



Piano Trios by Rachmaninov (Trio élégiaque, No. 1) & Tchaikovsky (Op. 50)

aud 92.691



[American Record Guide](#) April 2015 (Greg Pagel - 2015.04.01)



The notes to many of my Tchaikovsky chamber music discs begin by saying Tchaikovsky was not very interested in chamber music. Well, he may not have written much of it, but what exists is great! In fact, for someone like me, who likes chamber music more than orchestral music, his three quartets and this trio more than do the job when I'm looking for a Tchaikovsky "fix".

Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio was dedicated to the pianist and composer Nikolai Rubinstein. Tchaikovsky had long intended to write something to show Rubinstein's gift for playing with other musicians, but Rubinstein's premature death, which touched Tchaikovsky deeply, meant that he could only compose a work in memory of him.

Both of these readings are excellent. The Cho and Testore Trios both do a fine job with the first movement, bringing tenderness and sensitivity to the work's sad moments, energy to powerful parts. With the Cho the piano sounds thin when playing alone, but the balance is good when the whole ensemble plays.

Most of the work is composed of a Theme and Variations, and it is here that one can point out differences in the two interpretations. Both have their strengths and weaknesses. In the Theme, which opens with a piano solo, the Testore plays with simple sweetness. Cho's piano again sounds thin. Variation I, which gives the melody to the strings, sounds better played by the Cho, and their delivery of variation V is magically toy-like. I like Testore's fugue in variation VIII better than the Cho's, which feels too bogged down. At their best, the Cho Trio sounds really brilliant, but I think they get hung up on details. Both groups play the Finale beautifully. In the end, it's really a toss-up between the two. I enjoy both more than the Moscow Trio (Sept/Oct 2013).

As for the remaining works, Testore includes Rachmaninoff's Trio 1. It is not known to whom, if anyone, the elegy was dedicated, unlike Trio 2, which was dedicated to Tchaikovsky, and was modeled after his trio. The one played here is a very early work, not published until after Rachmaninoff's death. The notes to this release theorize that this work, too, was meant as an homage to Tchaikovsky, and points out several clear stylistic references. Whether or not this is true, it sounds very Russian, if not very much like mature Rachmaninoff. The Testore give it a very Russian interpretation, romantic and (after the gentle beginning) muscular.

I was extremely impressed with the other works offered by the Cho Trio. I've always enjoyed Ax-Ma-Perlman's Mendelssohn trios, but this is every bit as good. From its ghostly opening and moments of sublime lyricism to its many intense episodes, the ensemble displays remarkable expressive range. In III the constantly spinning figures dance and sparkle. Always there is playfulness and bite.

Like their Tchaikovsky, the Cho's Arensky surpasses the Moscow Trio's (included on that 2013 release). I was delighted by the humor and inventiveness of the work, especially the quirkiness of II. Cho's delivery is stunning! The passagework in the piano is brilliant. I even enjoyed their reading of Shostakovich's Trio 2, a work I don't care for, simply for their variety of color. If you like Shostakovich, you'll like this performance.

BBC Radio 3 23.08.2015, 9.00 am (Andrew Mc Gregor - 2014.08.23)



BROADCAST CD review

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Classical CD Choice October 12, 2014 (Barry Forshaw - 2014.10.12)



In order to tame the very close piano sound of the Audite recording, the violin and cello here sound distinctly muted. Nevertheless, the performance here is exemplary, finding all the nuances of the composer's highly individual sound world.

Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.

Ensemble - Magazin für Kammermusik 6-2014 Dezember / Januar (Hans-Dieter Grünefeld - 2014.12.01)



Im Gedenken

Hier [...] lässt das Trio Testore emotionale Kraft heraus, spannt die melodischen Bögen in versierter Abstimmung der instrumentalen Strukturprogression, dabei auf Nuancen der Timbres achtend. So ist eine programmatisch sinnvolle Kombination melancholisch-produktiver Memoriale entstanden, die musikhistorische Kontexte bewusst macht.

Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.

Fanfare 26.03.2015 (Jerry Dubbins - 2015.03.26)

fanfare

My first encounter with the Trio Testore was fairly recent. In 37:2, I reviewed the group's two-disc set of Brahms's piano trios and hated it for all the expressive conceits, slowish tempos, and rhythmic instability. Richard Kaplan, on the other hand, who reviewed the set in the same issue, loved it. In fact, he loved it so much that he put it at the top of his 2013 Want List.

Sometimes I wonder what readers must make of these diametrically opposing views. It's like the philosophical paradox of the card that reads on one side, "The statement on the other side of this card is true," and on the flip side, "The statement on the other side of this card is false." I think in such situations what it comes down to is not so much about the specifics of what each reviewer says, as it is about which

reviewer the reader tends to personally like and trust more. Obviously, Kaplan and I hear Brahms differently.

The heart-on-sleeve emotionalism of Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff is perhaps more tolerant of the Trio Testore's inclination towards Romantic effusiveness and excess, but, as with the group's Brahms, the players take considerable liberties with the score as they push and pull tempos about, stretch notes for expressive effect, pour on portamento—even between adjacent notes, with little regard for how cloying it can be—and most troubling of all, rewrite the printed notes to suit their own purposes.

It was quite shocking, for example, to hear and see what violinist Franziska Pietsch does in measure eight of the Tchaikovsky. In the second half of the bar, the composer wrote the notes E, F, E, D, E, all in one beat, in a rhythm of a 16th note, two 32nd notes, and two 16th notes. When played as notated, it's a written-out, in rhythm, turn: da-deedle-ah-da. But Ms. Pietsch knows better. Instead, she plays D, C, D, E, and evens out the rhythm to sound like basically four 16th notes: da-da-da-da. The pity of it is that she is either blithely or willfully ignorant of the fact that four bars earlier, starting on a B in the tenor clef, the cello has exactly the same note and rhythmic pattern Tchaikovsky wrote for the violin. And by the way, cellist Han-Christian Schweiker plays it correctly as written. Does Pietsch not understand that her part is supposed to echo the cello?

It's that sort of playing fast and loose with the score that really turns me off to Trio Testore. It's what I heard in the ensemble's Brahms and, taken to even further extremes, it's what I hear in these Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff readings. I would invite colleague Kaplan to listen to these performances while following the scores, and tell me if this release doesn't alter his earlier opinion of the Trio Testore.

For this same coupling of works, I'd recommend the Kempf Trio on BIS for performances that deliver plenty of Russian brooding and emotional intensity, while managing to preserve the composers' integrity and the musicians' self-respect.

Fanfare May 2015 (Huntley Dent - 2015.05.01)

fanfare

The Tchaikovsky Piano Trio must be the most operatically effusive chamber work ever written. Its commanding piano part perfectly suits an outsize personality like Martha Argerich, who has recorded it magnificently (DG). You expect a claque in the balcony to explode with bravas. On the same label another world-striding pianist, Lang Lang, delivers a panoramic performance, and in both cases the celebrated violinist (Gideon Kremer, Vadim Repin) and cellist (Mischa Maisky times two) hardly needed to sneak off to a trainer for steroids, either. These are readings on the grand Romantic scale that the Tchaikovsky Trio demands.

In the spirit of the mouse that roared, the modestly celebrated Trio Testore, a German ensemble founded in 2000, presents the score just as grandly, daring any challengers. Pianist Hyun-Jung Kim-Schweiker has a sweeping technique and takes the lead role with as much personality as anyone I've ever encountered. Violinist Franziska Pietsch and cellist Hans-Christian Schweiker (the pianist's husband) play two beautifully matched 18th-century instruments made by the Testore family of Milan, hence the trio's name. These musicians are comfortable in emotional shades of purple, and the result is a top-flight reading.

This is all the more so because Audite's SACD sound, even when heard in two-channel stereo, is remarkably full, clear, and detailed. We are sitting inches away from the performers, and the balance is lifelike in every respect. The interpretation proceeds at first in broad gestures, but when we get to the work's second half, with its luscious theme and 12 variations, Trio Testore characterizes each section quite individually—the Tempo di valse of Variation 6 trips as light-heartedly as the Fuga of Variation 8 toils away

earnestly and the Andante febrile of Variation 9 intimately sighs for lost love. Rachmaninoff's precocious Trio élégaique, which the 19-year-old wrote over four days in January 1892, is couched in his signature mood of voluptuous mourning. It makes for a lovely if not very original filler. In all, a delightful disc that inspires me to hear the Trio Testore's highly praised debut recording of the Brahms piano trios. They also head a spring festival in the west of Germany in Alsdorf, a once grim coal mining town now given over to the muses.

[Gesellschaft Freunde der Künste](#) 01.09.2014 (- 2014.09.01)



**Mit seiner CD beleuchtet das Trio Testore die Seite russischer Kammermusik:
Tschaikowskis und Rachmaninovs**

Nach der erfolgreichen Veröffentlichung der Brahms-Klaviertrios legt audite nun eine weitere SACD mit dem Trio Testore vor. Sie beleuchtet eine besondere Seite russischer Kammermusik: Tschaikowskys und Rachmaninoffs Werke für Klaviertrio sind als Widmungs- und Gedenkstücke konzipiert.

Pjotr Tschaikowski komponierte sein einziges Klaviertrio im Gedenken an Nikolai Rubinstein, seinen Förderer und Freund. Mit dem anspruchsvollen Klavierpart erwies er dessen pianistischer Brillanz die Ehre, baute sie jedoch in den kommunikativen Zusammenhang mit zwei gleichberechtigten Partnern ein: Sinnbildlich erhält der Virtuose von ihnen Resonanz, Unterstützung und Anregung.

Wir lieben Musik... weil sie uns glücklich macht

Sergej Rachmaninow nahm sich das zweisätzige Werk und seinen elegischen Grundzug zum Vorbild, als er 17-jährig sein erstes Klaviertrio komponierte. Darin prägte er bereits wesentliche Elemente seines Stils, seiner Art der melodischen Erfindung und der Entfaltung weiter Zusammenhänge aus.

Die Widmungsgeschichte der Werke bestimmt ihre individuelle Form und ihren persönlichen, leidenschaftlichen Ton. Sie stehen damit beispielhaft für eine Tradition, die weit ins 20. Jahrhundert hinein wirkte.

**Gramophone Gramophone Awards Issue,
September 2014 (Geoffrey Norris - 2014.09.01)**

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By the time Rachmaninov wrote his first Trio élégaique, Tchaikovsky had already established the in memoriam mood that was to be echoed in other, later piano trios by Russian composers, Arensky and Shostakovich among them. His A minor Trio of 1881 was dedicated 'to the memory of a great artist', Nikolay Rubinstein. There is no known reason why Rachmaninov should have written an elegiac trio in 1892 at the age of 18 – unlike the second one of the following year, which was composed in direct response to the death of Tchaikovsky.

Trio Testore tackle the earlier of the Rachmaninov trios, cast in a single movement, with a mix of tenderness and raw emotion. It is not a masterwork; but with the sensibility that these players reveal, it comes across with touching sincerity and, for all that the piano is the dominant force, with a dramatic intensity to the string lines as well. Trio Testore's range of expression is similarly apt to the temperament of

the Tchaikovsky Trio. Although he had earlier voiced antipathy towards the piano trio medium, Tchaikovsky found an emotional and textural balance here that the Testore tap purposefully and with considerable power and impetus in the broad span of the first movement. The ebb and flow of angst is well judged and the variations of the second movement are deftly characterised, with the keen interplay of instruments creating a fabric of variegated colour that counters any misgivings Tchaikovsky might have harboured about the piano trio's tonal potential.

hifi & records 2/2015 (Uwe Steiner - 2015.04.01)



Das Trio Testore musiziert aus einem Guss, kammermusikalisch geschlossen und ausgewogen. Dabei reizt es die dynamischen und artikulatorischen Kontraste beinahe noch stärker aus als die drei Jahre alte, stärker solistisch profilierte CD mit Gidon Kremer, Giedrė Dirvanauskaitė und Khatia Bunashvili (ECM). Audites Produktion punktet zudem mit homogenen und satteren Klangfarben.

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<http://theclassicalreviewer.blogspot.de> Sunday, 14 December 2014
(Bruce Reader - 2014.12.14)



Authoritative performances of Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio in A minor and Rachmaninov's Trio élégiaque No. 1 from Trio Testore on a new release from Audite

This is as fine a performance of the Tchaikovsky Trio that you'll ever find with these players putting their hearts and souls into the music. The engineers provide a fine recording in the acoustic of the Jesus-Christus-Kirche, Berlin-Dahlem, Germany the venue for so many fine recordings. There are informative notes.

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Scherzo N° 304 - febrero 2015 (Josep Pascual - 2015.02.01)

sch^erzo

Los intérpretes que lo conforman resuelven sin demasiados problemas la exigente escritura de ambas obras y todo resulta muy claro, nada brumoso, de un camerismo genuino, en el que cada intérprete tiene su parte de protagonismo a la vez que cada cual sabe ceder el suyo a quien corresponda según el momento. Han estudiado las obras con calma y seriedad, es evidente, y su trabajo es ejemplar.

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www.classicalcdreview.com 11.11.2014 (Robert Benson - 2014.11.11)

CLASSICAL CD REVIEW
a site for the serious record collector

Both works are played superbly, and Audite's recording team has captured their sound to perfection.

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www.ClassicsToday.com 08/2014 (Jed Distler - 2014.08.01)

CLASSICS TODAY
com

A Desirable Rachmaninov/Tchaikovsky Coupling

Some may find violinist Franziska Pietsch's vibrato excessive, yet it's never cloying. For a Rachmaninov G minor and Tchaikovsky Op. 50 trio coupling, you cannot do better.

Full review text restrained for
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www.pizzicato.lu 22/08/2014 (Remy Franck - 2014.08.22)

pizzicato
Remy Franck's Blog about Classical Music

Nachhaltige Bestätigung

Mit seiner fulminanten Brahms-CD hat das Trio Testore sich selber die Latte sehr hochgelegt und dementsprechende Erwartungen geweckt, denen es mit dieser Rachmaninov-Tchaikovsky-Einspielung vollauf gerecht wird.

Das Programm vereint zwei untypische Klaviertrios, die im Grunde Gedenkmusiken sind. Rachmaninows erstes Trio *élégiaque* hat keinen bestimmten Adressaten. Tchaikovsky hat sein Klaviertrio mit Variationensatz seinem langjährigen Förderer und Weggefährten Nikolai Rubinstein gewidmet – 'à la *mémoire*' un grand artiste'. Beiden Werken ist die melancholische Grundstimmung gemein, die das Trio

Testore mit packender Intensität wiedergibt, ohne übermäßig pathetisch zu werden und in die Karikatur abzugleiten. Schon der schwebende, nahezu mysteriöse Einstieg ins Rachmaninov-Trio läßt die tiefe Emotionalität erahnen, die uns erwartet. Während uns bei Rachmaninov die lyrisch-nachfühlende gesangliche Ausgestaltung des Hauptthemas fesselt, ist es bei Tchaikovsky die poetische Melancholie.

Das Trio Testore musiziert auf kammermusikalisch höchstem Niveau. Es ist ein organisches Musizieren, intensiv im Ausdruck und klar in der Gestaltung auch kleinster musikalischer Elemente, ein Musizieren, das den Zuhörer mit einbindet, auch wenn die letzte Note schon lange verklungen ist.

The technically outstanding Trio Testore plays the two basically melancholic compositions with packing intensity without being caricatural.



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