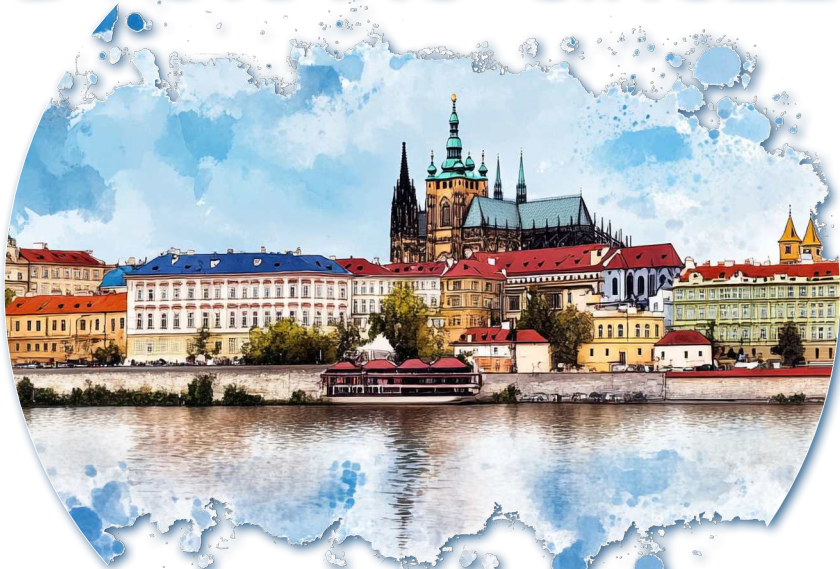


# DVOŘÁK'S CIRCLE



*Hermitage*  
PIANO TRIO

A 'PROF.' JOHNSON 24-BIT 192KHZ RECORDING



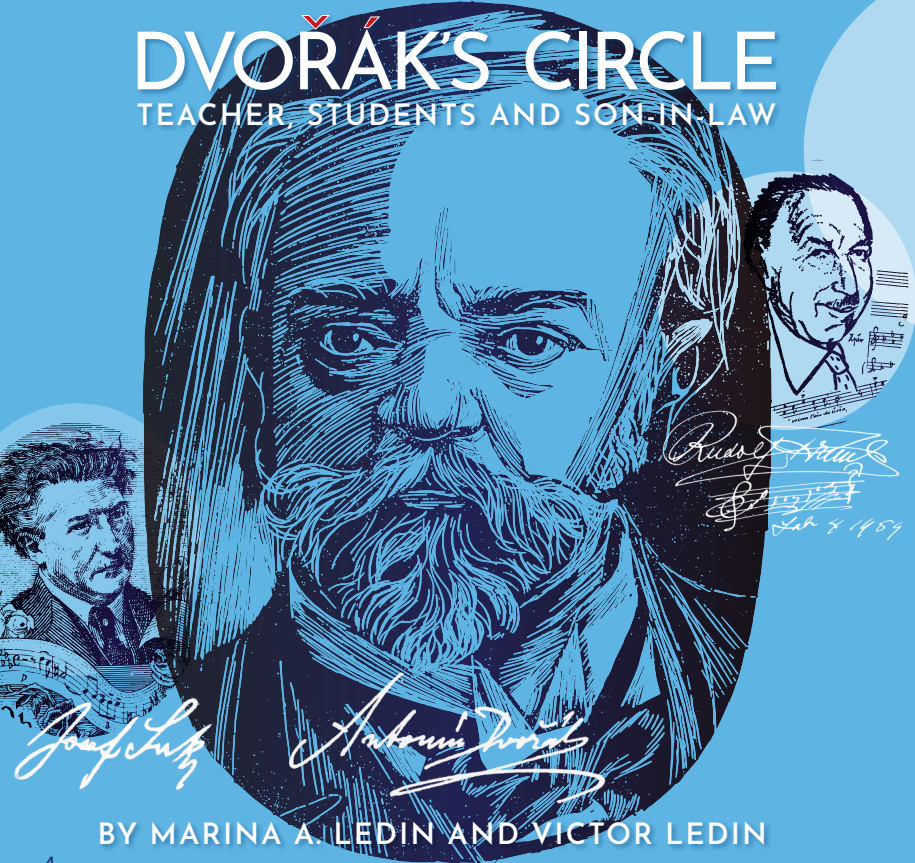
*Hermitage*  
PIANO TRIO

When the idea came to make an album centered around a piano trio of Antonín Dvořák and to combine it with compositions by some of his companion composers, we all immediately agreed that the centerpiece must be his majestic and powerful *Piano Trio No. 3* in F minor, Opus 65. This masterpiece has been a staple in our performance repertoire for over a decade and we consider it one of the most monumental works in all forms of chamber music. Stylistically, it is at the pinnacle of what defines the romantic period character; passion, lyricism, emotional expression, personal narratives and freedom to explore. The two beautiful and dramatic works of Josef Suk and the nostalgic composition of Rudolf Friml, both students of Dvořák, showcase the creativity, connectivity, and diversity of teacher and pupils. Their intersection, musically and personally, provides a portrait of three gifted individuals who explored and developed their talents because of the essential inspiration of one of the greatest composers of all time. We hope you enjoy this journey with us to magical Bohemia!



# DVORÁK'S CIRCLE

TEACHER, STUDENTS AND SON-IN-LAW



BY MARINA A. LEDIN AND VICTOR LEDIN

**T**he program we created for this recording brings together the musical and personal connections of three individuals who were mentored, influenced, and even became family.

**Antonín Dvořák** (1841–1904) was a teacher of both **Josef Suk** (1874–1935) and **Rudolf Friml** (1879–1972). Suk not only performed many of Dvořák’s chamber works with his ensemble, the Bohemian String Quartet, he also fell in love and married Dvořák’s daughter, becoming his son-in-law. Friml’s melodic gifts were nurtured by Dvořák, leaving him with an indelible love of his Czech roots.

Like Dvořák, Friml visited the United States, touring the country first in 1901. Dvořák lived in America for three years (1892–1895), producing some of his most enduring works, including the “New World” Symphony.

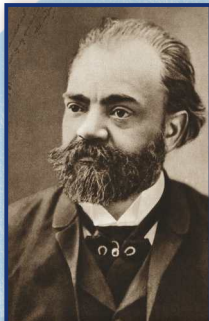
Friml, upon touring the United States again in 1904, decided to make America his permanent home. He eventually became a very successful Broadway and film composer.

Our program—“**Dvořák’s Circle**” brings together one of our favorite piano trios by this composer and the complete works for piano trio of Dvořák’s two students, whom he taught, inspired and enormously influenced. The **Hermitage Piano Trio** also brings together three individuals – all immigrants to the United States, who (like Friml) made America their adoptive country.

## ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)

### Piano Trio No. 3 in F minor, Op. 65 (1883)

- I. *Allegro ma non troppo*
- II. *Allegretto grazioso*
- III. *Poco Adagio*
- IV. *Finale—Allegro con brio*



DVOŘÁK IN 1885

Antonín Leopold Dvořák was born on September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1841, in the tiny village of Nelahozeves (approximately 18 miles north of Prague on the left bank of the Vltava river) guarded by an old square castle. His parents (František and Anna) were proprietors of an inn and butcher shop (*Gasthaus-Metzgerei*). Antonín was their first and oldest of fourteen children, of whom five boys and three girls survived infancy. The Dvořáks had a love of music; often at family gatherings they played polkas, with the father singing, playing the violin and sometimes being accompanied by a zither. It is not a surprise then, that they saw to it that Antonín was well educated, academically and musically.

From 1857 to 1859, Antonín attended the Organ School in Prague, where he studied organ with Josef Förster (1833–1907), singing with Josef Leopold Zvonář (1824–1865), and harmony and counterpoint with František Blažek (1815–1900). In 1860, Antonín's parents moved and became proprietors of an inn in Kladno, where they lived the rest of their lives. Antonín joined an orchestra that played in restaurants and beer-gardens, just making ends meet. His financial problems were slightly alleviated when, through the help of Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884), Dvořák was given a position as violist with the Czech National Theater. Greater financial stability did not come until 1873 when Dvořák

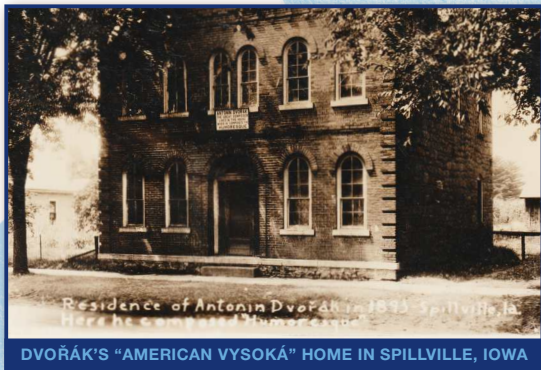
became organist at St. Adelbert's Church. Greater recognition came when his cantata, *Hymnus "The Heirs of White Mountain"* ("Dědicové Bílé hory"), Op. 30, for mixed chorus and orchestra, was performed in March of 1873. Also in 1873, Dvořák married Anna Čermáková (1854–1931), a talented singer. When in 1874, Dvořák won for the first time the Austrian State Prize for Composition, Johannes Brahms was one of the judges of the State Prize. Brahms immediately recognized Dvořák's exceptional, though still latent, creative gifts, and recommended that his own publisher, Simrock, print and distribute Dvořák's *Moravian Duets*, Op. 32. A few years later, Brahms again induced his publisher Simrock, this time, to commission a work from Dvořák. That work—a set of *Slavonic Dances*, Op. 46 based on actual Bohemian dances—made Dvořák world famous. Within a few years, Dvořák's reputation as a composer spread not only throughout Europe, but across the Atlantic as well, bringing him an invitation from Jeannette Meyers Thurber (1850–1946) to become director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York. When the Conservatory was founded in 1885 (twenty years after the American Civil War), her school was racially integrated, promoted women, and had an inclusive stance toward the handicapped. Other honors also began pouring in from all sides. The Austrian court decorated him, Cambridge University gave him an honorary doctorate, the Czech University in Prague elected him Doctor of Philosophy and he was appointed professor of composition at the Prague Conservatory. He created some of his most memorable and enduring works in the United States (1892–1895)—the Symphony, "From the New World," and his "American" Quartet. His students in America included Henry "Harry" Thacker Burleigh, Mrs. William



ANNA ČERMÁKOVÁ



JEANNETTE THURBER



Arms Fisher (Emma Roderick Hinckle), Rubin Goldmark, Harvey Worthington Loomis, William Mercer Cook, Harry Rowe Shelley, Maurice Arnold Strothotte, and others. He returned to his native country in 1895 and continued to compose and teach at the Prague Conservatory, where among his students were

Josef Suk (who married Dvořák's daughter, Otilie, in 1898), Rudolf Friml (who began studies with Dvořák in 1895), Herma Studeny, John Stepan Zamecnik (American born of Czech ancestry who also studied with Dvořák between 1895 and 1897, and became a pioneering film composer on his return to America), Vítězslav Augustín Rudolf Novák, Oskar Nedbal, Rudolf Karel, Julius Fučík, Franz Lehár, and others. When Dvořák died at the age of sixty-three in 1904, after suffering from uremia and progressive arteriosclerosis, a sorrowing crowd followed his body to the churchyard as the musical world mourned. Since then, his countrymen have held a special service in the churchyard and cemetery of the Vyšehrad Castle in remembrance for this musician who was nearest and dearest to the hearts of the Czech people. Despite the occupation and harrowing conditions of World War II, the Czech government issued in 1941 a commemorative stamp, honoring the one hundredth anniversary of Dvořák's birth.

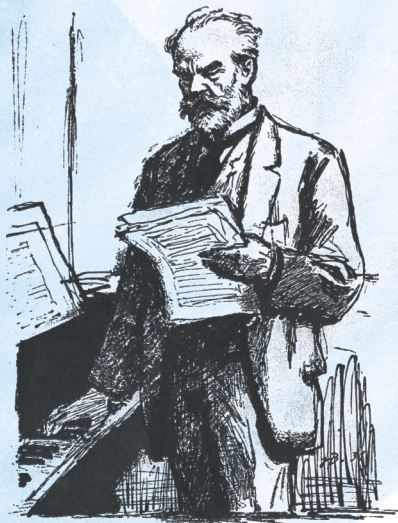


Dvořák's output in the field of chamber music for strings encompasses twenty compositions—one sextet, three quintets, fourteen quartets, and two tercets. He also wrote ten pieces for piano and strings—two quintets, two quartets, four trios, one sonata for violin and piano, and one sonatina for the same combination.

The *Piano Trio No. 3 in F minor, Op. 65*, was composed between February 4<sup>th</sup> and March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1883, and was followed that year by his *Scherzo Capriccioso* for orchestra, Op. 66 and the dramatic overture for orchestra, *Hussite Overture (Husitská)*, Op. 67. The *Trio* was first performed by violinist Ferdinand Lachner (1856–1910), cellist Alois Neruda (1837–1899), and Antonín Dvořák at the piano, on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 1883, at a concert of Dvořák's works given by the Bolešlav Choral Society in Mladá Boleslav (a city in the Central Bohemian Region of the Czech Republic that lies on the left bank of the Jizera River).

Antonín's mother, Anna Dvořáková, died on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1882, only a few months before Antonín began writing his Opus 65. Antonín was always devoted to his mother, and throughout this trio one is aware of his sense of distress, sorrow and bereavement.

Musicologist and Dvořák authority Otokar Šourek, writes: "The music of the *Trio in F minor* is the expression of a deeply-felt and passionate revolt and of disturbing questions to which Dvořák was seeking the answer.



Not even the *Allegro grazioso*, with its stubbornly persistent rhythms, is able to throw off this basic mood, while the splendid *Adagio*, one of the loveliest among the many jewels of Dvořák's creations, has a principal theme full of spiritual suffering and a middle part full of passionate defiance. Not till the very close does the composition reach an expression of reconciliation and an inner brightness of mood... It was undoubtedly this excessively agitated and painfully disturbed emotional content which promoted an exceptional concentration of Dvořák's creative powers, making the *F minor Trio* not only the most deeply unhappy and dark manifestation of the composer's spirit in his whole chamber music, but also one of the most significant of all works in the range of its subject-matter and complexity of its form."

Dvořák's *Piano Trio No. 3 in F minor, Op. 65*, opening movement, *Allegro ma non troppo*, begins with the theme announced by the violin and cello. It is a bold and sweeping theme, rich in the minor tonality full of dramatic impact. The piano does not carry the theme immediately, but rather supports the two string instruments boldly for a time. As the movement proceeds, the three instruments seem to transcend the conventional realm of chamber music and to take on the larger proportions of orchestral music. The second movement, *Allegro grazioso*, resembles a charming peasant dance artistically transformed by Dvořák. The strings provide the opening *obbligato* while the piano announces the theme, a simple and beautiful theme—one of Dvořák's loveliest expressions. The third movement, *Poco adagio*, is more subtle and subdued and is the emotional core of the work. It is based on a highly reflective theme first stated by the cello, then repeated by the violin, and later elaborated on in the extension. The concluding movement, *Allegro con brio*, is a *furiant* in everything but name. This dance form, of which Dvořák was extremely fond, is alternately bold and tranquil, its mood changing with the transitions in tempo and dynamics. The rhythmic energy and tonal impact of this movement provide a stupendous end to this masterpiece.



LANDSCAPE IN BOHEMIA  
BY JOSEF HOLUB (1870-1957)

**JOSEF SUK (1874-1935)**  
**Piano Trio in C minor, Op. 2 (1889-91)**

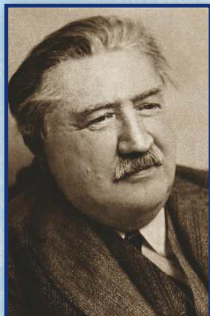
*I. Allegro*

*II. Andante-Adagio*

*III. Vivace*

and

***Elegy in D-flat Major, Op. 23 (1902)***



**JOSEF SUK**

Josef Suk was born in Křečovice (a small village in the Central Bohemian Region of the Czech Republic) on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1874. He began his studies of the piano, violin, and organ from his father Josef (1827–1913), who was the village’s school teacher and choirmaster. He entered the Prague Conservatory at the age of 11 in 1885, studying violin with Antonín Bennewitz (1833–1926), theory with Josef Förster (1833–1907) (also Dvořák’s teacher), Karel Knittl (1853–1907), and Karel Stecker (1861–1918). He graduated in 1891. Suk then pursued additional training at the Prague Conservatory (1891–1892) in chamber music with cellist Hanuš Wihan (1855–1920) and composition with Antonín Dvořák. In 1891, Hanuš Wihan formed the Bohemian String Quartet with violinists Karel Hoffmann (1872–1936) and Josef Suk and violist Oskar Nedbal (1874–1930). The quartet played in over 4,000 concerts across 20 European countries.

After Dvořák’s return from America, in the Summer of 1895, Suk became a frequent visitor to the Dvořák home in the village of Vysoká. While he continued to work with Dvořák, it became quite evident that Suk was falling in love with Dvořák’s daughter, Otilie. In Vysoká, Dvořák was fond of walking in the fields,

observing the bird life (Dvořák was an amateur ornithologist, and kept pigeons!) and rested after his whirlwind adventure in America. It is perhaps, this interest in birds, that influenced his tone poem completed in 1896, “Holoubek,” Op. 110 (which translates literally as “little pigeon,” though most published scores, list the work as “Wood Dove”). Suk’s wedding to Otilie occurred on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1898, coinciding with the bride’s mother’s and father’s silver-wedding anniversary. When, in 1899, Dvořák made his only visit to Budapest to attend a “Dvořák Evening” concert, Josef Suk was there with his quartet, as well as the virtuoso violinist Jan Kubelík (1880–1940) playing Dvořák’s chamber music. Kubelík’s piano accompanist between 1896 and 1904, was Rudolf Friml.

Suk composed his *Piano Trio in C minor, Op. 2* while still a student at the Prague Conservatory. Completing his first draft in February of 1889, he presented the work to his teacher, Karel Stecker. Stecker suggested various changes, and the work received its first performance in January 1891 (as a four-movement work), at a concert at the Prague Conservatory. As a result of the performance, Suk was admitted into Dvořák’s composition master class. Dvořák made additional suggested changes (including removing the short scherzo (originally the third movement from the work)) and the final version of Suk’s Op. 2 came into being. The main theme of the opening *Allegro* is expressed by a powerful series of piano chords against a striving melody in the strings. The slower, second theme, introduced by the cello, is more lyrical. The second movement is a striking, *Andante*. It is a relaxed and elegant folk dance. The lovely second subject is extremely romantic. The main theme to the finale, *Vivace*, is a highly original and heavily syncopated dance. Its forward energy has a bright and brilliant second part, while the second theme is an optimistic march.

Suk’s Op. 7 (1891–1893) was a set of piano pieces, of which the *Love Song*, became one of his most popular works. Arranged for orchestra, and for violin

and piano this short piece became part of every 20<sup>th</sup>-century violinist's repertoire. This composition showed Suk's youthful melodic invention and expressive emotionality. As he matured, Suk's experience as an accomplished pianist and as a violin virtuoso continued to grow. He remained a member of the Bohemian Quartet his entire life, and recorded for Polydor his own Op.11 *String Quartet*, as well as works by Smetana and Dvořák.

For Suk, the years 1904 and 1905 were great milestones—1904 marked the premature death of Suk's teacher and father-in-law, Antonín Dvořák. After a short and very happy marriage, in 1905, his beloved Otilie passed away, leaving Suk emotionally distressed and a single father raising his son. The indescribable loss changed Suk's musical style into darker and more profound tonal explorations, often inclining into pathos. This emotional turmoil turned into one of his most astonishing symphonic works—Suk's *Symphony in C minor*, Op. 27 ("Asrael" or "Angel of Death"). He dedicated the work to his beloved father-in-law and teacher, but having only completed three movements, his wife, Otilie, unexpectedly died. In his despair, Suk, added two additional movements to this monumental masterpiece, which were simply described as "To Otilie." Suk never remarried, staying true to the love of his life. This double tragedy changed his style—his themes became broader and of greater profundity; the majesty and fear of death permeated his works; his melodies became touched by an elegiac pensiveness. From 1922–1935, Suk was professor of composition at the Prague Conservatory, where he was head of master classes and rector (1924–26; 1933–35). Among Suk's students were composers Bohuslav Martinů, Jaroslav Ježek, and pianist Rudolf Firkusny. Suk died near Prague on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1935. His grandson, also named Josef Suk (1929–2011), was a celebrated Czech violinist.

While Suk's *Elegy in D-flat Major*, Op. 23, preceded the double tragedy of 1904/5, Suk's only other work for piano trio, began life as *Elegie: Pod dojmen*

*Zeyerova Vyšehradu (Under the Impression of Zeyer's Vyšehrad)* for Violin, Cello, String Quartet, Harmonium, and Harp. Suk also arranged the work for piano trio, which is the version on this recording.

Julius Zeyer (1841–1901) was a Czech prose writer, poet, and playwright. Earlier in his career, Josef Suk composed the orchestral suite *Pohádka (Fairy Tale)*, Op. 16 from incidental music composed for Julius Zeyer's 1898 mythological stage play *Radúz and Mahulena*.

Zeyer's prose and poems often convey a sense of restlessness, nostalgia, mysticism, and gloominess, while blending religious and erotic imagery at the same time. For the first anniversary of the death of Julius Zeyer, a memorial celebration was organized in his memory from May 31<sup>st</sup> to June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1902. This event took place in the Queen Anne's Pavilion and the Vyšehrad Castle garden. Suk composed his *Elegy* for the occasion—it was performed (inside the pavilion, on the temporary stage with scenery) as an introduction to the “living picture”: *When the Sun Set on Vyšehrad*: at the closing of Suk's piece, the curtains lifted and the living picture appeared on the stage. *Vyšehrad* (1880) is Zeyer's famous cycle of five epic poems of the Parnassian type—“*Libuše*,” “*Zelený*,” “*Vítěz*” (“The Green Victor”), “*Vlasta*,” “*Ctirad*,” and “*Lumir*.” The poems deal with Czech prehistory and attempt to create a great national myth. The beginning of Czech history is associated with myths about the creation of the world and the pagan element.



## RUDOLF FRIML (1879-1972) WORLD PREMIERE!

### *Piano Trio "Rural Life in Bohemia", Op. 36 (1918)*

*Andante - Poco animato - Moderato - Adagio - Allegro giusto*



FRIML IN 1955

Rudolf Friml (actually Rudolf Antonín Frymel) was born in Prague on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1879. He was the youngest of three children of František and Marie Frymel. When Rudolf's father (an accordion-playing baker) purchased a piano, it became immediately clear that little Rudolf had extraordinary musical talents. His mother soon procured three different teachers to harness her precocious son's musical gifts. He was able to improvise rather impressively and when one of his teachers (a local choirmaster) asked that the boy play organ for the 6:00 A.M. daily masses, little Rudolf learned very quickly the entire liturgy and its music by memory.

Realizing that his surname might be too long (and may be mispronounced), Rudolf created the abridged new last name—Friml. In 1895, he entered the Prague Conservatory, studying the piano with Josef Jiránek (1855–1940), a student of Bedřich Smetana, and violin with Hanuš Jan Trneček, a student of Antonín Bennewitz (also Suk's teacher), and harp with Václav Staňek. Upon returning from America in 1895, Antonín Dvořák, also became Friml's composition teacher. According to Friml's own unpublished set of reminiscences, he enjoyed his walks with Dvořák, who, according to Friml gave the young composer the valuable advice to always "stick to my melodies. Take a theme and develop it. Don't jump around like a goat!" (quoted from a *Life Magazine*

article (January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1970)). That advice Friml took to heart and thus, well-developed and memorable melodies became his calling card.

While at the Prague Conservatory, Friml met (and became close friends with) Jan Kubelík (1880–1940). Kubelík entered the Prague Conservatory at the age of eight, and in 1892 became a student of Otakar Ševčík (another of Antonín Bennewitz's students). In 1892, after many years (1875–1892) of teaching in Kyiv, Ševčík became the head of the violin department at the Prague Conservatory.



Kubelík and Friml (both child prodigies and precocious teenagers) became musical partners and began touring throughout Europe and in 1901 they performed together in the United States. Friml never graduated from the Prague Conservatory as a result of an arcane rule Friml broke—students were forbidden from playing anywhere before their “conservatory-sponsored” debuts. When he chose to play with an orchestra in Prague (after multiple warnings by his teachers not to do so), Friml was expelled from the Prague Conservatory on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1901.

According to biographer, William Everett, “In his late teens, after his expulsion from the conservatory, Friml was described as one who “Lived the life of a Bohemian—thoughtlessly.” Friml was Bohemian not only ethnically but also philosophically. Friml believed strongly in fairness and the rights of individuals... This same passion for social justice is obvious in his stirring music (in his musicals) such as *The Mounties*, *Song of the Vagabonds*, and *March of the Musketeers*, all of which have lyrics concerning justice and defeating oppression.”

In 1901, American impresario Daniel Frohman (1851–1940) engaged Friml and Kubelík on a U.S. tour that included seventy-eight concerts between November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1901, and March 24<sup>th</sup>, 1902. This was a milestone in the careers of both musicians. Friml returned to the United States for tours in 1904, and again in 1906, finally settling in New York for good. For his concerts, Friml chose very ambitious repertoire, everything from works by Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Rachmaninoff, Liszt to works by Smetana, Dvořák, and Suk, as well as his own numerous piano compositions and improvisations. In 1904, he made his debut at Carnegie Hall playing his own one-movement *Piano Concerto in B-flat Major*, Op. 10.

Friml wrote a voluminous quantity of piano music. Not surprisingly, many of these pieces possess a strong sense of Czech musical nationalism. The beneficiary of the over 100 opus numbers (many of which were suites

of multiple character pieces) that Friml produced, was the publisher Gustav Schirmer, who in 1914 also produced a fifty-nine page catalog with commentary! Being a smart businessman as well, Friml, made sure that his compositions were also issued in as many different version—for violin and piano, for cello and piano, for organ, for chamber orchestra or full orchestra, etc. After his Broadway debut with *The Firefly* in 1912, Friml's career expanded into operettas/musicals (he wrote nineteen) and eventually into films (nine in all, between 1930 and 1956). "The Donkey Serenade" from *The Firefly* became an enormous hit and was published in many versions and transcriptions. After its premiere on Broadway in 1924, *Rose-Marie* was made into film three times—1928 (a silent version starring Joan Crawford), 1936 (a black-and-white version featuring Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy) and 1954 (a color version starring Ann Blyth, Howard Keel and Fernando Lamas). To this day, it remains among his best-known and loved musicals.

Friml was active musically his entire life, continuing to concertize and record late into life. His solo concerts, often had no printed programs, only suggested composers. One such concert, broadcast in San Francisco, has Friml entertaining the audience with amusing reminiscences with a



pastiche of popular works by Dvořák, Smetana, Suk, Fibich, interspersed with Chopin etudes and mazurkas, transcriptions by Liszt, as well as flight-of-fancy improvisations on some his own best know themes from his operettas and movie scores.

Friml was married four times. On May 27<sup>th</sup>, 1909, to Mathilde Louise Baruch (1889–?). They had two children, Marie Lucille (1911–1995) and Charles Rudolf Jr. (1910–2002) (who was an actor known for *Teenage Thunder* (1957), *Up in Arms* (1944) and *Six Hits and a Miss* (1942) and an accomplished pianist and composer). His second marriage was to Blanch Betters (1892–1952), an actress who had appeared in the chorus of Friml's musical *Katinka*. His third marriage was to actress Elsie Cornett Lawson (1899–1942) (who played the maid in Friml's *Glorianna*, and by whom he had a son, William Rudolf (1921–1973), who was also a gifted pianist and composer). His fourth and final marriage was to Kay Wong Ling (1913–2007). The first three marriages all ended in divorce.



KAY WONG LING

On December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson wrote Rudolf Friml a birthday letter in which he paid a touching homage to the composer:

“For decades, your musical composition has gladdened and uplifted the hearts of America—and, indeed, the world. It must be a source of continuing satisfaction to you to know the measure of joy that you have brought to so many. Please accept my warm admiration for your timeless contributions to the American heritage. It comes from a President who has always derived inspiration from the fierce, free spirit of the Czechoslovak people which, transplanted on our own shores, has so enriched us all.”

A year later in 1969, Friml was celebrated by Ogden Nash on the occasion of his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in a couplet which ended: “I trust your conclusion and mine are similar: ‘T’would be a happier world if it were Frimler.” Similarly, satiric songwriter Tom Lehrer made a reference to Friml in his own song “The Wiener Schnitzel Waltz” which includes the lyric, “Your lips were like wine (if you’ll pardon the simile) / The music was lovely, and quite Rudolf Friml-y.” The inimitable and extraordinary Rudolf Friml, whose music brought joy to millions of listeners, passed away in Los Angeles on November 12<sup>th</sup>, 1972, and was interred in the “Court of Honor” at Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Glendale, California.

Friml’s earliest published works (1901–1905) were song cycles published by the Czech publisher František Augustin Urbánek, who also published works by Smetana, Dvořák and Suk. It was Urbánek who first published Friml’s only original piano trio in 1918. The Boston Music Company issued an edition of the one-movement work in 1925, with the Opus 36 number. It is interesting to note that Arthur P. Schmidt assigned the same Opus 36 to three Friml piano pieces (*L’aurora (At Dawn)*; *Crépuscule (Twilight)*; *Mélodie sentimentale*) that were published in 1908. Opus numbers and dates of compositions are often a confusing element in Friml’s output, something which, hopefully will one day be resolved, once someone examines Friml’s voluminous archives and manuscripts. Friml’s *Piano Trio “Rural Life in Bohemia,” Op. 36* is a brilliant short and fanciful postcard full of memories of his beloved Bohemia—and like so many of his own piano improvisations, moves from snap shots to snap shots of dances and sentimental melodies, interconnected by the ghosts of the composers he encountered and influenced him the most, Smetana, Dvořák, Suk, Liszt and Chopin. From beginning to end, this work is joyous and wistful, uplifting and celebratory, and like Friml’s other works, in the words of President Johnson, will gladden one’s heart.

—NOTES BY MARINA A. LEDIN AND VICTOR LEDIN  
ENCORE CONSULTANTS LLC, SAN RAFAEL, CA



# Hermitage

## PIANO TRIO

“...more striking even than the individual virtuosity was the profound level of integration among the players, who showed a rare degree of ensemble from beginning to end.”

—THE WASHINGTON POST

Founded in 2011, the United States-based **Hermitage Piano Trio** has solidified its place as one of the world's leading piano trios, garnering multiple GRAMMY® Award nominations and receiving both audience and press accolades for their performances that *The Washington Post* singled out for “such power and sweeping passion that it left you nearly out of breath.”

The Trio is a champion of immense repertoire ranging from the works of the great European tradition to more contemporary American pieces. Hallmarks of the Hermitage Piano Trio are their impeccable musicianship, sumptuous sound and interpretative range, which have led to demand for many repeat performances. They have appeared on major chamber music series and festivals in Los Angeles, New York, Boston, Chicago, New Orleans, Philadelphia, Miami, Washington, D.C., Tucson, Portland (OR), Tulsa, San Diego, Anchorage, Corpus Christi, Newport (RI), Winnipeg, Montréal, San Miguel de Allende (Mexico), Seoul (Korea), St. Thomas (Virgin Islands) and many others. In addition to their extensive touring engagements, the Trio is involved in educational and outreach projects.

Hermitage Piano Trio began its multiple-album recording deal with Reference Recordings® by debuting its album titled *Rachmaninoff*. Featuring Sergei Rachmaninoff's two trios and his unforgettable "Vocalise", the album garnered multiple GRAMMY® nominations and resounding critical fanfare. *The Strad* lauded the Trio's "outstanding playing in intense, heartfelt performances," and *American Record Guide* praised that "the Hermitage wants to burst forth with passion, to let the whole world know! I am really glad that someone can still play that way in our utterly unromantic age."

Their second album, *Spanish Impressions*, has the Trio exploring the rich and diverse musical heritage of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Spanish composers, including works by Arbós, Turina, Cassadó and Perelló. The album received broad critical acclaim, with *Gramophone* praising the Trio's "impeccably dovetailed phrasing and hair-trigger rhythmic unanimity," and *Stereophile* noting "the Hermitage Piano Trio sounds right at home with the color and verve of this music. ... excellent dynamics, natural colors, and big, natural-sounding acoustic."



RR-147



RR-151

A rarity in the chamber music world, this elite trio is comprised of three musicians who are noted soloists in their own right:

Violinist **Misha Keylin** has performed in over fifty countries spanning five continents. He has captured special attention with his world-premiere album series, released by Naxos, of Henri Vieuxtemps seven violin concertos and showpieces. These recordings have already sold hundreds of thousands of copies worldwide and have garnered numerous press accolades and awards, including “Critic’s Choice” by *The New York Times*, *Gramophone*, and *The Strad*.



**Sergey Antonov**, hailed as “a brilliant cellist” by the legendary Mstislav Rostropovich, went on to prove his mentor’s proclamation when he became one of the youngest cellists ever awarded the gold medal at the world’s premier musical contest, the quadrennial International Tchaikovsky Competition. Antonov’s entry into this elite stratum of sought-after classical artists has already placed him on stages at world-renowned venues from Russia’s Great Hall at the Moscow Conservatory to Suntory Hall in Tokyo.



And pianist **Ilya Kazantsev**, praised by *The Washington Post* as “virtually flawless,” has performed as a recitalist and a soloist with orchestras in Russia, Canada, Europe, and the United States. Kazantsev’s many awards and honors include first prize at the Nikolai Rubinstein International Competition (France) as well as top prizes at the International Chopin Competition (Russia) and the World Piano Competition (USA).



For more information, please visit [hermitagepianotrio.com](http://hermitagepianotrio.com)

# Hermitage

PIANO TRIO



**Recorded April 15–18, 2023 at  
Skywalker Sound, Marin County, California**

**PRODUCERS:** Victor and Marina A. Ledin

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCER:** Marcia Gordon Martin

**RECORDING ENGINEERS:** Sean Royce Martin; Keith O. Johnson

**ASSISTANT ENGINEERS:** Dann Thompson; JoAnn Nunes

**EDITING:** Sean Royce Martin; JoAnn Nunes;  
Victor and Marina A. Ledin

**MASTERING ENGINEER:** Sean Royce Martin

**SACD AUTHORIZING ENGINEER:** Graemme Brown, Zen Mastering

**PIANO TECHNICIAN:** Larry Lobel

**PIANO:** Blüthner 9-foot concert grand #149,748  
Made in 1998 in Leipzig, Germany

**ART DIRECTOR:** JoAnn Nunes

**LINER NOTES:** Victor and Marina A. Ledin

**IMAGES:** Cover & pages 4–21 Courtesy of Encore Consultants LLC Archives;  
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# DVOŘÁK'S CIRCLE

**ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)**

*Piano Trio No. 3 in F minor, Op. 65 (1883)*

- 1 I. *Allegro ma non troppo* 13:35
- 2 II. *Allegretto grazioso* 7:32
- 3 III. *Poco Adagio* 10:04
- 4 IV. *Finale – Allegro con brio* 10:22

**JOSEF SUK (1874-1935)**

5 *Elegy in D-flat Major, Op. 23 (1902)* 6:21

**WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

**RUDOLF FRIML (1879-1972)**

6 *Piano Trio "Rural Life in Bohemia,"  
Op. 36 (1918)* 9:18

**JOSEF SUK (1874-1935)**

*Piano Trio in C minor, Op. 2 (1889-91)*

- 7 I. *Allegro* 6:08
- 8 II. *Andante – Adagio* 3:57
- 9 III. *Vivace* 5:11

Total Time: 72:28

*Hermitage*  
PIANO TRIO

Misha Keylin, violin  
Sergey Antonov, cello  
Ilya Kazantsev, piano

