NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NO 47 SUMMER 2020

Charity number 1067071

Life in Lockdown

We were sad that the Senior Intercollegiate Piano Trio Competition scheduled for 22 March had to be cancelled due to the lockdown. By this time many overseas students who planned to perform had returned home and venues, including Chethams where the event was to take place, had closed, so there was no alternative but to cancel. After the huge amount of work involved in organising the event, of course it was disappointing for us but it was especially so for the students who had worked really hard to prepare for it.

Musicians have been particularly badly hit with the cancellation of concerts but many are using technology to keep in touch, although sadly mostly without any payment and students are being offered online lessons. So at this difficult time with no events to report on, what better than to chase up members who have promised to write articles, and now have the time to do so, so that we can let you have an extended summer Newsletter with a variety of articles which we hope you will find interesting!

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In this issue

As we are celebrating Beethoven's 250th anniversary we will be featuring a number of articles in this and future Newsletters with any further contributions most welcome. Please send them to the Editor at the address below or contact us via our website.

Martino Tirimo

NOTES FROM A DOMESTIC MUSIC ROOM DURING NATIONAL LOCKDOWN

From our Founder and Chairman Jane Faulkner

It is very natural to be worried professionally in this new and difficult situation. Many industries are 'taking a knock' and will possibly not be the same again. If they are to survive they may have to adapt. Maybe some will become obsolete as our behaviour is forced to change. When I think about the classical music industry I think it is very probable that it has to change but I am equally sure though that it will not die. People will always need music. But whereas change is usually gradual, this has been thrust upon us, with no time to prepare. I find it hard to imagine a different concept of concerts – not listening to orchestras, soloists or chamber music physically in our main concert halls. What about our 'bread and butter' work from music societies and festivals, which all valiantly fly the flag for live music in the community? Well, none of us can know for certain how new patterns will evolve, and although one cannot help conjuring up images of a variety of possibilities, it may be best to grit our teeth and just 'see how it goes'. In the meantime it has been heartening to see how many musicians have posted solo and chamber performances on line, some even as a family, or performed duets 'over the hedge'. This is an indication of how entrepreneurial we can be.

A musician friend said this was when you decided how you identified yourself. You have a bit more time, alongside domestic responsibilities. What do you do with this opportunity? There is no right or wrong here, just a realisation of how you want to be. My own realisation was that although heavily involved with various organisations involving some administration, first and foremost I am a violinist, and I now have a rare opportunity to study. I have often wanted this opportunity, and without the pressure of performance, I can now pursue this. It is much easier than being back at the Royal Academy of Music, with the timetable of weekly lessons where you had to be prepared or take the consequences! So now, with the years of experience behind me, I know not only what I want to do, but more importantly, how to do it. Taking out sections of unaccompanied Bach, and enjoying experimenting with new ways musically and technically has been illuminating and enriching. The usual worries and frustrations are not there as there is no time scale or performance looming. If something does not work, that is also adding to knowledge. Books of studies have been placed on the music stand and seemingly simple technical exercises practised, but these 'simple' exercises form the basis of violin technique. I hope this all helps me as both a teacher and performer. I am truly enjoying this time with my violin, and of course conscious that I am so lucky to be able to do so.

My non playing musical life has thrown up more issues. With some friends I run a small but significant music festival in my locality, now cancelled for this September. As a performer myself I find it difficult to make these cancellation calls. I know what it means to these incredibly talented players. They are rebooked for 2021 but that is no immediate help. Similarly with a local music society we are delaying the start of the season to 2021, with of course no guarantee that this will take place. And there are other organisations involving performers in which I play a part. With all of these I realise that it is so important to keep in touch with members and supporters. We must keep our musical life alive and continue to involve people, all of whom have shown their interest and appreciation by joining these groups, and demonstrate that we do our best to keep things going. I genuinely feel a stronger level of 'ownership' with these societies since this situation took hold. They seem even more relevant to my life and the life of music in the community.

My journey with Johann Sebastian Bach's Six Cello Suites
By Robert Max

Editor's note. This article was written at my request after being present at an astounding performance of the Bach Suites by Robert, all played without a break except for a short introduction before each work. It was one of the most memorable concerts I have attended in recent years!

Opportunities to explore and perform our wonderful repertoire as cellist of the Barbican Piano Trio for more than 30 years have been a regular joy for me within a varied musical career. This has encompassed concertos, recitals and chamber music performances, conducting, teaching and lecturing and a considerable amount of chamber music coaching, first at Pro Corda and since 2001 at MusicWorks. I have spent comparatively little time playing music for unaccompanied cello and this is a style of music-making that differs markedly from all those I have just mentioned.

Although I studied some movements from Bach's Six Suites while I was in my teens and at Music College, they rarely featured in my recital programmes. I started teaching at the Junior Department of the Royal Academy of Music shortly after completing my postgraduate studies at the Juilliard School and my growing awareness of my lack of knowledge about Bach's Suites made me determined that none of my students should suffer a similar fate. As a result, all my students learn at least one movement of Bach each term, if not more, and as soon as all the movements of one Suite have been memorised, we arrange to perform the whole Suite.

In 2014 I decided to start a music festival in Frinton-on-Sea on the Essex coast centred on the musical activities of the Barbican Piano Trio, in which I play with my colleagues Sophie Lockett (violin) and James Kirby (piano). The first Frinton Festival, which featured lots of wonderful music by Sergei Taneyev, was a great success and subsequently I decided to perform one Bach Suite each year as part of a varied programme of chamber music in Frinton's atmospheric "Old Church". It is reputed to be the smallest complete Church in Essex seating seventy people at a pinch and has a fine acoustic.

Over the past thirty years I have spent a considerable amount of time exploring Suites 1, 2 and 3 with my students and together we have considered them from so many different angles. We have compared various manuscript sources, we have examined the wide variety of phrase lengths, we have considered the different dance steps and also thought about how the same dance's intrinsic characteristics differ among the different Suites. We have thought about keys and their relationships and considered how they sound on the cello. We have thought about the harmonic shape of each phrase and about the harmonic journey of each movement. Conversations with my students have led to innumerable new pathways for exploration. When it came to performing the first three Suites I found that so much had been considered already that I was well on the way to creating the sort of performance I was aiming for.

This was not the case with Suites 4, 5 and 6 because I teach these works comparatively infrequently. I performed the 4th Suite a few times early in my career and then decided to give it a rest. I knew that I wanted to play the 5th Suite with the top string tuned down to a G, as written in Anna Magdalena Bach's manuscript, but I put off studying it because the optimum moment to spend time tuning up and down never seemed to present itself. I studied and performed the 6th Suite on my 4-string cello and then vowed not to perform it again in public until I had the opportunity to do so on a 5-string cello.

When it came to programming the 4th Suite in the 2017 Frinton Festival I spent a considerable amount of time relearning the music. On the one hand it was comforting to know that all the music had been previously assimilated, on the other hand I acknowledged that my approach had changed completely during the 30 intervening years. In 2018 I confronted the thorny issue of the 5th Suite and I found it enormously helpful to keep a different cello tuned down and ready on a cello stand at all times – I then had no excuse! Learning it from scratch, I decided to teach it to myself much as if I were teaching it to one of my students and I proved to be quite a task-master! I studied the manuscript sources in detail, including Johann Sebastian's manuscript of the G minor Lute Suite BWV 995, and this resulted in a detailed plan of the fingerings and bowings I was going to play. I knew that learning the Prelude's fugue would be hugely demanding and would stretch my playing and intellect to the limit, so I decided to learn this movement last, once I knew that the dances were well in hand. The plan worked well and as a result I have enjoyed performing this Suite enormously.

A couple of years ago I sold a bow and with some of the proceeds I bought a 5-string Chinese cello that I had seen in a shop window in West Hampstead. There is nothing special about this instrument but it works, once I found a C-string taut enough to make up for the lack of resonance at this pitch (many thanks to Tom Woods for his help) and it is surprisingly easy to find cello E-strings which match the middle strings. This cello has a particularly sweet sound at the top and I loved re-learning the 6th Suite in this new way. I found it takes much less time getting used to an E-string than playing the scalic passages in the 5th Suite on the D string and remembering NOT to use my 4th finger. What was tricky was reading the high notes in the manuscript on an unfamiliar E-string in alto clef.

I went to Yo Yo Ma's late-night Prom in 2015 where he played the Six Suites in one concert with no interval and I found this incredibly inspiring. The Royal Albert Hall was full to the brim, the audience's attention was phenomenal and his command was mesmerising. I was aware that this was simply something I had to do before I got too old. So instead of playing the 6th Suite on its own in the 2019 Frinton Festival I decided to play all the Suites in order in one concert, starting with the 1st Suite and ending with the 6th Suite. This performance was given in the somewhat larger All Saints' Church in the neighbouring village of Great Holland. The Church is surrounded by fields and is at the other end of the road from a friendly local pub. Alongside re-learning the 6th Suite I had to revise the other five Suites and to give me fresh impetus I read for the first time Anner Bylsma's polemical Bach, the Fencing Master. I found this book to be brilliantly thought-provoking but ultimately too idiosyncratic. Much more useful to me was Charles Medlam's superb Approach to the Bach Cello Suites. This slim volume presents a wealth of information about the context in which the music was written, explains with admirable clarity various stylistic points within the music and scrupulously avoids being judgemental. I can't recommend this publication highly enough, it should be on every cellist's bookshelf.

Each Frinton Festival weekend is intensely busy and I knew that I would be too daunted to play this monumental programme if I had not had the opportunity to perform it elsewhere beforehand. So I emailed a friend who occasionally puts on concerts near Cheltenham, wondering if he would be interested in promoting a similar concert a few weeks before. He was so excited about the idea that we had the concert inked in the diary twenty minutes later and it occurred to me that other promoters might be interested. As a result I played this programme a dozen or so times in 2019. Early in the year I played them at Queen Mary, University of London, as the opening event of the new education hub called "Centre of the Cell". Professor Victoria Sanz-Moreno explained the basics of Cell Biology and I showed how the dances are built out of one, two or three tiny musical cells. Travelling later in the year to the Midlands or to Scotland on my own brought home to me the particularly secluded life a travelling concert pianist must lead.

I am often asked how I remember all those notes and to be honest, when sitting down on my stool before an audience at some of these concerts I have occasionally asked myself the same question. I have played many

concertos and solo pieces from memory and I have very occasionally conducted from memory; I never play sonatas from memory, even those I have memorised, and of course I wouldn't dream of playing a Piano Trio concert without the music, even though I must have performed some of our repertoire more times than anything else. The answer is that Bach's music is all so different, each movement is so distinct, there is no possibility of mistaking one thing for another. Occasionally one's muscular memory has to be carefully guided, much as you would hold the hand of a young child when going for a walk, so that the correct path is followed. That is something one must take care of all the way through each performance. However, I have observed that if I concentrate too much on this aspect then much more important and interesting things fail to materialse in the performance. I play all the repeats and am aware that the repetitions provide opportunities for us to deepen our experience and understanding of the music. This involves investing the first time with compelling involvement and then meaningfully contradicting that point of view during the repeat, while not losing sight of the essence of that dance.

Linking each Suite with just a few words summarising where we are and where we are going next helps the audience share the journey with me in performance. Bach is constantly exploring different sonorities and does this through changes of key. Five of the Suites are in "open string" keys, but they all sound different because of which open string is the key-note. The difference between the 2nd Suite in D minor and the 6th Suite in D major is accentuated because of the different instrument I use for the latter. Similarly, the difference in sonority between the 3rd Suite in C major and the 5th Suite in C minor is emphasised by the darker instrumental colour achieved by tuning the top string down a step in the latter. The E-flat Suite sounds completely different to all the others as none of the open strings resonate with the key-note. I am fascinated by the idea that as Bach writes more music, he comes up with more and more ideas. In some respects each Suite is more complex than the one which precedes it. That said, I noticed when relearning the 6th Suite on the 5-string cello that there are musical and cellistic similarities with the 1st Suite and these bring us in some respects back to where we began.

Having performed the Suites many times, I decided that I should record them. St. Jude's Church in Hampstead Garden Suburb has a fantastic acoustic that I know well from the many concerts and recordings that I have played and conducted there. As soon as the dates were in the diary I contacted Guildmusic, who had previously released a CD of music by Rachmaninov and Tchaikovsky performed by the Barbican Piano Trio, and they were immediately interested to release this recording, so I spent two days with my producer Michael Ponder at St. Jude's. Two days is not nearly enough time to record two CDs worth of music and the drama was heightened by the auditory interruptions we had to cope with. These included aeroplanes, gales, additional traffic noise caused by road resurfacing nearby, deliveries of marquees, games of rounders played by girls from the neighbouring school, leaf-blowers and drills used on external renovations to nearby houses.

With some good planning and a lot of hard work we recorded all Six Suites within the time available. I recorded Suites 1, 2, 3 and the middle movements of no.4 on the first day, leaving the physically demanding Gigue and the mentally demanding Prelude for first thing on the second day, followed by the tuning down for Suite 5 and the change of cellos for Suite 6. I am grateful to Michael and our editor Jennifer Howells for their committed and imaginative work.

The CDs are being prepared for production as I write and I would have been looking forward to further preparation for future performances at Conway Hall and in the 2020 Cambridge Summer Music Festival. Everything is on hold now due to coronavirus, so both of these concerts will have to wait for a more propitious time, but social distancing has given me the opportunity to write this article instead. I hope you have enjoyed reading it and I also hope you will enjoy listening to the recording when it is released later this year.

BEETHOVEN thoughts by Martino Tirimo

For this, the first of a series of articles celebrating the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth, we thank the distinguished pianist Martino Tirimo, who has recently released Beethoven's Complete Piano Works in a boxed set of 16 CDs which were recorded at the Leipzig Gewandhaus, engineered and produced by Genuin Recording Group and released by Hänssler Classic in October 2019 on HC19032.

What more can one say about a man who is one of the greatest of the great composers, one of the most popular, and whose works are performed endlessly to audiences throughout the world who flock to concert halls to hear them? Ludwig van Beethoven's life has been under exhaustive scrutiny in numerous biographies, so what else is there to discover?

His whole life was indeed extraordinarily difficult. As a child he was beaten by his drunken father, as an adult he often experienced financial difficulties and his romantic relationships were often hampered by the issue of class. In his behaviour he often appeared to be rough and bad-tempered, even eccentric. And, of course, there was the loss of the sense of hearing, the impact of which perhaps only a musician can appreciate fully.

My question is: would he have produced the remarkable number and quality of masterpieces had his life's path been an easier one? I do not think so. All these experiences deepened his emotional world and sharpened his intellect. They helped him in his reach for an expression most musicians cannot even envisage. Furthermore, I am convinced that his hearing problem, which must have been an almost intolerable experience for him, was a blessing for mankind. His inner ear developed to an astonishing degree and works such as the 'Hammerklavier' Sonata would probably never have been composed had he been able to exercise this vital sense. In short, his inner vision of sound far exceeded what he was able to hear of the limited acoustic possibilities of the instruments of that time.

As a young student in Vienna, I had the opportunity to play the "Hammerklavier" on his Broadwood piano, and felt very privileged. However, this was one of the most disappointing musical experiences of my life. The tone was thin, sonorities and colours much restricted and the volume poor. At that moment I realized that Beethoven must have "heard" something very different, and I was so thankful for that. I am sure he would have been thrilled to experience the sound of the modern piano, and especially in this majestic Sonata.

It is my firm conviction that he was a much-misunderstood personality for one cannot judge a great genius by what was regarded as acceptable and normal social conduct at that time. My own judgement is based on certain verified events and also on his actual musical expression.

Once, as a young man of 24 he attended a performance of Paisiello's "La Molinara" and he was sitting in one of the opera boxes next to a middle-aged woman. At the end of the aria 'Nel cor più non mi sento', which was the most popular operatic aria of those times, the lady said to Beethoven that she had some piano variations on this theme, but had lost them. Beethoven looked at her, but remained silent. At the end of the opera he went home, wrote six variations on this aria and next morning sent them by courier to this lady, with a short note in Italian: 'Variazioni: perdute, ma trovate par Luigi van Beethoven' ('Variations: lost, but found by LvB')!

On another occasion in Vienna, he visited the piano manufacturer Streicher and upon entering the piano store he suddenly hears somebody playing his 32 Variations in C minor. He soon finds out that the pianist was the teenage daughter of Streicher. Upon seeing him, the girl froze. He calmly says to her: 'Who wrote that?'. She was bewildered. 'But you…*you* did'. He covers his face with his two hands and says: 'Oh, Beethoven, what an ass you've been'!

And here is a third example, which was uppermost in my mind while making the recordings. Ferdinand Ries was Beethoven's closest student, and he described in some detail what happened during his piano lessons. Beethoven did not concern himself at all with wrong notes, but if the musical expression, the essence of his idiom and the specific emotional content, was absent, then he went into a rage. For him this was not forgivable. It was a crime!

The first example shows he had a wonderful sense of humour. The second one depicts a highly self-critical young composer, who was never satisfied with his accomplishments and was always looking ahead, constantly creating a new language. It also exhibits great humility. The third example is always with me before any performance of his works, because it reveals a lot about his beingness and what really mattered to him.

One fact that is little-known is his contact with Eastern sacred scriptures. He used to copy out passages of wisdom from Sanskrit texts and some of these he always had on his composing desk. For example: "I am that which is. I am all, what is, what was, what will be; no mortal man has ever lifted my veil". Also: "He is only and solely of Himself, and to this only One all things owe their existence".
For me, this shows that Beethoven was a deeply 'religious' man, in the best sense of the word: a true researcher for the Truth and the Life.

His piano output alone is enormous and arguably the greatest collection of all, and surely its most remarkable feature is the sheer *variety* of expression. Among the 32 Sonatas you will not find two that are similar; and in the 20 sets of Variations one marvels at the range and inspiration of his vision and imagination. Indeed, he was a rebel and he defined the course of classical music probably more than any other composer. He travelled fast and far, from the influence of Haydn and Mozart in his early works to his own idiomatic language of the middle period works and, finally, reached heights of great spiritual depth in the last 10 years or so.

Elsewhere, the listener can only marvel at the wealth of invention. His piano works express an enormous gamut of emotions, but also sweetness, humour and the operatic element. However, nothing came easily to him. He sketched and re-sketched and there seemed to be no restriction in his experimentation. Being highly self-critical, it sometimes took a long time before he arrived at what he regarded a satisfactory final version. These 'experiments' helped to develop pianistic writing and musical expression to a remarkable degree, very much determining the future direction of music. Without his immense influence, who knows what would have followed Mozart?

The recordings were all done at the wonderful Gewandhaus in Leipzig and I so enjoyed 'discovering' the youthful Sonatas, some enchanting Variation sets and delectable Dances, Bagatelles, Preludes, Rondos and much else. The whole journey was an education and, if anything, increased my admiration for this giant of music.
The recollection of Ries is always with me, for it highlights the composer's powerful instruction to the interpreter: to focus with total dedication, commitment and love on the *significance* of the music, on what lies beyond the notes. And what a treasure he has left for us!

Julian Jacobson - An exploration of Beethoven's Piano Trios

Julian Jacobson is a renowned pianist and composer and here shares his extensive insight into the Beethoven Piano Trios.

Beethoven's first published composition is a set of three piano trios. Two mature masterpieces written at the height of his powers represent the middle period: the first of these contains one of the most extraordinary slow movements in the history of music. The celebrated "Archduke" Trio rounds off Beethoven's middle period style with the utmost majesty, while his late period is represented by a single quirky flight of fantasy, the Variations on "Ich bin der Schneider Kakadu" op 121a - even if some of the variations were probably composed earlier. There are a few other minor works and arrangements which I shall mention in the course of this article, but these represent his most substantial contribution to the piano trio - a genre which he developed to its full potential, notwithstanding earlier masterpieces by Haydn and Mozart.

The piano trio has a curious evolution. The Baroque trio sonata usually involved four instruments, two melody instruments in the soprano register, a keyboard and a string bass line played on the viola da gamba, the precursor of the cello. So too, Bach's violin sonatas might well have had a string instrument giving substance to the bass line. Haydn took this somewhat hybrid form and developed it into the classical piano trio, giving us some 45 examples in his habitual abundance, including several undoubted masterpieces. However their origin in the Baroque trio sonata results in the cello having little independence, most often doubling the piano's left hand. Picking up from Haydn, Mozart gradually emancipated the cello so that his two mature masterpieces the B flat and E major Trios (K502 and K542) display for the first time a full chamber music richness, with textures as substantial and balanced as in a string quartet. Indeed in this respect he has never been equalled.

This was naturally enough the model that Beethoven inherited and wished to expand. His three opus 1 Trios - possibly the most auspicious debut of any composer - were first performed in 1795, and the 24-year old composer immediately announces himself as a major new presence. Though clearly in "early" style, they are in no sense derivative or cautious, as might be expected from a young composer eager to please: in fact Haydn advised Beethoven to withhold the publication of the third, C minor Trio, saying that the public might not accept such new and daring sonorities from a young composer. Naturally the independent-minded Beethoven took no notice and proceeded to publish all three, dedicating them to his early patron Prince Lichnowsky in whose house they were first performed, with the composer at the piano.

One immediately noticeable feature leaps out: all three trios have four movements, whereas no Haydn or Mozart trio has more than three. Generally the "absent" movement in Haydn and Mozart's trios is the Scherzo, but Beethoven found immediately a way of adapting scherzo form and texture to the piano trio medium, giving even these early trios a symphonic weight.

The first Trio, in E flat, immediately announces itself with all the confidence in the world. The sky-rocketing first theme, announced by the piano, is already picked up by the cello in the 9th bar, showing Beethoven's emancipation of the cello at the outset, though he would naturally develop this further: the first three trios are still heavily weighted towards the piano. This *Allegro,* sonata form first movement is full of vivacity and invention. The slow movement, in the subdominant key of A flat, relaxes into a space at the same time more formal and yet deeply personal. The Scherzo is witty and volatile, and Beethoven takes care to give the strings more of the limelight, with the piano silent till the 6th bar and then just shadowing the strings. The Finale is full of wit and high spirits: the beginning of the development section sounds as if it is in the dominant of B flat till the third bar where the note G makes us realise we're actually in G minor - an excellent musical pun. The substantial coda is full of surprises.

The underrated second Trio, in G, maintains the high level of the first. Its centrepiece, and perhaps the jewel of the whole set, is the *Largo con espressione* 2nd movement, with an astonishing depth of emotion, some phrases even anticipating the great slow movement of the Hammerklavier Sonata of some 20 years later. The finale, based on a theme that opens with eleven fast repeated Gs, is frankly knockabout farce and a good riposte to anyone who assumes that classical music is always serious.

The third Trio has a special significance as Beethoven's first work in his characteristic key of C minor, and already he finds some of the fierce drama always associated with his use of it. The first movement is terse and restless; its brisk *Allegro con brio* tempo engenders some furiously energetic semiquaver passages, mainly but not only in the piano, and the coda, alternating *pianissimo* and *fortissimo,* with savage *sforzandi* off the beat, must have seemed positively violent in 1795. After this, the slow movement, a set of variations, is more conventional, showing already Beethoven's ability to plan large scale works - a deeply felt slow movement such as the one in the second Trio would have overbalanced the work. The third movement *Menuetto* - not a scherzo this time - returns to the mood of intensity, though with a delightful major key Trio that gives the cellist a chance to shine. And then the Finale: this *Prestissimo* headlong dash must be the movement that caused Haydn to advise Beethoven not to publish, though it has also been suggested that this could have been caused by jealousy of the brilliant young upstart just as Haydn was nearing the end of his career! Beethoven makes a fascinating play of sonorities and, in the coda, indulges in an audacious, unexplained leap from C minor to B minor that still has the power to shock.

I hope I will be forgiven for passing over the graceful, somewhat conventional opus 11 Clarinet Trio in its piano trio version: not quite top-drawer Beethoven, it has always seemed to me to need the clarinet to give life to its concertante textures. Still, the slow movement opens with a beautiful cello solo.

Almost 15 years elapsed before Beethoven published his next set of piano trios in 1809, the two of opus 70. By this time Beethoven had written many of his most famous and enduring works, and the Trios are the work of an immensely experienced and confident composer. By far the better known is the first, universally known as the Ghost Trio, named on account of the unutterably weird slow movement though possibly also relating to some sketches for a projected opera on Macbeth.

The first movement, *Allegro vivace e con brio* (Beethoven doesn't mince his words!) opens with a *fortissimo* explosion of energy, the instruments in unison over four octaves, immediately answered by a tender phrase that the cello seems to have been invented to play. There is much variety and incident: the movement is predominantly loud and fast, but to balance this Beethoven writes a long, 16-bar passage in *pianissimo,* with mysteriously rustling piano scales over slowly shifting harmonies. A magical coda hints at the unfathomable mysteries to come.

The slow movement, *Largo assai ed espressivo,* is in the tonic minor key of D minor. There is quite simply nothing like it in all music, and Beethoven goes to the very limits of classical style and harmony to express a wild anguish. (I sometimes wonder just what Beethoven was actually feeling as his pen inscribed these

visionary notes). Immensely slow, it can still give players problems just to get it to stay together. There is much use of tremolando, with several bars in the piano indicated as 48 notes to the bar - surely a completely new texture. Tonality is attenuated at times almost to the point of disappearing. Discernibly in sonata form, the development is just eight bars long yet it feels immense, and not only because of the very slow tempo - such anguish had never been expressed in music before.

Inevitably the *Presto* finale is lighter, restoring equilibrium though not without its quirks: the opening seems to be straightforward but gets immediately stuck on a chord of F sharp major, a fairly remote key to D major, with a further stop on a fermata four bars later, before Beethoven allows the movement to flow normally. Certain moments recall the first movement, including the fine, long cello solo, later moving to the violin, that brings back the main theme. The coda - a further harmonic adventure, moving as far away as B flat minor - uses *pizzicato* strings in the most delightful way, and overall the movement has an air of light-headed unreality to dissipate the nightmare of the Largo.

The second Trio, in E flat, has - like the second Trio of opus 1 - been traditionally undervalued though it is a favourite of many musicians. Descriptions constantly use the word “subtle”, and it is one of his most Mozartian pieces, though Mozart re-imagined in terms of Beethoven’s greatly expanded tonal resources, as well as the extended range of Beethoven’s piano which now reaches to high F, a whole octave higher than his piano in 1794. Beethoven seizes joyfully on these new high notes, drawing celestially sparkling sonorities especially in the finale. All four movements are in the major key, running an unusual course from E flat to C to A flat before returning to E flat. The Trio is sunny and genial throughout: the second movement, in Haydn’s favourite double variations form, has its necessary *alternativo* in the tonic minor, but this has none of the drama or tragedy normally associated with C minor in Beethoven - at most it has a sort of comic grumpiness. The warm, singing third movement is in triple time and at times almost suggests a waltz; Schubert seems just around the corner. The Finale is a boisterous Allegro full of rough good humour, contrapuntally alive, formally complex yet immediately communicative. The piano part is a tour de force, reminding us that the “Emperor” Concerto, in the same key of E flat, was composed the next year.

With the celebrated “Archduke” Trio op 97, composed two years later in 1811, we reach the summit of Beethoven’s piano trio oeuvre. Indeed it has a status almost as THE piano trio, just as the “Kreutzer” is THE violin sonata. Famous enough to have a much-loved London wine bar named after it, it is one of those works that seem to have always existed. And yet - it is, dare I say it, not a work that is particularly easy to warm to. Perhaps it is almost too stately in its perfection. At the very zenith of his second-period mastery, could Beethoven have become the tiniest bit complacent? It seems sacrilegious to suggest it, but very shortly afterwards - for various reasons, not only spiritual - he withdrew into himself, entering a period where his deafness finally became almost total and the compositions largely dried up. When he did find his voice again, it was with the profound, inward-looking, philosophical masterpieces of his third period, far removed from the opulent lushness of the Archduke.

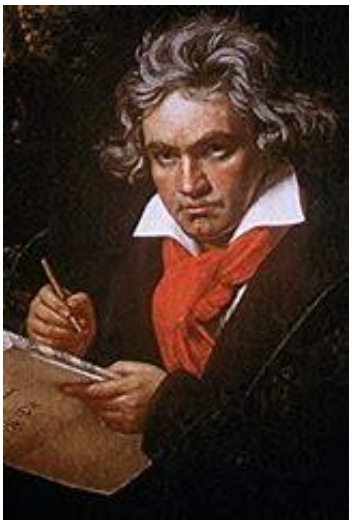
In this sense, then, the Archduke represents a *ne plus ultra,* a serene and masterly distillation of all the techniques of the second period since the Eroica Symphony. But something personal is lacking and the real Beethoven seems to be hiding behind his own mastery. The one exception is the extended development after the variations of the slow movement (placed third, as in the 9th Symphony and Hammerklavier Sonata): it would be churlish of me to deny that this one of Beethoven’s most sublime and moving moments.

The nickname is for Archduke Rudolph of Austria, Beethoven's pupil and later friend and greatest patron: he was also the dedicatee of the Hammerklavier Sonata, the Missa Solemnis, the Fourth and "Emperor" Piano Concertos and the Grosse Fuge - not a bad return on investment! A full performance, with all repeats, can last 45 minutes, making it one of Beethoven's longest instrumental works.

The first movement, a leisurely Allegro moderato, remains predominantly lyrical and unfolds in long paragraphs. Unusually the whole second group is in the submediant key of G major, eliciting a special warmth from the strings. The development section is notable for an extended passage where both strings play *pizzicato.* Beethoven's inner ear for balance is infallible - thankfully the days are gone when some writers ascribed some of Beethoven's more experimental sonorities to his deafness. The texture is more often *concertante,* the strings and piano forming two distinct units, rather than the more fluid, contrapuntal and chamber music-like textures of the opus 70 Trios.

The Scherzo opens with the simplest theme imaginable, an upward scale of B flat in the cello. Good humoured rather than nervously intense, there is some beautifully warm writing for the strings. The Trio, beginning in chromatically groping B flat minor gloom, explodes into a riotous waltz-like passage that anticipates Weber's "Invitation to the Dance", in the same key of D flat, of eight years later. The entire Scherzo and Trio are repeated, a scheme Beethoven reserved for his grandest works.

The Andante cantabile slow movement shifts to the warm key of D major and is a set of variations on one of Beethoven's most beautiful themes, stated by the piano and taken up by the strings. Three variations of increasing animation are succeeded by a slower variation, then comes the development over a long series of shifting chords leading to that magical cello phrase and a touching coda. The final chord is not the expected tonic but a sudden dominant 7th on B flat: this leads straight into the boisterous Allegro moderato finale, full of high spirits. Perhaps rather too much of the material is given to the piano, but Beethoven makes up for this in his Presto coda with some delightful scampering passages for the strings.



Beethoven's final work for piano trio is the comic, poker-faced set of Variations, op 121a, on "Ich bin der Schneider Kakadu" (I am the tailor Kakadu), an aria from a long forgotten Singspiel. Largely composed in the 1790s, Beethoven revised them in 1816, adding a very long, mock-tragic Introduction and an extended coda. The cheerful tune has a wonderful air of anti-climax after the endless introduction. The variations are well varied, each instrument having its own solo, with variation 7 dispensing entirely with the piano. There remains only the Variations in E flat op 44, an early work despite its opus number, another early and insignificant E flat Trio WoO38, and the much more interesting Allegretto in B flat WoO39 of 1812, composed for the ten-year old daughter of his friend Antonie Brentano who has been advanced as a possible candidate for the "Immortal Beloved". This would explain its unusual warmth and sweetness, Beethoven going so far as to add fingering to help the child with her preparation.

And so we have a body of chamber music, if not quite as substantial as the string quartets, at least on a par with the violin and cello sonatas, with three mature masterpieces and the special distinction, in opus 1, of announcing the career of one of the towering figures in Western music. Beethoven set the bar high, inspiring later composers to some of their finest chamber music: Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Brahms, Tchaikovsky and Ravel among others. Perhaps only the Ravel - the ultimate piano trio -- achieves as much as Beethoven in his greatest trios.

Darragh Morgan writes about his new recording

Morton Feldman 'For John Cage' for Violin and Piano with John Tilbury, piano
Diatribe records DIACD025 released on 27 February 2020

Darragh Morgan and John Tilbury

The story of how Morton Feldman and John Cage first met has now become elevated to the status of legendary musical folklore. During a 1950 New York Philharmonic performance of Webern's Symphony Op. 21, Feldman decided to leave the concert at the interval. In the lobby he met Cage. As Cage says, "we both walked out of a Philharmonic concert in which Webern had just been played, and we shared the desire not to hear anything else because we had been so deeply moved." It was the beginning of a deep friendship that was to influence both their respective creative spirits. Morton Feldman became a friend, flatmate and student of John Cage.

Feldman's interest in visual art strongly influenced his early works, and by the 1970s he was fascinated by handmade weaving techniques – musical symmetry literally referenced in his work 'Crippled Symmetry'. Feldman wrote "For me, stasis, scale, and pattern have put the whole question of symmetry and asymmetry in abeyance." In his other late violin and piano work 'Spring of Chosroes' from 1977, the title in fact directly refers to the name of a carpet, the spring carpet made for Sassanian King Chosroes I, whose dynasty ruled the Persian Empire from AD 211 – 651.

Violinist and dedicatee Paul Zukofsky writing to Morton Feldman stated "I can tell you that when playing your recent music, I feel very close to those rug-makers working away – first the border, the same stitch so many times, now a different strand, fewer times, now we start a pattern, it's finished, a background... the rug making explanation helps account for the tiny variations you play with in timing and intonation – the equivalent of the irregularities in a hand-sewn rug."

Feldman said of 'For John Cage' "it's a little piece for violin and piano but it doesn't quit." It exists as a plateau of existential sound, pianissimo with almost entirely still gestures throughout.

I was first introduced to the music of Morton Feldman nearly 25 years ago by Paul Zukovsky who was then my musical mentor and who had premiered 'For John Cage'. This close connection to Feldman's art had a profound effect on me. I learnt much from my musical encounters with Zukofsky about Feldman's use of mean-tone intonation and the obvious influence of this on the expressivity of his string writing, but it was only when I met pianist John Tilbury and had conversations with composers who knew Feldman personally – Chris Newman and Howard Skempton – that I felt I was really beginning to understand his musical personality.

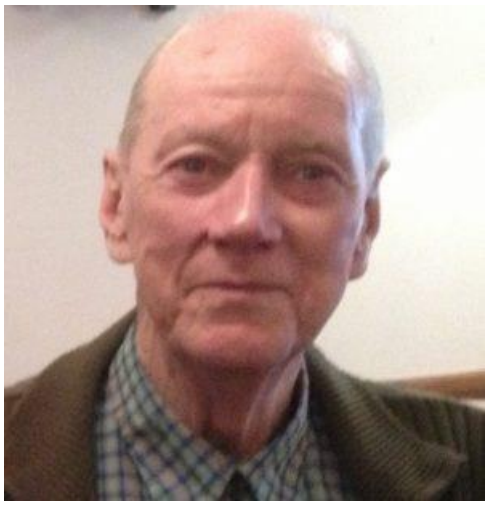
I was already experimenting with using a baroque bow in performances of certain music by Cage and Feldman. The ethereal tone these more curved and lighter/shorter bows can produce seemed the most natural tool for conveying the desired articulation, and also Feldman's constant wish and marking in his late scores that every gesture should dissipate naturally with an upwards and downwards sotto voce expressive marking.

I abstain from any use of vibrato as this hugely helps with my vision of the types of nuance and timbral purity this piece requires and of course this complements John Tilbury's immaculate pianistic touch. To close, here is a quote by Cornelius Cardew from the early 1960s that evokes wonderfully the atmosphere created in 'For John Cage'.

"Almost all of Feldman's music is slow and soft. Only at first sight is this a limitation. I see it rather as a narrow door, to whose dimensions one has to adapt oneself (as in 'Alice in Wonderland') before one can pass through it into the state of being that is expressed in Feldman's music. Only when one has become accustomed to the dimness of light can one begin to perceive the richness and variety of colour which is the material of the music. When one has passed through the narrow door and got accustomed to the dim light, one realises the range of his imagination and the significant differences that distinguish one piece from another...

Feldman sees the sounds as reverberating endlessly, never getting lost, changing their resonances as they die away, or rather do not die away, but recede from our ears, and soft because softness is compelling, because an insidious invasion of our senses is more effective than a frontal attack, because our ears must strain to catch the music, they must become more sensitive before they perceive the world of sound in which his music takes place."

John Carmichael OAM



In our last Newsletter we were delighted to welcome the distinguished Australian pianist and composer **John Carmichael OAM** as a member. John studied in Melbourne before moving to Paris to study with Marcel Ciampi, also studying with Arthur Benjamin and Anthony Milner. Regular readers of our Newsletters will know that we frequently cover health issues relating to musicians so we were interested to learn that in addition to his performances as pianist, John was a pioneer in music therapy. He developed music teaching and music appreciation projects at Stoke Mandeville and Netherden Mental Hospitals and also worked for the Council of Music Therapy in London.

As a composer, his work has been widely recorded including his Flute Concerto (James Galway) and Trumpet Concerto (John Wallace and the BBC Scottish Symphony Overture) and several recordings of his piano music.

Concentration on melodic and thematic development within well-wrought musical structures has always been a feature of Carmichael's music. In 2007 on the release of the ABC Classics CD Solo Flights, a complete recording by Antony Gray of Carmichael's music for solo piano, it was selected as CD of the Week on the ABC network and was reviewed in the Classic FM Magazine in the UK as '77 minutes of enchanting music', while Rob Barnett in Classical Music on the Web, reviewing the CD Sea Changes, remarked that Carmichael is 'completely serious in his pursuit of discovery in melody – blissfully accessible and often sheerly beautiful'.

His Piano Concerto no 2 received its UK première on January 17 2020 by the St Paul's Sinfonia, with Antony Gray, the dedicatee, as soloist. His recently written Piano Trio will receive its first performance at the Deal Festival 2021 by the Primavera Ensemble. In the Queen's Birthday Honours List in 2011, John was awarded the OAM (Medal of the Order of Australia) *'for services to the arts as concert pianist and composer.'*

The Valencia Baryton Project

Editor's note: As the many varied articles contained in our Newsletters show, music and musicians prove to be endlessly fascinating to me! Recently I have been in touch with the multi-talented double bass player Matthew Baker who is Professor of Double Bass at Berklee College of Music, Valencia and I made the interesting discovery that he is involved in a project with a trio featuring the baryton. Matthew has kindly provided me with details which I am pleased to share with you here.

The project

String trios with four instruments? A harpsichord hiding behind the cello? The Valencia Baryton Project has dedicated itself to the performance of music of the ancient and little-known instrument, the baryton. Played by only a handful of people worldwide, the instrument is a cross between a viola da gamba and a lirone, and was considered the pinnacle of aristocratic instruments of the 18th century. Today, the baryton gives the traditional string trio an entirely new dimension. The Valencia Baryton Project was formed by colleagues from the opera of the Palau de les Arts in Valencia, Spain with the vision of performing the nearly 160 works written by Franz Joseph Haydn in various formations with the baryton. At the heart of the ensemble is the traditional formation in trio - baryton, viola and violoncello - for which Haydn wrote 126 works of outstanding beauty during his time as the court composer for the Prince Esterhazy of Austria. Other works written for the baryton include those by Tomasini, and the instrument was used in many baroque arias from composers including Handel, Purcell and Dowland. The project has been well received worldwide and has been signed by Naxos for their catalogue's first baryton CD which will be released in 2021.

In the beginning

Matthew shares with us how the project began. "In 2004 I was in a double bass and cello duo based in Bournemouth and I did a transcription of the Haydn baryton duos that worked very nicely for the duo. However, I really wanted to hear how the 'pizzicato' part would have sounded on the back strings and my interest was piqued. Then in 2007, I had to put together a trio of violin, viola and double bass and I transcribed some of the trios. They were beautiful and that continued to keep the spark of interest burning. In 2017, my wife gave me a present which was a train ticket and money for a lesson with the only baryton player in Spain, Jose Manuel Hernandez, who lived outside of Madrid. I thought a lesson would be fun, but as it's reputed to be the most difficult western string instrument in existence, I figured that would be the end of my interest. I was hooked within minutes. Jose Manuel was actually retiring from baryton playing. As the only luthiers that could make one had a 2 year waiting list due to other exotic instrument commissions, Jose Manuel offered to sell me his instrument. I couldn't afford it but a very generous sponsor offered to buy it and lend it to me and so it all began. By August of 2018 I performed my first concert and I actually kind of took to the 'most difficult string instrument' as if I'd been playing it for years. After doing a promo video in late 2018, Naxos offered me a recording contract, the trio began to take form and concerts were appearing. We now have tours booked in Costa Rica, USA, France, Spain, and tours taking shape in the UK, New Zealand, and Mexico. I couldn't believe how quickly it all evolved but have finally found 'my' instrument - although I am still very much a double bassist as well!"

The Instrument and the music written for it

"The instrument I play is a classical baryton, which came into use in the mid- 18th century. It was made by Owen Morse-Brown of maple wood in 2006. The baryon itself is attributed to an invention of the court of King James I where it was used to accompany singers as well as a solo instrument. This instrument usually had 16 strings in the back which allowed it a degree of chromaticism. It has a much more subdued sound than the baryton I play and was considered only an instrument for solo or accompanying another singer or two

After some years it started to fall into disuse but was resurrected in central Europe, mainly the Austrian Hungarian Empire and Germany. This new incarnation was the classical baryton which had 10 strings in the back tuned to a D major scale with an extra 5th on the bottom and 9th on the top. There is a practice for retuning strings if necessary but it is not done normally.

Haydn began to write (and indeed had to learn the instrument rapidly) for the baryton at the request of Prince Esterhazy, who was an amateur baryton player. As this was at the beginning of his time in the Esterhazy court, it was almost Haydn's 'trial' to come up with trios that the Prince would appreciate. Had these trios not been so well received, we would have a very different musical scene than we do today as this may well have spelt the end of Haydn's time in the Esterhazy court, which was the beginning of his renown as a composer. The opening trios of his 126 trios that he wrote are, considering his level of maturity and being unfamiliar with the instrument, absolute masterpieces. It has been speculated that he also used his baryton trio writing as the groundwork for his close string part writing that would become one of his greatest strengths in his symphonies. There are numerous similarities both in content and form.

Throughout the 126 trios, Haydn began barely using the back strings - treating them as resonant strings instead. But as both he and the prince became more familiar with the instrument (which is really a misshapen viol with lots of extra strings and a very flat bridge) you can see his use of back string playing blossom, beginning in the 40s. However, by the 80s Haydn's style had become more looking forward into pure classicism and he abandoned the back strings in many of the latter trios. Beyond his compositions for trio, Haydn wrote numerous other works but many of these works were lost in the fire at the Esterhazy Palace near the beginning of the 19th century and the 126 trios only exist because a copyist had been charged with cataloguing the collection and was only partially through it by the time this happened.

It's hard to know, but from what I can gather there are fewer than 30 professional barytonists in the world. Jeremy Brooker, in Canterbury, is one of the greats of the older generation, although now he is looking more to the baroque baryton as well as numerous other instruments, and less at the Haydn works. He and I have worked on the duos and look forward to playing them in concert at some point soon. Modern composers have written for the instrument although nothing has been written that has made a great impact on the modern music scene. In late 2019, I performed what was the first ever baryton jazz concert with french pianist Baptiste Bailly and we have gone on to record a few tracks of baryton jazz, with and without electronic music added. It's a project that is on a slow burn as I have no rush to go out and start something new while still pushing my classical trio but it has had wonderful reception and before the pandemic cancelled everything we had a very busy concert schedule for 3 months throughout Spain. I hope to recover that soon and keep pushing boundaries. "

© Matthew Baker 2020 **www.bakerbass.com/valencia-baryton-project** **photos: Alex Baker**

Past Sounds - a new book by Gillian Perrin

I am delighted to have been offered space in this Newsletter to introduce my forthcoming book about music for piano trio, *Past Sounds*, to members of the Piano Trio Society. (Coronavirus pandemic permitting, it is due for publication later this year.)

Beginning at school, where I was taught by a former pupil of the renowned musical analyst Donald Francis Tovey, I have had a lifelong interest in the formal structures of classical music: I firmly believe that an understanding of musical structure can immeasurably deepen enjoyment. Moreover I believe that one of the greatest of all musical structures - the sonata idea - is woefully unfamiliar to many concertgoers. My book therefore aims to put a spotlight on the repertoire for the piano trio as a beautiful but often neglected area of sonata literature.

I follow the development of the sonata idea in the piano trio, tracing a trajectory from the trio's burgeoning as domestic music for amateurs in the 18th century, through its early flowering in the High Classical period, and on to its flourishing on the concert platform as a Romantic display piece; the final chapters describe 20th-century trios against the background of the modern era. Thus many of the fine - and often little-known - sonata works in the piano trio repertoire (as well as others by not-so-familiar composers) are placed in context as part of the story of one of the great formal archetypes of the western musical tradition.

Written for performers and music students of all ages, as well as for general music-loving readers, this is not a textbook, but an unfolding narrative which presents these works for piano trio also against their cultural background: it incorporates illuminating detours into contemporary worlds of literature, philosophical writing and the fine arts.

The book includes detailed analyses of selected sonata works in text boxes, useful for performers and students, as well as for general readers who may return to it as a handbook for subsequent listening. Thematic material is presented throughout in notated music examples; to broaden the book's accessibility for the general reader, these will also be available as audio-clips on a companion website.

Photo: Imagery © Anna McCarthy Photography www.annamccarthy.com

Issues of Note

I hope this Newsletter will bring some interesting reading to our members and friends during lockdown and I would like to thank all the contributors for their articles. These have involved much care and research which I am sure you will all appreciate. We hope to continue looking at Beethoven's music for violin and piano and cello and piano in the next issue and welcome any contribution on these topics. Any further articles are also much appreciated.

We would like to extend a warm welcome to **Julian Jacobson**, who is our latest member and has already made a major contribution in this issue for which we are extremely grateful. We will be including further details about his distinguished career in a subsequent Newsletter. We are pleased to welcome also **Gillian Perrin a**nd look forward to the publication of her new book, details of which we will bring you in due course. As we went to press we have just received confirmation that **David Owen-Norris** has accepted our invitation to become a Vice President of the Society. We are delighted to welcome him and will include further information in our next issue.

Christine Talbot-Cooper, Editor