



Franz Schubert
The Complete String Trios
Henry Purcell Three-Part Fantasias

SAKUNTALA TRIO

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

Henry Purcell (1659–1695)

String Trios

Sakuntala Trio

Rebecca Chan *violin*

Sascha Bota *viola*

Brian O'Kane *cello*

Henry Purcell (1659–1695)

Transcr. by Peter Warlock

1. **Three-Part Fantasia No. 1, Z. 732** – Moderato [3:24]

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

Compl. by Brian Newbould

String Trio in B-flat major, D.471

2. Allegro [8:43]

3. Andante sostenuto [7:08]

4. Scherzo & Trio [2:45]

5. Allegretto [7:59]

Henry Purcell (1659–1695)

Transcr. by Peter Warlock

6. **Three-Part Fantasia No. 3, Z. 734** – Slow [2:28]

Franz Schubert

String Trio in B-flat major, D.581 (second version)

7. Allegro moderato [6:02]

8. Andante [4:53]

9. Menuetto & Trio [4:03]

10. Rondo [7:35]

Henry Purcell (1659–1695)

Transcr. by Peter Warlock

11. **Three-Part Fantasia No. 2, Z. 733** – Rather slow [3:36]

Total playing time [58:45]



Photography: Venetia Jollands

Franz Schubert: The Complete String Trios & Henry Purcell: Three-Part Fantasias

The fantasies of Henry Purcell (1659–1695) belong to the middle Baroque period when the viols – bowed string instruments which pre-date those of the violin family – were still in fashion. They are probably the least-known works of an English composer rather better known for his operas, semi-operas, and music for the Anglican church. A favoured medium for the viol was the fantasia, which featured the interplay of several contrapuntal strands.

Purcell wrote upwards of a dozen fantasias for viols, the precise total depending on issues of nomenclature, mostly for three or four players. All three of the three-part fantasias are included on this disc. They are all characterised by delicately interweaving melodic strands using the Baroque techniques of counterpoint, with a first theme shared among the players in a 'point' of imitative counterpoint, followed by a further point based on another theme, and sometimes further points on more new melodic germs. The English composer Peter Warlock transcribed these fantasias for modern instruments of the violin family, upon which they work well as spirited, urbane 'conversations'.

Schubert was the last of the four great composers now sometimes referred to as the First Viennese School, in that they all spent part of their lives in Vienna within the period 1780–1830. Alone of the four, Schubert was born in Vienna. And he alone is lauded as a composer of song. But he was as dedicated a composer of instrumental music as were Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, his earliest teenage works being efforts in symphony, sonata and chamber music.

The string trios are early works (as, indeed, are arguably all his works, since he died at the age of thirty-one). By this time chamber music using instruments of the violin family was firmly established, thanks in part to the string quartets of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. String trios by those composers were very few in number. There is a technical reason for this. True, the fundamental unit of harmony is the triad (the three-note chord). But that vertical identity is only a part of harmonic technique, which entails horizontal action too – put simply, one triad progressing to another. And effective progressions tend to entail the occasional 'doubling' of notes of triads. In any case, already the four-note chord (triad-plus-one) had been a common enough presence in music since well before Schubert: Beethoven enjoyed beginning his First Symphony with one. Significantly, the

four-voiced medium has for long been the standard for sung ensemble music too – witness the chorales of Bach. Routinely, hymns, national anthems and the like have been set for the soprano-alto-tenor-bass combination.

The fact that Schubert wrote only two string trios reflects the fact that the trio medium is, then, more challenging for the composer than the quartet medium. Schubert idolised Mozart, and the first of his trios (catalogued as D.471) was written in what may be called his 'Mozart year', the year (1816) that produced such delightful works as his Fifth Symphony. With ten youthful quartets already to his name, he evidently wanted to explore the smaller ensemble, perhaps inspired by a wonderful model by his adored Mozart (the Divertimento in E-flat), but also, perhaps, in the knowledge of Beethoven's early Op. 9 set.

Schubert's second String Trio, D.581, was composed only a year later, and tends to reflect more the Haydn style and the *stile galant* of Bach's sons, but with fanciful, even quirky touches which suggest something of a diversion from the main path of Schubert's stylistic development. Schubert left two versions of this work, the second version coming to us only as

a set of parts in the composer's hand, without a score. This recording is of that second version. There is no evidence as to how Schubert saw the relationship of the two versions, no clue as to whether the second version was intended to replace the first. There are four movements, following the conventional structural principles of the time, with a fairly lively first movement in what would later be called 'sonata form', a slow movement in a three-part form (A,B,A), a minuet and trio, and a finale in rondo form.

The first trio (D.471) would probably have had four movements too, if Schubert had finished it. But after the first movement he penned only a first section of the slow movement, then abandoned the work, without apparent reason. Perhaps his fertile imagination was already buzzing with ideas for the Fifth Symphony, which in any case claimed his attention in a matter of days as it was begun in the same month.

What Schubert left of his *Andante sostenuto* amounts to a complete first section, comprising two statements of its theme, the first leading away from its key and embracing a few moments where the sky darkens in a dialogue of violin and cello around a throbbing viola, before the key is resumed for the second statement, which

duly closes in a formal cadence – at which point Schubert lays down his pen.

This gem of a fragment, suggesting to me – though unobtrusively – an acquaintance with Mozart's Divertimento for string trio, cried out for completion. That, I concluded, would best be done by adding a contrasting central section, followed by a return of the first section, the result being a simple ternary form. In realising this plan I learned a simple lesson from the slow movement of the Fourth Symphony, finished just five months earlier, where Schubert carries forward elements of the middle section to enrich the returning first section. I also added a short coda fusing elements from both sources.

Given that the Schubert repertoire for the trio group is so slender, and confined to the 'prentice years', I took it upon myself in this instance to turn a half-work into a complete one, doing so according to principles as Schubertian and rational as possible. And the commissioners of this completion, the Leopold String Trio, seemed to welcome the addition of this complete second work to the Schubert trio repertory.

For the third movement I did as Schubert did in his later D minor String Quartet, where he 'borrowed' one of his own

keyboard dances (D.790, No. 5, written but ten months earlier) – a fact curiously not acknowledged in the current edition of the Schubert catalogue. And just as Schubert's early D.32 Quartet takes a dance from D.128 for its trio section, I take a flowing Deutscher from the D.820 set (No. 6) to complete this third movement.

For the finale a different approach was needed. It so happens that a fragment of an *Allegretto* for piano (D.346) provisionally dated to the same year as D.471 and not appearing to belong to any projected sonata for that instrument displays intermittent traces of string-trio texture. Taking it as the basis of a finale for D.471 would therefore give it a life, and a life not unsuited to it. Since Schubert's fragment amounts to a substantial 261 bars and comprises a rondo/sonata-form hybrid which has already reached its recapitulation, it stands in need of only some eighty-three bars to complete this (varied) recapitulation and add a short coda.

In this guise the completed String Trio in B-flat is here recorded for the first time by the Sakuntala Trio, with whom I had the pleasure of working remotely during the pandemic of 2020/21.

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Brian Newbould

Brian Newbould is a Schubert specialist known by his completions, or 'realisations', of four of the six symphonies left unfinished by that composer, which have been performed and broadcast worldwide and several times recorded. Among these is the composer's last attempted work, the 'Tenth' Symphony, sketched in his last weeks before his death at the age of thirty-one in November 1828. Recorded by both Sir Neville Marriner with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and Sir Charles Mackerras with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, the Tenth was performed in the composer's home city of Vienna by Sir Simon Rattle and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, a short distance from his brother's apartment, where Schubert sketched the work and died.

Professor Newbould is the author of several books and editor of several essay collections on Schubert. His latest two-volume book, *Schubert's Workshop*, published by Routledge in 2023, plots the composer's technical development and includes chapters on the author's completions of some ten unfinished works. Unlike the mountaineer who climbed Everest 'because it was there', Newbould

wrote this book 'because it wasn't there'.

In it, he studies Schubert's compositional technique from the viewpoint of one who has, as it were, leaned over the composer's shoulder as he composed.



Sakuntala Trio

Sakuntala Trio was born as a result of the lockdown, uniting three notable chamber musicians well established in the London scene. The brusque stop from live concert activities offered the rare opportunity to rehearse the pieces for five months, meeting for a couple of days almost every week before visiting St Silas for the recording. We played all music very slowly, alike to a conversation where meaning sinks deeply, listening actively to every change of sound with the desire to make a world of difference and in an idealistic mysterious way, a difference to the world. Such a task has presented us with a sense of purpose during times when identity as musicians was being questioned. It was both an untamed path to beauty and truth and the great challenge of bringing you music never previously heard and released. The feeling is comparable to being the first ones reaching a mountain top. It is a statement of our relationship to music in confusing time and the perfect escape from the limbo.

Encounters with Brian Newbould have been a priceless experience whilst approaching his completion of the B-flat Major D.471 trio with existent fragments of music by Schubert.

To be as close as possible to what the composers imagined, we embraced the sound of the raspy gut strings, speaking with the bow and looking for fresh meanings where rhetoric articulates time and create the flow of music.

We offer the labour of our love to the unique genius of Schubert and Purcell's masterpieces in good faith to the sensitive listener with the belief you will join us in the concert live experience where composer, interpreter and audience and a complete perfect whole.

Our deep heartfelt thank you goes to the other trio Andrew Keener, Robin Hawkins and Matthew Swan who made this recording possible.

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