

WIGMORE HALL

Tuesday 30 January 2024
7.30pm

Trio Gaspard

Jonian Ilias Kadesha violin
Vashti Hunter cello
Nicholas Rimmer piano

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) Piano Trio in A HXV/9 (1785)
I. Adagio • II. Vivace

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) Piano Trio No. 2 in C Op. 87 (1880-2)
*I. Allegro • II. Andante con moto •
III. Scherzo. Presto - Poco meno presto •
IV. Finale. Allegro giocoso*

Interval

Joseph Haydn Piano Trio in F sharp minor HXV/26 (1795)
I. Allegro • II. Adagio cantabile • III. Finale. Tempo di menuetto

Sally Beamish (b.1956) Trance for Piano Trio (2023)

Franz Liszt (1811-1886) Hungarian Rhapsody No. 9 in E flat S379 'Le carnaval de Pesth' (1848)

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Haydn's Piano Trio in A HXV/9 is a slender two-movement piece that dates from 1785. In that year he also worked on the String Quartet in D minor, the Paris symphonies and began the extended string quartet *The Seven Last Words from the Cross*. The piano trio largely developed from Baroque forms that saw the piano partnered with two other instruments, one of which was invariably of a lower register to support the left hand part of the piano. The Piano Trio in A HXV/9, however, marks a significant step in the evolution of the genre, as the cello is given a role of prominence. This is apparent within the first movement and towards the movement's conclusion the strings assume a quasi-operatic role. The second movement finds more equilibrium between the instruments, though the strings augment and dance around the florid yet crisply articulated piano part.

Brahms wrote the opening movement of the Piano Trio No. 2 in C Op. 87 in 1880, alongside another piano trio in E flat major. Though the E flat major piece was destroyed following criticism from friends, he completed the piano trio in C some two years later. The intervening time period saw him transition in public consciousness from a piano virtuoso to a confident and internationally-renowned composer. The opening movement contains four main thematic ideas. The violin and cello play the first theme in octaves, then a chromatic idea takes over; next, another idea for the strings also played in octaves is presented before the final theme, which is of some elegance. The first three themes are elaborated, prior to an extended coda which incorporates a significant reworking of the opening thematic material. The second movement comprises a set of variations that feature a distinctive rhythm which lends the music a Hungarian lilt. Brahms's lyrical gifts are evident in the transformation of the penultimate variation. The third movement continues in the minor key and is notable for its *pianissimo* marking, though the contrasting major key lends the trio section some brilliance and authority. The *Finale* is something of a Brahms specialty: a well-mannered and pleasing rondo.

Haydn's Piano Trio in F sharp minor HXV/26 was written in 1795 and is dedicated to Rebecca Schroeter, an able amateur keyboard player. It is one of only two chamber music works in which he used the key of F sharp minor, the other being a string quartet. The key brings with it a shifting and shadowy soundworld that Haydn willingly explores, particularly in the first movement. That movement begins as if tinged by melancholy, but the music eventually shifts to the major key which brightens the mood appreciably. The music for the central movement is the same as that used in the slow movement of Haydn's Symphony in B flat H1/102, completed the previous year, but here it is written in the key of F sharp major. The piano trio version sounds rather freer and more improvised than the orchestral alternative, which has prompted some scholars to think the trio version might actually have

been conceived first. The final movement finds Haydn taking the minuet form, commonly used by Johann Christian Bach for his final movements, and makes it his own by almost recalling a dance from a bygone age.

Sally Beamish's *Trance for Piano Trio* was commissioned in 2023 by Trio Gaspard to sit alongside Haydn's piano trios. Beamish recalls that her mother, violinist Ursula Snow, to whose memory the work is dedicated, often played Haydn's Piano Trio in F sharp minor HXV/26 with her trio. About the work, Beamish has written:

I took F sharp as my starting point, and threaded in occasional notes taken from Haydn's *Adagio cantabile* movement. The harmonies, which form a repeated chaconne-like pattern in the piano part, are also derived from the Haydn, but in my own way, and not necessarily audible to the listener. The music is like a series of fragmented memories; the violin at first ghost-like, while the cello has an improvisatory line; the violin then drawing the cello into its falling fifth motif, while the piano has the solo line. The three instruments become equal as the music comes to a head, before dissolving into a quiet final statement of the chord sequence. The melancholic nature of Haydn's trio affected my approach, combined with memories of my mother and her gradual disappearance into dementia. The title indicates a meditative state, but also a 'passageway', or departure – the confusing journey of my relationship with my mother as her personality shifted, changed and faded.

Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 9 in E flat S379 'Le carnaval de Pesth', written in 1848, was arranged for a piano trio in the same year. As befits a composer-performer with an ear for catching the prevailing trends of his day, it is one of 19 such works Liszt wrote in a nationalist idiom to preserve what were thought to be authentic Hungarian melodies alongside the passionate nature of music-making. Dedicated to the Moravian violinist Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst, whom many considered as the successor to Paganini in terms of virtuosic technique, the single movement work evokes the sounds of a rustic ensemble playing at a bustling village carnival. In this rhapsody, the cymbalom's distinctive timbre is mimicked. This, alongside the double octaves, chromatic scales and arpeggios, all reinforce the music's supposedly native character. Tension is built throughout the slow introduction with the quasi-improvisational deployment of instrumental flourishes, though their resolution is held off for longer than one might expect. The music reaches a climax before the opening theme returns accompanied by further instrumental pyrotechnics.

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