

## CAFÉ MUSIC | TRIO SOLISTI

Four Seasons of Buenos Aires | Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992) [23:20]  
(arr. Bragato/ Bachmann)

- 1 Otono Porteño (Fall) [5:09]
- 2 Invierno Porteño (Winter) [5:50]
- 3 Primavera Porteña (Spring) [4:52]
- 4 Verano Porteño (Summer) [7:15]

5 Le Grand Tango | Astor Piazzolla (arr. M. Kutnowski) [9:07]

Café Music | Paul Schoenfield (b. 1947) [16:42]

- 6 Allegro [6:08]
- 7 Andante Rubato [5:33]
- 8 Presto [4:51]

Trio No. 2 in B minor, Op.76 | Joaquín Turina (1882-1949) [12:16]

- 9 Lento- Allegro molto moderato [5:23]
- 10 Molto Vivace [2:27]
- 11 Lento- Andante mosso- Allegretto [4:17]

12 It Ain't Necessarily So | George Gershwin (1898-1937)  
(arr. Bachmann) [2:49]

The governing title of this recording, *Café Music*, suggests music that is accessible—even fun. And so it is with the works included on it. Indeed, one might even imagine oneself in a café or a bar while listening. At the same time, the carefully chosen works resonate in a deeper way because they are also firmly rooted in classical tradition. Each piece has its basis in that genre but looks beyond it for other influences popular and otherwise. As we are sometimes reduced to the absurd in our definitions of classical music, chamber music, and jazz, so might we fall into that trap in considering the meaning of *café music*. Its historic significance is impressive and readily identifiable in the music of such composers as Beethoven, Schubert, Liszt and Brahms. Throughout Eastern Europe, in particular, the tradition of café music remains strong even today, but it prevails elsewhere in greatly varying forms. Piazzolla and Turina, for example, are closely connected to the famous *habanera* rhythm which had its origins in Africa, sailed off to Cuba, crossed the world again to Spain and the Basque regions in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and found its imprint in Paris with Debussy and Ravel. Of course we cannot omit the impact of the *habanera* in Argentina where it gave birth to the irreplaceable tango. The tango became such a force there that its popularity and decline followed the patterns of economic stress and recovery. In 1914, the Archbishop of Paris tried to ban the tango for its “lascivious nature” but was repudiated by the Ambassador of Argentina and sued for \$4000 by

a tango teacher. Perhaps it is well to remember, too, that the music played in European cafés revealed much of the untold story of World War II. The Nazis tried, but failed, to close cafes and clubs where music symbolized resistance.

At the heart of café music lies not only popularity and the highly personal but also the virtuosic which is clearly evident in Trio Solisti's interpretations. In his review of Trio Solisti's January 2008 performance of Paul Schoenfield's *Café Music* for the San Antonio Chamber Music Society, critic Mike Greenberg of *Incident Light* commented that "the musicians took care to play every gesture with ferocious conviction..." It was with this strong conviction, says violinist Maria Bachmann, that Trio Solisti took on the enormous task of identifying, studying, arranging, and refining the music on this recording.

### **Ástor Piazzolla (1921-1992)** **Four Seasons of Buenos Aires**

The immediate association one makes with Piazzolla's *Four Seasons* is Vivaldi's composition of the same name. While much of that comparison is intentional, it does not give the whole story. A first consideration is structure. In Vivaldi's work, each of the four seasons is treated in three movements, while in Piazzolla's they are given one movement within which there is variation of mood and character. In other words,

Piazzolla bows to the Baroque structure he loved but explores it in entirely new ways relating to his own personal invention for which he so famous, the *nuevo tango*. In that invention, Piazzolla took the tango from a popular street dance to a serious form of music. Like Bach's gavottes and Mozart's minuets, Piazzolla's tangos are not meant for dancing but for complex and virtuosic interpretation at the highest level of performance. Nor should we insist on programmatic interpretation of Piazzolla's *Four Seasons*, as we so often do with Vivaldi's. Originally composed between 1965 and 1970 as four separate works, Piazzolla's *Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* has had numerous treatments from its original scoring for violin, electric guitar, piano, bass and bandoneon (Piazzolla's own instrument). Trio Solisti's interpretation is based on the arrangement by Argentinean cellist and composer José Bragato, a member of Piazzolla's famous Octeto Buenos Aires, who received a Grammy Award in 2002 for his arrangements of Piazzolla's music for string quartet. Maria Bachmann, Trio Solisti's violinist, made her own additions to Bragato's arrangement to include the startling string techniques and sound effects that so brilliantly flavor this recording as well as additions to the musical material. Many of these techniques such as the *glissando*, or slide, are practiced in traditional classical music, but here they are personalized to express Piazzolla's unique *nuevo tango* concepts. And seldom are they done the same way each time. The first sound heard on the recording, before any actual note of music, is something called a "cricket," loosely described by Maria Bachmann as

“playing on the wrong side of the bridge as far back as possible and with hard—really hard—pressure.” The cello is used for the knocking sounds that imitate various percussion instruments.

Piazzolla's *Seasons* shout with his originality and inventiveness—and with a certain national flavor. On the subject of nationalism, however, we should be careful. Piazzolla was no mere imitator of folk tradition. Like Dvořák and Bartók before him, Piazzolla took folk idioms and turned them into high art. The fascinating dissonances and abrupt tempo changes go well beyond the scope of folk music. That said, Piazzolla also effectively paints the seasons of his native country with its tumultuous spring, sultry summer, melancholy fall and dark winter. The order of the seasons, by the way, varies in the work's many arrangements, but Trio Solisti's makes musical sense even if does not honor Vivaldi's order.

Piazzolla's studies with Alberto Ginastera led him to studies in Paris with the legendary Nadia Boulanger. Piazzolla gives a wonderful account of his reluctance to admit to her that he played the bandoneon rather than the piano. He presented to her what he called his “kilos of symphonies and sonatas.” She responded that they were “well-written,” but that she could not find Piazzolla in them. Finally he played his tangos for her to which she responded, “You idiot, that's Piazzolla!” He commented, “And I took all the music I composed, ten

years of my life, and sent it to hell in two seconds.” The years of study and work, however, do not seem lost in Trio Solisti's treatment of *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*.

### Ástor Piazzolla Le Grand Tango

Considered one of Piazzolla's masterpieces, *Le Grand Tango* was commissioned by Mstislav Rostropovich and premiered by him in 1990. That version for cello and piano has been performed and recorded many times with great success, but the adaptation for Trio Solisti by Argentinean composer, scholar and arranger, Martin Kutnowski, sheds new light on Piazzolla's genius. Here we have all the power and complexity of Piazzolla's *nuevo tango* revealed in one work. It moves even closer to classical music than the *Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* but not at the expense of the tango itself in all its glories. Here we have dark moods, moments of passion and lyricism, daring harmony, and above all, the powerful rhythmic effects we associate with Piazzolla. As to “grandness,” *Le Grand Tango* is just that since it is almost twice the length of any traditional tango piece as well as Piazzolla's explorations in the form.

Ostensibly in one movement, the work nevertheless seems to fall into three: a rhythmically strong first section with mood swings between

Chassidic song drawn from Schoenfield's years spent on a kibbutz in Israel. It was this movement that caused reviewer Mike Greenberg of *Incident Light* to describe Trio Solisti's treatment of *Café Music* as "richer, deeper, and more layered," and as having "a soulful flexibility that had one foot in Tin Pan Alley and one in central European high Romanticism."

The racy virtuosity of the third movement is sheer amazement from its opening statement reflective of yet another composer who had one foot in the café, Francis Poulenc. We quickly move on from Poulenc to the multiple influences in Schoenfield's music that somehow remains uniquely his own.

Paul Schoenfield, born in Detroit, studied piano with Julius Chajes, Ozan Marsh and Rudolph Serkin. He holds an undergraduate degree from Carnegie-Mellon, a doctorate from the University of Arizona, and is currently on the faculty of the University of Michigan. He is also an avid scholar of mathematics and Hebrew, among many other interests.

**Joaquín Turina (1882-1949)**  
**Piano Trio No. 2 in B Minor, Op. 76**

Joaquín Turina finds his place in *Café Music* through both his association

with the music of the Basque regions and his own inclination towards incorporating the popular and the classical. He left his native Seville for Madrid at 20 and three years later ventured to Paris where he came under the influence of Debussy and Ravel, both of whom bowed to Spanish music. Despite his academic associations, a certain "sevillanismo" remains in his work stemming surely from his early interests. One of these was the *zarzuelas*, a form of Spanish opera infused with popular influences that included spoken words and dance. Interestingly, as a young boy, he held a passion for the accordion, a close relative to Piazzolla's bandoneon.

Despite these influences, Turina sought to transcend Spanish nationalism more so than his Spanish contemporaries Albeniz, Granados and Falla. This is reflected in his Piano Trio No. 2 of 1926 which clearly reveals the influence of Debussy, Ravel and César Franck. Falla had advised him to look to Spanish folk music for inspiration, but that advice was merely a statement of Turina's natural style, since the music of his native Seville was strongly and undeniably in his blood. Within the parameters of classical style, Turina found his own voice rich in Sevillian grace, color, and the Basque *Zortzico* rhythms clearly evident in the Piano Trio No. 2.

The first movement of the Op. 76 Piano Trio reflects classic sonata form with three sections marked Andante and three marked Lento.

Contrasting themes in major and minor keys enrich the highly emotive movement resplendent with beautiful melody. The middle movement is a *jota*, a national dance of northern Spain in rapid triple time, not unlike a waltz but with a Spanish imprint. Pizzicato chords from the strings suggest the castanets which accompany the *jota*. We hear and see, if you will, Spanish couples performing the dance, underscoring Turina's interest in things visual and literary. The dance is interrupted mid-way by a reference to the first movement.

If the middle movement is dance, the last movement is song. Despite this contrast, thematic material from the earlier movement is incorporated into this final movement, lending the piece unity as well as variety. A coda borrowed from the Lento theme of the second movement completes the work.

Written in 1926, the Piano Trio was premiered at the Frankfurt International Festival of Chamber Music in 1927 and received the National Prize.

### **George Gershwin (1898-1937)**

#### **It Ain't Necessarily So** from *Porgy and Bess*

"It Ain't Necessarily So" might seem the bon-bon in this recording, but it is still not without implications for the over-arching theme: the

integration of popular and classical art forms in a unique way. This brief and delicious moment is based on, of course, the song from George and Ira Gershwin's 1935 opera, *Porgy and Bess*. It is sung by the character, Sportin' Life, a drug dealer who expresses his doubt about several biblical statements. Since then, the song has moved through many permutations including one by the great violin virtuoso, Jascha Heifetz. It was this treatment that inspired Maria Bachmann's arrangement for Trio Solisti with its moving thirds for cello and violin and, once again, the rhythmic underpinning provided by the piano. It is a notable gift to the piano trio repertoire.

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*Lucy Miller Murray is Founder of Market Square Concerts in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and the author of Adams to Zemlinsky, A Friendly Guide to Selected Chamber Music published by Concert Artists Guild of New York. A second edition is forthcoming.*

**C**omprised of three brilliant instrumentalists - violinist Maria Bachmann, cellist Alexis Pia Gerlach and pianist Jon Klibonoff - Trio Solisti has earned a reputation for its passionate, committed, and adventurous performances marked by exquisite individuality of expression and seamless ensemble playing. These qualities have drawn high praise from such journals as *The New York Times* ("...consistently brilliant...and compelling.") and *The Washington Post* ("...zealous abandon in a transcendent performance.") The Trio's cutting

edge verve and mastery across a wide spectrum of styles has garnered superlatives not often encountered in the piano trio genre.

The members of Trio Solisti collaborate with many of today's leading composers. Recent premieres include *Vita Brevis* by 2004 Pulitzer Prize winning composer Paul Moravec. The trio performed the world premiere of *Vita Brevis* with soprano Amy Burton. Commissioned works for Trio Solisti include a work by one of America's most gifted young composers, Kevin Puts, who writes a work for Trio Solisti to premiere in 2012. Violinist Maria Bachmann and pianist Jon Klibonoff gave the world premiere of Philip Glass's *Sonata for violin and piano* in February 2009, cellist Alexis Gerlach performed the world premiere of a concerto by Kevin Puts for cello and string quintet in May 2009, and Maria Bachmann performs the world premiere of Paul Moravec's *Violin Concerto* at the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia, PA in 2010.

Trio Solisti's third CD, *Pictures at an Exhibition*, was released on Endeavour Classics in the fall of 2007. The disc includes Trio Solisti's own arrangement of Mussorgsky's monumental *Pictures at an Exhibition* and Ravel's masterly *Piano Trio in A minor*.

Other recordings by Trio Solisti are an all-Brahms CD for Marquis Classics, and a CD of music by Paul Moravec on NAXOS American Classics. This release includes the world premiere recording of Moravec's

2004 Pulitzer Prize-winning work composed for Trio Solisti, *Tempest Fantasy*, with guest clarinetist David Krakauer. "Trio Solisti Explores Beethoven", a documentary video, was released by Videos for Arts and Humanities ([www.films.com](http://www.films.com)) in 2003. Directed by Academy Award nominee Josh Aronson, the documentary traces Trio Solisti's interpretive process in rehearsals and performances of Beethoven's "Ghost" and "Archduke" trios.

Trio Solisti has made critically acclaimed debuts in New York City on Lincoln Center's Great Performers Series and at Town Hall's Peoples' Symphony Concerts, at The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., the Wolf Trap Center for the Performing Arts in Vienna, Virginia, and at the internationally renowned Tuscan Sun Festival in Cortona, Italy. They have performed as guests of The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, at Seattle's Meany Hall, La Jolla's Revelle series, Milwaukee Symphony's Pabst Series, Troy Chromatic Concerts, Weill Hall at Carnegie Hall, and have toured in Canada.

Trio Solisti is the founding ensemble of Telluride MusicFest which celebrates its' seventh anniversary in 2009. The trio performs with many guest artists at Telluride MusicFest and Philip Glass is the Composer-in-Residence in 2009. [www.triosolisti.com](http://www.triosolisti.com)



**Maria Bachmann, violin**

Hailed by The New York Times as "a violinist of soul and patrician refinement", Maria Bachmann has been heard as featured soloist worldwide and has had the rare distinction of being profiled by Time and Fanfare magazines, and honored by Musical America and New York's Newsday as "Outstanding Artist of the Year." Ms. Bachmann's recital cd released in 2007, *The Red Violin*, was chosen by BBC Music Magazine as the "North American CD of the Month". Her recital disc *Fratres*, was re-issued by RCA Red Seal in 2005, and she has recorded for BMG/Conifer, BMG/Catalyst, Endeavour Classics, Argo, Koch, and Connoisseur Society. Ms Bachmann has performed as soloist with Leonard Slatkin and the National Symphony at the Kennedy Center, with the St. Louis Symphony, and in

recital at the Kennedy Center's Terrace Theater, Alice Tully Hall, Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital hall and Town Hall in New York, Boston's Jordan Hall, and The Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. An eminent champion of new music, composers Philip Glass, Leon Kirchner, George Rochberg,

Paul Moravec and Sebastian Currier have all written works for her. Maria Bachmann studied at the Curtis Institute of Music with Ivan Galamian and Szymon Goldberg, and was awarded the Fritz Kreisler Prize for outstanding graduating violinist. She performs on a 1782 violin by Niccolo Gagliano. [www.mariabachmann.com](http://www.mariabachmann.com)



**Alexis Pia Gerlach, cello**

Cellist Alexis Pia Gerlach has performed extensively as a soloist with orchestras and in recitals across the United States, as well as in Europe, Asia, the Middle East and South America. She has collaborated with conductors including Mstislav Rostropovich, James DePreist and Peter Oundjian, and with The Orchestra of St. Luke's, the Fort Worth Symphony, the Charleston Symphony, and Boston's Metmorphosen Chamber Orchestra. Her recording with pianist Fabio Bidini of the Franck and Rachmaninoff Sonatas is released on the Encore Performance label. With the Paul Taylor Dance Company, Ms. Gerlach performed solo cello music on a month-long tour of India and at New York's City Center,

and she has collaborated in a duo with New York City Ballet principal dancer, Damian Woetzel, at the Caramoor Festival. As a chamber musician, Ms. Gerlach has been a guest artist of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and has performed at numerous festivals, including Marlboro, Aspen and Caramoor, where she is a Texaco Rising Star. She has toured the United States and France with Musicians From Marlboro, and she is a member of Concertante, a string sextet based in New York City. Ms. Gerlach graduated from the Juilliard School and the Yale School of Music where she studied with Aldo Parisot.



**Jon Klibonoff, piano**

Jon Klibonoff has established a versatile career as orchestra soloist, recitalist and chamber musician throughout the United States and abroad. His many awards include the Silver Medal of the Gina Bachauer International Piano Competition, the Affiliate Artists Xerox Pianists Award, the Pro Musicis Foundation Award, First Prize in the Kosciuszko Chopin Competition, and The Concert Artists Guild Competition. His many orchestral appearances include the Baltimore, Utah, Buffalo, Denver, and North Carolina Symphonies. Mr.

Klibonoff has appeared in recital at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Weill Recital Hall in Carnegie Hall, the 92nd Street Y in New York, the National Gallery and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. He has appeared as guest artist with numerous chamber groups including the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and the Shanghai, Miami and Lark String Quartets. For three seasons, Klibonoff was an artist-in-residence for the "On Air" radio series produced by WQXR classical radio in New York City. Jon Klibonoff can be heard frequently in collaboration with many instrumentalists including flutist Carol Wincenc, clarinetist David Shifrin, and cellist Yo-Yo Ma. A graduate of The Juilliard School and Manhattan School of Music, Klibonoff is currently on the faculty of The Manhattan School of Music and SUNY Purchase College.



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