

NAXOS

HUMMEL

Piano Trios • 2

Nos. 1, 4 and 5

Gould Piano Trio



Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837)

Piano Trios • 1: Nos. 1, 4 and 5

Largely neglected by posterity, Johann Nepomuk Hummel in his own time enjoyed the highest reputation both as a composer and as a virtuoso performer. The increasing availability of his music, whether in print or in recordings, is evidence of the unjustified nature of the posthumous neglect of his work, although neither the bicentenary of his birth nor the 150th anniversary of his death in 1987 aroused the interest that his compositions clearly deserve.

Hummel was born in 1778 in Pressburg, the modern Slovak capital Bratislava, the son of a musician. At the age of four he could read music, at five play the violin and at six the piano. Two years later he became a pupil of Mozart in Vienna, lodging, as was the custom, in his master's house. On Mozart's suggestion the boy and his father embarked in 1788 on an extended concert tour. For four years they travelled through Germany and Denmark and by the spring of 1790 they were in Edinburgh, where they spent three months. There followed visits to Durham and to Cambridge before they arrived, in the autumn, in London. Plans in 1792 to tour France and Spain seemed inopportune at a time of revolution, so that father and son made their way back through Holland to Vienna.

The next ten years of Hummel's career found him occupied in study, in composition and in teaching in Vienna. When Beethoven had settled in Vienna in 1792, the year after Mozart's death, he had sought lessons from Haydn, from Albrechtsberger and from the Court Composer Antonio Salieri. Hummel was to study with the same teachers, the most distinguished Vienna had to offer. Albrechtsberger provided a sound technical basis for his composition, while Salieri gave instruction in writing for the voice and in the philosophy of aesthetics. Haydn, after his second visit to London, gave him some organ lessons, but warned him of the possible effect on his touch as a pianist. It was through Haydn that Hummel in 1804 became *Konzertmeister* to the second Prince Nikolaus Esterházy, effectively doing the work of *Kapellmeister*, a title that Haydn held nominally until his death in 1809. He had Haydn to thank, too, for his

retention of his position with the Esterházy family when in 1808 neglect of his duties had brought dismissal. His connection with the family came to an end in 1811 but his period of service had given him experience as a composer of church and theatre music, while his father, as director of music at the Theater auf der Wieden and later of the famous Apollo Saal, provided other opportunities.

Hummel had impressed audiences as a child by his virtuosity as a pianist. He returned to the concert platform in 1814, at the time of the Congress of Vienna, a year after his marriage, but it was the Grand Duchy of Weimar, home of Goethe, that was able to provide him, in 1818, with a basis for his career. By the terms of his employment he was allowed leave of absence for three months each spring, a period spent in concert tours. In Protestant Weimar he was relieved of responsibilities for church music but presided at the opera and was, with Goethe, one of the tourist attractions of the place, although in speech his homely Viennese accent sorted ill with the purer speech of the resident literati.

In 1828 Hummel published his study of pianoforte performance technique, a work that enjoyed immediate success and has proved a valuable source for our knowledge of contemporary performance practice. Towards the end of his life his brilliance as a player diminished. This was the age of Liszt and a new school of virtuosity, while Hummel represented a continuation of the classical style of playing of his teacher, Mozart, now carried into the age of Chopin, Liszt, Kalkbrenner and Thalberg.

Hummel's *Piano Trio in E flat major, Op. 12*, was published in Vienna in 1803. The first subject of the sonata-form first movement is entrusted to the violin, to be taken up in a more elaborate form by the piano. The second subject, in B flat major, is based on the same theme. The exposition is repeated, after which the cello launches into the development, its statement of the theme followed by that of the violin, which subsequently starts the recapitulation, with the equivalent of the second

subject now first given to the cello. The movement ends with a flourish from the piano. The ternary form slow movement is in A flat major, with initial thematic interest in the strings then in the piano, accompanied by the plucked notes of the violin and then of the cello. At the heart of the movement is a more turbulent F minor section, with more elaborate figuration in the piano part. The sonata-form *Finale* has all the ebullience of a closing rondo.

The *Piano Trio in G major, Op. 65*, was written in 1814-15, at a time when Hummel had resumed concert activity and when Vienna was busy with the incidental social activities engendered by the Congress that was to settle European affairs, after the defeat of Napoleon. The piano takes the lead from the start, after the first ascending notes of the G major triad, announced by all three instruments. The piano statement of the first subject is followed by the violin, and the same procedure is followed to announce the D major second subject. The exposition of the sonata-form movement, with its concluding triplet piano figuration, is repeated, before the relatively short development section. The second movement, marked *Andante grazioso*, is in C major, with a time signature of 3/8. In ternary form, the return of the opening theme allows elaborate accompanying figuration from the cello, then joined by the violin. The work ends with a lively *Rondo*, allowing, in its main theme and contrasting episodes, a fairer distribution of parts between the three players.

Hummel's *Grand Trio Concertante in E major, Op. 83*, was published in Leipzig, Paris and London in 1819, composed for and dedicated to his friend Johann Baptist Cramer, the son and grandson of former Mannheim musicians who, with his father, had settled in London. The young Cramer was among the most distinguished pianists of his day, a pupil of Johann Samuel Schroeter, with whose widow Haydn was later associated, and then for a time of Clementi. Cramer had had a firm grounding in the great music of the past. As a player he drew praise from Beethoven and, like Hummel, continued the playing tradition associated with Mozart. Hummel's *Grand Trio*, with its technical demands on a pianist, is expressly designed for Cramer, a concerto in all but name. The piano alone starts the first movement, while the second subject, in the unusual key of A flat major, the enharmonic equivalent of G sharp, is entrusted first to the violin, before being taken up by the piano. The exposition is repeated, followed by the development with its exploration of other keys. The piano introduces the recapitulation with the first subject, then taken up by the cello. The G major *Andante* is in the form of a theme and variations, including an excursion again into A flat major. The work, its concertante character always in evidence, ends with a final *Rondo* that makes considerable demands on the pianist in writing calling for great virtuosity.

Keith Anderson

Gould Piano Trio

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



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.

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. After their highly regarded rendition of James MacMillan’s *Fourteen Little Pictures*, 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

Trained by Mozart and Haydn, Johann Nepomuk Hummel enjoyed the highest reputation as a composer and virtuoso performer of his day. His piano trios are characterised by their richness of sonority, good humour and flowing melodic inventiveness. While the influence of Beethoven can be heard, Hummel's own creative voice is highly distinctive. The early *Piano Trio, Op. 12* exudes the atmosphere of Vienna at the turn of the 19th century, and the *Grand Trio* is a concerto in all but name, the demands on the pianist expressly designed for its dedicatee Johann Baptist Cramer.

Johann Nepomuk HUMMEL

(1778-1837)

Piano Trios • 2

Piano Trio No. 1 in E flat major, Op. 12 **19:12**

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|---|------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Allegro agitato | 9:08 |
| 2 | Andante | 5:30 |
| 3 | Finale: Presto | 4:34 |

Piano Trio No. 4 in G major, Op. 65 **16:18**

- | | | |
|---|---|-------------|
| 4 | Allegro con spirito | 8:15 |
| 5 | Andante grazioso | 4:10 |
| 6 | Rondo: Vivace assai e scherzando | 3:53 |

Piano Trio No. 5 in E major
'Grand Trio Concertante', Op. 83 **25:59**

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|---|----------------|--------------|
| 7 | Allegro | 13:50 |
| 8 | Andante | 4:13 |
| 9 | Rondo | 7:56 |

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Lucy Gould, Violin

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