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The Borodin Trio

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Chandos

DIGITAL

ARENISKY
Piano Trio No.1 in D minor Op.32

GLINKA
Trio Pathétique in D minor

THE BORODIN TRIO

ANTON ARENSKY (1861-1906)
Piano Trio No.1 in D minor Op.32 (31:45)

- 1 I Allegro moderato (11:49)
- 2 II Scherzo: Allegro molto (6:22)
- 3 III Elegie: Adagio (6:33)
- 4 IV Finale: Allegro non troppo (6:43)

MIKHAIL GLINKA (1804-1857)
Trio Pathétique in D minor (17:40)

- 5 I Allegro moderato (5:55)
- 6 II Scherzo: Vivacissimo (3:53)
- 7 III Largo (5:48)
- 8 IV Allegro con spirito (2:04) TT = 49:32

THE BORODIN TRIO

Luba Edlina • Rostislav Dubinsky • Yuli Turovsky
piano violin cello

More than sixty years separate these two works, yet both are by Russian composers who had a gift for melody, who loved mellifluous harmonies and who passed their enthusiasms on to others. By a coincidence both died while touring away from Russia, Arensky in Finland and Glinka in Berlin.

Although Anton Arensky studied for a time under Rimsky-Korsakov, at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, his musical affiliation seems closer to Tchaikovsky, and it was to the Moscow Conservatory — where Tchaikovsky's eclectic approach to music to some extent balanced the nationalistic school of The Five, including Rimsky-Korsakov — that Arensky went as a teacher of theory and composition after gaining the Gold Medal in St. Petersburg. His own most important student was Rachmaninov.

Arensky wrote three operas, two symphonies, a piano concerto, incidental music to a production of Shakespeare's *Tempest* and a number of choral and chamber works, including two trios for piano, violin and cello. The first of these was published in 1894, the year Balakirev, founder of The Five, suggested Arensky as his successor as Director of Music at the St. Petersburg Imperial Chapel. The Trio was inspired by Karl Davidov, who had died five years earlier. Davidov was a cello virtuoso who founded the Russian school of cello playing, and the Trio bears posthumous testimony to his work at the St. Petersburg Conservatory from 1863, where he became Director from 1876 until 1886.

The first movement is built around three themes, the first dramatic, the second lyrical and the third impetuous. It is followed by an example of what became known as the 'Arensky Waltz', a playful *scherzo* which provides a natural continuance to the thoughtful coda

of the first movement. This is a *scherzo* more in mood than form, and the waltz is in the nature of a central trio, offering full-blooded contrast to the lighter mood of the main *scherzo*, itself tinged with Mendelssohnian delicacy, spiced with pizzicato passages. The *Elegie* also has a central section, this time a light contrast to the main conversation between the muted cello and the violin; for this the piano provides a dark-hued dotted backing, relaxing in the central section where it has pride of place. The *Finale* is a dramatic rondo movement, with two ideas, the first strong and vigorous, the second more gentle and given to the two string instruments. The central part of the *Elegie* is recalled in an *andante* episode and later the first theme of the first movement brings a sense of unity to end the work.

Glinka's Trio is not so easily recognisable as a work by 'the father of Russian music', whose encouragement of Balakirev was important in the early development of the composer who was to be the leading light of Russian nationalistic music through The Five. Nor does it really fit the title which became attached to it in published form, in its original scoring for piano, clarinet and bassoon. In fact, Johann Hrimaldy's transcription for piano, violin and cello has kept the work in the repertory.

It was composed in 1832 when the 28-year-old Glinka was in Italy for his health, working at composition with the Director of the Milan Conservatory, falling under the influence of Donizetti and Bellini and putting up with a particularly odorous mixture of camphor and diachylon on the plasters his doctors insisted had to be applied to his chest every day. The poor composer wrote on the autograph 'I have known love only by the pain it brings', probably ironically under the circumstances, but enough to give sufficient

excuse for appending this misleading title of *Pathétique* to a work which is essentially genial and lyrical.

Although set down in four movements the piece has the character of a single movement in four related sections, throughout evoking the warmth of Italy, of which Glinka wrote: '...a little Italian bedroom, a pretty moonlight glistening in through the window, and, reposing there, a beautiful Italian girl. Her black hair falls free — oh, not completely — upon her shoulders and her bosom. She is good — much that is good. Everything about her declares passion and voluptuousness.' Small wonder that some of his friends wrote of Glinka that 'he loved music, he loved petticoats!'

With the first three movements played without a break, the finale becomes a brief epilogue, utilising the material which has already become familiar. The main motif is heard at the outset, energetic, exciting and growing in passion with each development, contrasted with a lyrical secondary idea in the *Allegro moderato* before the scherzo-like *Vivacissimo*, with a central trio based on a beautiful melody given here to the cello. Italian cantilena is evident in the lovely *Largo*, the motif flitting across the main theme at the end with the wistful elegance of a beloved memory. All these ideas are allowed to parade in the *finale* until an extended *coda* ends the work in dramatic triumph.

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The Borodin Trio was formed after the three members emigrated from the Soviet Union in 1976, since when they have established themselves as one of the best piano trios of our generation, having played in all the major cities of Europe and America, as well as making a tour of Australasia. Their British début at the Wigmore Hall in July 1978 was 'an outstanding success in anyone's book' (*Daily Telegraph*), and other appearances have included the Bath, Malvern and Boston Festivals.

Rostislav Dubinsky was founder and first violinist of the legendary Borodin Quartet for thirty years. He met his wife Luba Edlina at the Moscow Conservatory when they were both students. She is best known for her many brilliant performances and recordings as a pianist with the Borodin Quartet. The Dubinskys now live in the USA, where they both teach at one of America's most prestigious schools of music, that of Indiana University.

Cellist Yuli Turovsky also studied at the Moscow Conservatory; he was a prize-winner of the Third Soviet Cello Competition and a laureate at the 22nd International Prague Spring Competition in 1970. His many performances as soloist with the Moscow Chamber Orchestra won him acclaim before he emigrated to Montréal, where he now teaches at the Conservatoire du Musique. He is founding Music Director and conductor of Canada's chamber orchestra I Musici de Montréal.

Recordings for Chandos by the Borodin Trio include Piano Trios of Beethoven, Brahms, Dvořák, Mendelssohn, Rachmaninov, Ravel, Schubert, Shostakovich, Smetana and Tchaikovsky, as well as much other chamber music.

A Chandos Digital Recording

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