

Violin and Piano, the *Cantata Brotherhood Songs*, Trombone Quartet, six vocal suites and many others. In 1977, Sheludyakov was the winner of the Russian National Piano Competition. He has performed solo concerts with orchestras, solo recitals, and chamber music performances in Russia, USA, Germany, France, Italy, China, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Australia. He has recorded 24 discs of piano solo and chamber music. In 1999 he was named a Merited Artist of the Russian Federation. Currently Mr. Sheludyakov is a member of faculty at the University of Georgia in Athens.

**The ARCO Chamber Orchestra**, founded in 1990 by Levon Ambartsumian during his years as professor of violin at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory, drew together handpicked instructors, students, and recent Conservatory graduates. Almost immediately ARCO performances throughout Europe drew high critical praise and enthusiastic audience response. International acclaim grew following ARCO's concert tours in Italy, Spain, Germany, Romania, France and Korea. In 1995, Mr. Ambartsumian joined the University of Georgia's School of Music as the Franklin Professor of Violin, while remaining the artistic director and conductor of ARCO. Because he was able to bring some of his students to America with him, the home base of the orchestra shifted to this hemisphere, where the ensemble has now become a talented international blend of musicians. Since its performance in 2001 in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, ARCO has been invited to return every year. ARCO has released several CDs with music by Vivaldi, Haydn, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky, Shostakovich, Piazzolla, Bronner and Podgaitis.

**Daniel Kaplunas** is a native of Vilnius, Lithuania. He started playing the violin at the age of six under the tutelage of his mother, who is also a violinist. By the time he graduated from Vilnius Ciurlionis School for the Arts, Mr. Kaplunas had won two Young Lithuanian Musicians' competitions, as well as concertized in Denmark, Holland, and Germany. After coming to the United States, he continued his violin studies with Julia Bushkova at Interlochen Arts Academy (Michigan) and with Philip Lewis at the University of North Texas, where he received his Bachelor and Master of Music degrees. During his doctoral studies at the University of Georgia with Levon Ambartsumian, Mr. Kaplunas has performed with the ARCO Chamber Orchestra as both violinist and conductor, recording several compact discs on the Art Classics and Phoenix USA record labels. Daniel Kaplunas is currently Assistant Professor of Music at Wartburg College, where he is the director of Wartburg Community Symphony and Wartburg Chamber Orchestras.

**Levon Ambartsumian**, Franklin Professor of Violin at the University of Georgia, and formerly professor at the Moscow Conservatory (1978-1993), is an internationally acclaimed violinist, winner of the 1977 International Violin Competition in Zagreb, the 1979 Montreal International Competition, and of the Soviet Violin Competition in 1981. Ambartsumian is a Merited Artist of Armenia and of the Russian Federation. He is the founder, conductor, and artistic director of the ARCO Chamber Orchestra, now based at the University of Georgia in Athens. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, he continues to perform and present master classes around the world. More than thirty compact discs have been released under different recording labels in the USA and Russia.

**Shakhida Azimkhodjaeva**. A native of Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Shakhida made her solo debut with the Uzbekistan Symphony Orchestra when she was eleven and won the National Violin Competition in 1985. She graduated from the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory and was one of the founders of the Moscow Chamber Orchestra ARCO. Since 1989, she has been concertmaster and soloist of the orchestra and in this capacity has performed extensively in Europe, South Korea, USA, and Canada.

**Alexander Ambartsumian, violin; Anna Ambartsumian, violin** Alexander was born in 1999, the son of Levon and Shakhida, who were his first violin teachers. He made his Moscow debut in 2007, performing with "The Seasons" Moscow Chamber Orchestra.

Anna was born in 2001 to this family of professional violinists. Both she and her brother have played solo with ARCO Chamber Orchestra at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie; at Moscow Philharmonic Recital Hall, Moscow Glinka State Museum, and in Hodgson and Ramsey Concert Halls of University of Georgia. In November 2011, both were soloists with ARCO Chamber Orchestra on tour in Italy.



## *From Jewish Folk Poetry* Shostakovich/Dreznin Bronner Podgaitis



Levon Ambartsumian, violin  
ARCO Chamber Orchestra Daniel Kaplunas, conductor  
Anatoly Sheludyakov, piano

**“From Jewish Folk Poetry.” Violin suite by Sergei Dreznin based on music of Dmitry Shostakovich**

In 1948, when Stalin launched his infamous anti-Semitic campaign that led to the arrests and execution of many Jewish scientists, poets and doctors, Shostakovich bought a book at a kiosk at the railway station near his dacha. Later that year, he wrote a song cycle *From Jewish Folk Poetry*, Op. 79 for soprano, mezzo-soprano and tenor voices, accompanied by piano. All the lyrics came from the book and Shostakovich kept the finished work hidden from the public (and the eyes of KGB), presenting it only to a handful of friends. After Stalin's death, it took another two years before Shostakovich's cycle of 12 songs was performed in public.

In 2001, Sergei Dreznin arranged 6 of these songs for violin and piano focusing on the hard lot of the Jews in Tsarist Russia and the supposed happiness that came with Soviet power.

Sergei Dreznin: *These are melodies of untold beauty, maybe the most gorgeous ones the composer ever wrote...here is the total and complete identification of the composer with a culture different from his own, the identification as complete as that of George Gershwin with black folklore in his "Porgy and Bess" – a similarity which I stressed in my arrangement...*

The work was first performed by Levon Ambartsumian and Anatoly Sheludyakov, in the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, February 23, 2003.

**Sergei Dreznin**, a Moscow-born Paris-based concert pianist and composer, won the All-Union composers' competition 1985 and a Diploma at the All-Russia piano competition Kazan-77. Fourteen of his music theater pieces were produced on the stages of New York, Moscow, Vienna, Berlin and Paris including *Catherine the Great* (Russia's national theater award, Golden Mask), *Ophelia - opera in blue and Romeo & Juliet in Sarajevo* (after Shakespeare), *Cabaret Terezin*, the Pushkin-based *Feast During the Plague* as well as *Don Juan*, and *Victory Over the Sun*. His *Dante-Concerto* (after Liszt) for violin and string orchestra was recorded by Gidon Kremer for Deutsche Grammophon and is being performed by Julian Rachlin across Europe. Sergei is the author of *Requiem To the Memory of the Victims of Nazism*, vocal cycles, chamber and orchestral music as well as several film scores including *Legend of Salieri* (USSR), *El Chicco* (Austria) and the WWII epic *The Fallen* (USA).

**“Five Yiddish Songs” by Mikhail Bronner**

This work was written especially for Levon Ambartsumian and his family.

It is about the People of the Book and the extinct world of *shtetls*, an archipelago that disappeared from the surface of the Earth.

**1. The same old question.**

All men in the world ask the same old question. Trala, trajdi, ridirom.

And the answer is, tradi, ridi, rajlom

**2. Sleep, my child**

Sleep, my treasure, sleep. What will daddy bring for you? A ring-shaped roll. You will eat it and ask, “More, mama, more!”

**3. You must not go about with other girls**

I won't have you go about with other girls, you must only go about with me

**4. Sleep, my son**

Sleep, my son. Sleep soundly as I sing you a song. When you, my child, grow older you will understand how different people are.

**5. Sweet hostess**

Our sweet little hostess, our charming little hostess, is as sweet as a fresh cucumber.

**Mikhail Bronner** graduated from the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory where he studied composition with Tikhon Khrennikov. He is a Professor of Composition at Moscow Music Ippolito Institute. One landmark in his career was the stage production of his ballets *The Optimistic Tragedy* and *The Taming of the Shrew* at the Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko theatre in Moscow and the performance of his opera *The Golden Island* at the famed Nataliya Sats children's opera theatre in Moscow. Mr. Bronner has set to music a large number of sacred texts (*Dona nobis pacem*, *Stabat mater*, *Ave Maria*, *Book of Psalms*..) and written many compositions inspired by images, themes and characters of The Book (Old Testament). The Russian monthly *Muzykalnoe Obozrenie* (The Music Review) named Mikhail Bronner Composer of the Year 2002. He has composed more than 100 works: three operas, three ballets, several symphonies, choral, vocal and chamber pieces. His works have been performed in Russia, Germany, Bulgaria, Hungary, Britain, France, Italy, Belgium and the USA.

**Efrem Podgaitis**

**Kol Nidrei** – in Aramaic (all vows) – is a ceremonial declaration of a rejection of all vows. Though not a prayer, this dry legal formula and its ceremonial accompaniment have been charged with emotional undertones since the medieval period, creating a dramatic introduction to Yom Kippur on what is often dubbed "Kol Nidrei night." At its foundation lies the sense of a sin committed in breaking vows previously taken either inconsiderately or by force.

In the words of Efrem Podgaitis: *I got extremely interested in the history of “Kol nidrei” - the old Jewish prayer that survived till now thank to the glorious melody that serves as its foundation. It's not an accident that both the prayer and the melody attracted such composers as Max Bruch and Arnold Schönberg. In 2003 I wrote a version for cello and chamber orchestra, and in 2004 created its violin version.*

**Nocturne for violin and orchestra**

Memories of things that brought joy to one's life: childhood, beauty, love...

**A Pretty Wedding Ring (Fantasy on the theme of a Jewish folk song for violin and orchestra)**

The song is about a girl who dreams of little golden wings so she can fly to her beloved. About a horse, so she can ride to him, and of a pretty golden ring she will give to him.

**Efrem Podgaitis** (Moscow) graduated from the Moscow Conservatory as a composer in 1974 (in the class of Yuri Butsko and Nikolai Sidelnikov). In 2000, he was awarded the title of Merited Propagator of the Arts of Russia. Podgaitis' works include 12 operas, 3 symphonies; 27 concerti for different instruments and orchestra. His works are regularly performed in Russia and abroad, including in Britain (notably at the festival of contemporary music in Huddersfield) in Turkey, Hungary, Switzerland, France, Italy and Japan. Many CDs with symphonic, choral and chamber music have been released under different international labels, including Melodiya, Opus 111, Artserve and Phoenix Usa. His works have been performed or conducted by, amongst others, Mstislav Rostropovich, Saulas Sondetskis, Vassily Sinajsky, Yuri Bashmet, Alexander Brusilovsky, and opera star Lyubov Kazarmovskaya.

**Anatoly Sheludyakov** was born in Moscow where he graduated from the Gnesin Musical Academy. He also graduated from the Moscow Conservatory in the composition class of Tikhon Khrennikov. His compositions include Variations for Orchestra, Ostinato for Orchestra, Suite for Oboe and Piano, Suite for