

# WIGMORE HALL

Tuesday 23 May 2023  
7.30pm

## Gould Piano Trio

Richard Lester cello  
Benjamin Frith piano  
Lucy Gould violin

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Piano Trio in C minor Op. 1 No. 3 (1794-5)

*I. Allegro con brio • II. Andante cantabile con variazioni •  
III. Menuetto. Quasi Allegro • IV. Finale. Prestissimo*

Piano Trio in B flat Op. 11 (1797)

*I. Adagio • II. Allegro con brio •  
III. Tema: 'Pria ch'io l'impegno'. Allegretto*

Interval

Piano Trio in B flat Op. 97 'Archduke' (1810-1)

*I. Allegro moderato • II. Scherzo. Allegro •  
III. Andante cantabile ma però con moto - •  
IV. Allegro moderato*

CLASSIC *fm*

Wigmore Hall £5 tickets for Under 35s supported by Media Partner Classic FM



This concert is part of the CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust ticket scheme, offering free tickets to those aged 8-25

### Friends of Wigmore Hall – celebrating 30 years of friendship

Over the past 30 years, Friends have been providing transformational support for the Hall, ensuring this historic building remains a home for great music making. Enjoy the benefits of friendship by joining as a Friend today, and be a part of the Wigmore story. Visit: [wigmore-hall.org.uk/friends](http://wigmore-hall.org.uk/friends) | Call: 020 7258 8230

FRIENDS OF  
WIGMORE HALL

30

Wigmore Hall is a no smoking venue. No recording or photographic equipment may be taken into the auditorium nor used in any other part of the Hall without the prior written permission of the management.

In accordance with the requirements of City of Westminster persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any other gangways. If standing is permitted in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating, it shall be limited to the number indicated in the notices exhibited in those positions.

Disabled Access and Facilities - full details from 020 7935 2141.

Wigmore Hall is equipped with a 'Loop' to help hearing aid users receive clear sound without background noise. Patrons can use this facility by switching hearing aids to 'T'.



Please ensure that watch alarms, mobile phones and any other electrical devices which can become audible are switched off. Phones on a vibrate setting can still be heard, please switch off.

The Wigmore Hall Trust Registered Charity No. 1024838  
36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP • [Wigmore-hall.org.uk](http://Wigmore-hall.org.uk) • John Gilhooly Director

Wigmore Hall Royal Patron HRH The Duke of Kent, KG  
Honorary Patrons Aubrey Adams OBE; André and Rosalie Hoffmann; Louise Kaye; Kohn Foundation; Mr and Mrs Paul Morgan



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



In November 1792 **Beethoven** moved from his birthplace of Bonn to Vienna, beginning composition lessons with Haydn in the new year. Although he had composed since childhood (and some of his pieces had already been published for limited circulation), he intended to make the maximum impact as a newcomer in Vienna. Thus, when he published a set of three carefully crafted piano trios in 1795, he labelled them as 'opus one'.

Beethoven's pupil Ferdinand Ries claimed that Haydn expressed admiration for the first two, but was disconcerted by the bold modernity of the third and advised Beethoven against publishing it. The older composer could not have heard the trios played until the official première in 1795 in the home of Prince Lichnowsky – by which time they had already been published. But perhaps he gave his well-meant advice after seeing an early version of the manuscripts.

Beethoven undoubtedly learnt a lot from Haydn's example, though in many respects the Op. 1 trios owe more to Mozart's contribution to the genre. When they were heard in London, the pianist, composer and publisher JB Cramer proclaimed, 'This is the man who is to console us for the loss of Mozart!'

Like its companions, the Third Trio has four movements instead of the previously customary three. The first is notable for its frequent shifts of mood: Beethoven, looking back on these trios in later life, expressed surprise that he had crammed so many elements into them. The *Andante* is a set of variations on a meditative and spiritual theme, the minuet a nervous, unstable affair. The *Finale* is at least as stormy in nature as the first movement. Only in the coda does the forward drive gradually relent, until we come to a quiet point of repose – an unexpected ending, perhaps, but one that immediately seems logical.

By 1797, Beethoven was gaining a solid reputation in Viennese musical circles. But although he was impressing the connoisseurs with formal innovations and ambitiously expansive works, he needed to maintain the interest of a wider public – at least until he could rely on wealthy patrons for long-term financial support. As a performer he had a popular following as an improviser on the keyboard, an activity that was sometimes as much a competitive sport as an artistic undertaking. And he would team up with the string or wind soloists of the day in concerts designed to show off their virtuosic skills and the latest improvements in instrument manufacture.

In this spirit he accepted an invitation from the clarinettist Josef Bähr (1770-1819) to write a set of variations on a popular song being heard nightly in the streets of the Austrian capital as the taverns emptied. That, at least, is one story of the origins of the B flat Trio Op. 11, which in its original scoring is for clarinet, cello and piano. The finale is indeed a

variation movement based on a hit tune from a light opera of the time, *L'amor marinaro* ('Love among the sailors') by Haydn's godson, Joseph Weigl. It is preceded by a sonata-form *Allegro* and a lyrical slow movement that contains the most searching music in the Trio.

Beethoven published the Trio in 1798 with a violin part as an alternative to the clarinet. Clarinet soloists were something of a novelty, so the violin option would have increased the chance of sales among musical amateurs. Whether domestic musicians were prepared for the comparative difficulty of the piano part is another matter. Its prominent role is an indication that the composer took part in Bähr's performances of the work.

By 1810 many of Beethoven's ambitions had been realised. He was a celebrity in Vienna, a composer with an international reputation, and publishers were engaged in bidding wars for his latest works. Furthermore he now had a degree of the financial security he had been hoping for, thanks to the Archduke Rudolph (1788-1831), youngest son of Holy Roman Emperor Leopold II. Beethoven had been engaged as Rudolph's piano and composition teacher when the nobleman was a teenager. Master and pupil had become friends, and Rudolph had organised a collaboration with two Austrian princes, Kinsky and Lobkowitz, to provide Beethoven with a regular allowance so that 'the necessities of life shall not cause him embarrassment or stifle his powerful genius'.

Of course, this did not mark the end of all hardships for the composer. His deafness increased, a marriage proposal was turned down, and he still felt the need to write the occasional money-spinning crowd pleaser. In fact it was soon after the sensational première of the noisy orchestral extravaganza *Wellington's Victory*, complete with mechanical musket fire, that he completed the lofty and sublime Trio Op. 97, dedicated to Rudolph and acquiring the sobriquet 'Archduke'.

Heard privately in 1811 but not given a public performance until 1814, the Trio invokes the adjective 'spacious' in most commentaries. The first movement maintains an unusual placidity even in its development section, although there is sufficient contrast between the gliding first subject and the more perky second theme. The composer's sense of mischief and love of surprises is therefore all the more effective in the quirky *Scherzo*, which in turn is a perfect foil for the hymn-like opening and profound expansiveness of the theme-and-variation slow movement. The finale breaks into this reverent mood and takes us to a convivial world of café music, with an exhilarating picking up of pace at the finish.

© Brian David 2023

*Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.*