

CHAMPS HILL  
RECORDS

Vol. 4

RÖNTGEN:  
STRING TRIOS NOS. 13-16

LENDVAI STRING  
TRIO



## FOREWORD

This wonderful project of discovering, performing and recording the complete string trios by Julius Röntgen has been a truly monumental and tremendous experience for us.

Our journey began in 2007 after a conversation with musicologist and publisher Martin Anderson, during which we realised that the only string trio published to date was Röntgen's first. We soon after learned that there were fifteen more, carefully stored in handwritten manuscript form in the Netherlands Music Institute in the Hague. At this point, to our astonishment we found out that none of these wonderful works had been performed in public, let alone recorded, but archived for over 80 years.

Reading and playing from the old hand written scores, instead of the usual computer-published sheet music we are used to, has added a very personal touch to the journey. Thanks to the Kersjes Prize and Champs Hill Records we have been able to record and bring to life this colourful and captivating music, which we hope you will enjoy as much as we do.

Nadia Wijzenbeek

Julius Röntgen

Jan Boon

Het Kersjes Fonds

## TRACK LISTING

### JULIUS RÖNTGEN (1855–1932)

#### STRING TRIO No.13 IN A MAJOR (Bilthoven, 1 March 1925)

1	Con moto	5'40
2	Andante tranquillo	4'15
3	Allegro vivo e giocoso	3'04
4	Allegro	6'47

#### STRING TRIO No.14 IN C MINOR (21 – 24 February 1928)

5	Allegro un poco sostenuto	6'28
6	Andantino con tenerezza	3'07
7	Allegro deciso	3'11
8	Poco allegro – Finale fugato: Allegretto	7'18

#### STRING TRIO No.15 IN C MINOR (Aosta, Bellagio & Aeschi, 31 July – 9 August 1929)

*Unserm Meisterchauffeur Engelbert [Dedicated to our master-chauffeur Engelbert]*

9	Moderato	4'51
10	Un poco vivace	2'21
11	Andante	3'27
12	Finale automobilistico: Allegro energico	4'11

#### STRING TRIO No.16 IN C-SHARP MAJOR (19 – 21 May 1930)

13	Andante tranquillo	4'43
14	Poco allegretto e grazioso	3'46
15	Lento, ma non troppo	4'11
16	Allegro passionato	4'45

Total playing time: 72'06

Produced & edited by Matthew Bennett  
Engineered by Dave Rowell

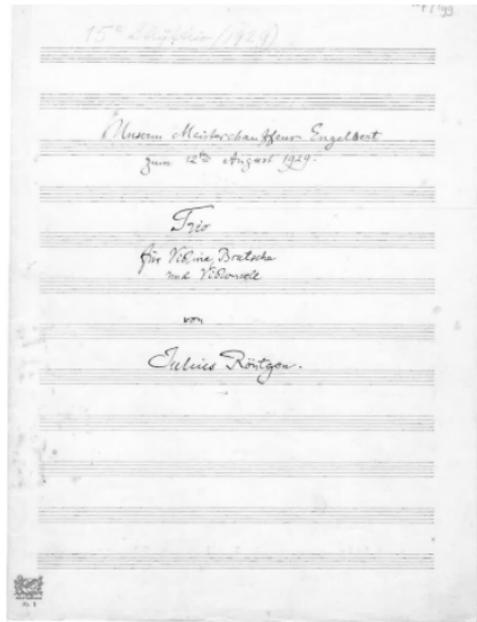
Recorded on 17th – 19th June 2015 in the Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex, UK  
Cover and biography photographs of Lendvai String Trio by Sarah Wijzenbeek  
Booklet rear cover picture of Julius Röntgen at the Concertgebouw Amsterdam (1931) by Jan Boon (1882–1975)

Executive Producer for Champs Hill Records: Alexander Van Ingen  
Label Manager for Champs Hill Records: Matt Buchanan

■ JULIUS RÖNTGEN (1855–1932): PASSIONATE MUSICIAN AND COMPOSER

There is a certain tendency towards irreverence in the Dutch spirit that causes Julius Röntgen's countrymen to refer to his great talent with gentle mockery. Röntgen's professional reputation enjoyed a noticeably higher regard in other countries, and he earned accolades abroad that eluded him in his home nation. One such distinction was the honorary doctorate conferred upon him by the University of Edinburgh in 1930, presented by Sir Donald Francis Tovey. After Röntgen's death, *The Times* published a eulogy written by the esteemed musicologist, who referred to Röntgen's works with praise: "Röntgen's compositions, published and unpublished, cover the whole range of music in every art form; they all show consummate mastery in every aspect of technique; even in the most facile there is beauty and wit; each series of works culminates in something that has the uniqueness of a living masterpiece." Besides his international reputation as a renowned pianist and composer, he was also in high demand as a teacher, turning down offers abroad in favour of staying in Amsterdam. Composers such as Grieg and Brahms respected him highly and sought his friendship. As a pianist, he enjoyed collaborations with some of the great musicians of his time: singer Johannes Messchaert, cellist Pablo Casals, and violinist Carl Flesch, among others.

Julius Röntgen came from a very musical family. His father Engelbert, a violinist, was born in the Netherlands (Deventer) and later emigrated to Leipzig, Germany, where he played in the Gewandhaus Orchestra. He married the pianist Pauline Klengel, who came from a family with a long musical tradition. Julius, the eldest child and only son, spent his youth in Leipzig. His parents were well connected within the highest musical circles, and regularly received musicians such as Felix Mendelssohn, Niels Gade and Joseph Joachim in their home. Julius Röntgen's grandfather taught him the fundamentals of piano and violin playing, and his parents themselves took responsibility for his further training. Röntgen's exceptional musical talent was apparent at an early stage, but his father seems to have done his best to prevent his son from leading the typical life of a child



The dedication and first page of Trio No.15

prodigy. In addition to the training that he received from his parents, Röntgen studied for short periods of time with teachers such as Louis Plaidy, Carl Reinecke, Moritz Hauptmann and Franz Lachner. Within a few years, Röntgen gained a widespread reputation as a piano virtuoso, performing throughout Europe.

He began writing music at a young age, publishing his first composition in Germany in 1871. Only a few years later, he was invited to accept a teaching position in Amsterdam. After some hesitation, he settled there in 1877, making an immediate impact on the level of his students. In 1884, together with a number of colleagues, he founded the Amsterdamsch Conservatorium where he also served as managing director from 1913 until 1924.

Despite his busy career as a concert pianist, teacher, conductor and director of the Conservatory, Röntgen managed to compose more than 600 compositions. Many of these works remain obscure, and even Röntgen himself admitted in an interview that he did not know all of his own compositions. As a fellow composer once recalled: "In the time it takes for someone to pick up a pen and paper, and to write down the keys and signs, Röntgen had probably already composed the beginning of a fugue." For Röntgen it was his usual practice, since the music was already completed in his head before he committed it to paper.

During Röntgen's lifetime, only one hundred of his compositions were published, the first thirty-one of them by the German firm Breitkopf und Härtel. Most of Röntgen's manuscripts are in the depots of the Netherlands Music Institute in The Hague. Recent years have seen a concerted effort to record the majority of his symphonic works and solo concertos; however, much of Röntgen's chamber music is still lying in obscurity. This series of recordings by the Lendvai String Trio is therefore a wonderful opportunity to get acquainted with a rich and diverse corner of Julius Röntgen's oeuvre: the complete string trios.

### **The String Trios**

Röntgen wrote sixteen String Trios, fifteen of which have never been published. For the most part, the Trios were also neither numbered nor named by the composer (an exception being the Walzer Suite), leaving the year of composition and key signature as the only means of their identification.

For someone who had starting composing in his teens, it is surprising that Röntgen came to the genre of String Trios only later in life, completing his first trio in 1915 at the age of 60 and the last trio in 1930, two years before his death. The reasons for this remain obscure, but it is clear that chamber music played an important part in Röntgen's life. In 1912, he formed a professional piano trio with two of his sons from his first marriage (Engelbert, a cellist, and Julius Jr., a violinist). With this ensemble, he gave concerts for years. However, Röntgen had another favourite instrument, the viola, and with two sons from his second marriage (Edvard and Joachim), he played string trios, presumably only at home, where he himself played the viola parts.

### **The String Trios No.13 – 16**

As Julius Röntgen approached his 70th birthday he resolved to make composing his foremost priority. He retired from his position as director of the Amsterdamsch Conservatorium in June 1924, and an intensively creative period followed: in the last seven years of his life he brought out no fewer than 100 new compositions, while still giving piano lessons to a small but eager group of students from Amsterdam.

In 1925 the family was able to move into their new home, Gaudeamus, a villa in Bilthoven designed by Röntgen's son Frants Edvard. That autumn, in collaboration with his wife, Röntgen started a series of seminars in musical analysis. They focused

not only on the great masterworks of the classical and romantic period, but also new music of the 20th century that Röntgen himself had studied in great detail. His students were introduced to works by Schönberg, Stravinsky and the Dutch composer Willem Pijper, among others. In the summer of 1927 Röntgen and his wife travelled to the United States where their son Engelbert was working as a cellist. It would turn out to be a journey full of musical discovery, starting on the boat to America where Röntgen heard live jazz for the first time. He was fascinated by the music's charm and inventiveness, and during his stay in the US his son indulged his newfound interest and Röntgen returned to the Netherlands with several LPs of jazz music. Röntgen had an open musical mind; despite the conservative musical tastes of his colleagues, who despised jazz, he enthusiastically introduced the music of George Gershwin to his students in the Gaudeamus seminars. In fact many rhythmical features, such as syncopations, are part of the 14th and 15th Trios, and sometimes clear jazz influence emerges from the music. Another new experience for Röntgen was hearing American spirituals during his stay in New York; after his return home he made arrangements of several songs and later incorporated them into some of his own compositions, such as the String Trio No.15.

Between 1926 and 1928 Röntgen also continued his collaboration with the filmmaker Dirk Jan van der Ven, accompanying his movies from the piano with his own compositions. He also took on several hours of teaching on a volunteer basis at a private school in Bilthoven, an initiative of the famous pedagogue Kees Boeke. For someone who was supposedly retired, Röntgen was busier than ever.

Röntgen composed a series of three String Trios in the beginning of 1925. The last of these, Trio No.13, was written in March of that year in Hotel Regina in Bilthoven, while the family was awaiting the completion of their new home. The Trio opens with a 'feeling' of peaceful comfort reminiscent of a warm bath, moving into an elegant dance, but not lacking in dramatic intensity. The next two movements are real dances: a lazy Habanera dominates the second movement with an ostinato rhythm in the cello, and

the third movement Scherzo features a wild peasant dance with rumbling drone. The last movement is a marked contrast from the other three. The given tempo marking of Allegro is hardly discernible in the beginning; after some powerful opening chords the music gives way to an elegiac melody. Despite a promising waltz, Röntgen builds up the musical tension; the restless stretto that follows before coming to an abrupt ending lends an agitated and uneasy feeling to the movement as a whole.

The last three Trios are all written in minor keys. The opening of No.14 (1928) is encapsulated by a single melancholy theme, often played in unison, that increases in dramatic intensity. Syncopated rhythms dominate this five-movement Trio, particularly in the jazzy opening of the third movement. Other echoes of Röntgen's trip to the United States are audible in the Spiritual-influenced tunes in the very tender second movement (*con tenerezza*). The last three movements flow without a break. In the fourth movement we hear Röntgen's splendid variation technique in a series of ten short fragments, and he ends this trio with his beloved fugal technique where he reminds us of the theme of the fourth movement.

Trio No.15 has a special place amongst Röntgen's works. It was composed during a family vacation during which the Röntgens were taken on a tour of northern Italy by their son Engelbert and his wife. The foursome travelled slowly and took in the sights by car, which must have been a joyful experience for the composer. He dedicated his fifteenth trio to his son, 'The Master Chauffer Engelbert (Unsere Meisterchauffeur Engelbert)', and Röntgen's wife referred to this piece thereafter as the 'Car Trio (Auto Trio)'. The movements were written in Aosta, Bellagio and Aeschi during the summer of 1929. The music reflects the happiness of this journey, and the listener can easily imagine riding together with the family through Germany to Italy, passing all the magnificent landscapes Röntgen loved. The Trio opens with an intimate, melancholy movement of incredible beauty. The second movement mixes folk music themes with occasional features of American Spirituals on top of a bourdon accompaniment. The viola opens the third movement with a romantic melody. While the first three

movements share a calm and sensitive aesthetic, the last movement is full of humour and energy: since Röntgen enjoyed playing the viola parts of his own String Trios, he composed a viola part for himself with an imitation of a carhorn (wie eine Hupe).

The last of the String Trios, his sixteenth, dates from May 1930. On May 10th Röntgen made his last appearance as a concerto soloist: together with the Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest he performed his beloved Fourth Piano Concerto by Beethoven. Nine days later he was fêted with a celebratory programme of his own music in the Kleine Zaal of the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. The last String Trio was composed within those same days, and it has quite a different character. From the start, the music traps the listener in an oppressive atmosphere permeated with melancholy that never lets go, despite the playfulness and lightness of the second Scherzo-like movement. Without interruption second movement elides into the third, and the music sounds like a farewell. The exceptionally beautiful melody that dominates this movement is first presented by the viola. But finally Röntgen allows excitement to take over, and he ends his last Trio with an *Allegro passionato* that borders on the rebellious.

Until his death two years later – sadly, sooner than anyone had expected – Röntgen never stopped composing, but the Sixteenth String Trio was his last contribution to this genre. He left a rich musical legacy with these works, and thanks to the Lendvai String Trio they can finally be heard as a collection.

Margaret Krill  
(English edited by Shuann Chai)

Since their Wigmore Hall debut in 2006, the Lendvai String Trio has had a busy schedule of concerts at major venues throughout Europe, including several re-invitations to Wigmore Hall, recitals at Kings Place, the Barbican and Purcell Room in London, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and Musikaliska in Stockholm.

In 2011 the trio was awarded the prestigious Kersjes Prize in Holland, as well as being selected for the Concertgebouw's Young Artist Series in Amsterdam; other previous successes include winning awards from the Kirckman Concert Society, the Worshipful Company of Musicians, Musician's Benevolent Fund, the Park Lane Group, and the Concert Promoters Network in the UK. In 2005 they were selected for the Holland Music Sessions 'New Masters on Tour', resulting in a series of concerts across Romania, Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and the Netherlands. The trio regularly perform at festivals in the UK, Germany, Italy, France, Switzerland, Austria and Sweden and their concerts have been broadcast by Dutch Radio 4, Swedish Radio P2 and BBC Radio 3. Their debut CD *Destination Paris* (2011, Stone Records) received international acclaim as well as their recent recording of the complete Beethoven String Trios (Stone Records) which was *BBC Music Magazine's* Chamber Choice in June 2013.

The trio enjoys regular collaborations with other artists and recent highlights have included concerts with oboists Alexei Ogrintchouk and Nicholas Daniel, and pianists Paolo Giacometti, Charles Owen, Alasdair Beatson and Martin Sturfält. As well as regularly commissioning new works, the Lendvai String Trio are also keen to uncover and revive 'forgotten' and lesser-known works for the genre.



**Nadia Wijzenbeek** ~ *violin*

Dutch violinist Nadia Wijzenbeek enjoys an international career as a Concertmaster, chamber musician and soloist. Nadia was appointed Concertmaster of The Radio Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra in the Netherlands in 2009. In 2013 she became concertmaster of the Dutch Radio Philharmonic Orchestra.

Having started to play the violin at a very young age under the tutelage of her aunt Coosje Wijzenbeek, Nadia went on to study at the Amsterdam Conservatory with Elisabeth Perry and Herman Krebbers, graduating with distinction. She continued her studies in London at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with David Takeno, where she was awarded a Concert Recital Diploma.

Besides the Lendvai String Trio, Nadia is also a member of the Aronowitz Ensemble, BBC New Generation Artists and the recipient of the Borletti Buitoni Trust special Ensemble prize. Nadia is Artistic Director of the popular concert series 'Raadhuisconcerten' in her home town Hilversum. She plays a Joseph filius Andrea Guarneri violin.

**Ylvali Zilliacus** ~ *viola*

Since 2015 Swedish violist Ylvali Zilliacus works as a guest principal at the Royal Swedish Opera in her hometown Stockholm and since 2011 also plays regularly with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra. She is frequently invited to international chamber music festivals such as Ernen Musikdorf in Switzerland, Recife Virtuosi in Brasil, The Hague International Chamber Music Festival and Båstad Kammarmusikfestival in Sweden.

Between 2009 and 2013 Ylvali was principal violist of the Musica Vitae Chamber Orchestra in Sweden with whom she often featured as soloist. She has worked as a

guest principal with the Philharmonia, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Umeå Symphony Orchestra.

Ylvali studied at the Royal College of Music with Simon Rowland Jones, and in Berlin as a DAAD scholar with Tabea Zimmermann at the Hans-Eisler Hochschule für Musik. Between 2003 and 2007 Ylvali played with the period instrument ensemble English Concert in London, directed by Andrew Manze, and with them frequently recorded for Harmonia Mundi as well as touring extensively in the USA. Ylvali plays a Lorenzo Storioni viola built in 1767, kindly lent to her by the Swedish Musical Instrument Foundation. Alongside music, Ylvali is also committed to practising Ashtanga Yoga.

#### Marie Macleod ~ cello

British cellist Marie Macleod has performed throughout Europe, USA and Australia as soloist and chamber musician, appearing with orchestras such as the London Symphony Orchestra and the Ulster Orchestra. As well as being cellist in the Lendvai String Trio, Marie is also a member of the Phoenix Piano Trio and the Aronowitz Ensemble who are BBC New Generation Artists and Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award winners, and she records regularly for Stone Records, the BBC and Sonimage.

In 2013 Marie was appointed principal cellist of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra. Between 2006 and 2008 she was principal cellist of the Västerås Sinfonietta in Sweden, after which she became the assistant cello teacher at the Yehudi Menuhin School and cellist in the Sheffield-based chamber group Ensemble 360. Marie's competition successes include winning the string section of the BBC Young Musician of the Year in 1998, and she studied with Louise Hopkins at the Yehudi Menuhin School, Steven Isserlis at IMS Prussia Cove, Frans Helmerson in Germany and David Takeno at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. She plays a Matteo Goffriller cello from 1706.

#### ALSO AVAILABLE...



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CHRC122

#### RÖNTGEN: STRING TRIOS LENDVAI STRING TRIO

The Lendvai String Trio presents the complete string trios of Julius Röntgen. A firm friend of Edvard Grieg, Röntgen's trios – remaining largely unpublished – are influenced by his friend's interest in folk music.

*"The performances are delivered with impeccable musicianship by the wonderful Lendvai Trio, who seem to be going from strength to strength and clearly relish and enjoy these minor masterpieces ... this is a project that consistently delivers on the highest level and I heartily recommend it to all."* Gramophone

*"This is delightfully pithy music, strong on folk inflexions, taking a delight in naturalness of phrasing, avoiding any hint of the didactic or academic. It's al fresco music, too, music for friends. It's been beautifully served once again by the recording team and performers."* Musicweb

*"... The Lendvai trio has a deep well of energy ... persuasive playing, technically of the highest order ... "* The Strad