

De Beauvoir Piano Trio

Enyuan Khong violin
Charlotte Kaslin cello
Cristian Sandrin piano

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

Piano Trio in C, K.548 (1788)

20'

- i. Allegro
- ii. Andante cantabile
- iii. Allegro

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

Piano Trio No.1 in D minor, Op.49 (1839)

35'

- i. Molto allegro agitato
- ii. Andante con moto tranquillo
- iii. Scherzo. Leggiero e vivace
- iv. Finale. Allegro assai appassionato

Lili Boulanger (1893–1918)

D'un matin de printemps (1917)

4'

De Beauvoir Piano Trio is a Britten Pears Young Artist for 2024/25, here for a week-long residency on the Chamber Music in Residence course. De Beauvoir Piano Trio is a London-based, prize-winning ensemble that seeks to bring freshness and vitality to the classical masterworks, whilst elevating both modern and marginalised voices.

The Trio won second prize at the Virtuoso & Belcanto Competition in Italy (2021), third at the IX Stasys Vainiunas Competition in Lithuania (2022) and was a finalist of the St Martin-in-the-Fields Chamber Competition (2020), postponed due to Covid-19.

Festival appearances include the Prussia Cove International Musicians Seminar (IMS) under the tutelage of Thomas Adès.

Past engagements include the IMS 50th anniversary at Wigmore Hall (2022), Leeds International concert season, the Institut Français in London and Edinburgh, and the European Chamber Academy seminars in Oslo.

The Trio is under the mentorship of Chamber Studio at King's Place, London.

Mozart: Piano Trio in C, K.548

Mozart was the first composer to take the trio out of society drawing rooms and into the concert hall. This is a far cry from the little chamber piece that amateurs would have played – the strings have a much greater role and Mozart designed the piano part to show off his own skills to the grandest Viennese audiences.

He wrote the Trio in 1788 – musically a very productive period but financially disastrous. Austria was at war with the Ottoman Empire, and not only was the aristocracy less inclined to finance the arts, no one was going to concerts. With his wife needing expensive medical treatment, Mozart was running up considerable debts, and yet even though he lost a child shortly before writing it, the Trio begins with such a jaunty flourish that it is hard to believe he had a care in the world. There are more reflective moments as the first movement develops and later, in the Andante. But the finale is unambiguously buoyant and brings the Trio to a thoroughly joyous conclusion.

Mendelssohn: Piano Trio No.1

Mendelssohn was just 16 when he told his sister Fanny that he hoped – in the near future – to compose ‘a couple of good trios’, but it was another six years before he embarked on the project. He showed a first draft to a childhood friend, Ferdinand Hiller, himself an accomplished musician and in particular, a very fine pianist. Hiller was generally impressed with what he called the ‘fire and spirit’ of the Trio but admitted to misgivings about certain passages. He had recently met both Chopin and Liszt and heard their new, virtuoso style: Mendelssohn, he felt, was still in thrall to earlier composers such as Bach and Beethoven and his writing was – by comparison – ‘somewhat old-fashioned’.

Mendelssohn was initially reluctant to make even minor changes to the score, but Hiller was not to be swayed. He reminded the composer of a recent conversation, during which he had declared that ‘the smallest touch of the brush must not be despised.’ Hearing his own dictum repeated back to him, Mendelssohn agreed to look at the work again. He subsequently rewrote the Trio, this time creating a much more virtuosic piano part, particularly in the dramatic outer movements. The lyrical Andante, meanwhile, offers calm contrast in the form of a song without words, and the delicate Scherzo seems to conjure up the fairies from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

Along with his earlier string octet, this is rightly considered one of Mendelssohn’s greatest chamber works. ‘The master trio of our age’ was how Schumann described it, adding that it was ‘an exceedingly fine composition which will gladden our grandchildren and great-grandchildren for many years to come’.

Lili Boulanger: D’un matin de printemps

Lili Boulanger was born into an intensely musical family: her older sister Nadia became one of the 20th century’s most influential teachers but as a composer, it was Lili who was the more talented. She was just two when Fauré discovered she had perfect pitch: at five, she was observing classes at the Paris Conservatoire and she later became the first female composer to win the prestigious Prix de Rome – a prize that had always eluded Nadia.

Lili’s career, however, was short-lived: having suffered chronic illness from the age of two, she died just a few months short of her 25th birthday. This short trio appeared the same year and was one of the last pieces to be written in her own hand: her final works were dictated to her sister. Despite the circumstances, the music gives no hint of her failing health. *D’un matin de printemps* (‘Of a spring morning’) is an optimistic piece, as its title suggests, with more than a faint echo of Debussy. His music had made a great impression on Boulanger and he in turn admired hers, which he described as ‘undulating with grace’.

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