

*Piano Trio (Geronimo), in G minor, Op. 1* (composition date unknown; rev. 1921)

Edward Joseph Collins, composer

Notes by Jon Becker, Collins project editor

By the time he composed this Piano Trio, Collins could draw on personal experience with the genre. As early as 1904, at the age of 18, Collins was publicly performing as pianist, with Nicoline and Nicolai Zedeler, sister (violin) and brother (violoncello), for the Zedeler Trio. Collins's letters from Germany to his family in Joliet speak only of his attempts to compose songs and a string quartet. But Collins wrote, quite pragmatically, of a forthcoming piano trio performance in Berlin in 1911:

We have started rehearsing for our trio concert, which takes place at Bechstein Hall on Nov. 2. The first notice of it appeared in yesterday's paper; it was only a line, but it was exciting enough to read my name. I felt as if my career had begun and that I was being challenged to come out and show what I can do. I am sure we will have a nice success; we certainly play better than any of the chamber music organizations (that is among the younger musicians) that I have heard here. Then we have arranged the program diplomatically by playing firstly a Trio by Gernsheim, who is a big gun here and who can be of great use to us, secondly a sonate for violin and piano by Kahn, who was my composition teacher at the Hochschule and who, I am hoping, will give me private lessons this summer and thirdly, a trio by Mendelssohn, which will be a compliment to his descendants, our patrons, and who we are hoping will show their appreciation by taking a bunch of tickets. Beethoven and Schubert et al. don't need any young musicians to exploit their works, but living composers do, and so you put them under your obligation by playing their compositions in public.

In a subsequent letter to his family, Collins confirmed that both Gernsheim and Kahn had attended, as had Collins's Mendelssohn family acquaintances, and that the concert had been a musical and financial success. Was the composer's *Piano Trio Op. 1* on this program?

The first explicit mention of Collins's *Trio* is found in a 10 October 1921 entry in the composer's journal: "Spent the afternoon and evening revising and correcting my Trio, Op. 1 which I intend to submit to Society for the Publication of American Music."

Three days later the composer made this entry: "Sent my trio away to the Society for the Publication of American Music and returned the correct proofs of two waltzes to the Composer's Music Corporation [Ed.: likely Op. 18]. Not a bad day but tomorrow must be ten times as good."

But by March of 1922, the composer's hopes for his Op. 1 had been dashed:

This has been a great St. Patrick's Day: I heard that my Trio which I submitted to the Society for the Publication of American Music was rejected, also that my Festival Overture [Mardi Gras] failed to qualify for the finals in the North Shore Competition. This afternoon the cheque which Madison paid me as a royalty on [the operetta] "Who Can Tell? Came back with protest fees attached. A wonderful day.

A day later, on March 18, Collins journaled: "Tis with a load on my heart that I begin work this morning. The future looks dark and I realize that that the only happiness possible for me is success and fame." Almost six years later, in an entry on 13 March 1928, the composer wrote that he planned to work on a piano trio, the last mention of this genre in his papers.

Though undated, the *Trio* source score that was engraved for this recording is likely the one submitted by Collins to the Society for the Publication of American Music. It is the only source score professionally copied in ink; also, the first movement has passages different from the other sources and is in a different hand, likely reflecting the composer's reported 1921 revisions.

This source score is also the only one subtitled "Geronimo." There is no obvious use of native American musical materials in Collins's *Trio* score and he did not think highly of contemporaries who composed Indian music. Perhaps "Geronimo" was added only to convey a young composer's enthusiasm?

Collins later recycled the third movement of the *Trio*, orchestrating it for the third movement of his 1929 *Symphony*.