

ArtPower
University of California San Diego

HERMITAGE PIANO TRIO

February 1, 2019 at 8 pm

Department of Music's Conrad Prebys Concert Hall





ArtPower
University of California San Diego

ArtPower at UC San Diego presents performing arts that engage, energize, and transform the diverse cultural life of the university and San Diego.

Through vibrant, challenging, multi-disciplinary performances, ArtPower seeks to develop more empathetic students and community members who are better prepared to engage in the world around them through their participation in high-quality artistic, educational, and engagement programs that broaden thinking and awareness, deepen understanding, and encourage new dialogues across UC San Diego and the community.

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ArtPower presents

Hermitage

Piano Trio

February 1, 2019 at 8 pm

Department of Music's

Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Misha Keylin, *violin*

Sergey Antonov, *cello*

Ilya Kazantsev, *piano*

Program

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–93)

Trio in A minor, op. 50 (1881–82)

Pezzo elegiaco. Moderato assai

Tema con variazioni. Andante con moto

INTERMISSION

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)

Trio No. 2 in D minor, op. 9, "Élégiaque" (1893)

Moderato

Quasi variazione

Allegro risoluto

About the Program

Piano Trio in A minor, op. 50

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Born May 7, 1840, Votkinsk

Died November 6, 1893, St. Petersburg

Nikolai Rubinstein, brother of the pianist Anton Rubinstein, had hired Tchaikovsky to teach composition at the Moscow Conservatory and later encouraged him as a composer, conducting and championing his music. When Nikolai died on March 23, 1881, at the age of 46, Tchaikovsky resolved to write a work in his memory, but it was difficult for him to choose the form for such a piece. Nikolai had been a pianist, but a piano concerto did not seem a proper memorial piece. Tchaikovsky disliked the combination of piano and strings in chamber music but eventually overcame this aversion to write the Trio in A Minor as the memorial to Rubinstein; it was the only time Tchaikovsky used a piano in his chamber music. He began work on the trio in December 1881 while living in Rome and completed the score on February 9, 1882. The manuscript is inscribed: "In memory of a Great Artist."

A particular memory came back to Tchaikovsky as he worked on this music: in 1873, after the premiere of Tchaikovsky's *The Snow Maiden* (which had been conducted by Rubinstein), faculty members from the Moscow Conservatory had gone on a picnic in the sunny, blossom-covered countryside. Here they were surrounded by curious peasants, and the gregarious Rubinstein quickly made friends and had the peasants singing and dancing. As he set to work on the trio, Tchaikovsky remembered how much Rubinstein had liked one of their songs.

The trio as completed has a very unusual form: it is in two massive movements that last a total of almost 50 minutes. The first movement in particular has proven baffling to critics, who have been unable to decide whether it is in sonata or rondo form. It is built on two sharply contrasted themes: the cello's somber opening melody—which Tchaikovsky marks *molto espressivo*—and a vigorous falling theme for solo piano, marked *Allegro giusto*. Tchaikovsky alternates these themes through this dramatic movement, which closes with a quiet restatement of the cello's opening theme, now played in octaves by the piano.

The second movement is a huge set of variations. The theme of these variations is the peasant melody Rubinstein had liked so much on the picnic in 1873, and Tchaikovsky puts this simple tune through eleven quite different variations. Particularly striking are the fifth, in which the piano's high notes seem to echo the sound of sleigh bells; the sixth, a waltz introduced by the cello; the eighth, a powerful fugue; and the tenth, a mazurka introduced by the piano. So individual and dramatic are these variations that several critics instantly assumed that each must depict an incident from Rubinstein's life and set about guessing what each variation was "about." Tchaikovsky was dumbfounded when this was reported to him; to a friend he wrote: "How amusing! To compose music without the slightest desire to represent something and suddenly to discover that it represents this or that, it is what Moliere's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* must have felt when he learnt that he had been speaking in prose all his life."

The trio concludes with a final variation so huge that many have considered it a separate movement. It comes to a somber end: Tchaikovsky marks the final page *Lugubre* (“lugubrious”), and over a funeral march in the piano come fragments of the cello’s theme from the very beginning of the first movement, now marked *piangendo*: “weeping.” This theme gradually dissolves, and the piano marches into silence.

Trio No. 2 in D minor, op. 9, “Élégiaque”

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Born April 1, 1873, Oleg

Died March 28, 1943, Beverly Hills

Rachmaninoff wrote two piano trios, and—curiously—both are nicknamed “Trio élégiaque.” The first, in G minor, dates from 1892, and the source of its inspiration has been forgotten, but the second sprang from a painful moment in its composer’s life. On November 6, 1893, Tchaikovsky died, and Rachmaninoff—who had regarded the older composer as mentor and friend—was shattered. That same day, he set to work on a piano trio in Tchaikovsky’s memory, and its composition—a slow and painful process—occupied the twenty-year-old composer for the rest of the year.

When he set out to write a memorial to Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff chose as his model the Piano Trio in A Minor heard on the first half of this concert. The parallels between the two trios are striking: both are dedicated “To the memory of a great artist,” for instance. Both trios open with a long and grieving first movement; both have a theme-and-variation second movement; and Tchaikovsky’s trio concludes with a final variation marked *Allegro risoluto* that becomes in effect a brief finale, while Rachmaninoff simply rounds his trio off with a brief finale marked *Allegro risoluto*. To draw the parallel even more completely, both composers use as the theme of their variations movements a melody each associated with his mentor: Tchaikovsky uses a peasant song he and Rubinstein had heard at a picnic, while Rachmaninoff uses a theme from his own work *The Rock*, which Tchaikovsky had been scheduled to conduct.

The Rachmaninoff Trio in D Minor has remained much less well-known than its model—the work of a student composer inevitably suffers when compared to the work of a mature and successful composer. As might be expected, Rachmaninoff is much more comfortable writing for piano than for strings, and in his trio the piano frequently dominates textures, while the strings are given subordinate roles and often set in unison. Still, this youthful music can be very effective, and there are many flashes here of the artist Rachmaninoff would later become.

The lengthy *Moderato* opens darkly with a tolling piano ostinato, and gradually the strings enter to sing their sad song. At the *Allegro moderato*, the music leaps ahead powerfully—here is one of those moments that sounds like mature Rachmaninoff. The development is very long and turbulent, with much vigorous bowing from the strings; these episodes alternate with slow and dark passages, full of lamentation. Rachmaninoff marks his slow movement *Quasi variazione*, and piano alone plays the chordal melody that will serve as the basis for variation (in what seems now a strange decision, Rachmaninoff had originally assigned the first statement of this theme to the harmonium, but reversed himself when revising the trio). There follow eight clearly-defined variations, and some of these are quite distinct: the second is for piano solo, the third for racing piano and

pizzicato strings, the seventh a dialogue for piano and strings. The concluding *Allegro risoluto* is extremely dramatic, and at the end Rachmaninoff brings back the lugubrious beginning of the first movement, and his memorial trio—like Tchaikovsky's before him—marches grimly into silence.

Program note by Eric Bromberger

About the Artists

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 "three of Russia's most spectacular young soloists . . . turned in a performance of such power and sweeping passion that it left you nearly out of breath."

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, Portland (OR), San Miguel de Allende (Mexico), and New Orleans. The group's 2018-19 season features performances all over North America, including those at Portland (OR) Friends of Chamber Music, Art Power At UC San Diego, and the Corpus Christi Chamber Music Society. Recently signed to a multiple-album recording deal with Reference Recordings, the Trio's debut CD—recorded in 2017 and released in 2018—is comprised of the piano trios of Sergey Rachmaninov: Trio élégiaque No. 1 in G minor; Trio élégiaque No. 2 in D minor, Op. 9; and *Vocalise*.

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 Rachmaninov, Shostakovich, Arensky, Glinka, and Tchaikovsky to Haydn, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Dvorak, and Brahms—the source of many of their invitations to return. 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 forty-five 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. Kazantsev's many awards and honors include first prize at the Nikolai Rubinstein International Competition; he also won the International Chopin Competition and the 2007 and 2008 World Piano Competitions.

Based in the United States, members of the Trio have taught at prestigious schools around the country and have recorded for Naxos and ALM Records. In addition, cellist Sergey Antonov is the artistic director of the concert series for the Chamber Music Foundation of New England.

For more information, please visit www.hermitagepianotrio.com

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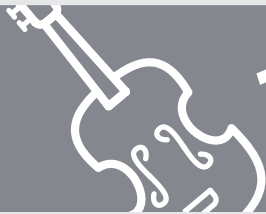


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Special Event / U.S.A.

Vijay Iyer & Matt Haimovitz

Thursday, March 7, 2019, at 8 pm

Dept. of Music's Conrad Prebys Concert Hall

Tickets: \$45-59; UCSD Student: \$9

Cellist Matt Haimovitz—an artist whose barrier-breaking performances have taken him around the world—joins forces with genius jazz composer-performer pianist Vijay Iyer in a program that truly defies definition. This special event showcases Iyer's own composition alongside the music of Zakir Hussain, John McLaughlin, J. S. Bach, Ravi Shankar, Billy Strayhorn, and others to create a program of unprecedented virtuosity and depth. Duets are the centerpiece, but also expect solo performances by each of these mesmerizing players.

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Chamber Music / U.S.A. & Canada

St. Lawrence String Quartet with Stephen Prutsman

Friday, April 26, 2019, at 8 pm
Dept. of Music's Conrad Prebys Concert Hall
Tickets: \$40-54; UCSD Student: \$9

The award-winning St. Lawrence String Quartet (SLSQ) has spent nearly three decades at the top of the chamber music world. Based at Stanford University, the ensemble is renowned for the intensity of its performances, its breadth of repertoire, and its commitment to concert experiences that are at once intellectually exciting and emotionally alive. A frequent visitor to ArtPower, SLSQ is this time joined by acclaimed pianist and composer Stephen Prutsman. Described as one of the most innovative musicians of his time, Prutsman was a medalist at both the Tchaikovsky International Piano Competition and the Queen Elisabeth International Music Competition.

Program

Robert Schumann: Quintet in E-flat Major, op. 44; Joseph Haydn: String Quartet in F Minor, op. 55 no. 2 "The Razor"; Stephen Prutsman: *Color Preludes* for Piano and Strings