



# George **ENESCU**

## Piano Quartet No. 1 Piano Trio

**Stefan Tarara, Violin • Molly Carr, Viola**  
**Eun-Sun Hong, Cello • Josu De Solaun, Piano**

## George Enescu (1881–1955)

### Piano Trio in A minor • Piano Quartet No. 1 in D major, Op. 16

George Enescu was born in Liveni (a town renamed after the composer, following his death), Romania on 19 August 1881 and received initial violin lessons from a gypsy violinist. On the advice of Eduard Caudella, a pupil of Vieuxtemps and then the most prominent Romanian composer, he was sent to the Vienna Conservatoire in 1888, studying violin with Joseph Hellmesberger the younger and taking lessons in counterpoint then later composition with Robert Fuchs. In 1893 he went to Paris for composition lessons from Massenet then Fauré at the Conservatoire, as well as studying counterpoint and fugue with André Gédalge. In 1897 a programme of his music was given in Paris and by 1899, when he won the Conservatoire's First Prize for violin playing, he was already becoming established as a composer. In 1904 he formed the Enescu Quartet, at the same time playing with such eminent contemporaries as Pablo Casals, Jacques Thibaud, Alfred Cortot and Fritz Kreisler. The esteemed Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe in due course dedicated the third of his unaccompanied violin sonatas, *Violin Sonata in D minor, Op. 27, No. 3 'Sonate-Ballade'* to Enescu.

In Romania, Enescu did a great deal to encourage younger musicians – primarily through the conservatoires at Bucharest and Iași. He spent the First World War in Romania, giving many concerts for the International Red Cross, as well as establishing the George Enescu Symphony Orchestra in 1917 in Iași after Bucharest had been occupied by the Central Powers. After the war he resumed his international career, while tending to reserve the summer months for composition, but the Second World War saw him confined once more to Romania. After the war he returned to Paris and undertook an intensive round of concerts and masterclasses, despite illnesses that affected his spinal column and later his hearing. The swift establishment of the Communist regime at home and the removal of the royal family, to which Enescu had always been loyal, made any intended return to Romania increasingly unlikely and his final years were spent in New York then Paris, where any activities were blighted by his increasing poverty and ill-health made worse as the result of a stroke. He died in Paris on 4 May 1955.

Chamber music has a crucial place within Enescu's output – not least his two string quartets (Naxos 8.554721), two cello sonatas [8.570582], two piano quartets and the *Piano Quintet* (8.557159), along with three sonatas, a suite, and various smaller pieces for violin and piano (8.572691 and 8.572692). The two pieces featured here are separated by just seven years, yet they represent very different phases of his composing – the *First Piano Quartet* marking the climax of his early maturity, the *Piano Trio in A minor* coming out of an uncertain period of transition.

Although he could not have intended it so, the *Piano Quartet No. 1* was the final work that Enescu completed for five years and thus marks the culmination of a productive decade that began with the *Second Violin Sonata* (1899) and *Octet* for strings (1900) – continuing with the *Romanian Rhapsodies* (1901), the *First Orchestral Suite* and *Second Piano Suite* (both 1902), the *First Symphony* (1905) and the *Dixtuor* for winds (1906). The present work, which seems to have been written at short notice, was completed on 10 December 1909 then premiered in Paris eight days later. Dedicated to Mme Ephrussi (Charlotte Béatrice de Rothschild [1864–1934] was born into the banking dynasty and later a committed patron of the arts), this work unfolds on a large scale and brings to a head its composer's involvement with the procedures of cyclical transformation he had encountered in the chamber music of Franck and Chausson. Each movement is centred upon a theme – those in the latter two movements audibly derived from the first – which evolves over its course before finding its most developed form at the close.

The opening *Allegro moderato* begins with a sombre theme, shared between the four instruments, that takes on a greater formal intricacy and expressive richness as it builds to a trenchant climax then heads into a wistful codetta. A lengthy development ensues with various motivic aspects of the theme explored extensively as the music gains emotional fervour. A spacious version of the codetta emerges in place of a conventional reprise, making for a cumulative transition into the coda with the theme being intensively discussed on the way to a forceful conclusion.

The central *Andante mesto* begins with a noble cello threnody against an atmospheric backdrop on other strings and with a pulsating motion on piano, the music's pronounced modal inflection underlining its debt to French antecedents. It gradually opens out towards a plangent climax in which the primary aspects of this theme are developed and intensified, before retreating into a rapt while mysterious calm that brings some of the most limpid writing. This eddying motion persists until the close, the texture thinning out to leave piano and strings musing uncertainly.

The final *Vivace*, rather shorter though no less eventful than the previous movements, commences with a rhythmically incisive theme which enables the strings to trade forthright responses over the piano's sauntering gait. The impetus slackens going into an episode of greater suavity, but the main theme soon reasserts itself in an intensive passage that makes way for a reprise of the secondary music, even more felicitously scored. Both these ideas are duly alternated in a coda that culminates with a restatement of the main theme in a powerfully rhetorical close.

Although the work was well received at its premiere, there were only two further hearings in Enescu's lifetime – on 18 May 1910, then during 1933 – with the composer at the piano on each occasion. Plans to revise the score never came to fruition, and it remained unpublished until 1965. That same year also brought the relocation of his *Piano Trio in A minor*, a piece of which nothing had previously been known and which has only latterly become available in an edition confirming its status as a transitional work from a time of creative uncertainty.

Enescu may have begun this piece as early as 1911, before spending a week at a sanatorium near Bucharest in 1916 and finishing it on 22 March. Even then he made no mention of its completion nor arranged a performance, which only took place in 1965 when the manuscript had been edited by the pianist and composer Hilda Jerea (1916–1980). The piece then remained in limbo until the composer and Enescu authority Pascal Bentoiu (1927–2016) made his own edition, using the knowledge gained from his realisation of the *Fourth* and *Fifth* symphonies to elaborate the condensed score so it could take its place in a fascinating sequence of pieces which, emerging between the *Second* and *Third* symphonies, include the *Second Orchestral Suite* (1915), the *Pièces Impromptues* for piano and unfinished cantata *Strigoii* (both 1916).

The work falls into three compact though intricately arrayed movements. Thus, the opening *Allegro moderato* begins with a highly expressive theme distributed across the instruments, succeeded by one of greater inwardness and repose. This heads seamlessly into a transformation of the initial theme, now sounding more speculative and equivocal, then a less transformed version of its successor before the brief and poetic coda. The central *Allegretto* is a set of variations (the last such instance in Enescu's output, even though 'variation' as a formal procedure was to become ever more fundamental to his thinking in the chamber and orchestral works from the following decades) on a theme whose unruffled demeanour gives little indication of what is to follow. The first variation makes animated play with its main motifs, then the second is graceful and leisurely with its waltz-like gait. The third variation is sparely while evocatively scored, quietly tapering away into the briefest yet most touching of codas. The final *Vivace amabile* initially intensifies this mood with a melody of dark-hued eloquence which proves to be only the introduction to a more purposeful theme, itself contrasted with one of rather greater poise. Aspects of both themes develop extensively yet understatedly on the way to a reappearance of the introductory theme, now in expressively heightened terms, with which the piece ends.

**Richard Whitehouse**

### **Stefan Tarara**

Violinist Stefan Tarara was born into a musical family in Heidelberg, Germany and made his stage debut at the age of four. He performs regularly as a soloist, chamber musician and concertmaster at prestigious concert venues around the world. He is currently the first concertmaster of the CHAARTS Chamber Orchestra in Switzerland and holds positions in numerous other chamber music groups. He is assistant to Professor Zakhar Bron and since 2017 has taught his own class at the Bern Music School and Conservatory, Switzerland. Tarara has won First Prize at 27 national and international competitions, among them the 'George Enescu' Competition 2014, 'H. Wieniawski and K. Lipiński' Competition 2005 and the 'Henry Marteau' Competition 2005 where he also received a special prize for the best interpretation of a virtuoso work. He has released three solo recordings with the German label Ars Produktion. He plays an 'ex-Kreisler' Antonio Stradivari violin (1721).

### **Molly Carr**

Violist Molly Carr enjoys a diverse musical career as recitalist, chamber musician, educator and artistic director. Described as 'one of the most interesting interpreters of the viola today' (*Codalarío Spain*), she has been the recipient of awards from international competitions and organisations including the Primrose International Viola Competition, Chamber Music America, the Pro Musicis Foundation and the Davidson Institute. In 2018 she was honoured by the United Nations for her work with refugees around the globe through the Novel Voices Refugee Aid Project. Her performances have taken her across North America, Europe, the Middle East and Asia and been featured in *The New York Times*, *Forbes* and *The Wall Street Journal*, as well as on PBS, CNN, NPR and BBC World News. She is the founding director of the award-winning organisation Project: Music Heals Us, a non-profit that brings free chamber music performances and interactive programming to marginalised populations with limited access to the arts. She serves on the faculties of Bard College Conservatory of Music, The Juilliard School's Precollege Division, and Musical Arts Madrid. [www.molly-carr.com](http://www.molly-carr.com)

### **Eun-Sun Hong**

Cellist Eun-Sun Hong won First Prize at the George Enescu International Competition 2014 and has received top awards at the Penderecki, Cassado and Young Tchaikovsky competitions. She was a recitalist in the El Primer Palau series in Spain and received the Ingrid zu Solms Kulturpreis in Germany. As a soloist she has performed with international orchestras including the Orchestra Filarmonica della Fenice, George Enescu Philharmonic, and Russian and Tokyo philharmonic orchestras. She has appeared in venues including the Konzerthaus Berlin, Musikverein Wien, Wigmore Hall, Romanian Athenaeum and Théâtre des Champs-Élysées; and at festivals such as the Ravello, Moritzburg, Kronberg, Casals and the Open Chamber Music festival at Prussia Cove. In 2015 she performed the world premiere of Penderecki's *Ciaccona* for six cellos, with Frans Helmerson and Truls Mørk among others. Eun-Sun Hong was taught by Myung-Wha Chung in Seoul and by Lluís Claret in Barcelona and completed her studies in Cologne and Berlin with Frans Helmerson. She plays a cello by Carlo Giuseppe Testore (1710).

### **Josu De Solaun**

Spanish-American pianist Josu De Solaun is a prolific instrumentalist and composer who has performed in many of the world's most celebrated concert halls as a concerto soloist, chamber musician, solo recitalist and solo improviser and composer. He is also a published poet. The First Prize winner at the XIII George Enescu International Piano Competition in Bucharest (previous winners include legendary pianists Radu Lupu and Elisabeth Leonskaja), Josu De Solaun also won the First Grand Prize at the XV José Iturbi International Piano Competition and the First Prize and Audience Prize at the inaugural European Union Piano Competition. He earned his doctorate at the Manhattan School of Music. [www.josudesolaun.com](http://www.josudesolaun.com)



**Stefan Tarara** Photo © Nikolaj Lund



**Molly Carr** Photo © Dario Acosta



**Eun-Sun Hong** Photo © Jino Park



**Josu De Solaun** Photo © Fernando Frade

Chamber music was a crucial element in Enescu's output and these two works, separated by seven years, represent very different phases of his compositional development. The large-scale *Piano Quartet No. 1* marks the climax of his early maturity. The *Piano Trio in A minor*, however, was unknown until 1965 and represents a more transitional stage – a compact but intricately expressive work with an animated and compelling sequence of variations at its heart.

**George  
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(1881–1955)

<b>Piano Trio in A minor (1916)</b>	<b>21:08</b>
❶ I. Allegro moderato	7:20
❷ II. Allegretto con variazioni: Allegretto moderato – Presto – Allegro piacevole – Tempo di Siciliano lento	5:41
❸ III. Andante – Vivace amabile	7:52
<b>Piano Quartet No. 1 in D major, Op. 16 (1909)</b>	<b>37:09</b>
❹ I. Allegro moderato	13:40
❺ II. Andante mesto	12:57
❻ III. Vivace	10:18

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