

# STANFORD

## Piano Trio No. 2

## Piano Quartet No. 1

**Gould Piano Trio • David Adams, Viola**



## Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924)

### Piano Trio No. 2 in G minor, Op. 73 • Piano Quartet No. 1 in F, Op. 15

Born in Dublin in 1852 to a prominent legal family, Charles Villiers Stanford was educated at Queen's College, Cambridge where he was also organ scholar. Migrating to Trinity College in 1873, he was organist and choirmaster there until 1892. With permission from the Seniority (nowadays the College Council) at Trinity, he was able to take leave to study in Leipzig and Berlin between 1874 and 1876. Mentored principally by Joseph Joachim, Stanford rose to fame meteorically during the 1880s. By 1889 he had become a composer of considerable reputation in both Britain and Europe. As a composer he was already the author of three operas – two of which had been given in Germany – and four symphonies, the third of which (the 'Irish') had been given its première in 1887 in London by Richter to much acclaim. His enviable list of choral works included the *Elegiac Ode* (1884) for the Norwich Festival, the oratorio *The Three Holy Children* (1885) for Birmingham, *The Revenge* (1886) for Leeds, and three masterpieces, the *Requiem* (1897), the *Te Deum Op. 66*, and the *Stabat Mater*, while his unmatched catalogue service of music and anthems had established him as a central figure in music for the Anglican church. His national standing was also enhanced in January 1889 by a concert entirely of his own music in Berlin, an event unequalled by any other compatriot composer of his generation, including Sullivan. His institutional reputation had also been established in 1883 with his appointment as Professor of Composition at the Royal College of Music, and this was additionally recognised by the unanimous decision to appoint him to the chair of music at Cambridge University in 1887 after the death of Sir George Macfarren. Stanford held these two positions for the rest of his life and was responsible for teaching many of Britain's next generation of composers. He was also an active freelance conductor and held the positions of conductor of the Leeds Philharmonic Society (1897-1909) and Leeds Triennial Festival (1901-10) both of which did much to promote British music under his direction.

As a composer of chamber music, an idiom he believed to be one of the most essential representations of 'absolute music', Stanford was prolific and enormously inventive. During the 1870s his interest in such music began with the composition of two sonatas, for cello *Op. 9* and violin *Op. 11*. A third work, the *Piano Quartet No. 1 in F, Op. 15*, was completed in April 1879 and dedicated to his friend, the composer and conductor, Ernst Frank. The Quartet was first given at Hans Richter's 'Festival Concerts' in London on 8th May by the highly acclaimed virtuoso pianist, Xaver Scharwenka (who had already enjoyed much success with his brilliant *Piano Concerto No. 1 in B flat minor*), the violinist and former Joachim pupil, Hermann Franke, the violist Benno Hollander and the cellist Auguste van Biene. After its première, it was repeated in the chamber music concerts of the Cambridge University Musical Society (where Stanford was an active pianist) and at the Hallé concerts in Manchester. Hermann Franke, who was the force behind the organisation of Richter's concerts in London, also programmed it in 1882 and 1886 after its publication by the German company Bote & Bock.

Stanford's mastery of extended instrumental forms truly comes of age in this work which breathes a confidence and *joie de vivre* in the two main thematic paragraphs of the first movement. His handling of a small, seminal number of musical motives has a consummate fluency and concentration to rival Brahms, yet the magnificent scoring for the idiom reveals a lighter, more felicitous hand. Of particular note, too, is the reflective, chorale-like opening of the developmental phase in A flat major, a disposition which is later reiterated in the 'tranquillo' recapitulation for piano alone. In the earnest Scherzo, Stanford's shapes an interesting argument between the main key, A minor, and the relative, C major, to which the music is often tonally drawn. This tendency is affirmed by the 'Trio' section which is couched in C major, yet as the Scherzo reasserts itself, A minor and its tonic major counterpart become more forceful, especially at the

conclusion when a memory of the 'Trio' is heard in A major. The wistful slow movement in B flat juxtaposes a melody of lyrical simplicity whose reprise (after a more buoyant and tonally fluid second subject) leads to a more dramatic climax. Furthermore, this intensification is combined with references to material from the first and second movements, a cyclic propensity continued in the secondary theme of the Finale's opening paragraph and the lively coda. This fine movement, so assured in its design and balance, looks forward to the even more spacious finale of the composer's *Piano Quintet in D minor Op. 25*, arguably his greatest chamber masterpiece.

Stanford began work on his *Piano Trio No. 2 in G minor, Op. 73*, in December 1898 and completed it in January 1899. Dedicated to his friends of the 'Berlin Trio' of Heinrich Barth, Emmanuel Barth and Robert Hausmann, it was first performed on 13th July of that year by the London Trio, a recently-formed ensemble made up of the pianist Amina Goodwin (a pupil of Liszt and Madame Schumann), the violinist Theodore Werner (who was soon replaced by Achille Simonetti) and the cellist William Whitehouse (a pupil of Piatti). Central to the first movement, a probing, restive essay, is the opening semitonal motive heard in the violin and cello and the accompanying wash of diminished-seventh harmony in the piano, an idea which contributes much to the adventurous harmonic palette of the work as a whole. Stanford also cleverly incorporates this 'motto' material at various important structural moments in the movement, notably at the end of the exposition where he gives the impression of a repeat, only to alter the course of the main theme as it launches into the resourceful development. The recapitulation of the second subject, in G major, is beautifully handled as is the way this momentary poetical episode is expunged by the turbulent coda in the minor.

There is a Beethovenian pathos about the slow movement in E flat major which is deeply introspective in mood and demeanour. This is typified by the fine opening idea for the piano, noble in its diatonicism and lyrical breadth. On its subtle return, later in the movement, Stanford's rescoring is nothing short of visionary. Cast in C minor, the vigorous Scherzo, full of contrapuntal invention, playful themes and quirky modulations (especially in the Trio), acts as a striking foil to the previous movement. The opening gesture of the Finale, which cyclically recalls the beginning of the first movement, provides an adroit transition from the close of the Scherzo (in C major) to G minor, though Stanford executes this process with considerable legerdemain, not with a clear-cut cadence to the tonic, but quizzically via the Neapolitan. From the tonally indeterminate introductory bars, with their questioning semitonal motives, Stanford unleashes a fiery Rondo theme constructed from the same material. This defiant, uncompromising manner is tempered by two euphonious, contrasting subjects, the first in B flat (derived from the ascending phrases of the introduction) and the second in E flat, initially presented by the cello. Out of this second thematic episode Stanford derives further tonal and thematic development which in turn begins to recall the 'motto' idea from the first movement. This is, however, only momentary as Stanford carries us back to the inexorable energy of the rondo theme. While this is an important moment in the rondo sonata design, the most telling events of this opulent structure are the return of the second subject in B major (which exudes a glow of well-being) and the tertiary melody in G major, both of which illustrate the composer's extraordinary fecundity and imagination.

Jeremy Dibble

## Gould Piano Trio

Lucy Gould, Violin • Alice Neary, Cello • Benjamin Frith, Piano



Photo: Chris Stock

Recently compared to the Beaux Arts Trio by the *Washington Post* for their “musical fire” and dedication to the genre, the Gould Piano Trio continue to bring the masterpieces of their repertoire to an ever-widening public. After winning Melbourne’s inaugural International Chamber Music Competition, the Goulds quickly established a worldwide reputation with many tours throughout Europe, the United States, South America, the Far East and New Zealand. Following their highly regarded rendition of James MacMillan’s *Fourteen Little Pictures* which toured in the UK and Europe, they commissioned a second piano trio from the composer, given its première at the Bath International Music Festival in May 2014 and subsequently toured in Britain. The Goulds have performed complete cycles of the Dvořák trios at Wigmore Hall and the Beethoven trios at St George’s Bristol; this “live” Beethoven appears on the SOMM label. The trio’s discography is very far-reaching. Their Brahms cycle is unique in including both his early trios and those for clarinet and horn, and their exploration of the works of the late British romantics such as Stanford, Ireland, Bax, Scott, Milford and York Bowen (Chandos

and Naxos) has brought critical acclaim. The Trio have always found the space in their musical lives to coach, principally at the Royal Northern College of Music and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama where they hold residencies. Their outreach work with schoolchildren and in the community brings a sense of added communication and perspective to their outlook. Of particular pride is the creation of the Corbridge and the RWCMD festivals by the Gould Piano Trio with clarinetist Robert Plane, where the collaboration with guest artists refreshes their musical inspiration.

## David Adams



Photo: Sophie Baker

Equally at home on violin and viola, David Adams makes regular guest appearances, recordings and broadcasts with the Nash Ensemble, the Endellion String Quartet, the Gould Piano Trio and the Hebrides Ensemble. David Adams is leader of the Orchestra of Welsh National Opera and a tutor in violin and viola at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. As guest leader he has appeared with many British symphony and chamber orchestras, including the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. He is regularly invited to attend the International Musicians Seminar at Prussia Cove and has performed on their national tours. He is artistic director of the Penarth Chamber Music Festival. David Adams began his studies at the age of five with his father, Principal Viola in the Hallé Orchestra. He plays a Joannes Gagliano violin from 1800 and a Betts viola c.1840, previously played by his father.

One of Britain's leading composers and educators of his day, Stanford considered chamber music an essential representation of 'absolute music'. His mastery of extended instrumental forms truly comes of age in the *First Piano Quartet*, a work which breathes a confidence and fluency to rival Brahms. An adventurous harmonic palette distinguishes the *Second Piano Trio*, the Beethovenian pathos of its slow movement contrasting with the defiant turbulence of its cyclically related outer movements. The Gould Trio is 'magnificently stylish' (*Gramophone*) in their recording of Stanford's *First Piano Trio* (8.572452).

Sir Charles Villiers  
**STANFORD**  
(1852-1924)

**Piano Trio No. 2 • Piano Quartet No. 1**

**Piano Trio No. 2 in G minor, Op. 73** **31:15**

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|-------------------------------------|------|
| ❶ I. Allegro moderato               | 8:48 |
| ❷ II. Andante                       | 6:30 |
| ❸ III. Presto                       | 6:36 |
| ❹ IV. Larghetto – Allegro con fuoco | 9:21 |

**Piano Quartet No. 1 in F, Op. 15\*** **30:08**

- |                               |      |
|-------------------------------|------|
| ❺ I. Allegro con brio         | 8:40 |
| ❻ II. Scherzo, allegro vivace | 5:39 |
| ❼ III. Poco adagio            | 9:03 |
| ❽ IV. Allegro con brio        | 6:46 |

**David Adams, Viola\***

**Gould Piano Trio**

**Lucy Gould, Violin • Alice Neary, Cello • Benjamin Frith, Piano**

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