

*Trinity Music, Op. 57 (1990)*

Dimitri Smirnov

“This composition was commissioned by the Verdehr Trio and was composed in Ruza, a small place near Moscow. The three instruments—clarinet, violin, and piano—are treated here as a triunity, threefold unity, some equality, three units joining up in one super instrument with a triple nature: woodwind, string, and keyboard, a kind of perfection, a small model of The Holy Trinity created in the universe.

The music is very soft and quiet. It is the music of half-tints and smooth, delicate motion, of careful attentive listening into sounds and half-pauses, with the atmosphere of contemplation and mystery.”

—Dimitri Smirnov

The world premiere of *Trinity Music* was on March 9, 1991 at Caja D Ahorros d’Avila, Avila, Spain.

During the Verdehr Trio’s winter tour to the Soviet Union in 1990, they met and performed for prominent Soviet composers in Moscow and became acquainted with Dimitri Smirnov and his wife, Elena Firsova, also a composer who wrote *Verdehr-Terzett* for the Trio in 1991.

The mood of *Trinity Music* is mysterious, and eerie effects are created by the clarinet producing double sonorities in the opening with triple sonorities and single tones of different colors occurring in the cadenza later in the work. A spatial-like quality pervades throughout the entire work with bell tones in the piano and harmonics in the violin. Contrasting rhythms in all three instruments lead to an electrifying climax and cadenza. The composition concludes much as it begins, mysterious, quiet, and ethereal.

Dimitri Smirnov (born 1948, Minsk, Belaruse) was born into a family of opera singers. He spent most of his childhood in Central Asia, first at Ulan-Ude and then in Frunze.

From 1967 to 1972, Smirnov was at the Moscow Conservatoire studying composition with Nikolai Sidelnikov, orchestration with Edison Denisov, and analysis with Yuri Kholopov. In 1970, he made contact with Webern’s pupil Philip Gershkovich, a musician who never held an official position in Moscow but who exerted great influence on Soviet composers through his private teaching.

From 1973 until 1980, Smirnov worked as an editor in the publishing house *Sovetsky Kompositor*. In 1974, he became a member of the Union of Composers and began a career as a freelance composer. He was one of the founders of Russia’s Association for Contemporary Music, established in Moscow in 1990.

Smirnov’s *Solo for Harp* won first prize in a competition in Maastrich. His two operas, *Tiriell* and *The Lamentations of Thel*, were premiered in 1989 at the Freiburg Festival, Germany, and the Almeida Festival in London respectively. The same year, his *First Symphony, The Seasons* was performed at Tanglewood. His orchestral *Mozart-Variations* were staged as a ballet in Pforzheim, Germany. Many of his other works have been performed with notable conductors such as Riccardo Muti, Sir Andrew Davis, Dennis Russell Davies, Peter Eötvös, Oliver Knussen, and Gunther Schuller. Scores of his music are available from various publishers including Hans Sikorski, Boosey & Hawkes, and Schirmer.

Smirnov has made his permanent residence in Great Britain since 1991. He has had appointments as Composer-in-Residence at St. John’s College at the University of Cambridge, Composer-in-Residence at Dartington, and Visiting Professor at the University of Keele. In 1998, Smirnov and

his family moved to St. Albans near London where he was again active as a freelance composer. From 2003, he has taught at Goldsmiths College, University of London.