



St Mary's Church, Cratfield
Sunday 27 August 2017

LENDVAI STRING TRIO

Nadia Wilzenbeek *violin*
Ylvali Zilliacus *viola*
Marie Macleod *cello*

Concerts at Cratfield

TODAY'S CONCERT

When we think of a string trio, a form that grew out of the Baroque trio sonata, we think of violin, viola and cello; the combination we here today. And from the classical period onwards that tended to be the case but other combinations such as two violins and cello, and two violins and viola have also been used by various composers. For instance, Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805) wrote over 50 string trios for two violins and cello.

Unlike the string quartet repertoire with its abundance of truly great pieces, the string trio repertoire of violin, viola and cello is not blessed with too many masterpieces. There is the exception of Mozart's late divertimento K563 which was performed at Cratfield in 2000 and again in 2014. In the 20th century Schoenberg wrote an exceptional string trio (1946) using the 12 tone technique and Beethoven wrote a number of string trios early in his career before embarking on his first set of string quartets Op.18.

Today's concert is an intriguing programme of three very different pieces for string trio. Starting with a relatively unknown composer (Rontgen) who wrote 16 string trios; followed by a great composer (Schubert) writing for a combination we don't particularly associate him with; and closing with JS Bach's iconic Goldberg Variations for keyboard, superbly transcribed for string trio. All three pieces being played today are new to Concerts at Cratfield.

TODAY'S PERFORMERS

The Lendvai String Trio, new to Cratfield, comprises the Dutch violinist Nadia Wijzenbeek, the Swedish violist Yivali Ziliacus and the British cellist Marie Macleod. They made their Wigmore Hall debut in 2006 and have performed throughout Europe.

They won the Kerjes Prize in Holland in 2011. The Trio have also won awards from the Kirckman Concerts Society, the Worshipful Company of Musicians, Musician's Benevolent Fund, the Park Lane Group, and the Concert Promoters Network in the UK. Their debut CD *Destination Paris* for Stone Records in 2011 received International acclaim as well as their recent recording of the complete Beethoven String Trios which was BBC Music Magazine's Chamber Choice in June 2013.

Outside of the Trio, Nadia is the concertmaster of the Dutch Radio Philharmonic Orchestra; Yivali is guest principle at the Royal Swedish Opera and Marie is a solo cellist of the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra.

The name *Lendvai* was chosen when the Trio were introduced, at the Prussian Cove Master Classes in Cornwall, to a String Trio by the Hungarian composer, Erwin Lendvai (1882-1949).

JULIUS RONTGEN
1855-1932

The composer, Julius Rontgen, came from a very musical family. His father, Engelbert, a violinist, was born in the Netherlands and later emigrated to Leipzig in Germany where he played in the Gewandhaus Orchestra. He married the pianist Pauline Klengel who came from a family with a long musical tradition. Julius, the eldest child and only son, spent his youth in Leipzig. His parents were well connected within the highest musical circles, and regularly received musicians such as Felix Mendelssohn, Niels Gade and Joseph Joachim in their home.

Julius's talent was apparent from an early age. His grandfather taught him piano and violin and his parents were involved in further musical training. Julius also studied with figures such as, Carl Reinecke and Franz Lachner. He soon established a reputation as a piano virtuoso and performed all over Europe. At the same time Rontgen was also composing, and had his music published in Germany. He settled in Amsterdam in 1877 and starting there as a teacher he founded, with other colleagues, the Amsterdam Conservatorium in 1884. Later in 1913, he became the managing director of the institution, a position he held until 1924. Despite his busy career as a performer, teacher and administrator, Rontgen composed over 600 works of orchestral and chamber music, but only 100 works were published. Most of his manuscripts are housed in the Netherlands Music Institute in the Hague.

The Lendvai's have taken up the cause of Rontgen and recorded all of the composers 16 String Trios. The only one of the set published is No.1. The other 15 were found in handwritten manuscript form at the Hague Music Institute where they had been archived for over 80 years.

STRING TRIO NO.15 IN
C MINOR *AUTO TRIO*
(1929)

About 15 minutes

Trio No.15 was dedicated to the composer's son, Engelbert, who was the driver of the car during a family tour of Northern Italy in 1929. Hence the *Auto Trio* title reference. The music, composed during the trip, represents the happiness the composer felt at experiencing the delights of Italy. The opening movement has an atmosphere of quiet intimacy. The second movement has a feel of folk music and American spirituals. The third movement opens with a viola melody of romantic inclination. The final movement is more energetic with a sense of lively well-being. Rontgen tended to play the viola part of his string trios and in this trio the viola has an imitation of a carhorn.

FRANZ SCHUBERT
1797-1828

Schubert wrote some of the greatest and most loved works in the chamber music repertoire. His late string quartets and the C major string quintet are masterpieces of the highest order and his two piano trios of substantial length and melodic wonders, set a standard of chamber music throughout the romantic period. So when we hear the name Schubert and trio we automatically think of his famous piano trios. But Schubert also experimented with

the string trio form. He wrote three pieces in this form and all of them in the key of B flat major. The first one, D111 written in 1814, consists of an allegro fragment only. The second D471, from 1816, is in one completed movement only, with a fragment of a second movement. So the third string trio D581, from 1817, is the only completed one. Schubert revised the original composition and the revised version is the one the Lendvai play for us today.

STRING TRIO IN B FLAT
MAJOR D581
(1817)

ALLEGRO MODERATO

ANDANTE

MENUETTO AND
TRIO – ALLEGRETTO

RONDO - ALLEGRETTO

About 20 minutes

This trio, the four movements coming in at approx. 20 minutes, is brief and compact compared to Schubert's late great Chamber works and is generally amiable in mood and atmosphere. The melodic invention, as expected from this composer is typically *gemutlich* in the Austrian folk manner and generally keeps the dark side of Schubert's invention at bay. But not entirely, as there are moments, especially in the first movement that hint at the harmonic shocks of late Schubert. The second theme of the first movement's exposition is similar to the gentle opening theme but as we reach the development section the mood darkens and the key changes to F sharp minor. The key reverts back to B flat major for the recapitulation and the movement draws to a gentle conclusion. The andante F major second movement in 6/8 time is an easy going graceful movement that moves into F minor for the short middle section. At the return of the opening theme back in the major key, the violin takes charge with the ornamentation of that theme. The minuet is an amiable stroll with the viola

taking centre stage in the trio section. The final Rondo movement, which stays in the home key of B flat major throughout, goes at a jolly trot with the violin asserting itself again following the viola's dominance in the previous movement. At bar one hundred and eleven the music turns somewhat dramatic and sharper in tone, but the main theme returns in its original placid mode as the music ambles along to the finishing line of this most charming of string trio's.

INTERVAL

Refreshments are offered by a team from the parish, in aid of church funds

JOHANN SEBASTIAN
BACH
1685-1750

The Goldberg Variations (BWV988) being played today have been arranged for string trio by Dmitry Sitkovesky. The original keyboard work was published in 1741; the Sitkovesky transcription was published in 1985. Dmitry Sitkovesky (1954) is a renowned Russian violinist and conductor.

ARIA

Dmitry Sitkovesky in his own words about his transcription of the Goldberg Variation: "When I first wrote my transcription of Bach's Goldberg Variations for string trio in 1984, it was both a labour of love and an obsession with the 1981 Glenn Gould recording. For two months I probably had the time of my life, musically speaking, being in the constant company of Johann Sebastian Bach and Glenn Gould. Since then, my transcriptions have been played all over the world."

VARIATION 1

VARIATION 2

VARIATION 3 -
CANONE ALL'UNISONO

VARIATION 4

VARIATION 5

VARIATION 6 -
CANONE ALLA SECONDA

VARIATION 7 -
AL TEMPO DI GIGA

VARIATION 8

VARIATION 9 -
CANONE ALLA TERZA

VARIATION 10 -
FUGHETTA

VARIATION 11

VARIATION 12 -
CANONE ALLA QUARTA

VARIATION 13

VARIATION 14

VARIATION 15 -
CANONE
ALLA QUINTA

VARIATION 16 -
OUVERTURE

VARIATION 17

VARIATION 18 -
CANONE ALLA SESTA

The circumstances under which the Goldberg Variations came into being were passed down to us by Bach's first biographer, Johann Nikolaus Forkel. In 1802 he wrote: The Count (Keyserlingk) was often sickly, and then had sleepless nights. At these times Goldberg, who lived in the house with him, had to pass the night in an adjoining room to play something to him when he could not sleep. The Count once said to Bach that he should like to have some clavier pieces for his Goldberg, which should be of such a soft and somewhat lively character that he might be a little cheered up by them in his sleepless nights. Bach thought he could best fulfil this wish by variations, which an account of the constant sameness of the fundamental harmony, he had hitherto considered as an ungrateful task. But as at this time all his works were models of art, these variations also became such under his hand. This is, indeed the only model of the kind that he left us. The Count thereafter called them nothing but *his variations*. He was never weary of hearing them; and for a long time, when the sleepless nights came, he used to say: "Dear Goldberg, do play me one of my variations." Bach was, perhaps, never so well rewarded for any work as for this: The Count made him a present of a golden goblet filled a hundred Louis d'ors. But their worth as a work of art would not have been paid if the present had been a thousand times as great.

VARIATION 19

VARIATION 20

VARIATION 21 -
CANONE ALLA SETTIMA

VARIATION 22 -
ALLA BREVE

VARIATION 23

VARIATION 24-
CANONE ALL'OTTAVA

VARIATION 25-
ADAGIO

VARIATION 26

VARIATION 27 -
CANONE ALLA NONA

VARIATION 28

VARIATION 29

VARIATION 30-
QUODLIBET

ARIA DA CAPO

About 55 minutes

Some musicologists don't quite believe Forkel's tale for several reasons. First of all the work carried no dedication when it was published in 1742. Bach simply entitled it *Keyboard Practice, Consisting of an Aria with Diverse Variations for the Harpsichord with Two Manuals, Composed for Music Lovers to Refresh their Spirits*. As Glenn Gould said, that's "a very down-to-earth description of such a great work." Secondly, Goldberg would have been only 14 or 15 years old at the time. But surely there were prodigies then as there are now? Had he not died at the age of 29, we might have known more about its inception. Finally, no gold goblet was mentioned in Bach's estate, although there was a tobacco box of agate set in gold which was very highly valued. Whether or not it is true doesn't really matter; it remains a good story and one which will no doubt be forever attached to this monumental work.

The harmony of the opening *Aria* is the basis for the thirty variations that follow. The key is G major with three variations in G minor. Every third variation is a canon, with variation 30, expected to be a canon is surprisingly a *Quodlibet* (a medley of popular tunes) instead, before the return of the *Aria* to conclude the work. The variations to especially look-out for are numbers 13 (sublime), number 15 (the first in the minor key), and above all number 25 (the longest) marked *adagio*. The harpsichordist Wanda Landowska famously called this variation, *the black pearl*.

MUSIC ON CD
TODAY'S PERFORMERS
AND WORKS

Rontgen String Trio No. 15: The Rontgen complete 16 String Trios have been recorded by today's artists, The Lendvai String Trio on four separate discs on the Champs Hill label. Gramophone magazine in their February 2017 edition of the final four string trios which includes today's number 15, wrote about the recording. "The performances are superbly committed and the recording ... is superbly balanced, the players in a beautiful natural perspective - I think this might be the best of the series."

Schubert String Trio D581: My recommended recording of this work would be the two string trios D471 and today's D581 together with the popular Trout Quintet. The artists are The Leopold String Trio with Paul Lewis piano and Graham Mitchell double bass in the Trout Quintet. The label is Hyperion and it is a mid-price issue. For a Naxos bargain price choice, the D581 String Trio is coupled with the great String Quintet D956 and the performers are Villa Musical Ensemble.

Bach Goldberg Variations for String Trio: Having listened to various versions of the Sitkovetsky String Trio transcription of Bach's Goldberg Variations, I would recommend the Amati String Trio on Brilliant Classics at bargain price. At mid-price again the Leopold String Trio have garlanded excellent reviews for their version on Hyperion.

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Leonora Piano Trio

15 JULY

Jack Liebeck *violin*, Katya Apekisheva
piano

29 JULY

Allegri String Quartet

12 AUGUST

Maxwell String Quartet

26 AUGUST

Kathryn Stott *piano*

9 SEPTEMBER

Carducci Quartet & Craig Ogden *guitar*

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