

# WIGMORE HALL

Monday 16 June 2025  
7.30pm

## Smetana Trio

Markéta Janoušková violin

Jan Páleníček cello

Jitka Páleníčková Čechová piano

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Piano Trio in G HXV/25 (1795)

*I. Andante • II. Poco adagio •*

*III. Finale 'Rondo all'Ongarese'. Presto*

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Piano Trio No. 3 in C minor Op. 101 (1886)

*I. Allegro energico • II. Presto non assai •*

*III. Andante grazioso • IV. Allegro molto*

*Interval*

Dmitry Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Piano Trio No. 1 in C minor Op. 8 (1923)

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

Piano Trio No. 4 in E minor Op. 90 'Dumky' (1890-1)

*I. Lento maestoso – Allegro quasi doppio movimento •*

*II. Poco adagio – Vivace non troppo • III. Andante –*

*Vivace non troppo • IV. Andante moderato – Allegretto scherzando • V. Allegro – Meno mosso • VI. Lento*

*maestoso – Vivace*



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When **Haydn** began writing keyboard trios in the 1760s, they were usually performed within the homes of the supposedly refined classes. The pianist or harpsichordist, often the lady of the house, would be 'accompanied' by friends or staff members on the violin and cello: the strings were always regarded as subsidiary to the keyboard. By the time Haydn came to write his last piano trios in the 1790s, the newest keyboard instruments had stronger lower registers, theoretically freeing the cello from having to reinforce the bass line throughout.

Although Haydn never quite abandoned the tried-and-tested piano-led textures, there are moments in the G major Trio HXV/25 where the strings are given a fair degree of independence. It was composed in 1795, towards the end of Haydn's second visit to London, and is one of a set of three dedicated to the widow Rebecca Schroeter, to whom the unhappily married composer had a close attachment at the time. The first two movements are relatively restrained and polite, but the finale avails itself of some Gypsy fire. Haydn would have heard plenty of Gypsy bands and Hungarian folk music while living in Hungary in the employ of the Esterházy family.

**Brahms's** Third Piano Trio was written in the Swiss resort of Hofstetten. Even on holiday Brahms remained self-disciplined, setting part of the day aside for composition, the rest of it for recreation. When not at his desk or in the bar, he was fond of exploring the mountains on foot. Given his portly frame, descending the slopes took about half the time of the upward journey. He always said that his musical ideas fell into place while he was walking, and his output during his Swiss sojourn in the summer months of 1886 would seem to prove this – songs, sonatas for cello and for violin, and this third and final piano trio.

Here, the composer's concern for small-scale motivic development results in extreme concentration. The four-movement work lasts a compact 20 or so minutes. Note how the first movement omits the conventional exposition repeat and instead launches a process of continuous development that lasts throughout the remainder. After that, a shadowy scherzo and a rhapsodic intermezzo lead to a finale that eventually achieves C major. After hearing the completed Trio, Brahms's trusted friend Clara Schumann wrote in her diary, 'No other work of Johannes has so thoroughly transported me.'

As photographs taken at any time in his life suggest, **Shostakovich** rarely enjoyed good health. In his mid-teens he was afflicted by tuberculosis of the lymph glands, undergoing an operation shortly before being packed off to the Crimea to convalesce, with his sister Mariya as company.

According to one of Mariya's letters home, during this period of recovery Dmitri perked up, acquired a suntan and fell in love. The recipient of his affection was a girl of his own age, Tatyana Glivenko, to whom he dedicated

the single-movement Piano Trio that he composed during that summer of 1923. She and Dmitri remained close friends for several years. The original title of the work was *Poème*, which is indicative of its romantic nature; the spiky modernism that would mark most of Shostakovich's output in early adulthood had not yet emerged in his writing.

The Trio was put to some unexpected uses in the first years of its existence. According to another sister, Zoya, it was once used as the accompaniment to a silent film. To support the family finances in Petrograd, Shostakovich had taken a job playing piano in cinemas; he cheekily used the situation as a chance to rehearse his Trio with a couple of musician friends, though the audience was apparently unimpressed.

As is not uncommon with student works, the Trio was more or less forgotten about by the composer once his mature style had developed. It remained unpublished during his lifetime and was posthumously pieced together from incomplete instrumental parts by Shostakovich students and scholars.

If this is **Dvořák's** 'Dumky' Trio, what does that mean? The *dumka*, plural *dumky*, has its origins in a melancholic Ukrainian song-form. The Bohemian version that Dvořák adopted alternates the original slow lament with a contrasting lively section of a highly rhythmical nature.

The Trio dates from 1891, the year before Dvořák left Prague for New York, where he would head up the newly established National Conservatory of Music. He caused controversy on his arrival by suggesting that the United States should base its own national style of music on the melodies and rhythms of Native Americans and the plantation songs of African-Americans. Musical nationalism was a hot topic in Europe; back home, Dvořák was treasured precisely because of the uniquely Czech voice with which his music spoke.

That mindset certainly informs the Piano Trio. Although it sounds as if it has the outline of a fairly conventional four-movement chamber work, its structure is actually quite different. The 'first movement' (1-3) is not a continuous structure, but a sequence of three *dumkas*. Each of the remaining three movements (4-6) is another *dumka*. And the Trio does not follow a conventional tonal plan. The home keys of the six *dumkas* are, respectively, E minor, C sharp minor, A major, D minor, E flat major and C minor.

While working on the Trio, the composer told a friend that 'it will be both happy and sad ... of a popular nature, so that it should appeal to highbrow and lowbrow listeners.' Indeed, it proved a great hit with audiences, and Dvořák performed it many times on a farewell concert tour of Bohemia and Moravia before sailing to the New World.

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