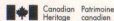


The Penderecki String Quartet's recording of the Brahms Piano Quintet with pianist Lev Natochenny (Marquis Classics ERA 187) has been acclaimed worldwide. The Quartet has also released Britten's Third String Quartet and Shostakovich's Third String Quartet (Marquis Classics ERA 173). Mr. Natochenny is also featured on *Schubert: Schwanengesang* with baritone Kevin McMillan (Marquis Classics ERA 151).

Credits

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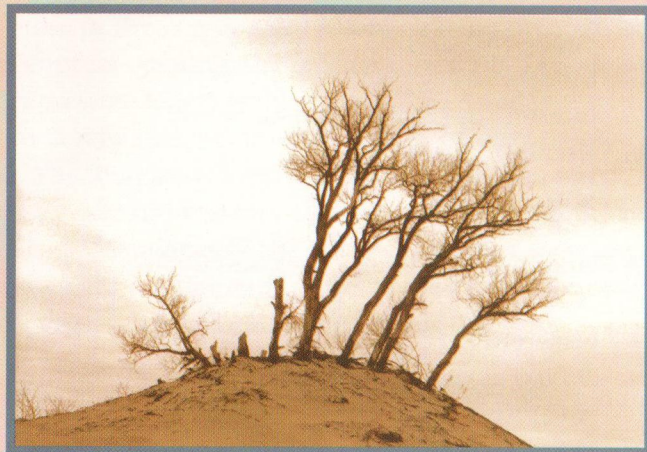
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The Penderecki
String Quartet
Lev Natochenny, piano

Shostakovich – Piano Quintet Op. 57
Schnittke – Piano Quintet



MARQUIS
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(l-r) Piotr Buczek, Paul Pulford, Jerzy Kaplanek, Dov Scheindlin.

The Penderecki String Quartet was founded in Poland in 1986 with the support of the pre-eminent Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki. The Quartet's performing schedule takes them to the great concert stages of North America, Europe and the Far East, including concerts in New York, Washington, Seattle, Montreal, Toronto and Mexico City. Their European schedule has included repeat performances in Salzburg, Merano, Heidelberg and a smashing debut in Leipzig's MDR Musiksommer festival.

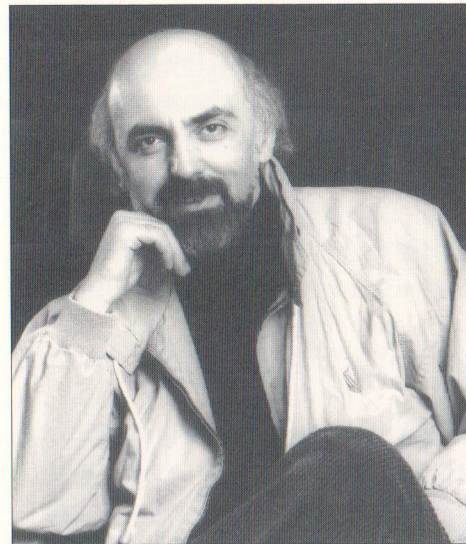
The Quartet has collaborated with eminent ensembles such as The Borodin Trio and The Fine Arts Quartet as well as with artists such as Vladimir Feltsman, James Campbell, Tsuyoshi Tsutsumi and Janina Fialkowska.

They are Quartet-in-Residence at Waterloo's Wilfrid Laurier University. Under the Quartet's direction, the string program has become one of Canada's most prestigious. The Quartet offers chamber music and studio instruction to students from all over the world.

Described as a "real genius in his creativity" by European critics and a "rare master of his instrument" by New York critics, Lev Natochenny combines innovation, intelligence, technical brilliance and attention to every detail in his approach to music.

Lev Natochenny studied at the Moscow Conservatory under the guidance of Lev Oborin, Boris Zemliansky and Elisso Virsaladze. He was awarded the Gold Medal in F. Busoni International Piano Competition, First Prize in Young Artists International Piano Competition and Gina Bachauer Award. He has performed in major halls throughout Europe and the U.S., and has appeared with the Russian National Orchestra as both pianist and conductor. Lev Natochenny has developed a particular affinity for chamber music with its special refinement and delicate intimacy.

Mr. Natochenny is Professor of Piano at the Hochschule für Musik in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. In 1990 Lev Natochenny founded Meranofest International Music Festival and Academy for Superior Performance Studies - where music making and the training of young talent go hand in hand.



The Penderecki String Quartet

Lev Natochenny, piano

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Piano Quintet in G minor Op. 57

- 1 I. Prelude (Lento-Poco più mosso-Lento)
- 2 II. Fugue (Adagio)
- 3 III. Scherzo (Allegretto)
- 4 IV. Intermezzo (Lento-Appassionato)
- 5 V. Finale (Allegretto)

Alfred Schnittke (b. 1934)

Quintet Piano for Two Violins, Viola and Cello

- 6 Moderato
- 7 Tempo di valse
- 8 Andante
- 9 Lento
- a0 Moderato pastorale

Dimtri Shostakovich, Piano Quintet in G minor, Op. 57

Shostakovich's Piano Quintet in G minor was composed in 1940 in response to a request from the Beethoven String Quartet to write a work that they could perform with the composer. The premiere, with Shostakovich at the piano, was a great success and shortly thereafter won the Stalin Prize. Although extremely approachable as an example of pure instrumental chamber music, the Quintet is arguably also unabashed social comment, full of contrasting sentiments from the tragic and the comic to the outright sarcastic.

The stately opening of the Prelude gives way to a faster, triple-meter, Bach-like setting. A dynamically charged and texturally dense return to the opening brings the movement to a grinding halt. In the adagio Fugue that follows, the reserved, even woeful, subject unfolds in an unhurried fashion, as if conscious of a painful yet predestined goal. A brief reference to the weighty opening of the Prelude occurs at the climax. Assertive and forthright, yet humourous and sarcastic, the Scherzo's folk-dance theme is subjected to chromatic, rhythmic and dynamic

effects, turning it into a bumbling caricature of itself. The slow *Intermezzo* – an extended dialogue between a legato melody and a staccato, “walking bass” – has an air of melancholy about it, though without the sense of despair witnessed in the Fugue. The opening theme of the Finale is contrasted by a parody of the “entrance of the clowns” theme heard at Russian circuses. The confidence and hopefulness is somewhat offset by a troubling undertone and the movement’s conclusion is not without a sense of uncertainty.

Alfred Schnittke, Piano Quintet

Schnittke began his Piano Quintet in 1972, after the death of his mother, to whom the work is dedicated, and completed it in 1976. The opening movement, marked *Moderato*, is based on a melodic figure that departs from, and returns to the same note. This neighbouring-note figure is introduced in the piano and subsequently treated imitatively in the strings, each voice employing a different rhythmic pattern. The piano eventually introduces a steady, repeated high G#, enhancing the complexity of the strings, and contributing to the overall

restlessness of the movement. In the second movement, marked *Tempo di Valse*, the theme grows out of a four-note motive spelling B A C H (in German “B” refers to B-flat and “H” to B.) The genre of the waltz is itself reminiscent of an earlier time and the melodic and harmonic “distortions” suggest fading memories. The third-movement *Andante* utilizes a motive very similar to the neighbouring pattern of the first movement and, like the latter, also uses imitation, microtones, and repeated, bell-like pulse in the piano. After a subdued, fragmented, and dissonant chordal opening, the fourth-movement *Lento* features a highly expressive legato violin theme. The string texture thickens over repeated, yet intermittent, oscillating passages in the piano. The final movement, in D-flat major, is marked *Moderato pastorale*, and features a passacaglia theme in the piano with sustained harmonies in the strings, the latter based on rhythmically varied statements of the double-neighbour pattern that has figured so prominently throughout the work.

Charlees Morrison