

# History of the Russian Piano Trio • 5 DYCK • STERNBERG YOUFEROV The Brahms Trio



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**Vladimir DYCK (1882–1943)**

**Piano Trio in C minor, Op. 25 (1910)**

**Constantin von STERNBERG (1852–1924)**

**Piano Trio No. 3 in C major, Op. 104 (1912)**

**Sergey YOUFEROV (1865–?1927)**

**Piano Trio in C minor, Op. 52 (1911)**

This concluding album of The Brahms Trio's five-volume survey of the piano trio in Russia contains music that is both remarkable and unknown, while the composers' names have all but disappeared from the collective memory of the musical world.

Vladimir Dyck was born in 1882 in Ukraine, in the port city of Odessa, where his father worked for the customs. He was the family's fifth child. Little is known of his life there; in 1899 he travelled to Paris, possibly on the recommendation of Rimsky-Korsakov, and began studying at the Conservatoire. His composition teacher there was Charles-Marie Widor, the great French organist and composer. Dyck won the First Prize for harmony, in the class of Antoine Taudou, in 1904. He remained in France, and took French nationality in 1910. This enabled him to send in an entry to the prestigious Prix de Rome competition, and his cantata *Yanitzka*, after the novel by Georges Spitzmuller, won the second 'Second Grand Prix'. It received its first performance in May of the following year.

After his graduation, Dyck earned his living by teaching piano, and a number of his pupils came from exalted social circles. One of his last pupils, Suzanne Bloch, became his wife, and they had a daughter, Nicole. He also began writing music for silent films, using the pseudonym 'Dri Mival', including Viktor Tourjansky's *Le Prince charmant* (1925), *Vénus Astarté* (1929) and *Nord 70° 22'* (1931). His concert music, highly influenced by his conservatoire training, was supplemented by a good deal of light music, and Dyck also began to work with Jewish material (indeed, his harmonisation of *Hatikva* became the Israeli national anthem). In 1933 he co-founded with Léon Algazi a publishing house, Mizmor, dedicated to the music of Jewish composers. His productive life came to a tragic end when he

and his family were arrested in 1943 and taken to Auschwitz.

Dyck's earliest known works include two symphonies (one for wind instruments and one for piano four hands) and a number of chamber works, including the *Piano Trio*, published in 1910, bearing the opus number 25. It is a substantial four-movement work, dedicated to his former harmony teacher Antoine Taudou. The first movement, *Largo molto sostenuto – Allegro ma non troppo*, is a sonata-form structure, but of a very Russian dramatic cast, moving from grandeur to despair and back with a remarkable sense of determination. The second, a *Scherzo* with the indication *Allegretto grazioso*, is, in complete contrast, as light and airy as a soufflé. The composer's deft scoring (and especially here his use of pizzicato strings) and lively melodic sense show exactly why he was so good as a film composer. Solemnity returns in the following *Andante sostenuto*, but it is a solemnity tinged with nostalgia, which metamorphoses into scurrying agitation, only to subside into a brief coda with both violin and cello using mutes. The work ends with a triumphant *Allegro con brio*, which has something of the obsessive quality of the first movement.

The trajectory of Constantin Ivanovich von Sternberg was quite different from that of Dyck. He was born in St Petersburg in 1852, of ethnic German parents, and studied piano with Moscheles in Leipzig, as well as with Friedrich Wieck in Dresden and Theodor Kullak in Berlin, and also for a short time with Liszt in Weimar, subsequently building up his career as a concert pianist and touring throughout Russia. He also went on tour to a number of countries, not only in Europe, with the renowned singer Désirée Artôt. Following his American debut in 1880 and several tours, he emigrated, becoming the director of the College of Music in Atlanta, and subsequently founded the Sternberg School of

Music in Philadelphia. His work as a piano teacher was highly regarded, and he published two books on technical aspects of piano playing. He also wrote a very substantial number of solo and chamber works, his composition teachers in Leipzig having been Moritz Hauptmann and Carl Reinecke. He died in Philadelphia in 1924.

Of Sternberg's works for piano trio, the best known is the three-movement suite, *Aus Italien, Op. 105*, but the preceding work, the *Trio No. 3 in C major*, is a rather weightier proposition, in spite of its relative brevity. Its three movements are, nevertheless, characterised by a genial humour – in fact, the performance indication of the last movement specifically says '*con umore*'. The first movement, *Allegro con spirito*, is, in spite of its Classical structural rigour, memorable for the dance-like elegance of its thematic material, as is the *Tema con variazioni* which follows – indeed, it even includes an Austrian Ländler as one of the variations. The *umore* of the final *Rondo* takes the form of a witty conversation between the three instruments, as they throw melodic fragments to each other suddenly to come together in bubbling bonhomie.

Sergey Youferov was born in 1865 into a wealthy family in Odessa, and was a composition pupil of Glazunov and Nikolay Klenovsky in St Petersburg, and of the theorist Nikolay Hubert and the music historian Herman Laroche in Moscow. He also studied law and from the early 1890s was actively involved in the preparation of the Russian law on musical copyright. Youferov was an important figure in the musical and cultural life of Russia at the turn of 20th century, spending much of his time in St Petersburg and Kherson (Ukraine) where he became head of the Imperial Russian Musical Society. Details of his life after 1917 remain unknown including the exact time and place of his death.

Youferov's list of works is impressive. There are three operas, all dating from the last decade of the 19th century, ten orchestral works, two concertante pieces, three chamber works including the *Piano Trio* recorded here, and a substantial number of songs and solo piano pieces. The *Trio* is a work of large dimensions, in three movements, dedicated to Joseph Kratina (in the absence of more definite information, one may legitimately wonder whether this is the Czech-American sculptor of that name). The first, *Moderato – Allegro*, is virtuosic and full of portent, a monumental journey whose material evolves so constantly that the recapitulation comes as a genuine shock. There is high Tchaikovskian drama, here, certainly, but Youferov is very much speaking in his own voice.

While the central *Adagio* is song-like, it is difficult not to hear this intimate conversation between the three instruments as an *Abschied*, a farewell to the past. Of note are the unusual time signature (5/4 or 2½/2) and the delicate employment of harmonics and trills, and the use of mutes. The finale, *Allegro*, begins as an ominous, relentless triple-time march, or dirge, which undergirds the whole movement, like a march to the scaffold, until the time changes to 4/4 and there is a brief choral-like section for violin and cello which introduces a broodingly nostalgic coda (all this based on the material of the first part of the movement). It is very hard not to hear this as a farewell to the Russian 'Silver Age', a world about to be destroyed. The piano trio as a genre did not, of course, disappear in Russia, but those by, for example, Shostakovich and, even later, Schnittke, reflect the experience of the very different reality of Soviet life.

**Ivan Moody**

## A note on the programme

We have anticipated the release of this album with great excitement – three world premieres by three composers whose fates reflected the history of the 20th century. Their lives and fame were destroyed by the Russian Revolution, scattered in the whirlwind of the change of epochs, world views and aesthetic touchstones, while their very names vanished from both the history of music and the memory of subsequent generations of musicians. Three piano trios that have remained unheard over the course of a whole century! To hold these priceless scores in our hands, to immerse ourselves gradually in the music, trying to discern its language and hidden meaning, to play these compositions for the first time, to record them for the first time – all this has been an incomparable, invaluable, and joyful experience!

As we prepared to record these trios, we gathered piece by piece scattered bits of evidence that could tell us about how they were composed. We did not find much – short newspaper items, reviews, fragments of manuscripts, and

correspondence with the publishers which, miraculously, had survived in archives in Russia, Ukraine, Europe and America. But just as an eye slowly adapts to darkness, these captivating sonic worlds appeared from nothingness – from the silence of oblivion, musical details became distinguishable to the ear, like diary entries preserving both the era and the compelling figures of the composers.

We have put all our love for chamber music, all our knowledge and skills, into the preparation of this album, and it is our sincere hope that these premiere recordings of piano trios by Vladimir Dyck, Constantin von Sternberg and Sergey Youferov will attract the attention of new generations of performers and researchers to the *œuvres* of these wonderful composers. Certainly, we believe that this music will inspire the same delight in the hearts of our listeners as they do in our own.

**Natalia Rubinstein**

## The Brahms Trio

The Brahms Trio is one of the leading Russian chamber ensembles, comprising violinist Nikolai Sachenko and cellist Kirill Rodin, both winners of the Gold Medal at the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, and pianist Natalia Rubinstein, First Prize winner of the Joseph Joachim Chamber Music Competition in Weimar and founder of the ensemble. Since its foundation in 1990, the trio has regularly appeared at prestigious international concert venues, such as the Grand Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, the Brucknerhaus Linz and Seoul Arts Center, as well as at festivals in Melbourne, Hong Kong, Istanbul, Copenhagen, Paris and London. Legendary musicians such as Tatiana Gaidamovich, Alexander Bonduriansky (Moscow Trio), Valentin Berlinsky (Borodin Quartet) and Rudolf Barshai have had a significant influence on the formation of the performing style and career of the trio. The Brahms Trio has made an invaluable contribution to enlarging the chamber repertoire by rediscovering unknown piano trios by Russian composers of the late 19th and early 20th century. The musicians of The Brahms Trio are professors at the Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory, and are the recipients of the honorary title Honoured Artist of Russia. [www.brahms-trio.ru](http://www.brahms-trio.ru)

This album concludes The Brahms Trio's five-volume survey of the piano trio in Russia with remarkable works by composers whose names have all but disappeared from the musical world's collective memory. Vladimir Dyck, a student of Widor at the Paris Conservatoire, took French nationality in 1910 but his life came to a tragic end when he and his family were arrested in 1943 and sent to Auschwitz. His *Piano Trio, Op. 25* contrasts Russian soulfulness with the lightness and deft scoring he brought to his film compositions. Constantin von Sternberg's genial *Op. 104* reflects his career as a virtuoso pianist, while Sergey Youferov's expansive and nostalgic *Op. 52* is a farewell to the Russian 'Silver Age', a world about to be destroyed by revolution.

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### DYCK • STERNBERG • YOUFEROV

**Vladimir DYCK (1882–1943)**  
**Piano Trio in C minor, Op. 25**  
**(1910) 31:29**

- |          |   |      |
|----------|---|------|
| <b>1</b> | I. Largo molto sostenuto –<br>Allegro ma non troppo | 9:51 |
| <b>2</b> | II. Scherzo: Allegretto grazioso                    | 6:29 |
| <b>3</b> | III. Andante sostenuto                              | 6:26 |
| <b>4</b> | IV. Allegro con brio                                | 8:33 |

**WORLD PREMIERE**  
**RECORDINGS**

**Constantin von STERNBERG**  
**(1852–1924)**  
**Piano Trio No. 3 in C major,**  
**Op. 104 (1912) 13:56**

- |          |                                  |      |
|----------|----------------------------------|------|
| <b>5</b> | I. Allegro con spirito           | 4:53 |
| <b>6</b> | II. Tema con variazioni: Andante | 5:56 |
| <b>7</b> | III. Rondo: Allegro con umore    | 3:01 |

**Sergey YOUFEROV (1865–?1927)**  
**Piano Trio in C minor,**  
**Op. 52 (1911) 32:10**

- |           |                       |       |
|-----------|-----------------------|-------|
| <b>8</b>  | I. Moderato – Allegro | 13:15 |
| <b>9</b>  | II. Adagio            | 8:42  |
| <b>10</b> | III. Allegro          | 10:04 |

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

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Playing Time  
77:38



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