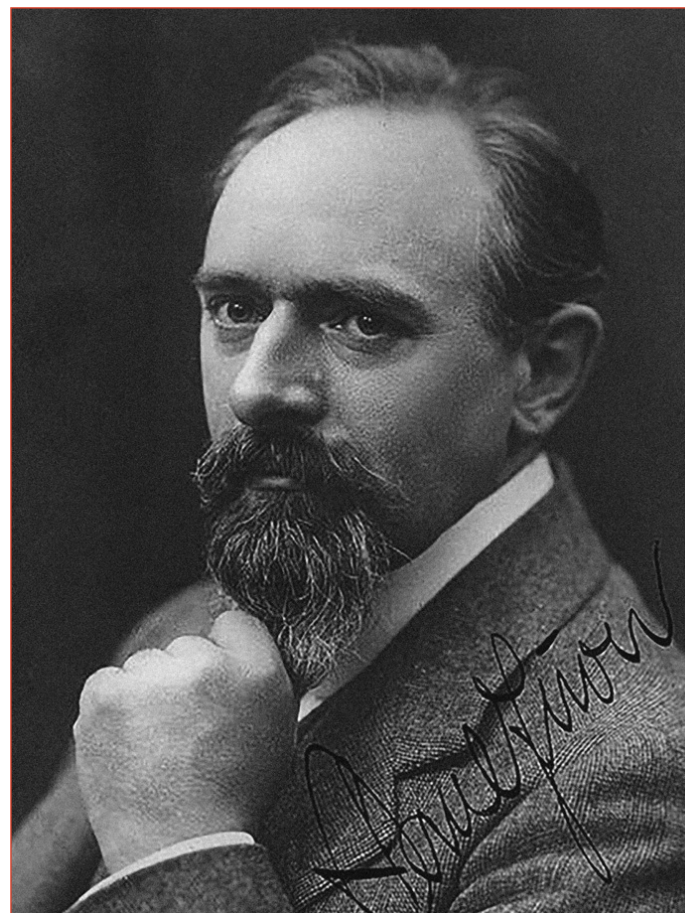
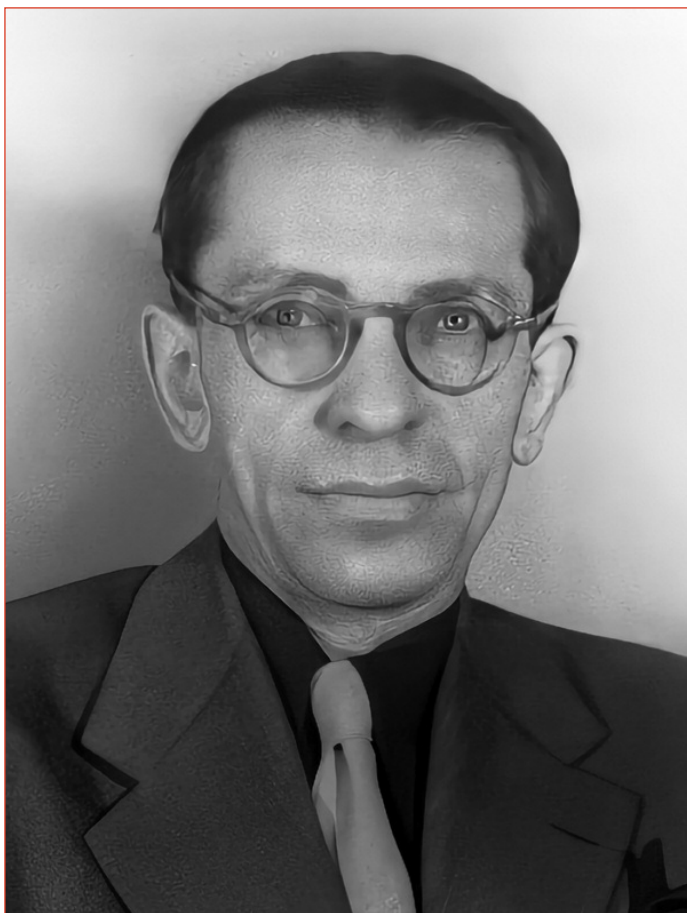


History of the  
Russian Piano Trio • 8  
*The Russian Abroad: Berlin*  
**LOPATNIKOFF • JUON**  
The Brahms Trio



## History of the Russian Piano Trio • 8

### The Russian Abroad: Berlin

The Russian Abroad is a cultural phenomenon of the 20th century. As a result of the unprecedented emigration of musical cultural figures after 1917, the history of Russian music was divided into two streams and has since developed in parallel in the USSR and the countries of the Russian Abroad. This violent division of the civilisational process occurred when Russian musical culture was mature and bright. The music of the Russian avant-garde that burst onto the European scene, and to an extent even more so the works of composers whose style and aesthetic preferences had been formed during the lifetimes of Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov and Sergey Taneyev, were not simply associated with the abandoned Russia, but embodied the 'Russian' in music as it was deposited in the auditory experience of their, also emigrated, audiences. The preservation and development of these traditions became a kind of mission for the figures of Russian Musical Abroad, a form of national identification.

The third volume of the *History of the Russian Piano Trio* is dedicated to the Berlin branch of the Russian Abroad and presents two piano trios by Paul Juon, which reflect the evolution of his musical style, and the world premiere recording of the *Piano Trio* by Nikolai Lopatnikoff, an archetypical example of Russian modernism, which fills a repertoire gap that exists in the place of piano trios not written by Sergey Prokofiev and Igor Stravinsky.

Nikolai Lopatnikoff belongs to a group of outstanding artists of the new era, who determined the path of development of musical art of the 20th century. A peer of the century, he witnessed historical disasters, changes of epochs, worldviews and aesthetic orientations. Born in Reval (now Tallinn, Estonia), he grew up in St Petersburg, and studied at the Petrograd Conservatoire. After the Revolution, in November 1917 he fled with his family first to Finland, then to Germany, where he found an acclaim, an audience and European fame. Ranked alongside Igor Stravinsky by Detlef Gojowy and Yury Arbatsky, referred to by Nicolas Slonimsky as 'an outstanding composer' and by Virgil Thomson as a 'neo-Classic master', in the two decades before the war Lopatnikoff had a dizzying career. His symphonies and concertos were premiered under the baton of Bruno Walter and Hermann Abendroth, Ossip Gabrilowitsch and Serge Koussevitzky. His works were awarded the Reichs-Rundfunk Gesellschaft Prize and the Belyayev Prize, he was twice awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship and was elected to the American National Institute of Arts and Letters. But from the mid-1950s, under the pressure of the post-war avant-garde, Lopatnikoff's works disappeared from the repertoire of the world's orchestras and concert halls, and his fame faded. After the composer's death in Pittsburgh in 1976, his music and his name slipped into darkness.

*Piano Trio in A minor, Op. 23* was written in 1932 at the same time as the opera *Danton*, the last major work completed by Lopatnikoff during his Berlin period (the opera's scheduled premiere in 1933 was cancelled due to the Nazis' rise to power). According to the composer's notes, the trio was first performed by the Grinke Piano Trio (Frederick Grinke, violin – Florence Hooton, cello – Kendall Taylor, piano) in London in 1938 and repeated the same year in Tallinn, Helsinki, and in Amsterdam in 1939. Further traces of this work have been lost.

There are two manuscript versions of the trio in Lopatnikoff's archive, which preserve evidence of the composer's meticulous work on the musical text. After a comparative analysis of both manuscripts, tracing the sequence and logic of the composer's amendments, reductions and additions, changes in dynamics, touches, phrasing and articulation, we present to the audience a tremendous four-movement fresco. In this work, unparalleled in the history of the Russian piano trio, Lopatnikoff seems to appropriate all existing musical styles and, by breaking them down into atoms, creates his own musical world. Under a patina of almost strong-willed sangfroid, Lopatnikoff weaves together archaic Russian references, monumentally epic utterances and intonations of crying\*, Baroque rhetorical figures, Kabbalistic symbols and

kitsch, Russian choral subvocal polyphony, buffoonish anti-aesthetics, bells\*, and jazz rhythms in a tightly (if inventively) constructed score, filled with contrapuntal vigour and an unrelentingly rhythmic pulse. By choosing A minor as the tonality of his work, a key so often preferred by Russian composers for piano trios, and by beginning the work in an equally traditional way with cello stating the first theme accompanied by the piano, Lopatnikoff seems to view this stylistic artefact from a modernist distance: deliberately contrasting the intonation of a personal, confessional, often nostalgic statement characteristic of the Russian piano trio, with a tone of the hard-edged detachment, which verges on the implacable.

The first movement, a sonata-allegro, seems as if it was made of roughly worked granite blocks, each of which has its own particular shape, but the material in each block is the same granite, only with its own vein pattern. The narrative, epic main theme, built on the intonation of an interval of a second, evokes the main motif of Taneyev's *Piano Trio in D major*, Op. 22. It is metrically and harmonically opposed by tart dissonant chords with an emphasised tonic organ bass in the piano part, anticipating the final *danse macabre*. In the second subject, an interval of a second is transformed into an intonation of crying, recalling simultaneously the famous scene at St Basil's Cathedral from Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* and also his romance *Darling Savishna*, as well as many works by Rachmaninov, Prokofiev, Shostakovich and other Russian composers. The motif of suffering, man's despair, the wailing of the people and the extratemporal, generalised monumentality of the epic – two key images of Russian art – becomes the leitmotif of the entire work, giving it an unmistakably recognisable authentic 'Russian' sound. The huge, intricately structured, polyphonised development leads to a wild climax with rhythmic inexorability, and the clash between the two avatars of the leitmotif reaches its ultimate tension. An aura of dissonant despair dissolves in the recapitulation, which is brief and ghostly as a recollection. Virtuously changing the harmonic inclination of the main theme within the 'white keyboard' diatonic harmony, and giving the intonation of the crying of the second subject the echo of a bell, Lopatnikoff concludes this movement with a recitative triple unison that reaffirms the epic nature of the leitmotif.

Starting the second movement *Scherzo: Allegro molto vivace* via a hint of the theme of the *Scherzo* from Felix Mendelssohn's *Trio in D minor*, Op. 49, Lopatnikoff contrives a playful modernist interaction with the tradition of the Russian piano trio (a homage to Mendelssohn is present in some way in almost every Russian trio of the 19th century), masterfully juggling allusions, tonalities, form and metre. The second-interval leitmotif that is hiding in Prokofiev-like winding chromatics, the swing and foxtrot inscribed on top of the triplet pulse, the deceptiveness of the form, the sudden intrusion of the bells image in the middle section and the extended recitatives of all three instruments evokes the culture of artistic cabarets with irony-infused aesthetic non-conformism that captured the refined minds of the era, from Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko and Alexander Tairov to Vsevolod Meyerhold and Max Reinhardt.

The third movement, *Andante*, sounds like a dire prophecy. Reminiscent of the Basque tune from Maurice Ravel's *Piano Trio in A minor*, which was written on the threshold of the First World War, the syncopated rhythm of the slow dance turns into a funeral procession. The intonation of crying leitmotif pervades the theme. The gradual polyphonisation of the texture, the conjugation of dissonant harmonies and increasing dynamics lead to a brief climax that brings no deliverance to the doomed. On the eve of the recapitulation, the muted sound of the bells in the piano part against the lifeless ostinato of the strings, a kind of *Memento mori*, becomes the semantic centre of the movement. In the coda, the reminiscence of the initial dance returns for a moment, but the descending bass in the piano part (a Baroque rhetorical figure symbolising the path to the grave, often found in Russian piano trios) leads to an infernal-sounding 'otherworldly' D major. This is how the key of E major will later be heard in the finale of Dmitry Shostakovich's *Piano Trio in E minor*, Op. 67. Even further, the final *Danse macabre* anticipates the Shostakovich *Trio* written ten years later. In the fourth movement, *Allegro molto*, written in the form of a rondo-sonata, just as it will later be in Shostakovich's *Trio*, the themes of all the previous movements are drawn into the element of a desperate folk dance. The similarity in other compositional

techniques is also striking, including the climactic conduct of the main theme by the piano against a background of powerful pizzicato chords of the strings, the recourse to Kabbalistic symbols, and rowdy pictures of folk festivities, in contrast to the exceptional colour and theatricality of such scenes in Stravinsky's works, which carry the meaning of 'triumph of the loud' and destruction. With a diabolically accelerated dance, reminiscent of the victory of Devil in Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale*, Lopatnikoff concludes his providence, clothed in the form of a piano trio.

Written in the same year, 1932, Paul Juon's miniature modernist *Suite in C major, Op. 89* contrasts with the two large-scale A minor trios on this album, with its major tonality, elegance and vivid theatrical imagery. In the short five movements of the *Suite*, Juon seems to try on all the musical masks that were in vogue at the time. From the composer's diaries we know about the programme, which was not included in the printed version: first movement – *Melody*, second movement – *Marionettes*, third movement – *Intermezzo*, fourth movement – *Odalisque* and fifth movement – *Barbarian Dance*. Dedicating the *Suite* to the renowned pianist and teacher Bronislaw von Pozniak, who for more than two decades had been the leader of one of Europe's major piano trios, Juon seems to appeal to one of the key works in the repertoire of this ensemble – Antonín Dvořák's *Piano Trio, Op. 90 'Dumky'* (there are at least three different recordings of this work made by the Pozniak Trio on Deutsche Grammophon over a period of 15 years). Beginning the *Suite* with an allusion to the third movement of *'Dumky'*, Juon constructs an elegant modernist version of this archaic syncretic Slavonic genre, changing styles, images and compositional techniques along the way. The sophisticated inventiveness of the harmonic language draws attention. The realm of the diatonic (the composer succeeded in not disturbing the purity of the diatonic with a single black key!) in the first movement, *Moderato*, is combined with bylinic recitatives encrusted with imitations of Spanish-inspired dance guitar strumming; Juon, like Medtner and Rachmaninov, suddenly concludes this movement with a nostalgic quotation of an Orthodox church canticle. The quasi-Prokofievian second movement, *Giocoso*, which alludes to Claude Debussy's *Golliwogg's Cake-Walk* and *A Musical Snuffbox* by Anatoly Liadov, is replaced in the third movement, *Andantino*, by a Russian 'long song'\* (in a melodic minor unusual for this genre), with a dance reminiscence in the middle section. The exotic oriental dance in the fourth movement, *Allegretto*, is an exquisitely decorative stylisation, with tart harmonies in the spirit of Rimsky-Korsakov, the infernal elegance of a Scriabin-like mazurka and Medtnerian fairy tales, grotesque 'wildness', passionate recitatives, sophisticated polymetry and dizzying texture. This is the most intricate part of the *Suite* in terms of form, texture and kaleidoscopic imagery. An archaic folk dance in the spirit of Stravinsky, with a quotation from *The Rite of Spring*, folkloric mysticism and the festive chiming of Easter bells in the fifth movement, *Allegro giusto*, concludes a masterful picture of the musical world of the Art Nouveau era.

By the time the *Suite* was composed, Juon was already a mature master – a member of the Berlin Academy of Arts, a composer, performer and musicologist who had been teaching the art of composition for over a quarter of a century. A pupil of Jan Hřimalý, Anton Arensky and Sergey Taneyev at the Moscow Conservatoire, and of Woldemar Bargiel at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik, Juon was invited by Joseph Joachim to become a professor of composition at his Berlin alma mater. Juon's legacy as a composer includes the opera *Aleko*, four symphonies, three violin concertos, a great deal of chamber, instrumental, theatre and vocal music – a total of over one hundred works, including six piano trios, whose musical evolution reflects the artistic processes that took place in Russian music in the first decades of the century, regardless of the geography of the composers' relocations. In 1917, categorically not accepting the revolution, Paul Juon officially renounced his Russian citizenship. Afterwards, the Soviet regime erased his name from the history of Russian music. Throughout the 20th century, there was only one Juon in Soviet art – the painter who glorified the regime and was glorified by it – the composer's brother, Konstantin. In Europe, Paul Juon's career, as well as the European culture of that era in general, was cut short at the height of its prosperity with the Nazi rise to power. Juon's name and artistic legacy, almost forgotten after his death in 1940, is now experiencing a revival in Europe and the United

States. The return of Juon's music to Russia is only at the beginning of its journey.

*Piano Trio in A minor, Op. 17* is Juon's first trio, and perhaps the first trio in the Russian history of the genre to be based on purely folk material stylised in a historical way. This work was written in 1901, at the very beginning of the 'Berlin period' of the composer's career. In the same year, the *Trio* was published by the German music editor Robert Lienau.

The first movement, *Allegro*, is in sonata form and follows the classic canon of Russian trios (the tonality A minor, favoured by Russian composers; the main theme presented by the cello accompanied by piano texture, as in the trios by Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov, Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov, Aloiz and Pabst and in later works by Lopatnikoff and Roslavets). The main subject is close in character and intonation to a Russian 'long song'. A peasant dance theme, *poco meno mosso*, builds on the motif of the fifth interval of the main theme and leads to the second subject. The elegance of the instrumental folk tune and the rounded construction of the two contrasting themes of the second subject, reminiscent of the verse form of ditties with an unchanging refrain, give the second subject the character of a playful spring pastoral. Even in this early work Juon's remarkable love of decorative textural variety is evident, which would become almost the main expressive force in the *Suite*. The final movement, built on the material of the second subject and based on the organ point on G, leads to a brief polyphonised development that spans minor tonalities and leads to a quasi-romantic climax in C minor. The second movement, *Adagio non troppo*, written in three-part form with repeated parts, has at its core a songful theme that passes through a series of transformations in the spirit of the Brahms-like syntax. The influence of Brahms, which Juon seems to have taken up indirectly through his teacher Woldemar Bargiel, can be heard in the principles of construction and development of form and in the textural techniques of the third movement, *Rondo: Allegro*, written in the form of a rondo-sonata with a mirror recapitulation. Juon uses the stylised folk theme of the main subject, intonationally akin to the main theme of the first movement and reminiscent of both Tchaikovsky's *First Piano Concerto* and Borodin's *Symphony No. 2*, in the same way as Brahms used folk music: in the course of the development, the theme acquires a *scherzo*-esque, dance-like character, as if Brahms's Hungarian gypsies were Russian peasants, this would be their music. A graceful second subject with elements of polymetry and a small closing area in the character of a waltz complete the exposition. A polyphonised development with an epic episode in the spirit of Tchaikovsky leads to a mirror recapitulation. The work is concluded with a jubilant and festive main theme in the eponymous A major.

We believe that the piano trios by Nikolai Lopatnikoff and Paul Juon presented on this album will attract the attention of new generations of performers and researchers, and that in the future the ensemble repertoire will be inconceivable without these works and they will forever become a part of the history of Russian music.

**Natalia Rubinstein**

\*characteristic Russian tropes



## 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](http://www.brahms-trio.ru)



Photo © Emil Matveev

Berlin is the focus of this eighth volume of the *History of the Russian Piano Trio*, which features two Russian composers who lived in the city. Nikolai Lopatnikoff's symphonies were premiered by Bruno Walter and Serge Koussevitzky, and he was once ranked alongside Stravinsky. Lopatnikoff's *Piano Trio in A minor* is an archetypal example of Russian modernism, unparalleled in its use of allusions, tonalities and form. Paul Juon's *Suite in C major* is full of elegant and vivid theatrical imagery, while his *Piano Trio No. 1 in A minor* employs charming stylised folk material influenced by Brahms.

## History of the Russian Piano Trio • 8

### *The Silver Age and Art Nouveau Era*

## LOPATNIKOFF • JUON

**Nikolai LOPATNIKOFF**  
(1903–1976)

**Piano Trio in A minor, Op. 23**  
(1932)\*

- |                                            |              |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>1</b> I. Allegro                        | <b>10:33</b> |
| <b>2</b> II. Scherzo: Allegro molto vivace | <b>6:05</b>  |
| <b>3</b> III. Andante                      | <b>7:16</b>  |
| <b>4</b> IV. Allegro molto                 | <b>8:45</b>  |

**Paul JUON (1872–1940)**

**Suite in C major, Op. 89 (1932) 13:54**

- |                            |             |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| <b>5</b> I. Moderato       | <b>2:33</b> |
| <b>6</b> II. Giocoso       | <b>2:21</b> |
| <b>7</b> III. Andantino    | <b>2:48</b> |
| <b>8</b> IV. Allegretto    | <b>3:24</b> |
| <b>9</b> V. Allegro giusto | <b>2:41</b> |

**Piano Trio No. 1 in A minor,**  
**Op. 17 (1901) 25:26**

- |                                 |              |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>10</b> I. Allegro            | <b>10:31</b> |
| <b>11</b> II. Adagio non troppo | <b>6:58</b>  |
| <b>12</b> III. Rondo: Allegro   | <b>7:49</b>  |

**\* WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

## The Brahms Trio

**Nikolai Sachenko, Violin • Kirill Rodin, Cello • Natalia Rubinstein, Piano**

Recorded: 19–21 November 2021 **1–4** and 16–19 January 2022 **5–12** at the Large Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, Russia • Producer, engineer and editor: Mikhail Spassky • Booklet notes: Natalia Rubinstein

Publishers: from manuscript – Edition: Brahms Trio (2021) **1–4**, Challier & Co. (Richard Birnbach) –

First edition, Berlin (1932) **5–9**, Robert Lienau Musikverlag – First edition, Berlin (1901) **10–12**

Cover photos: *Left*: Nikolai Lopatnikoff (The Tully Potter Collection) • *Right*: Paul Juon, 1908 (Alamy.com)