

🏹 Notes About the Program 🏹

Piano Trio in B-flat Major, Op. 97 “Archduke” Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Something must be said here about Archduke Rudolph, the Emperor Franz’s youngest brother, and not only the highest born but the most devoted of Beethoven’s patrons. Born in 1788, he was destined for the church. As a boy he showed an aptitude for music, and at some time in his teens – perhaps in the winter of 1803-1804, when he became 16 – he chose Beethoven as his piano teacher. Later he became Beethoven’s only pupil in composition. The relationship, which lasted without interruption until Beethoven’s death (Rudolph himself died four years later at the age of 43), was characterized by genuine respect on both sides. Rudolph treated Beethoven with consideration and humorous understanding; and Beethoven, though irked and sometimes provoked into ill-behaviour by the inevitable court protocol that surrounded a royal archduke, showed an almost childlike devotion to Rudolph, to whom he dedicated several of his greatest works. There are, it is true, many letters that show him begging off giving a lesson because of particularly pressing business or ‘illness’; most of those pleas were accepted by the benevolent Rudolph as polite fictions. In 1809 the Archduke, with Prince Kinsky and Prince Lobkowitz, established a lifelong annuity for Beethoven with the sole stipulation that the composer remain in Vienna.

And then, for the second time within four years, the French army bore down on Vienna, causing the imperial family, including Rudolph, to leave the city.

Nevertheless it was decided that Vienna should be defended. As a result the city was bombarded by French howitzers throughout the night of 11 May and the following morning. Beethoven is said to have taken refuge in the cellar of his brother Caspar Carl’s house, and to have covered his head with pillows. On the afternoon of 12 May the city surrendered, and there was a second French occupation; it lasted for two months and proved a heavy drain on the inhabitants’ pockets.


Towards the end of the year a highly congenial commission came Beethoven’s way, since it brought him in touch with the theatre once more, and since the play in question was by Goethe, whom he admired above all writers then living. It had been decided to furnish Goethe’s *Egmont* with incidental music, and Beethoven was invited to supply it; he completed it by June 1810 and it was immediately performed. Apart from the excitement of the plot itself, in which Count Egmont foresees the liberation of the Netherlands from Spanish rule but dies as a result of his own brave stand, it is possible to suggest a deeper reason behind Beethoven’s heartfelt response to it: it may represent his own delayed reaction to the conquest and occupation of his adopted city by the French, and his hopes of being delivered from them. In the spring or summer of 1810 he also wrote three songs (op.83) to words by Goethe, and he learnt about the poet’s character through the friendship that he now formed with the very young, talented and seductive Bettina Brentano, a friend of Goethe – whom in turn she kept informed by letter about Beethoven.

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Bettina obviously charmed Beethoven. Rather less is known about another woman with whom he had been more seriously involved only a little earlier. For it seems clear that in the spring of 1810 Beethoven was more or less solemnly considering marriage. Not only did he turn his attention to his wardrobe and personal appearance; he even wrote to his old friend Wegeler in Bonn for a copy of his baptismal certificate, necessary evidence of his exact age. The woman who was the object of these concerns was a certain Therese Malfatti, the niece of Dr. Johann Malfatti who had become his physician for a short while after the death of the trusted Dr. Schmidt in 1808 (his doctor since about 1801). It looks as though Beethoven made a proposal of marriage and it was turned down. No doubt it was radically misconceived; there is no evidence that the family of Therese, who was not yet 20, would have found Beethoven, then in his 40th year, an acceptable suitor, and the one surviving letter from him to her, though warm enough, is not particularly intimate.

Beethoven's disappointment is hard to gauge. He was urged to travel, perhaps because of his distracted state, but instead he merely moved to Baden for two months. The compositions on which he worked that summer include the *String Quartet in F minor* (Op. 95) – the 'quartetto serioso' – and the so-called 'Archduke' *Piano Trio in B♭* (Op. 97); although their autograph scores bear dates of October 1810 and March 1811 respectively, it is possible that both works were completed later than the dates suggest. The earlier months of 1811 seem to have been a time of comparative inactivity in composing, though a number of larger works, including the *Choral Fantasy* and an oratorio written several years earlier, had to be seen through the press.

Beethoven's health was still not satisfactory, and in the summer of 1811, on Dr. Malfatti's orders, he visited the Bohemian spa Teplitz to take the cure. While there he wrote the incidental music to two stage works by Kotzebue, *König Stephan* (Op. 117) and *Die Ruinen von*

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Athen (Op. 113), designed as prologue and epilogue to the ceremonial opening of the new theatre at Pest. He evidently returned to Vienna refreshed and began work on the *Seventh Symphony*, which he completed in the spring of 1812, going on without a break to the *Eighth Symphony*. (To judge from the sketchbook used for work on these symphonies, he at one time considered following them with a third symphony, probably in D minor.)

Excerpted from *Oxford Music Online, Grove Music*

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Piano Trio in D Minor No. 1, Op. 32 Anton Arensky (1861–1906)

Anton Arensky (1861–1906) was a Russian composer, pianist and conductor. His father, a doctor, was a keen cellist, and his mother an excellent pianist who gave him his first music lessons. By the age of nine he had already composed some songs and piano pieces. When the family moved to St Petersburg, Arensky took lessons with Zikke before entering the St. Petersburg Conservatory (1879), where he studied composition with Rimsky-Korsakov and counterpoint and fugue with Johannsen.

He graduated with a gold medal in 1882. Even before this, Rimsky-Korsakov had been sufficiently impressed by Arensky's talent to entrust him with a share in preparing the vocal score of *The Snow Maiden*. After graduating, Arensky went straight to the Moscow Conservatory as a professor of harmony and counterpoint;

among his pupils were to be Rachmaninoff, Scriabin and Glière. The move to Moscow brought him into close contact with Tchaikovsky, who gave him much practical encouragement, and Taneyev.

From 1888 to 1895 he directed the concerts of the Russian Choral Society and also appeared as a conductor at symphony concerts. In 1889 he was appointed to the council of the Synodal School of Church Music in Moscow, remaining until 1893. One of Arensky's greatest personal successes was with his opera *Son na Volge* (A Dream on the Volga), based on the same Ostrovsky play as Tchaikovsky's opera *Voyevoda*, and produced in Moscow in 1891. Parts of the opera had been composed under Rimsky-Korsakov's supervision when Arensky was still a conservatory student.

In 1894 Balakirev recommended Arensky as his successor to the directorship of the imperial chapel in St. Petersburg, and in 1895 Arensky moved to that city, resigning from his professorship at the Moscow Conservatory. A second opera, *Raffaello* (Raphael), composed in 1894 on the occasion of the First Congress of Russian Artists, was less successful than its predecessor.

In 1901 Arensky left the imperial chapel with a pension of 6000 rubles. The rest of his life was devoted to composition and to very successful appearances both as pianist and conductor at concerts in Russia and abroad. From his early years he had been addicted to drinking and gambling and, according to Rimsky-Korsakov, his life became more disordered still in his last years. His



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health was quickly undermined, and he succumbed to tuberculosis.

Arensky was one of the most eclectic Russian composers of his generation. Arensky was to show a particular liking for unusual meters (and was reproached for the habit by Tchaikovsky). In his best-known extended work, the *Piano Trio no. 1 in D Minor*, the presence of Mendelssohn (and especially of that composer's own *D Minor piano trio*) is clearly apparent. The trio is one of Arensky's most successful large-scale pieces, displaying his melodic facility and fluent compositional technique. It was composed in memory of the cellist Davidov, and its commemorative purpose is particularly apparent in the third movement. Such an elegiac vein was characteristic of Arensky; it is significant that, despite being Rimsky-Korsakov's pupil, he seems to have responded far more to the influence of Tchaikovsky.

Excerpted from Oxford Music Online, Grove Music

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Divertissement for Violin, Cello, and Piano, Op. 126 Nikolai Kapustin (b. 1937)

Nikolai Girshevich Kapustin is a Russian composer and pianist, born on November 22, 1937 in Gorlovka, Ukraine. At the age of 14 he moved to Moscow and started lessons with Avrelian Rubakh, himself a pupil of Felix Blumenfeld who also taught Simon Barere and Vladimir Horowitz. Later, he studied with pedagogue

Professor Alexander Goldenweiser at the Moscow Conservatory, who also told him about Rachmaninov, Medtner, Scriabin, and Tchaikovsky whom Goldenweiser knew personally. Nikolai Kapustin is an autodidact on composing; he made his first attempt to compose a piano sonata at age of thirteen. During his conservatory time he composed and played his Op. 1; a *Concertino* for piano and orchestra.

The Op. 1 was a jazz piece and turned out to be his first work performed publicly (1957). He also had his own quintet and was a member of Yuri Saulsky's Big Band. After graduating in 1961 from the Moscow Conservatory, he became a member of the Oleg Lundstrem Big Band. Several works of his were performed by Oleg Lundstrem, with Kapustin himself on the piano.

In 1972 he started working with the radio orchestra for a total of five years, then with the cinema orchestra for seven years, and in the early 80's he started composing full time. Kapustin turned out to be a classical composer who happens to work by fusing jazz idioms with formal classical structures in his compositions.

A prolific composer, Kapustin has written 161 compositions to date, including 20 piano sonatas, six piano concerti, piano works for solo piano and four-hands, as well as for two pianos, a violin concerto, two cello concertos, piano trios, string quartets, a piano quintet, and a significant number of other chamber works as well as compositions for orchestra and big band.

Excerpted from <https://www.nikolai-kapustin.info/>



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