

**Friends of Chamber Music present the Busch Trio in concert
at the Vancouver Playhouse, Tuesday, October 13, 2026, at 7:30 pm**

Omri Epstein – piano

Mathieu van Bellen – violin

Ori Epstein – cello



Chance encounters amongst musicians in the world of chamber music often develop into friendships. Far less frequently, a group of school friends who each have a range of everyday hobbies transform into a chamber group that reaches the highest level on the international stage. But this is how the Busch Trio came into existence, establishing themselves among the leading piano trios of this generation.

“This trio is the fruit of a friendship that has existed for years”, says pianist Omri Epstein who describes the essentially spontaneous process by which the trio came into being after they met at the Royal College of Music in London more than a decade ago. At the time, the three young men were aspiring soloists, but their shared passion for chamber music became their strongest bond. It was around then that violinist Mathieu van Bellen was given the honour of playing the ‘ex-Adolf Busch’ G.B. Guadagnini (Turin, 1783) – the legendary violinist from the first half of the C20 who was already a shining example for the young trio. Their choice for both string players to play on gut strings signifies a deep appreciation for the aesthetic of the early-20th century greats.

Currently, the Busch Trio regularly appears on major stages and at festivals throughout Europe and North America. They have been described by The Times (London, UK) as having “*effortless musicianship*”, by Gramophone as a “*true delight from start to finish*” and by the Süddeutsche Zeitung (Munich, Germany) as “*the leading piano trio of their generation*”. The trio have been celebrated for their concerts and recordings, receiving important accolades and awards in the Netherlands, UK, Germany, Belgium, and France.

Early in their career the Alpha Classics label showed remarkable trust in the trio, committing them to a long-term contract. They have released notable recordings of Dvořák's complete works for piano and strings on four CDs, Schubert's complete piano trios and the "Trout" quintet on two CDs as well as a CD of works by Ravel and Shostakovich. Their present and future plans include recording the complete piano trios by Beethoven to be released on five CDs over the coming years, with the first disc released in 2025.

The Busch Trio members live in Amsterdam and continue to maintain their intensive rehearsal and performance schedule.

The Busch Trio is represented exclusively by Dispeker Artists. www.dispeker.com

We are grateful to the Vancouver Recital Society for the use of their Steinway Piano.

PROGRAMME

Piano Trio in E minor, Op. 90 "Dumky"

Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904)

Lento maestoso - Allegro vivace, quasi doppio movimento

Poco adagio - Vivace non troppo

Andante - Vivace non troppo

Andante moderato - Allegretto scherzando - Allegro

Allegro

Lento maestoso – Vivace

This trio was written in 1890 and 1891, shortly before Dvorak's trip to the United States of America. It contains both the melodic freshness and rhythmic verve of native Czech folk music. His friend Brahms did the proofreading and made constructive criticisms. The fifth and last of Dvorak's works for piano trio, it is a *dumky*, a group of Slavic folksongs in which each individual *dumka* consists of an elegiac tune followed by a joyful one. For the *dumky* in this piece Dvorak adopted a steady pattern. The first slow part has the character of a love call while the second part, mostly located in the high treble, is quick and brilliant. Thus, the *dumka* was a perfect vehicle for Dvorak, who was fond of abrupt emotional changes. This work has two original features. It is a suite of six *dumky* instead of the traditional four, and the *dumky* are scored in a strict chamber music style, including a fairly equal distribution of the melodies amongst the three players. The movements approximate the format of the classical four-movement quartet. The first three *dumky*, played without pause, correspond to a first movement, while the fourth *dumka* serves as a slow movement, the fifth as a scherzo, and the last as a rondo finale.

The first three movements are divided into four parts. Each begins with a slow, rhapsodic section, which gives way to a lively Slavic dance tune. The first *dumka* opens with an impassioned

outburst from the cello, which is followed by a doleful principal theme, played on the violin. Then, the violin and piano prance through a series of dance melodies. The sections are repeated with a reversal of the roles of the instruments. The second *dumka* features a funeral theme played by the cello.

The last three movements, in flat keys, are entities in themselves. In the fourth movement two *dumky* are varied three times. The fifth movement gallops along at a spirited pace, its themes modulating continuously from major to minor key. The finale opens impressively with a slow dirge-like theme that is followed by dance tunes of varying speeds. The coda leads to a final fortissimo C Major chord, bringing the trio to a brilliant finish.

Diversity in the music is supplied by Dvorak's rich inventiveness in composing melodic and rhythmic patterns. In each *dumka*, the two sections are presented at least twice in succession and the tempo of both sections is generally different, with the exception of the fifth *dumka*, which has a continuous allegro tempo.

Similar to a "sonnet sequence", this trio views the same subjects from many angles, but due to Dvorak's inventiveness and technical skill it never becomes monotonous.

This work was first played for the Friends audience in 1950 and this will be the 14th time we have enjoyed hearing the "Dumky" Trio performed. Three of those popular past performances were given by the Beaux Arts Trio (1980, 1991, 2004).

INTERMISSION

Piano Trio in A Minor, Opus 50

Peter Ilych Tchaikovsky (1840 – 1893)

- I. *Pezzo elegiaco. Moderato assai—Allegro giusto*
- II.
 - a. *Tema con variazione. Andante con moto*
 - b. *Variazione finale e coda. Allegro risoluto e con fuoco—Andante con moto*

Tchaikovsky wrote in a letter to Nadezhda von Meck on October 24/ November 5 [old calendar/ new calendar], 1880, responding to her question, "Why don't you write a trio?" He gave a detailed explanation of his antipathy for this genre, declaring that the piano and string instruments formed an unnatural combination. "The thing is", he wrote, "to my ears the acoustic combination of piano with violin or cello solo is completely incompatible. In this sonority the instruments seem to repel one another, and I assure you that any kind of trio or sonata with piano or cello is absolute torture for me... But is it not unnatural to combine three such individual instruments as violin, cello and piano? The qualities of each of them are lost. The lyrical and wonderfully warm timbres produced by the violin and the cello can be accompanied by the king of instruments, but the latter tries in vain to show its ability to sing against its rivals... But you know the term trio implies a homogeneity, whereas here there are instrumental solos on the one hand, and the piano on the other. It is not just that the piano trio is inevitably manufactured, each

of the three playing their instrument continually, but also the difficulties this represents for the author in distributing his musical ideas between the voices".

Nevertheless, at the end of the following year in Rome, the composer decided to write a trio. Writing again to Nadezhda von Meck on December 15/27, 1881, he referred to his "antipathy for this combination of instruments". Tchaikovsky told her: "In spite of this antipathy, I am thinking of experimenting with this sort of music, which so far I have not touched. I have already written the start of a trio. Whether I shall finish it and whether it will come out successfully I do not know, but I would like very much to bring what I have begun to a successful conclusion... I won't hide from you the great effort of will required to set down my musical ideas in this new and unusual form. But I should like to overcome all these difficulties..."

Some days later, the composer wrote to her again about his work on the trio: "Do not think, my dear friend, that I am exhausting myself by composing the trio. At first, I had to force myself to write something and for my mind's ear to become accustomed to this combination of instruments. But now I am working with interest and enthusiasm, and the thought that the trio will provide you with some pleasure makes my task all the more fascinating". References to the unusual nature of his work, and the difficulties this presented in its early stages, also crop up in other letters.

On January 8/20, 1882, Tchaikovsky wrote: "This morning I finished the rough sketches of my trio". However, after completing the sketches he decided to set aside work on the trio for a time: "Let the trio rest a while: it will do it good. I shall add the finishing touches later..."

Tchaikovsky evidently completed the final stage of composition around January 13/ 25, 1882, when he wrote: "I have completed my trio and made the fair copy with great care. Now that the thing is written, I must say I am quite sure that this composition has not turned out at all badly. My only concern is that I may have left it too late to try my hand at this new sort of chamber music, and that some aspects of my writings for orchestra will show themselves. In short, I am unsure whether this is really symphonic music just arranged for a trio, rather than being specifically designed for them. I took great pains to avoid this, but I don't know that it has turned out this way".

In his letter of January 18/30, Tchaikovsky promised Pyotr Jurgenson that he would send him the trio within weeks for publication. "I have already copied out the first movement—the second (Andante with 12 variations, of which the twelfth and last, also serves as a finale) I will begin to copy out tomorrow". A week later in a letter to Nadezhda von Meck, Tchaikovsky mentioned that the trio was "absorbing all my time and energy".

"My trio is coming along, and working on it is very pleasant", Tchaikovsky wrote on January 30/ February 11. "The trio will comprise two movements. The second movement is a theme with many variations, of which the last will be a finale to the whole piece". Evidently, by then Tchaikovsky had already put the finishing touches to the trio, since the autograph date on the fair

copy of the score reads: "Roma 28 j[anvier]–9 f[evrier] 1882". On January 30/ February 11 the manuscript was dispatched to Pyotr Jurgenson. "The trio is dedicated to [the memory of] Nikolay Grigoryevich [Rubinstein, younger brother of Anton Rubinstein]. It has a somewhat funereal and mournful tone. I would like it very much if this piece, written in memory of Nikolay Grigoryevich appeared in a particularly splendid edition. I have asked Taneyev if he would play the trio, keeping precisely to my metronome markings. I want the first performance of the trio in the next season to be by Sergey Ivanovich".

Tchaikovsky made a note concerning the performance of the trio, which was included in the full score. Sergey Taneyev wrote of this to Pyotr Jurgenson in an undated letter (probably from the autumn of 1882): "I took the manuscript of the trio to Fitzenhagen, and I would like you to send him the pages of proofs. He asked me to write to you to see if you can find space at the bottom of the first page of the full score of the trio, for the following sentence, written on the manuscript: "Les artistes et les amateurs, qui se donneront la peine de jouer cette composition, sont bien priés de se conformer tres exactement aux indications métronomiques de l'auteur. Pour l'emploi de pédale l'auteur s'en remet au goût éclairé des artistes et amateurs, qui executeront la partie du piano". Or, in English: "Artists and amateurs when performing this composition are asked to comply exactly with the author's metronome markings. The author has indicated exactly where the pedal should be employed in the piano part".

On the fair copy of the trio, the author wrote: "I asked S. I. Taneyev to perform this trio with Messrs. Hřimalý and Fitzenhagen, who together suggested certain emendations, which were subsequently accepted by myself". These changes were considerable, and were later explained in full in letters to his publisher, Pyotr Jurgenson.

The trio premiered in a private performance in Moscow on the first anniversary of Nicolay Rubinstein's death, March 11/ 23, 1882. But the first public performance of the corrected score was also in Moscow, on October 18/ 30, 1882.

This is the first time that Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio, Opus 50, has been played in concert for Friends of Chamber Music in Vancouver!

Source: "Piano Trio." *Tchaikovsky Research*, . 30 Jan 2023, 19:49 UTC. 5 Oct 2026, 22:15
<https://en.tchaikovsky-research.net/index.php?title=Piano_Trio&oldid=58638>.

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Next concerts - both at the Vancouver Playhouse, 600 Hamilton Street, Vancouver, BC

Terra String Quartet (USA)

Tuesday, November 17, 2026 – 7:30 pm

Maddalena Casulana: Madrigals

Benjamin Britten: String Quartet No. 3, Opus 94

Ludwig van Beethoven: String Quartet No. 15 in A Minor, Opus 132

Escher Quartet (USA)

Tuesday, December 1, 2026 – 7:30 pm

“Music of World War II”:

Prokofiev: String Quartet No. 2 in F Major, Opus 92 “Kabardinian”

Shostakovich: String Quartet No. 3 in F Major, Opus 73

Britten: String Quartet No. 2, Opus 36

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