

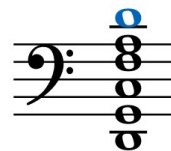
## Oreade String Trio

### Josef Haydn (1732-1809): Baryton Trios (1765-1775) (arr Yvonne Morgan)

Hob. XI:117 in F *Adagio; Allegro, Menuetto*

Hob. XI:108 in A *Moderato; Menuetto; Finale*

The baryton is a fretted, bowed 6- or 7-string instrument rather like a bass *viola da gamba*, but with an additional set of 10 or more wire strings behind the neck whose resonance enhances the instrument's sound. These strings can also be plucked by the player's left thumb to provide a simple accompaniment. Its bowed strings are gut and typically tuned A', D, G, c, e, a, d' (*illustrated*) with the top string a tone above middle C, like the second-highest string on the viola. The instrument originated (possibly in England) in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and, though never popular, had appeal in court circles. Haydn's employer Prince Nikolaus Esterhazy acquired one in 1765 and insisted that Capelmeister Haydn write something for him to play.



Over the next ten years Haydn wrote about 120 trios for baryton (played by the prince), viola (probably played by Haydn) and cello. The combination is unusual in that it has no soprano range instrument. In order to help the prince's more dominant part to be more easily heard against instruments of similar pitch range, Haydn tuned the baryton's sympathetic strings an octave higher than usual. Even so the sound of the trios as written has an unusual deep sonority. However, this evening's performance is of arrangements made by Yvonne Morgan in 1999 that substitute the soprano voice of the violin for the baryton. Consequently the similar pitch range is mostly eliminated.

The later trios, including the two we hear tonight, are more demanding of the baryton player than are the earlier ones, as Haydn responded to the prince's improving technique. The baryton fell out of favour early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but underwent a revival in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> with new instruments being made and played <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZApJANZjI0>.

### Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) String Trio in D Op 9 no 2 (1798)

*Allegretto*

*Andante quasi Allegretto*

*Menuetto: Allegro*

*Rondo: Allegro*

'*The best of my works*' declared the 28 year-old Beethoven of his three Op 9 string trios, which had followed on from two earlier ones, Ops 3 and 8. Indeed he was so pleased with them that he finally succumbed to the persistent requests from his aristocratic patrons to write some string quartets – and the six Op 18 quartets were finally born. Why did it take him so long? And why write string trios first? Beethoven was intent on tightly controlling his launch into Vienna. As a virtuoso pianist and a competent viola player he was confident about writing for piano and strings; his Op 1 piano trios were a great success. But to be seen as Mozart's successor in writing string quartets required more study. String trios provided a similar, even harsher, technical challenge (particularly for the viola) but with much less scope for direct comparison with Haydn and Mozart. The players, espe-

cially the viola, literally have their hands full fleshing out three voices to be as satisfying to the listener as if there were also a fourth. The contrast with the Haydn Baryton trios written only about 25 years earlier is remarkable.

The three Op 9 trios are dedicated to Count Johann Georg von Browne, a general in the Russian army then living in Vienna. He subscribed to Beethoven's Op 1 piano trios and, must have been highly regarded by the composer who described him as the '*first Maecenas of his Muse*'. He and his wife were also the dedicatees of the Op 10 and the three Op 22 piano sonatas. But according to a knowledgeable employee he was not without failings: "*one of the strangest of men, full of excellent talents and beautiful qualities of heart and spirit on the one hand but, on the other, full of weakness and depravity*".

The second of the three Op 9 trios is the least often heard; Angus Watson describes it as '*one of his more elusive compositions...[but] full of imaginative and experimental ideas*'. So listen carefully and you will be rewarded! Right from the start, the second shows

Beethoven's debt to Haydn and Mozart with a gently flowing, cheerfully relaxed melody (*illustrated*).

However, the uneasy, obsessive

Beethoven then emerges with a tight, repetitive figure (*illustrated*). These contrasting ideas provide material for over 300

bars of ingeniously

worked out sonata

form. The silences

of this second figure

also shape the first part (x) of the theme for the *Andante* second movement (*illustrated*); the melodic

second part (y) probably

benefitted from lessons in

vocal composition that

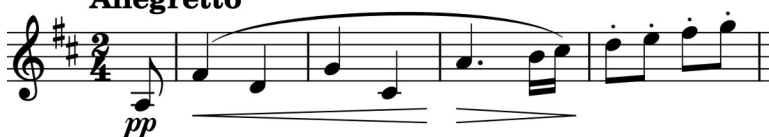
Beethoven had recently

received from Salieri: it

leads to distinctly operatic

episodes later in the movement.

### Allegretto



### Andante quasi Allegretto



The too-fast-to-dance-to scherzo-like *Menuetto* and its trio section also inherit the thematically important rests from the first two movements, with similarly contrasted flowing passages (*illustrated*).

### Allegro



The theme for the *Rondo* last movement is shared

with Beethoven's *Romance* in F (another *Rondo*, albeit *Adagio*), which was also composed in 1798. Tonight's *Rondo* is brimming with innovative ideas, illustrating Beethoven's dazzling artistry in improvisation and variation.

My debt to Angus Watson will be obvious to those of you who have read his '*Beethoven's Chamber Music in Context*'.

===== Interval =====

## Franz Schubert (1797-1828) String Trio in B flat major, D. 471 (1816)

### *Allegro*

The autumn of 1814 was the start of one of the most extraordinary burgeonings of creativity that music has ever seen. Over 15 months, the teenage Schubert not only produced around 150 songs (including *Gretchen am Spinnrade* and *Erlikönig*), but also two string quartets, two symphonies, two masses and four Singspiele. He composed at a rate of over 65 bars a day despite being a full-time teacher at his father's school, having composition classes twice a week with Salieri and being so short-sighted that he even wore his glasses when he was asleep.

Two years later during 1816 Schubert's productivity was still extraordinary (110 songs, 2 symphonies etc) but he had not yet received a single public performance in Vienna, a single public notice in a newspaper, or enjoyed a single work being published. In the autumn he made a significant domestic and professional move, leaving his demanding teaching position and his supportively conventional home to take up with the dandified Franz von Schober in Vienna's fashionable inner ring. Today's string trio movement was written in the September of 1816; no other movements exist apart from a 39-bar fragment of an *Andante sostenuto*. It is not clear why Schubert left it unfinished. Perhaps the two movements contained too many and too clear reminiscences of Mozart and Haydn (such as Haydn's Quartet, op. 76, 4) for Schubert, who was striving for independence at the time.

The sunny opening (*illustrated*) sets the tone for much of this charming if simply-structured movement. After the repeated first half, the development is unusually restricted in its material, being almost entirely based on the two closing bars of the first half (*illustrated*); the interest comes from the keys that the 19-year-old Schubert leads us through.



## Antonin Dvořák (1841-1904) Terzetto in C Op 74 (1887) (arr. Richard Bell)

*Introduzione: Allegro ma non troppo*

*Larghetto*

*Scherzo: Vivace; Trio: Poco meno mosso*

*Tema con Variazioni*

Dvořák's Terzetto was written as Hausmusik to be played at home by Dvořák, a professional viola player, and two of his friends: violinist Jan Pelikan of the National Theater Orchestra and Jan's violin student Josef Kruis who boarded with the Dvořáks at their mother-in-law's house while he studied chemistry. Dvořák had been taken with the fun that teacher and pupil were having with violin duets, so within a week had written a piece that allowed his viola to join them. But evidently he overestimated the talents of the amateur Kruis, and the finished work proved too difficult for him. Dvořák promptly substituted a much easier piece for the three of them to play: four *Miniatures* for two violins and viola - subsequently transcribed as *Romantic Pieces* for violin and piano. Although we are hugely sympathetic to Kruis' plight, we are glad he inspired Dvořák since the Terzetto is almost the only worthwhile piece in the entire chamber music repertoire for two violins and viola. It is certainly not mere 'Hausmusik', but rather an ingenious synthesis of spontaneous musicality and great artistry.

First a charming *Allegro* acts as an introduction to the melodically beautiful *Adagio*. Then the *Scherzo*, a *Furiant* with a *Ländler* as a trio, is as folksy as if it had just been played on the nearest Prague dance floor. In the *Finale*, the ten variations, like those in Dvořák's

'*Dumky*' Piano Trio are alternately in contrasting fast and slow tempi - a rewarding structure which he handles masterfully. .

The Terzetto is rarely performed, although it is frequently attempted by amateurs when, as can happen, their string quartet's cellist is late. The whole work is almost never played even in these circumstances since even cellists are rarely that late. Today it receives a welcome, if rare, airing thanks to an arrangement by Richard Bell for the more conventional string trio of violin, viola and cello.

Programme notes by Chris Darwin with considerable help from Ursula Sarnthein.