

DESTINATION PARIS

LENDVAI

STRING TRIO



Martinu, Francaix & Enescu





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STRING TRIO

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BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ (1890-1959)

String Trio No. 2, H 238 (1934)

- | | | |
|----------|----------------------|------|
| 1 | <i>Allegro</i> | 8.39 |
| 2 | <i>Poco Moderato</i> | 8.17 |

JEAN FRANÇAIX (1912-1997)

String Trio (1933)

- | | | |
|----------|------------------------|------|
| 3 | <i>Allegretto Vivo</i> | 2.39 |
| 4 | <i>Scherzo: Vivo</i> | 3.27 |
| 5 | <i>Andante</i> | 3.34 |
| 6 | <i>Rondo: Vivo</i> | 4.34 |

BOHUSLAV MARTINŮ

String Trio No. 1, H 136 (1923)

- | | | |
|----------|---------------------|------|
| 7 | <i>Allegro</i> | 6.44 |
| 8 | <i>Andante</i> | 7.37 |
| 9 | <i>Poco Allegro</i> | 5.30 |

GEORGE ENESCU (1881-1955)

- | | | |
|-----------|---------------------------------|------|
| 10 | Aubade in C major (1899) | 4.31 |
|-----------|---------------------------------|------|

55.50

LENDVAI STRING TRIO

Nadia Wijzenbeek *violin*

Ylvali Zilliacus *viola*

Marie Macleod *cello*

Martinů, Françaix & Enescu - The French Connection

Born in the Moravian town of Polika in 1890, Bohuslav Martinů spent much of his boyhood in a church tower where his father, a shoemaker by trade, was warden and firewatcher. Set to become one of the most spirited and prolific Czech composers of the twentieth century, Martinů began composing from age 10, amassing an impressive collection of juvenilia including songs, piano music, string quartets, symphonic poems and ballets. However, it was as a violinist that Martinů first excelled, studying briefly at the Prague Conservatory - from which he was expelled for 'incorrigible negligence' in 1910 - and performing as a young man with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra. As a teacher, he was exempt from military service and spent the First World War in his home town where he continued to compose, beginning to garner accolades for his work, notably his ballet music and the patriotic cantata *Czech Rhapsody* (1918). Still hungry for further training, however, Martinů returned to the Prague Conservatory where he studied with Josef Suk, Dvorak's son-in-law, before setting his sights on Paris, arriving in the city in the 1923 to embark on new studies with French composer Albert Roussel.

Despite living in considerable poverty for many of the seventeen years he spent in Paris, Martinů was gradually able to establish himself as a full-time composer, delighting in the wide palette of musical colours, from jazz to neoclassicism, alive in the city at that time. The two string trios are products of Martinů's stay in Paris and span a considerable stretch of his time there. Indeed, the **String Trio No. 1** (1923) was the first piece he composed on arriving in France and demonstrates the young composer's eagerness to draw on the city's burgeoning avant-garde scene, notably in the trio's intensive polyphonic scoring and the array of instrumental colours. Intriguingly, following the first performances of the work in Paris and its Czech premiere in 1925, all traces of the manuscript remained lost for eighty years, only for the autograph of the trio to resurface in 2005 at the Danish Royal Library in Copenhagen.

The *String Trio No. 1* opens with a restless *Allegro*, the snap and whirl of pizzicato cello set amid furious counterpoint. The clamour of the opening passage soon stills to a softer violin melody supported by a hushed, circling accompaniment in the lower strings who draw on a central motif of the movement: a repeated, alternating semiquaver figure, here steadily descending. The music gradually settles to a series of winding solo melodies passed through the trio, aloft on pizzicato accompaniment, before the storm of the opening builds once more with a series of accented block entries citing the opening material. This furore gives way to gently shifting chords, sliding between major and tritone-inflected harmonies, underpinned by an undulating cello refrain and occasionally interrupted by a subdued but menacing pizzicato motif. These tritone inflections yield to a slow, whispered account of the opening theme in ghostly parallel motion, before a soft and grave D-minor resolution.

The first movement's restrained close leads smoothly to the tranquil *Andante* second movement. A plaintive melody passes across the trio amid washes of sparse harmony, the texture occasionally clearing for a circling, chromatic motif to pass between solo instruments before the warmth of the full trio returns. Tension grows across the movement and builds to a series of strident double-stopped chords above which the violin soars. The texture then dissolves into a passage of great delicacy, the level accompaniment of cello and viola supporting the violin in a glistening solo. The movement closes with fragments of the chromatic solo motif again passed across the trio, enveloped in shimmering A-major chords.

The final movement *Poco Allegro* begins with a bold, springing melody in the violin and met with plucked accents and glissandi in the viola and cello, a drone-like texture hinting at a Czech folk dance. The movement shifts between the rough buoyancy of the opening material and a series of gentle and at times chorale-like passages, which each time return to the merry first melody, the texture growing increasingly polyphonic with staggered entries, robust countermelodies and playful modulations.

The movement finishes with a racing coda: a jazz-infused chromatic syncopation dances through the ensemble, before an exuberant final flourish of racing scales and pizzicato brings the trio to a close.

The **String Trio No. 2** was composed in 1934, in the latter period of Martinů's Parisian stay. Premiered in 1935 by the Pasquier Trio, a group comprised of three brothers, and one of the most celebrated chamber ensembles of the era, the *String Trio No. 2* demonstrates an increasingly mature and confident Martinů. The work is divided into two compact movements, an *Allegro* and a *Poco Moderato*, although both contain passages of rapid and driving tempo, and softer, lyrical scoring. The trio also features a series of recitative or cadenza-like episodes for solo instruments, a hallmark of Martinů's long-standing composition teacher and friend Roussel.

The first movement *Allegro* opens with a strident burst of contrapuntal writing, the trio's rhythmic energy recalling both the late Baroque style and Czech folk music. Moving into an agitated development section, the lower strings dart through passage-work as the violin ascends to a series of floating harmonics. The movement gradually eases away from the bustling drive of the opening section with cadenza-like passages for violin and cello, first set above a trembling, suspended chord, then unaccompanied. A reflective passage of sonorous and contrapuntal scoring follows, before a reprise of the movement's main theme.

The *Poco Moderato* opens with lyrical, improvisatory solos for cello and viola, punctuated by warm and psalm-like cadences. The meditative introduction leads quickly into the darting first subject of a sonata-form structure, the movement set to alternate between this neoclassical precision and the second subject's tender lyricism. After a fiery development section and echoes of the opening's still contemplation, the movement draws to a dazzling close with a rush of arpeggios and an emphatic D-major cadence.

Composer Jean René Désiré Françaix (1912-1997) was born into a fervently musical family. His father was director of the Le Mans Conservatory, where Françaix's mother also taught, and by the age of ten Françaix had already begun studies in composition with Nadia Boulanger and piano with Isidor Philipp. An accomplished pianist, Françaix was a student at the Paris Conservatory and rapidly shot to fame as neo-classical composer of popular orchestral works and ballet scores, including a commission for the Ballet Russes de Monte Carlo, *Scuola di ballo*. Françaix's oeuvre has frequently been overlooked as frivolous, despite the great intelligence of his musical wit and the occasional gravitas of his later works, notably the solemn and mystical Oratorio *L'Apocalypse selon St Jean* (1939).

Composed in Paris in 1933, Françaix's **String Trio in C Major** was dedicated to the Pasquier Trio and is a lively celebration of the neoclassical style. A merry *Allegretto Vivo* opens the work and features the three instruments muted. Amid the chattering figuration and imitative entries, the movement pays a fitting homage to the master of counterpoint: a repeated viola motif of B-C-A-Bb (H-C-A-B in German notation) spells out 'Bach' in reverse. The second movement is an elegant and lilting *Scherzo*. Its central section has an almost cartoonish feel, conjured by boisterous cello pizzicato and daring shades of bitonality in the violin and viola, before the movement returns to the meandering charm of the opening material. The slow movement *Andante* employs mutes once more and features the violin as soloist, accompanied by simple stepwise motion and rocking figuration in viola and cello. The *Rondo: Vivo* finale returns to C major and begins with a violin melody bursting with mischief, the close of each phrase echoed impishly by viola and cello. Amid repetitions of the rondo refrain lie a series of characterful episodes, including a coquettish violin melody surrounded by suggestive glissandi, and a slower passage where the trio sways to a languorous halt. After a last reprise of the refrain and a brief nod to the can-can, Françaix signs off with a teasing swung-rhythm final phrase.

Trained first by a Romany fiddle player and most famous for his *Romanian Rhapsodies* for orchestra, George Enescu (1881-1955) was quickly defined as the quintessential Romanian musician. However, the depth and imagination of the composer reached beyond the label of Romanian folklorist. A gifted classical violinist and graduate of the Conservatory of Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna and the Paris Conservatory, Enescu was eager to establish himself as a cosmopolitan figure. Indeed, while his mature works continued to explore the form and texture of Romanian folk music, Enescu's musical voice lay predominantly within Germanic and French neo-romantic traditions with occasional flashes of experimentalism, buoyed by an abiding interest in Indian music.

Aubade for string trio, 'a morning love song', was composed in 1899 during Enescu's early years in Paris where the composer lived intermittently from 1895 until his death. The trio was written in the same year as the Second Violin Sonata, a work that vividly bears the mark of Enescu's teacher Gabriel Fauré in its flowing piano lines and modal cadences. Enescu later declared that the Violin Sonata marked the moment where he felt he was 'becoming himself,' and the playful *Aubade* likewise suggests the composer at ease. A sparkling tribute to the Parisian salon, the trio also draws lightly on Romanian folk music: the opening violin melody set across plucked lower strings recalls the texture of the Taraf band where a fiddle melody plays over cimbalom and double bass. The piece alternates between delicate variations on the opening material, playful as birdsong, and a hectic second theme, which each time yields to the gentle lilt of the first melody, eventually bringing the piece to an elegant close.

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