Society for
CHAMBER
Music
in
ROCHESTER

46th Season

Romantic Masters

Sunday, Apr. 30, 2023 at 4:00 pm

Beston Hall at Glazer Music Performance Center
Nazareth College

PROGRAM

***Pre-concert Performance**

String Quintet, Op. 39 (1892) . . . . . Aleksandr Glazunov
(1865-1936)

I. Allegro

Nazareth String Quintet
Instructor: Tigran Vardanyan

Lexis Ferree *violin*
Sylvia Hunt *violin*
Brianna Packard *viola*
Min Gonzalez *cello*
Meghan Lambert *cello*

Violin Sonata in E-flat major, Op. 18 (1888) . . . . . Richard Strauss
(1864-1949)

Allegro, ma non troppo
Improvisation: Andante cantabile
Finale: Andante - Allegro

Juliana Athayde *violin*
Chiao-Wen Chang *piano*

——— *Intermission* ———

Chanson Triste for cello and piano, Op. 56 No. 3 (1902) . . . . . Anton Arensky
(1861-1906)

Steven Doane *cello*
Chiao-Wen Cheng *piano*

Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor, Op. 32 (1894) . . . . . Anton Arensky
(1861-1906)

Allegro moderato
Scherzo. Allegro molto
Elegia. Adagio
Finale. Allegro non troppo

Juliana Athayde *violin*
Steven Doane *cello*
Chiao-Wen Chang *piano*

PROGRAM NOTES

Aleksandr Glazunov: String Quintet Op. 39 (1892)

A student of Rimsky-Korsakov and the teacher of Prokofiev and Shostakovich, Alexander Glazunov was a key transitional figure in the history of Russian music. When he began composing in the 1880s, Russian musical nationalism, with its emphasis on the use of traditional folk elements and idioms, was at its high point. In 1899, when he was appointed professor at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, Russia's musical tastes had returned substantially to the forms and styles of western music. And in 1930, when he retired as director of the Conservatory, Soviet authorities had assumed ideological control of Russian cultural life.

Glazunov's reputation as a composer reflected these shifting currents. Altogether he composed more than 100 works, including eight symphonies, five concertos, and seven string quartets, as well as a series of stage and orchestral works in the Russian nationalist idiom. At one time, in fact, he was heralded as Tchaikovsky's successor as

Russia's number one composer, and when Borodin died, Rimsky-Korsakov selected Glazunov as his partner in completing Borodin's unfinished compositions.

At the turn of the century, moreover, Glazunov's music – whether western or nationalist in orientation – was widely played not only in Russia but throughout Western Europe and the United States. But tastes changed, and today he is remembered largely for his Violin Concerto, popularized by Jascha Heifetz, and two ballets, *Raymonda* and *The Seasons*.

When Glazunov was only 20, Rimsky-Korsakov introduced him to a wealthy art patron named Mitrofan Belyayev. The sponsor of symphony concerts in St. Petersburg and the owner of a publishing house in Leipzig, Belyayev invited a group of Russian composers to his palatial house every Friday to perform each other's music. Glazunov was the youngest member of the group, and his host encouraged him to produce a series of chamber works that he might publish in western Europe, including the quintet we hear this evening.

The quintet, composed at the age of 26, puts Glazunov's adaptability on full display by presenting an amalgam of western and Russian nationalist influences. The form and content of the first three movements lack a distinct Russian character, opting instead for western styles, but the quintet's final movement explores Russian folk rhythms and color throughout. Notably, the quintet features two cellos instead of the more traditional doubling of the viola, which lends the piece a darker, richer sound.

The viola begins the opening Allegro with a lilting melody, as the rest of the ensemble provides lush harmonic support. The first cello emerges with a contrasting theme, a stately yet soaring line placed in the instrument's upper register. The movement showcases Glazunov's talent for counterpoint as he weaves together five parts without relegating any one to an accompanying role for too long, culminating in a forceful conclusion.

Richard Strauss: ***Violin Sonata, Op. 18 (1888)***

Richard Strauss was actively engaged in music-making for most of his life. The son of a professional horn player, he grew up surrounded by music. He began piano lessons at four, composed his first works at six, took up the violin at eight, and commenced several years of compositional study with the assistant conductor of the court orchestra at eleven. Strauss continued to compose until 1948, a year before his death, when ill health forced him to stop. While we mostly remember him today as a composer, Strauss was an accomplished violinist and pianist, and was considered a very influential conductor, one of the two great German composer-conductors of his time, along with Gustav Mahler.

Strauss's early musical instruction, under the supervision of his father, focused on the works of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert. The senior Strauss detested Wagner, who was then considered avant-garde and on the cutting-edge. It is a great irony that Richard Strauss later became a strong supporter and interpreter of Wagner's music.

Richard played violin in the "Wilde Gung'l" orchestra association which was founded by his father, and in several chamber groups formed with family friends and relatives. These groups premiered several of Richard's early works and provided invaluable experience. During this period Hans von Bülow, conductor of the Meiningen Orchestra, became acquainted with the Strauss family and called him "by far the most striking personality since Brahms."

We do not think of Strauss as a prodigy yet it is clear that he was one. By the time he was 16, he was a published and a performed composer. Later, with his symphonic poems and operas, Strauss re-defined the concepts of symphonic sounds and form.

By 1887, Richard Strauss had firmly established himself as one of the most promising young musicians of his generation. Having returned to Munich to become a conductor with the Munich Hofoper a year earlier, Strauss began to familiarize himself with the symphonic poems of Franz Liszt. After a journey to Italy in 1887, the same year Strauss completed his *Violin Sonata*, he wrote his first large-scale symphonic fantasy, *Aus Italien*. The following year, he would compose his first symphonic tone poem, *Don Juan*. The *Violin Sonata* would prove to be the composer's last substantial instrumental chamber music work before he fully delved into symphonic writing.

By the time Strauss wrote the *Violin Sonata*, he was no longer a novice in music or in writing for the piano or violin although he was still in his early twenties. In addition, some of his chamber music had prominent and challenging parts for both instruments. Needless to say, his thorough knowledge of these instruments was a great asset in composing such a virtuoso piece.

The *Violin Sonata* is considered Strauss's last "classical" piece. Still under the influence of his conservative father, his chamber output, of which he only left a handful of works dating from before 1890, follows the generally accepted classical patterns.

Strauss left only three works in the sonata genre, namely the *'Cello Sonata*, the *Piano Sonata*, and the *Violin Sonata*, all early works. The last is considered the most mature work of the three, and his musical language, which was to become so evident in his later works, is already present. Both the violin and the piano parts are densely written, and the melodic lines interweave, creating a symphonic texture. Even though it is a sonata, it is almost as if the two instruments are playing a double concerto.

Strauss composed the *Violin Sonata* under the romantic spell of Pauline de Ahna, who later became his wife. The work is full of youthful energy, hope, and anticipation. The ardent fervor of the song-like lines is evident, especially in the second movement, which often reminds the listener of the songs and operas that were to come later in Strauss's career.

The piano opens the first movement with a short fanfare, immediately followed by a somewhat sorrowful reflective violin line. But this subdued moment does not last very long as the two instruments quickly rise to a high place. In the second movement, entitled *Improvisation*, Strauss uses the violin as though it were a lieder singer. Cast in the traditional ternary form of a-b-a, the 'a' sections are particularly mellifluous. The 'b' section, in the middle of the movement, is capricious and improvisational but forever elegant. A portion of this middle section is played with the mute on the violin. The third movement, after a quiet, yet dramatic introduction, plunges into music that is suggestive of heroism and grandeur.

Of compositional interest is the specific rhythmic pattern consisting of a dotted note (an eighth or a quarter) followed by a 16th or an 8th and then by a triplet. In the first and third movements, this fragment can be found throughout. In all the expanded and overlapping melodic lines, this rhythmic motive ultimately holds the movements, and the piece, together.

Strauss remained fond of the work and it was performed at the concert he attended in Munich on his 85th birthday, June 11th 1949, three months before his

death. Although it is not considered to be at the pinnacle of violin literature, Strauss's *Violin Sonata* has been in the active repertoire of most of the major violinists of the 20th century and it continues to offer its charm and heartfelt melodies to today's listeners.

Anton Arensky: *Chanson Triste (1902)*

Anton Stepanovich Arensky, pianist and conductor of the late Romantic period, was born on June 30, 1861 in Novgorod. For context, he was a generation younger than Tchaikovsky and a generation older than Stravinsky. A child of musical parents, he had already composed some songs and piano pieces by the age of nine. When the family moved to St. Petersburg, Arensky attended Rousseau's music school before entering the St. Petersburg Conservatory at the age of eighteen. He studied composition with Rimsky-Korsakov and counterpoint with Johannsen. Rimsky-Korsakov was sufficiently impressed by Arensky's talent to entrust him with a share in preparing the vocal score of *The Snow Maiden*.

In 1882, Arensky graduated with a gold medal in composition. Within the year, he had been appointed professor of harmony and counterpoint at the Moscow Conservatory. Among his pupils were Rachmaninoff, Scriabin, and Glière. At the Conservatory, he came into frequent contact with Tchaikovsky, who showed a very warm regard for the young composer, gave him much practical encouragement, often proffered his critical advice, and would come to exert a noticeable influence on Arensky's style.

In 1894, Balakirev recommended Arensky as his successor for the directorship of the Imperial Chapel in St. Petersburg, and in 1895 Arensky moved to the capital, resigning from his professorship at the Moscow Conservatory. At the age of forty, Arensky left the Imperial Chapel with a pension that allowed him to devote the rest of his life to composition and a very successful touring career both as pianist and conductor in Russia and abroad.

Since his early years, Arensky had unfortunately been attracted to drinking and gambling. According to Rimsky-Korsakov, Arensky's life became more disordered in his last years. His health was quickly undermined and he succumbed to tuberculosis in a Finnish sanatorium in 1906 at the age of forty-four. His musical legacy comprises a successful opera, two symphonies, two concerti, choral and piano works, and an admirable cache of chamber music works.

Arensky's Op.56 consisted originally of four pieces for cello and piano. They were composed over a six-year period between 1894 and 1900 and were brought out by his Moscow publisher, Jurgensen in 1902. The pieces really are not related, but each is a character piece. For this reason, they were published separately rather than as a group. The first of the set originally titled *Chant de Printemps* became better known as *Air Orientale*. It has the quality of a Spanish folk dance. The second work, *Romance*, is melancholy in mood and clearly influenced his student Rachmaninov. The third work, *Chanson triste*, is just that, a sad song with simple piano accompaniment.

Anton Arensky: *Piano Trio No. 1 (1894)*

Save for the well-known *Variations on a Theme of Tchaikovsky* for string orchestra, little of Arensky's substantial output has maintained a place on contemporary concert programs. He was essentially a miniaturist, and his finest music is to be found in the shorter works for small ensembles, for solo piano and for his melodious songs (which

seem to have influenced Rachmaninov's conception of Russian song). His influence as a teacher -- to such future luminaries as Rachmaninov and Scriabin -- has earned him a place of distinction in the history of Russian music.

It was Arensky's mentor Tchaikovsky who established an influential tradition of Russian elegies for piano trio with his monumental trio of 1882 dedicated to the celebrated pianist and co-founder of the Moscow Conservatory, Nikolai Rubinstein. Upon the death of Tchaikovsky a decade later, a young student named Serge Rachmaninoff composed his second *Trio élégiaque* in his honor. The following year, Arensky composed his trio to the memory of the celebrated Russian cellist Karl Davidoff who had been principal cellist of the St. Petersburg opera and later director of the St. Petersburg Conservatory. One might also look as far forward as 1944 when Shostakovich dedicated his second piano trio to the Russian musicologist Ivan Sollertinsky. Each of these trios is strongly marked by the presence of a dark elegy: sorrowful and even funeral music in honor of the dead.

The romantic character and technique of Arensky's trio suggests the influence of Schumann and especially Mendelssohn whose trio in D Minor immediately comes to mind. As with Mendelssohn's, Arensky's first movement features finely articulated lyrical themes, an intricate, full texture, and a steady, flowing momentum. The cello introduces nearly every theme throughout the entire trio in what would appear to be a direct tribute to Davidoff. Despite its "softening" from its initial minor key into the relative major, the first movement ends in definite sorrow as the first theme's main motif rises in a chaste, plaintive premonition of the third movement elegy to come. The second movement - *Scherzo* - far from the French Menuet or even a muscular scherzo à la Beethoven, is a waltz glittering with elegance, theatrical poise and, in the trio, genial and melodious warmth. To begin, a delicate, almost whimsical gesture from the violin is answered by a torrent of notes from the piano, a wonderfully theatrical call and response. Pizzicato, unresolved arabesques, and the sparkling high register of the piano create a charmed atmospheric introduction promising great expectations until, finally, the cello begins the dance soon engaging its violin partner.

The stunning third movement *Elegia* is the heart and soul of the trio, its *raison d'être*. The piano intones the grave, iconic rhythm of the funeral march as a muted cello sings the sorrowful first theme. Both violin and cello are muted giving the music a hushed, almost unspeakable poignancy like grief stuck in one's throat. But equally characteristic of most musical elegies is a second theme, bright, hopeful and nostalgic as a memory of happier times. Gentle, spacious, and with ever upward-reaching modulations, the music is literally uplifting, culminating in the soaring heights of the violin. This is a particularly magical movement of the trio that will recur again, briefly, in the *Finale*. A more tumultuous character again suggesting Schumann or even Brahms pervades the *Finale* with a stormy bravado as a rondo refrain juxtaposed with contrasting episodes that literally and figuratively operate as memories. One is a recall of the luminous "nostalgia" theme of the *Elegia* whose rising modulations that are ultimately grounded by a recall of the original first movement theme, familiar but weary with sadness and suddenly swept away forever by a final gust of fate.

Notes compiled by Eric Zeise from text by Kai Christiansen,
Willard J. Hertz, Jane Vial Jaffe, Midori, and Isaac Thompson.

Biographical Notes

Juliana Athayde, appointed concertmaster of the RPO in 2005, has made numerous solo appearances with the RPO, including several premieres, and with orchestras across the country. She has also appeared as guest concertmaster with several orchestras. A passionate educator, Ms. Athayde is Associate Professor of Violin at the Eastman School, a Visiting Teacher at the Cleveland Institute of Music, and previously served as a Visiting Professor at the Cleveland Institute and at Cornell University. Completing her graduate studies at the Cleveland Institute, she was the first graduate of the CIM's Concertmaster Academy.

Taiwanese pianist **Chiao-Wen Cheng** has performed as soloist, recitalist, and chamber musician in major venues throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia. She has become a sought-after collaborative partner through her sensitive playing, vibrant sound colors, and detailed voicing, and has performed with many instrumentalists, chamber ensembles, and orchestras. Since 2019, Cheng has been an Artist-Faculty Piano Collaborator at the Perlman Music Program. In 2022, she was hired as the Collaborative Pianist for the U.S. premier of Tan Dun's trombone concerto. She has also appeared as recitalist, as soloist with orchestras, and has won a variety of competitions and awards.

Cheng began piano lessons with her aunt at the age of four, completed her bachelor's degree at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music where she received a Van Cliburn Scholarship. She completed her master's degree at Peabody Institute, as a student of Benjamin Pasternack, where she received a full scholarship. Cheng holds a doctoral degree from the Eastman School, where she was a student and teaching assistant of Barry Snyder. At Eastman, Cheng also held a graduate assistantship as a collaborative pianist and large ensemble pianist. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Collaborative Piano at the Eastman School of Music. She joined the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra as a Principal Keyboard in 2022.

Cellist **Steven Doane,** internationally known soloist, recitalist, chamber musician, recording artist, and pedagogue, appears at festivals and on concert series throughout the United States and overseas. Doane received his BM from Oberlin Conservatory and MM from SUNY Stony Brook. He received a Watson Foundation Grant for overseas study in 1975, and had further studies with Richard Kapuscinski, Bernard Greenhouse, Jane Cowan, and Janos Starker. With Eastman pianist Barry Snyder, he has made a number of acclaimed recordings. Steven Doane received Eastman's Eisenhart Award for Excellence in Teaching in 1993, and the Piatigorsky Prize in teaching at the New England Conservatory in 1986. As a member of the New Arts Trio, Doane was awarded the Naumburg Chamber Music Award in 1980. He made his Carnegie Hall and Kennedy Center debuts in *Don Quixote* with David Zinman and the RPO in 1983. His Tully Hall recital debut occurred in 1990, and has been followed by numerous recital appearances in many other venues. Steven Doane currently holds the title of "visiting professor" at the Royal Academy of Music, London, where he has done several residencies.

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