tamosaitis performed extensively throughout Mexico and Latin America. As cello soloist, he has performed on tour with the New York Symphonic Ensemble, and with the Sinfonica de El Salvador, the Sound Shore and in May, 2019 performed the Schumann Cello Concerto with the St. Thomas Orchestra. Mr. Tamosaitis is a member of Canta Libre, a chamber ensemble which frequently performs throughout

the region. Canta Libre's CD of French chamber music for harp, flute and strings was hailed by BBC Music Magazine as its CD of the month in 2013. In 2002, Mr. Tamosaitis founded the St. Thomas Orchestra and continues as its Music Director. The orchestra has developed over the years into one of the premier community based orchestras in the region (www.storchestra.org)

The Composers & The Music

5 Incomparable Violin & Piano Sonatas

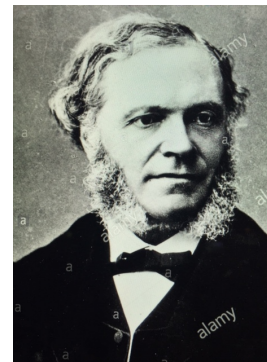
BRAHMS: The Sonatas for Violin & Piano



As in so many other aspects of his output, Brahms (1893-1897) was intensely self-critical about his violin sonatas. He composed his first as early as 1853, when he was just 20, which he probably played privately with his friends, and may well have written at least four more, all of which were destroyed. In 1879, he produced what we now know as No 1, the G major Sonata, and Op. 78.

Like both the works that followed, the G major was written for Brahms's friend Joseph Joachim, for whom he had recently completed his Violin Concerto, and it shares that monumental work's lyrical effusiveness, its concern to make the violin sing above all else. The same mood pervades the second Sonata, in A major, Op 100, which emerged seven years later, and it seems as if it was around then too that he at least sketched the D minor Sonata Op 108, though that would not be finished for another two years. As its stormy D-minor key suggests, its mood is very different from that of its predecessors, and it is also conceived on a much larger scale, with four movements rather than the regulation three - it is much more a work designed for public consumption than the intimacies of the works in G and A. Heard in succession, Brahms's progression through the triptych of sonatas is fascinating. [from *The Guardian: Brahms' Violin Sonatas*, Andrew Clements]

FRANCK: Sonata for Violin & Piano in A major

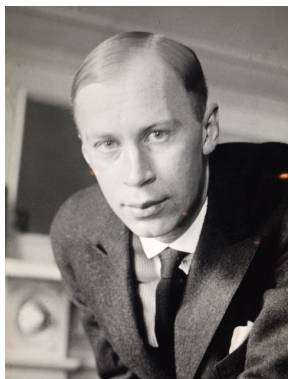


César Franck (1822-1890) was born in Belgium, but moved to France, where he became the dominant force in music, accruing a large group of ardent devotees. Unlike Brahms or Beethoven (or Wagner, for that matter), Franck was a saintly man, always kind in manner and speech. To increase the gulf separating him from Brahms and Beethoven, Franck, disinterested in fame and fortune, managed to get married (but it wasn't a happy marriage). An unsuccessful—though virtuoso—pianist, it wasn't until Franck began to play the organ at age 30, improvising for hours on the organ of Ste. Clothilde, that he found his vocation. Even then, he was a late bloomer; all of his best-known music was written after age 53.

Franck's compositional style favors frequent modulations, and, like Liszt's *B minor Sonata*, he develops the initial melodic material throughout the piece. His pieces are sensuous, yet spiritual and serene. He promised Wagner's wife, Cosima, a violin sonata in 1859, but put it off. Finally, the famed Eugene Ysaÿe, a fellow Belgian (born in Franck's hometown) to whom the Sonata is dedicated, persuaded Franck to write a violin sonata in honor of Ysaÿe's wedding. The 1886 premiere took place in an art gallery in Brussels. The room was so dark that Ysaÿe was forced to play the sonata largely from memory!

The opening movement is in sonata form, but leaves out the development section, to avoid conflict. It is harmonious and reflective. The piece develops less by thematic opposition than by a gradual rising and falling of tension. It uses what Franck referred to as "cyclic" development: all the movements share common thematic threads. The second movement is turbulent, but subsides to a foreboding calm, returning again to both turbulence and calm, before dark turbulence finally gives way to joyful exuberance in the final measures. The third movement is somewhat amorphous; Franck called it a "recitative-fantasia." The Finale opens with a sunny theme, in perfect canon! There is a recapitulation of sorts, and the ending is fervent; a proclamation of love for the married couple. [Program Notes by Jason Sundram]

PROKOFIEV: Sonata for Violin & Piano in D major



During the summer of 1943, Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) escaped the war-torn Eastern Front for the isolation of the Central Asian city of Alma-Ata, where he was hard at work on the sprawling film score for Sergei Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible*. In the middle of this massive project, Prokofiev found himself drawn to music on the other end of the spectrum- something he described as a "sonata in a gentle, flowing classical style." This piece was born as the *Flute Sonata in D, Op. 94* and, at the urging of violinist David Oistrakh, soon was reincarnated as the *Violin Sonata No. 2 in D Major, Op. 94a*.

The expansive melody, which opens the first movement (*Moderato*), gives us a sense of this shimmering classicism. It's as if we're hearing a Handel or Mozart sonata through twentieth century ears. As you listen to this opening melody, notice the sudden harmonic turns which infuse the music with a kind of autumnal lament. As the movement unfolds, what might have been an overtly sunny D major is constantly pulled into the shadows.

The second movement (*Scherzo: Presto*) is filled with wild scales and biting sarcasmic dialogue between both instruments, alternating with a plaintive and exotic slower section which evokes Russian folk music. In the coda section, one can hear the movement's heroic theme attempts to make a final statement, but gets cut off by the more agitated theme. It makes a second attempt, jumping in a beat too late, which is also unsuccessful. The movement ends with the musical equivalent of both instruments tumbling down a flight of stairs.

The third movement (*Andante*) pulls us into a dreamy impressionistic soundscape. A melody, which begins with a Mozart-like grace and elegance, wanders harmonically into far-off. A hint of jazz emerges in the hazy, languid second theme.

The final movement (*Allegro con brio*) explodes with bold, euphoric jubilation. One of the most magical qualities of this movement is not only the range of contrasting "places" we visit, but how we get back to the "A" section. For example, the return of the opening theme is anticipated towards the end of the flowing, cantabile sections, first in the violin and then in the piano. One can feel the music getting impatient. After an anticipation-filled buildup, it finally arrives home with renewed vigor. [From *Flute to Violin: The Evolution of Prokofiev's D Major Sonata February 22, 2019, by Timothy Judd*]

5 Magnificent Cello & Piano Sonatas

BRAHMS: The Sonatas for Cello & Piano

Brahms was generous to cellists: in addition to his two monumental sonatas for cello and piano, there are innumerable glorious moments in his chamber and orchestral music when the cello sings forth as only a cello can. Perhaps part of the reason for his predilection is that in his youth he had studied the instrument quite seriously, to a level where he was able to tackle one of Romberg's difficult concertos; he might have gone even further if his teacher hadn't vanished, taking Brahms' cello with him.

These two marvelous sonatas, dating from very different times in Brahms's life, are invaluable assets to the cello and piano repertoire, almost indisputably the most important cello sonatas from the second half of the nineteenth century.

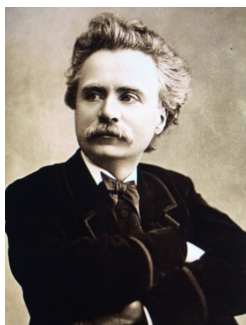
The first Cello Sonata (Op. 38) was started in 1862, when Brahms was not yet thirty, with the finale being added to the long-completed first two movements in 1865. This, his first surviving duo-sonata, is an important work, in some ways a turning-point. His previous sonata composition had been the Third Piano Sonata, Op 5, a work of tempestuous youth, written in 1853 and prefaced by a quotation from the romantic poetry of Sternau. The cello sonata is utterly different; it is almost a 'historical sonata', its roots firmly planted in the music of the past – as if Brahms was turning his back on his wild young self. The only obvious quotation is from Bach's Art of Fugue (although the main theme of the *menuetto* bears a strong resemblance to that of the scherzo of Beethoven's famous Cello Sonata in A major). This is Brahms staking his claim as the greatest 'classical romantic' composer of chamber music, a worthy successor to his heroes from other epochs.

The first movement, with its glorious sunset coda in E major (Brahms was the master of musical sunsets) is linked to the other two movements chiefly through the dominance of the expressive minor sixth that makes its first appearance in the second bar of the work, and continues throughout the sonata. The second movement, a charming minuet and trio, seems to pay nostalgic tribute to the world of Mozart – or perhaps to that of Schubert, with whose music Brahms was somewhat obsessed at this period. The last movement, a robust mixture of fugue and sonata form, takes its main theme from

Contrapunctus 13 from the Art of Fugue – as if Brahms is looking further backwards in time as the sonata progresses.

If the First Sonata shows Brahms the young man presenting his credentials as a scholar and a mature gentleman, the second Cello Sonata (Op. 99) is the work of an older man composing music with all the passion and sweep of youth. Written – along with the Second Violin Sonata and Third Piano Trio – during a productive summer in Switzerland in 1886, the F major Sonata was composed for Hausmann, who was renowned for his large and virile tone. The first movement is extraordinarily bold, the two instruments pitted against each other in a wild, storm-tossed sea of tremolandi. Curiously, the slow movement, in the near-but-unrelated key of F sharp major, may derive from a discarded movement originally written for the E minor Sonata. That movement is now lost, but there are a couple of clues that at least suggest a connection; the similarity of the third subject of this slow movement to that of the E minor's first movement, and the importance of the minor sixth in this middle section and coda, are striking – perhaps too much so to be coincidental. The rich style, however, is definitely late Brahms; if this movement did originate in an earlier work, he must have done some extensive revision before incorporating it. The *Allegro passionato* is a wonderfully powerful and dark scherzo; a friend of Brahms's wrote to him (rather irreverently) that she could detect him here 'humming and snorting continually' – a pleasant image. The last movement, like that of the Second Piano Concerto, is almost startling in its lightness of touch, unexpected within this massive framework. [*Brahms; The Cello Sonatas, liner notes by Steven Isserlis, 2005*]

GRIEG: Sonata for Cello & Piano in A minor



Edvard Grieg (1843-1907) composed his only cello sonata was composed in 1882 and was at least one of the first pieces he composed after a busy period as conductor of the Bergen Symphony, as well as from a period of illness, as mentioned above, that may have been as much emotional as it was physical. The work begins anxiously, stormily, in A minor, so one can't help but think of his piano concerto, in the same key. The opening may clearly remind the listener of one of the composer's most famous work, but the cello sonata stands on its own for its emotional accessibility and beauty. Listen to the piano's statement of the cello's opening line at the recapitulation, or the return of that warm second theme,

and one instantly understands the charms of this first movement and the whole work.

The central movement begins innocently, like the chimes of a small music box. It's beautiful, richly expressive, a warm comforting hug one might need after the intensity of first movement, but as Johnston states, as the shortest movement of this sonata progresses, "it becomes clear that all is not as innocent and sweetly lyrical as the lovely opening melody would suggest," and this movement reveals its own turmoil. Sweetness gives way to a stressfully intense middle section, but that too ultimately runs its course, given way to again to the simple beauty of the opening.

The finale begins with a brief, quiet introduction, but quickly reveals itself to be a busy, almost mischievous dance. There are powerful plucks from the cello that underline the

heartbeat of this slightly restrained wildness, but even when we cool down to a peaceful echo of the former passage, we still have the cello plucking out a background tempo. Again, the emotional development here is more important than any musical or theoretical considerations, but interestingly, after this emotionally charged movement, with intense passion and beauty from both piano and cello, the movement and thus the entire piece ends in A major. The composer had every chance in the world to end the work tragically, or darkly, but after all that, or maybe *despite* all that, the work ends positively. [*Fugue for Thought, 2017*]

RACHMANINOFF: Sonata for Cello & Piano in G minor



Around the turn of the 20th Century, Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943) was still going through the serious crisis of confidence, which had been triggered by the disastrous 1897 premiere of his Symphony No.1. The composer was unable to write almost anything in the following three years, until he began a course of hypno-therapy, which eventually helped him overcome his block.

Among the first major works to emerge after his recovery was the Cello Sonata in G minor Opus 19, completed in November 1901. Unfortunately for this piece, Rachmaninoff had only premiered his mighty second piano concerto the month before, and that work's huge success eclipsed the less ambitious, but

undoubtedly musically related, chamber piece that followed soon afterwards.

Rachmaninoff dedicated the sonata to the eminent Russian cellist Anatoliy Brandukoff, who gave the first performance in Moscow with the composer himself playing the terrifyingly difficult piano part. Some 14 years older than the composer, Brandukoff and Rachmaninoff were nevertheless great friends. The cellist was Rachmaninoff's best man at his wedding and the two of them gave numerous concerts together.

Brandukoff had previously premiered many cello pieces by Tchaikovsky who was a profound admirer of his playing. It had a refined expressive quality and Rachmaninoff's writing clearly played to his cellist's strengths. Because he believed both the cello and piano had equal roles to play in this work, Rachmaninoff was not inclined to call the piece a cello sonata. Most of the themes are introduced by the piano, before being embellished and expanded by the cello. Because of this, it is often referred to as the Sonata in G minor for Cello and Piano.

In four movements, and like the evergreen Piano Concertos, the sonata is filled with the character so typical of Russia's Romantic era. Few composers before Rachmaninoff could have so deeply explored the cello's capacity for expressive tenderness and intensity. And there can be no doubt Brandukoff's playing really brought every nuance and feeling out of the page.

When he wrote this marvelous sonata, Rachmaninoff surely could not have known that this would be his last chamber music work. From that time on, however, he would only dedicate his skills to solo piano pieces, and the larger scale orchestral and choral pieces. So this is a piece to be discovered and treasured as representing both a beginning and an end to a phase of Rachmaninoff's career - and a testimony to a fine musical friendship. *[ClassicFM Program Notes]*

SHOSTAKOVICH: Sonata for Cello & Piano in D minor



Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) wrote his Cello Sonata in 1934, a crucial date regarding developments in Soviet cultural history, Shostakovich's compositional style, and his personal life. Stalin's government had begun to promote the artistic doctrine of Socialist Realism, which, in typically vague bureaucratic language, called for accessible musical styles that resonated with everyday experiences of Soviet citizens. In response to

official demands, Shostakovich had started to experiment with a new simplicity, which would not, however, regress into unoriginal, old-fashioned styles. At the same time, Shostakovich was attracting international fame with his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, which enjoyed a certain *succès de scandale* in Russia and the West because of its shocking subject matter and explicit musical depiction of adultery. This success was abruptly curtailed, however, after the publication in 1936 of a notorious article in the national journal *Pravda*, whose anonymous author, rumored to be Stalin or a close associate, denounced *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* as "chaos instead of music." This article had a devastating effect on Shostakovich's livelihood. His compositions were quietly removed from concert programs, most of his friends were too afraid to defend him, and his promising career as an opera composer was over. While Stalin's officials harshly criticized almost all Shostakovich's compositions from the mid-1930s, the Cello Sonata was, interestingly, never suppressed. This treatise will investigate why. Was it because chamber music, having no plot or text, is less scandalous than opera? Or did the Cello Sonata contain some evidence of the elusive principles of Socialist Realism? This treatise has four chapters. The first two will introduce the historical and cultural situation in Russia in the 1930s, detailing the problematic challenges Soviet composers faced in trying to incorporate Socialist Realist requirements into their music. The third chapter presents an analytical overview of the four movements of the Cello Sonata, discussing their form and stylistic features in relation to Socialist Realism. The final chapter addresses whether the Cello Sonata is truly representative of Socialist Realist philosophy, and why, during the cultural purges of Stalin's Terror, the Cello Sonata never attracted negative official comment. *[University of Texas, Shostakovich's Cello sonata : its genesis related to socialist realism, Miranda Clare Wilson, 2005]*

6 Ravishing Piano Trios

ARENISKY: Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor



Anton Arensky (1861-1906) was influenced by some of the greatest figures of Russian music: Rimsky-Korsakov, his composition teacher at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, and Tchaikovsky, his colleague at the Moscow Conservatory, where Arensky taught upon his graduation. In turn he instructed other great Russians in Moscow, notably Rachmaninoff, Scriabin, and Glière. Returning to St. Petersburg in 1895, Arensky became director of the Imperial Chapel on Balakirev's recommendation. From 1901 on, receiving a pension from the chapel, Arensky devoted himself to composing and to appearances as a conductor and pianist. Having been addicted to alcohol and gambling for some time, his life became more and more disorganized, according to Rimsky-Korsakov. He spent his final years in a tuberculosis sanatorium in Finland, where he died in 1906. Of his three operas, the first, *Son na Volge* (A dream on the Volga) achieved the greatest success, but his reputation generally rests on a few shorter works, such as the present D minor Trio, and short piano pieces at which he excelled.

Arensky composed his D minor Piano Trio in 1894 and dedicated it to Karl Davidoff (1838-1889), who had been principal cellist of the St. Petersburg opera and later director of the conservatory there. The work might be classified in the "chestnut" category because of its familiarity, but this is a familiarity that is sensed even by one who is hearing the piece for the first time. The work evokes other composers in certain places—the trio of the Scherzo, for example, brings Saint-Saëns's Second Piano Concerto to mind and the opening theme of the Finale suggests the "Polonaise" in the last movement of Tchaikovsky's Third Orchestral Suite. Despite these influences, Arensky's Trio could not have withstood the test of time without its own distinct identity.

The first movement, in the tradition of late German Romanticism, unfolds in a grand sonata form, with the striking feature of an adagio statement of the opening theme to close the movement. The imaginative Scherzo, placed second, frames a trio that shows the Russian-Slavic-German fondness for an idealized kind of waltz.

The slow Elegia, its somber mood enhanced by muted strings, is the movement that particularly pays tribute to the memory of Davidoff. It follows ternary form with a varied return of the "A" section. The Finale, a real tour de force, immediately dispels the mood with its exuberant polonaise-like main theme. The coda unifies the entire work, recalling the theme of the middle section of the Elegia and the first theme of the first movement in its adagio setting before the fast-paced conclusion. *[Parlance Chamber Concerts, program notes, Jane Vial Jaffe, 2019]*

DEBUSSY: Piano Trio in G major



During the summer of 1880, an eighteen year old Claude Debussy (1862-1918) was among the small group of students sent to *Villa Oppenheim* in Florence (now a hotel known as Villa Cora), one of a number of young Paris Conservatoire of Music students who were sent there for the summer at the invitation of Nadezhda von Meck, to instruct and play music with her and her children.

Nadezhda von Meck was the widow of Karl von Meck, a German engineer who garnered a fortune by founding a network of railroads in Russia. Most classical music lovers who have ever heard her name know it from her relationship with Pyotr Tchaikovsky, the Russian composer. She gave Tchaikovsky financial support so he could devote himself to composition, with an agreement that stipulated they never meet. This resulted in a remarkable exchange of letters (over 1,200 in thirteen years) in a long distant friendship that Tchaikovsky came to rely on for her intelligence and musically knowledgeable advice.

Debussy and other students would perform for the family every evening, and it was then that Debussy's trio might have been played. A letter from von Meck to Tchaikovsky mentions that Debussy was writing the trio, but there is no positive evidence that it was ever performed then. In fact, the trio may not have ever been performed in Debussy's lifetime. The work was not published until 1986 after the manuscript (which was considered lost) was found in 1982. Considerable editorial work was needed to piece it back together from various sources. The trio is in 4 movements.

Debussy was still a student when he composed the trio and had very little training in composition, so while the first movement can be thought of as in sonata form, it is a very loose and personal style of sonata form. It consists of attractive themes that are in the light-weight salon style of the time. The beginning themes return towards the end in a kind of recapitulation, and the movement ends quietly. The second movement, a scherzo, movement shows more of what Debussy's style would become when he was a mature composer. The charm of the music is undeniable. The scherzo begins with a short introduction of pizzicato strings that alternate with the piano. The B minor theme itself begins with block chords in the piano. The graceful middle section is marked *un poco piu lento* and is in B major. The scherzo repeats and the movement ends quietly.

In the Andante, the piano sets the stage for the graceful theme that is first played by the cello and then by the violin. A slightly more turbulent middle section that includes some modulations into distant keys leads back to a repeat of the initial theme. The final movement shows Debussy's inexperience in form (as does the entire trio) but the tunes are memorable throughout. His use of modulation may be a reflection of his knowledge of the music of Cesar Franck, a composer that showed considerable influence on young French composers at the time. Debussy was to go on to develop his own unique style of composition, but this piano trio is a pleasant listening experience despite his inexperience at the time. *[Musical Musings, Alan Beggerow, MusWrite.blogspot.com]*

MENDELSSOHN: Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor



Like Beethoven, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809-1847) was a prolific composer of chamber music, especially of pieces for the piano. Though his piano sonatas don't turn up in concert with too much regularity, the eight books of *Songs without Words* do, and his two piano concertos rival Chopin's as the most elegant works in the genre of the second quarter of the 19th century.

Mendelssohn's two piano trios, both written in the last decade of his life, are among his finest works and rank as two of the greatest examples of a genre explored by composers ranging from Mozart to Shostakovich (and beyond). The first trio was composed in the summer of 1839. Cast in four movements, it shares the same key – D minor – as the Second Piano Concerto, written two years prior.

The first movement opens with a passionate cello melody, accompanied by a syncopated figure in the piano. The violin eventually joins in and the ensemble proceeds to develop elements of the opening tune. Throughout, the piano writing is decidedly virtuosic: Mendelssohn's close friend Ferdinand Hiller apparently encouraged him in this direction, which lends the Trio a rather progressive feel for its era.

The slow second movement brings to the fore Mendelssohn's exquisite melodic gifts. This is essentially a song without words for three instruments, each of which is provided moments that showcase their lyrical capabilities. The contrasting middle section is filled with melancholy gestures and a pulsing triplet accompaniment; the return of the opening material in the violin's high register over cello accompaniment is one of the Trio's many highlights.

In the third movement, Mendelssohn wrote a movement that recalled the style and character of his Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (and foreshadowed the brilliant incidental music he would compose for the same play just three years later), writing a lithe, agile scherzo filled with color and good humor.

The opening of the finale returns to the rather grim sound world of the first movement, commencing with a driving, march-like rhythm in D minor. Gradually, the spirit of the slow second movement infuses this material with a good dose of lyricism and it is transformed into a flowing melodic gesture. After a turbulent development and recapitulation, the coda dispels the gloom of D minor with a radiant turn to D major. In lesser hands, this type of gesture can sound perfunctory or rudimentary; here, it's the perfect summation of all that has come before, rounding out one of Mendelssohn's most substantial chamber works on a note of triumph. *[Notes by Johathan Blumhofer]*

RACHMANINOFF: Piano Trio No. 1 in G minor 'Elegiac'

Sergei Rachmaninoff wrote two piano trios within a year of each other, and both were called "*Trio Élégiacque*" (elegiac, or mournful, trio). The first was written in 1892 when Rachmaninoff was 19 years old. He wrote it in a three-day period, and he was the pianist

at the premiere of the work a few days later, The second trio was written in 1893 shortly after the death of Tchaikovsky, a composer Rachmaninoff admired. So the second trio is actually an elegy in remembrance of Tchaikovsky, but the first was written when Tchaikovsky was in good health the year before.

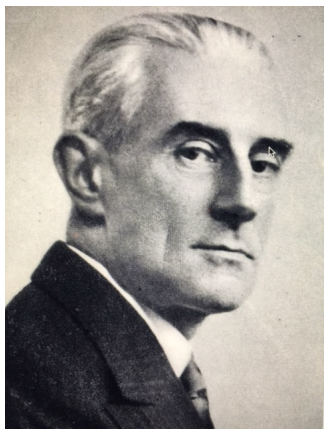
The first trio is in but one movement, and is modeled somewhat after Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio in A minor, written in 1882 in memory of Tchaikovsky's deceased friend Nicolai Rubinstein. This work made a lasting impression of Rachmaninoff and influenced him greatly when he composed his own trios.

The work opens with the violin and cello slowly and softly playing a repetitive figure that gradually grows in intensity. The piano enters with a theme that dominates the work. This theme goes through various changes in the twelve sections that make up the trio, and in the end is transformed into a funeral march, as the Tchaikovsky trio does.

Rachmaninoff was still a student when he composed this trio, but he already had the emotional intensity and sense of instrumental color that was to be a part of his future compositions.

On account of it being a student work or its short length, the first trio was not published in Rachmaninoff's lifetime. The first edition appeared in 1947, and the work has no opus number. [Musical Musings, Alan Beggerow, MusWrite.blogspot.com]

RAVEL: Piano Trio in A minor



"I have written only one masterpiece. That is the *Boléro*. Unfortunately, it contains no music." – Maurice Ravel

Between 1903 and 1914, Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) produced three magnificent chamber music works that are among the finest in the repertoire of early modern music. With Debussy and Satie, Ravel defined a new revelatory style of French music that made a sharp break from the 19th century Romantic tradition overwhelmingly dominated by German angst. Drawing from such exotic inspirations as Asian culture the French Symbolist poets, Spanish folk music and the Impressionist painters, entirely new sounds emerged in poetic piano miniatures and vast orchestral canvases of sumptuous color. In between lay a precious cache of chamber music works. Debussy wrote a stunning String Quartet and the otherworldly quintet for harp and strings, *Danse sacrée et danse Profane*. Ravel's essential creations comprise an equally extraordinary string quartet, the *Introduction et Allegro* for harp, flute, clarinet and string quartet and the Piano Trio. Both composers also wrote a small number of rarefied sonatas as late works. Curiously, while the piano and orchestral works create entirely new forms, organic, and fluid as the indistinct atmospheres they express, the chamber works tend to work their magic within more traditional formats. Ravel's string quartet and piano trio are structured around a traditional plan with the immediately recognizable four-movement character. Of the piano trio, Ravel famously remarked, "My

Trio is finished. I only need the themes for it", suggesting that he had fastidiously mapped out the structure including its harmonic plan in an intentional quest to conquer the time-honored form within the equally traditional genre of the piano trio. What makes this trio such a masterpiece, besides its immediate sensual appeal, is the blending of both a skillfully crafted structure and the indescribably fresh voice of Ravel and a new musical era. The trio includes many wonderful details of construction and expression including novelties both exotic and presciently neoclassical.

The trio opens with a movement marked *modéré*, a sonata whose dreamy themes in a modal cast spaciouly float in a surprisingly placid sequence that is more suggestive than argumentative, dream rather than discourse. There are two clear themes. The first is rhythmic, brief and somewhat dark, the second delicate, lyrical and bright, both familiar as Ravel's poetic language. The development focuses chiefly on the first, returns into the gentle dawn of the second and obliquely concludes with elements of both drawn into new harmonic reaches that feel resolved and fully realized in spite of the astonishingly spacious neutrality into which the music melts.

Next comes a glittering scherzo charged with brilliant rhythm and color that immediately recalls a similarly remarkable scherzo in Ravel's quartet. The distinctive sonorities are formed by combinations of pizzicato, octave doublings in the strings and the illuminated writing for piano that first made Ravel famous. These techniques combined with the string trills, harmonics and tremolos found in the other movements describe the deliciously innovative palette from which both Ravel and Debussy painted their musical epiphanies. It is truly amazing that the innovative and complex writing for piano demands the utmost virtuosity yet blends so perfectly without overwhelming the chamber textures. Indeed, Ravel is among the few great originators of new ensemble sonorities. The title Pantoum refers to a Malaysian form of poetic verse adopted by a variety of French writers of the period and applied here to purely musical language by a most ingenious Ravel. Three different themes alternate and shift positions according to a precise literary plan across multiple stanzas. While following this scheme, Ravel still maintains the clear and simple structure of a scherzo and trio, a ternary form like the *Bergerettes*.

The third, slow movement is titled Passacaille, the French equivalent to the Italian Passacaglia, an old Baroque theme and variations form built around a ground bass melody that recurs through ever changing contexts. Ravel composed a brilliant eight-measure theme of ponderous beauty that begins low in the piano, climbs up into the cello, rises soulfully with the violin and continues to be ceremoniously exchanged among the intimately entwined players in a long line that swells and sinks with subtle but profound intensity. Sparse and remote, the misty lament is treated to an especially poignant treatment by a string duo with ancient-sounding hollow harmonies and a final jagged contemplation in the deepest rage of the solo piano, a return to the primordial ground bass. Haunting and timeless, this is the trio's unforgettable center of gravity.

Several commentators have described Ravel's predicament in finishing the trio: with the sudden outbreak of WWI, he became nearly manically compelled to wrap up the composition in order to enlist in military service. Ravel described his own final effort as driven by "insane heroic rage." The music is bright and energetic without any traces of anger, but many argue that the finale's initial promise may have been compromised by haste or distraction. It begins with one of the grandest splashes of color in the literature

with compelling new sonorities. The meter alternates between 5/4 and 7/4, unusual time signatures drawn from Basque influence. A wash of triumphant gestures swirl up and down dynamic arcs in a fantasia of shifting tempi. The unmistakably conclusive wave is punctuated by the brief recurrent motif featuring a dotted-rhythm and the fundamental stepwise whole note turns that characterize the themes of all four movements in a typically French but especially subtle cyclic recall. There is energy and sweep but some lament a loss of focus on precise chamber textures as the piano trio strains, through smoke and mirrors, to evoke the grandeur of an orchestra. Yet it is all extraordinary chamber psychedelia. After the variety of meticulous form, mood and motion in the previous movements, the last is a welcome gust, free and wild, a flurry in the wake of a man suddenly called into urgent action on another front. [*EarSense, program notes, Kai Christiansen and Music at Kohl Mansion*]

TCHAIKOVSKY: Piano Trio in A minor



Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio is one of the truly monumental achievements of musical art. It is a moving and personal statement of friendship, love, death and grief, written and dedicated "In memory of a Great Artist", that being the composer's mentor, Nicolai Rubinstein (1835-1881). Presented in only two movements, it is nevertheless one of the longest (approximately 50 minutes) and most complex works of its genre and the only work by Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) for this instrumental combination. Through the unparalleled conviction by which it achieves its emotional, virtuosic and elegiac heights, it stands in a class by itself.

Its seeds emanate from the long friendship between Tchaikovsky and Rubinstein, which began when Rubinstein, founder of the Moscow Conservatory, appointed the young composer to its faculty in 1865. Tchaikovsky was 25 at the time. History would show the remarkable nature of the friendship since it had the strength to surmount a bitter four-year interruption brought about by Rubinstein's brutal criticism of Tchaikovsky's (now famous) B-flat minor Piano Concerto. The incident hurt Tchaikovsky so deeply that he removed Rubinstein's name from the dedication and severed all ties with him. The friendship was born anew when Rubinstein had the honesty to admit that his initial judgment of the Concerto was grossly in error, and that he had decided to become one of its champions in public performance. This gesture was one of the most important moments in Tchaikovsky's life.

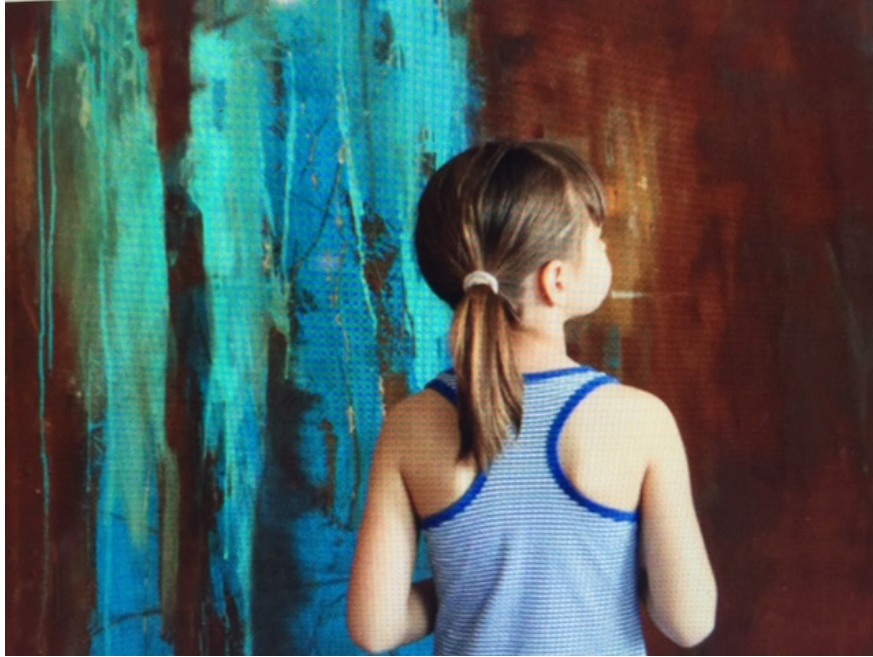
The friendship endured until Rubinstein's death in 1881, which affected Tchaikovsky so severely that he could not work for nine months. Through the prodding of friends, he eventually found release from his pain, as well as his own musical resurrection by the creation of this trio.

The first movement, an Elegy Piece, is a general expression of sentiment about Rubinstein's life, combining three musical themes of contrasting emotion: deep melancholy, triumphant spirit and human tenderness. They are all played out in ever-

changing relationship to each other but with mournful overtones. The second movement is a set of eleven variations based on a folk tune whose derivation bears a personal reference to the lives of both men? In content, the variations run the gamut of human emotions, and Tchaikovsky paints individual vignettes of Rubinstein's personality as well as personal incidents in the course of their friendship. Several of them elaborate upon Russian folk influences intrinsic to their common heritage, the fugue illustrates Rubinstein as musical educator and disciplinarian, and numerous others pay homage to Rubinstein's virtuosity as a pianist.

The Finale Variation and Coda (a complete sonata-form movement in itself) brings together elements of all the preceding variations as well as fragments from the first movement. It is a brilliant journey of virtuosity, energy and unrelenting tension whose climax is a dramatic restatement of the opening theme from the first movement, now transformed into the highest emotional peak of the entire work. It then descends in gradual degrees, colored by arpeggiated harmonies of mournful implications, until it dissolves to nothingness over the rhythm of a funeral march in the piano - a final acceptance of mortality and death. [*© Robert Preston, 1985*]

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