



SCHUBERT
PIANO TRIOS
VOLUME 1

GOULD PIANO TRIO



Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

Piano Trios

The Gould Piano Trio

Lucy Gould *violin*

Richard Lester *cello*

Benjamin Frith *piano*

Piano Trio No. 1 in B-flat major, Op. 99, D898

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|--------------------------|---------|
| 1. Allegro moderato | [15:19] |
| 2. Andante un poco mosso | [9:41] |
| 3. Scherzo & Trio | [7:11] |
| 4. Rondo | [9:32] |

5. Valses nobles, Op. 77, D969

arr. for piano trio by
Julius Zellner (1832–1900) [10:02]

**6. Piano Trio in E-flat major,
Op. 148, D897, 'Notturmo'** [9:15]

Total playing time [61:05]

About The Gould Piano Trio:

'Right from Schubert's entrancing opening – Benjamin Frith's piano delicately picking out the theme, Lester offering succulent plucked notes, with light staccato stabs from Lucy Gould's violin – we knew we were in chamber music heaven.'

The Times



Lithograph of Franz Schubert by Josef Kriehuber (1800–1876)

Franz Schubert (1797–1828) Piano Trios

Piano Trio No. 1 in B-flat major, Op. 99, D898

Apart from a very early single movement written when he was fifteen years of age, Schubert came to the piano trio late in his short career and left only two full-length works in the form, written in 1827–8. The first of them, in B-flat major, was almost certainly completed in the Autumn of 1827. Though the autograph manuscript is lost, the composer's friends recalled that it was written just before the second trio (D929, in E-flat major). Mystery surrounds the exact date of the first performance of the B-flat Trio, though Schubert wrote to his friend Anselm Hüttenbrenner about a concert including a 'new trio' given at the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna on 26 December 1827, when it was played by the violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh, cellist Josef Linke and pianist Karl Maria von Bocklet. Though by no means certain, this was probably the B-flat Trio, since the second (E-flat) Trio was described as 'new' when it was played at a concert in March 1828. By the time Schubert came to write his piano trios, the form had taken on a new stature thanks to works such as Beethoven's *Ghost* and *Archduke* trios. With the B-flat Trio, Schubert built on Beethoven's model with an utterly characteristic work of

his own, combining considerable proportions with a predominantly sunny disposition. When the trio was first published by Diabelli in 1836, Robert Schumann wrote that 'One glance at Schubert's trio, and the miserable hustle and bustle of human existence vanishes, and all the world is fresh and bright.' Even though it only appeared in print eight years after Schubert's death, the B-flat Trio was a considerable success during the last year of Schubert's life: in 1865, his biographer Heinrich Kreissle von Hellborn wrote that both trios were 'given with enthusiastic applause at private parties, and at public concerts, by musicians who were enthusiastic advocates of Schubert's genius.'

Those musicians were a very distinguished group: Ignaz Schuppanzigh (1776–1830) and Josef Linke (1783–1837) were both members of the Schuppanzigh Quartet which had given the first performances of Beethoven's late quartets and, in March 1824, Schubert's A minor String Quartet (D804) which was also dedicated to Schuppanzigh. The pianist Karl Maria von Bocklet (1801–1881) was born in Prague but was working in Vienna – as a violinist – in 1817. It seems he was equally adept on the violin and the piano: he worked as a violinist at the Theater an der Wien but subsequently concentrated on the piano. He was considerably admired by Schubert, who dedicated the Piano Sonata

in D major (D850) to him in 1826. The same players also gave the earliest performances of Schubert's Piano Trio in E-flat.

The first movement is in Sonata Form. It opens with a confident, striding theme played in octaves by the strings, propelled by dotted notes in the piano's bass line. One of the distinctive features of Schubert's writing in this trio – as in the *Trout* Quintet – is for a theme to be played on the piano by both hands in octaves. This is just what happens when the piano reiterates the first theme, pianissimo, accompanied by the strings. The second theme, first heard on the cello, then in octaves with the violin, is a lyrical contrast. After an extensive development of these two ideas, the recapitulation finds Schubert playing with the form – there are a couple of false starts in different keys before it finally arrives on the tonic on B-flat major and works towards a stirring conclusion.

Over a gently undulating piano accompaniment, the song-like main theme of the 'Andante un poco mosso' (in E flat major) is introduced pianissimo by the cello, before being handed to the violin. When the piano takes over, a new figure appears in the strings and before long Schubert is exploring some surprising harmonic shifts, moving effortlessly into

remote keys, as the texture becomes more agitated before returning to the serene mood of the opening.

Back in the home key of B-flat, the 'Scherzo' begins with a falling theme in octaves on the piano which heralds a movement full of rhythmic ambiguity and some tricky interplay between the piano and strings. The 'Trio' section, in E-flat, is less animated and it has the feel of a waltz. Here, the melodic interest is given to the strings while the piano provides an accompaniment that almost entirely avoids playing on the strong (first) beat of each bar.

The finale is a freely designed 'Rondo'. The main theme is similar in outline to that of a much earlier song (*Skolie*, D306) which sets a text about enjoying the delights of a flower before its fragrance fades. Whether this was a deliberate allusion on Schubert's part is far from certain, but it's a singularly appropriate image to have in mind when listening to this ebullient movement. Along with its predominantly genial mood, this is also a movement of considerable ingenuity: within his chosen Rondo structure, Schubert develops the main theme in the most imaginative ways, above all in a passage where elements of two important ideas are heard simultaneously (the main theme in the



cello, while the violin plays music based on the opening rhythm) with delicious metrical ambiguity. This magical passage returns – in the remote key of G-flat major – just before the final Presto which brings this inspired trio to a close.

Piano Trio in E-flat major, Op. 148, D897, 'Notturmo'

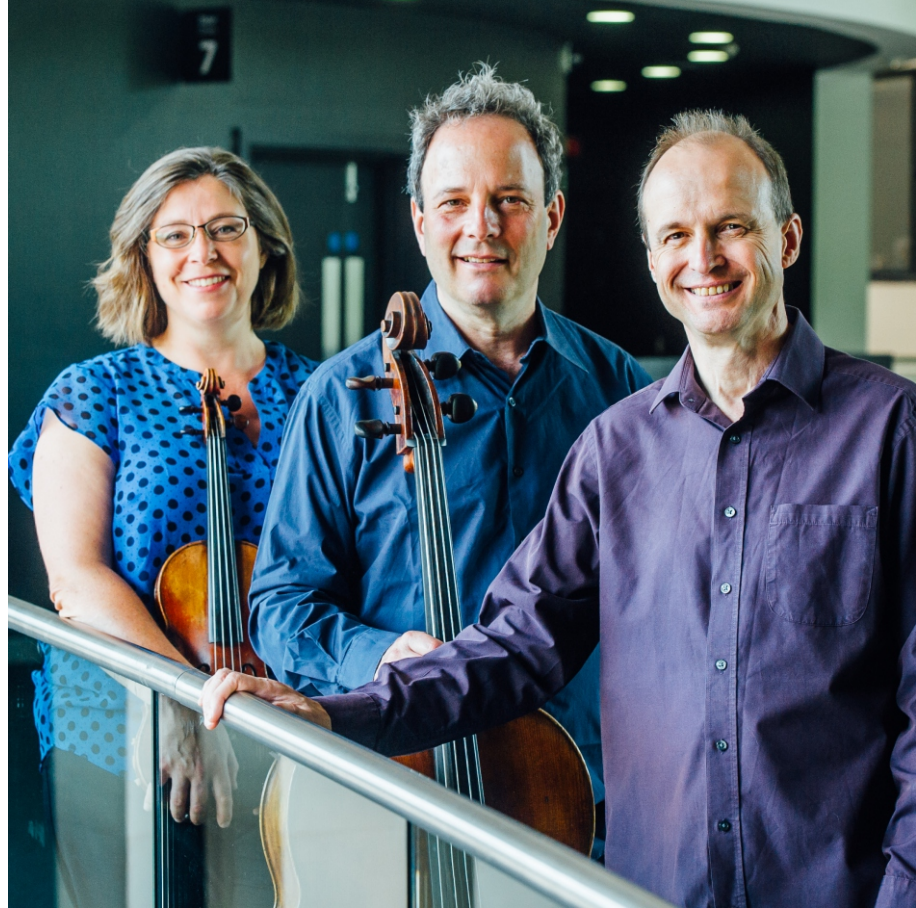
This substantial movement in E-flat major, headed 'Adagio' on Schubert's original manuscript, was composed in late 1827 or early 1828. It was almost certainly written originally as the slow movement of the Piano Trio in B-flat D898 (composed at about the same time), before Schubert decided to discard it in favour of the trio's 'Andante un poco mosso'. The title *Notturmo* (Nocturne) was first used when the work was published by the Viennese firm of Diabelli in 1846 and was invented by the publisher. It is a remarkable composition, comparable in some ways to the slow movement of Schubert's String Quintet – its mood at the start is timeless and sublime, the musical argument seeming to unfold with infinite slowness. Two episodes disrupt this idyll (though the tempo remains the same) with more deliberate dotted rhythms that suggest a kind of slow march. Each of these episodes is in a different key, and as is often the case with

Schubert, their choice creates some magical surprises: E major for the first, and C major for the second. With each return of the main idea, it is slightly varied, with the addition of trills, broken chords and other delicate figurations. It's a work of haunting beauty and stillness, utterly characteristic of Schubert's late style.

Valses nobles, Op. 77, D969

Schubert's twelve *Valses nobles* were originally published for solo piano in January 1827 and nearly a century later they were one of the direct inspirations (and musical models) for Ravel's *Valses nobles et sentimentales*. In 1871 the Viennese firm of J.P. Gotthard published them in an arrangement for piano trio by the composer Julius Zellner (1832–1900). Zellner's transcription is highly effective, retaining all the charm of Schubert's original while bringing different instrumental colours to it. These waltzes were always intended as music for entertainment, and in their piano trio guise they are an uncomplicated delight.

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Gould Piano Trio

The Gould Piano Trio have been compared in the Washington Post to the great Beaux Arts Trio for their “musical fire” and “dedication to the genre” and have remained at the forefront of the international chamber music scene for a quarter of a century.

Launched by winning first prize at the Melbourne Chamber Music Competition, they were “Echo Rising Stars”, making a highly successful debut at New York’s Weill Recital Hall, described by *The Strad* as “Pure Gould.” Their many appearances at London’s Wigmore Hall have included the complete piano trios of Dvořák, Mendelssohn and Schubert as well as, in the 2017–18 season, a Beethoven cycle to celebrate twenty-five years since their debut at this iconic venue.

The trio’s passionate belief in the importance of developing new repertoire has resulted in commissioning works from many contemporary composers. Commissions from Sir James Macmillan and Mark Simpson saw premieres at the Bath International Festival and the PRS New Music Biennale in Hull, City of Culture, 2017. They also maintain a lively relationship with promising young chamber players by giving masterclasses worldwide, particularly in

association with the Guildhall School in London and The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff.

Together with clarinettist Robert Plane, the trio are artistic directors of the Corbridge Chamber Music Festival in Northumberland, which celebrated its twenty-first anniversary with a much acclaimed new commission from Huw Watkins for clarinet and piano trio entitled *Four Fables*.

Extensive tours of North America, the Far East, Europe and New Zealand have been interspersed by adventurous recording projects. In addition to their highly praised recordings of the standard works, the trio have thrown light on long neglected gems from late-Romantic British repertoire, including trios by Charles Villiers Stanford and John Ireland, plus fascinating works by Arnold Bax, Robin Milford, York Bowen and Cyril Scott. Recordings of John Casken’s piano trio and a disc of works by Charles Ives, Rebecca Clarke and Amy Beach also appeared last year to critical acclaim.

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Recorded in the Chapel of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge on 8–10 December 2020

Producer, engineer & editor: Adam Binks

Recorded at 24-bit/96kHz resolution

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Steinway Model D piano maintained by Iain Kilpatrick (Cambridge Pianoforte)

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