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Nut Point Centre

ASTOR PIAZZOLLA (ARG) — Two Tangos
— *Primavera Portena and Oblivion*

GARETH FARR (NZ) — Forbidden Colours

JOHN MUSTO (USA) — Piano Trio

SERGEI RACHMANINOV (RUS) — Trio Élégiacque
No.2 in d minor, Opus 9

NZTrio

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Astor Piazzolla (Argentina; 1921–1992):

Two Tangos: Primavera Porteña, Oblivion, c. 8'

There are two sides to Astor Piazzolla: the serious symphonic composer and the undisputed tango king. Born in the midst of the tango craze that was sweeping through Buenos Aires, he served his apprenticeship in the old tango bands, playing his beloved bandoneón and beginning to develop his own style of tango, Nuevo tango, which dispensed with the rigid old rhythms and structures and would very soon make his name.

Primavera Porteña—Spring in Buenos Aires—is from his own version of The Four Seasons, inspired by Vivaldi and dating from the heyday of his first most popular band, the Nuevo Tango Quintet. It was 1965, they had just broken onto television as well as radio, and were performing every night at a succession of wildly popular clubs where people like Ella Fitzgerald and Marlene Dietrich came when they were in town.

At the other end of the scale, *Oblivion* is pure tango, an almost unbearably nostalgic paean to youth, written for the last of his movies—Marco Bellocchio's *Henry IV*, of 1984. Piazzolla was now onto his second quintet, enjoying worldwide acclaim, and had just had a beautiful reunion with his daughter, in Mar Del Plata south of Buenos Aires, where he had been born. Sadness was mixed with the joy: his mother had recently died, and besieged by reporters, he told them that it was now a sadder place for him with her no longer there.

Gareth Farr (NZ; b. 1968):

Forbidden Colours, c. 10'

Gareth Farr studied composition and percussion performance at the University of Auckland and later at Victoria University in Wellington where the characteristic rhythms and textures of the Indonesian gamelan rapidly became hallmarks of his own composition. Farr continued with postgraduate study at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, and after returning to NZ at the age of 25, Farr was appointed composer-in-residence by Chamber Music New Zealand, the youngest-ever composer to hold that position. His music has been heard at, or especially commissioned for high-profile events including the 50th anniversary of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, the opening of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, and the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney.

Gareth writes: 'I became intrigued by a phenomenon called "forbidden colours"—unseeable by the human eye because their light frequencies automatically cancel each other out. The piece establishes itself as a blurry, impressionistic texture—but soon, things start popping into focus, and then sliding away again out of view. I have tried

to create the musical equivalent of when you have to strain your eyes to make something out—to even ascertain if you're looking at anything at all, or if it's just a figment of your retinas.'

John Musto (USA; b. 1954):

Piano Trio, c. 14'

Moderato

Slowly—Allegro molto—Tempo 1—Allegro molto

American composer John Musto (b. 1954) is regarded as a highly versatile musician, whose activities encompass virtually every genre: orchestral and operatic, solo, chamber and vocal music, concerti, and music for film and television. His music embraces many strains of contemporary American concert music, enriched by sophisticated inspirations from jazz, ragtime and the blues.

Musto has written of the Piano Trio: 'The tunes in the piece grew out of improvisations at the keyboard. It is cast in two movements: moderate and slow/fast. In the first movement, a songful beginning gives way to a more vigorous contrapuntal exchange, and a final burst of energy in the coda. The second movement alternates a slow, nighttime-in-the-city blues with a frenetic bop section. The lyrical strains of the first movement briefly try to re-emerge, but are swept aside by a violent coda.'

— Interval —

Sergei Rachmaninov (RUS; 1873–1943):

Trio Élégiacque No.2 in d minor, c. 45'

Moderato—Andante, quasi variazione—Allegro risoluto

Rachmaninov had written his first *Trio Élégiacque*, his graduation piece in 1892, in tribute to Tchaikovsky, who fell victim to the cholera epidemic that swept through St. Petersburg the following year. He never imagined that this second *Trio Élégiacque* would give the true meaning to the words. He began it the same evening of Tchaikovsky's death, dedicating it 'To the memory of a great artist'—and within two months it was done.

It's a huge, grand and passionate work, written on a much larger scale than his first trio, beginning with a movement in perfect classical sonata form—also a grief-laden lament for Tchaikovsky, in that opening note from the cello. The second movement, *Andante*, is a variation movement following Tchaikovsky's own model in his trio Op. 50, with eight variations following the main theme and Rachmaninov very much asserting his brilliance at the piano; and the finale is an outburst of passion and energy when suddenly the strings bring in an echo of the lament at the beginning—and that magical descending phrase brings the trio full circle.

For full programme notes visit
nztrio.com/event-directory/

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