

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT CLASSICAL MUSIC GROUP

Music of Hope

a concert to honour political prisoners in Russia



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the music

Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943)
Trio élégiaque No. 1 in G minor

Alfred Schnittke (1934-1998)
Suite in the old style for cello and piano

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)
Piano Quintet in G Minor, opus 57

the musicians

Polina Leschenko
piano

Priya Mitchell
violin

Corinne Chapelle
violin

Nathan Braude
viola

David Cohen
cello

Rachmaninov – Trio élégiaque No. 1 in G minor

The trio was written in January 1892 in Moscow, when Rachmaninov was 19 years old, and performed for the first time the same month with the composer at the piano. This work is cast in only one movement, in contrast to most piano trios, which have three or four.

This movement is in the classical form of a sonata, but the exposition is built on twelve episodes that are symmetrically represented in the recapitulation. The mournful theme is presented in the first part, *Lento lugubre* by the piano.

In the following parts, the elegy is presented by the cello and violin, while the spirit is constantly evolving (*più vivo - con anima - appassionato - tempo rubato - risoluto*).

Rachmaninov wrote this first trio while still a student and may well have intended it as a homage to his elder friend and mentor, Pyotr Tchaikovsky. Rachmaninoff wrote a second Elegiac piano trio in 1893 after the death of Tchaikovsky.

Schnittke – Suite in the old style for cello and piano

Schnittke was born in 1934 in the Soviet Union to German parents. After living for several years in Vienna, he returned to Moscow to attend the Conservatory from 1953 to 1958, and taught instrumentation from 1962 to 1972. Thereafter, splitting his time between Moscow and Hamburg, he supported himself as a film composer.

The first two movements of the suite, a Pastorale and a Ballet, are taken from a film soundtrack detailing the adventures of a dentist; both these movements are cheery and inoffensive in the extreme, the Pastorale sounding sweet enough to be salon music. The Minuet, slow and melancholy, was taken from a children's animation film. A Fugue taken from a film about a sportsman is resolute and accomplished, driving quickly to its emphatic coda.

Fittingly, the most daring element of this suite was also written for a children's animation work: the final Pantomime, despite its charming melody, features bare, exposed rhythms, striking pizzicati, and even what in context feels like a searing dissonance in the violin.

Shostakovich – Piano Quintet in G Minor, opus 57

This quintet, written and first performed in 1940, is one of Shostakovich's best known chamber works. The first two movements supply a massive prelude and fugue which acquire an extra dimension due to the fact that the piano quintet naturally divides between strings and piano, each capable of multi-part textures on their own as well as combining for a unified ensemble.

The third movement is a fantastic scherzo and trio, a high point of the work suitable for encore all by itself. In startling contrast to the poise and grandeur of the prelude and fugue, the scherzo dances with a rustic, wild abandon, leering towards colourful parody and dark sarcasm so typical of Shostakovich.

Less traditional is a ponderous intermezzo placed between the scherzo and finale, a mournful and poignant passage. But it quickly fades into the relaxed tone of a breezy, uplifting conclusion.

The finale has a clearly articulated classical sonata form. A march-like feel is always just beneath the surface, occasionally swelling in grand gestures while, in between, a brief recollection of the intermezzo temporarily clouds an otherwise sunny end.

Polina Leschenko

piano



Polina was born in St Petersburg into a family of musicians and began playing the piano under her father's guidance at the age of six. Two years later she performed with the Leningrad Symphony Orchestra in St.Petersburg.

Polina has worked with such prominent orchestras as the Salzburg Camerata, Hallé Orchestra, London Mozart Players, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Britten Sinfonia, Berne Symphony Orchestra, Russian National Orchestra, I Pomeriggi Musicali in Milan, Orquesta de Euskadi and the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

Polina has given critically acclaimed solo recitals and chamber music concerts at such renowned venues as the Konzerthaus in Vienna, Mozarteum in Salzburg, Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center in New York, Cité de la musique in Paris and the Opera House in Sydney.

Priya Mitchell

violin



Priya was brought up in Oxford and went to the Yehudi Menuhin School. Two years at the Conservatoire in Vienna were followed by a period of study with Zachar Bron in Germany.

She has given highly acclaimed performances with, amongst others, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Yuri Temirkanov at the Royal Albert Hall, the BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Richard Hickox, and the Walton Concerto with Sir Andrew Davis at Symphony Hall, Birmingham.

Priya is also a regular concerto soloist with many major European orchestras. She has appeared with the Belgian Radio and Television Philharmonic Orchestra, Sinfonia Varsovia and the Polish Chamber Orchestra. As a recitalist and chamber musician, Priya has performed extensively at many international music festivals.

Corinne Chapelle

violin



Corinne started her studies as a two-year-old and gave her first concert only a year later. Her talent was nurtured at leading music schools – she studied with Yehudi Menuhin at his school in London, following which she studied at the Juilliard School of Music and joined Pinchas Zukerman’s class in New York.

These studies were further complimented by working with such pedagogues as Ana Chumachenko, Lorand Fenyves and Josef Gingold. Corinne has received various awards at international violin competitions including the Jascha Heifetz Violin Award and the Montreal International Violin Competition.

Both as a soloist and chamber musician, Corinne has already made an impressive international career. She has represented the United States around the world as an International Ambassador of Music, appearing at the Senate Caucus in Washington, D.C. and premiering the Barber Violin Concerto in China.

Nathan Braude

viola



A Russian citizen, Nathan has performed in many of the world's most prestigious concert venues including the Wigmore Hall in London, Théâtre de la Ville in Paris, Amsterdam Concertgebouw and the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels.

He has also appeared as a soloist with numerous orchestras including the Brussels Philharmonic, Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen, Limburgs Symfonie Orkest, and Solistes Européens Luxembourg.

Nathan's festival appearances include Progreto Martha Argerich in Lugano, Ravinia Festival in Chicago, Festival de Radio France, Montpellier and Festival Juventus where he was nominated "Lauréat Juventus" in 2008. His début recording for the Fuga Libera label with the complete works for viola by the Belgian composer Joseph Jongen was released to critical acclaim in September 2011.

David Cohen

cello



Born in Belgium, David made his solo debut with the Belgium National Orchestra at the age of nine.

His international career as a soloist soon flourished with invitations from the St Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the London Soloists' Chamber Orchestra, l'Orchestre Philharmonique de Liège, l'Orchestre de la Beethoven Akademie, l'Orchestre National de Lille, the Zurich Chamber Orchestra, l'Orchestre Symphonique de Grenoble, the Polish Philharmonic Orchestra, the Sinfonia Varsovia, the Seoul Philharmonic and the BBC Concert Orchestra.

In his remarkable career, David has worked as a soloist with some of the most distinguished conductors in the industry such as Lord Menuhin, Mstislav Rostropovich, Walter Weller, Sir Charles Mackerras, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Christophe von Dohnanyi, Pedro Halffter and Martin Brabbins among others.

*I will live and survive and be asked:
How they slammed my head against a trestle,
How I had to freeze at nights,
How my hair started to turn grey...
But I'll smile. And will crack some joke
And brush away the encroaching shadow.
And I will render homage to the dry September
That became my second birth.
And I'll be asked: 'Doesn't it hurt you to remember?'
Not being deceived by my outward flippancy.
But the former names will detonate my memory -
Magnificent as old cannon.
And I will tell of the best people in all the earth,
The most tender, but also the most invincible,
How they waited for letters from their loved ones.
And I'll be asked: what helped us to live
When there was neither letters nor any news - only walls,
And the cold of the cell, and the blather of official lies,
And the sickening promises made in exchange for betrayal.
And I will tell of the first beauty
I saw in captivity.
A frost-covered window! No spyholes, nor walls,
And the cold of the cell, and the blather of official lies,
And the sickening promises made in exchange for betrayal.
And I will tell of the first beauty
I saw in captivity.
A frost-covered window! No spy holes, nor walls,
Nor cell-bars, nor the long endured pain -
Only a blue radiance on a tiny pane of glass.*

IRINA RATUSHINSKAYA

