

Rastrelli Cello Quartet

Internationally Renown Cello Quartet

October 15, 2023

The four gentlemen of the Rastrelli Cello Quartet began working together in 2002 and have devoted themselves ever since to exploring and experiencing the cello's world of sound. They are committed to tradition, but completely uncoupled from the conventional approach, which only serves as a solid foundation. Since then, the ensemble has built up a unique and broad repertoire, the likes of which can't be found anywhere else.

The very personal bond that the quartet has with its home city of St. Petersburg is manifest through the name they chose for their ensemble, inspired by the 18th century architect responsible for a number of prominent historical buildings in St. Petersburg. Bartholomeo Rastrelli shaped the image of the city in northern Russia like no other.

The Rastrelli repertoire consists almost exclusively of arrangements by Sergio Drabkin, one of the quartet's founding members. Under the artistic direction of the charismatic virtuoso, Kira Kraftzoff, Drabkin's refined compositions lead the quartet on a journey through an individual and often unexpected musical landscape.

Each of the gentlemen contributes his unique character, experiences and perspectives to the overall picture, and so two of the artistic director's former students, Mischa Degtjareff and Kirill Timofeev, also members since 2002, contribute to the quartet's ongoing success.

The four Rastrelli cellists only perform music that they themselves love—that's a matter of absolute conviction when it comes to putting together their programs. The quartet usually treats its audience with a mixture of arrangements of chamber music works, orchestral classics, and standards of cello literature, as well as popular music, jazz, klezmer or tango.

The listener experiences a thundering symphony orchestra when Modest Mussorgsky's "A Night on the Bald Mountain" sounds from the stage, and is then tenderly embraced by "Andante Cantabile," a

Russian folk song which Peter Tchaikovsky arranged for string quartet. Perhaps you will hear the "Zigeunerweisen" by Pablo de Sarasate or Drabkin's "Paganissimo," which offers every musician plenty of room for virtuosity. Speaking of which... showy virtuosity is an ever-present element which continuously accompanies the musical encounter. At the same time, Rastrelli display in a unique way the incredible diversity of their instrument.

The art of transformation becomes, without exception, an authentic adventure in sound for the listener. There are always four cellos and yet you think you are hearing an old piano playing ragtime, a saxophone of the Glenn Miller Orchestra, or Piazzolla's bandoneon.

The Rastrelli Cello Quartet has recorded eight CDs to date, which present very diverse styles of music and give an extensive survey of the repertoire of the ensemble. The CD "Cello in Classic" was nominated for the "Record 2008" in Russia and won the silver award, only behind Luciano Pavarotti's "Pavarotti Forever" (Universal Music). Two of the albums were produced together with the clarinetist, Giora Feidman, with whom the quartet has had a long term artistic collaboration.

Since its inception, the quartet has been a guest on festival stages, concert halls and radio stations worldwide. These include the Royal Concertgebouw Amsterdam, the Berlin Philharmonic, the Mariinsky Theater St. Petersburg, Lincoln Center New York, Beethoven Festival Bonn, Beauvais Cello Festival (France), Rheingau Music Festival, Oberstdorfer Musiksommer, Meadowlark Music Festival in Lincoln / Nebraska (USA), European Music Festival Sofia (Bulgaria), Boswiler Summer Festival (Switzerland), Ohrid Summer Music Festival (Macedonia), Linköping Music Festival (Sweden), Schleswig Holstein Music Festival, Rio International Cello Encounter Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) and the Bucharest Sonoro Festival (Romania).

Kira Kraftzoff

Kira Kraftzoff, artistic director and founder of the Rastrelli Cello Quartet, the Russian Quattro and the Rastrelli Chamber Orchestra, was born in 1971 in Leningrad, USSR, now St. Petersburg.

He began his musical and artistic training at the age of six, at the "Special School for Highly Gifted Children" at the State Conservatory in St. Petersburg, under the supervision of Prof. Mark Reisenstock.

At the age of 14, Kraftzoff made his debut with the St. Petersburg Radio Symphony Orchestra, in the St. Petersburg Philharmonic, with Aram Khatchaturian's Cello Concerto. Among his early competitions, one deserves special mention: in the National USSR Competition in 1988, Kraftzoff received the highest award as the youngest finalist.

He continued his studies with Prof. Anatoly Nikitin at the Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory in St. Petersburg and graduated with distinction in 1994. Afterwards, Kraftzoff worked for four years as a lecturer in Nikitin's cello class while continuing his studies as a student of the legendary Daniel Schafran. In 1993, as a representative of the St. Petersburg Conservatory, the young cellist, was able to participate in Mstislav Rostropovich's first master class in Russia after his long exile. He then came to Stuttgart through a student exchange program and studied there with Prof. Peter Buck, the cellist of the "Melos Quartet".

Kira Kraftzoff has won international competitions in Spain, South Africa, Italy, Germany and Austria. As a soloist, he has been a guest of the Philharmonie in St. Petersburg, Berlin and Munich. He has also performed in the Alte Oper Frankfurt, the Tonhalle Zurich, the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, the Laiszhalle Hamburg, the Stefaniensaal Graz, the Mozarteum Salzburg, the Grand Park in Chicago, the Taegue Philharmonie in South Korea and others. Festivals like the Davos Music Festival, the Schwetzingen Festival, the Beethoven Festival in Bonn, the Rheingau Music Festival, the Ludwigsburg Castle Festival, the Colorado Music Festival, the Savonlinna Festival in Finland, the Musical Olympus in St. Petersburg are an integral part of the concert calendar. Kira Kraftzoff worked with fellow artists such as Gidon Kremer, Krzysztof Penderecki, Gilles Apap, Giora Feidman and David Geringas.

The list of radio and television recordings includes productions for NBC, BR, SWR, HR, NDR and NHK.

The TV station "Russia 1" produced a 40-minute documentary about his life and his artistic career. From 1991 to 1994, before founding the Rastrelli Cello Quartet, Kira Kraftzoff was the first cellist of the "St. Petersburg Soloists," a position which he also held in the "Württemberg Chamber Orchestra" in Heilbronn from 1998 to 2005.

In 2010, he started his career as a conductor and founded the "Rastrelli Chamber Orchestra." In 2012, he founded the "Russian Quattro" - the world's first professional string quartet with two violins and two

cellos. From 2005 to 2010, he was professor of strings at the State University for Art and Culture in St. Petersburg.

Mischa Degtjareff

Mikhail (Mischa) Degtjareff received his first cello lessons at the Special Music School St. Petersburg in the class of Elena Dernova. He then studied from 1996 to 2001 with Prof. Anatoli Nikitin and his assistant Kira Kraftzoff.

During his studies, he was a member of the Saint Petersburg Cello Ensemble, under the direction of Professor Nikitin, and was already pursuing an active concert career. In 1996, he was a laureate of the "Young Talents of Russia" festival and in 1998 a laureate of the competition of the Gartow Foundation "Friends of St. Petersburg Music." In 1998, he took part in the orchestra academy of the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival. He completed his cello studies in 2005 at the Stuttgart University of Music with Prof. Peter Buck.

He composes both serious (classical) and pop music, including for the Rastrelli cello quartet.

Mikhail Degtjareff is currently a lecturer for string quartet at the State Conservatory in St.Petersburg.

Kirill Timofeev

Kirill Timofeev, born in 1978 and raised in St. Petersburg, received his first cello lessons at the age of five with Elena Dernova. He later studied at the Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory in his hometown. His teachers were Prof. Anatoly Nikitin and Kira Kraftzoff.

He studied chamber music with Natalia Arzumanova. From 2003 to 2005, he was a student in the soloist class of Prof. Peter Buck at the State University for Music and Performing Arts in Stuttgart. He also took part in master classes with Natalia Gutman, Ivan Monighetti and David Geringas.

With his duo partner, Evgeni Sinaiski (pianist), Kirill Timofeev gives concerts all over Europe and Russia. The two musicians perform regularly from Portugal to Krasnoyarsk with a broad repertoire. As a soloist and member of various chamber music formations, Kirill Timofeev is represented at numerous festivals, including the Schwetzingen Mozart Festival, the White Crow Music Festival, the Rheingau Music Festival, the Rio International Cello Encounter and the Schleswig Holstein Music Festival. Since 2009, Kirill Timofeev has been the leader of the cello section at the Merck Philharmonic in Darmstadt.

Sergio Drabkin

Sergio Drabkin was born in Polotsk, Belarus in 1953. Until 1977, he studied at the Polotsk Music School and the Minsk State Music Academy. After studying, he had a successful musical career in Belarus for 17 years, in such positions as leader of the Belarus State Philharmonic Orchestra, solo cellist of the local baroque ensemble and as a member of the string quartet, with which Drabkin has made several CD productions.

Sergio Drabkin has worked closely with a number of orchestras in Germany since 1995, when his family moved there. From 2003 until 2019, he was a permanent member of the Württemberg Chamber Orchestra. Sergio Drabkin arranged a large number of works of various musical styles for the Rastrelli Cello Quartet, Giora Feidman, the King's Singers, James Galloway, Gilles Apap and many others.