

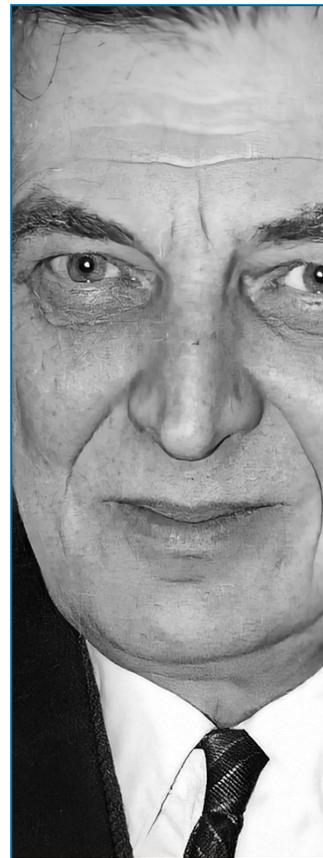
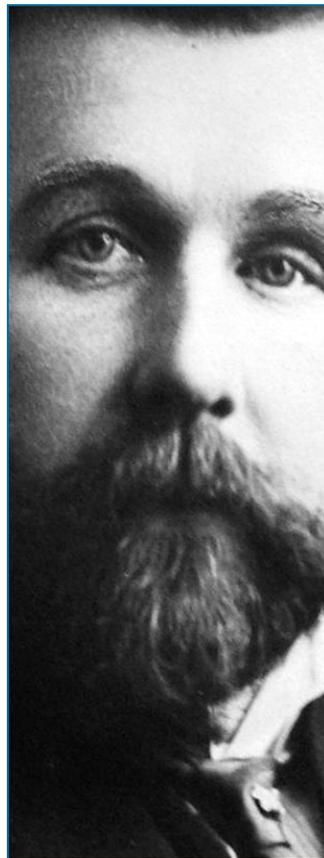
History of the Russian Piano Trio • 9

The Russian Abroad: Paris – Rome – New York

AMFITHEATROF • GRECHANINOV

A. TCHEREPNIN • J. WEINBERG

The Brahms Trio



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Alexander GRECHANINOV (1864–1956)		8 II. Molto lento	5:59
Piano Trio No. 2 in G major, Op. 128 (1930–31) 20:43		9 III. Vivace e gaio – Lento – Mistico – Solenne – Agitato – Subito più lento – Poco più mosso ma con larghezza	8:36
1 I. Allegro	6:43		
2 II. Intermezzo: Moderato assai	5:41		
3 III. Finale: Vivo	8:16		
Alexander TCHEREPNIN (1899–1977)		Jacob WEINBERG (1879–1956)	
Piano Trio, Op. 34 (1925) 8:18		Piano Trio on Hebrew Themes, Op. 28 (pub. 1943) 24:11	
4 I. Moderato tranquillo – Allegro	3:15	10 I. Elegia: Adagio con lament	7:18
5 II. Allegretto	2:41	11 II. Scherzo: Presto	5:50
6 III. Allegro molto	2:18	12 III. Tema con variazioni: Andante con moto – Poco allegretto – Allegro marziale – Alla burlesca – Improvisata: Lento – Andante con moto – Allegro – Coda: Largo – Presto	10:59
Daniele AMFITHEATROF (1901–1983)			
Piano Trio ‘A May’ (1932) 22:40			
7 I. Principiare lentamente poi accelerare – Andante – Allegro – Molto sostenuto e drammatico – Largamente – Animando – Moderato	8:01		

This new volume of the *History of the Russian Piano Trio* presents four composers of the Russian Abroad whose works reflect the diversity of stylistic experiments and discoveries in Russian art of the Modern era.

Up until the Second World War, Paris was the musical mecca of the Russian Abroad. In the early 1920s, the Belyayev Board of Trustees and Koussevitzky's Éditions Russes de Musique settled in the city, as well as the Russian Musical Society Abroad, which was created to continue the work of the Russian Imperial Musical Society, that was abolished in Russia after the revolution. In 1924, the Russian Conservatoire was established in Paris. One of its founders and first director was Nikolay Tcherepnin, and Sergey Rachmaninov was elected honorary president, while the teaching staff over the years included virtually all the great Russian musicians who had fled Russia. Before moving to New York in 1939 **Alexander Grechaninov** was among them.

One of the older generation of Russian émigrés (he left Russia for France in 1925, when he was 60 years old), Grechaninov graduated from the Moscow Conservatoire under Safonov and Taneyev, and the St Petersburg Con-

servatoire under Rimsky-Korsakov. At a time of Modernist quests for a new musical language, Grechaninov, a consistent and committed follower of the Russian school, wrote music that was simple and understandable for a wide audience. His popularity in Russia in the early 20th century was incredible, rivalling even that of Tchaikovsky. Grechaninov's operas were staged at the Bolshoi Theatre, and his works were published by Mitrofan Belyayev. 'He was the last of the Russian composers who managed to reap a late autumn harvest from the fading trunk of the "great era of Russian music", the epoch of Tchaikovsky and the Mighty Handful,' wrote Leonid Sabaneyev.

Trio in G major, Op. 128 was written during the Paris period of Grechaninov's emigration, and represents a kind of Russian music 'made for export'. This brightly decorative work, resembling a painted box, contains genuine ethnographic material, stylised sounds of folk instrument, as well as quotations and allusions to the music of Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky, Liadov and Stravinsky. This trio is a kind of musical analogue to Ivan Bilibin's illustrations for Russian folk fairy tales.

In the first movement, *Allegro*, the Bilibin-esque clearly

defined images, featuring lots of characteristic details and rich ornamentation, are placed in a classic sonata form. The sound pictures of the fairground festivities in the main and closing subjects (with allusions to *Carnival* from Tchaikovsky's *The Seasons* and Stravinsky's *Petrushka*) contrast with the lyrical second subject. The second movement, *Intermezzo*, is reminiscent of those charming miniatures, mazurkas, 'grandmother's waltzes' and 'nanny's fairy tales' that Grechaninov wrote for children throughout his life. Written in the form of a sonata-rondo, *Finale: Vivo* is the most elaborate and significant part of the cycle. In the whirlwind of the tarantella movement, it finds room for Miriskusniki-like mysticism, Baroque rhetoric, a lyrical violin cadenza, a fugato and the triumphant return of both main themes of the first movement in the festive chorus of the coda. *Trio, Op. 128* was published by M.P. Belaieff in Leipzig in 1937. In Russia, this work was not performed until the 1990s.

Until the early 1990s, the music of **Alexander Tcherepnin**, one of the greatest composers of the Russian Abroad, was also not performed in Russia. Unlike his older contemporaries, Tcherepnin did not experience a period of rebellion against established traditions or an evolution from the old style to the new. He was born simultaneously with Modernism, which became his most natural milieu for creativity, and was called a 'musical citizen of the world.' He was born in St Petersburg, studied at conservatories in his birth city (by then re-named Petrograd), Tiflis (Tbilisi) and Paris, was a director of the Conservatoire in Shanghai, taught in Japan, gave piano lessons at the Russian Conservatoire in Paris and composition classes at the University of Chicago, and toured Egypt and Palestine. He was the heir to a renowned dynasty of musicians and artists (his father, Nikolay Tcherepnin, was a famous conductor and composer, and professor at the St Petersburg Conservatoire; his mother's uncle, Alexandre Benois, was one of the key figures of the Silver Age, and the ideologist and founder of the artistic movement and magazine *Mir Iskusstva* ('World of Art')). From an early age, Alexander Tcherepnin had the privilege of interacting with Rimsky-Korsakov, Liadov, Glazunov, Stravinsky, Prokofiev,

Diaghilev and Chaliapin. He later became close to Honegger and Martinů, and joined a group of innovative young Parisian composers.

It was around this time that Tcherepnin composed the *Piano Trio, Op. 34*, dedicated to Albert Blondel, director of the Érard piano company. In 1925, the trio was published by Durand, edited by Isidore Philipp, Tcherepnin's teacher at the Paris Conservatoire. In the refinement and emotional restraint of the musical language of this truly innovative work, one can clearly hear the recognisable features of the national style of the 'Mighty Handful', with its inherent orientalism, and the influence of French Modernism and the Russian avant-garde, primarily Prokofiev and Stravinsky, with whom Tcherepnin grew up. This trio is a perfectly concise, laconic and concentrated expression of the ideas and aesthetics of musical constructivism. Almost all the main musical techniques of the Modernist movement find original expression in this miniature three-part work: specific motoric pulse, the predominant role of metro-rhythm, suite-like structure, principles of montage and repetition of musical patterns, linearity and graphic texture, the use of dissonant verticals, and the inventiveness of polyphonic techniques. Having abandoned the traditional major/minor tonal system by the early 1920s, in this trio Tcherepnin uses his own original tonal concept. Derived by combining minor and major hexachords, the nine-step tonal system that is close to Messiaen's modes of limited transposition, entered music theory as the 'Tcherepnin major' or 'Tcherepnin scale', as defined by Nicolas Slonimsky.

The first movement, written in binary three-part form, is built on the contrast between the cantilena polyphonic first theme and the toccata-like second theme. A sophisticated play with mirroring and distorted symmetry (using various contrapuntal techniques) permeates all layers of the musical text of the miniature three-part intermezzo. In the third movement, the harsh, relentless main theme and ostinato in the piano part, attacked by accents and syncopations and suddenly falling into a five-beat metre, give the impression of a monstrous perpetuum mobile. Tcherepnin breaks off the finale in full swing. The

mechanistic motion, which has neither beginning nor end, like a faceless and soulless force, turns in different directions and moves past the listener.

A striking contrast to Tcherepnin's asceticism is the world premiere recording of **Daniele Amfitheatrof's** colourful, passionate and sublime *Piano Trio*.

The life story of Amfitheatrof, heir to an equally glorious dynasty, reads like an adventure novel. A descendant of two ancient archiepiscopal families, whose history dates back to the mid-17th century and who gave Russia not only leading clergymen (including the famous Filaret, Metropolitan of Kyiv, and Valentin Amfitheatrof, rector of the Kremlin Cathedral of the Archangel), but also outstanding figures of culture and science who ruled the minds of the Russian intellectual elite for centuries. Amfitheatrof's first banishment from St Petersburg to Siberia came when he was three months old, together with his parents, and his first emigration when he was three years old. First, the family went to Paris, then Italy, where he studied at the Conservatorio di Musica di Santa Cecilia in Rome under Ottorino Respighi, his mother's classmate in Rimsky-Korsakov's class at the St Petersburg Conservatoire, then he returned to Russia, attending the Petrograd Conservatoire under Jāzeps Vītols, another student of Rimsky-Korsakov, and then this was followed by arrests, solitary confinement and an escape by boat across the Gulf of Finland to Europe. In 1921, the Amfitheatrof family settled in Italy, never again to return to Russia.

The composer's father, Alexander Amfitheatrof, novelist, playwright, poet, literary and theatre critic, frondeur and rebel, persecuted by both the Tsarist and Soviet authorities, was the most widely read Russian writer of the Silver Age. The Amfitheatrof family maintained close ties with Chekhov, Gorky, Plekhanov, Gilyarovskiy, Stanislavsky and Chaliapin. In exile, Amfitheatrof's home always remained a place of attraction for many writers and poets of the Russian Abroad.

Unlike his parents, Daniele Amfitheatrof did not maintain relations with his former countrymen. He did not participate in the activities of the Russian Musical Society

Abroad, did not perform Russian music, and was not written about in Russian newspapers. He went down in history as an Italian composer.

Piano trio 'A May' was written by Amfitheatrof in Rome in 1932. The mood, melody, texture, harmonic language, structure and principles of form in this work are strikingly different from the traditions rooted in the Russian piano trio. There are neither images of fear and death (the main themes of Russian Symbolism), nor influence of Prokofiev and Stravinsky (the trendsetters of Russian Abroad), no Russian folk, no nostalgia, farewells or prophecies. Amfitheatrof's quasi-Dante-esque triptych sounds like a deliberate antithesis to the 'epitaphic' tradition and tragic mood of Russian music, leading the romantic hero into a happy and infinite world of freedom and beauty.

The first movement is written in sonata form with a mirrored recapitulation. Due to vocal melodicism, exaggeratedly passionate expressiveness, an abundance of the composer's remarks and contrasting changes of diverse motifs and mottos, this movement is reminiscent of the opera scores of Puccini and Mascagni. In the second movement, brief string *ariosi* frame a tender theme that seems to emerge from the transparent twilight of the pre-dawn hour and reaches a grand, shining climax. In the finale, masterful use of instrumental colours, the finest *chiaroscuro*, unexpected timbral techniques and acoustic effects create the illusion of a multidimensional space, painting a picture of an ideal world. Here, an ascending scale reigns supreme, which since the Baroque period has symbolised revival, ringing bells (transparent bell-like sound of the piano at the beginning of the movement and the composer's remark '*Come uno scampanio lontano*' are reminiscent of *Cloches à travers les feuilles* from Debussy's *Images* and the finale of his *Violin Sonata*), and birds sing, flown into the music of the 20th century as a metaphor for a new freedom. Reminiscences of the three main themes of the previous movements in a polyphonic climax, reaching the Wagnerian scale, crown this beautiful, Italian sunlit music.

The programme on this album is concluded with the world premiere recording of **Jacob Weinberg's** *Trio on*

Hebrew Themes, Op. 28. In the 'Babel' of stylistic trends of the Modern era, one of the important artistic phenomena was the emergence of Jewish national musical art. This movement began in Russia, which is not surprising: by the end of the 19th century, the majority of the Jewish people, scattered throughout the world, lived in the Russian Empire; ethnographic expeditions organised across the vast country to record Jewish religious and secular folk tunes provided a wealth of material for research. What is surprising is that this movement originated within the Russian academic musical tradition, at the very heart of it. The founders of the Society for Jewish Folk Music (which started this movement that later spread to Europe and America and had a key influence on the development of Israeli classical music) were graduates of the St Petersburg and Moscow Conservatoires, disciples of Rimsky-Korsakov and Taneyev, and the ideologist of this movement was Vladimir Stasov. Perhaps this is why, like the composers of Balakirev's circle and most of Rimsky-Korsakov's pupils, the composers who joined this movement wrote almost no chamber music, being interested in other genres. All the more precious are the few piano trios left to us by this extraordinary group of musicians, whose discoveries and innovations inspired many great composers, including Shostakovich, and enriched the language and imagery of 20th-century music.

Jacob Weinberg, one of the founders of the Moscow branch of the Society for Jewish Folk Music and the Jerusalem Conservatory, as well as the American National Jewish Music Council, and the series of annual Jewish arts festivals, was born in Odessa. Like most cultural figures of the Russian Abroad, he was also the heir to a famous dynasty that belonged to the highest literary and musical circles of the Russian Empire. Among his ancestors were famous writers, actors and physicists; one of his uncles was married to Anton Rubinstein's sister; Cui, Grechaninov, Dargomyzhsky and many other composers wrote romances to the poems of another of his uncles Pyotr Weinberg, a professor and a famous translator of

Shakespeare, Goethe and other European poets into Russian.

Jacob Weinberg graduated from the Moscow Conservatoire under Taneyev, later studied with Theodor Leschetizky in Vienna, participated in the Rubinstein Competition in Paris, toured as a pianist, wrote musical and theoretical works, and from 1916 was a professor at the Odessa Conservatoire. In 1921 he was arrested. Freed two months later, Weinberg immediately emigrated to Palestine, and five years later moved to the United States. He taught at the New York Music College, performed at Carnegie Hall, toured America and Europe, and wrote very diverse music: piano concertos, string quartets and film scores, sacred oratorios, including *Isaiah* and *The Life of Moses*, and music for Sabbath services, which are still performed at Temple Emanu-El synagogue in Manhattan. He also set Lincoln's Gettysburg Address to music, which brought him real fame in America.

Weinberg's piano trio reflects the full range of his musical interests, brilliant compositional skill and his clearly light-hearted nature. It seems as if Weinberg is playing with childhood building blocks here, poking fun at himself, mixing Hasidic *nigunim* with descending chromatic scales in whimsical combinations (on one hand, this is an allusion to Rachmaninov's *Trio in D minor, Op. 9*, on the other, it is a Baroque symbol of death, but with the addition of an augmented unison, this symbol clearly changes its connotation). In an amusing *scherzo* written in the perpetuum mobile genre, traditional for European virtuoso violin music, Weinberg weaves in the most popular themes of Bizet and Schubert, and spices it all up with tango rhythms. In the final variations on the authentic theme of an Ashkenazi lullaby, he mixes Russian songs, Ladino and Schumann's *Marche des 'Davidsbündler'*, bells and Beethoven's theme of fate, and many other recognisable and guessable details of the European musical puzzle that would be reassembled in the Modern era.

Natalia Rubinstein

The Brahms Trio

The Brahms Trio is one of the leading Russian chamber ensembles. Since its foundation in 1990, the trio has regularly appeared at prestigious international concert venues, such as the Large Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, Elbphilharmonie Laeiszhalle Grand Hall, Brucknerhaus Linz and Seoul Arts Centre, as well as at festivals in Melbourne, Hong Kong, Istanbul, Copenhagen, Paris and London. Legendary musicians such as Tatiana Gaidamovich, Rudolf Barshai, Alexander Bonduriansky (Moscow Trio) and Valentin Berlinsky (Borodin Quartet) have had a significant influence on the formation of the performing style and career of the trio. The musicians of The Brahms Trio are professors at the Tchaikovsky Moscow State Conservatory. The Brahms Trio has made an invaluable contribution to the expansion of chamber repertoire by rediscovering unknown piano trios of Russian composers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In 2020, Naxos began to release a series of 15 albums entitled *History of the Russian Piano Trio*. These releases have subsequently been nominated for an International Classical Music Award (ICMA), and were named as the best albums of 2021 by *Gramophone* and *American Record Guide*. In 2022, The Brahms Trio was nominated for Opus Klassik Awards in the categories of Best Chamber Music Recording, Ensemble of the Year and Outstanding Contribution to the Expansion of the Repertoire. www.brahms-trio.ru



Cover photos (from left to right): Daniele Amfitheatrof (The Tully Potter Collection), Alexander Grechaninov (Public Domain), Alexander Tcherepnin (The Tully Potter Collection) and Jacob Weinberg (Ellen Weinberg Mausner)

Paris was the musical destination for many Russian émigré composers between the two World Wars, with both Grechaninov, from an older generation, and Tcherepnin, from a younger one, living in the city. Grechaninov's *Piano Trio No. 2 in G major* is a brightly decorative work, whereas Tcherepnin's concise, refined orientalism in the *Piano Trio, Op. 34* is influenced by French modernism and the Russian avant-garde. Daniele Amfitheatrof moved to Rome where he wrote his beautiful, sunlit *Piano Trio*, richly imbued with the aura of Puccini and Mascagni. The dazzling *Piano Trio on Hebrew Themes* by New York-based Jacob Weinberg incorporates synagogue and Russian tunes, quotations from Bizet, Beethoven, Schubert and Schumann, as well as tango rhythms.

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The Silver Age and Art Nouveau Era

AMFITHEATROF • GRECHANINOV A. TCHEREPNIN • J. WEINBERG

Alexander GRECHANINOV (1864–1956)

1–3 Piano Trio No. 2 in G major, Op. 128 (1930–31) **20:43**

Alexander TCHEREPNIN (1899–1977)

4–6 Piano Trio, Op. 34 (1925) **8:18**

Daniele AMFITHEATROF (1901–1983)

7–9 Piano Trio 'A May' (1932)* **22:40**

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10–12 Piano Trio on Hebrew Themes, Op. 28 (pub. 1943)* **24:11**

* WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

A detailed track list can be found on page 2

The Brahms Trio

Graf Mourja, Violin • Kirill Rodin, Cello • Natalia Rubinstein, Piano

Recorded: 15–16 **7–9** and 18–19 **1–3** January, 1–2 April **4–6** **10–12** 2024 at the Large Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, Russia • Producer, engineer and editor: Mikhail Spassky • Booklet notes: Natalia Rubinstein Publishers: M.P. Belaieff – First edition, 1937, Leipzig **1–3**, Éditions Durand – First edition, 1925, Paris (revised and fingered by Isidor Philipp) **4–6**, Edizioni Suvini Zerboni – First edition, 1934, Milan **7–9**, Carl Fischer Inc. – First edition, 1943, New York (Brahms Trio revised version 2022) **10–12** • Cover photos: See booklet