

MOZART

PIANO TRIOS

KV 502, 542, 564



Rautio Piano Trio

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Piano Trios KV 502, 542 & 564

Rautio Piano Trio

Jane Gordon *violin*

Adi Tal *cello*

Jan Rautio *fortepiano*

About Rautio Piano Trio:

'[...] ravishing tone and depth of timbre [...] a real sense of musical line'
The Independent

'The Rautio Piano Trio gave mature and persuasive accounts'
The Strad

Piano Trio in B-flat major, KV 502

- | | |
|---------------|--------|
| 1. Allegro | [8:24] |
| 2. Larghetto | [7:28] |
| 3. Allegretto | [6:21] |

Piano Trio in E major, KV 542

- | | |
|---------------------|--------|
| 4. Allegro | [7:40] |
| 5. Andante grazioso | [4:45] |
| 6. Allegro | [7:07] |

Piano Trio in G major, KV 564

- | | |
|---------------|--------|
| 7. Allegro | [5:03] |
| 8. Andante | [5:47] |
| 9. Allegretto | [4:30] |

Total playing time	[57:11]
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Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Piano Trios KV 502, 542 & 564

In 1781, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart had a significant disagreement with his Salzburg employer Archbishop Colloredo, became his own impresario and settled in Vienna. While this was a quite unusual and somewhat risky step for an artist to take at the time it appeared to work for a while. Wolfgang staged subscription concerts, performed his own piano concertos to great acclaim and entered a relatively brief period of financial success. In 1787 his father died, and Mozart's financial situation began to spiral out of control. It was around this time that he completed the great operas *The Marriage of Figaro*, KV 492 and *Don Giovanni*, KV 527 and, alongside these larger works, the jewels of the early piano trio repertoire.

Mozart wrote six piano trios between 1776 and 1788. Compared with Joseph Haydn's forty-five this seems a rather low output, but in terms of significance, Mozart's trios accomplish an important step in the evolution of the genre. It's not an understatement to say these works are masterpieces and mark a major development in the piano trio form as we recognise it today. Alongside the usual grace and beauty we associate with Mozart's writing,

the listener also finds a relatively high degree of experimentation and virtuosity particularly in the writing for the piano, which Mozart would have played himself at his concerts in Vienna. The string parts began to display an independent and prominent role more suited to the concert hall than the domestic music room. It is this independence that paved the way for Beethoven whose own first trio was published nine years later in 1795. Both composers enjoyed the success of the form meaning they could perform their own works, simultaneously impressing audiences with their virtuosic playing, whilst attracting good publication sales.

According to his biographers, Mozart could be charming, witty, brilliant, audacious and sometimes downright impertinent, and all such qualities clearly come through in his wonderful trios. They are at times deceptively simple whilst hinting at deeper melancholic thoughts under the surface. In the B flat trio KV 502, composed in 1786, Mozart gives a very playful character to the first 'Allegro' movement, where the piano and strings almost tease each other in a lively interplay. There is some fiery virtuosity in both piano and violin writing alongside charming singing melodies. The 'Larghetto' is especially sublime as Mozart manages to capture the brightest and darkest emotions, perhaps reflecting the vagaries of life.

The 'Allegretto' is in rondo form which dances along in a witty manner and concludes with dramatic brilliance.

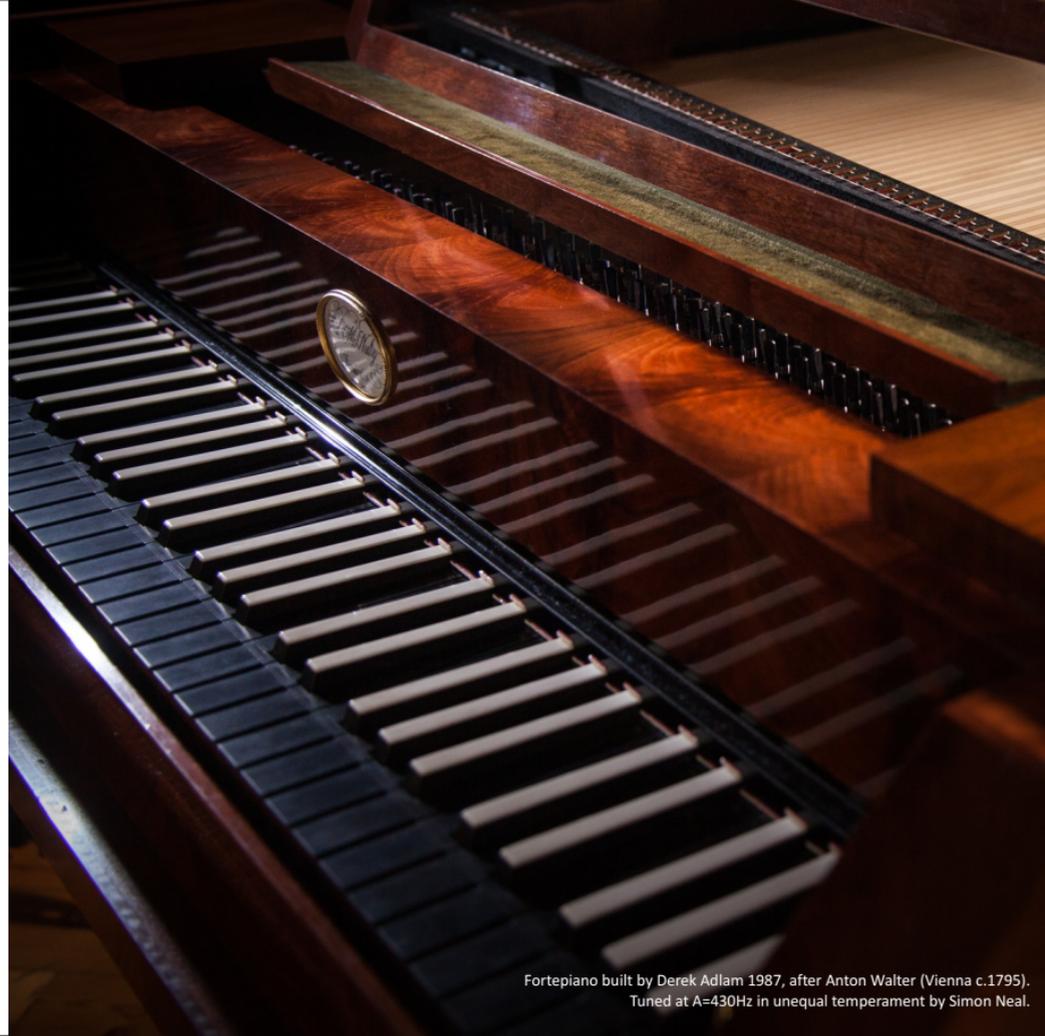
Written two years later, KV 542 is in E major, which is an unusual key for Mozart. It opens in an exploratory way with beautiful and surprising harmonic progressions before settling on a gentle undulating melody. The 'Andante grazioso' begins with a simple charming theme in the piano part, characterised by dotted rhythms. This is transformed into a much more intense melancholic middle section in the minor, expressed initially by the violin. The finale ('Allegro') opens again with a simple melody and the movement develops tremendous flair in virtuosic cadenza-like episodes from the piano and violin.

Mozart's last trio, KV 564, was completed in October 1788 and is notable in that it gives the cello some more prominent melodies than in the earlier trios. The 'Allegro' is full of vitality and interplay between the instruments, followed by a set of variations in the 'Andante' which contain a particularly poignant moment of sorrow towards the end. The siciliano dotted theme in the finale dances along, interspersed with minor episodes and a more rumbustious

section. The ending is elegant and light, unlike the dashing finales of the other trios.

Today's listeners are accustomed to the sound of a concert grand piano and string instruments equipped with high tension metal strings and powerful bows. However, at the end of the eighteenth century, the sound-scape would have been very different. The fortepiano, lacking an iron frame, thick strings and a sophisticated soundboard, produced a much more fragile, mercurial sound. The violin and cello used gut strings resulting in a considerably different timbre from today's modern instruments. The lighter, shorter bows typical of the time give a crisper articulation and increase the agility of the strokes with a wider variety of short and off the string bowing and a more transparent sustain.

Exploring historical performance practices sheds light on what Mozart could have imagined when composing these trios. The balance of the instruments is completely reversed as here the strings are the more dominant partners in the ensemble, which is clearly reflected in the writing style. The cello supports the left hand of the fortepiano and the violin writing is sensitive to the keyboard's sonic qualities; whenever there is a melody in the right hand of the pianist, the violinist must play the lightest



Fortepiano built by Derek Adlam 1987, after Anton Walter (Vienna c.1795). Tuned at A=430Hz in unequal temperament by Simon Neal.

of accompanying figures so as not to subdue the melody. This is quite the opposite to the modern set-up where the pianist must endeavour not to cover the violinist and the cellist has to work to project their part. For the keyboard player fast scales, trills and coloratura passages are easy to rattle off on the fortepiano whereas slow legato playing is much more of a challenge. Hence, sustained melodies are best given to the strings. For the string players, adjusting to the fortepiano gives a more intimate quality to the music-making, where textures are transparent and the range of articulations and subtle nuances in phrasing can shine through. Vibrato can be used as an ornament and notes effortlessly shaped and released with the bow.

The question of temperament also adds a wonderful new spectrum of colour into the mix. With the piano no longer caged in modern equal-temperament tuning, both players and listeners can explore the specific flavour of each key. For instance, the bright sonority of E major in the remarkable KV 542 has a very different quality from what we are accustomed to on today's instruments.

Performing with fortepiano has allowed us to develop a deeper understanding of the

nature of the writing style and sound world of Mozart's time. We invite you to step back in time to enter that world, and we hope you will enjoy it as much as we do!

Acknowledgements:

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Rautio Piano Trio

The award-winning Rautio Piano Trio is one of Britain's most dynamic chamber ensembles, critically acclaimed for their innovative programming and captivating performances. Their highly imaginative concerts include rarely performed works alongside the cornerstones of the repertoire, and they regularly use historical instruments for performances of eighteenth and nineteenth century music.

In 2013 they performed the complete cycle of Mozart's Piano Trios on fortepiano at St George's Bristol and at the Tel Aviv Museum of Arts in Israel, subsequently recording this album. The Trio's interest in historical performance has since led them to perform Mendelssohn at The Cobbe Collection in Hatchlands on an 1845 Erard piano. They have also explored the often neglected trios of Johann Christian Bach (the 'London Bach') which they first performed for the London Bach Society BachFest in 2014.

The Trio is based in London and has played across the UK, France, Austria, Germany and Israel. Highlights include performances at the Wigmore Hall, Southbank Centre, Kings Place in London, Bridgewater Hall in Manchester, the Joseph Haydn-Saal in Vienna, live on BBC Radio 3, with concerts

at the Hambacher Musikfest in Germany, SOUND contemporary music festival in Scotland, English Haydn Festival and the Pablo Casals Festival in France.

The Rautio Piano Trio was established at the Royal Academy of Music and International Musicians Seminar Prussia Cove. They have been recipients of numerous awards from the Tillett Trust, Worshipful Company of Musicians, Park Lane Group, Musician's Benevolent Fund Ensemble Award, English-Speaking Union and were appointed Leverhulme Chamber Music Fellows at the Royal Academy of Music. The performers on this disc are violinist Jane Gordon, cellist Adi Tal and pianist Jan Rautio. In 2015, cellist Victoria Simonsen joined the trio.

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