

audite



TRIOLIRICO

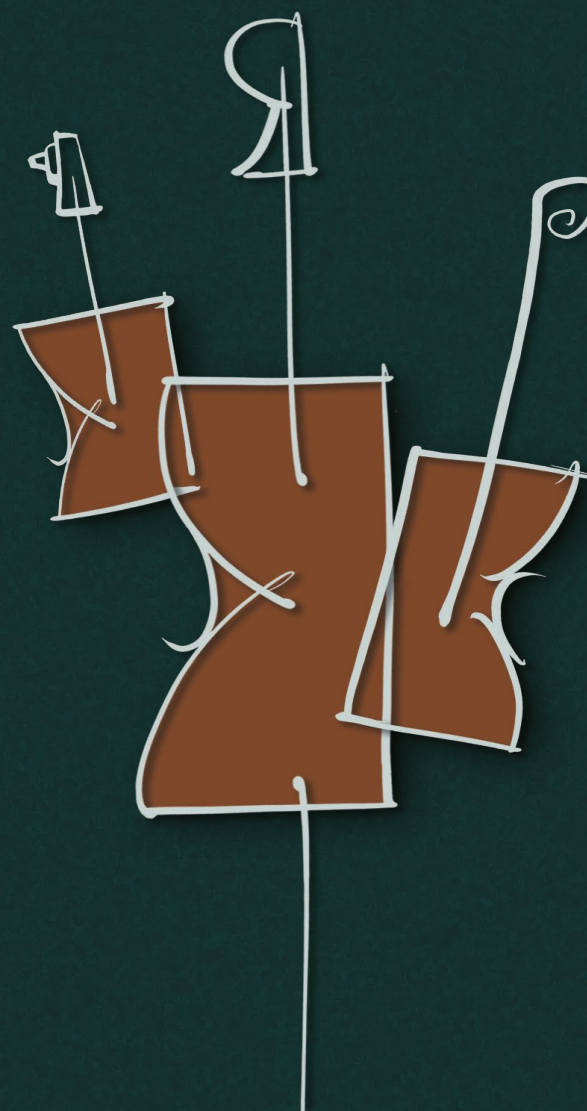
EUGÈNE YSAË (1858-1931)
String Trio 'Le Chimay' 18:14

PÉTER EÖTVÖS (*1944)
**String Trio (in
 Christophe Desjardins) 6:42**

ZOLTÁN KODÁLY (1882-1967)
Intermezzo for String Trio 4:30

ERNST VON DOHNÁNYI (1877-1960)
Serenade for String Trio, Op. 10

- I. *Allegro* 2:03
- II. *Adagio non troppo, quasi andante* 3:47
- III. *Vivace* 4:19
- IV. *Thema con variazioni. Andante con moto* 7:12
- V. *Allegro vivace* 4:05



Four works for three personalities:

Trio Lirico performs music from Belgium and Hungary

Composing for three string players is always a particular challenge – as is making these works sound as impressive and convincing as possible. Three equal voices come together, played by three different instruments, each with their own individual sound and character. Although the combination of violin, viola and cello leads one to expect a certain homogeneity of sound (which, in principle, tends to be achieved), the demand for independence remains intact. Or, as the musicians of the Trio Lirico put it in a nutshell: “All three of us are soloists, with our own personalities.”

It is only in the organic interplay, in the dialectic of the individual’s creative accents and the ensemble’s perfectly attuned musical cooperation, that the charm of a string trio unfolds. Franziska Pietsch, Sophia Reuter and Hila Karni have chosen four very different works for their recording: compositions from the early twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. They hail from both western and eastern regions of Europe, each featuring their own characteristics, whilst at the same time revealing many parallels and connections.

The oldest of the composers represented here is **Eugène Ysaÿe** who – as César Franck a generation earlier – was born in the Belgian city of Liège and was one of the eminent violin virtuosos of his time. As a “child prodigy” he astonished the musical world, and his excellent reputation, which he soon acquired, was underpinned by numerous successful concert tours that brought him into contact with almost all the musical greats of the time. It is not surprising that the vast majority of his compositions focus on Ysaÿe’s own instrument, as is also the case in the **String Trio “Le Chimay”**, named after the composer’s home town. Although the violin is given the leading part, it is not necessarily the dominant one. “Like a river flowing through the landscape” is how the musicians of the Trio Lirico characterise this music, which opens in a magical, dreamlike manner, revealing a fairy-tale, fantastical soundscape. Cast in one movement and featuring ornate transitions, this piece has an immensely poetic, almost impressionistic, quality, with the melody of the violin unfolding with striking beauty and the other two instruments going far beyond the role of merely accompanying. In this work, which he wrote in 1927, towards the end of his life and career, Ysaÿe appears not only as a “virtuoso” but also, and especially, as a lyricist who bestows upon his music a beauty of sound, richness of colour and depth of thought. A “picture of colourful dabs” appearing like a “reflection in the water” – such are the associations which this music evokes amongst the players. And certain echoes of Debussy and Ravel also become apparent.

An interesting and original figure in European music at the intersection of romanticism and modernism was **Ernst von Dohnányi**, born in 1877 in Bratislava and active for decades in the musical centres of Vienna, Berlin and Budapest. Growing up in a family of musicians, he came into contact with the works of prominent composers from an early age, especially the Viennese classics. He became personally acquainted with Brahms: Dohnányi’s opus 1, a piano quintet, received high praise from the famous master in 1895.

At that time, the young musician was still studying at the Budapest Academy of Music, which he would later direct himself after the outbreak of the First World War and again during the interwar period.

Ernst von Dohnányi always had a multi-pronged approach in terms of planning and realising his musical career. As a piano virtuoso he was in demand internationally, as is evidenced by regular tours to the major European music centres and repeated invitations to North America. His success with audiences was outstanding, and numerous recordings amplified his fame. He was also highly esteemed as a conductor – from 1918 he directed the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra, and he also served as president of the Philharmonic Society. Because he performed in an official capacity during the Nazi regime both in his native Hungary (which, under Miklós Horthy, followed a political course alongside Hitler's Germany and Italy) and in Austria (which had been part of the German Reich since 1938), he was accused after the Second World War of being too close to the state and government. Dohnányi, who like many other artists also saw himself as “apolitical”, was declared “persona non grata” in Hungary after the liberation of 1945 and relocated first to Argentina, then later to the USA, where he continued to perform and teach. As a central protagonist of his country, who in his capacities as pianist, conductor, composer, pedagogue and organiser was tirelessly committed to Hungarian music, his status is undisputed.

Dohnányi composed orchestral works (including several symphonies and piano and violin concertos) as well as choral, piano and chamber music. The **Serenade for String Trio in C major, Op. 10**, dates from 1902, following a piano concerto, a symphony and a string quartet. A self-assured and technically well-versed composer, Dohnányi had various stylistic options open to him. The serenade takes a strange position between a late romantic expressive aesthetic and a noticeably more distanced, “modernist”, approach to music-making. Although all three instruments come to the fore with tonal emphasis and expressive intensity, nineteenth century traditions are not simply carried over without reflection. The genre of the string trio, which did not play a particularly important role during the romantic era, certainly allowed for such a practice – Max Reger opted for a similar method in his compositions written at the same time.

An opulent work in five movements, Dohnányi's serenade seems on the one hand to have been inspired by the great string trios of Mozart and Beethoven, but on the other hand, Dohnányi finds an individual tone right from the start. On the surface, the music seems decidedly folkloristic, almost reminiscent of minstrels, but its deeper structural levels reveal great artistry and considerable complexity. According to the three players, this piece can be seen as a “showpiece for string trio” – referring to both the virtuoso nature of the agitated movements and the vocal quality of the two lyrical movements. In any case, contrasts are sharply contoured and fashioned to great effect.

As an interpreter, Ernst von Dohnányi was also very committed to **Zoltán Kodály**, five years his junior. A certain “elective affinity” may have played a role here, due to a shared interest in the traditions of classical and romantic art music as well as Hungarian folklore. The concise **Intermezzo for String Trio**, a youthful work written in 1905, has a duration of only a few minutes and is an accessible piece of music, relaxed and friendly in character: according to the Trio Lirico a “little jewel” in their repertoire. Several shorter episodes are organically interconnected, without a hint of complexity or heaviness, but committed solely to the joy of making music together and to achieving a balanced sound.

Péter Eötvös' String Trio of 2020, on the other hand, emerges as an entirely different work in both conception and expression. Inspired by the death of a musician close to the composer – the French violist Christophe Desjardins of the Paris *Ensemble InterContemporain*, who died in February 2020 following a battle with cancer – this string trio is a commemorative work of particular urgency. Desjardins' death was a great loss to Eötvös, who had developed a longstanding, close association with this ensemble specialising in contemporary music – he now wanted to process this experience musically. Alongside this distinctive autobiographical dimension, however, the purely musical interest in the interaction of the three differently timbred string instruments is also relevant. In view of their technical, tonal and expressive possibilities, a broad spectrum opens up, whether through the use of long *glissandi* (a continuous gliding sound from one note to the next), or harmonics (“spherical” overtones produced by a special fingering technique), *pizzicati* beyond the bridge, striking *tremoli*, the use of all available pitch registers, the use of extreme dynamic ranges and more. Everything serves to intensify musical expression, a central category in Eötvös' creative thinking. However, fluid transitions, which were characteristic of Ysaÿe's “Le Chimay”, cannot be found here: the music seems to be divided into individual fragments which nevertheless possess an inner coherence.

Péter Eötvös conceived this piece for three completely equal parts – each instrument (and therefore each player) can contribute his or her individual qualities. A clearly defined structure in the form of series, or units, of ten tones provides the framework and support, without pushing the essential moment of expression into the background. Precision in the execution apart, the most important element in interpreting this complex music is consistently conveying its expressive content. Franziska Pietsch, Sophia Reuter and Hila Karni were obviously on the right track, for Péter Eötvös himself – whom they consulted in the process – acknowledged: “With the Trio Lirico we immediately found the common musical language, the great sensitivity in tone, paired with rhythmic and dynamic precision. This recording is authentic and can serve as an example to other performances.”

Detlef Giese

Translation: *Viola Scheffel*



FRANZISKA PIETSCH violin

“[...] this soloist has something to say” is the verdict of Treffpunkt Klassik on SWR 2, because Franziska Pietsch’s career was musically and personally quite moving.

Born into a family of musicians in East Berlin, Franziska Pietsch was discovered and encouraged early on. She studied with the famous teacher Werner Scholz, made her debut as a soloist at the Komische Oper in Berlin at the age of eleven and a year later won the first prize of the Bach Competition for children and adolescents in Leipzig. But after her father remained in West Germany following a concert tour, two years of repression followed, with no violin lessons and no concerts.

After her fresh start in the ‘West’ under the mentorship of Ulf Hoelscher, she won the Maria Canals competition in 1989 and afterwards studied at the Juilliard School under Dorothy DeLay. She also received significant inspiration from masterclasses with Wanda Wiłkomirska, Herman Krebbers, and Ruggiero Ricci.

Back in Germany, she took over the position of first concertmaster in the Wuppertal Symphony Orchestra for a few years and made guest appearances in the same position at the Deutsche Oper am Rhein, the Frankfurt Opera, the Solistes Européens and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Luxembourg (deuxième soliste), among others.

From 2000 until 2014 she led the Trio Testore with which she recorded all piano trios by Brahms and founded the ‘Mai Klassik’ festival. In 2014 she founded the Trio Lirico. To this day, playing chamber music is just as important to her as working as a soloist with large orchestras. Among her recent partners here were, among others, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, as well as the Budapest Philharmonic, and conductors such as Antoni Wit, Horst Stein, Arpad Joó, Moshe Atzmon, Julia Jones, Toshiyuki Kamioka, and Christian Măcelaru. Concert tours have taken her to numerous European countries, the USA and South America. In addition, Franziska Pietsch is a welcome guest at the Elbphilharmonie, the Laeiszhalle Hamburg or the Konzerthaus Berlin, as well as at chamber music festivals such as the Schleswig-Holstein or Aspen Music Festival. Inspired by her project ‘musikMachtpoesie,’ she has also founded her own festival, ‘WinterKlassik’.

Her CD recordings have been awarded prizes, including the International Classical Music Award and the Quarterly Prize of the German Record Critics’ Award.

She plays a violin made by Carlo Antonio Testore (Milan 1751).



SOPHIA REUTER viola

was born in Dresden and comes from a well-known family of musicians. She received her first violin lessons at the age of five from Klaus Hertel at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater 'Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy' in Leipzig. Afterwards she was taught by Peter Tietze in Berlin.

At the invitation of Yehudi Menuhin, she studied from 1989 violin with Yehudi Menuhin and Alberto Lysy, and viola with Johannes Eskaer at the International Menuhin Music Academy (IMMA). Later she taught as a lecturer at the IMMA in Gstaad / Switzerland, and recorded several CDs as a soloist alongside Yehudi Menuhin. In addition to concert tours as a soloist in the music centers of Europe and America, also several chamber music recordings followed.

Sophia Reuter finished her viola studies with Alfred Lipka at the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler in Berlin. From 2006 to 2013 she was engaged principal viola with the Duisburg Philharmonic Orchestra (Deutsche Oper am Rhein). She also played regularly as guest principal viola with orchestras like the Gran Teatre del Liceu (Barcelona), the Gewandhaus Orchestra Leipzig, as well as with other leading symphony orchestras in Germany and abroad. Sophia Reuter has been a member of the viola section of the Staatskapelle Berlin since 2018 and, since 2021 plays as sub-principal.

She is particularly interested in chamber music and plays with the virtuoso ensemble Tharice Virtuosi, the Linden Strings Berlin and the string section leaders' sextet of the Staatskapelle Berlin. She has been a member of the Trio Lirico since its foundation in 2014.

Sophia Reuter plays a viola made by Wilhelm Brückner (Erfurt 1976).



HILA KARNI cello

Born in Tel Aviv, she took her first cello lessons at the age of nine and started performing four years later in Europe, Canada and the United States with her first piano trio. She studied with Zvi Harel, Uzi Wiesel, David Geringas and Bernard Greenhouse, who described her as “one of the most musically sensitive, technically exciting cellists of the younger generation”. She received chamber music coaching from Haim Taub, Ilan Gronich and the Alban Berg Quartet.

In 2006, together with Daniel Bard and Ohad Ben-Ari, she founded the successful Trio Mondrian, who won first prize, the ‘Young Award’, as well as a special prize for their interpretation of a Brahms trio at the International Chamber Music Competition in Trieste in 2007. They also won the audience prize at the Bologna Festival 2008 and received a Borletti-Buitoni Fellowship (London). The composer Marcello Abbado dedicated a work to the ensemble, entitled *Trio Mondrian*. Hila Karni has been a member of the Trio Lirico since 2021.

Numerous appearances at festivals, including the Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival, the Stresa Festival, the Kfar Blum and the Ravinia Festival, as well as concerts at major venues including Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Athens Megaron, Festspielhaus Baden-Baden, Vienna Konzerthaus, Cologne Philharmonie, Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, Wigmore Hall and Carnegie Hall bear witness to Karni’s international reputation. Her musical partners include Guy Braunstein, Maxim Vengerov, Nigel Kennedy and the Scharoun Ensemble. She also regularly performs together with the Israeli singer Achinoam Nini (Noa).

From 2013 to 2015 Hila Karni taught chamber music at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg. In 2015, she founded the successful chamber music series ‘Prelude Concerts’ in Berlin, providing the opportunity not only for her daughters Lir (violin) and Dorel (flute) but also many other young talents to perform alongside professional musicians.

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audite

e-mail: info@audite.de

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