

the inventions and sinfonias so that the student would not need to turn pages, and so the pieces are all on the short side; but they are wealthy miniatures indeed.

A distance of nearly ten years separates the dozen or so youthful string quartets composed during Franz Schubert's initial teenage plunge into the realm of chamber music and the three late quartet masterpieces of 1824-1826. Schubert's mind--and his pen--were little occupied with string instruments between these two peaks, but he did find time in his astoundingly busy schedule to come up with two string trios, D. 471 and D. 581, both in B flat major and both composed during the month of September, D. 471 in 1816 and D. 581 in 1817. The String Trio in B flat major, D. 581 is, unlike its sister-piece D. 471, a finished composition in four movements that, also unlike its more strictly Classical sister-piece, puts on display a few of Schubert's more individualized musical characteristics--not enough to draw the kind of rich personal expression that we find in his Lieder of the day and which would not figure into much of his instrumental music until the 1820s, but enough to allow a listener even only casually acquainted with the late-Classical style to identify the work's twenty-year-old composer with little trouble.

The four movements of the Trio, D. 581, which is scored for the usual trio ensemble of violin ,viola, and cello, are all of rather moderate tempo, as follows: Allegro moderato--Andante--Allegretto (Minuet and Trio)--Allegretto (Rondo finale). It is perhaps in the opening movement that we hear Schubert's unmistakable voice most clearly, for while on the surface this very brief sonata-allegro form movement would seem to have little in common with the expansive kind of sonata movements Schubert would come to compose a little later on, the chromatic twists of both counterpoint (passing tones, etc.) and harmonic motion in the development section (the sudden move to G flat major and then F sharp minor) and the rich ornamental figuration throughout the movement (such as the little sixteenth-note violin arabesque the first pops up at the end of the second bar) all act as perfectly legible signatures.



HEIFETZ
PRIMROSE
PLATIGORSKY

Beethoven
Trio in D, Op. 9, No. 2

Bach
Three Sinfonias

Schubert
Trio No. 2 in B-Flat

The D major Trio opens with a theme (*Allegretto*) delivered quietly on the violin, but almost as if the first page had been ripped from the score, or at least as if the first few bars had been skipped. A second theme is then given by all the instruments, playing *forte*, maintaining the generally jovial mood of the music. It is almost as if this melody, delivered so emphatically by all the instrumentalists, is being presented as the work's real beginning. A third theme, of a more restrained character (marked *dolce*) but also somewhat playful, is presented to complete the exposition. The development section uses all three themes imaginatively and concludes with the cello playing in its highest reaches. At this point a subtly veiled account of the opening melody is given to launch the reprise. The movement closes with a jovial and colorful coda.

The second movement is marked *Andante quasi allegretto* and is rather playful, despite some slightly menacing *pizzicato* playing accompanying the main theme. A second melody appears and maintains the generally lighter character of the music. The material is reprised, though in different and imaginative ways, and there follows a coda.

A Menuetto marked *Allegro* follows. The two-part structure is not unusual but the movement as a whole seems rather Scherzo-ish, owing to the tempo marking and to the middle-section trio. The music is delightful in its lightness and thematic appeal, though some have found the trio both threadbare but effectively atmospheric in its lack of melodic material, its hazy dark rhythmic elements, and its mysterious *pianissimo* dynamics.

The finale is a Rondo marked *Allegro*. It is interesting that in the first Op. 9 Trio, the G major, Beethoven fashioned a Presto finale, his first that was not only not a Rondo, but a genuine sonata-allegro movement. The composer here returns to a form with which he had been quite successful and comfortable. The main theme of this movement is jovial, rather simple and, at the outset, where it is delivered three times in succession by the cello, somewhat bland. As the music proceeds, this theme takes on greater character from the viola harmonies and from development in exchanges among all the instruments. A second theme appears, more lyrical in character, after which the main material is reprised. There is further and quite brilliant thematic development, and the work closes with the violin intoning the happy opening theme.

All three of the Op. 9 Trios were first published in Vienna in 1798. The dedicatee of the them was one of Beethoven's leading patrons, the Russian Army Officer, Count Johann Georg von Browne. A typical performance of the D major Trio lasts around twenty-five minutes.

J.S. Bach composed his 15 Three-Part Inventions (he actually called them *sinfonias*) for keyboard at the same time as their 15 two-part counterparts. They first appear along with the Two-Part Inventions in the 1722 *Clavier-Büchlein für Wilhelm Friedemann*, Bach's then pre-teen son, and then reappear, slightly revised, in an 1723 volume which Bach prefaces with a detailed description of the 30 pieces' instructional purpose. (An excerpt: "to play cleanly in two voices...[and] deal correctly with three obbligato voices...but, above all else, to acquire a true cantabile style of playing, and, with it, to get a good foretaste of the art of composition.") And instructional these *sinfonias* are: many is the young piano student who, riding high and triumphant after conquering the Two-Part Inventions, has discovered by moving on to the Three-Part *Sinfonias* just how truly difficult is the task of mastering that true and beautiful "cantabile style" -- and, furthermore and fully in realization of Bach's purpose, as studies in counterpoint, miniature form, and efficient motivic invention they are without equal.

The Three-Part *Sinfonias*' value, however, like the value of the Two-Part Inventions, goes well beyond simple pedagogy; for, like the Art of the Fugue or the Well-Tempered Clavier, both of which are also superficially instructional in nature, the *Sinfonia* is as wonderful, beautiful and, frankly, difficult to the expert as it is to the student -- and there are not many exercise-books that can claim such.

The 15 *sinfonias* follow the same order of keys as the 15 inventions (an order similar in kind to that used in the Well-Tempered Clavier, though of course in the WTC there are more keys to explore). Fugal procedure is used very frequently throughout the *sinfonias* (the most striking case is No. 9 in F minor, a true triple fugue!), and even in the cases where the music unfolds in freer fashion, the opening gesture is invariably one of imitation between the top two voices. Bach chose to limit himself to two pages when composing

Heifetz, Primrose, Piatigorsky

Beethoven: Trio In D, Op. 9, No.2

Bach: Three Sinfonias / Schubert: Trio No. 2 In B-Flat

Beethoven Trio In D, Op. 9, No. 2

1 Allegretto 6:41

2 Andante Quasi Allegretto 4:18

3 Menuetto 3:45

4 Rondo 5:10

Violin – Jascha Heifetz

Cello – Gregor Piatigorsky

Viola – William Primrose

Bach Sinfonias

5 Sinfonia No. 4 In D Minor 1:27

6 Sinfonia No. 9 In F Minor :23

7 Sinfonia No. 3 In D 1:07

Schubert Trio No. 2 In B-Flat

8 Allegro Moderato 4:36

9 Andante 4:17

10 Menuetto 3:12

11 Rondo 4:11

Producer – John Pfeiffer

Recorded at RCA Studios, Hollywood, USA, August 17/22, 1960 (tracks 1 to 4)

August 15/16 & 18, 1960 (tracks 5 to 7); August 16/22, 1960 (tracks 8 to 11)



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