

The  
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presents

# Hermitage Piano Trio



Misha Keylin, *violin*  
Sergey Antonov, *cello*  
Ilya Kazantsev, *piano*

Tuesday, May 17, 2022, 7:30 PM

Hermitage Piano Trio. Photography by Lisa-Marie Mazzucco

# Program

Piano Trio in A Major, Op. 35 (1904)

*Prelude*  
*Menuet*  
*Romance*  
*Finale*

Horatio Parker  
(1863-1919)

Piano Trio in A minor, Op. 6 (1945)

*Elegy*  
*Scherzo*  
*Funeral March*  
*Idyll*

Georgy Sviridov  
(1915-1998)

- INTERMISSION -

Trio élégiaque No. 1 in G minor (1892)

Sergei Rachmaninoff  
(1873-1943)

Vocalise, Op. 34, No. 14 (1912)

Rachmaninoff  
Arr. J. Conus

Piano Trio in C Major (1926)

*Allegro risoluto*  
*Tempo moderato e pesante – Allegro giusto*  
*Recitativo: Moderato ed appassionato*

Gaspar Cassadó  
(1897-1966)

*Please turn off all electronic devices. Photography and recording are not allowed.*

# Program Notes

## **Suite for Piano Trio in A Major, Op. 35**

Horatio Parker

Horatio Parker (1863-1919) was born in Auburndale, Massachusetts. He first studied composition with George Chadwick at the New England Conservatory in Boston and subsequently with Josef Rheinberger at the Bavarian Royal Conservatory in Munich. Like other American composers working at this time, he was primarily influenced by the major German Romantic composers. He enjoyed a long career as a teacher, first at the National Conservatory in New York under Dvorak's directorship and subsequently as a Professor and Dean of the Yale Music School. The University of Cambridge bestowed on him the honorary degree Doctor of Music in 1902. He wrote in most genres but today is primarily remembered for his vocal compositions.

Composed in 1904, the Suite for Piano Trio clearly harks back to that popular in the baroque era as it follows the format of a Bach dance suite, but its style is that of the romantic era and not the baroque. The opening movement, Prelude, in the piano part, with its arpeggios, resembles a Bach prelude, but the long-lined, yearning string melodies are something not found in Bach. The second movement, Tempo di Menuetto, in structure resembles the formal minuet, but the melody and rhythm are clearly those of a romantic waltz. A slow movement, entitled Romance, follows. The main section is lush and yearning but a the contrasting middle section is lighter and almost playful. The finale, an Allegro, though not so marked, is clearly a march dominated by its dotted rhythms. Here the middle section is faster and more lyrical.

--Anonymous

## **Trio in A minor, Op. 6**

Gyorgy Sviridov

Georgy Sviridov (1915-1998) was born in the Russian town of Fatezh in Kurst province. After studying folk instruments locally, he eventually entered the Leningrad Conservatory where he studied with Shostakovich among others. He spent most of his life in Moscow and went on to become a prolific composer. His impressive output includes orchestral and chamber music works, concertos, choral music, songs, and film scores. Living and working during turbulent times in the Soviet Union, Sviridov managed simultaneously to satisfy his political masters and to create music that preserves the genuine spirituality of Russian art and culture.

The Piano Trio (composed in 1945) clearly shows the influence of Sviridov's teacher Shostakovich. It is a massive work, written on a grand scale. The first movement, marked Elegy opens with a subdued melody shared by the strings. This mood is brusquely interrupted by a powerful episode in the piano, full of passion and anguish. Given that it was written during the height of Leningrad's struggle for survival against the brutal Nazi attack lengthy siege, and that Sviridov was in the city at the time, most commentators suggest that it is related to this. The second movement, Scherzo, though exciting and energetic is a dance macabre, a devil's dance of death. The trio section, romantic and innocent stands in sharp contrast. Next comes a Funeral March, once again we hear the main subject of the elegy from the first movement, but now it is even more somber and gloomy as befits such a march. The finale, marked Idyll, has a pastoral quality, perhaps connoting that peace has returned to the land, but the movement ends sadly and quietly, a reminder of the tragedy of war.

--Anonymous

## **Trio No. 1 in G minor, “Élégiaque”**

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Rachmaninov was undoubtedly one of last century's greatest pianists, his performances legendary. He excelled also as a conductor of both operatic and symphonic works. It was, however, as a composer that he fared less well, certainly with the critics. His own compositions were considered totally irrelevant. He lived in exile, in Beverly Hills, as did two of the titans of Twentieth Century music, Stravinsky and Schoenberg, yet as a composer he was viewed as a sad ghost of a bygone era.

Unlike Stravinsky or Schoenberg, his works were popular with the public. And his works were championed by Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra as showpieces for the lush "Philadelphia sound." Ironically it may have been his popularity that contributed to the misunderstanding of his works. In order to be recorded, his works were, with his sanction, chopped to fit sides of long playing records. As a performer, Rachmaninov felt that his American audiences had a short attention span and advised against playing anything longer than 17 minutes in duration. The following letter to Nicholai Medtner (a composer Rachmaninov admired greatly and to whom he dedicated his *Variations on a Theme by Corelli*, Op. 42) reveals his wry sense of humor. "I've played [the Op. 42 variations] about fifteen times, but of these fifteen performances, only one was good. The others were sloppy. I can't play my own compositions! And it's so boring! Not once have I played these all in continuity. I was guided by the coughing of the audience. Whenever the coughing would increase, I would skip the next variation. Whenever there was no coughing, I would play them in proper order. In one concert, I don't remember where, some small town, the coughing was so violent that I played only ten variations (out of twenty). My best record was set in New York, where I played 8 variations. However, I hope that you will play all of them, and won't 'cough'."

It was not until the 1970's that uncut versions of his works began to be performed. In addition, his choral works which had been neglected, but rumored to be among his best works, were resurrected. Today, there are numerous recordings of the choral symphony *The Bells*, as well as his liturgical masterworks *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, Op. 31 (1910) and the *All-Night Vigil*, Op. 37 (1915). It was also in the

seventies that the late British pianist John Ogdon revived Rachmaninov's two large Piano Sonatas, Op. 28 and Op. 36, and it has been in Britain, not America (his adopted home) that a reevaluation of Rachmaninov the composer has taken place. It is interesting to note that the Fifth Edition of *The Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, (Eric Blom, editor, 1954) contains a single two column page article about Rachmaninov, while the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, (Stanley Sadie, editor, 1988) has a lengthier article that stretches over six, double columned pages, not counting the listing of works.

The Piano Trio No. 1 in G Minor was composed by the nineteen year old Rachmaninov in a few days in January 1892. This one movement work was first performed with the composer as pianist, David Krein violinist, and Anatole Brandukov as cellist in the Vostryakov Hall on January 30, 1892.

We turn to Stravinsky for the coda: "As I think about [Rachmaninoff], his silence looms as a noble contrast to the self-approbations which are the only conversation of all performing and most other musicians. And, he was the only pianist I have ever seen who did not grimace. That is a great deal."

--Joseph Way

## **Vocalise, Op. 34 No. 14 (arr. J. Conus)**

Sergei Rachmaninoff

The exquisitely beautiful *Vocalise* that closes his set of 14 songs, opus 34 was composed in 1915. Written in a minor key, like so many of Rachmaninoff's best pieces, *Vocalise* has a melancholy undertone that reflects the composer's dark mood at this time, as Russia struggled through World War I and hovered on the brink of revolution. Its opening melodic phrase is an artfully disguised version of the ancient "Dies Irae" ("Day of Judgment") plainchant theme for the Requiem Mass for the Dead; this grim musical idea was a recurring motive throughout much of Rachmaninoff's music.

But the effortless, unending flow of melody — unfolding in beautiful, arching phrases — triumphs over the sadness.

Jules Conus was an accomplished violinist. He worked at the Moscow Conservatory from 1893 to 1901, where he taught violin and performed frequently. He formed a close friendship with Sergei Rachmaninoff (which lasted until his death in 1942), often performing with him in various chamber ensembles of Rachmaninoff's works. He was the violinist at the premier of Rachmaninoff's majestic Trio élégiaque No. 2 in D minor, Op. 9, which was dedicated "To the Memory of a Great Artist"—Pyotr Tchaikovsky. The *Vocalise* transcription for the Piano Trio is at the Library of Congress in the Sergei Rachmaninoff Archive.

--Anonymous

## **Piano Trio in C major**

Gaspar Cassadó

The Spanish cellist and composer Gaspar Cassadó (1897-1966) was born just before the turn of the 20th century to a music family. His father Joaquin was a pianist, church musician and respected amateur composer while his brother Agustin was a talented violinist. In an effort to give them the best training, Joaquin moved the whole family to Paris in 1907. The gifted sons studied with the best imaginable teachers: Agustin with Jacques Thibaud and Gaspar with Pablo Casals. For a number of years, the father and sons performed as a successful piano trio. In Paris, Cassadó encountered some of the leading musical lights of the early 20th century: Debussy, Ravel and Satie. He studied composition with Ravel and with Manuel de Falla as well as befriending the composers Alfredo Casella, Joaquin Turina, and Isaac Albéniz. Each of these composers would write music inspired by the rhythms, harmonies, melodies and colors of Spanish folk music creating an instantly recognizable style of modern Spanish Nationalism.

Written in 1926, Cassadó's three-movement piano trio is a delicious Spanish-tinged fantasy composed with the technical assurance of one well acquainted with the ensemble from an insider's point of view. It is best characterized as a fantasia because of its relaxed formal structure and its idiosyncratic freedom from the typical conventions of the 19th century piano trio tradition. The opening movement is not a formally argued sonata, the middle movement is not a traditional slow movement and a dance character appears to be liberally scattered throughout the entire work.

All three movements make liberal use of features characteristic of the "Spanish sound." First, there is a melodic and harmonic tendency to move up and down by a half-step, a tight and spicy interval that likely derives from Flamenco guitarists moving up and down the neck in close intervals for a particularly potent drama of tension and stepwise resolution. Second, Cassadó frequently embellishes his melodic lines with rapid three-note ornament that is an immediately recognizable signature of the style. The scoring is agile and virtuosic for a variety of compelling colors. And finally, the use of piquant rhythms and a wide range of swiftly changing dynamics infuse the music with a lively bravado against a backdrop of panoramic splendor. The most prominent point of contrast occurs in the middle movement where Cassadó creates a suspenseful, dark-tinged mood through a series of rapid but subdued figurations that flicker and flame with mysterious magic before yielding to the more light-hearted relief of dancing finale.

--Anonymous

# About the Artists

## HERMITAGE PIANO TRIO

Misha Keylin, *violin*  
Sergey Antonov, *cello*  
Ilya Kazantsev, *piano*

“...more striking even than the individual virtuosity was the profound level of integration among the players, who showed a rare degree of ensemble from beginning to end.” - *The Washington Post*

Now entering their second decade, the United States-based Hermitage Piano Trio has solidified its place as one of the world’s leading piano trios, garnering multiple GRAMMY® Award nominations and receiving both audience and press accolades for their performances that *The Washington Post* singled out for “such power and sweeping passion that it left you nearly out of breath.”

The Trio is a champion of immense repertoire ranging from the works of the great European tradition to more contemporary American pieces. Hallmarks of the Hermitage Piano Trio is their impeccable musicianship, sumptuous sound and polished skill, which have led to demand for many repeat performances. They have appeared on major chamber music series and festivals in Los Angeles, New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Tucson, Portland (OR), Tulsa, San Diego, Corpus Christi, Newport (RI), San Miguel de Allende (Mexico), and New Orleans. Highlights of the 2021-2022 concert season include Dallas Chamber Music Society, Arizona Friends of Chamber Music, University of Iowa, Chamber Music Oklahoma, Waterford Concert Series (VA) and The Morgan Library & Museum (NY).

The Trio began its multiple-album recording deal with Reference Recordings, debuting its CD titled “Rachmaninoff,” which features Sergei Rachmaninoff’s two trios and his unforgettable Vocalise. Echoing many other enthusiastic reviews, *The Strad* lauded the Trio’s “outstanding playing in intense, heartfelt performances,” and *American Record Guide* praised that “the Hermitage wants to burst forth with passion, to let the whole world know! I am really glad that someone can still play that way in our utterly unromantic age.”

A rarity in the chamber music world, this elite Trio brings together three accomplished soloists in their own right. An established soloist, violinist Misha Keylin has performed in forty-five countries spanning five continents. He has captured special attention with his world-premiere CD series, released by Naxos, of Henri Vieuxtemps seven violin concertos and showpieces. These recordings have already sold hundreds of thousands of copies worldwide and have garnered numerous press accolades and awards, including “Critic’s Choice” by *The New York Times*, *Gramophone*, and *The Strad*. Hailed as “a brilliant cellist” by the legendary Mstislav Rostropovich, Sergey Antonov went on to prove his mentor’s proclamation when he became one of the youngest cellists ever awarded the gold medal at the world’s premier musical contest, the quadrennial International Tchaikovsky Competition. Antonov’s entry into this elite stratum of sought-after classical artists has already placed him on stages at world-renowned venues from Russia’s Great Hall at the Moscow Conservatory to Suntory Hall in Tokyo. And pianist Ilya Kazantsev, praised by *The Washington Post* as “virtually flawless,” has performed as a recitalist and a soloist with orchestras in Russia, Canada, Europe, and the United States. Mr. Kazantsev’s many awards and honors include first prize at the Nikolai Rubinstein International Competition (France) as well as top prizes at the International Chopin Competition (Russia) and the World Piano Competition (USA).

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# The Morgan Library & Museum

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