



## FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

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# Neave Trio

ANNA WILLIAMS, violin

MIKHAIL VESELOV, cello

ERI NAKAMURA, piano

2:30 pm, Sunday, October 5, 2025

*Faye Spanos Concert Hall*

*University of the Pacific*

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### TRIO ÉLÉGIAQUE NO. 1 IN G MINOR (1892)

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

Lento lugubre—Più vivo—Con anima—Appassionato—Tempo rubato—Risoluto— (1873–1943)

Tempo I—Più vivo—Con anima—Appassionato—Alla marcia funebre

### PIANO TRIO NO. 2 IN A MINOR, OP. 34 (1887)

CÉCILE CHAMINADE

Allegro moderato

(1857–1944)

Lento

Allegro energico

— *INTERMISSION* —

### PIANO TRIO IN C MAJOR, OP. 29 (1910)

DORA PEJAČEVIĆ

Allegro con moto

(1885–1923)

Scherzo: Allegro – Trio

Lento – Allegretto

Finale: Allegro risoluto

Neave Trio appears by arrangement with Gina Meola, Jensen Artists

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## The Artists

Since forming in 2010, GRAMMY®-nominated Neave Trio has earned enormous praise for its engaging, cutting-edge performances. New York's classical music radio station WQXR explains, "Neave" is actually a Gaelic name meaning 'bright' and 'radiant', both of which certainly apply to this trio's music making." Gramophone has praised the trio's "taut and vivid interpretations," while The Strad calls out their "eloquent phrasing and deft control of textures," and BBC Music Magazine describes their performances as balancing "passion with sensitivity and grace."

Neave has performed at many esteemed concert series and at festivals worldwide, including Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival, Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, Smithsonian American Art Museum, 92nd Street Y, Rockport Chamber Music Festival, Norfolk and Norwich Chamber Music Series (United Kingdom), Zeeuwse Concertzaal (The Netherlands), and the Samoylov and Rimsky Korsakow Museums' Chamber Music Series in St. Petersburg (Russia). The trio has held residency positions at Brown University, University of Virginia, Longy School of Music of Bard College, San Diego State University as the first-ever Fisch/Axelrod Trio-in-Residence, and the Banff Centre (Canada), among many other institutions. Neave Trio was also in residence at the MIT School of Architecture and Design in collaboration with dancer/choreographer Richard Colton. The Neave Trio continues to serve as the inaugural Ensemble-in-Residence at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Neave Trio strives to champion new works by living composers and reach wider audiences through innovative concert presentations, regularly collaborating with artists of all mediums. These collaborations include the premiere of Robert Paterson's Triple Concerto with the Mostly Modern Orchestra under the direction of JoAnn Falletta; D-Cell: An Exhibition & Durational Performance, conceived and directed by multi-disciplinary visual artist David Michalek; with projection designer Ryan Brady; in the premiere of Klee Musings by acclaimed American composer Augusta Read Thomas.

## Rachmaninoff: Trio Élégiacque

I know it is tough to believe, but Sergei Rachmaninoff, the man who would become one of the 20th century's towering pianists and composers, flunked all of his exams as a twelve-year-old at St. Petersburg Conservatory. Acquaintances labeled him as an "aimless goof off" who specialized in altering his report card to make Fs look like Bs.

Fearful for his future, his mother and his cousin, Alexander Siloti, jerked young Sergei out of the lenient St. Petersburg Conservatory and transplanted him in the infamously demanding rival Conservatory in Moscow. Nikolai Zverev, who had a dreadful reputation for strictness, accepted him as a pupil, and the family's tactic worked. Rachmaninoff completed his studies at the Conservatory within three years, graduating as its top student, and receiving the distinguished Great Gold Medal—an honor that had only been awarded twice before. Years later, he reminisced about his experience, "Discipline entered my life. God forbid that I leave the piano five minutes before my time of three hours was up!"

Discipline was not the only gift he received at the Moscow Conservatory. Its most famous professor, Pyotr Tchaikovsky, became his instructor, his supporter, his counselor, and his father figure. So, it is no surprise that when Sergei composed his Trio Élégiacque No. 1 in his final year as a student, he would base its main theme on a memorable motif from Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1.

The DNA of this Trio comes from the opening four-note horn motif of Tchaikovsky's masterwork. Rachmaninoff turns Tchaikovsky's descending four notes into a four-note rising motif – in a minor mode – introduced by the piano. Everyone in the audience at the Conservatory would have been well aware of Rachmaninoff's unmistakable musical reference. At the time, borrowing an idea from another composer was not plagiarism, it was a show of respect. The issue wasn't where the idea came from, but what you could do with it, and Sergei did a lot.

This Trio, which he wrote as a nineteen-year-old, already sounds like the same

Rachmaninoff who years later would write his commanding piano concertos and his monumental Second Symphony. His distinguishing massive chords, fascinating progressions, and Romantic washes of color are much on show.

The Trio ends with a funeral march. Even at that early age, Rachmaninoff was obsessed with death. Many of his mature works quote the *Dies Irae* from the Catholic mass for the dead.

Rachmaninoff returned to this format a year later, after Tchaikovsky's premature death. Trio Élégiacque No. 2 is a tribute to his mentor. It, too, ends with a poignant funeral march.

## Chaminade: Piano Trio, Op. 34

Cécile Chaminade was born and educated in Paris. She received significant honor and recognition in the first few decades of her career, and she was the first female composer admitted to the Légion d'Honneur. She composed several large-scale works in the 1880s, including a ballet, a comic opera, an orchestral suite, and the dramatic symphony *Les amazones*, along with her two piano trios. From the 1890s on, she emphasized songs and piano character pieces. In all, she composed about 400 works.

Chaminade traveled widely as a pianist-composer, with tours to England, where she was a guest of Queen Victoria, and in 1908 to the United States, where her music was already popular. Several American musical clubs had been named after her. (Chaminade Clubs still exist in Providence, Rhode Island, Yonkers, New York, and North Attleboro, Massachusetts, for example.) She did not visit Grand Rapids, but her music was performed at various club events and St. Cecilia concerts.

In later years, Chaminade's standing dropped as the modernist style came into preference, and also because of contradictory standards applied to women composers as compared to male composers. As Marcia Citron writes, "pieces deemed sweet and charming were criticized for being too feminine,

while works that emphasize thematic development were considered too virile or masculine and hence unsuited to the womanly nature of the composer.”

Piano Trio No.2 in A minor, Op. 34 dates from 1887 and is in three movements. The opening bars of the first movement, *Allegro moderato*, serve notice that this is a work which will scale enormous summits. The main theme, dominated by scale passages, has a pushing, powerful attribute but also a serious, sinister and ominous nobility. The piano reiterates the opening theme in two highly dramatic and prominent occurrences, first in a soprano register then again in the bass, sounding like an extra voice. This is all done against tremolo (the first time) and triplets (the second time) in the strings.

In the middle movement, the strings, in one voice much of the time, state and develop the lovely first theme which has an undeniable vocal quality to it. The delicate lyricism of the *Lento* shows the influence of her teacher, Benjamin Godard.

The finale, *Allegro energico*, begins with much of the energy and decisiveness that appeared in the first movement. It is depicted by various rousing chromatic passages as well as other original effects together with a very effective coda.

### **Pejačević: Piano Trio, Op. 29**

Dora (Countess Maria Theodora Paulina) Pejačević was born into a noble family in Budapest. Her father was a Croatian count, her mother Elisabetha-Lilla Vay de Vaja a Hungarian baroness, pianist and singer. Dora spent her youth in Našice (Slavonia, now part of Croatia). She received initial piano lessons from her mother but continued teaching herself piano. She started composing at age 12.

In 1902, her family moved to Zagreb, where she continued her education (violin and music theory) and continued in the Croatian Music Society in Zagreb, as well as through private lessons in instrumentation. In 1909, she started studying in Dresden, from 1911 on in Munich. In 1914, with the outbreak of WWI, she returned to Našice again, composing and also helping wounded soldiers as a nurse. After the war, she lived in Budapest, Prague, Vienna, and finally in Munich.

There, in 1921, she married Ottomar (Otto), Ritter von Lumbe (1892 – 1978). She became pregnant in 1922, aged 47. In 1923, she died only weeks after giving birth to a son.

The first movement, *Allegro con moto*, has an attractively melodious, descending theme offered first by the violin, then taken over by the cello. All this is complemented by wide-ranging arpeggios on the piano: this is jubilant emphatic music! The voices, forceful to motivate each other, build up in strength and impetus. An ascending scattered new theme sets in at the first climax, then yet another one—Dora Pejačević displays herself as a composer rich in fantasy and ingenuity!

Some of the developments are attractive; however, they do not last long enough or appear recurrently enough to survive the following inventions. For some listeners, the assembly of melodies soon turns bewildering, and it is hard to recognize a larger structure—at least in a first encounter. This does not mean that this movement sounds “difficult”. The overall (first) impression is just that the music doesn’t live so much from the melodies, but rather from the harmonies and the interesting, late-romantic modulations.

The second movement, *Scherzo*, is an unpredictable fun piece, a mix of pizzicato and staccato, with canon-like sequences and animated occurrences, often sullen in the modulations, concluding relatively brusquely.

The Trio is rather unusual: it is in 5/4 time reflecting its Slavonic heritage. There are sections where the piano plays a simple, chordal motif in the first three beats, and the two string instruments respond with two pizzicato beats in octaves. Later, in the middle part, the 5/4 meter is less conspicuous. The music builds up to an enthusiastic episode with beautiful, rounded piano sonority—and in the last part, the initial 3+2 scheme returns, ultimately leading into the second instance of the *Scherzo*.

The latter expose the composer’s personal style, though they may appear

somewhat wandering (in a first encounter, at least).

The movement builds up to a culmination, which then leads into a short piano cadenza. The continuation is highly expressive. It does return to the beguiling initial themes, though now melancholic, fervent, more expressive. The music steers into a piano solo, and subsequently, the short, descending first piano cadenza returns—twice even.

A phantasmagoria of enjoyable, even attractive melodies / motifs and thought-provoking modulations, short intense smooth, lyrical cantilenas and a virtuosic piano part, often in dense textures. Attractive, right, though at times a bit mystifying. The one thing that holds the movement together is the initial two themes, which return at the end of the movement, and the three instances of the short cadenza.

Clearly Pejačević’s best movement so far! the third, *Lento*, is elegiac, yearning, pensive, forlorn, with beautiful, penetrating cantilenas in the strings, often in octaves. Peaceable, atmospheric music, far less complex than the *Allegro con moto* in harmonies and themes.

The middle part forms a sharp contrast: condensed, “fiery”, clearly Slavonic colors and expression, often virtuosic and intricate in the piano part, highly communicative in the string cantilenas, building up to powerful, dramatic climaxes, then returning to the elegiac, melancholic initial theme.

The fourth movement, *Risolto*, is indeed resolute: Redolent in resolve, thrust, energy, big fullness and passion. A dramatic composition with a virtuosic piano part that is constantly striving forward in harmonies, melodies and rhythm, strengthening dramatic climaxes. Violin and cello are often competing with each other in the intensity and expression of the cantilenas. The piano further “heats up” the atmosphere, never dropping the tension, up to a truly enthralling, impressive climax.

Notes © Dr. Michael Spencer

# 69<sup>TH</sup> SEASON

## 2025-2026

*Presented in Cooperation with  
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### Telegraph Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, September 14, 2025

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*Q & A FOLLOWS*

### Neave Trio

2:30 PM Sunday, October 5, 2025

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### Seraph Brass

2:30 PM Sunday, November 2, 2025

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### Trio 180

2:30 PM Sunday, February 15, 2026

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

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### Erinys Quartet

2:30 PM Sunday, April 19, 2026

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

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- Concert programs are subject to change without notice.
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