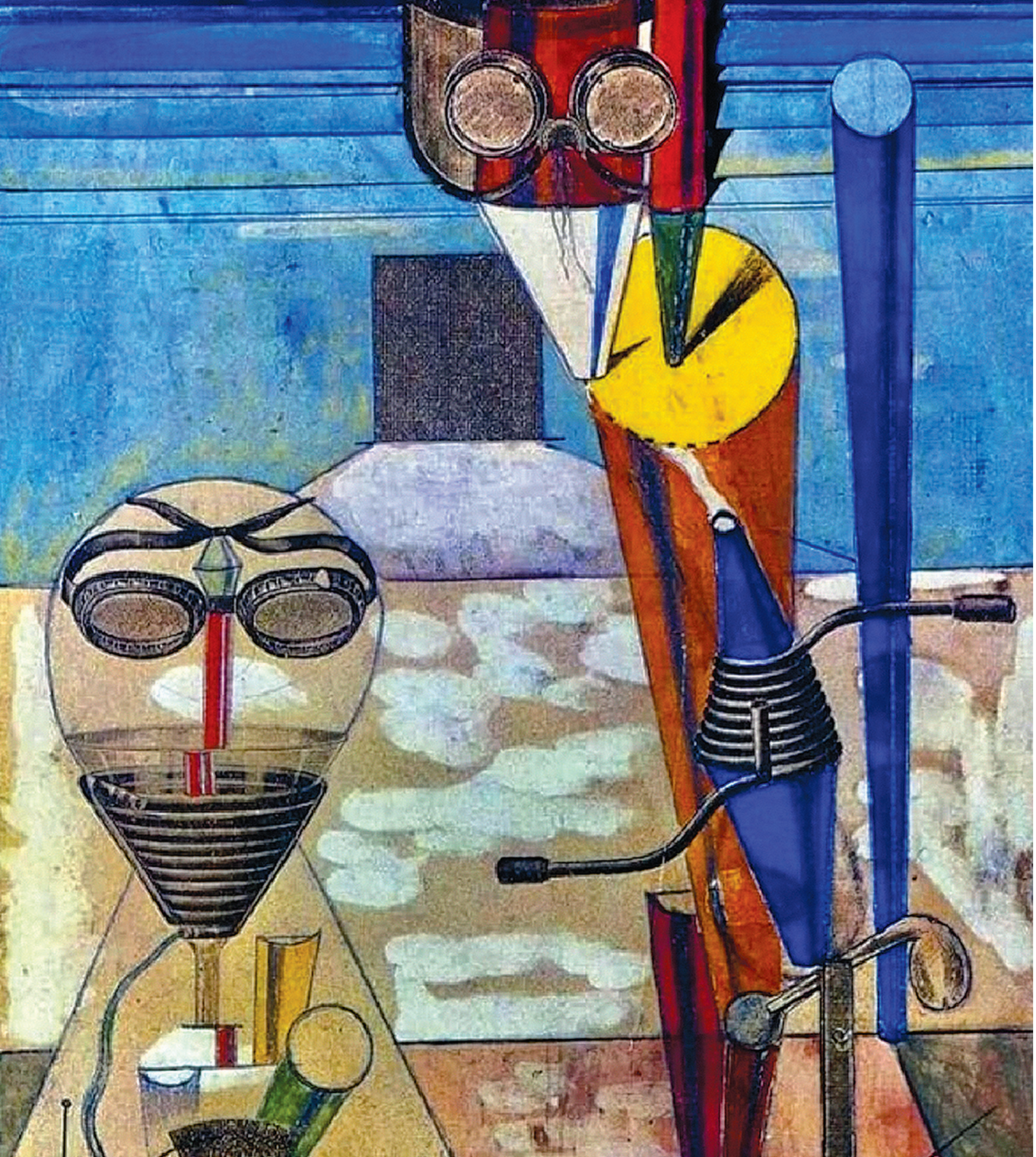

HORN TRIOS

from Mozart to Piazzolla and beyond

(Volume 2)

Howard Wall
horn

Elmira Darvarova
violin

Thomas Weaver
piano

Affetto
AF2502

HORN TRIOS from MOZART to PIAZZOLLA and beyond (Vol. 2)

Album Notes by Elmira Darvarova

This is the second installment of a compendium of horn trios from the 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. As a type of "anthology" of original and arranged repertoire for the trio ensemble of horn, violin and piano, this is not the kind of recording project consisting of the "obligatory" Brahms Horn Trio in the company of just 2 or 3 other much-recorded horn trios. Although the Brahms Trio is included (in Volume 1), our concept is a lot more ambitious, presenting a 4-centuries, 2-volume collection where each album encompasses a double-disc compilation, exploring a vast array of diverse styles and genres, with a wide range of composers' nationalities (representing 12 different countries in Vol. 1 and 11 countries in Vol. 2). While this is by no means everything that has been composed or arranged in the sphere of this particular repertoire (new material is composed or transcribed all the time), we have assembled an extensive selection: Vol. 1 offered works by composers from the United States, Canada, England, Germany, Austria, France, Liechtenstein, Argentina, Estonia, Romania, Bulgaria and Morocco, while Vol. 2 includes composers from the US, UK, Australia, Ukraine, Russia, Germany, Austria, France, Spain, Argentina and Czechia. Among the 15 works in Vol. 1 we registered 8 world-premiere recordings, while Vol. 2 is literally brimming with world-premieres: among the 13 works in Vol. 2, there are 11 world-premiere recordings of original and transcribed repertoire. Vol. 1 had been so eagerly anticipated that several weeks before the official release our label, Affetto, received a request for the recordings from BBC Radio in London, in connection with their programming needs. Since the release of Vol. 1, radio stations in the US, Canada, Europe and Australia have played multiple times our recordings of horn trios. (Just a few days ago, on Brahms' birthday, May 7, an Australian radio station played our Brahms Horn Trio recording from Vol. 1.) We have poured our hearts and energy in interpreting and promoting these works, many of which have been transcribed by ourselves, in accordance with the elevated standards stemming from our high-ranked positions/standing in the music world. Hornist Howard Wall, whose storied career includes not just his legendary reputation as a long-time member of two of America's most prestigious orchestras – the New York Philharmonic and the Philadelphia Orchestra, but also an impressive discography of chamber and solo discs, brings a symphonic dimension to his own transcriptions of music by Piazzolla, Stravinsky, Bach and John Coltrane. Pianist Thomas Weaver (a faculty member at Curtis Institute and Boston University Tanglewood Institute, and an award-winning composer), whose own horn trios (one in each volume) mesmerize with atmospheric moods, and whose translucently-textured playing earned accolades for his recent album of Hungarian composers, shines in each piece with sublime virtuosity and fierce artistic commitment (check-out also his expansive jazz cadenzas in Stravinsky's Firebird *"Berceuse"* and John Coltrane's *"Naima",* in addition to all his other amazing contributions in the varied repertoire range encoded in our project's title: "From Mozart to Piazzolla and beyond"). I – the violinist Elmira Darvarova – am equally "at home" with Mozart (as a former concertmaster of the Metropolitan Opera, where I accompanied the world's greatest singers in a multitude of Mozart operas) and with Piazzolla (having attained a Grammy nomination for one of my many Piazzolla albums), as well as feeling "at home" everywhere else, from baroque to contemporary genres, and including world music (my Indian Ragas album, recorded with the sublime sarodist Amjad Ali Khan, debuted at No. 3 on Billboard and was praised as one of the best-ever East-Meets-West presentations). Our concert performances with horn trio repertoire have served as a revelation and inspiration to other performers, revealing what is possible in horn & violin collaborations. When a violinist collaborates with a hornist, a strongly-substantial violin tone is, of course, a required prerequisite for balancing, but one other important ingredient of any artistic partnership is to strive for the most convincing interpretation within the frame of the instrumental ensemble. The continuous aim towards the most sophisticated interpretation becomes a way of life, where you obsessively study the minute details, and practice and rehearse while investing your rendition with all the elements of who you are, guided by your artistic credo, and inspired by the sources that fuel your fascination with a music work. The same is true also when transcribing a work which has captivated you, in order to undertake any performing or recording project. All of the works in our multi-disc project of horn trios were recently performed by us at the New York Chamber Music Festival.

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

***Berceuse* from The Firebird (arr. for horn, violin and piano by Howard Wall, Elmira Darvarova and Thomas Weaver)**
premiere recording

Igor Fyodorovich Stravinsky, born in Russia, and a naturalized citizen of France and of the United States, was one of the most important composers of the 20th century. Profoundly affecting the world of music, Stravinsky enormously influenced other colossal composers such as Debussy, Ravel, Bartok and Copland, and became a household name, listed by *Time* Magazine as one of the 100 most consequential figures of the entire 20th century. Stravinsky was depicted by Pablo Picasso and Alberto Giacometti in paintings, drawings and sculptures, photographed by Richard Avedon and Lord Snowdon, and documented in numerous biographical publications. An inlet in Antarctica and a crater on Mercury have been named after Stravinsky. Music critic Anthony Tommasini, upon hearing of Stravinsky's demise in 1971, stated *"Stravinsky had been like a Beethoven among us".* A "late-blooming" pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov, and still not formed as composer by age 20 (unlike his contemporaries Prokofiev and Glazunov, who had already as teenagers established themselves as composers), Stravinsky's genius suddenly erupted on international stages with his first major ballet works. Stravinsky's late-blossoming as composer can be safely attributed to his father (a respected opera star of the Mariinsky Theatre in Saint Petersburg) and to his teacher (Rimsky-Korsakov, no less): the father, domineering and tantrum-prone, constantly discouraged Stravinsky from a career in music and demanded he become a lawyer instead, while Rimsky-Korsakov disliked Stravinsky's interest in modernism and condescendingly patronized him with disdainful comments such as "not bad". The fact that Stravinsky's talent had been suppressed for so long but sky-rocketed very soon after both his father and his teacher died, speaks for itself. By age 16 Stravinsky was attending on a daily basis rehearsals at his father's place of employment – the Mariinsky Theatre, where the boy eagerly absorbed Italian, French and Russian music, yet the father – a prominent basso – steered him towards law school, while Rimsky-Korsakov, after checking-out Stravinsky's portfolio of compositions, advised him to not enroll in the Saint Petersburg Conservatory. One can only feel sad for the masterpieces that Stravinsky never got a chance to create during the many years of neglect his music talent experienced at the hands of family members and teachers who, shamefully, refused to recognize and support his enormous gift. But as soon as Stravinsky was free from these figures of authority and their petty jealousy, he composed some of the most immortal music works of all time, eclipsing many star-composers. Stravinsky's catapulting to overnight fame with his 1910 ballet **"The Firebird"** triggered envy in a number of his friends and colleagues such as Debussy who at first had been complimentary of Stravinsky's *"The Firebird"* but later grew resentful and said: *"What do you expect, one has to start somewhere",* while Rimsky-Korsakov's widow and son (who had once been extremely close to Stravinsky), rudely rejected him as soon as he outshone his late teacher. (Rimsky-Korsakov's son had been the dedicatee of Stravinsky's *"The Firebird",* but that didn't prevent him from badmouthing Stravinsky.) Sarcastic opinions of *"The Firebird"* were expressed by Richard Strauss, who said *"It's always interesting to hear one's imitators"* and by Sergei Prokofiev, remarking that there was no music in *"The Firebird",* and if there was any, it was from Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *"Sadko".* Commissioned by the impresario Diaghilev and based on themes from Russian folklore, Stravinsky's *"The Firebird"* (a work with which later Stravinsky also made his debut as a conductor) became an instantaneous sensation, enjoyed tremendous success and paved the way for further brilliant works (he conceived the idea for *"The Rite of Spring"* while working on *"The Firebird"*). Although Stravinsky stated that he composed *"The Firebird"* as a revolt against his teacher Rimsky-Korsakov, the magnificent orchestration technique displayed in *"The Firebird",* and in other Stravinsky masterpieces, is undoubtedly the result of the influence bestowed on Stravinsky by Rimsky-Korsakov's mastery of orchestration. And while the plot of *"The Firebird"* had been selected not by Stravinsky but by Diaghilev's commissioning group, the supernatural legend of a mystical glowing bird (found in a 19th century collection of Russian folk tales by Aleksander Afanasyev, but also paralleled by Iranian and Armenian legends) sparked, for Stravinsky, a quest for research of other folk tales from Afanasyev's compilation, which, in turn, generated several vocal pieces by Stravinsky and the 1918 theatrical *"L'Histoire du Soldat".* (Based on the Russian folk tale "*The Runaway Soldier and the Devil"* in Afanasyev's compendium, Stravinsky's *"L'Histoire du Soldat"* experimented with several genres, including tango, many decades before Piazzolla embarked on elevating tango to an art form.) We transcribed the ***Berceuse/Lullaby* from *"The Firebird"*** to celebrate our reverence of Stravinsky's genius and of his magnificent masterpieces, many of which we have performed numerous times in symphonic and chamber concerts (in operatic performances as well – for me it was *"The Rake's Progress"* at the Metropolitan Opera, and for Howard Wall – *"Mavra"* at Carnegie Mellon University). While Afanasyev lists seven different versions of the Firebird legend, the rendition used in Stravinsky's work portrays the mythical creature as an exotic half-bird, half-woman, casting a hypnotic spell on the villainous king Kastchey with a haunting, bewitching lullaby. The extended jazz cadenza written by Thomas Weaver magnifies the mesmerizing effect, intensely building-up to a fervor until a tonal modulation seamlessly reverts to the lullaby's theme, still on the wings of the magical dream. The lyrics of the 1844 poem by Yakov Polonsky "A Winter's Journey" come to mind:

"And in my dreams I see myself on a wolf's back,
riding along a forest path,
to do battle with a sorcerer-tsar in that land
where a princess sits under lock and key,
pining behind massive walls.
There gardens surround a palace all of glass;
there Firebirds sing by night
and peck at golden fruit."

Stravinsky's first major showpiece – *"The Firebird",* not only brought him world-renown but also propelled his highly-accomplished artistic vision as an independent, no longer suppressed, utterly-creative figure, living and working in freedom. Unlike his friend Prokofiev, who unwisely returned to the USSR from exile and became a "de facto" prisoner of the communist state, Stravinsky, whose oeuvre was banned by Stalin, stayed entirely away from his country of origin for many decades, only briefly returning for a 3-week visit in 1962 during the softer times of "Khrushchev's Thaw". In stark contrast to Stravinsky, the tragically-trapped Prokofiev, broken-spirited and panicked, desperately scrambled to please the communists with party-approved music, possibly hoping for reprieve once Stalin left this world, only to die on the same day as Stalin (55 minutes earlier, in fact). As an exiled musician myself, who left behind my communist country of birth, I appreciate on many levels that Stravinsky chose freedom.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

***"Erbarme dich, mein Gott"* from St. Matthew Passion (arr. for horn, violin and piano by Howard Wall)**
premiere recording

Johann Sebastian Bach was born in a family where music as occupation dated back to his great-great-grandfather (a miller and musician, forced by religious prosecution of his Lutheran faith to relocate from Hungary to Germany). Orphaned at age 10, Bach was taken under the wing of his eldest brother, a church organist, and a pupil of Pachelbel. Rigorously trained and supremely gifted, Bach successfully synthesized and enriched stylistic and national traditions, thus becoming one of the greatest composers of all time (the greatest, as per Beethoven, and as per the New York Times' chief music critic Anthony Tommasini), with 1153 documented compositions in his lifetime of 65 years. Had Bach not been killed by complications from botched eye-surgeries rendered by a charlatan (who also victimized and blinded hundreds of other patients, including Handel), the world would have inherited even more masterpieces by Bach, who was an extremely prolific composer. Bach not only achieved incomparable creative mastery, but he also never stopped learning and transforming others' oeuvre, transcribing and arranging numerous works by Vivaldi, Palestrina, Handel, Pergolesi, Marcello, Couperin, Telemann. Undaunted by politics and critics, Bach vigorously strived to learn and absorb, always with a fierce dedication. At age 15, newly-enrolled in a school located 240 miles away, Bach arrived there by walking for 2 weeks, and at age 20, Bach walked to and from Lübeck (280 miles each way) in a quest to find a new teacher and to hear Buxtehude's organ playing. (In light of such unimaginably-arduous trips on foot, it hardly merits mentioning that Bach once also walked 22 miles to try to meet Handel, who turned out to be away just then). An uncompromising perfectionist, Bach was fired and imprisoned for a month by an employer who couldn't abide by Bach's high standards. In another job, being an innovator who pushed the limits of tonality, Bach was indicted for including "strange notes" in the organ parts, thus confusing some singers. A music critic (a contemporary of Bach) derided him to write less complex music (I looked-up the name of Bach's heckler, and sure enough, it was a total nobody, whose own compositions have been largely lost). In his final job, appointed as director of church music for the city of Leipzig, where he had to supervise performances at 4 large churches, the workaholic Bach petitioned to add, as well, full-time functions at one additional – fifth – church, and he also, simultaneously became, for 12 years, director of a private secular ensemble with free weekly performances showcasing Bach's orchestral repertoire (all this while Bach also composed 300 cantatas, at the hectic pace of one cantata per week). After Bach's death his legacy fell into obscurity, with only a few figures keeping an interest, such as Beethoven's teacher Neefe (who had studied with one of Bach's sons), Beethoven himself (who learned as a child the entire Well-Tempered Clavier), and the Jewish court official Daniel Itzig, who despite not being a musician, revered Bach and collected his manuscripts. Itzig's granddaughter married Felix Mendelssohn's father (a Jewish banker), who thus came into possession of many of Bach's manuscripts, donating them in 1805 to the Sing-Akademie in Berlin, which, in turn, became the venue, 24 years later (in 1829) for the 20-year old Felix Mendelssohn to conduct several sold-out performances of the monumental St. Matthew Passion with a 400-member choir and a full orchestra, thus sparking a Bach revival in the 19th century, and beyond, with Bach's oeuvre becoming permanently part of the world's music treasures, and further influencing, in the 20th century, Ysaÿe, Busoni, Stokowski, Milstein, Szeryng, Starker, Shostakovich, Stravinsky, Villa-Lobos, Bernstein, The Swingle Singers, Wendy Carlos, Yo-Yo Ma and countless others. **St. Matthew Passion, BWV 244** (original Latin title: *Passio Domini nostri J.C. secundum Evangelistam Matthaeum*) is a 2-part sacred oratorio for 4 vocal soloists, a double choir and a double orchestra, with texts from the Gospel of Matthew. As the longest Bach composition (comprising 68 sections with a duration of 3 hours), and as a culmination of the entire Baroque sacred music period, this oratorio was elaborately planned by Bach, with each of the 2 parts correspondingly fitting before and after the Good Friday sermon. In addition to the biblical texts, free verses were supplied by several poets, including Picander, who shaped the libretto much like an opera (a genre Bach never went into). Bach had meticulously adapted the production to the architectural elements of Leipzig's Thomas Church, which had 2 organ lofts of unequal size, where the larger loft space accommodated a larger choir and orchestral formation for the 1st part of the oratorio, and a smaller chorus with a chamber group was stationed in the smaller loft for the 2nd part. ***"Erbarme dich, mein Gott"*** ("Lord, have mercy") is the 39th section of the 2nd part, written in 12/8 time signature in ternary ABA form, as a poignant dialog between the alto soloist and the violin, depicting Peter's plea for mercy after betraying Jesus, having 3 times denied knowing him. The anguish, despair and remorse, the fervent pleading for compassion and forgiveness in this heart-wrenching drama resonate deeply and universally. My long-time interest in this particular piece led to discussions with 2 of my mentors: Henryk Szeryng and János Starker, both of whom were world-renowned for their exquisite Bach interpretations. Both Szeryng and Starker advocated heightening of the expressive power through a non-stagnant, flowing tempo in *"Erbarme dich",* and a carefully-calibrated (amidst the lively tempo) treatment of all the rapid shorter note values which Bach wrote for the violin, and which should not come out as mere improvisational ornaments, but as an integral part of the melodic essence. (Bach, who had created a special "ornamentation guide" for his 9-year old son, invested great effort in explicitly-emphasizing shorter note values to distinguish them from random "ad libitum" ornamenting.) Bach produced several performances of *St. Matthew Passion,* every few years, and every time he re-worked the piece, to reflect his own constantly-refined standards. In arranging and re-interpreting his own pieces, as well as those by others, Bach often kept the instrumentation independent from the core of the music material, to the point of even writing several pieces without specific instrumentation, including *"Musical Offering"* and *"The Art of Fugue"*. A credo like this makes it possible for disparate instrumentalists to approach and experience Bach's music – a democratic attitude on Bach's part which continues to reach and enrich musicians and music lovers, filtered through many transformative arrangements, all honoring the greatest music ever created.

Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909)

***Tango espagnol Op. 164, No. 2* from Deux morceaux caractéristiques pour pianoforte (arr. for horn, violin and piano by Ralph Lockwood)** *premiere recording*

Isaac Manuel Francisco Albéniz y Pascual was an eminent Spanish pianist, composer and conductor, working on the forefront of nationalism in Spanish music. Despite dying relatively young (at age 48) he created more than 250 compositions for piano alone, in addition to symphonic, chamber and operatic music, infused with Spanish folk elements. Excelling as concert pianist, Albéniz toured Europe and South America, and was sponsored by the piano manufacturer Érard for a series of 20 concerts at the 1888 Barcelona Universal Exposition. ***Tango espagnol, Op. 164, No. 2*** in A minor is the 2nd part of a 2-movement solo piano composition titled ***"Deux morceaux caractéristiques pour pianoforte",*** composed in 1889. *Tango espagnol* (as spelled in French, since the entire original title of this 2-movement composition is French) has been performed much less frequently than the other Tango by Albéniz, the 1890 Tango in D from his *Suite España,* Op. 165. The type of tango encoded in these Albéniz works is an Andalusian variant. The rhythmical device Albéniz used – the *habanera* rhythm – stems from the popular 19th century Cuban dance genre "contradanza", derived from earlier (17th century) European contra dance forms (also contradance, contra-dance and other alternate spellings). Popular in Spain as a form of folk dancing, contradanza spread throughout Spanish America, giving rise to the *habanera* which, in turn, became fashionable in Europe and provided a key rhythmical structure for the development of tango. Habanera and tango remained intertwined for a long time and their cross-pollinating roots have been extensively analyzed and debated, as these genres originated, most probably, in Europe and were brought overseas by European immigrants of the Great Wave to Argentina and Uruguay, from where they were re-introduced back to Europe by sailors. Albéniz could have been exposed to habanera and tango during his 1881 tour of Cuba and Argentina (the word "tango", as pertaining to a dance style, had been used in print as early as 1823 in Havana) while he could have also been familiar with the first woman-composer of tangos – the Spanish-born star-pianist Eloísa D'Herbil (composer of 100 tangos) who had relocated to Argentina where Albéniz, during his tour, might have heard her perform tango. Albéniz could have known Carmen's habanera from Bizet's 1875 opera (which was produced all over Europe, including in Spain), or he might have heard, throughout Spain, that same habanera as originally composed by its true author – the Spanish Basque composer Sebastián Yradier, whose 1850 composition *"El Arreglito"* was so widely-popular, that Bizet unwittingly mistook it for a Spanish traditional folk song (with no particular author) and incorporated it in his opera as Carmen's aria *"L'amour est un oiseau rebelle".* (The real author, Sebastián Yradier, had died in obscurity despite also composing one of the world's most popular songs – the 1860 habanera *"La Paloma"* which, with over a thousand versions, including by Elvis Presley, shares with "Yesterday" by The Beatles the rank of most-recorded song ever; notably, Yradier composed his "La Paloma" after a trip to Cuba, but Albéniz might have been hearing it in Spain, where it was legendary and had been copyrighted in 1879.) The habanera as a rhythmical entity remained an essential component of tango's arsenal, embraced and integrated across borders and continents by musicians and authors of disparate nationalities – the iconic Argentine tango musician Aníbal Troilo used in a 1951 *milonga* the same

habanera heard in Bizet's 1875 *Carmen* – that same 1850 composition by Sebastián Yradier – *"El Arreglito"*. With so many cultural cross-references, it remains, to this day, hard to pin-point the exact origins of tango music: presently it is hypothesized that tango stems from Spanish, Italian, French, African and Gaucho cultures, but in 1889 (the year in which Albéniz composed his *Tango espagnol Op. 164, No. 2),* tango had been defined by the Spanish dictionary *Real Academia Española* as a "popular celebration dance of black people in America". At the time Albéniz wrote his tango in 1889, the genre had not yet entered its golden era, the massive tango hits *"La Cumparsita"* and *"El Choclo"* had not yet been composed, Carlos Gardel had not yet been born, nor had Piazzolla been born – Piazzolla, who assumed the life-long mission of transforming the tango and making it an art form to be listened to on concert stages, not danced to, in bars and clubs. But meanwhile, many decades before Piazzolla accomplished his wildly successful tango metamorphosis, Stravinsky pursued the direction of looking at tango through the prism of art – in 1918 with his mind-bogglingly artful tango from *"L'Histoire du Soldat"*. Stravinsky, who wasn't Argentine or Uruguayan, and who hadn't embarked on a life-mission to innovate tango, simply experimented for a few minutes (after hearing in a dream the tune he incorporated in *"L'Histoire du Soldat"),* coming up with an astonishing, not yet surpassed, "tango-as-pure-art" masterpiece which even the Argentine-born Piazzolla, in his quasi-Bartókian "Concert d'aujourd'hui" from *"L'Histoire du Tango"* could not come close to. 20 years earlier, within the esthetically-tasteful parameters of 19th century post-romanticism, Albéniz achieved a perfect balance between form and essence in his *Tango espagnol,* transcending by far the *"salon"* terminology. Ralph Lockwood's arrangement for horn trio eclipses the "transcription" concept through Lockwood's deep expertise as a high-profile instrumentalist and educator in both piano and horn (he served at one time in a titled position in the Cleveland Orchestra horn section). Lockwood's contribution in this, and other, arrangements, rises to the level of co-authorship.

Jiří Pazour (b. 1971)

***Awakening of Pearls* for horn, violin and piano** *premiere recording*

Jiří Pazour is a Czech pianist and composer, who since 1995 has been a professor of theory and of piano improvisation at the Prague Conservatory. In demand as an improvising soloist, Pazour has recorded several albums and has performed on four continents with tours in the United States, Canada, Australia, South Korea, Japan, England, Germany, France, Switzerland, Poland, the Netherlands, Malta, Greece, Slovakia. An award-winning composer, Jiří Pazour graduated from the Prague Conservatory, majoring in composition and piano, and continued his composition studies at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. Pazour has created orchestral, chamber and solo compositions, which are regularly broadcast by Czech Radio and are frequently performed by eminent Czech and international soloists and ensembles. Pazour's songs for children are regularly programmed on Czech Television, and he collaborates with prominent theater and radio directors in his stage works. Pazour's two-part composition ***"Awakening of Pearls"*** was composed between 2004 and 2008 for the ensemble Brahms Trio Prague, whose radio recording of this composition has not been released on any album, therefore our recording of Jiří Pazour's *"Awakening of Pearls"* is, as of this moment, the first one registered as an official release by a recording label. Originally existing as two separate compositions ("Other Times" and "Awakening of Pearls"), the work was later combined by the composer into one unit, and was published in 2020 as a unified score by the Czech Radio publishing house. This is a two-movement lyrical poem, which, like many other compositions by Jiří Pazour, has, in the words of the composer *"its own hidden plot"* and is based on his personal experience and world-views. *"Awakening of Pearls"* has been performed internationally, and we presented its New York premiere at the 2024 New York Chamber Music Festival.

Richard Bissill (b. 1960)

Horn Trio

Acclaimed hornist Richard Bissill was former Principal Horn of the London Philharmonic (1984-2009) and former Principal Horn at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden (2009-2017). He studied horn and piano at the Royal Academy of Music in London before joining the London Symphony Orchestra aged 22. A Fellow of both the Royal Academy of Music and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, he has taught at the Guildhall School of Music since 1983, and has been Solo Horn with the London Brass since 1990. In addition to performing and teaching he has also pursued an almost parallel career as an arranger and composer, with works commissioned by the London Philharmonic, BBC, London Brass, British Horn Society and London Symphony. He has also written for television and film including Channel 5 and the BBC. As a freelance recording session player he has worked with artists such as Paul McCartney, Elton John, Joni Mitchell, Peter Gabriel and Quincy Jones, and can be heard playing on numerous film soundtracks including Return of the Jedi, Gladiator, The Mummy, Shrek, Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings and James Bond. Richard Bissill has performed Britten's Serenade and Mozart's 4th Horn Concerto with the London Philharmonic at the Royal Festival Hall, and the concertos of Haydn, Telemann, Mozart and Strauss at the Queen Elizabeth Hall and the Barbican. We presented the New York premiere of Richard Bissill's 2016 **Horn Trio** during the 2024 New York Chamber Music Festival. With its soaring lines and jazzy elements it is a winner with audiences.

Catherine Likhuta (b. 1981)

***Tangle and Tear* for horn, violin and piano**

The Ukrainian-born, Australian-based pianist and composer Catherine Likhuta writes highly emotionally-charged music of programmatic nature, with rhythmic complexity and Ukrainian folk elements. Her works have been performed worldwide, including at Carnegie Hall (Stern Auditorium) and she has received commissions from prominent symphony orchestras, chamber ensembles and soloists. An award-winning composer, Likhuta has held residencies at a number of universities, conservatories and festivals. Her music has been released by labels such as Albany, Cala, Common Tone, Equilibrium, Mark and Summit Records. She holds a bachelor's degree in jazz piano from Kyiv Glière Music College, a 5-year post-graduate degree in composition from the National Music Academy of Ukraine and a PhD in composition from the University of Queensland, where she is also the recipient of the Vice-Chancellor's Alumni Excellence Award. She was the soloist on the premiere and the CD recording of *Out Loud,* her piano concerto, and the pianist on Adam Unsworth's CD *Snapshots.* Catherine Likhuta wrote her work ***Tangle and Tear*** in 2018, originally as a trio for violin, bass clarinet and piano, commissioned by Plexus (Melbourne, Australia), and later adapted for horn trio, dedicated to Likhuta's friend and collaborator, hornist Peter Luff. In the words of the composer: *"Inspired by the amazing musicians in this ensemble and everything they do for Australian music, I wanted to use the concept behind the name Plexus as the base for the piece. One of the meanings of this word is "an intertwining combination of parts or elements in a structure or system [from Latin plectere – "to braid"]. As I was looking into this definition, the word "tangle" kept coming to mind. Then, as I enjoy juxtaposing musical ideas and characters behind them, I thought of the opposite of "tangle" – "tear". The concept of "tangle and tear" grasped me immediately, and my brain kept coming up with various ways in which this concept applies to our everyday lives. For me, it represents any situation that gets out of hand and cannot be untangled or resolved in a destruction-free way. It can be something light-hearted, like having to cut blue tack out of your pre-schooler's hair (don't ask me how I know this…); something devastating from within, like life-threatening addictions; finally, something dramatic and terrifying, like the only possible way out of an unhealthy and violent relationship. This last one kept churning in my head, influencing several sections of the piece, perhaps due to Australia's out-of-control situation with domestic violence… The concept is also intentionally reflected in the form of the piece: unpredictable, with some sections taking a long time to tangle and some built around the struggle of tearing something irreparable apart. Musically, the entire piece is built on the opening's emotional four-bar motif from the piano part".*

Ástor Piazzolla (1921-1992)

***Otoño porteño, Soledad, Le Grand Tango* (arr. for horn, violin and piano by Elmira Darvarova and Howard Wall)** *premiere recording*

Ástor Piazzolla was the foremost composer and ambassador of tango music, whose life mission was dedicated to the cause of enhancing and ennobling the signature music genre of Argentina by transforming it artistically into music to be listened to, not danced to. Extremely hard-working, Piazzolla constantly performed throughout his life (from his first public appearance at age 11 in the Roerich Hall on Riverside Drive in New York City, to his last concert in Greece 58 years later), while he was also one of the most prolific composers ever, writing over 3000 works (including more than 60 film scores). Born in Argentina, Piazzolla spent the crucially-formative years of his childhood in New York. Becoming a virtuoso on the bandoneón (since age 8) and studying with the pianist living next door (a pupil of Rachmaninoff), he soaked up influences from baroque to Bartók and jazz. Not satisfied with the traditional tango of earlier generations, Piazzolla dedicated himself to the development of his *Nuevo Tango* as a contemporary music genre, fusing a trinity of cultural backgrounds which he strived to reconcile and merge: the legacies of tango, jazz, and classical music. I was fortunate to have collaborated for several years with the late great tango pianist Octavio Brunetti (hailed by the New York Philharmonic as "the inheritor of Piazzolla's mantle"). Performing on 2 continents with Octavio Brunetti and recording with him the violin & piano transcriptions he created from the original Piazzolla scores (dedicating them to me), was one of the highlights of my career as a concert violinist, and it is very rewarding to continue to relate to Piazzolla's oeuvre through further projects, in the quest to re-imagine and re-interpret (now through our trio arrangements) the supreme beauty and passion that has been gifted to humanity by Piazzolla's genius. After Octavio Brunetti's untimely death I included music by Piazzolla in historically-retrospective tango programs, performing in the United

States and in Europe as a duo with Argentine pianist and composer Fernando Otero, from whom I learned still more about the long and storied evolution of tango, from the first times the word was ever mentioned (in the verses of a 1779 Spanish *tonadilla,* and in a 1789 proclamation by the Argentine government banning "tango" gatherings, presumed, at the time, to be frequented by unsavory elements), to 18th, 19th and 20th century contradanzas and habaneras preceding the profound modernization Piazzolla instilled (for which he received fierce opposition, including death threats). 33 years after Piazzolla's death the genre of tango is regarded as "before or after Piazzolla" and, to quote his biographer Maria Susana Azzi: "it is far too early to say whether there can ever be a post-Piazzolla tango". ***Otoño porteño*** is the Autumn in Piazzolla's *Las Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas* (Four Seasons of Buenos Aires). It starts with a *chicharra* effect, referring to the unique raspy sound produced by the cicada insect (generated by a violinist's bow, through scraping it next to the wrapping of a string). Lively episodes alternate with slower sections of repose, but the entire piece pulsates with gripping and deeply moving passion. ***Soledad*** (Solitude) is the third part of the suite *"Silfo y Ondina".* A milonga with extended lines of built-up tension, it escalates through the repeated sequential phrasing, which delays the release of pent-up sadness. Prolonging the unease, Piazzolla injects constant syncopations that are unsettling. The strange-sounding dissonances additionally emphasize the feeling of alienation and not belonging. A recitativo-like cadenza in the middle of the piece ushers in yet another element of loneliness, while the dejected mood of the ending coda does not bring relief from the sorrow. The 1982 ***Le Grand Tango*** was dedicated to cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, who had never heard of Piazzolla, and neglected to look at the piece for 8 years, keeping it stashed in a drawer (as he himself confessed later in interviews). Meanwhile, Piazzolla met in 1987 the American virtuoso cellist Carter Brey, and sent him the score of *Le Grand Tango.* Brey gave the world-premiere performance of the work in 1988. Two years later, in 1990, Rostropovich finally opened the score of *Le Grand Tango* and promptly traveled to Buenos Aires for a meeting with the composer and for guidance on how to interpret the piece. (Rostropovich performed *Le Grand Tango* in 1990 and recorded it in 1996.) One of Piazzolla's most sophisticated and elegant works, *Le Grand Tango* has been hailed by the cellist Yo-Yo Ma as one of his favorite pieces of music, with "inextricable rhythmic sense… total freedom, passion, ecstasy". One notable coincidence – and additional inspiration for the use of horn in our arrangement, was the fact that Carter Brey – the first performer of Piazzolla's *Le Grand Tango,* was an esteemed colleague of Howard Wall at the New York Philharmonic, where Brey has been, since 1996, the Principal Cellist. We previously included these world-premiere recordings of Piazzolla transcriptions on our album "Ástor Piazzolla – Genius of Tango".

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Lungi da te, mio bene **from the opera Mitridate, rè di Ponto, K. 87 (arr. for horn, violin and piano by Elmira Darvarova)** *premiere recording*

Mozart's universal fame makes it possible to skip general biographical details about him in this annotation, thus I will just mention the astonishing number of nearly 800 works that he created before dying at age 35. In this album we have several super-prolific composers – Piazzolla (3000 works), Bach (1153), Albéniz (around 300, including 250 for piano), but Mozart might have surpassed them all in productivity, had he not died so young. Mozart was a child of 14 when he composed the opera **Mitridate, rè di Ponto, K. 87,** commissioned to open the 1770 season at Milan's Teatro Regio Ducale. Premiered to great acclaim on December 26, 1770 during the Carnival in Milan (and performed there 21 more times), *Mitridate* was Mozart's first *opera seria,* paving the way for his 1781 *Idomeneo* (which was the first Mozart masterpiece I performed as concertmaster at the Metropolitan Opera). Composed while Mozart toured Italy, the 23 exhilarating "high-wire" arias of *Mitridate* are a stunning collection of staggering showcase coloratura which rivals the "Queen of the Night" and then some. Every possible chance to take your breath away was utilized by the child-composer, who may or may not have been advised and guided by his friend, the Czech-born, Italian-based composer Josef Mysliveček. The extremely-difficult solo parts are a plausible reason why *Mitridate* was neglected and not performed again for some 200 years, until 1971. Many musicians and experts (including the prominent conductor and Mozart specialist Sir Charles Mackerras) have expressed reverence for Mozart's *Mitridate,* but the phenomenal variety of thrilling virtuoso material might be exhausting to limited attentions spans (whose reaction is of the sort "we left at the interval") and to music critics who dismiss *Mitridate* labeling it condescendingly as a "student attempt". That had also been the preconceived attitude of the Italian musicians in 1770 until the first rehearsal before the world premiere of *Mitridate.* Mozart's father wrote to his wife: *"Before the first rehearsal had taken place, there had been no lack of people who, with satirical tongues, had even in advance proclaimed that the music was something juvenile and miserable, thus they maintained that it was impossible for such a young boy, and, on top of that, a foreigner, to write an Italian opera, and that, although they recognized him as a great virtuoso, he could not possibly sufficiently understand, and have insight into, opera. All these people have fallen silent since the evening of the first rehearsal, and are not uttering a syllable more".* Here is also what happened at the last rehearsal: the star male soprano – the castrato Pietro Benedetti (known as Sartorino) requested additional material, desiring to collaborate with the horn player. Mozart obliged and included a *horn obbligato* in Aria No. 13 ***"Lungi da te, mio bene",*** thus creating a brilliant and demanding showpiece, which Howard's friend and colleague, the late Jerome Ashby (Associate Principal Horn of the New York Philharmonic for 28 years) memorably performed in concert and on radio. In my transcription of *"Lungi da te, mio bene"* (which substitutes the vocal part with violin) I included an extended cadenza-like duet between the violin and horn, where the violin also gets a chance to shine in Mozart's fiery cascading downward arpeggio which the horn had been running away with, throughout the piece.

Joseph Summer (b. 1956)

Juliet and her Romeo **for violin, horn and piano** *premiere recording*

Joseph Summer is familiar to audiences both as a composer and as the founder/director of The Shakespeare Concerts, an internationally-renowned series. Summer has held directorships at several opera companies, including the Contemporary Opera Company of America and the Commonwealth Opera Company of Massachusetts. Summer has composed numerous operas and song cycles, and his operatic music has been praised in Opera News as "sophisticated, ceaselessly inventive", while his chamber music has been hailed in Gramophone as a "21st-century world of kaleidoscopic influences like a beautifully transformed Schubert". His compositions can be heard on the Albany, Navona and Centaur labels. Summer began playing horn at age 7. At 14 he studied composition with the Czech composer Karel Husa and at age 15 he was accepted at Oberlin Conservatory, where he studied composition with Richard Hoffmann (Schönberg's amanuensis), graduating with a BM in composition. At Oberlin he was also trained in the field of musical acoustics (and was Oberlin's first double major in composition/acoustics). Recruited by Robert Page (Dean of the Music Department at Carnegie Mellon University), Summer was hired, at 20, as a full-time faculty member at CMU where he devised the conservatory's freshman music theory curriculum and taught theory classes. We presented the American premiere of Joseph Summer's trio for violin, horn and piano ***Juliet and her Romeo*** during the 2024 New York Chamber Music Festival.

Thomas Weaver (b. 1991)

Shattered Ice **for violin, horn and piano** *premiere recording*

Thomas Weaver is an American pianist, composer and conductor currently on faculty at the Curtis Institute of Music and Boston University Tanglewood Institute. An award-winning composer and recipient of the Bohuslav Martinu Prize, he is an active solo and chamber musician whose career has included performances on 3 continents throughout the United States, Germany, Austria, Japan and Australia, in addition to festival appearances at Tanglewood Music Festival, New York Chamber Music Festival, and Red Rocks Music Festival. He has been presented by Carnegie Hall, New York Philharmonic Ensembles Series and Kimmel Center. Weaver has performed with a number of eminent musicians, and is a member of the Amram Ensemble, Trio Ardente and New England Chamber Players. A champion of new music, Weaver has performed world premieres by composers including David Amram, Reena Esmail, and Anthony Plog. Weaver can be heard on multiple albums on the Affetto label. Weaver's other horn trio, *"Stanzas",* was included in Volume 1 of this compendium. The 2019 ***Shattered Ice*** (written for hornist Joshua Blumenthal) was world-premiered in Japan by Blumenthal, Weaver and the violinist Lin Mu. About this piece, Weaver says: *"Given that the piece was to be premiered in Japan, coupled with both performers being connected to the Hyogo Performing Arts Center Orchestra, I found myself searching for some connection to the country's art. To my delight, I discovered the extensive work of Maruyama Okyo (1733-1795). One of his works, "Cracked Ice", instantly sparked a musical idea that could be developed into a piece. The work explores the possibilities of a sound world captured by Maruyama Okyo's skill in evoking emotion and context through a simple set scene. The work itself is split into three movements, each dealing with an imagined world designed about the painting: I. Stillness – Exploring the world of ice before the cracks start to form. The music moves from a pale sonority, with several interjections foreshadowing the coming chaos; II. Fracture – The chaos begins. Although the movement starts with an awkward burst depicting the irregular nature of cracking ice, it quickly transforms into a tumult, representative of the ice's ability to wreak havoc. III. Aftermath – A depiction of the world left after chaos. Although the majority of the movement is still and pale, the occasional violent outburst serves as a reminder that the cycle will continue as new ice that forms will be destined to shatter again".*

John Coltrane (1926-1967)

***"Naima"* (arr. for horn, violin and piano by Howard Wall, Elmira Darvarova and Thomas Weaver)** *premiere recording*

John William Coltrane is among the most-acclaimed icons of jazz, as a saxophonist, bandleader and composer. Winner of Grammy awards, recipient of a Pulitzer Prize and canonized as a saint by the African Orthodox Church, Coltrane was inducted into the Jazz Hall of Fame, had an asteroid named after him, and was listed as one of 100 greatest African Americans, while his former homes in New York and Philadelphia are designated National Historic Landmarks. John Coltrane crossed trajectories and collaborated with David Amram, who is a mentor to all 3 of us, the performers on this album. Both Coltrane and Amram were disciples of Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonious Monk, both of them were classically-trained as musicians, each one of them had lived and worked in both Philadelphia and New York City, and each one of them had a pioneering role in jazz, while both of them collaborated with many of the same iconic jazz figures: Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis, Charles Mingus, Stan Getz, to name just a few. David Amram and John Coltrane were featured on the same album ("Baritones and French Horns") recorded just 2 months before John Coltrane and Thelonious Monk made their July 1957 debut at New York City's leading jazz venue, the Five Spot Café, where David Amram also frequently performed (and was featured with a photo in the July 1957 issue of Esquire Magazine, shortly before pioneering the first "jazz & poetry" series with another Five Spot Café "regular" – Jack Kerouac, whose "On the Road" got published around the same time). Coltrane, enthralled with exploring various artistic traditions of the East and West, reached out to absorb diverse philosophical, spiritual and scientific subjects, searching for universal truths and emotional messages encoded in world music and global principles. Amram's discussions with Coltrane included not just musical subjects, but also topics such as Einstein's theory of relativity, and the symmetry of the solar system, which appealed to Coltrane's quest to reduce complexity in music by infusing simplicity into blues and jazz traditions. Pursuing the "juxtaposition of simple lines over complex melody" is how Coltrane was perceived also by the leading jazz scholar David Baker, author of 70 books and 400 articles on jazz. Collaborating with David Baker, I world-premiered, together with legendary cellist János Starker, a 1987 chamber composition by Baker (who was at the time Distinguished Professor and Chair of Jazz Studies at Indiana University), and serendipitously found myself discussing the essence of John Coltrane with David Baker, János Starker, Josef Gingold and musicologist Nicolas Slonimsky during our after-concert dinner (hosted by Starker in honor of the visiting Slonimsky, then 93-years old). David Baker (who, like Coltrane and Amram, had also performed during the 1950s at the Five Spot Café in New York, and had collaborated with one of Amram's jazz partners – Lionel Hampton) was, at the time, preparing for publication an article on Coltrane's jazz style, while Slonimsky prided himself on having authored in 1947 a book later venerated by John Coltrane and credited with propelling pivotal changes in Coltrane's artistic outlook – *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns*. Therefore, the experimental and unconventional directions of Coltrane's artistic pursuits were of great interest to my dinner companions and vividly debated (in addition to discourse about the cello concerto David Baker had composed for János Starker, the violin concerto he had created for my teacher Josef Gingold, and the violin concerto he planned to write for me). According to David Baker, Coltrane had excelled over all other jazz performers in diligently re-examining and re-interpreting the density of scales and cascading runs in the jazz vocabulary, which Coltrane had extended harmonically and melodically (through a sophisticated system of chordal substitutions and the "sheets of sound" famous concept, developed while Coltrane collaborated with Thelonious Monk and Miles Davis). Coltrane's 1959 melancholic jazz ballad ***Naima*** (composed as a tribute to his wife Juanita Naima Grubbs) first appeared on his album "Giant Steps" – an album regarded as pivotal in Coltrane's experimental developments. Proclaiming *Naima* his favorite composition, Coltrane constantly performed it and he re-recorded it numerous times between its initial release and his death 7 years later. *Naima* has become a cherished jazz standard interpreted by many, enduring and timeless with its tender lyricism.

–Elmira Darvarova, May 2025

HOWARD WALL was a long-time member of The New York Philharmonic, where he joined the horn section in 1994, after having been a member of The Philadelphia Orchestra for almost 20 years, and a former member of the Phoenix and Denver Symphony Orchestras. He made his Carnegie Hall debut at age 19 performing Schumann's *Konzertstück*, and appeared as soloist with the New York Philharmonic as well as on New York Philharmonic tours in Europe and South America. An avid chamber music performer, he was a member of the Philadelphia Chamber Brass, and appeared regularly at the New York Philharmonic Ensembles series and the Very Young Composers series throughout his New York Philharmonic tenure. He currently performs regularly at the New York Chamber Music Festival, and tours internationally in a duo with his wife, former MET Opera concertmaster Elmira Darvarova. Wall can be heard on a multitude of CD albums with solo, duo and trio repertoire, and his recordings have been praised for his "*legendary low register*", "*impeccable intonation and stellar virtuosity*", where "*every note is a gem*". Howard Wall was among the performers awarded Gold Medal and Top Honors at the 2018 Global Music Awards.

GRAMMY®-nominated, award-winning (Gold Medal at the Global Music Awards in 2017 and 2018), a concert violinist since the age of 4, and hailed by American Record Guide as "*marvelous in the tradition of Heifetz*", Elmira Darvarova caused a sensation, becoming the first ever (and so far only) woman-concertmaster in the history of the Metropolitan Opera, where she performed with the greatest conductors of our time, including the legendary Carlos Kleiber. A student of Josef Gingold and Henryk Szeryng, she can be heard on numerous CDs (including the world premiere recording of Vernon Duke's concerto with the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony, and a CD with music by René de Castéra, named a Record of the Year 2015 by MusicWeb International), and one of her recent albums debuted as No. 3 on Billboard Charts. She has appeared on the stages of 5 continents, has given master classes worldwide, and has performed chamber music with James Levine, János Starker, Gary Karr, Pascal Rogé, Vassily Lobanov and Fernando Otero. Praised by The Strad for her "*intoxicating tonal beauty and beguilingly sensuous phrasing*" and "*silky-smooth voluptuous tone*", she was featured in a Gramophone Magazine article about her world-premiere recording of Vernon Duke's concerto (written for Heifetz in 1940).

THOMAS WEAVER is a pianist, composer, and conductor currently on faculty at the Curtis Institute of Music and the Boston University Tanglewood Institute. A concert pianist since age 9, and having performed at major halls on 3 continents, including at Carnegie Hall, his eclectic career includes appearances as soloist with many ensembles and notable conductors, at major festivals and with partners such as Jess Gillam, Anthony McGill, Philip Myers, Elmira Darvarova, Brittany Lasch, Gene Pokorny, Kenneth Radnofsky, and members of the Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, and Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. As a conductor, Weaver has led performances in Philadelphia, New York City, and Boston, and he was music director of the Marian Anderson Museum and Historical Society. An award-winning composer and recipient of the Bohuslav Martinu Composition Award, Weaver's music, commissioned by numerous organizations and musicians, has been heard across 4 continents, while his arrangements have been recorded by Affetto/Naxos. His compositional voice blends the world between neo-Romanticism and modernism, bringing a strong sense of flexibility and rubato to highly chromatic, motivically-based music.

HORN TRIOS

from Mozart to Piazzolla and beyond

(Volume 2)

Howard Wall
horn

Elmira Darvarova
violin

Thomas Weaver
piano

Disc 1

1. **Igor Stravinsky: Berceuse from "The Firebird"** 6:28
   (arr. for horn trio by Howard Wall, Elmira Darvarova and Thomas Weaver) *world premiere recording*
2. **J. S. Bach: Erbarme dich, mein Gott, St. Matthew Passion, BWV 244, No. 39** 5:51
   (arr. for horn trio by Howard Wall) *world premiere recording*
3. **Isaac Albéniz: Tango espagnol, Deux morceaux caractéristiques Op. 164, No. 2** 5:18
   (arr. for horn trio by Ralph Lockwood) *world premiere recording*

Jiří Pazour: Awakening of Pearls (Probuzení perel) for violin, horn and piano *world premiere recording*

4. **I. Jiné časy (Other Times)** 10:45
5. **II. Probuzení perel (Awakening of Pearls)** 7:36
6. **Richard Bissill: Horn Trio** 8:11
7. **Catherine Likhuta: Tangle and Tear for horn, violin and piano** 9:35
8. **Ástor Piazzolla: Las Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas: III. Otoño Porteño** 6:52
   (arr. for horn trio by Howard Wall and Elmira Darvarova) *world premiere recording*

Disc 1 total duration - 60:36

Disc 2

1. **W. A. Mozart: Lungi da te, mio bene from "Mitridate, rè di Ponto" K. 87** 5:37
   (arr. for horn trio by Elmira Darvarova) *world premiere recording*
2. **Ástor Piazzolla: Silfo y Ondina: III. Soledad** 7:40
   (arr. for horn trio by Howard Wall and Elmira Darvarova) *world premiere recording*
3. **Joseph Summer: Juliet and her Romeo for violin, horn and piano** 10:44
   world premiere recording

Thomas Weaver: Shattered Ice for violin, horn and piano *world premiere recording*

4. **I. Stillness** 6:41
5. **II. Fracture** 6:48
6. **III. Aftermath** 5:43
7. **John Coltrane: Naima** 6:24
   (arr. for horn trio by Howard Wall, Elmira Darvarova and Thomas Weaver) *world premiere recording*
8. **Ástor Piazzolla: Le Grand Tango** 12:12
   (arr. for horn trio by Howard Wall and Elmira Darvarova) *world premiere recording*

Disc 2 total duration - 61:49

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