

# Wethersfield Chamber Concerts

6 May 2018 – 4pm

## Trio Isimsiz

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

### PROGRAMME NOTES *by John Woollard*

#### Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827): Piano Trio in E flat major, Op. 70 No. 2

Composed in the same year, the Fifth and Sixth symphonies, the Trios, Op. 70, represent a return to the traditional intimacy of chamber music that Beethoven had put aside in favour of composition on a grand, symphonic scale. In contrast to works of the previous five years, the Trios, Op. 70, are more lyrical and seemingly freer harmonically. Beethoven dedicated the Trios, Op. 70, to Countess Marie Erdödy, in whose home the composer had recently taken lodgings and who hosted their first performance in December 1808.

The trios are highly intricate and imbued with subtle implications that have large-scale realizations, sometimes in another movement. The motivic manipulation and harmonic exploration that are hallmarks of Beethoven's mature style are evident throughout these works. Of the Trio in E flat, Donald Francis Tovey noted that Beethoven had achieved an "integration of Mozart's and Haydn's resources, with results that transcend all possibility of resemblance to the style of their origins...." While Tovey's assessment is arguably a slight exaggeration, the first movement of the Trio in E flat gives an idea of what he meant. Beginning with a slow introduction, a practice generally associated with Haydn, the 4/4 time signature shifts to 6/8 for the sonata form proper. An abrupt modulation ushers in the second theme group, the first part of which is on the dominant minor.

The development section passes quickly through numerous harmonies while developing fragments of the first theme, after which the recapitulation sneaks in almost imperceptibly and in the "wrong" key. Beethoven sets the second theme group in the tonic minor but reaffirms the tonic major through an extended closing group and, strikingly, the return of the slow introduction. Although the Trio in E flat is a four-movement work, there is no slow movement. An Allegretto set of variations, in C major, appears in its place. The movement features two themes, one in the tonic and the second in C minor, both of which are varied. An extended scherzo fills the third spot in the work. Beethoven's format departs from tradition in that some of the repeats are not literal. Furthermore, the movement is arranged so that the trio section appears twice. The overall lyricism of the movement sets it apart from most of Beethoven's previous scherzos. Virtuoso in conception, the finale resembles the first movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata in C major, "Waldstein," Op. 53, in that the second theme is in the major mediant (in the case of the Trio, G major) instead of the dominant. When the second theme group appears in the recapitulation it is set in C major, not the tonic. Beethoven thereby creates "tonal balance" by writing the second theme first a third above, then below, the tonic. Such harmonic relationships are abundant in Beethoven's late works.

~~~~~ Interval ~~~~~

#### Tchaikovsky (1840 – 1893): Piano Trio in A minor, Op. 50

##### "In Memory of a Great Artist"

- I. Pezzo elegiaco (Moderato assai – Allegro giusto) (in A minor)
- II. (A) Tema con variazioni: Andante con moto (in E major)  
(B) Variazione finale e coda (in A major – A minor)

Bearing the inscription "To the memory of a great artist," this trio was dedicated to the recently deceased pianist Nikolai Rubinstein, with whom Tchaikovsky had maintained a difficult friendship. Fittingly, the trio's piano part is quite challenging and often overwhelms the material for violin and cello. Tchaikovsky was not much of a pianist and never realized how difficult his keyboard music could be.

The first movement, "Pezzo elegiaco" (elegiac piece), opens with an expansive motto that will recur throughout the work; the intense, soulful theme is introduced by the cello over a stinging piano accompaniment. The theme then is taken by the violin, soon rejoined in counterpoint by the cello. At length, the piano makes its own statement of the theme. The motto is subsequently fragmented and glued back together with fresh material of a striving, Russian nature. More important new material enters floridly in the piano, offering a slightly brighter outlook but with no less fervor. All this is developed in Tchaikovsky's standard manner, relying on obsessive repetition of thematic elements rather than real transformation of them, although one section offers an extended nostalgic reverie for the strings. The recapitulation is a verbatim repetition of the

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exposition, except that a second little development section is appended near the end.

The second movement consists of a theme followed by eleven variations. The piano states the theme, an appealingly naive folk-like tune, and it is then picked up by the strings. The variations are said to have recalled unspecified scenes from Rubinstein's life; they constitute a series of genre pieces that sometimes freely depart from the theme, although the first variation is essentially a restatement of the theme by the strings. In the second variation, the cello plays the melody again, over nimble counterpoint from the violin and piano. The third is a scherzo for piano, with pizzicato accompaniment. The fourth is a soulful, highly Slavic treatment. In the fifth, the piano evokes a music box or possibly sleigh bells. Sixth comes a light but lengthy waltz, initially led by the cello,

although the piano aggressively cuts in at the middle. The seventh variation keeps the theme at home in the piano, while the strings take meandering excursions. The eighth variation is a big, gruff fugue; the ninth, in sharp contrast, is a slow meditation full of gloomy arpeggios. Cheer returns with the tenth variation, a playful mazurka. The eleventh variation actually constitutes the final movement. It is in strict sonata form, and takes off from a treatment of the melody that owes much to the last of Schumann's Symphonic Etudes (which Tchaikovsky had orchestrated as a student). All the motifs in this movement are, one way or another, derived from the same theme until the extended coda, where the motto from the first movement bursts onto the scene and carries the trio to a despairing conclusion.

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Formed in 2009 at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, in 2015 the Trio Isimsiz won 1st Prize and the Audience Prize at the Trondheim Competition, and in 2017 2nd Prize at the Haydn International Competition in Vienna. They were selected for representation by Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT) in 2013 and were awarded a fellowship from the Borletti-Buitoni Trust (BBT) in 2018.

The Trio has performed widely in Europe, highlights including recitals at the Stavanger, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Peasmarsh and Gower Festivals (broadcast by Radio 3), the Tivoli Concert Hall, Snape Maltings, Fundacion Juan March in Madrid and Marianischer-Saal in Lucerne. Further afield they have undertaken tours in China and Argentina.

In 2017 the Trio returned to the Aldeburgh Festival and completed their first CD due for release on the Rubicon label in November. Future engagements include an all Beethoven programme at the Théâtre des Abbesses in Paris, concerts at the Köln Philharmonie, Trondheim Chamber Music Festival and recitals at Wigmore Hall, Brighton Dome and Saffron Hall.

The Trio Isimsiz are currently Fellows at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. They have collaborated with Anthony Marwood, Krzysztof Chorzelski, Richard Lester and Aleksander Madzar and attended IMS Prussia Cove working with Ferenc Rados.

During their studies the Trio undertook residencies at the Banff Centre in Canada, Jeunesse Musicales Chamber Music, Germany and Mozarteum, Salzburg, and participated in masterclasses with Andrés Schiff, Steven Isserlis, Menahem Pressler, Thomas Riebl, Wolfgang Reddick, the Gould Piano Trio, Belcea and Takács Quartet.

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, and **Michael Petrov** represented the UK in the European Concert Halls Organisation Rising Star series during the 2014/15 season.

**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'Hara 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.

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**We hope that you will join us for our concerts next year - on 14 & 28 April, 12 May 2019**