

TRIOMPHE 1

Magnifique

Franz Schubert | Notturmo in E-flat major D.897

Pēteris Vasks | Episodi e canto perpetuo

Linda Dallimore (NZ) | Self Portrait (new work)

Camille Saint-Saëns | Piano Trio No. 2 in E minor



FRANZ SCHUBERT (AUST: 1797-1828)

Notturmo in E-flat D.897 (1827)

Duration 10' 30"

Schubert was in his last year of life when he wrote this absolutely serene little nocturne. It's where his most sublime compositions come from, his piano trios, the B-flat piano sonata and the string quintet, and this shares the same sound-world in the slow movements - a simple heart-stopping melody, punctuated by pizzicato, meandering through the keys and essaying a brief burst of energy before gently returning to home. He knew he was dying. He possibly meant it as a draft slow movement for his Piano Trio No. 1.

Schubert never heard it performed, as with almost all of his works, and it brings to mind Brendel's quote: *"Schubert is a wanderer. He likes to move at the edge of the precipice, and does so with the assurance of a sleepwalker"* *

PĒTERIS VASKS (LATV: b. 1946)

Episodi e canto perpetuo (1985)

Hommage à O. Messiaen

I. Crescendo - II. Misterioso - III. Unisono - IV. Burlesca - V. Monologhi - VI. Burlesca II - VII. Canto perpetuo

Duration 30'

"It was like a lightning flash to me – that music can be like this!"

That's what Vasks said of Oliver Messiaen when he first heard the Quartet for the End of Time. He was still a student, studying double bass at the Vilnius Conservatory, playing in orchestras right around Lithuania and Latvia, when his piano teacher brought a piano arrangement to play together and that was it: henceforth he began to compose. Think translucent washes of sound: think melodies inspired by his forbidden Baptist upbringing; think always a battle between light and dark. All completely unknown to the west until fellow Latvian Gidon Kremer began to tour Vasks' violin concertos after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

But that was later. Vasks was still teaching when he wrote this, for colleagues at the Salacgrīva Conservatory, touring it through every corner of Soviet Russia in an ancient little Zaporozhets car. They only learnt later that it was during their rehearsals that a catastrophe had happened - Chernobyl. The audiences were exhausted. But they were adoring, jumping to their feet in ovation: the cellist recounts, *"This was a true time of triumph for Pēteris."*

To paraphrase Vasks' own description of this piece:

It is like the difficult road through evil, delusion and suffering to a song of love. The Crescendo introduces us to the atmosphere of the composition. The second episode, Misterioso, is a view from above, at the earth sleeping at night. The third, Unisono, is a masqued dance with the backdrop of a fantastic landscape before an ironic, almost grotesque Burlesque. The fifth, Monologhi, is an attempt at understanding, to grasp what is happening before another Burlesque: the black culmination of the opus. Road to nowhere. And then the violin and cello lead us out, from the Canto perpetuo to the Apogeo e coda, the emotionally saturated peak.

Pēteris Vasks: *"Man thinks himself to be so powerful. But we depend on guardian angels, and in our unfathomable self-centeredness, we forget that our guardian angels get tired too. They keep the world in balance, while they still have some strength left. They protect us from falling off into the void."**

LINDA DALLIMORE (NZ b. 1981)

Self Portrait (2024)

Linda Dallimore is an award winning composer, flutist and teacher hailing from New Zealand. She loves writing music for orchestras and chamber ensembles. Her music explores textures, colours and often draws inspiration from personal experiences, environmental, social and political topics. Currently based in Los Angeles, Linda is completing a Doctor of Musical Arts in Composition at the University of Southern California. Linda serves on the music theory faculty at the Colburn school and is delighted to serve as guest faculty for the Los Angeles Philharmonic's prestigious Composer Fellowship Program during the 2024 – 2025 season.

Self Portrait is inspired by the composer's first months in LA, after relocating with her young family to complete her doctorate. The trials and tribulations of the transition period are variegated with the joy of following dreams, finding a groove and musical voice again.

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS (FR: 1835-1921)

Piano Trio No. 2 in E minor Op. 92

I. Allegro ma non troppo - II. Allegretto - III. Andante con moto - IV. Grazioso, poco allegro - V. Allegro

Duration 33'

"I am working quietly away at a trio which I hope will drive to despair all those unlucky enough to hear it. I shall need the whole summer to perpetrate this atrocity; one must have a little fun somehow."

Saint-Saëns was 56 and at the height of his powers when he wrote this, the second of his three piano trios. Another prodigy pianist, like Chopin: he had begun playing at the age of 2½, and by the time he was 10 he was giving public concerts of the complete Beethoven sonatas – from memory! He started at the Paris conservatoire when he was 13 and has one of the longest careers in the music business, with a chamber music output that spans 70 years, right up until the year of his death. It was a difficult life – an only child, he was brought up by his mother and grandmother after his father died. His own two infant sons died tragically within weeks of each other, his marriage broke up, and after his mother died he spent much of the rest of his life travelling, accompanied only by his dog.

He began this trio in the spring of 1892 at his favourite holiday spot, Pointe Pescarde in Algeria, where he ended up settling in his old age. It had been almost 30 years since he had written his first trio and he poured himself into it, writing to a friend:

“I will bring back a ‘Trio’ with piano, which has been lying around in my head for who knows how long and of which I need to rid myself. And this is no small affair! I don’t claim that it will please these gentlemen, but it must please me, and I have my requirements which are not slight.”

The result was a five-movement masterpiece, and it certainly did please the gentlemen critics – it’s been called the greatest French piano trio of the 19th century. *

* Programme notes by Charlotte Wilson