



## Yevgeny Kutik's *Meditations on Family* New Works Inspired by Memory, Home, and Belonging

By Composers Timo Andres, Kinan Azmeh, Christopher Cerrone,  
Andreia Pinto Correia, Paola Prestini, Gity Razaz,  
Joseph Schwantner & Gregory Vajda

Online: [www.yevgenykutik.com/meditations-on-family](http://www.yevgenykutik.com/meditations-on-family)

Full EP CD out March 22, 2019 (Marquis Classics)  
Downloads and review CDs now available upon request  
Stream the album: [www.soundcloud.com/marquis-classics](http://www.soundcloud.com/marquis-classics)

Kutik is featured as *Strings Magazine's* March/April Cover Story

Kutik makes Kennedy Center Debut presented by Washington Performing Arts on April 23, 2019  
Performing selections from *Meditations on Family* & *Music from the Suitcase*

New York, NY – Russian-American violinist **Yevgeny Kutik**, known for his “dark-hued tone and razor-sharp technique” (*The New York Times*), has launched a new commissioning and recording project titled *Meditations on Family* via **Marquis Classics**. Kutik has commissioned eight composers to translate a personal family photo into a short musical miniature for violin and various ensemble. He envisions the project as a living archive of new works inspired by memories, home, and belonging. Each track has been released digitally weekly, and the full EP CD, produced by four-time Grammy winner **Jesse Lewis**, will be released on **March 22, 2019**. Kutik will make his Kennedy Center debut presented by Washington Performing Arts on **April 23**, performing selections from *Meditations on Family* and his previous project, *Music from the Suitcase*.

*Strings Magazine* featured Kutik as its cover story for the March/April issue, reporting, “True to Kutik’s vision, each miniature is a window into the composer’s emotional life. ‘I told the composers that I was looking for miniatures, no more than two to three minutes in length,’ he says. ‘I like this idea that when you are flipping through a family photo album, you don’t spend ten minutes on each photo. Rather, you look at each one and there’s a rush of emotion and then you go on to the next photo. I wanted to recreate that. So I kept coming back to this idea of little meditations. You sit down for two or three minutes and meditate on an idea and then you go on with your day. I really wanted to capture that in this project somehow.’”



Kutik has chronicled each piece and the composers’ photos and stories online at [www.meditationsonfamily.com](http://www.meditationsonfamily.com).

*Strings* also premiered Kutik’s video for **Joseph Schwantner’s** *Daydreams* for violin, four singers, and glass harmonica, inspired by a photo of the composer’s maternal grandparents and his mother as a baby, and recorded with tenors Michael Barrett and Corey Hart, and sopranos Sarah Moyer and Carey Shunskis. *I Care If You Listen* premiered Kutik’s recording of **Gity Razaz’s** *Cadenza for the Once Young*, dedicated to the composer’s grandparents, and their lasting love.

*Meditations on Family* includes *Flight to Limbo* by **Christopher Cerrone** (January 18), *Cadenza for the Once Young* by **Gity Razaz** (January 25), *Litania* by **Andreia Pinto Correia** (February 1), *Rima* by **Kinan Azmeh** (February 8), *How to Draw a Tree* by **Gregory Vajda** (February 15), *Suitcased Dreams* by **Paola Prestini** (February 22), *See Above* by **Timo Andres** (March 1), and *Daydreams* by **Joseph Schwantner** (March 8); full EP on CD (March 22).

Yevgeny Kutik was moved to embark on this project by his own relationship to family and culture. In 2014, he released *Music from the Suitcase*, an album exploring the sheet music that his family brought with them on their journey to the U.S. after emigrating from the U.S.S.R. in 1989. He says, “In those scores were extraordinary lessons about where I come from, my family, and our traditions.”

At his family’s gathering for Thanksgiving 2017, Kutik’s grandmother recounted the experience of saying goodbye at the Minsk airport, as Kutik and his parents set off for the U.S. Kutik says, “During the mass Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union in the 1980s, leaving the U.S.S.R. meant going into the unknown with few resources and belongings. As Baba Luba recalled, when she saw me, a boy of just four, walk past the airport security gate, she thought to herself, ‘I will never see him again.’ Luckily, the story has a happy ending. Just three years later, we welcomed my grandfather and grandmother at the Albany International Airport as they arrived to join us. As Baba Luba told her story, she brought out a photo that was taken at the airport during the first several minutes of their arrival. The camera captured the priceless expressions of my family members, especially that of my grandfather Isaac and Baba Luba, exhausted from their journey and filled with the overwhelming emotion of seeing their family again.”

It was this photo that spurred Kutik to commission *Meditations on Family*. “Seeing this photo reignited a desire of mine to put music to family memories and stories,” he said. “I asked composers I admire to choose their own family photo, a photo that conjures up memories of joy, sadness, unity, and longing, and to translate that photo into a short work for violin. What resulted are eight musical meditations, written by eight different voices, each inspired by their own family story and tradition.”

January 18: *Flight to Limbo* by Christopher Cerrone for solo violin  
*Inspired by a photo of the composer’s father as a small child, suffering from pneumonia.*

January 25: Gity Razaz’s *Cadenza for the Once Young* for solo violin  
*Dedicated to the composer’s grandparents, and their lasting love.*

February 1: *Litania* by Andreia Pinto Correia for violin and piano, with David Kaplan  
*A response to a photo taken by the composer when visiting her family on the island of Madeira in the mid-1990s.*

February 8: Kinan Azmeh’s *Rima* for violin and clarinet, with Ryan Yure  
*Inspired by a photo of the composer with his sister on a family trip to Bulgaria in 1979.*

February 15: Gregory Vajda’s *How to Draw a Tree* for violin and bass, with Edwin Barker  
*A piece based on a photo of the annual Vajda family meeting near the famous Lake Balaton in Hungary.*

February 22: Paola Prestini’s *Suitcased Dreams* for violin and piano, with David Kaplan  
*A meditation on a childhood photo of the composer and her mother.*

March 1: *See Above* by Timo Andres for violin and bass, with Edwin Barker  
*A musical representation of the first photo taken by the composer, of his family.*

March 8: Joseph Schwanter’s *Daydreams* for violin and four singers, with tenors Michael Barrett and Corey Hart; and sopranos Sarah Moyer and Carey Shunskis  
*Inspired by a photo of the composer’s maternal grandparents and his mother as a baby, from 1924.*

March 22: Full EP on CD

**About Yevgeny Kutik:** Yevgeny Kutik has captivated audiences worldwide with an old-world sound that communicates a modern intellect. Praised for his technical precision and virtuosity, he is also lauded for his poetic and imaginative interpretations of standard works as well as rarely heard and newly composed repertoire.

A native of Minsk, Belarus, Kutik immigrated to the United States with his family at the age of five. His 2014 album, *Music from the Suitcase: A Collection of Russian Miniatures* (Marquis Classics), features music he found in his family’s suitcase after immigrating to the United States from the Soviet Union, and debuted at No. 5 on the Billboard Classical chart. The album garnered critical acclaim and was featured on NPR’s *All Things Considered* and in *The New York Times*. Kutik’s 2012 debut album, *Sounds of Defiance*, also on the Marquis label, features the music of Achron, Pärt, Schnittke, and Shostakovich. Kutik released his third solo album, *Words Fail*, to critical acclaim on Marquis Classics in October 2016. The album uses Mendelssohn’s *Songs Without Words* as a starting point to expand upon the idea that music surpasses traditional language in its expressive capabilities and includes two new commissions on the theme by Timo Andres and Michael Gandolfi.

In April 2019, Kutik will make his debut at the Kennedy Center, presented by Washington Performing Arts. Additional performances in his 2018-2019 season include appearances with the Dayton Philharmonic, La Crosse Symphony, Duluth Superior Symphony, Northeastern Pennsylvania Philharmonic, Springfield Symphony Orchestra, Symphony of the Redwoods, Verde Valley Sinfonietta, the Cape Town Philharmonic in South Africa, and recitals at the Honest Brook Music Festival, Bargemusic, and the Boston Conservatory at Berklee.

Deeply committed to fostering creative relationships with living composers in addition to performing music from the standard repertoire, Kutik has been involved in commissioning and premiering several new works. In addition to *Meditations on Family*, recent highlights include the world premieres of Timo Andres' *Words Fail* at The Phillips Collection, Michael Gandolfi's *Arioso Doloroso/Estatico* at National Sawdust in Brooklyn, Ron Ford's concerto *Versus* with the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra, and Sheila Silver's *Six Beads on a String*, as well as the New York premiere of George Tsontakis' *Violin Concerto No. 2* at the 92nd Street Y. He has also been involved in the performances of new and rarely played works by Kati Agócs, Joseph Schwantner, Nico Muhly, and Donald Martino.

Passionate about his heritage and its influence on his artistry, Kutik is an advocate for the Jewish Federations of North America, the organization that assisted his family in coming to the United States, and regularly speaks and performs across the United States to both raise awareness and promote the assistance of refugees from around the world.

Kutik made his major orchestral debut in 2003 with Keith Lockhart and The Boston Pops as the First Prize recipient of the Boston Symphony Orchestra Young Artists Competition. In 2006, he was awarded the Salon de Virtuosi Grant as well as the Tanglewood Music Center Jules Reiner Violin Prize.

Kutik began violin studies with his mother, Alla Zernitskaya, and went on to study with Zinaida Gilels, Shirley Givens, Roman Totenberg, and Donald Weilerstein. He holds a bachelor's degree from Boston University and a master's degree from the New England Conservatory and currently resides in Boston. Kutik's violin was crafted in Italy in 1915 by Stefano Scarpella. For more information, please visit [yevgenykutik.com](http://yevgenykutik.com).

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