

RACHMANINOFF

Hermitage
PIANO TRIO



A PROF. JOHNSON RECORDING

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

Works for Piano Trio



After the social unrest and political turmoil of the 1905 Russian Revolution, Rachmaninoff left Moscow with his family for Dresden, Germany in November 1906. This vibrant city, full of art, culture, and music, became the Rachmaninoff's home for the next three years, with only short summer breaks at Ivanovka (the estate of his wife's family, the Satins, near Tombov). While in Dresden, Rachmaninoff agreed to perform and conduct in the United States during the 1909-10 concert season. That initial tour of 26 performances (19 as pianist and 7 as conductor), introduced Rachmaninoff to American audiences.

Upon returning to Russia, Rachmaninoff conducted the Philharmonic Society of Moscow. In 1914 he toured England to great success and in 1915 two of his closest friends passed away—Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915) and Sergei Taneyev (1856-1915). Scriabin and Rachmaninoff, lifelong friends, were students together of Anton Arensky (1861-1906) and Taneyev. In order to assist Scriabin's financially stricken widow, Rachmaninoff went on a concert tour performing Scriabin's piano works to raise funds. The death of Sergei Taneyev, Rachmaninoff's beloved teacher, was additional grief that darkened the year. Meanwhile, Russia was embroiled in World War I, and was experiencing political upheavals and instability. Travel was difficult at this time and it became evident to Rachmaninoff that after his family's estate, Ivanovka, was seized by the Socialist Revolutionary Party, he had to consider his family's welfare and safety and emigrate. A fortuitous invitation to tour across Scandinavia provided the excuse for Rachmaninoff and his family to leave the country. On December 22nd, 1917 they boarded a train in St. Petersburg for Finland, never to return to Russia ever again.

Through the good works of his friends, composer Nikolai von Struve, pianist Ignaz Friedman, and the Russian Musical Fund (founded in 1916 by

Alexander Siloti, in association with the Azovo-Donskyi Bank, to help indigent musicians), the Rachmaninoff family was able to pay for and find passage from Oslo, Norway to New York on November 1st, 1918. It should be noted that Baron Nikolai Gustavovich von Struve (1876-1920), a student of Felix Draeseke's in Dresden, was the dedicatee of Rachmaninoff's tone poem, *Isle of the Dead*, Op. 29 ("*Herrn Nicolas von Struve freundschaftlich gewidmet*"). Baron Nikolai von Struve was a member of Tsar Nikolai II's personal entourage, and a prominent figure in the social and musical life of the Russian capital before the Revolution. He was connected with the Russischer Musikverlag in Petrograd (a publishing enterprise devoted to the best interests of modern Russian composition) until its confiscation by the Soviet authorities. He was also a member, and later director, of the editorial board of Serge Koussevitzky's *Editions Russes de Musique*. By the end of 1915, Rachmaninoff also had finished his *14 Romances* (Op. 34), whose final song, *Vocalise*, became one of his most popular works. It was Nikolai von Struve who suggested to the composer that he orchestrate the work. Rachmaninoff promptly responded with arrangements for soprano and orchestra and for orchestra alone, and it is these versions that are most often heard today. The version for piano trio on this recording has an equally interesting and familial history, which we discuss at the end of these notes.



A. SILOTI

In the United States, Rachmaninoff re-united with his friend Josef Hofmann (to whom Rachmaninoff dedicated his *Piano Concerto No.3 in D minor*, Op. 30). Hofmann introduced Rachmaninoff to concert manager Charles Ellis. Ellis organized 38 concerts for Rachmaninoff in the 1918-19 season. Grateful to his adopted country, Rachmaninoff performed his own arrangement of "The Star-Spangled Banner" on his first program in Providence, Rhode Island. And so began Rachmaninoff's American life.

In his biographic article on Rachmaninoff, David Ewen wrote in 1949: "Rachmaninoff used to quote an old Russian proverb in self-criticism: 'If you hunt three hares at one time, how sure can you be that you will capture even one of them?' Rachmaninoff's career in America was marked by his hunting of three hares at once. In the winter of 1939 the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted a monumental three-concert cycle in Philadelphia and New York in which it featured Rachmaninoff in three leading musical roles: pianist, conductor, and composer. Certainly, if it had ever been doubted, it was

proved eloquently during this festival that if Rachmaninoff hunted three hares, he could also capture all of them. As a pianist, he performed his three concertos, with that command of the resources of the piano, that aristocracy of style and immaculateness of taste, which long before, had placed him with the greatest of living virtuosos. As a conductor, he directed his own music, bringing to his works authority, musicianship, and an infallible instinct; he was not just another composer conducting his music with more enthusiasm than skill, but a scrupulous artist who knew what he wanted and how to achieve it efficiently. Then there was the third Rachmaninoff—the composer—whose major works were spread over three full programs. This, perhaps, has been the greatest Rachmaninoff of all... His works are the expressions of a nature sensitively attuned to beauty. No Russian composer since Tchaikovsky could be so moving as Rachmaninoff. He is the Russian soul in music—emotional, hypersensitive, elegiac.”

And there is the word—*elegiac*—so we turn our attention to Rachmaninoff, the chamber musician and composer, and the three works recorded here by the Hermitage Piano Trio.

For Rachmaninoff, the 1890s, were busy years of study. From 1885 to 1889 he studied piano with Nikolai Sergeyevich Zverev (1832-1893), with whom he and Alexander Scriabin also lived. When Rachmaninoff received the Rubinstein Scholarship and began studying free composition at the Moscow Conservatory with Anton Arensky and counterpoint with Sergei Taneyev, Zverev, broke relations with Rachmaninoff and refused to speak with him for some time, believing that composition was a waste of time for gifted pianists. As a result, Rachmaninoff began spending his summers at his uncle's estate, Ivanovka (the bucolic estate of the Satins, whose



ZVEREV & RACHMANINOFF



SERGEI & NATALIE RACHMANINOFF

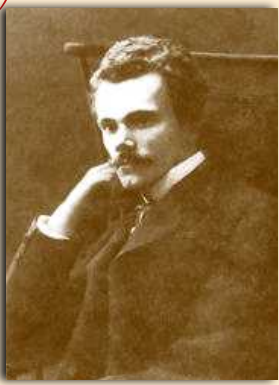
daughter, Natalie Satina, Rachmaninoff weds in 1902, after a three-year engagement). That estate provided the emotional and inspirational backdrop to many of Rachmaninoff's compositions, including his *Piano Concerto No.1 in F-sharp minor*, Op. 1 (dedicated to his cousin and teacher, Alexander Siloti (1863-1945)), and the *Youth Symphony* in D minor and tone poem, *Prince Rostislav*. In 1891 Rachmaninoff

completed his exams in piano, theory and composition with honors, and then sadly contracted a severe case of malaria during his summer break at Ivanovka. Malaria was a serious disease in the 1890s. In fact, in the United States, health officials created infectious diseases maps by geographic region at that time, pinpointing occurrences of malaria, typhoid and other deadly diseases. While Quinine became an effective treatment for Malaria, not until 1918 was it successfully synthesized and made available to medical professionals. So, that summer of 1891 took its toll on Rachmaninoff's health and spirit. Upon returning to the Moscow Conservatory for his last year of study, Rachmaninoff completed his *Trio élégiaque* No. 1 in G minor in just five days, marking the manuscript with the dates "18 January - 21 January 1892". On January 30th the work received its first performance with Rachmaninoff at the piano, violinist David Krein, and cellist Anatoly Brandukov. Working at a feverish pitch, Rachmaninoff composed his graduation work, the one-act opera, *Aleko*, based on Alexander Pushkin's *The Gypsies*, in just seventeen days. It was successfully premiered in May of 1892 at the Bolshoi Theatre, starring Feodor Chaliapin. The opera earned Rachmaninoff the Great Gold Medal from the Moscow Conservatory. He graduated with honors in May 29th, 1892 becoming officially "Free Artist". Upon graduation, Rachmaninoff signed a publishing contract with Gutheil (a publishing house founded in 1859 by Alexander Bogdanovich Gutheil), which began publishing his compositions and disseminating them worldwide. Gutheil later became an imprint of Serge Koussevitzky's *Editions Russes*.

Prior to writing his first piano trio, Rachmaninoff only wrote a few chamber works (three duos and a string quartet). So, why did he not publish his first piano trio nor did the work receive another performance during Rachmaninoff's life? After the *Trio élégiaque* No. 1 in G minor was premiered, Rachmaninoff was busy preparing his opera *Aleko* for its first performance. Among his friends at the Conservatory was fellow student, Mikhail Akimovich Slonov (1869-1930). Just like Rachmaninoff, Slonov studied with Taneyev and Arensky. Slonov was a talented song composer and gifted baritone. With Rachmaninoff he gave two song recitals in Kharkov in 1893, where two of Rachmaninoff's songs were also premiered. As it turns out, Slonov, who attended Rachmaninoff's Conservatory recital where the *Trio élégiaque* No. 1 in



M. SLONOV



A. GOLDENWEISER

G minor was first performed, retained the score and parts of Rachmaninoff's work. While Rachmaninoff's career quickly blossomed into an international one, Slonov stayed in Moscow, where he taught, composed and performed in recitals with pianist Alexander Goldenweiser (1875-1961). When Slonov died in 1930, his manuscripts, memoirs (never completed or published), personal correspondence with Chaliapin, Rachmaninoff and many others ended up in the archives of the State Central Museum of Musical Culture. After Rachmaninoff's death in 1943 and the end of World War II, Alexander Goldenweiser stumbled

upon the Rachmaninoff manuscript in the Archives, and in October 1945, pianist Alexander Goldenweiser (just like Rachmaninoff, a student of the Moscow Conservatory and pupil of Alexander Siloti) was joined by his chamber music colleagues and members of the famous Beethoven Quartet, violinist Dmitri Tsyganov (1903-1992) and cellist Sergei Shirinsky (1903-1974) (a student of Anatoly Brandukov), in a concert sponsored by the State Central Museum of Musical Culture, in the second performance of the *Trio élégiaque* No. 1 in G minor (1892) of Sergei Rachmaninoff. The score and parts were finally published in Moscow by the State Music Publishers in 1947.

The word *élégiaque* in French translates as plaintive, melancholic, sad. Rachmaninoff's *Trio élégiaque* No. 1 in G minor is indeed a brooding and reflective work. It is cast in one continuous movement, which is built upon twelve episodes that are symmetrically represented in the recapitulation. The "elegiac" theme is first heard in the piano opening, marked *Lento lugubre* ("slow and mournful"—a tempo marking also used by Rachmaninoff in his later work, "The Bells" and also by Tchaikovsky for the opening of his "Manfred" Symphony (a work, by the way, Rachmaninoff transcribed for 2 pianos, 4-hands in 1886 and performed for Tchaikovsky with pianist and fellow Zverev student, Matvei Leontovich Presman (1870-1941))). The *Trio's* opening four-note rising motif, dominates the work, and as suggested by a number of musicologists, if played backwards, has the same rhythm of the opening descending motif (but in the minor) of Tchaikovsky's first piano concerto. After the mournful opening, the "elegy" is presented by the violin and cello and developed. Ultimately at the conclusion of the work it is presented as a funeral march.

When in 1893 Rachmaninoff learns of the sudden death of Tchaikovsky, he

begins in earnest on October 5th his *Trio élégiaque* No. 2 in D minor, Op. 9. The work is completed on December 15th, 1893 and receives its first performance in Moscow on January 31st, 1894, performed by the composer as pianist, Julius Conus, violinist and Anatoly Brandukov, cellist. In the audience were Rachmaninoff's pianist-colleague Alexander Goldenweiser and also his teacher, Sergei Taneyev (who, by the way, was the pianist in the first performance of Tchaikovsky's *Trio* in 1882). Rachmaninoff, dedicated his work: "*To The Memory of a Great Artist*"—*Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)*.

The work, cast in three movements, is on a grand scale. As a model (a *sonata-allegro* followed by a set of variations), Rachmaninoff is, without a doubt, influenced by Tchaikovsky's *Trio in A minor*, Op. 50 of 1882, written in memory of Nikolai Rubinstein (1835-1881). While Tchaikovsky's last variation served as a finale to the whole piece, Rachmaninoff wrote a third movement to fulfill that function. Both works conclude with a reappearance of the main theme of the first movement and a funereal dirge-like coda. Rachmaninoff infuses his *Trio* with poetic-dramatic content, which is evidenced in the emotional ebb and flow through which the composer expressed his sense of personal grief and his consecration to the ideals of Tchaikovsky. Rachmaninoff's *Trio* is full of profound feelings, expressed in a large and expansive manner. It is a work where Rachmaninoff's virtuosity as pianist is manifest throughout as well as passages of no less brilliance for the strings. If one listens carefully, the *Trio* is rich in "Russianisms"—those sounds that provide the listener with images of vast expanses of land with distant horizons, of great churches with their bells tolling and choirs singing, of the tragic moods found in the novels of Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy. The tragic imagery is altogether appropriate for an elegy on the death of one of the greatest and most Russian of composers, Pyotr Tchaikovsky.

In assembling this program, the Hermitage Piano Trio, wanted to connect the three works, not only musically, but also through the works' human connections, evidenced by the performers who gave the premieres of each of the works and their personal relationships with each other. Rachmaninoff was the pianist in all three works when they were first performed. The



J. CONUS



S. TANEYEV



BRANDUKOV & TCHAIKOVSKY

cellist Anatoly Brandukov (1858-1930) was one of Russia's greatest cellists, to whom Tchaikovsky dedicated his *Pezzo Capriccioso* and Rachmaninoff dedicated his *Cello Sonata*. He studied with Wilhelm Fitzenhagen (1848-1890), who was the cellist in the first performance of Tchaikovsky's Trio, and was connected musically to Anton and Nikolai Rubinstein and Alexander Siloti (Rachmaninoff's teacher). He was the musical link from the 19th century to the 20th century in cello performance and was the teacher to countless cellists, including the Ukrainian, Gregor Piatigorsky. The violinist in the premiere of Rachmaninoff's *Trio élégiaque*

No. 1 in G minor was David Krein (1869-1926), concertmaster of Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre Orchestra and eminent chamber musician. He was one of seven brothers born to Abram Krein a noted violinist in the Klezmer tradition—all seven became musicians of note, including Alexander Krein, who, like Rachmaninoff studied with Taneyev. The violinist in the premiere of Rachmaninoff's *Trio élégiaque* No. 2 in D minor, Op. 9 was Julius Conus (1869-1942). He also came from an illustrious musical family. His father, Eduard Conus, was a pianist and teacher, and his brothers, Georgi and Lev, also were musicians, who studied at the Moscow Conservatory with Sergei Taneyev and Anton Arensky, where all of them became friends with Sergei Rachmaninoff. Julius Conus's son, Boris Conus (1904-1988), married

Rachmaninoff's younger daughter, Tatyana (1907-1961). Julius Conus's *Violin Concerto in E minor* was dedicated to his teacher, Jan Hřimalý (1844-1915), who taught at the Moscow Conservatory and who was violinist in the first performance of Tchaikovsky's *Trio* and also his 2nd and 3rd string quartets.

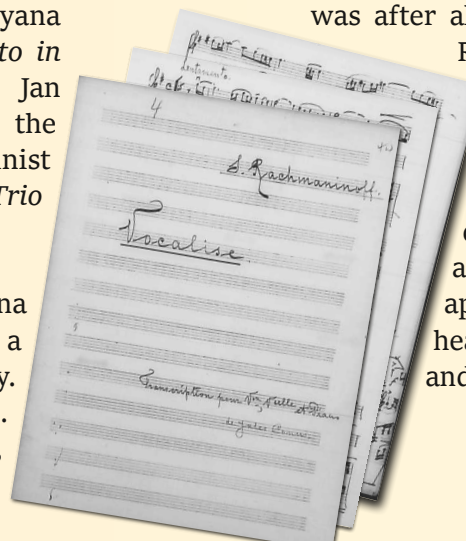
Russian lyric coloratura soprano Antonina Nezhdanova (1873-1950) was also a graduate of the Moscow Conservatory. Rachmaninoff composed his *Vocalise*, Op. 34, No. 14 in the voice/piano version, marking the two versions of the

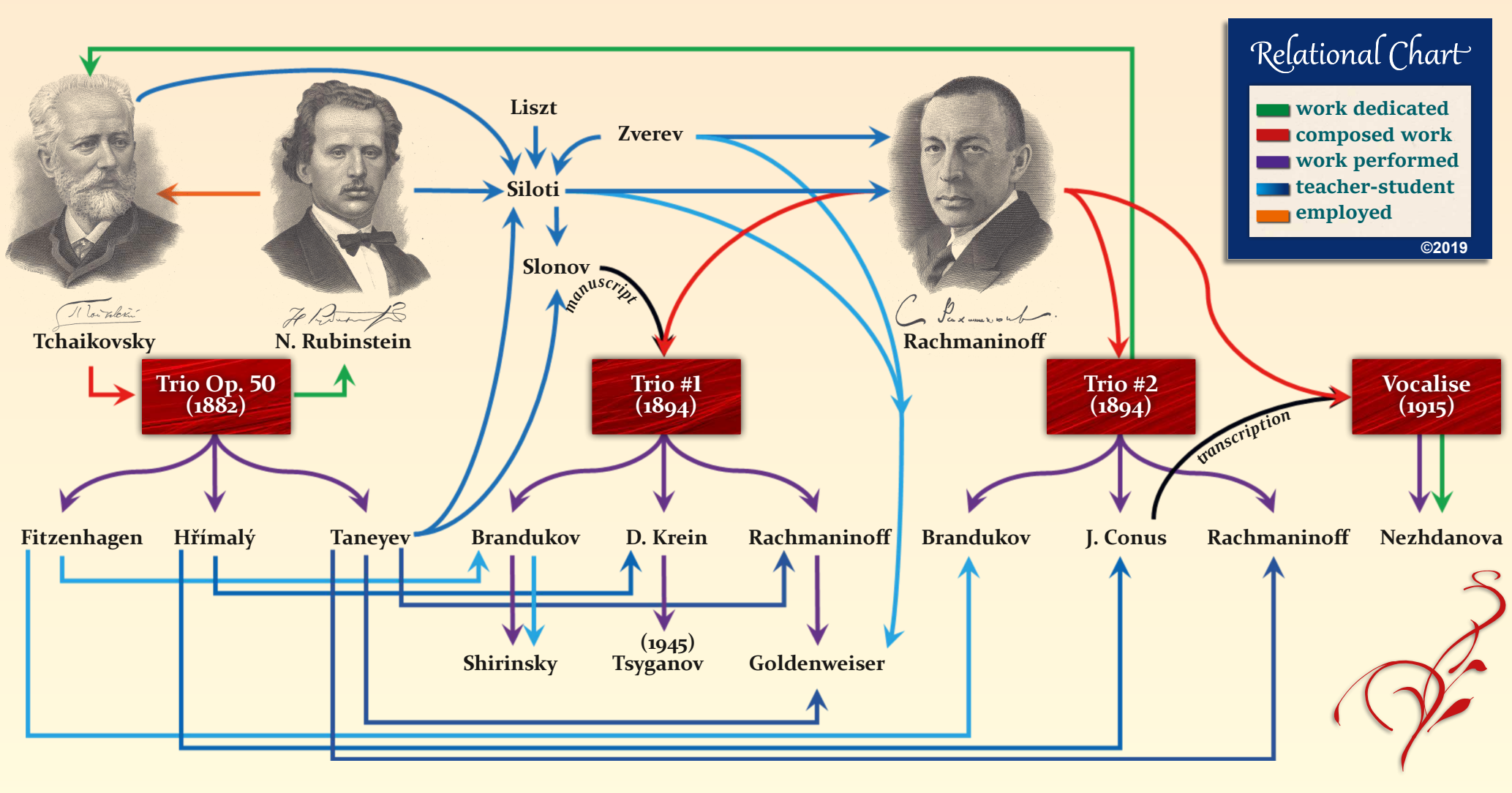


A. NEZHANOVA

manuscript with the dates—1 April 1915 and 21 September 1915. When Rachmaninoff transcribed the work for voice and orchestra, it received its first performance on January 25th, 1916 with Antonina Nezhdanova (to whom the work is dedicated) and Sergei Koussevitzky conducting. When Nezhdanova asked the composer why there were no words, the composer gallantly responded, "What need is there of words, when you will be able to convey everything better and more expressively than anyone could with words by your voice and interpretation?" By the way, Koussevitzky's arrangement of the work for double-bass and orchestra was performed by him in December 1915. Anatoly Brandukov also arranged Rachmaninoff's *Vocalise* for cello and piano. The rarity is the composer-approved transcription of *Vocalise* by Rachmaninoff's friend and colleague, Julius Conus. The manuscript of the transcription (along with the violin and cello parts) is at the Library of Congress in the Sergei Rachmaninoff Archive. The transcription was published by Gutheil in 1928. The manuscript is unfortunately undated by Conus. After the Russian Revolution of 1917, Rachmaninoff's and Conus's families moved to Paris. The fact that Rachmaninoff had a copy of Conus's manuscript does not automatically imply it was written before 1917. After settling in the United States in 1918, Rachmaninoff corresponded frequently with Conus, asking Conus to watch after his children (Tatyana was dating Boris) and often requesting scores or discussing various revised editions of Rachmaninoff's compositions which Conus was helping Rachmaninoff edit for publication by Gutheil/Editions Russes. In all likelihood, Conus's transcription dates from the late 1920s in Paris, just before its publication in 1928.

Vocalise is one of Rachmaninoff's most plaintive and melancholic pieces. It was after all written during World War I at a time when Russia was struggling and rumors of a Revolution were swirling. However, even the beautiful unending melodic theme, as it unfolds, manages to triumph over the sadness. A program of three works linked in sadness and death, linked inextricably through friendships and loss, presented by the Hermitage Piano Trio, appropriately end with a wordless work of heavenly beauty and the possibility of redemption and better times.





—Program Notes by Victor and Marina A. Ledin, ©2019

NOTE on the Spelling of Rachmaninoff’s Name:

While it is popular today to transliterate Russian names in a variety of ways, Rachmaninoff had only two “official” names, one in Russian and one in English. The Russian spelling is Сержей Васильевич Рахманинов. “Sergei Rachmaninoff” was the spelling he used while living in the United States from 1918 until his death. The Library of Congress standardized this usage. Outside the United States, his name is often spelled “Rachmaninov”, although variants with “kh” substituting for the “ch” are also common. It should be noted that the Rachmaninoffs’ tombstone spells their name as they signed their name in America—“Rachmaninoff”.

С. Рахманинов.

Sergei Rachmaninoff



Hermitage

PIANO TRIO

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS
ON RACHMANINOFF



When listening to his music—especially his orchestral works— I am always in awe of how skillfully Rachmaninoff utilizes string instruments in conveying the soul, passion and drama in his compositions. The two piano trios on this album were written by Rachmaninoff during his earlier years, but the maturity in his melodies and the themes are unmistakably traditional and on a grand scale. The phrases grow from almost barely audible church psalms and funeral processions to explosive climaxes that almost sound as if judgment day is upon us. Rachmaninoff challenges performers with both physical and mental stress at almost every turn, but he gives us just enough flexibility to express his music in our own individual way.

MISHA KEYLIN,
VIOLIN



I live my entire life surrounded by music of Rachmaninoff. For me his musical language is the soul and essence of Russian Romanticism. Endless melodies and unmistakable harmonies as well as monumental scale; his music is as close to the Russian heart and soul as it gets. It is an honor for me to fully dedicate our debut album to his art of the piano trio. I hope the listeners will enjoy listening to his music as much as we enjoy performing it.

SERGEY ANTONOV,
CELLO



Rachmaninoff's music has a very special niche in my life. I often compare it to Dostoevsky's "Brothers Karamazov", where three brothers resemble the richness and depth of human soul with its many sides: from lightness to darkness, from joy to sorrow, from pure happiness to complete despair. The program on this album has it all. One can find the moments of purest happiness, when all three instruments blend in together in a joyful dance. On the other hand the very next second, in an extreme contrast, all three instruments jump into the most dramatic climax showing off all of the capabilities they have.

ILYA KAZANTSEV,
PIANO





Hermitage

PIANO TRIO

“The Hermitage Piano Trio turned in a performance of such power and sweeping passion that it left you nearly out of breath.” –The Washington Post

Descending from the great Russian musical tradition, the Hermitage Piano Trio is distinguished by its exuberant musicality, interpretative range, and sumptuous sound. In the same way that St. Petersburg’s venerable Hermitage State Museum both represents the very essence and history of Russia while also using its collection to embrace and promote cultures from around the world, the Hermitage Piano Trio embodies the majesty of its Russian lineage while at the same time including in its immense repertoire works from the great European tradition to contemporary American commissions. Following a recent performance, *The Washington Post* raved that “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.”

Based in the United States, the Trio has performed to similarly tremendous acclaim for audiences on major chamber music series in Los Angeles, New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Tucson, Newport (RI), Portland (OR), San Miguel de Allende (Mexico), and New Orleans. A hallmark of the Trio is its polished skill in performing an enormous variety of music, and its wide, well-thought-out repertoire ranges from Rachmaninoff, Shostakovich, Arensky, Glinka, and Tchaikovsky to Schubert, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Dvořák, and Brahms—the source of many of their invitations to perform. Recently signed to a multiple-album recording deal with Reference Recordings®, the Trio’s vast repertoire will serve as the backbone of their catalog and the group’s hallmark.


A rarity in the chamber music world, this elite trio is comprised of three musicians who are noted soloists in their own right:

In a career already spanning fifty countries on five continents, violinist **Misha Keylin** is attracting particular attention with his world-premiere CD series of the seven Henri Vieuxtemps violin concertos, released by Naxos. These recordings have already sold over 150,000 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.

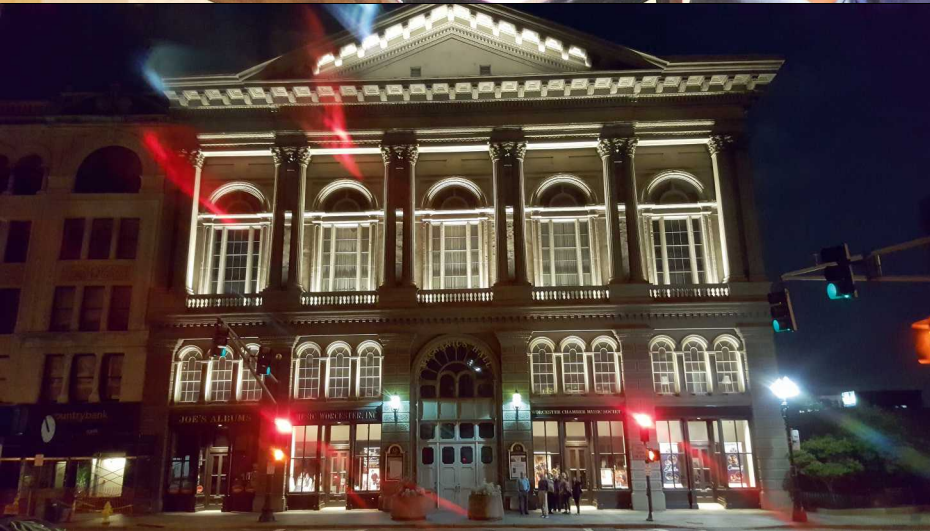
And pianist **Ilya Kazantsev**—hailed by *The Washington Post* as “virtually flawless”—has performed as recitalist and soloist with orchestras in Russia, Canada, Europe, and the United States. Mr. Kazantsev’s many awards and honors include first prize at the Nikolai Rubinstein International Competition (France); he also won the International Chopin Competition (Russia) and the 2007 & 2008 World Piano Competitions.

For more information, please visit www.hermitagepianotrio.com



Mechanics Hall

Worcester, Massachusetts



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SERGEI RACHMANINOFF (1873-1943)

- 1 ***Trio élégiaque No. 1 in G minor*** (1892) 14:34
- Trio élégiaque No. 2 in D minor, Opus 9***
(1893, revised 1907 and 1917) 50:09
- 2 **I. Moderato—Allegro vivace (D minor)** 19:36
- 3 **II. Quasi variazione. Andante (F major)** 22:00
- 4 **III. Allegro risoluto—Moderato (D minor)** 08:33
- 5 ***Vocalise, Opus 34, No. 12***
(1915, transcribed by Julius Conus (1869-1942) in 1928) 07:00

Total Time: 71:43



Hermitage
PIANO TRIO

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



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