



Esther Yoo's 2021 includes physical release of compelling new album from Z.E.N. Trio and performances of Barber and Mendelssohn concertos

Z.E.N. Trio's second Deutsche Grammophon disc pairs Shostakovich's Second Piano Trio with Arno Babadjanian's little-known Piano Trio in F-sharp minor

"The concerto's structural beauty... was matched by Yoo's exquisite sensitivity, and a palpable emotional rigour and maturity incredibly impressive in a musician so young." *Bachtrack*, April 2019

Potent artistic partnerships will be key to Esther Yoo's schedule this year. The critically acclaimed violinist is set to perform and record concertos by Bruch and Barber with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, while her work as chamber musician, can be heard on the Z.E.N. Trio's second album for Deutsche Grammophon. *Burning through the Cold*, scheduled for global release on 4 February 2021, couples Shostakovich's Piano Trio No.2 with another haunting Soviet-era creation, the Piano Trio in F-sharp minor by Arno Babadjanian. It also includes Khachaturian's *Sabre Dance* and an original transcription of Rachmaninov's *Vocalise* by Gayane Akhnazaryan and the Z.E.N. trio.

Burning through the Cold conveys the collective passion and conviction of music made by the Z.E.N. Trio. The group was formed in 2015 by Yoo and her fellow BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists, pianist Zhang Zuo, widely known as Zee Zee, and cellist Narek Hakhnazaryan. They made their Deutsche Grammophon debut two years later with an album of Dvořák and Brahms piano trios and have since matured as an ensemble on tour and in the recording studio. Their next concert, planned for Sunday 7 March at Wigmore Hall, comprises Schubert's Notturmo in E flat major, Dvorak's 'Dumky' trio in E minor and Shostakovich Piano Trio No.2 in E minor.

"We are all independent artists with our own solo careers, and I believe that is what makes the Z.E.N. Trio unique," comments Esther Yoo. "I love how we've managed to continue our collaboration alongside our solo engagements. It's a time for us to share music-making as good friends; it's not a time for egos to come into play. It's all about the music for us. *Burning through the Cold* came out of that collaborative process and shows how we are growing as individual performers and as a group. The album is part of the inspiring and fulfilling musical journey that we're taking together."

The album's repertoire evolved naturally from the Z.E.N. Trio's debut tour of the United States and Canada in October 2019 and from Narek Hakhnazaryan's passionate advocacy of music from his native Armenia. He introduced his colleagues to Babadjanian's Piano Trio, a rich, romantic three-movement work completed in 1952 shortly after its young pianist-composer won the Stalin Prize. "Shostakovich is one of my favourite composers, and I was eager to explore his works with the trio," notes Yoo. "Each of us is familiar with the Russian repertoire and Narek and I worked with teachers from that background. So the Shostakovich Second Trio and the shorter pieces already felt very much in the blood. The Babadjanian, which Zee Zee and I had never heard of, was Narek's inspired recommendation. It's such a brilliant work for the piano trio medium and so strange that it's not better known."

She adds that during rehearsals Hakhnazaryan placed the composition within the broader context of Armenian culture and history and highlighted its echoes of Armenian folk music and improvisatory traditions. The Z.E.N. Trio also explored the background to Shostakovich's searing Second Piano Trio, overtly dedicated to the memory of his friend Ivan Sollertinsky and covertly to the victims of the Holocaust. "As interpreters you have to learn so much about what was happening at the time these pieces were written," Esther Yoo observes.

"There are so many tragic elements in the Shostakovich, from the cello's whistling opening in memory of Sollertinsky to the Klezmer dance trampled beneath the stomping boots of soldiers in the finale. The details of history may change with time but there are things from the past that are being repeated today. Of course we had no idea when we recorded the album what 2020 would bring but, looking back, there are common connections between Shostakovich's fears and what so many have experienced during the present pandemic. We chose the title *Burning through the Cold* to show how this music still resonates so powerfully today."



In recent seasons Esther Yoo has forged strong connections to the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, reinforced in 2018 during her term as its inaugural artist-in-residence. Their relationship is ready to flourish this year in concert and in the recording studio. She joins the RPO and its Music Director Vasily Petrenko in Zagreb for a performance of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E minor on Saturday 10 April before exploring Barber's Violin Concerto with the orchestra and Barry Wordsworth at Cadogan Hall on Thursday 15 April. The violinist is also set to build another significant partnership with the conductor Yu Long as they will work with the RPO in June to record the Barber and Bruch concertos for Deutsche Grammophon at Fairfield Halls in Croydon.

"I'm greatly looking forward to recording the Bruch and Barber and think it will be especially satisfying to dive deep into them after being starved of concerto performances during the pandemic," says Esther Yoo. "The Bruch has been in my repertoire since I was a child and I've loved it ever since; the Barber is newer to me, but I think it makes a great companion to Bruch's concerto. I wanted to pair music from Europe, where I live, with a work from the United States, where I was born, and celebrate two cultures to which I feel so strongly connected. Yu Long has a huge presence in China and Asia and increasingly in the US and Europe. I've always been interested in working with him and admire his commitment to bringing elements of Asian culture to the West. I think we will enjoy a creative collaboration and have a lot of fun working on these concertos together."

<https://estheryooviolin.com/>

<https://www.zen-trio.com/>

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The information in this press release is correct as of 14 January 2021. Please check artist's website and social media for the latest updates



[Watch Z.E.N. Trio: Behind the Album here](#)

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Physical release date 4 February 2021 (Deutsche Grammophon)

Z.E.N. Trio: Esther Yoo violin | Zhang Zuo piano | Narek Hakhnazaryan cello

Shostakovich Trio No.2 in E minor, Op.67

Babadjanian Trio

Khachaturian *Sabre Dance* arr. Ruben Asatryan

Rachmaninov *Vocalise* arr. Gayane Akhnazaryan / Z.E.N. Trio

SELECTION OF 2021 ENGAGEMENTS

Sunday 7 March 2021

Wigmore Hall, London

Z.E.N. Trio: Esther Yoo violin | Zhang Zuo piano | Narek Hakhnazaryan cello

Schubert Notturmo in E-flat major, Op. 148, D897

Dvorak 'Dumky' trio in E minor, Op. 90, B. 166

Shostakovich Piano Trio No. 2 in E minor, Op.67

Thursday 18 March 2021

Queen Elizabeth Hall, London

Live streamed on Ticket Co and IDAGIO

Esther Yoo violin | Santtu-Matias Rouvali conductor | Philharmonia Orchestra

Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto in D major, Op.35

Saturday 10 April 2021

Vatroslav Lisinski Concert Hall, Zagreb

Esther Yoo violin | Vasily Petrenko conductor | Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Mendelssohn Violin Concerto in E minor, Op.64

Thursday 15 April 2021

Cadogan Hall, London

Esther Yoo violin | Barry Wordsworth conductor | Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Barber Violin Concerto