



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

aud 92.691

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Gramophone (Geoffrey Norris - 2014.09.01)

GRAMOPHONE

By the time Rachmaninov wrote his first Trio élégiaque, 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.