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String Quartet

St. Petersburg String Quartet



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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Biography



The **St. Petersburg String Quartet** is one of the world's most esteemed chamber ensembles. Their rise to fame has included a Grammy nomination, "Best Record" honors in both Stereo Review and Gramophone, an opening night performance at Mostly Mozart at Lincoln Center, a five-year residency at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, and hundreds of concerts on many of North America, Europe and Asia's most prestigious

series and festivals.

Their current season includes a performance at Carnegie Hall; a six-concert series at New York City's popular BargeMusic Series, where they will perform the complete Shostakovich cycle; a collaboration with the Naumberg Piano Competition winner Anton Nel; three concerts at the Los Angeles Music Guild; tours of England and France; and concerts in Connecticut, Florida, Texas, California, Louisiana, Kentucky, Kansas, Idaho and Mexico.



Highlights of recent seasons in North America include playing the opening concert of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center quartet series (the New York Times praised their "sumptuous account of Tchaikovsky's Quartet No.1"); a collaboration with Van Cliburn Gold Medalist Olga Kern; a tour with violist Michael Tree of the Guarneri Quartet at the Library of Congress; three concerts at New York's Metropolitan Museum with the late Ruth Laredo; and a 17-concert tour of Canada, during which the Toronto Globe and Mail wrote, "Bliss, for this listener, doesn't get much more unequivocal than the St. Petersburg Quartet's performance."



Abroad, the SPSQ has recently toured the Netherlands, Spain, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Israel and the U.K., where Tchaikovsky Piano Competition winner Peter Donahoe called their collaboration "some of the most sublime moments of chamber-music making I have ever experienced."

Founded in 1985 as the Leningrad String Quartet, the

SPSQ blazed a trail through chamber music circles, winning a number of prestigious international competitions including 1st Prize at the All-Soviet Union String Quartet Competition; Silver Medal and a Special Prize at the Tokyo International Chamber Music Competition, 1st Prize and both Special Prizes at the Vittorio Gui International Competition for Chamber Ensembles in Florence, Italy, and First Prize and the "Grand Prix Musica Viva" at the Melbourne, Australia International Chamber Music Competition." When the city of Leningrad resumed its historic name, the quartet changed its name to the St. Petersburg String Quartet.



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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Biography

In 2009 the St. Petersburg String Quartet launched the St. Petersburg International Music Academy, an intensive summer program for students, which they bring to various campuses and festivals in the USA and Mexico. In 2010 St. Petersburg Quartet was appointed the inaugural Quartet in Residence at Wichita State University.

The latest release in the SPSQ's extensive discography include CDs of Ravel and Debussy quartets as well as the complete chamber music works of Tchaikovsky.

Alla Aranovskaya and Leonid Shukayev are founding members of the SPSQ; Boris Vayner joined in 2005 and Luis Angel Salazar Avila in 2014.

Quartet members are [Alla Aranovskaya](#), 1st Violin; [Luis Angel Salazar Avila](#), 2nd Violin; [Boris Vayner](#), Viola and [Leonid Shukayev](#), Cello.



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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Individual Biographies

Alla Aranovskaya, First violin

I was born and raised in St. Petersburg, Russia. My parents told me that when I was two and a half years old, I approached a small piano which was in our home. I started to play with one finger the melody from the piece I had heard my sister practicing. My parents, who saw this, immediately started me on piano lessons. After turning six years old, I was taken to a music school. To my parents' disappointment, all of the piano openings were taken and only violin openings remained. So, it was from this circumstance that I started the violin.



In total, I have spent twenty years in music school. This includes the Rimsky-Korsakov Music College and the St. Petersburg Conservatory.



During my senior year at the conservatory, I became a member of the Kirov Opera Orchestra under the direction of Konstantin Simeonov, Yuri Temirkanov, and Valery

Gergiev. And in 1985, I received second prize at the All Russian Violin Competition. Soon after, I performed in several Russian cities with local orchestras and recorded the Saint-Saens Concerto No.3 with the St. Petersburg Capella Orchestra, conducted by Alexander Chernushenko. Soon after graduating from the conservatory, I joined the faculty of the conservatory. This was when the idea of starting a string quartet first came to me. Together with Leonid Shukaev, we decided to try to prepare the program for the All Russian String Quartet Competition. That was where our professional journey started.

Since then we have given concerts all around the world. There are few places which we haven't visited, such as Africa. But we hope we will have the opportunity to go there soon as well.

Feel free to contact me with any questions. I'm more than happy to answer them if I can.

Alla's Solo CDs now available to own!



Camille Saint-Saens
Ludwig van Beethoven

[Buy this CD](#) (This CD is not sold in stores>)

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Mozart, Beethoven, Grieg, Gershwin

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Indigo Duo
by Alla Aranovskaya (violin) and Boris Vayner (viola)

[Buy this CD](#) (This CD is not sold in stores)

Luis Angel Salazar Avila, Second Violin

Luis Angel Salazar Avila, born in San Diego, California, USA on March 8, 1994. He started playing violin at age five at the Center of Musical Studies at the Autonomous University of Baja California (UABC) who had Jelena Berskrovaia as a violin professor until 2007. He began to participate as a soloist and member of OCEM (Orchestra of Musical Studies Center of UABC) when he was ten. He was also concertmaster of the Youth Orchestra of Musical Studies Center. He has also participated with OSIM (Mexican Youth Orchestra) for three years.

In 2007 he started taking violin lessons and chamber with Dr. Omar Hernandez- Hidalgo until 2010 when Dr. Hernandez-Hildago died unexpectedly. During those three years he received several awards, locally and statewide as "Young Talent of Baja California" (2008 - 2012), "Young Talent of Ensenada" (2008, 2009), "Young Talent of the Year Baja California" (2010, 2011). In late 2010 began to take violin lessons with the teacher Nonna Alakhverdova until mid-2011. He has received master classes with Vera Kulkova, Penderecki String Quartet, Felix Olchofka, Konstantin Ziumbilov, Alla Krolevich, Cornelis Coelmans, Leo Brower, and the St. Petersburg String Quartet, among others.



He has participated in several summer camps around Mexico and United States, including St. Petersburg String Quartet Summer Academy 2010 and 2013, Nebraska Chamber Music Summer Camp (2013), Festival de Musica Santiago de Queretaro (2013), among others. In 2011 he moved to Wichita, Kansas, to study with Dr. Alla Aranovskaya, the first violin of the St. Petersburg String Quartet, as well as Chamber Music with Leonid Shukayev, cellist of the same quartet at Wichita State University.

During his senior year of high school at Wichita High School East, he served as concertmaster of the high school's orchestra, District Orchestra, All-City Orchestra, and All-State Orchestra. He has been co-concertmaster of the Wichita State University Symphony Orchestra since then. In 2012 he was appointed as 1st violin for the distinguished scholarship "Walenta String Quartet" which is the official undergraduate string quartet. In May of 2013 the Walenta String Quartet won 1st prize at the "Wolff Bing Chamber Music Competition 2013". In the same competition, he won 1st prize with his Cardo String Trio a year later in 2014. He is currently a sophomore in Violin Performance,

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violinist with the Orfeo String Trio, 2nd violin of the St. Petersburg String Quartet, and a student of Alla Aranovskaya.

Boris Vayner, viola

Boris Vayner was born in Novosibirsk, Russia. His professional background includes Novosibirsk Music College, Novosibirsk State University (majoring in mathematics), the St. Petersburg Conservatory, and the New England Conservatory, where he studied in the class of Carol Rodland and earned his Master of Music degree in 2005.

Since 2005 Mr. Vayner has been the violist of the St. Petersburg String Quartet, intensively touring throughout North America, South America, Europe and Asia. The highlights of his career include performances at Lincoln Center, Library of Congress, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Manchester Bridgewater Hall, Dublin National Concert Hall, St. Petersburg Philharmonic Great Hall and appearance at such festivals as Schleswig-Holstein (Germany), MIMO (Brazil), Buxton (England), Fishguard (Wales), Music Mountain, Rockport, Mainly Mozart in San Diego and many more. He has recently collaborated with such internationally renowned artists as Leon Fleisher, Michael Tree, Peter Donohoe, Anton Nel, and Michele Zukovsky.



In 2010, Mr. Vayner with the St. Petersburg String Quartet joined the Wichita State University School of Music as Quartet-in-Residence. Since then, he and his colleagues have been an essential part of cultural life of the Wichita community. Recent activities include a performance at Carnegie Hall with the WSU Symphony Orchestra, and launching a new school (St. Petersburg Music Academy) for gifted children as part of the WSU School of Music.

Mr. Vayner's other musical activities include teaching and conducting student orchestras at St. Petersburg International Summer Academy held at the Music Mountain Festival in CT, at "En Sol Sostenido" Music Festival in Tijuana, Mexico, at the ELAN International Music Festival in Dallas, TX and at the "Prestissimo" International Music Festival in Lititz, PA, as well as composition. His arrangement of Bach's Chaconne for the quartet was broadcast live on BBC 3 Radio in July 2010.

Leonid Shukayev, cello

I was born in the most beautiful city in the world - St. Petersburg. When I was six years old, I started studying music. My first cello teacher was Valentin Elin. I had other interests such as math and biology, but I chose to pursue music and entered the Rimsky-Korsakoff Music College. There I studied with the young but talented teacher, Konstanti Kucherov. While I was in college, I became very interested in chamber music and started attending classes of Vissarion Soloviev, the violist from the Taneyev String Quartet and Emma Estrin. During the second year of school, I entered a competition



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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Individual Biographies

for all chamber ensembles from musical colleges in Russia. Together with my pianist, Helena Kurdina (now working at the Met Opera), we won first prize. I enjoyed that chamber music experience so much that I tried to dedicate enough time to play in at least three different quartets and various piano ensembles.

At the Conservatory, I was fortunate enough to study cello with Emanuel Fishmann, the teacher of Misha Maisky and Boris Pergamenshikov. My chamber ensemble teachers included Tamara Fidler and Vladimir Ovcharek, first violinist of the Taneyev String Quartet. They represented the older tradition of performance in St. Petersburg, and I gained a lot from studying with them.

Having finished the Conservatory with honors, I entered the Conservatory doctorate program where I studied with Anatoli Nikitin and Sergei Roldugin. At the same time, I was invited to work with conductor Eugene Mravinski in the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra. Then, for a year and a half, I served in the army. When I returned, I continued work at the music college and conservatory.

I have always enjoyed performing in different types of ensembles. Besides performing with pianists and orchestras, I played in the St. Petersburg Trio before moving to the States. We recorded four CDs and toured Russia and Europe.

As a teacher, I like all my students and try not to show favoritism towards anyone. I teach them to think for themselves, master their technique, and above all, to love the music. Many of my students now play in different orchestras around the world. Two of my students, Dmitri Kirillov and Dmitri Sokolov, have won prizes in competitions, and some others play in professional string quartets. For me, it is important that they achieve success not only in music but in other areas of their lives.

Also, I have a strong interest in nature and philosophy. They help me to better understand myself and the world around me. My wife, Nadezhda Shabanina, is a singer, and we have two sons, Armand and Tioma.

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Repertoire

- Bach (arr. Boris Vayner): Chaconne
- Beethoven: Quartet Op.18 nos.1, 3, 4 & 5
- Beethoven: Quartet Op.59 nos.1, 2 & 3
- Beethoven: Quartet Op.127
- Beethoven: Grosse Fuge
- Borodin: Quartets Nos.1 & 2
- Brahms: Quartet in C minor
- Britten: Quartet No.2, Three Divertimenti, Purcell "Chacony"
- Debussy Quartet
- Dvorak: Quartet in F major, Op. 96 ("American")
- Dvorak: Quartet Op. 105
- Glazunov: Five Novelettes
- Glazunov: Quartet No.5
- Grieg: Quartet
- Donald Harris: Quartet No.2
- Haydn: Quartets Op.20, Nos. 4 & 5
- Haydn: Quartet Op.64, No.5 "Lark"
- Haydn: Quartet Op.76, No. 3
- Walter Mays: String Quartet No. 2 "Dreaming Butterfly"
- Mozart: Quartets K.421 & 428
- Natalya Medvedovskaya: Quartet Nos.1 & 2
- Mendelssohn: Quartet in A minor op.13
- Zurab Nadarejshvili: Quartets Nos.1 & 2
- Prokofiev: Quartets Nos.1 & 2
- Ravel: Quartet
- Schubert "Rosamunde" Quartet
- Schubert "Death and the Maiden" Quartet
- Schubert op 125 no.1
- Schubert op.161
- Schubert op.94
- Schubert "Quartettsatz"
- Schulhoff: Five Pieces for String Quartet
- Shostakovich: Quartets Nos.1-15
- Smetana: Quartet no.1 "From My Life"
- Tchaikovsky Quartets Nos.1, 2, 3 and Unfinished
- Tchaikovsky: Four Pieces for String Quartet

With guest artists:

- Piano Quintets by Bloch, Brahms, Dvorak, Schumann, Shostakovich, Schnittke, Schubert Taneyev, Franck and Dohnanyi
- Piano Quartets by Brahms, Mozart, Schumann, Taneyev
- Glinka: Grand Sextet Brillante
- Clarinet Quintets by Mozart, Brahms and Weber
- Guitar Quintets by Castelnuovo-Tedesco and Zurab Nadarejshvili (commissioned work)
- String Quintets by Arensky Mozart, Schubert, and Taneyev
- String Sextets by Brahms, Taneyev, and Tchaikovsky "Souvenir de Florence"

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- Octet by Schubert for string quartet, double bass, clarinet, bassoon, and horn
- String Octets by Mendelssohn & Shostakovich

With orchestra:

- Zurab Nadarejshvili: Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra
- Schoenberg: Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra (after Concerto Grosso Op. 6, No. 7 by Handel.)

The St. Petersburg Quartet has enjoyed collaborating with the following artists, and always welcomes future collaborative opportunities:

Pianists:

- Leon Fleisher
- Anton Nel
- Olga Kern
- Peter Donahoe
- Jeffrey Swann
- Mack McCray
- Seth Knopp
- Pedja Muzijevic
- and the late Ruth Laredo

Violists:

- Michael Tree

Cellists:

- Zuill Bailey

Clarinetists:

- David Shifrin
- Boris Allakhverdyan
- Teddy Abrams

Guitarist:

- Paul Galbraith

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

Most recent comments from presenters

"FABULOUS!!! They were wonderful! sounding as one. Heard rave reviews during the intermission and after. They received an instant standing ovation, not the kind where one or two stand and are later joined by . . . the rest. My husband claims they are the best string quartet he has ever heard, and he is quite the critic."

- Janet Moore, Utica Friends of Chamber Music

"The performance by the St. Petersburg String Quartet at the Austin Chamber Music Festival took place last night and was a huge success. CD sales went well too; half of their inventory that they brought was gone by the end of the evening."

- Ora Shay, Austin Chamber Music Center

Reviews

2013

[Program change doesn't stop St. Petersburg String Quartet, pianist Tao Lin from dazzling](#)

By Joseph Youngblood, Palm Beach Daily News

Chamber music of the highest order filled the auditorium of The Society of the Four Arts on Sunday afternoon, as the St. Petersburg (Russia) String Quartet, with guest pianist Tao Lin, presented a concert of music by Alexander Borodin (1833-1887), Sulkham Tsintsadze (1925-1991), Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975), and Robert Schumann (1810-1856).

The quartet was founded in 1985. First violinist Alla Aranovskaya and cellist Leonid Shukayev have been with the group since the beginning. Violist Boris Vayner joined in 2005, and second violinist Evgeny Zvonnikov in 2010. The group is quartet-in-residence at Wichita State University in Kansas.

The concert was supposed to open with Borodin's String Quartet No. 2. This work was replaced, and only the third movement — which contains the music that became And This Is My Beloved from the musical Kismet — was performed. This work features the lyric voice of the cello sounding above the other members of the quartet.

The program change was announced from the stage by Aranovskaya. The new work was Five Miniatures on Jewish Folk Tunes, written in 1990 by Sulkhan Tsintsadze, a prolific composer from what is now the country of Georgia.

St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

Two of the titles are in English: Feast Song and Tailor's Song. The other titles are a mixture of Hebrew and Yiddish: L'Chaim (To life), Lomir ayle inem (Let us all together), and Lomir ich iberheiten (Let's forgive one another). All of the movements were played with flair, with attractive passages played by the viola.

Pianist Tao Lin joined the quartet in Shostakovich's Piano Quintet in G minor, Op. 57. Lin is an amazing pianist. His playing is totally clean and he alternates easily between delicate lyric passages and strong assertive passages. The warm sound of the viola is heard several times in exposed passages, and the cello is outstanding. The quartet as a whole has many full-voiced passages, which are completely together.

The final work on the program was Schumann's Quintet in E flat, Op. 44, for piano and strings. The piano moves easily between melodic playing and finger-busting aggressive passages. The March movement contains a quick pickup note, which the strings did not always perform together. The Scherzo brings rapid scales in sixths and octaves in the piano and a wild scamper in the strings. The finale unites themes from the first movement in a vigorous and at times heroic pace. It was an altogether rousing performance.

The group gave one encore: the brilliant Scherzo from Antonin Dvorak's Quintet for Piano and Strings in A, Op. 81.

The St. Petersburg String Quartet is an outstanding group, and Lin is a dynamite pianist. It was a pleasure to hear them together.

2012

Music Mountain Opens with the St. Petersburg Quartet

Music Mountain Opens with the St. Petersburg Quartet

By Allison Silvieus, TMI Arts Page, published on July 12th, 2012

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After years of making a string-quartet statement, Music Mountain opened its 83rd summer season on Sunday with the St. Petersburg String Quartet and Misha Dichter.

The quaint Music Mountain facility lives up to its name and indeed sits atop a mountain. The long, winding road from the village up the mountain leads to a beautiful view and to Gordon Hall. Gordon Hall appears to be nothing more than an old, oblong meetinghouse converted into a rudimentary concert facility with a stage at one end and wooden church pews lining the interior. In actuality, however, the building was built in 1930 by Sears Roebuck for Jacques Gordon and is acoustically impressive.

Gordon founded Music Mountain in 1930 with the mission of “teaching and performing the string quartet literature.” His idea to mix nature with music was excellent. Music Mountain’s oasis of lush trees, blooming flowers, wooden benches on the lawn, and multiple screen doors on the sides of Gordon Hall allows the audience to appreciate nature and music simultaneously; it gives the experience a rustic feel.

The afternoon opened with a last-minute change of order, putting Tchaikovsky’s String Quartet in B Flat Major, Opus Posthumous first, followed by Beethoven’s String Quartet in C Minor, Opus 18 #4, an intermission, and Johannes Brahms’s Piano Quintet in F Minor, Opus 34. Sunday’s performance of Tchaikovsky was the first in Music Mountain history. Beethoven’s quartet has been played 22 times and Brahms’s 43 times.

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

The St. Petersburg Quartet played each piece with energy and attention to detail. Tchaikovsky's one-movement quartet was played with reverence. Tchaikovsky's major quartet was nicely contrasted with Beethoven's minor quartet (the only string quartet in a minor key in Opus 18).

Brahms's quintet concluded the concert, with Misha Dichter on the piano. Here the intensity, dynamics and finger work was remarkable. The quartet's zenith of energy occurred in the third movement but was followed by a mellow introduction to the final movement and a lyrical melody.

Misha Dichter was born in Shanghai and moved to Los Angeles at age two. He attended Juilliard and plays with major orchestras around the world. In 1998 he received the Grand Prix International du Disque Liszt for his Phillips recording of Liszt's piano transcriptions.

The St. Petersburg String Quartet has a Grammy nomination for chamber music for its recording of Shostakovich's string quartets, and Best Record honors in Stereo Review and Gramophone. The quartet has performed at Carnegie Hall, New York City's Bargemusic Series, the Los Angeles Music Guild, the Library of Congress, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art and has toured Canada, England, France, Mexico, as well as, in the United States, Connecticut, Florida, Texas, California, Louisiana, Kentucky, Kansas and Idaho.

The St. Petersburg String Quartet was founded in 1985 as the Leningrad String Quartet and won several international prizes. In 2009 it launched the St. Petersburg International Music Academy. Alla Aranovskaya (violin) and Leonid Shukayev (cello) are founding members of the quartet. Boris Vayner (viola) joined in 2005 and Evgeny Zvonnikov (violin) in 2010.

While a bit rustic, the Music Mountain experience is a peaceful, relaxing breath of fresh air. The musicality of the artists reaches a lofty level and the serene location provides an enriching atmosphere.

For further concert dates, please refer to our on-line calendar or our TMI Summer Guide.

2011

Russian Romantics Play Russian Romantics

By Leslie Gerber, The Boston Musical Intelligencer, July 11, 2011

While the St. Petersburg String Quartet has played previously at Maverick Concerts, its performance on Sunday, July 10, was its first in at least a decade. The ensemble made certain of its welcome by programming works by two very popular Russian composers. Between them, it gave us a more contemporary work that the Russians might well have admired. In his introductory remarks, Maverick's Music Director Alexander Platt drew attention to the craftsmanship of

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

Borodin's familiar String Quartet No. 2, which he said was as elegantly constructed as a Mozart quartet. That may be a bit of an exaggeration, but I must admit that while bathing in Borodin's gorgeous melodies, I had never paid much attention to the mechanics of his work, and it certainly is beautifully put together.

The St. Petersburg String Quartet, all Russian musicians, is now resident in the U.S. It has lost none of its grasp of Russian idiom. Its playing of Borodin used plenty of rubato, and its tonal quality was as lush as you'd ever want to hear. Yet there wasn't a trace of sentimentality throughout the work, and the very good balance of the musicians (strong viola and cello to match the violins) kept me aware of the texture of the music. It's not just a bunch of beautiful tunes strung together!

Alexander Platt is the twin brother of composer Russell Platt, which is our good fortune. The latter's music has been heard at Maverick before, and I've always enjoyed it. My only complaint about his Quintet for Bassoon and Strings, written in 1995, is that it was rather short for its emotional content (nineteen minutes in this performance). The slow movement is literally a transcription of a song, and I felt it could use some expansion. Both Platts spoke of the music as Copland-esque, which it was if you consider only Copland's "American" style. For a convenient description I'd call it neo-romantic. The music goes through a real emotional journey in a completely convincing progression. The bassoon has a somewhat soloistic role (and even a mesmerizing cadenza in the finale), but through most of the work it is integrated into the quartet texture.

Peter Kolkay, a member of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, is one of the best bassoonists I've heard. He plays with very beautiful tone, remarkable facility, and a consistently expressive outlook that made him a joy to hear. The StPSQ seemed completely comfortable with its role.

Tchaikovsky's Second and Third Quartets, like the Second and Third Piano Concertos, are played so seldom they almost might as well not exist. In all of these cases I always wonder why. The Quartet No. 2, in F, Op. 22, is thoroughly characteristic Tchaikovsky, with the exception of the challenging, highly chromatic opening which is as out of character (and as prophetic) as the opening of Mozart's "Dissonant" Quartet. Perhaps it is the melancholy tinge of this music that prevents it from being a hit, but that character hasn't hurt the "Pathetique" Symphony and it shouldn't hurt this remarkable work. It's got the occasional folk dance moments and the Russian sorrowfulness that Tchaikovsky lovers cherish. Performances like this one, idiomatic, expressive, unexaggerated, and beautifully integrated, make the case for the music as well as anyone might want. Now, how about some more performances of this and the Third!

String quartet sweet perfection

By William Furtwangler, Charleston Post and Courier, Saturday, June 2, 2007

The fact the St. Petersburg String Quartet returned to a mostly full St. Philip's Episcopal Church on Friday after a three-year absence is cause for rejoicing.

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

The quartet, from Russia, not Florida, is an unbeatable world-class ensemble. Their ensemble presentation is seamless and their musical insight is flawless.

Opening the Piccolo Spoleto Spotlight Concert with Bedrich Smetana's String Quartet No. 1 in E Minor "From My Life," the quartet's uncanny unity and cohesion, with judicious tempo changes, reflected the Czech spirit. Their exquisite playing revealed Smetana's lavish Czech and Bohemian melodies.

One of the first European nationalist composers, Smetana composed this quartet in 1876, after he had become deaf from syphilis. He also suffered from tinnitus, causing him to hear a continuous high note. He was quoted as saying it was "a shrill whistle of (an) A-flat in the highest register of the piccolo." This note appears on the first violin in the middle of last movement, seemingly out of place.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's Quartet No. 1 in D Major (1871) has the distinctive Tchaikovsky sound some earlier works lack. He made his mark more with orchestral music than chamber music, but this work may sound familiar. Its second movement, Andante cantabile, is based on a folk song and was arranged by Tchaikovsky for cello and string orchestra.

This bigger version has been heard many more times than the whole quartet.

Again, the St. Petersburg was matchless, with a sound so exact that it almost defies description. Following the inevitable but genuine standing ovation, the St. Petersburg played a brief encore: the second movement of Igor Stravinsky's Three Pieces for String Quartet (1914), named "Eccentric," reflecting a clown named Little Tick.

Classical Music - St. Petersburg String Quartet

**By JOAN REINTHALER, The Washington Post, Monday, January 22, 2007;
Page C05**

You might think that discipline, passion and impetuosity inhabit different universes, but the St. Petersburg String Quartet has morphed the three into a powerful musical persona. The group's program on Saturday at Georgetown's Dumbarton Concerts in Dumbarton United Methodist Church was well geared to display the many facets of its personality.

The concert opened with "Oriental," the second of Glazunov's Five Novelettes, a happy romp through a romantic's vision of the East that sounded more like a Western hoedown than an exotic fantasy. Its foot-stomping rhythms kept intricate textures in line and subtle sonorities in focus. It began with such a sense of motion that the listener felt as if this were something that had been going on for a while, and this momentum never quit.

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

The first, and lesser-known, of Borodin's Quartets is a compendium of musical devices, full of fugal snatches, passages in ringing harmonics and romantic lyricism. It is a little too long, too repetitious and too obvious but, played as well as it was on Saturday, it can be great fun. Individual lines had an opportunity to emerge, and violinists Alla Aranovskaya and Alla Krolevich, cellist Leonid Shukayev and violist Boris Vayner, who in ensemble were so ideally matched, proved also to have strong and interesting individual personalities.

Clarinetist Teddy Abrams, a 19-year-old Curtis Institute student who has played with the SPSQ for two years, joined the others for a gorgeous, well-shaped reading of the Brahms Clarinet Quintet. The first movement seemed deliberate, its occasional pauses opportunities for reflection and rededication. Abrams molded his lines with exquisite control of both dynamics and intensity (the latter especially) and moved in and out of the spotlight smoothly and with splendid artistry.

**St. Petersburg String Quartet: Dvorák Quartet, Op. 96; Mendelssohn Quartet, Op. 13; Tchaikovsky Andante Cantabile from Quartet No. 1.
Alla Aranovskaya and David Chernyavsky, violins; Boris Vayner, viola;
Leonid Shukayev, cello.**
(Marquis 351)

Having wrapped up its Shostakovich cycle for Hyperion last year during its 20th anniversary season, the St. Petersburg String Quartet has continued to celebrate on this recording with superbly poetic and elegantly considered performances of two rarely coupled masterpieces of the Romantic repertoire, plus a delicious Tchaikovsky encore. In the Mendelssohn, the quartet's extraordinary attention to not just the composer's dynamic markings, but the implications of how those dynamics affect phrasing, transforms what is often an exercise in juvenilia (Mendelssohn wrote the quartet when he was 17) into a reading of almost Beethovenian depth (appropriately so since the music is heavily influenced by Beethoven's late quartets) and complexity.

First violinist Aranovskaya and her colleagues are magnificent throughout, with wonderful shades of color shining through from the music's harmonic interior, and a rich sound that never thickens. The Dvorák is an even finer performance, as beautiful as it can be, and touched by breathtaking rhetorical touches that never become ostentatious and subtle speed changes that bring the music alive. At every turn, the quartet seems to find something illuminating. Nothing is routine, nothing taken for granted, and yet it all sounds magically spontaneous. Recorded in the Church of St. Catherine in St. Petersburg, the sound is outstanding.

At the end of the program note, there is this tribute from the quartet: "We wish to thank our first quartet teacher, Vladimir Ovcharek (first violinist of the Taneyev String Quartet), because he taught us to understand the Sacrament of Music." Since this recording was made, the quartet's original second violinist, Alla Krolevich, who had emigrated to Israel in 1988, rejoined them in October 2005.
-Laurence Vittes, On Record Review, Strings Magazine, June/July 2007

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

Summer Chamber Classics - St Petersburg

Review by MICHAEL DERVAN

[Read review in PDF format](#)

Dvorak: Quartet 12; Mendelssohn: Quartet 2; with Tchaikovsky: Andante Cantabile

St Petersburg String Quartet

Marquis 81351 (64:19)

I didn't realize I had five other recordings of the Dvorak. It is certainly one of my favorite pieces of chamber music; I never tire of it, and I have heard dozens of performances. Each time I delight in the music and find it hard to be critical. The same thing happened here, except that the second time I took out the other five recordings and compared. That gave me something to say. The music always makes its effect, but there are differences. There are even differences among Czech performances, though they are usually slight. Generally the Czech groups emphasize the lightness, the flow, and the cheerful rhythms. I hear little difference between the Travnicek, the Janacek, and the Dolezal Quartets. Our Dvorak Overview tells about the Panocha, Prague, and Smetana Quartets; the Smetana is thicker in sound and in some ways more peasant-like. But none of the Czech groups get too sophisticated or refined, that would kill the spirit of the music. The Tokyo Quartet is the most refined and the most subtle. The Orion is warm and hearty, not quite as refined. But these Russians really dig into it, more than any group I have heard. They are blatantly emotional, full-throated, ecstatic, downright thrilling. They have won me over, and I will have to put their recording in place of one of the others. (Since they all have different pairings, I will have to decide which other Dvorak work I can do without, unless I replace the Tokyo, which comes with the piano quintet, a work I also have multiples of.)

I didn't start out with any prejudice in their favor. I view the Czechs as the most German of the Slavic peoples. very rational, but very balanced. I can't stand English performances of Dvorak, but the Germans are completely sympathetic. The Russians, on the other hand, strike me as much too emotional for Dvorak and Czech music in general. Too much moaning and groaning would stop his bright and flowing chamber music dead in its tracks. Yet these men manage it perfectly. It is emotional, but it still has the natural flow that Dvorak has to have; it doesn't sound too sophisticated, too manipulated. And there is so much ecstasy, and it sounds like Dvorak's kind of ecstasy (think of the third movement of the cello concerto .the kind of ecstasy that shines so bright it almost burns).

And the Mendelssohn can certainly use the Russian treatment, though of course there are other ways to play it as well. I think it helps Mendelssohn to infuse the playing with warmth and feeling. Sometimes he seems too reserved for his own good. Here he is bolder, more forthcoming than we are used to, but I like him this way, and this may be the strongest impression the A minor Quartet has ever made on me.

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

The Tchaikovsky is the most emotional performance I've heard. Usually it is tender, sometimes it's flowing, sometimes glowing; but never have I heard more feeling than here. Maybe they restrained themselves so much for the other two composers that they felt they had a right to let it all hang out with their own Tchaikovsky. I'm glad they did, though again this isn't the only way to play it. If you knew how much joy I got out of this, you'd go looking for it. We need to break out of the usual way of playing music like this. Marquis is a Canadian label widely available in the USA.

-VROON, American Record Guide

"Quartet displays its glory"

Review by LINDSAY KOOB

Tuesday evening's Piccolo Spotlight concert featured the big sound and passionate musicianship of the St. Petersburg String Quartet, one of the festival's perennial smaller glories.

They chose to open the concert with the rich and effective "String Quartet No. 2," written in 2002 by contemporary American Donald Harris.

He achieved the kind of strength and intensity you would expect from Brahms, but by means of distinctly modern musical language.

Some of it wasn't pretty, thanks to plentiful dissonance and adventurous harmonies. But then, the human condition is not always pretty either, and Harris portrayed it here with stark emotional honesty.

Those who wonder if substantial and important music for string quartets is still being written nowadays are advised to hear this.

Mr. Harris was present to receive a hearty ovation along with his wonderful interpreters.

The musicians then truly entered their element with a lush and affecting account of Bedrich Smetana's "Quartet No. 1 in E Minor," subtitled "From my Life," perhaps his best known chamber work.

The ensemble's characteristic rich, juicy sound and heart-on-sleeve Russian emotionality perfectly complemented the music's rapturous beauty and deep Slavic pathos.

One marvel followed another, from searing evocations of passion and sorrow to moments of folksy charm and headlong abandon.

The only fly in the ointment for this listener was the repeated soft beeping of some nearby lout's unidentified hi-tech noisemaker, just loud enough to spoil some exquisite moments for those around him. For shame!

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Some surely wondered if this group's hallmark old-school tonal richness and interpretive exuberance would prove compatible with the final work, Maurice Ravel's "Quartet in F," an often delicate and diaphanous masterpiece of French impressionism.

But the players proceeded to prove their supreme skill and versatility with playing of great dynamic sensitivity and interpretive subtlety, while adding a fresh dimension or two to the piece with their luscious sonorities.

Let us hope that this warm and wonderful ensemble will continue to grace many more Piccolo Spoleto festivals with their irresistible music-making.

Shostakovich's Staggering String Quartets

by Stephen Wigler, ANDANTE

Shostakovich: String Quartets Nos. 10, 12 and 14

St. Petersburg String Quartet

Hyperion

The Borodin Quartet's masterful 1970 cycle returns to the catalogue -- only to be outdone by the youngsters of the St. Petersburg Quartet.

Shostakovich stands on a particular pinnacle alongside Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven: they are the only composers to have achieved equal success in symphonies and string quartets. But the 15 quartets of Shostakovich had a harder time establishing their place in the repertory than did those of his older peers. As recently as 25 years ago, you were unlikely to encounter these astonishing works unless you were lucky enough to hear a touring Soviet string quartet.

Shostakovich's quartets, which were written between 1938 and 1974, have been regarded as a kind of private diary — the personal testimony of a composer who witnessed World War II, Stalinist terror, the Krushchev thaw, the Cold War and the stagnation under Brezhnev. Western musicians, who understood little about the sufferings of the Russian intelligentsia during the Stalin era, knew even less what to make of Shostakovich's volatile music. They were intimidated by the way, in the space of a few bars, gaiety is transformed into anger, comedy into tragedy and the sublime into the ridiculous. Here were string quartets in which music as solemn and elevated as a boy choir singing a Requiem could suddenly sound like an accordion ensemble at an especially raucous wedding or bar mitzvah.

Little wonder, then that the first ensembles to understand and perform this music were Russian groups, most of whose members knew the composer: the Beethoven Quartet, which gave the world premieres of 13 of the quartets in **St.**

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Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

Moscow; the Taneyev Quartet, which gave the Leningrad premieres; the Borodin Quartet, which generally gave the third performances of these works in the Soviet Union and the first ones in the West. So it was understandable that the Fitzwilliam Quartet, which in the 1970s became the first Western ensemble to perform and record all 15 of the quartets, felt compelled to visit Moscow several times in order to study the music with Shostakovich before committing to public performances.

Ever since the Fitzwilliam's recordings, the Shostakovich quartets have been fair game for other Western groups. In the last 10 years, the Eder, Manhattan, Sorrell, Brodsky and Emerson quartets have recorded complete cycles. The last of these was the most important, not only because of its excellence but also for the prominent profile it acquired through clever marketing. The Emerson is currently the best-known string quartet in the United States and the "house" quartet for Deutsche Grammophon, classical music's most prestigious record label. Released in 2000, the Emerson cycle was generally hailed as having set a new standard for execution and created a new paradigm in interpretation — one less narrowly Russian in tone and atmosphere and more accessible to international audiences.

Three years later, that opinion no longer seems so widely held. Increasing numbers of listeners confess their attachment to the Borodin Quartet cycle on EMI, in which they find more sentiment, satiric bite and self-mockery — the qualities that make Shostakovich sound like Shostakovich. The Borodin players' identification with the composer, their insights into his music, their first-rate instrumental skills and precise ensemble have set the standard for recordings of these challenging works for two decades.

But that standard has been surpassed by two other Russian ensembles, an old one that no longer exists and a young one made up of musicians in their 20s and 30s.

The EMI set, from 1983, was actually the Borodin's second recorded cycle: 13 years earlier, it had become the first ensemble to record the complete Shostakovich quartets (or, at least, the 13 that had been written by 1970). Those performances were absent from the catalog for a quarter-century until Chandos Historical brought them back — and there's no doubt about it: they're superior to the later ones in almost every way.

For one thing, the Borodin Quartet was a better group in 1970 than in 1983. Not long after the release of the first set, both of the ensemble's violinists, Rostislav Dubinsky and Yaroslav Alexandrov, emigrated to the West. They were replaced by Mikhail Kopelman and Andrei Abramenkov, neither of whom matched their older counterparts technically or musically. But the major reason for the lapse in quality was the absence of Dubinsky, the Borodin's first violinist and founder, under whose leadership the group had become one of the greatest quartets of

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

the 20th century. Not only are Borodin I's intensity greater and its technical mastery more secure than those of Borodin II, but its interpretive decisions are musically more insightful.

Take, for instance, the first and second movements of the Fifth Quartet, which are tied together by an uninterrupted high F in the first violin. The Kopelman-led Borodin (1983) plays the end of the first movement very slowly; that tempo makes the opening of the slow second movement less dramatic, and Kopelman's audible difficulty in sustaining his tone is distracting. The Dubinsky-led Borodin (1970) has slightly faster tempo which ramps up the drama as the slow movement begins and makes it easier for the violinist to sustain his high-lying line, which acquires a penetrating, disquieting quality.

Another telling example is the Eighth Quartet. In the profoundly despairing slow movement, the later performance, as good as it is, fails to match the depths plumbed by the earlier one; in the second movement, perhaps the most famous of Shostakovich's hammering, percussive scherzos, the 1983 Borodin sounds tepid compared to the hard-driving ferocity of the 1970 group.

One could make similar comparisons throughout most of the first 13 quartets. Borodin II is very good; Borodin I is all but matchless.

That qualifying "all but" is necessary because of the St. Petersburg String Quartet's recording of the Tenth, Twelfth and Fourteenth Quartets. This is the penultimate disc in a remarkable series; when Hyperion issues the final disc (which will couple the First Quartet with the Piano Quintet) in early 2004, it's likely that St. Petersburg's will be regarded as the finest complete Shostakovich cycle on disc. There certainly has been plenty to admire in the four previous CDs: the wall of sound, beautiful and luxurious as well as loud, that opens the Fourth Quartet; the savagery and irresistible momentum that sweep a listener off his feet in the first movement of the Sixth; the mixture of gloom and desperation, energy and exhilaration throughout the Eighth.

The St. Petersburg players are just as fine on this disc. In their hands, the 10th's second movement *allegretto furioso* is a stupendous outburst that bludgeons the listener, and the finale, with its hurdy-gurdy Armenian flavor, is captivating. The 12th Quartet is also extraordinary: the music's journey from the bittersweet opening of the first movement *moderato* into the second movement's unease and dread and on to the work's triumphant resolution suggests the kind of musical path upon which Beethoven, in his late period, traveled. Finally, there is the 14th Quartet, written in the year before Shostakovich's death: the St. Petersburg's performance makes the final movement, with its motifs flying from violin to viola to cello and back, sound like a Dostoyevskian disquisition on the meaning of life.

[St. Petersburg String Quartet Concert I](#)

by William Thomas Walker, CLASSICAL VOICE OF NORTH CAROLINA

When second violinist David Chernyavsky prefaced the St. Petersburg String Quartet's December 4 performance with the comment that the musicians would

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

at times be "playing four independent parts, often separated by different meters," I had a shuddering flashback from enduring Elliot Carter's Third Quartet decades ago. In the event, the Duke University Reynolds Theatre audience had a much more listener-friendly experience than the austere academic style I recalled. Georgian composer Zurab Nadarejshvili (b. 1957) draws upon folk elements — spirited dances — and Georgia's characteristic polyphonic choral tradition. His Quartet No. 1 (1983), which according to the composer "reflect(s) ... the emotional experience of the Georgian people during the period of Stalinism and World War II," is in three movements that have in common a fading into silence as each ends. Beginning with a dirge-like slowness, the first movement features a soulful chant-like theme, spun by the cello, that embodies mourning the victims of Stalinist tyranny. The fast second movement has a folk dance flavor and employs a wide range of unconventional techniques — high exposed notes, bowing close to the bridge, slapping the belly and sides of the instruments with the hands, slapping the strings with the back of the bow, etc. Here each player's part is a different motif at a different meter. The solemn mood of the first movement returns in the third, which features an extended mournful melody for the first violin — a wailing for the dead — after the introduction, with extended pizzicatos over a droning cello line. All the members of the St. Petersburg Quartet played with great virtuosity and profound musicianship. The balances were excellent, intonation was exemplary, even in the highest positions, the string tone was full and warm, and the phrasing was deeply communicative.

The centenary of Antonín Dvorák's death has brought a welcome variety to our concert halls, with unjustly neglected masterpieces being given an airing — a welcome break from a too-steady diet of the composer's popular "American" Quartet, Op. 96. Bubbling over with joy and gorgeous melodies, the composer's Quartet No. 14 in A-flat, Op. 105, made a perfect foil for the St. Petersburg's other two selections, tinged with sorrow and tragedy. Ambivalence between melancholic and ebullient elements leavens the score. At times, there are echoes of the soundscape of the "New World" Symphony. The musicians' virtues, heard in the Nadarejshvili, were brought to bear in an interpretation that was as richly satisfying as it was glowing and heartfelt.

The ensemble was equally imaginative in its choice of Dmitry Shostakovich's Quartet No. 9 in E-flat, Op. 117 (1964), instead of the more often played Third Quartet or the Fifth or the Eighth. With many composed for what the composer called "the drawer," meant to be premiered in less repressive times, the string quartets contain some of Shostakovich's most personal music. They deserve to be programmed with the same frequency as late Beethoven, Brahms, and Bartók. The Ninth, dedicated to Irina Antonovna, his third wife, reflects his happy marriage, and the overall mood of the quartet is cheerful by Shostakovich's standards. Its five movements are played without pause. The opening's light textures and bouncy rhythms are followed by chorale-like adagio that leads to an allegretto dominated by a jaunty polka that becomes wilder as it unfolds. (Its relentless drive reminds me of music written for a comic chase.) The second slow movement suggests the sound world of Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, which Shostakovich had recently re-orchestrated. Two-fifths of the quartet is taken up by the concluding allegro, which features a redevelopment of all the preceding St.

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Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

material. The St. Petersburg players delivered it with astonishing intensity, deploying a wide palette of string techniques including dramatic pizzicatos, hairpin changes of meter or bowings, etc., thus meeting every demand of the score and fully delineating the emotional depth of the piece.

Revealing the Soul of Russia

by Jeffrey Rossman, CLASSICAL VOICE OF NORTH CAROLINA

The concert presented by Duke Performances on December 5 was a first in several respects and a unique experience for patrons of the Chamber Arts Society. This is the 59th season of the prestigious series but this was the first time that a concert was presented on a Sunday afternoon and the first time that an ensemble gave a second performance immediately following their usual Saturday night booking. If this was an experiment in a different kind of programming – established chamber music programming is by its very nature conservative, so this is a change but the concept is not radical – then it was a resounding success. The St. Petersburg Quartet had played to a nearly sold-out audience the night before (see my colleague William Thomas Walker's review of that concert), and 19 hours later they again had to contend with competition from the annual *Messiah* weekend at Duke Chapel. Those who attended either of these excellent performances know that the competition for parking spaces was fierce. The start of the quartet program was delayed to accommodate the poor souls lost in Duke's traffic nightmare.

Despite all these obstacles, there was again a nearly sold-out house for this Sunday "experiment." (Duke Performances will be presenting another doubleheader on January 8 and 9, featuring the Eroica Trio.) I think one of the reasons for the tremendous reception given the second presentation was the variety of programming on the two concerts. No matter how much any of us loves particular groupings of instruments, it is safe to say that mixture in the programming lineup is usually preferable, especially when the works involved are masterpieces played by exemplary musicians. This concert had the distinction of featuring a string quartet, a piano trio, and a piano quintet, all on the same program.

The first half of the program took off where the previous evening left off, with Russian works played by four musicians who have the music ingrained in their souls. At this point it is apt to bring up the old question of whether ethnic or nationalistic music is better understood and played by those who are born into its culture. I don't pretend to have "the answer," but it was apparent that these players brought something quite special to works written by Russian composers.

The eclectic program began with the afternoon's only selection for string quartet. Alexander Glazunov, although not as widely known or played now as the other big Russian names, was a prolific and popular composer in the early 20th century. His *Three Novelettes* (from *Five Novelettes*, Op.15) were written for a chamber music soiree in 1886, and the lovely, folk-inspired pieces launched the

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

wonderfully varied concert. Their lively rhythms, simple but effective melodies, and an authentic "folksy" feel gave the afternoon a light and festive start – with the more serious stuff coming up.

Pianist Maxim Mogilevsky joined first violinist Alla Aranovskaya and cellist Leonid Shukaev in a powerful reading of one of the masterpieces of 20th-century chamber music, Dmitri Shostakovich's Piano Trio No. 2 in E minor. Written in 1943-44, it is a work that runs the gamut of emotions from profound sorrow at the horrors of the war to brief gestures of uncontained joy before returning to immeasurable grief. The players revealed the emotional depths of Shostakovich's music – the performance was at times so powerful that it seemed you were listening to a musical depiction of raw, exposed nerves. Despite the undeniable technical brilliance, that aspect of the performance took a back seat to the almost frightening realism and baring of souls. Such a spell was cast that, when it ended, it felt like blasphemy to break out with something as crude as smashing one hand against the other. There was a palpable sense among the attendees that they had just experienced a truly transcendent performance.

There are many "what if" games music lovers play. What if Mozart or Schubert or Mendelssohn had lived even ten years longer? On the flip side, imagine what we'd be missing if Bach had died when he was 40. Or consider all of the music written that was destroyed by its creators because it wasn't up to their standards. Johannes Brahms was perhaps the most self-critical composer of them all, and he literally burned countless works.

The whole entourage returned to the stage to play Brahms' Piano Quintet in F minor, which went through several transformations before arriving at the form we know and love today. It began life as a string quintet with a second cello – this version was destroyed – and also survives as a piano duo. You can imagine how Brahms agonized over the use of piano in its final incarnation..., but it is a wonderful and well-balanced work that is viewed as one of the great piano quintets – a very select club.

We hope that the enormous success of this weekend with the St. Petersburg Quartet plus pianist Mogilevsky will signal to the presenter that the two-concert format is both profitable and musically satisfying. It shows that even slight variations in format and tradition can reap big results.

“St. Petersburg String Quartet”

Presented by Buffalo Chamber Music Society.

Tuesday evening in Kleinhans' Mary Seaton Room.

Review, April 29, 2004 - [Buffalo News](#)

The highly regarded St. Petersburg String Quartet made its Buffalo debut on this series in 1997, and returned on Tuesday evening with an all-Russian program which was absorbing in a number of different ways.

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

It opened with the Buffalo premiere of the 1985 Quartet No. 1 by Georgian composer Zurab Nadarejshvili.

This highly dramatic work is said by the composer to reflect the Georgian people's response to Stalinist oppression.

Its outer slow movements form a long arch structure, emerging from silence in a dream-like reminiscence of gauzy, eerie harmonics, then sinking back into a similarly vague realm at the very end. The layered, linear progression through these slow movements cannot help reminding one of the music of Arvo Part.

In stark contrast, the central Allegro is an insistently dense, prickly piece that dissolves into a diminishing thicket of percussive raps on the instruments' bodies.

With only the St. Petersburg's 1999 Delos recording as a benchmark, it must be noted that their Tuesday performance of this Allegro was so markedly toned down in aggressiveness and violent thrust as to seem almost a rewrite by the composer. Or could it be the new second violin and viola that made the interpretive difference?

At any rate, the work seems to hang together more convincingly with the softer, more muted Allegro.

Initially this music's Georgian chants, folk melodies and dramatic posture can be quite absorbing, yet in retrospect it seemed more like posturing, a large abstract sonic canvas, part musical and part mere sound effects, more melodramatically calculated than deeply felt by the composer.

A noticeably more human experience was offered by the 1944 Shostakovich Quartet No. 2.

Written under the duress of war, it deals guardedly with the emotional heights and depths of Soviet life, possibly the composer's response to the recently broken 900-day blockade of Leningrad.

One senses Shostakovich's camouflaged emotions in the music's irony, whimsy and sardonic qualities, all eminently accessible to the audience and all magnificently spun out by the artists. This was especially true of the beautifully declamatory violin solo by Alla Aronovskaya woven through the visionary and audacious slow movement (Recitative and Romance), and in the muted expressiveness of the wistful Waltz that followed.

These were previews of the highly imaginative new ways of combining four string instruments Shostakovich would invent in his subsequent 13 quartets.

While this is a turning point in the composer's evolving mastery of the quartet idiom, it does not attempt to duplicate in chamber form the powerfully searing messages embedded in the contemporary Symphonies Nos. 7 and 8.

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

All these qualities were superbly projected by the St. Petersburg musicians in an intensely centered yet beautifully nuanced performance.

The concert concluded with Tchaikovsky's seldom-heard Quartet No. 2.

He considered its first movement to be one of his most personally heartfelt creations, and the performance revealed that its complex construction and emotional intensity require closer listener concentration than in most Tchaikovsky works.

The signature use of brief, ear-catching motifs such as a repeated-note triplet figure and a descending three-note motto solidified the following scherzo and slow movement, and the quartet wound down with a sprightly finale of winning gaiety, even playfulness.

At two and a quarter hours, it was a generous concert, but the artists still appended a brief encore, a fast Jewish folk dance with a spirit somewhere between klezmer and hoe-down."

Review, September 27, 2003 - *The Virginia Gazette*

"Tuesday's appearance of the St. Petersburg String Quartet . . . was the calm before the impending storm called Isabel. However, musically, it was a musical storm of significant magnitude that swept its full-house audience into gales of appreciation and awe over the incredibly fine playing heard. Although the group appeared previously on this esteemed series, its continuing reputation for excellence beyond compare certainly preceded its return showing and made the anticipation all the more keen . . . the second violin and viola have changed . . . it's somewhat rare to find replacements that are at least as good if not better than the original. The St. Petersburg has been fortunate in keeping the good sounds coming. In the here and now, the ensemble's sound is intact and thriving . . . the membership change did not seem to disrupt the group's sense of musical nuance . . . Such maturity of approach and musical insight into all aspects of its business are quite rare and quite marvelous . . . Similar synergy exists with other chamber music ensembles, but few exhibit the same degree and depth of feeling . . . "you had to have been there" . . . to gain full appreciation and understanding of how superbly these traits were rendered. The St. Petersburg is a quartet to be seen and savored. And thus this concert was seen by a capacity house and savored to its fullest. From the delightful and exotic sounds of the opening 'Novelettes,' to the plaintive and powerfully expressive lines of the Shostakovich, to the joyfulness and thoughtfulness of the closing Beethoven, the St. Petersburg regaled its willingly captive audience with rich, sublimely blended sounds, wonderfully articulate technique, and defined musical meaning. The performance was essentially flawless, one that was filled with listener delight and musical savvy."

MUSIC REVIEW - St. Petersburg Quartet Shines

By Richard S. Ginell, Special to Los Angeles Times, April 16, 2003

In a welcome return to the Music Guild series at Cal State Northridge on Monday

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

night, the St. Petersburg String Quartet served up a program that focused upon this group's musical and emotional core. Yet it took some last-minute reshuffling of the announced lineup to reach this point.

The most significant addition was an amazingly mature Quartet No. 1 by Natalya Medvedovskaya, who wrote it at age 18 (she's now 29). Only eight minutes long, the piece has a tight, arching structure, good ideas that are bounced around the instruments and a restless, dramatic temperament audibly handed down from Shostakovich.

Earlier, the quartet turned to a St. Petersburg touchstone, Shostakovich's Quartet No. 4. Its first recording for Sony (now deleted from the catalog, alas) is the most fevered, passionate one I've ever heard; the recent remake on Hyperion is slower, warmer, with less of an edge. This performance juxtaposed elements of both.

In place of Smetana's "From My Life" Quartet, the St. Petersburg substituted zesty renditions of two entries, one in the form of waltz and the other in Hungarian style, from another calling card, Glazunov's "Five Novelettes." And the foursome swept into Dvorak's Quartet No. 14 with much enthusiasm and its tightest ensemble work of the evening.

Review - Baltimore Sun, March 4, 2003

"The St. Petersburg ensemble, which started out as the Leningrad String Quartet in 1985, ranks among the best chamber groups on the current scene. Sunday's performance for the Shriver Hall Concert Series demonstrated why. Tightly matched in tone and temperament, the players did not just delve into the notes of scores by Borodin, Shostakovich and Zurab Nadarejshvili, but into the poetic worlds lying behind each. Borodin's Quartet No. 2, with its shimmering lyricism, received an exquisite account, relaxed in pace and imbued with rhythmic flexibility. There was plenty of tension in the performance of Shostakovich's compact Quartet No. 9, which packs just about all of his emotions, positive and negative, into a single, unbroken train of thought. The music seemed to fly by, each change of mood and coloring superbly delineated. The Quartet No. 1 by Nadarejshvili, a contemporary composer from the Republic of Georgia, is largely in the mystical, time-slowness vein common to several others writing in Russia, Eastern Europe and England. This example is very personal and makes its greatest effects more through contemplation than outward gestures; even the device of rhythmic tapping on the instruments (in the second movement) is employed in an exceptionally subtle, internal manner. The St. Petersburg musicians gave the piece a mesmerizing performance."

"ST. PETERSBURG QUARTET PLAYS WITH ONE VOICE"

"Masters of subtlety and refinement, the members of the St. Petersburg String Quartet embodied the chamber music ideal of four voices speaking as one... there was nothing tepid or unilluminating about the music-making."

- Los Angeles Times

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

"Five stars for performance and sound"

- **BBC Music Magazine (CD Review of Glazunov Quartet No. 5 and Novelettes on Delos)**

"STUNNING SHOSTAKOVICH FROM ST.PETERSBURG QUARTET"

An impassioned performance of Shostakovich's Quartet No.9 by the St. Petersburg Quartet confirmed the group's heady reputation as premier interpreters of this 20th-century giant...unassailable technique and intonation, and, more importantly, [they] got the emotional temperature right...an astonishingly calibrated range of voicings and dynamics...The Russians delivered [Borodin's Quartet No.2] with sinew, luscious tonal blend and phrasing that surged with ardor...[The encore] was turned with breathtaking assurance and laugh-out-loud wit."

- **Washington Post**

"Extraordinary intensity and depth....They paid unswerving attention to the arching structures within movements, taking their time building the broad fugue of the Adagio into an overwhelming climax, making scorching work of the Scherzo...."

- **Los Angeles Times**

"QUARTET DELIVERS BIG, ROBUST PERFORMANCE"

The superb St. Petersburg String Quartet...can be appreciated on several levels. The quartet's big robust sound was so prevalent that it seems to be a signature trait...yet [they] also offered great depth in quiet, controlled playing, a rousing celebratory feeling in folklike tunes...Perhaps best was the quartet's sense of common accord... a standout example of how the ensemble projected unity, while also allowing for individual instrumental expression."

- **Indianapolis Star**

"The benchmark comparison with the Borodin Quartet on Teldec invariably favours the St. Petersburg . . . this new release makes one impatient for the ensemble's next Shostakovich disc."

-BBC Music Magazine (Review of CD of Shostakovich Quartets Nos. 2 & 3 on Hyperion)

" . . . in the St. Petersburg we have the natural successor to the Borodin's crown. These virtuosic and sumptuous-toned accounts of the A and F major Shostakovich quartets--heralding a complete cycle on Hyperion--easily rival the quasi-orchestral sonority the older quartet brought to this music . . . A dazzling debut."

-The Sunday Times (London)

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

"The St. Petersburg String Quartet demonstrates its innate affinity with these five Russian works (Quartets of Shostakovich and Prokofiev) and offers impressively polished and perceptive accounts . . . rhythmic and full-blooded . . . character, energy and musical insight. The players' powerfully wrought performance of Shostakovich's Third Quartet compares favourably with competition past and present."

-*The Strad*

"The idiomatic performances were riveting . . . The quartet created a great diversity of effects [in Glazunov's "Novelettes"]. They made the complex harmonies sound as if they were being produced by a much larger ensemble. And their delicate playing of high-lying phrases seemed to emanate from a single voice . . . [Nadarejshvili's Quartet No.2] is a favorite of the quartet-and of much of the audience after the performance. Nadarejshvili represents a viable future for 21st century music . . . he never forgets the audience connection . . . emotionally satisfying."

-*St. Paul Pioneer Press*

"One of the most spectacularly well-knit groups in the world . . . In perfection of cleanly blended tone and intonation, it surpasses even groups like the Emerson . . . It was hard to imagine Tchaikovsky's Quartet, Op.11 played with more soulful warmth and breadth, yet exquisitely dovetailed tone and expressive phrasing. Even the familiar Andante cantabile sounded newly minted and the effortless interplay in the Allegro giusto finale was almost literally breathtaking. There was incidental probing of each nook and cranny of the score, but with absolutely no sacrifice of spontaneity. Amazing."

-*Miami Herald*

"A consistently creamy tone and commanding technical finish . . . A performance of heated commitment."

-*Washington Post*

"QUARTET RAVISHES WITH RUSSIAN PROGRAM, RAVEL"

Plenty of white heat (in Shostakovich Quartet No.8). . . abandon, propulsion and rhapsodic volatility (in Tchaikovsky Quartet No.1) . . . the encore was an inexplicable rarity: Glazunov's delightful, reel-like Novelette ("Orientale").

-*Los Angeles Times*

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

"The playing . . . cut to the emotional core of (Prokofiev's) music . . . in Tchaikovsky's Quartet No.1 . . . so rich were the sonorities that the four players sounded like a string symphony . . . they let the music sing, breathe, ebb and flow . . . The authoritative performance was well-received by the good-sized audience."

-Cleveland Plain Dealer

"Splendid from start to finish . . . Elegant, stylish and extraordinarily musical, the St. Petersburg boasts a dazzling technique and beautifully blended sound . . . Its sense of musical synergy is the sort upon which exceptional careers are based . . . the group is firmly positioned among the stars of the chamber music galaxy."

-Williamsburg Gazette

"WORDS INADEQUATE FOR PERFECTLY EXECUTED PERFORMANCE . . ."

"...the performance was so magical that there was very little I could write to illustrate what I saw for those not present."

-Durham Herald Sun

"The St. Petersburg String Quartet played an all-Russian program with polish and passion . . . Every work had been composed quickly, within a six-week period at most, and showed something of the freshness of inspiration that art created rapidly with intense concentration often has. The quartet conveyed that inspiration with an equal freshness in the performance, derived from an obvious love of the music and a love of playing together . . . as well as a profound understanding of the art of ensemble playing . . . The love-duet (in Borodin's Quartet No.2) was spun out with aching tenderness by cellist Leonid Shukaev and violinist Alla Aranovskaya . . . the St. Petersburg delivered a precisely nuanced performance of Shostakovich (Quartet No.2) that never became too slick and prettified the grandeur, pathos and rough humour of this immense work."

-The Toronto Star

"Played with passion and precision . . . It's hard to imagine a more persuasive account of the work (Nadarejshvili's Quartet No.1) . . . The St. Petersburg players also did a tremendous job with Prokofiev's Quartet No.2 . . . They even made a good case for Glazunov's Quartet No.5 in D minor . . . he is worth hearing every once in a while, particularly when the performers bring the kind of advocacy to his work that we heard on Thursday."

-Ottawa Citizen

"The formidable quartet realized the work (Shostakovich Quartet No.9) with compelling gusto."

-Los Angeles Times

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

"The St. Petersburg String Quartet, which is about as passionate a group of string players as you're likely to hear . . . paid its second visit to Dallas in as many years . . . Once again the Russians impressed with their emotional commitment and singleness of vision . . . Last season their Dallas program included Shostakovich's String Quartet No.1. On Monday in the Caruth Auditorium, they played the Quartet No.2. If this is the start of a Shostakovich quartet cycle, they could appear annually until they hit the 15th quartet in 2011-and no one's likely to protest."

-Dallas Morning News

"Many of the great string quartets of mid-century and beyond have been frequent visitors to the San Antonio Chamber Music Society-the Budapest, the Hungarian, the Italiano, the Juilliard, the Tokyo. The St. Petersburg String Quartet . . . fully deserves a place in that pantheon. This concert was music-making of the highest order-total craft wedded to total engagement. To borrow a phrase from TV bang-em-ups, the St. Petersburg was all over this music like white on rice . . . this troupe is capable of transcending mere perfection, to take risks, to play with passionate intensity."

-San Antonio Express News

"(The St. Petersburg Quartet's) realization of Shostakovich's Quartet No.13, one of the composer's most remote and uncompromising creations, was magisterial. It was the fourth Shostakovich performance (in the Strings of the Future Festival), but the first in which one could hear the composer in his unfettered idiom."

-Ottawa Citizen

" . . . gorgeously performed by the St. Petersburg Quartet."

-The National Post (Canada)

"Piccolo Spoleto accomplished another major coup by again attracting one of the world's best ensemble groups. And, clearly, the word was out. Not a seat was left . . . These Russians possess an organic connectedness with the music of their countrymen, and can play these Slavic masters like nobody else: with heart, passionate understanding and poetry. What joy these interpreters of the Russian soul brought to a church full of festival-goers."

-Charleston Post and Courier

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

"It was a remarkably good year for classical music . . . Top concerts by touring ensembles (included) the St. Petersburg String Quartet's extreme intensity and polish in performances of works by Shostakovich, Prokofiev and Glazunov for the San Antonio Chamber Music Society."

-San Antonio Express News

"The committed advocacy of great performers must be the fondest dream of any aspiring composer. . . . the enterprising efforts of violinist Gidon Kremer . . . accelerated immeasurably (the renown of Schnittke and Arvo Pärt) in the West. Now the superb St. Petersburg String Quartet seems determined to do something similar for Zurab Nadarejshvili, a 40-year-old Georgian composer. Indeed, the group placed his Piano Quintet, a work from 1989, on a remarkable pedestal for its world premiere on Thursday evening at the Miller Theater. The Quartet opened the evening with strong performances of two of Shostakovich's more imposing quartets, No.3 in F and No.12 in D flat. As on its splendid Sony recordings, it delivered big, extroverted performances, with each note given a distinctive expressive profile. The players (joined by pianist Justin Blasdale) were obviously taking a calculated risk, giving Mr. Nadarejshvili a hard act to follow, and they redeemed their gamble with a compelling performance of his work . . . (a) haunting and innovative piece . . . a fresh and innovative voice . . . His music should receive wider circulation, and undoubtedly will as the career of the splendid St. Petersburg String Quartet continues to rise."

-The New York Times

"QUARTET'S GENEROUS RETURN" Honored, prized and admired . . . the St. Petersburg String Quartet continues to extend its influence. At its third Southern California visit, the strong musical impressions the quartet made (on previous visits) was reinforced . . . an ensemble of special accomplishment; their performances have authority, style, and breadth. Their technical credentials include high polish and immaculate detailing, and their probing of substantive musical matters yields genuine depth. . . . The centerpiece of the quartet's latest appearance . . . was Shostakovich's Third Quartet, a demanding and kaleidoscopic work the four players delivered with aplomb, all moods expressed, all dynamics gauged-and with a lively sense of spontaneity. Pianist Mack McCray . . . joined the quartet for a colorful exhumation of the Quintet by César Franck, making its convoluted rhetoric seem natural and unraveling for the listener its many complexities. The performance uncovered sometimes forgotten charms in the score."

-Los Angeles Times

"Among the Russian cultural treasures brought to light by the dismantling of the Iron Curtain is the St. Petersburg String Quartet . . . its reputation now rests on a

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

solid foundation of collective vision and musical savvy, to judge from a small but impressive group of recordings on Sony Classical . . . (Borodin's) buoyant, tuneful, ever popular Second Quartet attests to the St. Petersburg's cohesive temperament and the players' ability to match one another in phrase and gesture . . . a performance of virtually flawless ensemble . . . The St. Petersburg's stylish, supple, openhearted performances raise the question of why the Tchaikovsky Quartets have not enjoyed full partnership in the company of Beethoven, Brahms and Bartók . . . to hear that much-abused music treated with the respect, insight and spiritual rapport shown by the St. Petersburg players is to grasp the internal drive, the emotional logic, of Tchaikovsky's compositional process . . . By connecting with Shostakovich's emotion without wallowing in the gestures, the St. Petersburg Quartet ennobles the music. Indeed, these eloquent, technically adroit performances belie the group's relative youth and open the way to a Shostakovich cycle of distinction and lasting value."

-The New York Times

BEST CD OF THE MONTH: Shostakovich Quartets Nos.3,5 & 7

"The St. Petersburg performances are characterized by great lucidity, fine ensemble, and passionate insight-a sense of being unconstrainedly inside the music. I get the feeling that these young Russians understand every unspoken thought behind every half-concealed gesture, but they address the music purely, without gratuitous underscoring of the subtexts . . . the St. Petersburgers bring to bear not only unreserved commitment but also technical assurance at the very highest level, which enables them to concentrate fully and confidently on interpretive ends. The effortless brilliance of the prominent pizzicato episodes in all three works, for example, really make the listener sit up-not just because of the brilliant playing but for the way it registers Shostakovich's expressive points."

-Stereo Review

"This decade-old quartet displayed astonishing sophistication and self-confidence, most notably through subtle dialogue and sure, expressive intonation . . . The St. Petersburg brought (Shostakovich's Quartet No.8) to life in a controlled, lucid frenzy."

-Washington Post

"They showed a remarkable unity of spirit, so in touch with one another in the ebb and flow of the music that it almost seemed to be coming from one organism."

-Dallas Morning News

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

"ST. PETERSBURG QUARTET'S ELEVATED PERFORMANCE SOARS WITH COHESIVE ENERGY"

This opening concert of the new season was happily announced by the Buffalo Chamber Music Society as a sell-out. Even more happily, the performances by the St. Petersburg String Quartet should have left every member of the large audience with enough fond memories to last for quite a while. But it wasn't just the performances. The design of the program itself was imminently satisfying . . . with an elevated performance like this, it's easy to believe you were hearing the music as Shostakovich conceived it in his mind's ear . . . exquisite grace and vitality (in Tchaikovsky's Quartet No. 1) . . . the commitment and passion of the St. Petersburgers . . . took us light years beyond the nuts and bolts (of Glazunov's Quartet No. 5)."

-The Buffalo News

"CHAMBER OPENER GLORIOUS"

(The Piccolo Spoleto Festival) got off to a rousingly successful opening Monday evening by featuring the St. Petersburg String Quartet . . . the program was made up of some glorious sounds worth re-hearing and re-experiencing . . . held the audience entranced throughout."

-Charleston Post and Courier

"A world-class ensemble . . . exquisite performance of Borodin's Quartet No.1 . . . there was an athletic quality to their playing, a breathtaking combination of strenuousness and natural ease . . . they played Haydn's Quartet in F minor, Op.20 No.5, with thrilling ferocity and grace."

-New York Newsday

"The St. Petersburg String Quartet . . . had this reviewer appreciating anew--how else to put it--the sheer Russianness of Russian music-making at its best. In comparison, even so estimable a group as the () Quartet . . . can sometimes leave you with the impression that they have thought their way into that music's universe of discourse . . . Which is a way of saying that on home ground--here it was the Quartet No.2 by Shostakovich, a Russian, and the Quartet (1985) by Nadarejshvili, a Georgian--the St. Petersburg Quartet would not know how to sound unidiomatic. We were off (in the Nadarejshvili) into regions of fierceness or quiet that leapt upon us urgently but were always part of a story-telling impetus that (for all its technical sophistication) seemed ageless. The sound of ancient church chants . . . could be heard in it, along with something like the tone of troubled 20th-century humanness . . . Vivid, gripping music indeed . . . The St. Petersburg Quartet played it as if for dear life. The Shostakovich Second . . . was

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

precisely the sort of piece that made the Nadarejshvili possible. The St. Petersburg Quartet brought to it an intensity and commitment, and a level of tonal firepower . . . that brooked no resistance."

-Boston Globe

"Any list of highlights from the recently-concluded Piccolo Spoleto Festival would have to include the début recital of the St. Petersburg String Quartet, properly identified by the New York Times as 'one of Russia's cultural treasures.' . . the quartet left its audience cheering with a performance of Shostakovich's Fourteenth String Quartet."

-Toronto Star

"CONCERT EXHIBITS PERFECT LINKING OF MUSIC, MUSICIANS"

Tuesday's performance was simply fabulous . . . with their elegant style and deep emotional involvement, the St. Petersburg members burned their performance into my memory."

-Houston Chronicle

"Such an engrossing, convincing performance . . . this is a group very much on the fast track . . . The St. Petersburg combines the power and emotionalism of the great American quartets with European style precision and loving attention to detail. Their sound is amazingly unified, with a dark, rich tone that will become their signature, phrasing so tight that it was hard to tell who was playing what line, intonation so secure . . . (The Haydn) was subtle and elastic, burnished with that luxuriant tone, rubato startling in its unanimity . . . the finale's beautifully tempered fugue won shouts and whistles at the end, unusual for the opening piece on a program. The audience kept up this enthusiasm throughout the concert . . . (the Ravel) was nothing less than oceanic . . . a monumental performance, bringing freshness and a sense of being in the moment to a well-worn work."

-Newark Star-Ledger

". . .like being present at the Big Bang that created the universe. The St. Petersburg Quartet has indeed stunned those who have listened to them live or heard their recordings . . . Some of us are willing to bet that the St. Petersburg is headed for the same destiny as the Tokyo (String Quartet) . . . a high-wire act of precision and expressiveness is just the start. In addition to the cleanliness and the emotion, the players have a startling sensitivity to the qualities that turn sound into music . . . They handle dynamics, articulation, and tempo with uncanny **St.**

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Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

refinement. It is as if, for every aspect of the music, they have expanded the gradations of the spectrum. The effect is that of replacing the box of eight basic Crayola crayons with the big set of 96."

-U.S.1 (Princeton)

"The 1995 Sedona Chamber Music Festival took off with a rousing weekend of passionate music played by an equally passionate ensemble from Russia . . . Its tour de force programming . . . raised the festival to artistic levels formerly thought unattainable. The ensemble's level of intensity was as remarkable as the beauty of the music . . . perfect understanding . . . Aranovskaya and her colleagues (had) plenty of opportunity to reveal their explosive passion, in rhythm as well as tonal warmth . . . all three days' audiences offered enthusiastic ovations at the conclusion of each concert."

-Arizona Republic

(From Mostly Mozart Festival, Lincoln Center) "Their tone is dark, warm, capable of nuance and variety. Their rhythm and pacing are supple and flexible; they take over lines and phrases seamlessly. Yet despite their technical perfection, they are not careful or inhibited, but vibrantly human, with a youthful exuberance and romantic passion . . . "They played (Haydn's Quartet Op.20 No.5) beautifully, bringing out all the subtle changes of mood, color and expression; the final Fugue was both crystal clear and menacingly mysterious. Shostakovich's Quartet No.7 flowed with the natural inevitability of a conversation in one's native language. The players' emotional involvement and projection cast a real spell. They deserve every success, at home and abroad."

-Strings Magazine

"QUARTET LIVES UP TO ITS BILLING"

It was like chamber music used to be . . . beautiful sound, filled with emotion . . . The leader is a magnetic virtuoso named Alla Aranovskaya, who clearly could have a solo career, such is her expressive power and fiery technique . . . conjured up luxurious musical textures one minute and vigorous attacks the next . . . despite a very warm night in Chautauqua Auditorium, there was even an encore . . . the St. Petersburg Quartet intoxicated a sizable (800+) audience with its mastery."

-Denver Post

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

"RUSSIAN QUARTET PROVES IT—PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT"

The St. Petersburg String Quartet illustrated the wondrous results achievable when a group of four devoted, talented players spend 10 years practicing together daily. It was clear from their performance that they have patiently and unselfishly honed their technical skills and investigated musical possibilities together with ever-increasing understanding. . . a riveting, unforgettable account of Mozart's great D minor Quartet, K.421. Ensemble went beyond perfection; each bow stroke was completely synchronized, each tone carefully shaped, each pause as rhythmically apt as the sounds surrounding it . . . The players demonstrated compelling insight . . . the interaction (in the Ravel) was so skillful as rapid motives were passed from one instrument to another that one might easily have remained unaware of how demanding this colorful music is for the performers . . . one must applaud such creative and imaginative musical thinking, especially when the playing is so extraordinarily skillful and full of conviction."

-San Diego Times Union

"Really sensational: sparkling, colorful, refreshingly spontaneous . . . authentically exciting . . . scintillating."

-The Reader (San Diego)

"QUARTET ENTHRALLED"

The ensemble presented Shostakovich's Quartet No.3 in F major with stunning technical virtuosity and equally mesmerizing interpretation . . . The capacity audience responded with a standing ovation. All that was before intermission. Quartets by Haydn and Brahms received equally inspired readings. The first violinist, Alla Aranovskaya, shone forth with brilliance like the bright silver of her gown against the proper black ties of her male colleagues. But each artist was a soloist whose virtuosity and passion, honed within this ensemble since 1985, gave precise witness to the Russian soul . . . Again, a standing ovation as the concert ended. An encore was absolutely necessary, a rare event at chamber music concerts. The ensemble played Polka, again by Shostakovich . . . made you want to dance . . . Charleston Chamber Music Society has presented 55 seasons of consistently high quality concerts . . . Many, if not most, were outstanding. But few lit up the wintry evening as brightly as did the St. Petersburg Quartet."

-Charleston (WV) Daily Mail

"RUSSIANS DELIVER SUPERB SHOSTAKOVICH. The St. Petersburg String Quartet's performance of the lesser-known Third Quartet of Shostakovich drew a spontaneous, sustained standing ovation from the ample audience . . . That response in the middle of a program has been rare. . . The SPSQ made it **St.**

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Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

intensely compelling, the finest part of a superb concert . . . The unconventional form . . . let the ensemble demonstrate an exceptional narrative gift . . . Brahms' Quartet in C minor, Op.51 No.1 had subtle, flexible rhythm and a steely power that gave the music an icy, but not clinical, passion."

-Charleston (WV) Gazette

"It pays to go right to the source . . . So it was an extraordinary treat to hear the St. Petersburg String Quartet perform an all-Russian chamber music program Saturday evening . . . The final bars of Shostakovich's String Quartet No.3 were so emotionally charged, you could have cut the tension in the audience with a knife. After the final note died away, you could hear many listeners among the several hundred in the audience let out their breath at once . . . The delightful folk-flavored melody of the first movement set the stage for a carefully-wrought performance . . . the four musicians delivered a powerful, emotional climax . . . an extraordinarily cohesive performance."

-Grand Rapids Review

"Formed only 12 years ago, the St. Petersburg String Quartet has advanced rapidly to the upper echelons of the chamber music world. For the large house at the Civic Auditorium Thursday night, the reasons were obvious. . . the quartet performed a superb program, freshening the audience's perspective of even often-heard masterpieces . . . Thursday's concert began with a striking rendition of the Haydn Quartet Op.20 No.4. Consistently clean in attacks and crisp in effects, the players opened up fresh sonic possibilities . . . Prokofiev's Quartet No.1 was performed with overflowing vitality . . . The final work, Borodin's luscious Quartet No.2, was the highlight of a very gratifying concert. . . The St. Petersburg Quartet played it to such perfection that those hearing it Thursday are unlikely to hear it performed better in their lifetimes. Icing on the cake came with the group's spritely and delightful encore, a Shostakovich Polka. . . The group's high technical ability, joined with remarkable interpretive ardor, allowed them to elicit listeners' aesthetic intellect as well as their deepest emotions."

-Kalamazoo Gazette

"The St. Petersburg String Quartet has become perhaps the most admired Russian chamber ensemble working in the West. . . subtle, carefully mixed colors and precise gradations of dynamics. They show an acute sense of rhythm and admirable concern for balance and the articulation of inner voicings. . . Performances of the Tchaikovsky Quartet No.2 and the Shostakovich Quartet No.3 were characterized by perfectly blended tones, pinpoint accuracy and single-minded outlook."

-Minneapolis Star-Tribune

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

"The St. Petersburg Quartet made its South Florida début Sunday night at the Mainly Mozart Festival, playing Schubert, Mozart and Beethoven with warm humanity of tone . . . There was a breadth and intense lyricism in the St. Petersburg's performance that . . . made me wonder whether the cooler, more objective performances by other quartets really are correct . . . Aranovskaya's violin led eloquently with sustained power, matched by Shukaev's dark, ardently projected cello."

-Miami Herald

"ST. PETERSBURG QUARTET INFUSES MUSIC WITH LIFE"

The St. Petersburg String Quartet staked a plausible claim to the top rung of the chamber music ladder . . . the Quartet plays with high polish, perfect accord and a transparent, unusually clean and integrated sound. But what sets this troupe apart is its capacity to get inside the music and astonish the listener with the sheer rightness and vividness of its interpretations . . . Not a bar passed without a bold insight, an unexpected nuance of color, balance, tempo or rhythm that made you think, 'Oh! So that's how it's supposed to go!' The hallmark of the St. Petersburg is a driving, surging, throbbing, organic sense of rhythm . . . This was music overbrimming with life."

-San Antonio Express-News

"An estimated 600 listeners, one of the largest Musicorda audiences ever, packed Chapin Auditorium for the opening concert of the '95 Musicorda Festival . . . Clearly etched on the musicians' faces, buried in their every motion, was the deep-seated connection they feel to Shostakovich's notes, ideas and musical emotions. For them and for their listeners, the piece became personal property, shared almost jealously, but with searing passion. Solo passages of surpassing beauty were rendered by first violinist Alla Aranovskaya and cellist Leonid Shukaev . . . They knew as well when to pull the music inward, almost shielding it from view, making us yearn to hear what we thought we heard once more."

-Union-News (Springfield, MA)

"ST. PETERSBURG OPENS MUSICORDA WITH FLAIR"

"The flawless precision of this quartet was awe-inspiring. They took three curtain calls, one to a standing ovation, and then rewarded us with a Scherzo by Borodin as an encore . . . The 'bite' of (Aranovskaya's) attack, her consistently strong bowing, and her supremely confident fingerwork were electrifying."

-Daily Hampshire Gazette (Northampton, MA)

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

(From the Texas Music Festival) " . . . striking Houston début . . . The prize-winning musicians were first-rate . . . played with effortlessness and intimacy . . . Its blend was refined yet relaxed . . . the interpretive style was gripping . . . the players poured all the wrenching emotion necessary into Shostakovich's heartbreakingly music . . . (The Borodin) again was freely expressive, handsome and commanding."

-Houston Chronicle

"BONUS CONCERT BECOMES HIGHLIGHT OF SEASON"

"The St. Petersburg, one of the best string quartets performing today, played like one person with four heads . . . they are an ensemble of tremendous power, playing with an amazing freedom of expression . . . such understanding and penetration into the essence of the compositions that the complex became simple; the simple at the same time was rendered with such depth that it became highly sophisticated . . . in the web of sound which the musicians wove around the understandably appreciative and excited audience, the balance and part passing were impeccable, as if there were only one instrument speaking . . . it was as powerful as it was elegant, sounding more like a string orchestra . . . astoundingly multidimensional and spherical sound and an orchestral depth of harmony . . . almost overwhelming."

-Westport Minuteman

"RUSSIAN QUARTET CAPTIVATES BROWNSVILLE AUDIENCE"

"The local audience knew quality when they heard it and saw it. Each musician stroked his instrument like a familiar and cherished lover-gently, yet assertively, with passion and affection, whimsy and glee . . . The ensemble followed up with three encores, and the audience reciprocated with three standing ovations."

-Brownsville (TX) Herald

"STRING QUARTET DESERVES KUDOS TOSSED THEIR WAY"

"Superb performances . . . last night, before a packed house . . . the players held back nothing . . . Tchaikovsky's Quartet No.3 became the masterpiece of the evening. The ensemble delivered a mature and passionate reading . . . that lifted the four musicians--and the audience--out of their seats."

-The Blade (Toledo)

" . . . single-minded sense of warmth and intimacy . . . ardent lyricism. There was synchronic insistence to the driving rhythms of Prokofiev's String Quartet No.1, but even the most aggressive sections beckoned with soft-edged songfulness.

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

The fifth quartet of Haydn's Op.20 . . . seethed with a dark effervescence as players caressed legato phrases with unhurried care. The fugue evolved with exact balance and a natural sense of logic. Borodin's D-major String Quartet . . . coaxed with melodic sparkle . . . in the hands of this ensemble, it surged invitingly-sure, focused and full of pastoral gentleness."

-Los Angeles Times

"A near-capacity audience was treated to an exquisite evening of music-making . . . that might easily have transpired in a major international venue . . . The ensemble delivered spirited, idiomatic readings of Shostakovich's Quartet No.2 and Tchaikovsky's Quartet No.3 . . . obvious affection and conviction . . . Their playing was characterized by bold articulations, sweeping legato melodic lines, facile technique in rapid passages and a command of wide-ranging dynamic levels and tempi. It was the kind of ensemble playing that can only come from years of working together and living with the literature being performed . . . the quartet received a well-deserved standing ovation and obliged the house with encores by Borodin and Shostakovich."

-Augusta Chronicle

"RUSSIAN MUSICIANS GIVE STELLAR CONCERT"

A lovely and gripping performance . . . lively, vital sound . . . if you closed your eyes when a passage was being passed from one instrument to another, it was hard to tell where one player stopped and the other started. Their playing at very soft levels was extremely controlled, with no unwanted sounds. In the lightest passages, in fact, it sounded as though they were using only one or two hairs on their bows. The second movement of the Tchaikovsky, bouncy and playful, had the quartet members tossing notes and phrases from one to another like a hot potato."

-Daily Gazette (Schenectady)

"There is a justifiable fear that the traditions of the venerated old timers will be lost amid a welter of styles presented by numerous, often flashy newcomers. Regarding the preservation of the Russian tradition represented by the Borodin String Quartet, there seems to be no cause for alarm. Consider the St. Petersburg String Quartet . . . Like the best of yesterday's Russian quartets, the St. Petersburg employs long bow strokes and wide dynamic range (the group's pianissimo is gorgeous) . . . and, as with the Borodin String Quartet, the combination of warmth and terseness these players bring to Shostakovich is a welcome antidote to the hyper-aggressive treatment some of today's hot young groups find stylistically apposite."

-Los Angeles Times

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

"A well-balanced, creative and powerful program . . . the quartet played with confidence and authority . . . anchored by the commanding presence of violinist Alla Aranovskaya . . . dramatic physical expression and a palpable emotional intensity . . . The quartet showed splendid technique and admirable unity throughout . . . (The encore, a Shostakovich Polka), was a comic gem."

-Orange County Register

"This decade-old ensemble sounds like one of Russia's finest."

-San Jose Mercury News

"ST. PETERSBURG STRING QUARTET PRESENTS WORLD-CLASS CONCERT"

"One of the world's best musical ensembles . . . The players' pianissimo passages were softer than one usually hears and their bravura passages were fuller and more furious than most . . . it was wonderful."

-Oakland Tribune

"The String Quartets of Tchaikovsky have never been fully appreciated outside Russia, but this new recording by the St. Petersburg String Quartet might help to change that situation. The performance has the warmth that Tchaikovsky's music needs, as well as complete technical security and a convincing sense of form and climax."

-Washington Post

"The emotional intensity and warmer tonal tapestry of the Russian players are well-suited to Borodin's lyrical works. In the famous Notturno--Borodin's most indelible melody--where the () group seems to be merely playing the notes, the Russians' warm languor penetrates to the heart of Borodin's nocturnal romanticism."

-Chicago Tribune

" . . . among the world's very best . . . the kind of committed and passionate music-making that's in short supply among the groups churned out by American conservatories . . . (their CD's) show more of the virtues we expect from a live concert than we hear when the usual touring ensemble stops off for a visit . . . the St. Petersburg's playing in the first installment of the Shostakovich series shows mastery that should triumph across the full range of the quartet repertoire."

-Willamette Week (Portland)

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Reviews

" . . . some of the best quartet playing to emerge from Russia in 30 years."

-In Tune

"This keen young St. Petersburg ensemble displays a genuine roster of virtues . . . the combination of ardour and textural richness invariably holds one's attention."

-Gramophone

" . . . these performances can hold their own with the best of them . . . the St. Petersburg group constantly dig deep to expose the full panoply of Tchaikovsky's expressive range."

-CD Review

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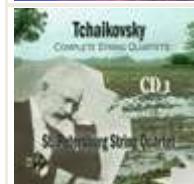
St. Petersburg String Quartet – Discography

[Click to read](#) about the St. Petersburg String Quartet complete cycle of Shostakovich quartets.

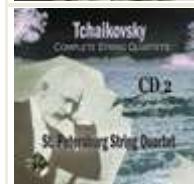
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Mendelssohn and Dvorak: String Quartets
(Marquis Music: MAR 351)
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Shostakovich: The Complete String Quartets (Hyperion
CDS44091/6)
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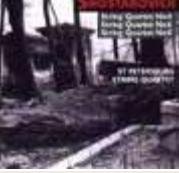
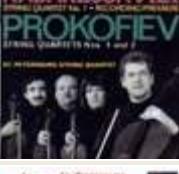
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	Shostakovich: Quartets Nos.10 12 & 14 (Hyperion CDA67156) ★★★★★ - Klassik.com Listen and buy this CD
	Shostakovich: Quartets Nos 5, 7, and 9 (Hyperion CDA67155) Chamber Music America/WQXR Award for Best Chamber Music CD of 2001 Listen and buy this CD
	Shostakovich: Quartets Nos. 4, 6 and 8 (Hyperion CDA67154) ★★★★★ - BBC Music Magazine Listen and buy this CD
	Shostakovich: Quartets Nos. 2 and 3 (Hyperion CDA67153) ★★★★★ - BBC Music Magazine Listen and buy this CD
	Shostakovich: String Quartet 1, Piano Quintet, Piano Trio 2 (Hyperion CDA67158) ★★★★★ - BBC Music Magazine Listen and buy this CD
	Borodin: Quartets Nos. 1 & 2 (Dor-90307) AFIM Indie Award nominee Listen and buy this CD
	Glazunov: Quartet No. 5, Five Novelettes (Delos 3262) ★★★★★ - BBC Music Magazine Listen and buy this CD
	Prokofiev: Quartets Nos. 1 and 2; Zurab Nadarejshvili: Quartet No. 1 (Delos 3247) Listen and buy this CD
	Shostakovich: Quartet Nos. 3, 5, and 7 (Sony Classical 66592) - Grammy-nominee; - Best Recording of the Month Stereo Review and Gramophone

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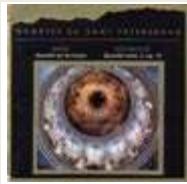
Shostakovich: Quartet Nos. 1,2 and 4 (Sony Classical 64584)



Tchaikovsky: The Complete Works for String Quartet (Sony Classical 57654)

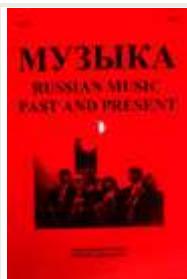


Borodin: Complete Quartets (Sony Classical 64097)



Ravel: Quartet in F; Shostakovich Quartet No.3 (Euroconcert 25.1500)

Books and Solo CDs of Quartet members



Alla Aranovskaya.
Selected chapters from "Sketches Between the Notes"

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**Camille Saint-Saens
Ludwig van Beethoven**
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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Selected YouTube Video Links

Dvorak: American Quartet, mvt. 4

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-EQA1lnEqKc>

Tchaikovsky: Waltz

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yEV0mn1urM4>

Borodin: Nocturne (with paintings by Malkhaz Dekanoidze)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYIBkQ9GLCg>

Erwin Schulhoff: Alla Czeca

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gyh6PpOuEys>

Erwin Schulhoff: Valse, Tarantella

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGoID_1kUTQ

Shostakovich: String Quartet No.6 in G major, op.101 mvt#1 - Allegretto

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FjAxiS48pQ0>

Shostakovich: String Quartet No.6 in G major, op.101 mvt#2 - Moderato con moto

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PX3TMbMCjg>

Shostakovich: String Quartet No.6 in G major, op.101 mvt#3 - Lento

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SeRDR7wHieA>

Shostakovich: String Quartet No.6 in G major, op.101 mvt#4 - Lento-Allegretto

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PwZ9bsAfAk>

Beethoven: String Quartet Op.18 No.6, mvt#1 Allegro con brio

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXaZT4Hd5zU>

Beethoven: String Quartet Op.18 No.6, mvt#4 La Melinconia

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a1eiyoFeUg8>

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St. Petersburg String Quartet – Selected YouTube Video Links

Shostakovich: String Quartet No.7 in F-sharp minor, Op. 108

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czrpVSUdKhA>

Mozart: String Quartet in C major, K.465 "Dissonant"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bsAuJgD3-1E>

Shostakovich: String Quartet No.4 in D major, Op.83

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mn7rTXE156E>

Mendelssohn: String Quartet in D major, Op. 44, No.1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVf1B7AA6EY>

Bach: Chaconne, pt.1 (arr. Vayner)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJ3I39dptgo>

Hugo Wolf: Italian Serenade

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmVLQXh4qRs>

Orlando de Lassus: Stabat Mater (arr. Vayner)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vREOv_Fjhzk

Walter Mays: Dreaming Butterfly pt.1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TzQsl4B3B-I>

Brahms: Sextet, Op.36 St Petersburg Quartet at Music Mountain

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yEV0mn1urM4>

St. Petersburg Quartet with Misha Dichter at Music Mountain 2012

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_jVQ5VcxER4

Jeremiah Bornfield: The Following (BargeMusic 2012)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkLqNXA7rnM>

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Hyperion Records - www.hyperion-records.co.uk

Cranbrook Music Guild - www.cranbrookmusicguild.org

Marquis Classics - www.marquisclassics.com

St. Petersburg Music Academy - www.StPetersburgAcademy.com

Elan International Music Festival - www.ElanMusicFestival.org

Music Mountain - www.MusicMountain.org

St. Petersburg Piano Quartet - <https://www.facebook.com/StPetersburgPianoQuartet>

Suprima Chamber Orchestra - <http://www.instantencore.com/contributor/contributor.aspx?Cld=5170745>

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