

Wethersfield Chamber Concerts

8 May 2016 – 4pm

Trio Isimsiz

Pablo Hernán Benedí Violin | Michael Petrov Cello | Erdem Misirlioglu Piano

PROGRAMME NOTES *by John Woollard*

SCHUBERT (1797–1828) - Piano Trio No. 2 in E flat major D929

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante con moto
- III. Scherzo. Allegro moderato
- IV. Allegro moderato

Schubert spent the majority of his brief but prodigious life writing and performing music within the intimate and convivial company of family and friends. Almost entirely without patrons, commissions nor aristocratic associations, he flourished within a small, cultured middle-class Viennese community where the majority of his music would remain, unknown to the larger world until after his death. Schubert wrote reams of music ideal for the setting: over six-hundred songs, numerous piano works for two and four hands, and a sizable canon of chamber music. In his final decade, Schubert produced a mature series of highly original chamber music that ranks among the greatest ever created including the Trout Quintet, the last four String Quartets, two Piano Trios and a breathtaking final work, the String Quintet in C major. Despite his rapidly declining health, his final year yielded the Piano Trios, the Quintet, three Piano Sonatas and a towering Symphony in C major. It would seem that Schubert's music just got better and better right until the end. Dying at the age of only thirty-one, Schubert may have departed with still "fairer hopes", but the music he left behind could easily occupy a much longer life in the service of appreciating it all.

The last Piano Trio in E flat major, Op. 100, D.929, is a gigantic masterpiece that, with Beethoven's Archduke, could be considered among the few greatest piano trios in the traditional repertory. It is gigantic in length and

breadth, wealthy in thematic ideas, constant transformations and ingenious details of construction. A typical performance runs to nearly forty-five minutes and this without taking the repeat in the first movement, and, after Schubert's edits in the finale, removing its repeat as well as some one hundred additional measures. "Heavenly lengths", as Schumann would write. Like much of Schubert's "late" music, it is grand and profound in a way that goes well beyond the relatively modest context in which he wrote. It was among the few pieces performed in the only public concert featuring Schubert's music held during his lifetime, the only work published outside Austria before his death. Schumann wrote, "a Trio by Schubert passed across the musical world like some angry comet in the sky". More intense than its worthy companion, the Piano Trio in B flat major written around the same time, it flairs with passion, pathos, perhaps even anger, but it is equally saturated with joy, grace and triumphant beauty.

Schubert's two full-length piano trios was begun during November 1827 and finished probably within the next few weeks. It was certainly completed by January of the following year, when Schubert held a private performance of the piece in celebration of the forthcoming marriage of his longtime friend Josef von Spaun; Spaun had encouraged the young composer at his fledgling compositional efforts while Schubert was still a child. The Piano Trio No. 2 in E flat major, was written almost immediately after the Piano Trio in B flat; Schubert himself felt the E flat work to be the better of the two -- not at all surprising, since he had "warmed up" on the other work before writing it.

~~~~~ Interval ~~~~~

#### DVOŘÁK (1841–1904) - Piano Trio No. 3 in F minor, Op. 65, B. 130

- I. Allegro ma non troppo
- II. Allegretto grazioso - Meno mosso
- III. Poco adagio
- IV. Finale. Allegro con brio

Many regard Dvořák's Piano Trio No. 3 in F minor as a milestone. It is uncharacteristically serious, stormy and fraught with tragic conflict, unusual for a man generally regarded as sanguine, uncomplicated and most un-neurotic. It is supposed that Dvořák was venting his grief after recently losing his mother. But the trio seems to have arisen from another crisis as well: the pleading of friends

and colleagues to move beyond his obsession with folk-oriented Slavic nationalism in music, to achieve a more cosmopolitan European style and a reputation beyond provincialism. Yet a third aspect of this turning point was surely Dvořák's "natural" development: because of or simply simultaneous with these other events, Dvořák, at forty-two, achieved a new level of maturity as a composer. With the first international success of his Slavonic Dances a few years behind him and his fateful trip to America still a decade away, Dvořák produced his first complex chamber music masterwork, a stunning epic that seemed to gather all these challenges into a forceful amalgam.

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For a number of years, Dvořák received support, mentorship and inspiration from Brahms who was seven years his senior. The Piano Trio in F minor has been called Dvořák's most "Brahmsian" work. Yet both composers worked contemporaneously turning out trios, piano and string quartets neck and neck. It is possible that influence passed in both directions and that they simply shared a musical culture of time and place, the Viennese style being a hybrid of Austrian, Hungarian and Bohemian origins since Haydn's early years. Regardless, Dvořák's third piano trio is a magnificent work, itself a hybrid of "European" classicism, potent arch-Romanticism, Slavic nationalism as well as the unique musical personality of Dvořák himself.

One of the most fascinating topics for study in the arts is the phenomenon of the striking, seemingly sudden increase in a composer's artistry made evident by comparing two works of the same type. Only seven years intervene between this work and Dvořák's second trio for piano, violin, and cello. Yet in this work there is much more maturity, control over musical material, and depth of feeling than in the prior work. More than just the seven more years of experience accounts for these. During this period the composer experienced professional disappointment after writing operas that did not find acceptance, formed a friendship with Johannes Brahms that provided a chance to share ideas about music, and suffered the death of his mother.

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

The Trio Isimsiz was formed in 2009 at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, under the guidance of Louise Hopkins, Carole Presland and Alasdair Tait. In 2013 the Trio was selected for representation by YCAT, and in 2015 won 1<sup>st</sup> Prize and the Audience Prize in the Trondheim International Chamber Music Competition.

The Trio has undertaken residencies at the Banff Centre, Canada and Mozarteum, Salzburg, and participated in masterclasses with Andras Schiff, Steven Isserlis, Menahem Pressler, Thomas Riebl, Wolfgang Reddick, the Gould Piano Trio and Takács Quartet. Earlier this year the Trio attended IMS Prussia Cove working with Ferenc Rados.

Concert highlights over the last year have included recitals at Wigmore Hall, Barbican, Purcell Room, Sage Gateshead, Colston Hall, Brighton Dome, the Newbury Spring, Peasmarsh and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festivals. They collaborated with Anthony Marwood, Richard Lester and Aleksander Madzar.

Following a successful residency in Aldeburgh, this season the Trio return for a further residency and recitals in the main festival and Britten Weekend. Future engagements include recitals at Wigmore Hall, Stavanger Festival, Tivoli Concert Hall, the Fundacion Juan March in Madrid and throughout the UK. Further afield the Trio give several recitals in Argentina including the Mozarteum in Buenos Aires.

All three members of the Trio Isimsiz Piano Trio enjoy great success individually. **Erdem Misirlioglu** was a Concerto Finalist in the BBC Young Musician Competition in 2008, **Pablo Hernán Benedí** is a member of the Chiaroscuro Quartet, formed by Alina Ibragimova, Emilie Hornlund and Claire Thirion, appearing at major venues throughout Europe. The Quartet's debut recording was released in 2011 to critical acclaim.

**Pablo Hernán Benedí** was born in 1991 in Madrid. He studied at the C.I. Padre Antonio Soler Conservatory in San Lorenzo de El Escorial and at the GSMD with David Takeno. In 2010 Pablo became a member of the Chiaroscuro Quartet, formed by Alina Ibragimova, Emilie Hornlund and Claire Thirion, appearing at major venues throughout Europe. The Quartet's debut recording was released in 2011 to critical acclaim.

**Michael Petrov** was born in 1990 in Bulgaria. He studied at the Yehudi Menuhin School and at the GSMD with Louise Hopkins, winning the Gold Medal in 2014. Over the last year he has made his debut with the Philharmonia, Royal Philharmonic and English Chamber Orchestras. During 2014/15 he gave recitals at major concert halls throughout Europe as part of his nomination by the Barbican Centre as an ECHO Rising Star.

**Erdem Misirlioglu** was born in 1990 in Suffolk. He studied with Mark Fielding at the Junior GSMD and since 2008 with Martin Roscoe and Ronan O'Hora at the GSMD. In 2008 he was a Concerto Finalist in the BBC Young Musicians Competition, performing Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini* with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. He recently won 1st Prize in the Beethoven Piano Society of Europe's Intercollegiate Piano Competition.

This music is darker in tone than the two earlier trios, and has an immediately evident seriousness of purpose. In the realm of development of his craft, Dvořák here shows a much greater understanding of writing for the piano in a chamber-music context.

At nearly 40 minutes, this is Dvořák's largest work for piano trio. The first movement is full of passion. It begins without introduction, yet the character of the opening theme is brooding and ominous. The second subject is tender. The first gets most of the attention in a passionate development section, and the recapitulation is dramatically convincing.

Dvořák originally placed the slow movement next, but in revising the work before its first performance placed the relatively brief (six-minute) scherzo movement as relief between two movements that are both over ten minutes long. Instead of being a scherzo *per se*, this movement is actually in the rhythm of a polka. The slow movement is surely bears the marks of the composer's friendship with Brahms. The finale, *allegro con brio*, starts off with the lightness of a dance movement, but it soon turns heroic, with a very dramatic development. At the very end the dance-like idea begins anew and the trio whirls to its conclusion.

The cost of the piano has very kindly been donated by one of our regular visitors, who wishes to remain anonymous.

**We hope that you will join us for our concerts in 2017: on 9 April, 23 April & 7 May**