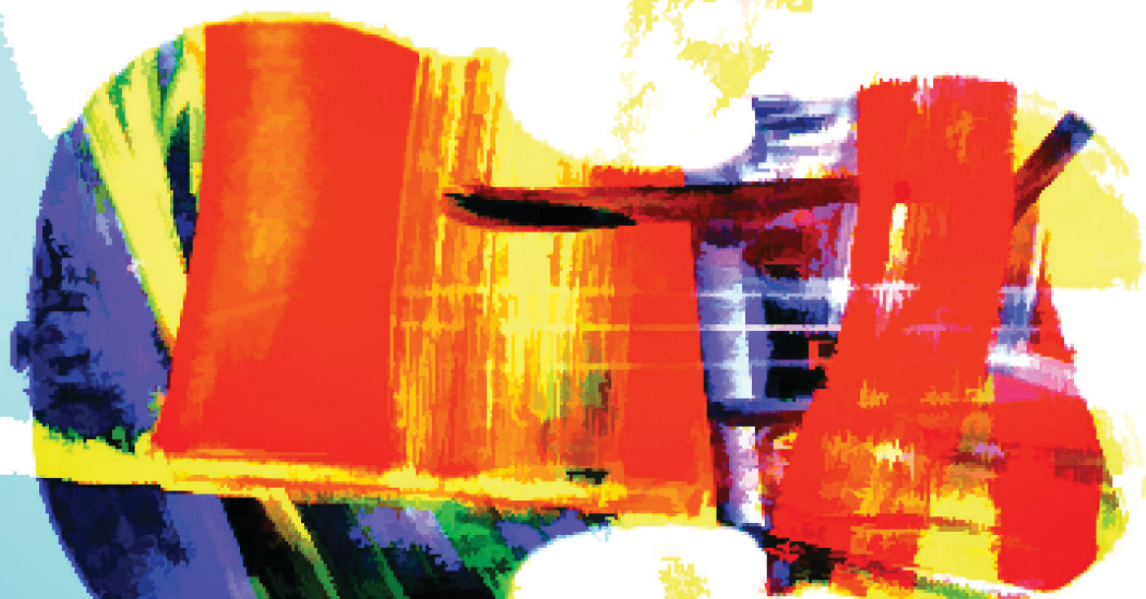


Arno Babadjanian
Piano Trio

Peteris Vasks
Episodi e Canto Perpetuo

P o t c h T r i o



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POTCH TRIO

BABADJANIAN · VASKS

Arno Babadjanian: Piano Trio

Largo – Allegro espressivo • Andante • Allegro vivace

Peteris Vasks: Episodi e Canto Perpetuo

Episodio I – Crescendo • Episodio II – Misterioso • Episodio III – Unisoni

Episodio IV – Burleska I • Episodio V – Monologhi • Episodio VI – Burleska II

Satz VII – Canto perpetuo • Satz VIII – Apogeo e coda

Total time: 53:08

Potch Trio:

Piet Koornhof, violin

Human Coetzee, cello

François du Toit, piano

DE 3420



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POTCH TRIO

BABADJANIAN • VASKS

Arno Babadjanian (1921-1983): Piano Trio (1953)

1. Largo – Allegro espressivo (10:41)
2. Andante (7:39)
3. Allegro vivace (7:18)

Peteris Vasks (b. 1946): Episodi e Canto Perpetuo (1985)

4. Episodio I – Crescendo (2:30)
5. Episodio II – Misterioso (4:11)
6. Episodio III – Unisoni (1:36)
7. Episodio IV – Burleska I (3:27)
8. Episodio V – Monologhi (3:14)
9. Episodio VI – Burleska II (3:36)
10. Satz VII – Canto perpetuo (5:34)
11. Satz VIII – Apogeo e coda (3:19)

Total time: 53:08

Potch Trio:

Piet Koornhof, violin
Human Coetzee, cello
François du Toit, piano

The two works on this CD are representative of the significant amount of twentieth-century chamber music that is highly accessible. It is surprising to many people because of the unfortunate perception that radical experimentation and innovation, not to say revolution, are the hallmarks of twentieth-century art music, if it is to be worthy of any serious consideration.

In fact, the vast majority of chamber music composed in the twentieth century is written in a familiar tonal language and is quite romantic in character, that is to say, has expression of feelings as a primary aim. Peteris Vasks has been quoted as saying that music is an emotional art: "if there is no emotion, there is no art." Similarly, much of the music of Arno Babadjanian, stemming from the post-World War II era, is uninhibitedly romantic, even nostalgic. It is said that the beautifully intimate and poetic second movement of his *Piano Trio* was meant to express his profound gratitude for having recovered from terminal illness. Whether or not that is true, the fact is that the music speaks of strong feeling; yearning to be expressed immediately and directly.

It seems that more and more composers are preoccupied less with experimentation, novelty and innovation than with expressing their aesthetic impulses and their emotions,

including their reactions to the wonders and the tragedies of the world they live in. It has become more a search for authentic expression than for novel means of construction. Many fine composers, largely ignored by academia, have been content to use a familiar language in a modern way, much to the relief of listeners world-wide, who are discovering that their century is filled with music that is both strikingly relevant and accessible, judging from the popularity of composers like Pärt, Gorecki, Tavener, and Kancheli.

The two works on this CD are perfect examples. Both are written in a familiar language, yet are recognizably of the modern age, and both are expressions of the journey through pain and suffering to something positive – whether we call it hope, faith, resolution, acceptance, or peace. Both recognize suffering as well as bliss. Both emphasize beauty. **Arno Babadjanian** was born in 1921 in Yerevan, Armenia, and died in 1983. Initially, he studied in his native country (under Talyan), and later went to Moscow to study with Igumanov and Lytinski. Having studied piano at the Moscow Conservatory, he gained wide recognition after graduation as a pianist of outstanding ability. He started his formal studies as a composer at the House of Armenian Culture back in his native Yerevan, where he was appointed as a teacher.

His music abounds in folk-like themes employed with dramatic pathos and romantic excitement. In the West, he is probably best known for his *Piano Trio* (1953), his *Sonata for Violin and Piano* (considered by many to be among his finest works), his *Armenian Rhapsody* for two pianos composed in collaboration with his good friend Alexander Arutunian, and his *Cello Concerto*, which was recorded by Rostropovich. His oeuvre also includes works for solo piano, for piano and orchestra, a violin concerto and three string quartets. His songs are quite popular in his native country.

Peteris Vasks, born in 1946 in Aizpute, Latvia, is arguably today the most noted living Latvian composer. Early studies in violin and piano were followed by serious study of the double bass as his instrument of choice, which he went on to play professionally in the Latvian National Opera, the Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra and the Lithuanian Philharmonic. He studied at the conservatories of Vilnius in Lithuania, and Riga in Latvia. He presently teaches at the Emils Darzins School of Music and freelances as a composer. He first encountered Polish music as a student in Vilnius, and developed an affinity with the emotional character of the music of Lutoslawski, Penderecki and Gorecki. Other important influences include Kancheli, Sibel-

ius, Mahler, George Crumb, and Messiaen, to whom *Episodi e Canto perpetuo* is dedicated.

The tribulations of his native land, the voice of nature, and the optimism of the human spirit are themes central to his work. He has called himself a “saddened optimist”, saying that he wants his music to be heard wherever people are distressed. Being acutely sensitive to suffering, his works are intended to have a consoling function, both for his audience and for himself. Among his best-known works are his stirringly beautiful *Cello Concerto*, composed for and recorded by David Geringas; his *Musica Dolorosa*, a symphony for strings entitled *Voices*; a concerto for choir; *Messages* for string orchestra, two pianos and percussion; and *Book for Solo Cello*, championed by Geringas.

Of *Episodi e Canto Perpetuo* (1985), Vasks has written: “It describes a difficult journey through the realms of distress, disappointment, and the suffering of love, which, in particular, forms the central point of the canto.” The score of the work includes this description by the composer of the eight movements: *Episodio I (Crescendo): the even dynamic build-up slowly leads to an atmosphere of tension.*

Episodio II (Misterioso): a glance at the sleeping earth on a quiet night.

Episodio III (Unisoni): a masked dance before the background of a fantastic landscape.

Episodio IV (Burlesca I): based on a powerful and aggressive theme; the contrasting section is one of bitter irony.

Episodio V (Monologhi): an attempt to recognize and understand all of these happenings.

Episodio VI (Burlesca II): the tableaux of Episodi IV return with heightened intensity and aggression, the gloomy climax of the work.

Satz (Movement) VII (Canto Perpetuo): a broad arched violin melody stands alone while the climax palely fades. It is taken up by the cello and then, in octaves, by both string instruments.

Satz (Movement) VIII (Apogeo e coda): the emotional climax of the work. The violin and cello in an exposed tessitura, accompanied by spacious piano chords. This intensity lessens consistently, the sound becomes ever softer, clearer, higher.

Piet Koornhof, violin

Violinist Piet Koornhof has performed extensively as recitalist and chamber musician, and as soloist with orchestras, in Southern Africa, Europe, North America, Russia, Singapore and New Zealand. His chamber music CD recordings as founder and violinist of The South African Chamber Music Society for Koch Discover International have garnered international acclaim.

In addition to the standard repertoire, Piet has a special interest in accessible twentieth and twenty-first century chamber music. He has been responsible for the first South African performances of works by, among others, Schnittke, Pärt, Vasks, Sviridov, Kar-aev, Bolcom, Babadjanian, Chebodarian, Tansman, Gliere, Medtner, Taneyev, Skoryk, Toldra, Koechlin, Martinu, Ben-Haim, Schulhoff, Piazzolla, Schoenfield, Hofmeyr, Watt and Klatzow.

Piet's most recent CD-recordings, both for Delos, are the complete J.S. Bach trio-sonatas for flute, violin and piano (DE 3391) with Raffaele Trevisani and Paola Girardi, and the Hendrik Hofmeyr double concerto for flute, violin and string orchestra (DE 3399) with Trevisani and the Moscow Chamber Orchestra led by Constantine Orbelian.

Piet was born in South Africa in 1961. He made his concert debut at the age of nine while he was a pupil of Alan Solomon. He was awarded scholarships by amongst others The South African Music Rights Organisation, Anglo American Corporation, The Aspen Music School and The Juilliard School where he studied with Dorothy DeLay. He also took part in master classes by Itzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zukerman and Sergiu Luca.

Piet has been teaching violin, chamber music and methodology of violin teaching at North West University in Potchefstroom since 1986. He holds a doctorate in music performance from the same institution where he is associate professor at the School of Music.

Human Coetzee, cello

Human Coetzee began playing the cello at the age of six. His first teacher was Betty Pack, and later Marian Lewin. His other teachers included Heilke Bultmann in Marburg, Germany, and Dalena Roux in Stellenbosch, South Africa. Leaving Potchefstroom after completing his schooling, he entered the Robert Schumann Institute in Dusseldorf in 1978, where he continued his studies under the tutelage of Angelica May, a pupil of Pablo Casals. He participated in master classes by Pierre Fournier, Johannes Goritzky, and Boris Pergamenshikov. On his return to South Africa in 1981, he enrolled at Stellenbosch University, where he graduated in 1983 with an Honours B.Mus degree. He then completed his M.Mus. and D.Mus. studies at North West University in Potchefstroom.

Human has appeared as soloist with a number of orchestras. Apart from his many performances as soloist, he regularly participates in various chamber music ensembles. During

his career Human has won several awards, including a special prize in 1988 at the Unisa International String Competition in Pretoria. Since 1989, Human has been teaching at the School of Music of North West University in Potchefstroom.

François du Toit, piano

François du Toit is acknowledged as one of South Africa's finest pianists, chamber musicians and music educators. Receiving his early musical training from Merryl Preston, he went on to complete an Honours degree at the University of Cape Town, studying under the distinguished pianist and teacher Laura Seale. Also holding diplomas up to Fellowship level from the Trinity College of Music, London, he also studied at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Hannover, Germany, under the renowned pedagogue Berndt Goetzke.

He distinguished himself in several important international piano competitions, taking top prizes in the 1991 Hannover Music Competition, the 1992 Rotterdam and 1993 Marsala Internationals, and the 1994 International Maria Callas Competition in Athens. He has appeared as an acclaimed concerto soloist with all of the orchestras in South Africa since the age of fifteen, and – while still a student in 1988 – was selected with Steven De Groote to perform with the

Cape Town Symphony Orchestra on its historic tour of the Republic of China.

He also appears with Franklin Larey as the Ixopo Piano Duo. He is a sought-after partner of visiting international artists in recital for chamber music societies throughout South Africa, and a highly respected adjudicator at the various national music competitions. At present, François is Associate Professor of Piano at the University of Cape Town where he is also Head of Chamber Music Studies.

The Potch Trio

The Potch Trio has been in residence at North West University in Potchefstroom, South Africa, since 1986. They have performed a wide range of repertoire from the

eighteenth to the twentieth century, and have given the South African premieres of works by Pärt, Schoenfield, Babadjanian, Sviridov, Kupkovic, Vasks and Piazzolla, amongst others. Being much in demand all over South Africa, the trio regularly performs in the major centers, ranging from the Baxter Concert Hall in Cape Town to the Aardklop Arts Festival in Potchefstroom and the annual Chamber Music Fest in Bloemfontein. In 1999 they appeared at the seventh Palaces of St. Petersburg International Chamber Music Festival in Russia, as well as at the Academy of Arts in Moscow. All three members of the Potch Trio are well-known soloists in their own right, maintaining active performing careers, as well as being educators.

– Piet Koornhof

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