



**FRANK MARTIN**  
**TIGRAN MANSURIAN**  
**ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK**

Origin

**Delta Piano Trio**



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**Delta Piano Trio**

**Gerard Spronk** violin

**Irene Enzlin** cello

**Vera Kooper** piano

**FRANK MARTIN** (1890 - 1974)

**Trio sur des mélodies populaires irlandaises**

- |                      |             |
|----------------------|-------------|
| [1] Allegro moderato | <b>4:45</b> |
| [2] Adagio           | <b>5:29</b> |
| [3] Gigue            | <b>5:12</b> |

**TIGRAN MANSURIAN** (b. 1939)

**Five Bagatelles, for violin, cello and piano**

- |                |             |
|----------------|-------------|
| [4] Largo      | <b>2:36</b> |
| [5] Moderato   | <b>3:54</b> |
| [6] Allegro I  | <b>2:44</b> |
| [7] Allegro II | <b>3:23</b> |
| [8] Moderato   | <b>1:42</b> |

**ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK** (1841 - 1904)

**Piano Trio No. 4 in E Minor, Op. 90, B. 166 "Dumky"**

- |  |             |
|--|-------------|
| [9] I. Lento maestoso — Allegro quasi doppio movimento | <b>3:45</b> |
| [10] II. Poco Adagio — Vivace non troppo               | <b>6:16</b> |
| [11] III. Andante — Vivace non troppo                  | <b>6:06</b> |
| [12] IV. Andante moderato — Allegretto scherzando      | <b>4:47</b> |
| [13] V. Allegro — Meno mosso                           | <b>3:57</b> |
| [14] VI. Lento maestoso — Vivace                       | <b>4:34</b> |

Total time 59:19

**Origin**

Many of the little things in life may seem unimportant at first glance but turn out in fact to be of the greatest significance. In the same way, a single note can encapsulate a wonderful tonal hue or a simple melody can permeate an entire piece of music. Quite often, a work becomes a journey of discovery towards a certain origin, translated into sound; a quotation from a folk song can embody the spirit of a country; a meditative harmony can unveil the key questions of existence and the rhythms of a folk dance can unearth the roots of a culture. Martin, Mansurian and Dvořák composed three such colourful works for piano trio – voyages of discovery taken here by the Delta Piano Trio through scintillating sound worlds.

The Swiss composer Frank Martin (1890-1974) spent many years exploring a wide range of styles before he found his own musical voice. He was constantly trying out the possibilities of different musical parameters, using both harmonic and twelve-tone techniques. When an Irish-American benefactor asked him to write a work based on Irish folk songs, Martin grasped this as an exquisite opportunity to combine two of the quests occupying him at the time – music from distant cultures and rhythm. This quest took on literal form as he searched the shelves of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, finding two collections of traditional Irish folk songs, some of which he copied out as the basis for his *Trio sur des mélodies populaires irlandaises* (1925). Having set himself the task of leaving these folk melodies intact, Martin only used them in their complete form and without setting them against what he described as

“falsifying harmonies”. Yet he still managed to add a new shade to the authentic tonal colours by using polyrhythms – multiple rhythms heard over and across one another. An example of these contrasting stress points can be found in the piano drone below the modal opening melody of the *Allegro moderato*, which adds its own layer of mystery. In the *Adagio*, Martin sets a rhythmically rigid lament in the cello part to metrically fluid melodies on the other two instruments. The final movement is an Irish jig, with changing meters and the violin becoming a proper folk fiddle. “It’s a complex, mature and multi-layered score”, say the Delta Piano Trio. “Every time we worked on the piece, we heard something new in it.” Martin’s rhythmic experimentation brought him closer to his own unique style, in doing so he also added a new chapter to the art of composition using traditional music.

If we were to mention a bagatelle, you might expect music following the French meaning of the word, something trivial and not particularly pretentious. But the Armenian composer Tigran Mansurian (b. 1939) gives the term a deeper meaning with the idea behind his *5 Bagatelles* (1985): the smallest things can have the greatest significance in life. Each bagatelle sounds like a moment when truth opens up; crystal clear while at the same time beyond our comprehension, like the different facets of a diamond allowing us a glimpse into its unfathomable core. “Mansurian is always looking for a particular truth in his music”, according to the Delta Piano Trio, who have worked extensively with the composer. “There is not a single spare note in his music, which gives every note even more meaning.” Minimalistic layers of sound shift and intertwine like patches of mist, sometimes taking on a more definite shape; the opening violin

notes depict a teardrop, while the acidic motifs of the fourth bagatelle reflect someone whose mind is not all there. “You can also hear a clear debt to his origins in this music”, the players continue, “whether it’s the wide open prairies of Armenia, a church bell or a particular sort of melancholy, as Mansurian grew up away from Armenia. His family had suffered in the Armenian genocide.” That said, the *5 Bagatelles* pose some questions with their fragmentary structure and open endings: is the music light or serious? Does the lullaby in the second bagatelle sound comforting or desperate? And does the reappearance of the teardrop motif in the fourth bagatelle suggest that the quirky fool is in fact sad? The Delta Piano Trio had the true nature of the work revealed to them when they met Mansurian. “We could instantly place the music in proper context. We saw someone who is altogether happy and friendly, though one look into his eyes will tell you this is a wise man who has been through his share of troubles. And that is what his music is about.”

Like many artists of the Romantic era, Czech composer Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904) let his music flourish from his deepest roots, his origins. His unique style represents a melting-pot of all sorts of characteristic elements of music and dance from his beloved Bohemia with the classical idiom. An example is the famous *Piano Trio no. 4* (1891), based on the ‘dumky’, epic folk ballads depicting a heroic sage, a supplication by a repressed people or a tragic historic event. The simple melodies follow irregular patterns, with repeated notes steeped in melancholy – the word ‘duma’ (of which ‘dumky’ is the diminutive of the plural form) means a ‘contemplation’, and this is obvious to the listener. The six movements of Dvořák’s *Dumky Trio* abound with melodies

that are both introspective and at the same time narrative, as if they had been sung once upon a time. The listener might recognise echoes of the *bandura* – a stringed instrument often used to accompany the *dumky* – in the arpeggios and repetitive bass notes. “Romantic piano trios generally have a dense piano part”, say the Delta Piano Trio. “In the *Dumky Trio*, however, things are suddenly laid bare. But when we focussed on the rhythmic aspects and the elements of folk music, this brought the colours and character of the music to life.” This is perhaps because Dvořák combined another rhythmic folk element – dance – into each movement. The *dumky* themselves may well be wistful, but the dance passages emerging from them are exhilarating; lively, rapid tunes with strong accents on the barlines, characteristic drones and typical sudden key changes from major to minor. The result is a work of enormous contrasts, and extremely expressive; Dvořák could not have given us a deeper look into the soul of his people.

In much the same way that Martin, Mansurian and Dvořák each made their own voyages of discovery in their compositions, the Delta Piano Trio has also reached the heart of these three works, music that has been part of their lives for many years. “You can go much further in a recording studio than is possible in a concert hall. We felt challenged to look for the limits and see if we could step across them into new territory. This is always something we try to do and one way for us to bring our audiences closer to the works.”

Simone Leuven

*Translation: Bruce Gordon/Muse Translations*



## Delta Piano Trio

Untainted and uncompromising musicality coupled with exceptional interpretive depth characterize the playing of the Delta Piano Trio, founded in Salzburg in 2013 by the three Dutch musicians Gerard Spronk, Irene Enzlin and Vera Kooper. The trio completed its studies in Salzburg, Paris and Basel with Wolfgang Redik (Vienna Piano Trio), Rainer Schmidt (Hagen Quartet), Anton Kernjak and with Trio Wanderer.

Numerous prizes and awards underline the trio's reputation, including first prizes at the international chamber music competitions Stasys Vainiunas in Lithuania, Salieri-Zinetti in Italy, Orlando in the Netherlands, at the Orpheus chamber music competition in Switzerland and, in particular, the highly endowed Kersjesprijs, the most important chamber music prize in the Netherlands, awarded in December 2020.

The Delta Piano Trio has toured Europe, Russia, Israel, China, South Korea, Indonesia, and the United States, and has performed in concert halls such as The Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing, the Gangdong Arts Center in Seoul, St. John's Smith Square in London, and the Jerusalem Music Center. The trio collaborates regularly with contemporary composers and maintains a collaborative relationship with Russian-American composer Lera Auerbach. They frequently give chamber music masterclasses and love coaching younger ensembles.

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