

Trio Brontë II

Chiara Sannicandro violin
Annie Jacobs-Perkins cello
Lili Bogdanova piano

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)
Piano Trio No.1 in B flat, D.898 (1827) 42'
i. Allegro moderato
ii. Andante un poco mosso
iii. Scherzo. Allegro
iv. Rondo. Allegro vivace

Dmitry Shostakovich (1906–1975)
Piano Trio No.1 in C minor, Op.8 (1923) 13'

Trio Brontë is a Britten Pears Young Artist for 2024/25, here for a two-week residency on the Chamber Music in Residence course.

Trio Brontë is named after the Brontë sisters and is inspired by their passion, intelligence and companionship. It champions works by lesser-known and female composers as well as works from the traditional canon. Based in Berlin, the Trio met at the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler and currently studies with pianist Jonathan Aner; it has received additional coaching from Kolja Blacher, Troels Svane and Eldar Nebolsin.

Last season Trio Brontë appeared as soloist for Beethoven's Triple Concerto with the Jyväskylä Sinfonia under the baton of Jan Söderblom, and won first prize in the 2023 Ilmari Hannikainen International Piano Chamber Music Competition in Finland. It also gave the world premiere of Tuomas Turriago's *Panta Rhei*, and presented its interdisciplinary programme 'Un Jour', which focuses on works by Germaine Tailleferre, Mel Bonis and Lili Boulanger, and was sponsored by the Bulgarian Culture Perspectives Foundation.

Additional concerts this season take Trio Brontë to Germany, Netherlands and the United States.

Franz Schubert: Piano Trio No.2 in B flat

Although Schubert first tackled a piano trio as a 15-year-old student, he didn't attempt another until 1827, when he produced two within a few months of each other, less than a year before he died. By this time, the trio had begun seriously to evolve from its humble beginnings as essentially an accompanied sonata. Gone were the days when it might be tackled at home by competent amateurs: thanks to Beethoven and works such as his 'Archduke' Trio, the three instruments were now being given equal prominence and increasingly challenging parts.

At the time of the trio's composition, the 30-year-old Schubert was in seriously poor health. He knew that his illness would prove fatal, but the realisation that he was – in effect – living on borrowed time seems to have given him extraordinary creative energy. The last two years of his life saw a remarkable number of substantial compositions, some of which – in particular the harrowing song-cycle *Die Winterreise*, which he was working on at the same time – do indeed suggest an awareness of his fate. The trio, however, has a very different feel and when Schumann heard it, he said the world seemed fresh and bright again: 'It makes the troubles of our human existence disappear.'

The work was published posthumously and the only time Schubert is known to have heard it played was at a private party. The performance was given by three of the best musicians in Vienna, whose skills had clearly been Schubert's inspiration. Afterwards, the pianist apparently showered him with heartfelt congratulations and said the Viennese did not realise what a treasure they had in him.

Dmitry Shostakovich: Piano Trio No.1 in C minor

Another 'first' trio but this time from a composer at the very start of his career. According to Shostakovich's sister, this single-movement work – originally called 'Poème' – was first performed to accompany a silent film. He wrote it in 1923: life had been hard for the family since the revolution and to supplement their meagre income, Shostakovich had taken a job as a cinema pianist. The auditorium provided an excellent practice venue and, despite regular protestations from film-goers, he and his friends often used the space to rehearse his new compositions, regardless of what else was going on around them. It is easy to imagine a film playing in the background, the sudden contrasts of mood reflecting the action unfolding on screen.

Shostakovich was studying in Leningrad when he wrote the trio. The following year he applied to the Moscow Conservatory and took the trio along as an audition piece. Although his companions apparently played appallingly, the examiners were greatly impressed: one of them – the leading composer Nikolai Myaskovsky – even wondered why Shostakovich should need classes at all, when 'he is already a complete master of form.' He was immediately offered a scholarship, although in the end his mother refused to let him go on account of his fragile health.

This is very much the young Shostakovich, aware of the mighty tradition of the Russian Romantics but taking it in a radical new direction. There are moments of great intensity – particularly as the trio comes to a close – undoubtedly inspired by the circumstances in which it was written. Shostakovich was 16 at the time and recovering from tuberculosis at a sanatorium in Crimea: he dedicated it to a girl he fell in love with while he was there.

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