NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NO 48 AUTUMN 2020

Charity number 1067071

Welcome to our new Vice Presidents

The Trustees are delighted to announce the addition of three new Vice Presidents over recent months and we extend a warm welcome to them and include further details on page 2

Michael Bochmann MBE

Robert Max

Michael Bochmann MBE is well known to our members for his inspirational teaching as well as acting on the Jury for our Intercollegiate Piano Trio Competition. However these form a small part of a very active musical life

Robert Max is a member of the Barbican Piano Trio which has been a member of our Society since its earliest days. Robert has made numerous contributions to our work, whether teaching, performing, contributing to our Newsletter or giving us the benefit of his advice.

David Owen Norris

David Owen Norris is widely known as pianist, broadcaster and composer and supported one of our early Piano Trio Days. In addition to solo recitals on both modern and historic instruments he is a familiar face on BBC television and is Professor of Musical Performance at the University of Southampton.

Piano Trio Day 2021 - Sunday 7 March

Although life is very uncertain at present we hope to continue with our popular Piano Trio Days and have provisionally booked **Clarendon Muse, Watford for Sunday 7 March** next year. Tutors will be **Susie Meszaros, Julian Jacobson and Tim Gill.** Further details to follow but please make a note of the date!

Our **AGM will almost certainly have to take place via Zoom on Monday 15 February at 3.00pm.** More details to follow but we welcome your participation!

In this issue

We are continuing our articles on the chamber works of Beethoven and are delighted that these have been written by two distinguished guest authors, Julian Haylock and Robin Michael.

Editor and Administrator
Christine Talbot-Cooper who welcomes articles and can be contacted on:
01242 620736 or info@pianotriosociety.org.uk

Vice Presidents of the Piano Trio Society

Since our Society was founded in 1995 we have been pleased to have **Peter Frankl** as our President. The two existing Vice Presidents, **Howard Blake OBE** and **Christine Talbot-Cooper**, have now been joined by three further Vice Presidents and we take this opportunity to thank them for their interest and support.

Cellist **Robert Max** has long been a member of the Society through the Barbican Piano Trio and has made many contributions over the years, with articles for the Newsletter, several performances at our events, acting as a Tutor at Piano Trio Day and as Chairman of the Jury for our first Intercollegiate Piano Trio Competition. Robert enjoys a career that weaves together the threads of solo performance, chamber music, conducting and teaching. He has given recitals throughout the UK, Europe, Russia and the USA and performed concertos with the BBC Concert Orchestra, London Mozart Players, English Sinfonia, Arad Philharmonic, Wren Orchestra, Kazakh State Symphony Orchestra, Covent Garden Chamber Orchestra and many others. Robert has been the cellist of the Barbican Piano Trio for thirty years, is an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music where he has taught at the Junior Academy since 1992, and has coached chamber music at MusicWorks since its inception in 2001. He is an Honorary Professor of the Rachmaninov Institute in Tambov (Russia), a member of the International Board of Governors of the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance, President of the North London Festival of Music, Drama and Dance and artistic director of the Frinton Festival. Robert is the principal cellist of the London Chamber Orchestra, conducts the Oxford Symphony Orchestra and the North London Symphony Orchestra and plays a Stradivarius cello dating from 1726 known as the “Comte de Saveuse”.

Michael Bochmann MBE has been a hugely influential tutor at several of our Piano Trio Days. As a student with Frederick Grinke at the Royal Academy of Music, Michael was a finalist and winner of the British Prize in the 1972 Carl Flesch International Violin Competition. A year later, he was a prize winner in the Jacques Thibaud Competition in Paris. Soon after this he made his first solo broadcasts for the BBC. At this time he also received lessons from Henryk Szeryng and Sandor Vegh. Since the early 1970s, Michael has made a significant contribution to the world of classical music through performances, media and education. His passion is to speak directly through the language of music and he has featured extensively in the media, producing over 50 recordings with the BBC in his work with the Bochmann Quartet, as concert master of the English String Orchestra and Orchestra Pro Anima and as a soloist. In 1990 he toured the U.S. and Canada, partnering Sir Yehudi Menuhin in Bach’s Double Violin Concerto. His work with Water City Music at the Tower of London, which, in 2017 included 50 schools, has led to a series of ‘Oasis’ concerts at St George the Martyr Southwark and Charlton House Greenwich. Michael has passionate beliefs about the way in which music is thought of in the present day and this has led him to develop various educational projects. These include setting up several series of masterclasses and since 1994, he has coached young professional quartets and string players on intensive residential courses held at his home. In 2015 he was awarded an MBE in the Queen’s birthday honours list for his services to music

David Owen Norris has played concertos all over North America and Australia, along with several appearances in the BBC Proms. A television programme entirely devoted to his work on the Elgar Piano Concerto, ending with a spectacular live performance of the whole work, has been shown frequently. He has recorded all Elgar's piano music, and last year he recorded his own *Piano Concerto in C* with the BBC Concert Orchestra. David also plays early pianos. His discovery that the World's First Piano Concertos were written around 1770 in London for the tiny square piano led to a complete reconsideration of that instrument, with an epoch-making recording, and concerto tours of Britain, Europe and America.

David Owen Norris has been a familiar face on music television since 1990, when he presented *The Real Thing?: Questions of Authenticity* on BBC2. His analysis of *Jerusalem* in the Prince of Wales's programme on Sir Hubert Parry in 2011 his *Chord of the Week* for BBC Proms, together with *Perfect Pianists*, which he presented from Chopin's Pleyel piano, have all proved hugely popular as have his appearances on Radio 3 and Radio 4.

David is Professor of Musical Performance at the University of Southampton, and Visiting Professor at the Royal College of Music and at the Royal Northern College of Music. He became a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists (by examination) at the age of nineteen. He was elected one of the three hundred Fellows of the Royal Academy of Music at the age of twenty-nine, and was recently elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London. He is an Honorary Fellow of Keble College, Oxford.

BAPAM continues its valuable work

The work of BAPAM has become increasingly important during the many months in which the arts have been badly affected by Covid. BAPAM continues with its personal consultations which are done online plus there have been webinars on various topics including **"**COVID-19 in Performing Arts – Impact, Challenges, Mitigations & Return To Normal" which took place on 14 October.

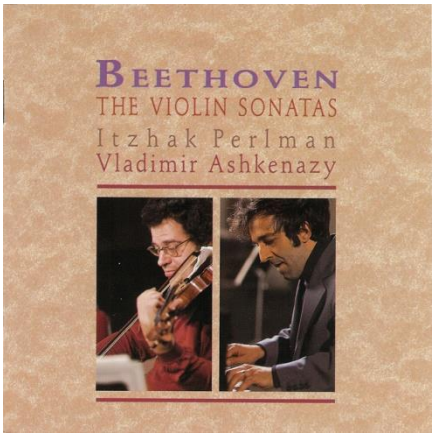
BAPAM training events are a key resource for healthcare and education professionals which explore key topics in current performing arts medicine practice and share unique insights into performance health and wellbeing. The approach is multidisciplinary: physiological and psychological care, preventing as well as treating problems, supporting healthy and sustainable creative practice.

Through 2020/21, they are delivering a series of monthly CPD webinars, expanding training provision and enabling wider access to a flexible ongoing programme. Sessions are held on the last Wednesday of the month from 7pm. The first session, **Lockdown Health of Performance Professionals**, takes place on October 28 at 7pm. The full programme for this event has now been published. All events in the series are open for booking, details of which can be found on their website **www.bapam.org.uk**

In addition, BAPAM worked with Dr Pippa Wheble to put on a weekly hour-long **Community Drop-in** over 14 weeks at which there were 170 attendances. "We booked guest speakers to share their expertise alongside Pippa. It was a space for artists who wanted to develop healthy practice, to share their progress with the **healthy practice diary** and learn new skills. The online community aimed to enable artists to collaborate and share in an open and safe way, their experience of the lockdown and what it has meant to them. Feedback from the group demonstrated that participants had been able to embed healthy practice in their daily routine and were very positive about being able to continue this. A quote from one of the participants brought home the value of this work, and a new set of sessions will start in November."

"This felt like a gift when the world was ending"

Julian Haylock explores the Violin Sonatas of Beethoven



Few of Beethoven's works have benefitted so radically from new approaches to interpretative semantics and playing styles than his ten sonatas for piano *with* violin. Until fairly recently, these trailblazing masterworks were unquestioningly viewed and played as part of the 19th-century Romantic tradition - with luxurious tone, generous vibrato, cantabile phrasing and virtuoso temperament the order of the day. Most significantly, and despite overwhelming musical evidence written into the scores themselves, they tended to be played as though the *violin* was the principal musical protagonist. In a revealing piece of footage captured by legendary filmmaker Christopher Nupen in the mid-1970s, we see Itzhak Perlman and Vladimir Ashkenazy listening back to recorded takes from their renowned sonata series for Decca. Perlman's face is a picture as his concerns grow, until he can stand it no longer – from his point of view, despite his gloriously full-throated sonority and Decca's characteristically opulent engineering, the violin should be even louder!

Yet the late-18th century musical world into which Beethoven's first set of three 'violin' sonatas op.12 was born could not even have conceived of the semantic gear-change that would result in later classics of the genre from Brahms, Fauré, Franck and Richard Strauss. Mozart's keyboard and violin sonatas were the current model, and although to our modern ears Beethoven appears do little (at least initially) to upset the Classical status quo, a review that appeared in the 5 June 1799 edition of the highly influential *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, speaks mountains: 'It is undeniable that Herr Beethoven goes his own way; but what a bizarre and painful way it is! ...If one considers this music carefully, one finds only a mass of material without good method; obstinacy in which one feels little interest, a striving after unusual modulations, a contempt of normal relationships, and a heaping up of difficulty upon difficulty, which makes one lose all patience and pleasure.' And this was only the beginning – just four years' later, Beethoven produced his trailblazing 'Kreutzer' Sonata (no.9).

Despite the fact the violin enjoys an enhanced musical profile in op.12 compared to the majority of Mozart's and Haydn's sonatas, there is no mistaking the piano's leading role, nor the keyboard origins of Beethoven's musical thinking. Although the composer had received advanced tuition on the violin during his student days in Bonn, his thematic outlines and figurations are unashamedly pianistic in origin. Time and again – as witness the popular 'Spring' Sonata (no.5), as its opening movement's development section gets underway - one encounters motific patterns that fall intuitively under a pianist's five digits, but are slightly awkward for a violinist's available four. Beethoven struggled to accommodate the violin's natural penchant for melodic inspiration as compared to the piano's thematic inclinations, and confessed to never feeling entirely comfortable offsetting the two instruments' divergent sonic profiles.

Yet what immediately strikes the listener is the insatiable exuberance of Beethoven's invention, confirming his burgeoning reputation in Viennese musical circles as a musical firebrand. 'Beethoven knew how to produce an effect upon every hearer, so that frequently not an eye remained dry, while many would break out into loud sobs,' recalled his pupil Carl Czerny at this time. To see the young lion in full flow was an awesome spectacle. The relatively primitive pianos of the time literally buckled under the relentless pressure exerted by his groundbreaking scores. In mid-performance hapless piano technicians would feverishly attempt to prize away broken strings and hammers while Beethoven simply kept on going, pulverising the instrument into submission. Here, at last, was someone completely in tune with the mood of the times. For centuries music had lagged behind the other arts, but spurred on by Beethoven's iron-clad will, it found itself right at the cutting edge of social change.

All three of the op.12 sonatas are cast in three movements, with a light-hearted rondo to finish. Yet within such apparently conventional formal guidelines, Beethoven emerges as thoroughly *un*conventional. In the opening *Allegro con brio* of no.1, for example, the composer's natural exuberance almost gets the better of him as each new musical idea spills over into the next. It was also a bold step to feature a central theme and variations in place of the customary *andante* or *adagio* slow movement, while the rondo finale exudes an irrepressible sense of rollicking high spirits and thigh-slapping good humour that appears to emanate from the biergarten.

The outer movements of no.2 also brim over with light-hearted gestures for the special appreciation of the musical cognoscenti, as witness the very opening in which the violinist accompanies with a figuration that clearly belongs to the left hand of the piano - Beethoven then rectifies the 'error' by recasting the music accordingly. No.3 is on a grander scale, cast in the composer's most imperiously commanding key of E flat major, complete with a piano part of virtuoso elan - at times in the outer movements, one can almost sense the 'Emperor' Concerto waiting in the wings.

Beethoven often worked on highly contrasted pieces at the same time, as if to help counterbalance their emotional content. Keen to emphasise the point, he originally intended publishing his next two violin sonatas – op.23 in A minor and op.24 in F, the so-called 'Spring' – together, with the same opus number. It was an engraver's error that resulted in them appearing separately in 1801 - Beethoven was understandably livid at the time. He reserved the key of A minor for some of his most intensely introspective utterances, as witness the outer movements of op.23 – the opening presto possesses an overwhelming sense of forward momentum and structural inevitability, while the finale is a moto perpetuo of restless energy and nervous excitement. Beethoven offsets these insatiable outbursts of *sturm und drang* with a central *Andante scherzoso*, whose gentle tread and easy charm appear to breathe the air of a different planet.

The 'Spring' Sonata op.24 is one of only three Beethoven violin sonatas with four movements (the others being Op. 30 No. 2 in C minor and Op. 96 in G). However, the presence of an extra scherzo movement barely makes itself felt in the case of op.24, as its fleet-fingered activity is over in little more than a minute. Yet perhaps the most striking aspect of the sonata is its overall sense of contentedness, a rare quality in Beethoven's music which led one early commentator to liken the opening movement to 'the first flowerings of Spring'.

The three Op.30 violin sonatas (nos.6-8) were completed during a critical period in Beethoven's life. During the spring of 1802, he took an extended break at Heiligenstadt, a small village just outside Vienna, and it was here during the summer months he completed his Second Symphony, the op.33 Bagatelles for solo piano, the op.31 piano sonatas, and the op.30 violin sonatas, dedicated to Tsar Alexander I of Russia. By now, the appalling realisation he was becoming deaf looked set to overwhelm him. His darkest thoughts at this time can be found in the so-called Heiligenstadt Testament, in which he admits having contemplated suicide. Most poignant of all is an extract from a letter to his friend Franz Wegener: 'How can I, a musician, say to people "I am deaf"? I shall, if I can, defy this fate, even though there will be times when I shall be the unhappiest of God's creatures...I live only in music.'

Remarkably, it was around this time that Beethoven put the finishing touches to the last sonata of the op.30 set (no.8 in G major), one of the most irrepressibly light-hearted works he ever penned. Indeed, the op.30 sonatas provide a fascinating psychological mapping of Beethoven's state of mind at this time. The A major (no.6) poignantly radiates lyrical contentment through a veil of tears – even the most apparently carefree of gestures carry an unmistakable emotional weight. Beethoven turns the coin over for the Seventh Sonata in his most anguished key of C minor, although even here things are far from plain sailing, as the opening movement unconventionally spends much of its time in the major mode. Beethoven's continuing struggles with his churning emotions is felt strikingly in the determinedly light-hearted scherzo, whose sunny

disposition he felt so unsure of that he considered leaving it out altogether. Yet on reflection, he found its knockabout humour provided such a welcome emotional release, he went even further with the outer movements of its successor, including a Keystone Cops moment when the opening two phrases are capped by a hilariously silly gesture from the violin.

Having let his hair down with op.30 no.3, Beethoven's music underwent a fundamental change, unleashing soundscapes of profound emotional complexity on a previously undreamed-of scale. He effectively rewrote the rulebook with two 1803 masterworks of unprecedented harmonic audacity, exhilarating rhythmic propulsion and fizzing, virtuoso propulsion – his Third 'Eroica' Symphony and Ninth 'Kreutzer' Violin Sonata, op.47.

The first two movements of the sonata were composed specifically for a forthcoming recital to be given by the celebrated Afro-European violinist George Bridgetower (1778-1860) in Vienna. With only two weeks to go, in desperation Beethoven incorporated a movement he had originally intended as the finale of the Sixth Sonata (also in A major). Beethoven was apparently quite taken with Bridgetower's playing, and the two appear to have hit it off personally, as the original, somewhat rascally dedication illustrates: 'Mulattic sonata. Composed for the mulatto Bridgetower, great lunatic and mulattic composer.' Sadly, the two later fell out over a girl (nothing changes!) and Beethoven subsequently withdrew the dedication, awarding it instead to the French virtuoso, Rodolph Kreutzer (1766-1831), who never played it and appears to have remained entirely unaware of the honour Beethoven had bestowed upon him.

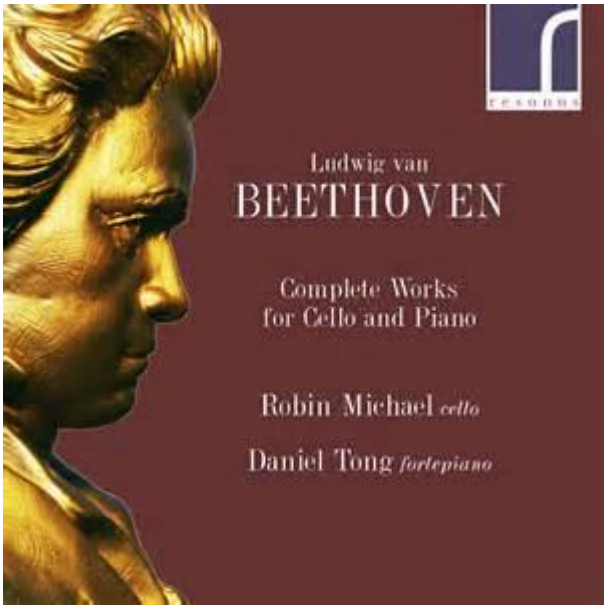
Of all the violin sonatas, the 'Kreutzer' is the most all-encompassing, not just as a technical level, but semantically too. Here, Beethoven goes way beyond what was normally expected of a sonata violinist and duo pianist at the turn of the 19th century. For today's players, the challenge is to recreate the 'shock of the new', even when employing a modern violin set-up and the purring sophistication of a Steinway grand. In this work above all, after experiencing the probing, take-nothing-for-granted, bracingly fresh insights of, say, Alina Ibragimova/Cédric Tiberghien and Chloë Hanslip/Danny Driver on disc, the indomitable, impassioned, concert-hall projection of classic accounts from the likes of Yehudi Menuhin/Wilhelm Kempff and Isaac Stern/Eugene Istomin begin to feel just a tad 'safe', for all their formidable expertise.

Whereas Beethoven's piano sonatas (especially), string quartets and symphonies provide useful barometers for tracing his stylistic development, the first nine violin sonatas appeared during a mere six-year period (1797-1803), leaving just the tenth and final sonata in G op.96 (1812) to point the way forward to the profound musical achievements of his later years. Like the 'Kreutzer', op.96 was composed for a touring violinist of formidable reputation – Pierre Rode (1774-1830). 'In view of Rode's playing, I have had to give more thought to the composition of this [final] movement.' Beethoven explained in a letter to his devoted patron Archduke Rudolph (dedicatee of the op.96 sonata and 'Archduke' Piano Trio). 'In our finales we like to have some noisy passages, but R[ode] does not care for them, so I have been rather hampered.' Yet having devotedly shaped the sonata's musical proclivities to suit Rode's playing style, the Frenchman turned out to be well past his prime at the work's premiere on 29 December 1812, with the gifted Archduke as pianist (Beethoven's encroaching deafness had by now precluded him from public performance).

Whatever the work may have sounded like on that freezing December evening, we can be eternally grateful for Rode having inspired such a radiantly poetic work. One can sense Beethoven smoothing out his normally uncompromising thematic, rhythmic, dynamic and harmonic invention to create a gently cushioned soundworld that has few parallels in his output and is only interrupted briefly by the playful scherzo. The second and fourth movements are both modelled on variation form - although neither are labelled as such – in order to create a meditative flow of ideas, freed from the dramatic narrative of sonata structure. And herein lies Beethoven's most profound revolution of all, as he exchanges the furrowed-brow fist-pumping of his most imposing scores for a meditative poise and exquisite economy that appears to defy musical gravity.

Robin Michael puts the Beethoven Cello and Piano Sonatas into context

Our desire to categorise all things musical often leads to a distortion of how historical events came to pass. Beethoven is a prime example of this, and his cello sonatas perhaps present a chance to reassess and better explain the rather crude categorisation of his often so-called '3 periods'. Today, if we consider the canon of the cello/piano sonata repertoire, the op.5 sonatas are considered generally to be the first bona fide examples of this genre. Whilst still being published and presented as 'Sonates pour pianoforte et violoncelle', there is a true égalité between the instruments which had hitherto not been explored. This, however, in no way illustrates the context in which these works were conceived and realised.



Nowadays, cellists the world over lament the (perhaps apocryphal) anecdote of Bernhard Romberg, one of the most famous cellists of the day, refusing the offer of a cello concerto from Beethoven. But, in the context of the day, it would have been no more bizarre for Beethoven to have refused a piano concerto from, say, Romberg or another eminent cellist of the day. Romberg, the Duport brothers and Kraft (father and son) all wrote prodigiously for the instrument, partly of course out of necessity but also, more importantly, because the metier of a musician of the day was much more all-encompassing. Up until the founding of the Paris Conservatoire in 1795, which was the first designated institution where a violinist could go to learn to become 'a violinist' (and thus the process of categorisation began), composing and improvising were integral parts of every musician's apprenticeship and development. Beethoven was no different (apart from perhaps just how much he excelled at all these facets), and at the time of the premiere of the op.5 sonatas, he was primarily known as a virtuoso pianist with an astonishing propensity for improvisation. Beethoven was still, however, a fledgling composer, his op.1 set of trios having only been published the year before the 1796 op.5 sonatas. His evolution and development as a composer is fascinating in the context of these five sonatas and their places in the chronological overview of his output. Whilst the op.5 sonatas represent Beethoven at the cusp of his compositional career and an ever developing focus towards his first group of op.18 quartets and first symphony (these two forms being the benchmark calling card for any composer of the epoch wanting to make an impression), the final pair of sonatas op.102 reveal to us the mature composer who could no longer perform due to his deafness. The premiere of the Archduke trio op.97 which Beethoven himself played in, was his last public appearance and these sonatas, written just after, show how acutely his compositional aesthetic was changing with a rigorous distillation of ideas and sophistication of counterpoint that would manifest itself in works such as the ninth symphony and Missa Solemnis. One can only imagine the frisson of creative energy when Beethoven and Jean-Louis Duport came together

to introduce his op.5 sonatas for the first time at the court of Friedrich Wilhelm II in Berlin. Beethoven's prowess for dazzling virtuosic displays and party-piece improvising - taking well known themes from audience members and extemporising, seemingly at will - was widely known. Duport was also lauded for his technical mastery and command of the cello, Voltaire saying, 'Sir, you will make me believe in miracles, for I see that you can turn an ox into a nightingale!'. (I would argue that the ox would have appealed just as much as the nightingale to Beethoven and he certainly exploits both sides). Duport also wrote one of the most important treatises on cello playing. Relevant still today, it also gives us a snapshot of the style of cello playing that must have appealed so much to Beethoven and also influenced how he himself approached the writing of these sonatas in terms of cello technique.

Sadly for us, there are no first hand accounts of those Berlin concerts. In fact the only surviving anecdote of either of these works in Beethoven's hands comes from the composer himself when he played through the op.5 no.2 sonata with Dragonetti, the double bass virtuoso of the day, who was on a visit to Vienna. Beethoven, convinced that Dragonetti would falter when it came to the nimble string crossing arpeggios in the last movement, was astonished at the ease with which Dragonetti dispatched them! But despite this lack of a first hand account, Duport's influence even at a subliminal level can be seen in both of the op.5 sonatas. Whilst Beethoven might not have necessarily known many of Duport's own works, cellists of the day would have known these and assimilated them into the fabric of the cello playing style of the day. There is a great deal of similarity, for example, in Beethoven's writing for the cello in the sets of variations to some of Duport's own Études and Beethoven would have heard examples of these at musical soirées, most likely in the form of improvised pieces of the sort that Beethoven himself excelled. When comparing op.5 to the op.1 set of 3 trios, (the third of which Haydn famously warned was too shocking for the unsuspecting Viennese public) we don't see the same level of sophistication in the cello writing compared to the treatment of the violin, the cello still effectively taking a continuo role. But by op.5 we can see Beethoven's own assimilation of the developing schools of cello playing which were coming directly from the likes of Duport and Romberg.

There are other important historical aspects involving these sonatas. Friedrich Willhelm II himself played a large part in bringing Beethoven and Duport together in collaboration, as he was a keen amateur cellist himself and employed both the Duport brothers at his court. His invitation to Beethoven to present himself at court in Berlin obviously sowed the seeds for these ground breaking sonatas. Also, two years previously, there had been a production of Handel's Judas Maccabaeus in Vienna. Beethoven is thought to have been in attendance and this almost certainly must have been the inspiration for the set of variations bearing the oratorio's most famous theme.

This work is very much a companion piece to the op.5 sonatas and as well as highlighting Beethoven's own reverence for Handel's music (which became more and more important to him throughout his life), the variation form in Beethoven's hands, illuminates not only his compositional mastery even at a fledgling stage, but gives us an insight as to what the content to his extemporisations at these salon soirées might have been like. The extent and rigour with which he is able rework a simple melody in terms of contrasting characters, rhythmic meters and re-harmonisations is astounding and in all likelihood it would have been an even more unharnessed version of this, that his audience would have heard when he was improvising. The op.5 sonatas and variations also give lie to the often quoted opinion that at this point in his compositional development, Beethoven didn't consider the cello to have enough melodic properties to be able to hold a long sustained line, certainly in the way that a violin could. This has been suggested as a reason why there is no bona fide slow movement in any of the cello sonatas until op.102 no.2. but it seems clear that his desire to experiment with form was the motivating factor here. Both op.5 sonatas begin with slow introductions which then unfold into extended 'sonata form' allegros. Rather than being alternatives to a stand alone slow movement they are perhaps an example of a prototype that Beethoven was already considering using for his first two symphonies. The similarities with these early symphonies do not end

there. Beethoven begins the op.5 no.2 seemingly in the 'wrong' key. He gives us a theme that starts with a C major chord, the subdominant. He quickly cadences in the 'correct' key of G major but the harmonic wrong footing is very similar to how he opens his first symphony. Here, in the aforementioned slow introduction, he takes things even further by preceding the subdominant chord with its own dominant chord and takes us 'round the houses' harmonically before finally arriving at the home key of C major and the Allegro main body of the movement.

If the op.5 and op.102 sets of sonatas pave the way for much that was to come in those so-called periods, the op.69 sonata is the exception to the rule. Written very much at the height of his 'heroic' middle phase, Beethoven was in a period of intense creative productivity. Of all the masterpieces conceived around this time the op.69 sonata is most closely related to the two most polemic of symphonies, the fifth and sixth. Whilst the fifth symphony evokes so much of the French revolutionary fervour of the time with its musical quotations from Rouget De L'ilse's Hymne Dithyrambique and Cherubini's Hymne Du Panthean concerning liberté and the 'rights of man', the sixth symphony is his most celebrated paean to nature.

Where does op.69 fit into the context of these such juxtaposed works? Perhaps in some ways, the perfection of op.69 lies in the fact that is a perfect fusion of these two worlds. There are clear motivic similarities between both the symphonies and the sonata, perhaps most strikingly the bass line that accompanies the horn call of the scherzo of the 5th symphony. This bass line in fact becomes the melodic material for op.69's own scherzo, its subsequent trio highly reminiscent of the sixth symphony's own scherzo. Beethoven seems to combine both the revolutionary and the benevolence of the two symphonies in this one sonata - his two opposing symphonic worlds coexisting in a completely organic fashion.

It is also interesting to note in relation to the op.5 sonatas, how much Beethoven by this period had honed his process of motivic development. Whereas he uses sonata form in the op.5 no.1 sonata to give himself ample room to show his full plethora of skills and repertoire, with op.69 we can see his desire to distill and use form to give himself a different kind of freedom. In the first movement of op.69, the first utterance, a theme played by the cello alone, provides much of the motivic material for the whole movement. It has often been commented that the theme which permeates the development of this movement bears a striking similarity to the viola da gamba aria Es ist Vollbracht from Bach's St Matthew Passion. Whilst musically these themes, and what they represent emotionally in the context of both works, seem almost identical, in Beethoven's case this theme also comes directly from his opening phrase, a very obvious motivic variation of it, and further evidence of the concise nature of his narrative. Having said this, Beethoven's connection and devout deference to the music of Bach and Handel continued to grow along with his own compositional style. Like Schumann after him, counterpoint became increasingly important and as we arrive at the last two sonatas, op.102, these elements become more striking and we see how his ever developing inner ear was compensating for his complete lack of ability to hear music outwardly. On the face of it, like the early op.5 set, there may seem to be more that separates these two sonatas than unites them. However, on closer inspection it is striking how, despite the huge difference in form and architecture of the two, these two works inhabit each other's sound world in a way that makes it impossible to imagine one existing without the other.

Beethoven's curt manner with his friends and colleagues is often quoted and used to build a picture of his personality but his musical friendships were not only important but instructive in terms of realising the creative workings of his inner ear. His relationship with Frederick Linke, cellist of the Schuppanzigh Quartet was a fruitful and long lasting one. His quartet premiered a number of Beethoven's works and Linke himself appeared in concert with Beethoven giving first performances of both op.70 trios and the aforementioned premiere of the Archduke Trio. Linke also ran a series of salon concerts in Vienna where Schubert was

frequently in attendance. This microcosm of Viennese musical life is important to bear in mind when considering particular musical connections between Beethoven and Schubert. It is entirely plausible, for instance, that Linke could have introduced a particular version of Beethoven's Kreutzer sonata that had been arranged for the unusual combination of two violins, viola and 2 cellos to his salon series. Whilst we don't know who made the arrangement (some believe it to have been Beethoven) the culture of arranging works for different combinations of instruments was commonplace. If Schubert had happened to have been in attendance he would have been struck by the unusual timbre of the ensemble. A string quintet normally had two violas not two cellos and this could well have inspired Schubert's own masterpiece for this instrumental combination. Linke premiered both the op.102 sonatas and we also know that he presented them at this series of salon concerts. Is it maybe not a coincidence therefore that the opening of op.102 no.2 begins with a theme that bears an exact reference to one of the most striking thematic motifs in Schubert's own 'Death and the Maiden' quartet? Whilst Beethoven's own impact on Viennese musical life and beyond was colossal, what of the crossroads he was at compositionally at the time of writing these last two sonatas? Perhaps if we look towards his final symphony and choral masterpiece, the Missa Solemnis, we can see, through these two sonatas, how the seeds for these two symphonic works were to take root. The economy of material in these last two sonatas is breathtaking and no more so than in the first, the C major, op.102 no.2. In common with op.69, the opening theme (also presented by the cello alone) forms not only the basis for the first movement but in fact, the intervallic structure of this opening theme, which is the grain for the entire work. However, far from limiting Beethoven in terms of emotional breadth, this taut structure allows him to condense all of his creative ideas into the most concise narrative. This sonata might only last around 15 minutes in length, but if we look to his most expansive symphonic movement, the first movement of the ninth symphony, we can see how this distillation and intense, focused organisation of a single motif takes root on a large orchestral scale. Only when we arrive at the recapitulation of this epic first movement do we realise that what seemed to be introductory material at the outset of the movement, a theme that has little or no 'melodic' property, has in fact been the entire basis for the movement. It is astonishing how impactful this is without having the need for any sort of melodic interplay, such is the strength of the counterpoint and structure around it.

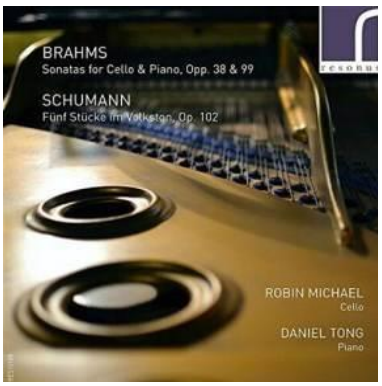
If there are similarities between op.102 no.1 and the ninth symphony can perhaps op.102 no.2 provide some clues as to the path towards the Missa Solemnis? Beethoven's own ambivalence to religion is well documented and in fact there are moments in the Missa Solemnis where rather than a reverence towards a deity, Beethoven is questioning its very existence. But it is hard to imagine the fugal writing in this great masterpiece (and subsequently in the op.131 and op.133 quartets), without the finale of op.102 no.2 and Beethoven's rigorous study of counterpoint having come before it. Unlike Bach's Musical Offering which poses a fugal subject so chromatic that one wonders how he will be able to negotiate 2, and 3 part counterpoint, let alone a six part fugue, Beethoven's finale of op.102 no.2 presents a fugue with the most benign of subjects. This theme, which takes a simple D major scale, may seem innocuous but Beethoven takes us through every possible key centre posing, in many ways, just as complex an argument as Bach's, but despite the outwardly academic nature of presenting material in this form, there is an overwhelming feeling of joy and almost resurrection after the slow movement. This slow movement is possibly the most extraordinary of all the movements from these sonatas. It is also perhaps a glimpse of the intense and personal sound world of the late quartets. The sombre choral opening which gives way to material of the utmost tenderness (very much the atmosphere of the op.130 Cavatine). The timelessness of the music is as hypnotic as where he takes us musically. We end up momentarily in a key (C sharp minor) so foreign, it as is if we are in the furthest recesses of the human soul. Only then does the fugue subject appear, first as a tentative question but then seemingly as the possible answer to all that had been questioned before. These last two works for cello and piano seem to encapsulate every facet of Beethoven's musical DNA and the five sonatas as a set shine a unique light onto his whole compositional output and musical life.

Our guest contributors

Julian Haylock

A former editor of *CD Review* and *International Piano* magazines and the author of biographies on Mahler, Rachmaninov and Puccini, Julian writes extensively for a wide variety of publications, including *BBC Music* and *The Strad*. When he's not immersing himself in glorious surround sound, you'll probably find him gallivanting across the leafy fields of Northamptonshire with his adorable clumber spaniel and golden retriever.

Robin Michael



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Robin Michael studied at the Royal Academy of Music with David Strange and Colin Carr and later with Ferenc Rados. He is principal cellist in Orchestre Revolutionnaire et Romantique, solo cellist with Orchestre Les Siecles (Paris) as well as regular guest principal cellist with a number of orchestras. Robin was the cellist in the Fidelio trio for over 10 years with whom he toured Europe, North America, Asia and South Africa. Recent concert highlights include complete Bach and Britten suite cycles in France and London, the South Korean premier of Jonathan Harvey's 'Advaya' for cello and electronics and numerous festival appearances . He has recently released a recording of the Brahms sonatas with pianist Daniel Tong, (see above) with whom he is also co-artistic director of the Kinnordy Chamber Music Festival in Scotland.

News from members

Congratulations to Australian pianist and composer **John Carmichael** who celebrated his 90th birthday on 5 October. The occasion was marked by interviews and performances of his music on Australia's Fine Music Radio station.

Many musicians are going to extraordinary lengths to ensure live music can be performed, so we were pleased to hear that the **Frinton Festival** will be offering three concerts in October. These include a recital by Ian Bostridge with Sebastian Wybrew on 23 October of Schubert's "Winterreise", a programme of music by Beethoven and Smetana on 24 October performed by the Barbican Piano Trio and Schubert's Octet will feature in the programme on 25 October. Further details: **www.frintonfestival.com**

The **Mithras Trio,** winners of the 10th Trondheim International Chamber Music Competition, the 67th Royal Over-Seas League Music Competition and the Royal Philharmonic Society Henderson Award 2019, will be performing works by Haydn, Beethoven, Smetana and Helen Grime at a North Norfolk Music Festival concert on 6 December at the Maltings, Wells-Next-The-Sea.

Some thoughts by Michael Bochmann MBE on Music and Listening

Michael is widely respected as an inspirational teacher and we have been privileged to welcome him to several of our Piano Trio Days, including the one at Gloucester in 2019, pictured here. He also served on the jury of our Senior Intercollegiate Piano Trio Competition at Birmingham Conservatoire in 2019. There are many students who have received the benefit of his wisdom - something often shared by those of us attending his masterclasses as observers!

"It is important for music teaching to show the student how to *do* or *play* something of course. But perhaps the most important thing of all in music making is actually how to listen! It is similar to the way visual artists say that the most essential thing in learning how to be an artist is to know how to look!

Maybe one should start with the most important people in a concert - the audience members. You may think that the atmosphere comes mainly from the performers. Well, maybe that is the case, but ask any musician or actor who has played a run of the same show for many nights. They will say that every performance is different because of the special character of each particular audience.

Most fundamentally, the quality of our listening is what helps – or hinders – our dialogue with other people. To get the best from your communication with another, you need to put your entire attention on them, that is *listen to them*. If you are judgmental as you listen or distracted, they will sense that and feel unfree to be themselves and put a barrier up. Similarly, musicians in a concert tend not to feel free to play their best if they sense the audience is not listening or mainly judgemental.

As a performer, a sea-change takes place as soon as you listen with real concentration to your fellow players. All sorts of wonderful things begin to happen:

- You understand the piece of music as a whole, rather than from your own perspective alone. That clearly shows you your part in the whole and what you have to do.
- You begin to listen acutely, so the ensemble and intonation improves.
- As a string player you play in tune with the piano if there is one.
- A single line instrumentalist hears the harmony and its story
- For pianists, listening reveals how to voice the piano part. In piano trios (particularly romantic ones where the cello does not double the piano) often the piano left hand line is the bass for the *whole* ensemble, not just the piano part. So, the voicing is quite different from solo playing. Many trio performances can be muddy in texture when this is not understood.
- Eventually you begin to hear your own part both from the outside and within this whole. (It is very helpful, when performing to imagine yourself sitting in the third row of the audience and direct yourself from there)
- Hearing yourself in the third person means that you are not projecting *yourself* in a concert but rather following the *course of the music* and projecting that. You become a vehicle for the music and not the other way around.
- Your attitude to audience members changes from potential judges to friends and a totally different atmosphere takes place.

As you may imagine, playing a concert with listening at its heart is a totally different experience all round. One very helpful way to practise it, in group rehearsal, is to play together maybe 40 bars of music, several times, on each occasion listening intently to each of your colleagues - both what they are playing and the way they are playing it. (Pianists can cheat here as the other parts are written above their own. But resist the temptation to look!) You need to listen to them more than to yourself! When you perform this exercise, you learn something new with each repetition and each player that you listen to. Time and again I have found, when asking students to do this exercise, that the biggest change happens during the first listening – because playing from listening radically improves the chemistry of a group. The fact is that it is not just your knowledge of the other parts that expands in doing this. It creates a coming together of human beings. When this happens in a performance, the feeling spills over into the audience very tangibly and you get that state in which people say, "you could hear a pin drop". The experience is intense and compelling for everyone, not due to the force of personality of the players but by sheer listening of everyone.

Michael coaching the Saubat Piano Trio at his home in Gloucestershire

As a player, you become one with what you listen to and you blend with it, setting yourself free from personal issues such as nerves or self-consciousness. You are able to listen to both the minutest detail and the broad spectrum all at once. But it needs great strength of character to "disappear" in this way. Initially in this exercise, as you listen you often tend to play too softly yourself, perhaps forgetting that others are listening to *you*! With practice, you eventually hear the *whole* ensemble, which includes you. And from this angle you can judge how much to bring forward your own part.

One of the great advantages of being proficient at an instrument and knowing the music very well is that your attention can move from yourself to others and still hold your own. And of course, it is exactly the same in everyday life. It is only when we are reasonably confident of ourselves that we are able to listen genuinely to other people. We are then able to lead where necessary or also go with the flow. It is of course one of the joys of living to do this, when we are able. And it is equally one of the joys of music-making with others, in particular chamber music.

We often think of composers as some kind of gods! They may be very great, but they are people like us, and sometimes considerably flawed too! Those who are no longer alive, live in their music and we can listen to them as people as we play. Then we have a genuine dialogue with a composer, even hearing it with *their* ears as it is composed, and we can sometimes be taken to the heights in their music that they hear.

The most important point about teaching how to listen is that through listening, everyone comes up with a unique interpretation, usually without knowing it! And frankly one is never convinced by a performer playing *someone else's* interpretation, however fine. So, in this sense, listening ultimately helps you towards self-realisation, which happens paradoxically when one is least aware of the self."

LADIES AND GENTLEMAN OF THE JURY.

HAVE YOU REACHED A VERDICT ON WHICH YOU ALL AGREE?

(A relaxed tale of music competitions)

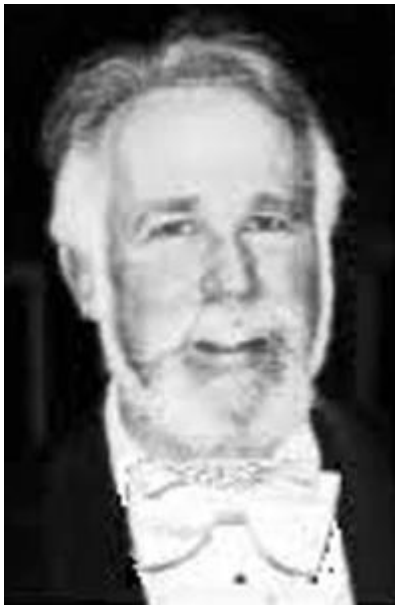
The title of this article has resounded around the law courts for generations. I have never served on a legal jury, but as a professional classical pianist and teacher I have served on a number of national and international music competition juries. So, what about musical verdicts and judgements? Music competition juries are generally made up of performers, teachers, conductors or music media professionals. On small and large juries usually one member is the chair and manages the other members. Juries are usually odd numbered to gain a majority verdict if not a unanimous one. If they are even numbered, the chair has a casting vote in the event of a tied decision. Deliberations can easily lead to either a unanimous or majority judgement or deliberations can be mulled over for what seems like unending opinions and thoughts on the performances. In a lot of competition rules, it states that none of the candidates should be present pupils of any of the jury members.

Juries are generally good natured even if each member is meeting for the first time, but sometimes there are professional or personality clashes. When reaching their decisions for each round of the competition, jury members should not let their own interpretations of the works being performed determine their verdicts and should keep an open mind. I have been on juries when the successful performers have been obviously standing out and others where the jury room has resembled a debating chamber. Prizes can range from monitory, presentation scores, recording contracts, future engagements, and some of the larger ones have been known to launch a musician's complete career. Disappointments have been few but these include being the pianist jury member on the 2020 Piano Trio Society Junior Piano Trio Competition which I am sure would have been a wonderful competition but had to be cancelled because of Covid19.

Other considerations are competitions that throw up unexpected issues. While I was on a piano and strings jury, one page into the first movement of Brahms' third violin sonata, the violinist's E string snapped. After replacing it, we had to decide whether the performers should start from the beginning or resume where the incident occurred. In a piano and voice competition, the pianist turned over two pages of score instead of one and while they tried to resume their place, the singer continued unaccompanied none the worse. Most of my time serving on juries has been on national and international piano competitions with both solo piano and concerto finals with orchestra. Music competition jury work has taken me to some very interesting places and I have met many people and audience members who wanted to be at the competitions because of their love of music rather than the adversarial nature of competitions. The actual performances have varied from magnificent and outstanding, through to very good, quite good, promising and oh dear, what a shame.

I can honestly say that I have never been on a jury where I felt bored or disinterested in the performances. Though I have at times wrestled with thoughts of how I felt about the interpretations, choice of dynamics, phrasing, intonation, choice of pedalling, tempi, choice of repertoire or musicianship. Music competitions seem to bring out polarised opinions from those people who seem to favour them in some way or those who are totally opposed to them. One thing is certain though. Whether they are held in private or in front of an audience, they are here to stay and whether there is agreement or disagreement with audiences as to the final results, you cannot please all the people all of the time.

Edition Silvertrust



Many of our members are interested in unusual or neglected repertoire and may be interested to learn of a website which contains much interesting information**. Edition Silvertrust** was founded in USA in 2003 by Raymond Silvertrust, pictured above, editor of *The Chamber Music Journal.* After writing about chamber music for several years, he realized that there are many fine works which have been unjustly forgotten or neglected--works which are every bit as good as the masterpieces with which we are already familiar--perhaps over familiar since nowadays it is hard to hear anything but works by the famous.

Knowing what a pity it was that these works were never likely to be played again unless they were reprinted, and seeing that so few deserving works were being republished, he tried to encourage publishers to undertake this task. Because he was the editor of an important chamber music publication, he actually had some degree of success, but nowhere near what he had hoped for and the prices which these publishers were charging for reprints or new editions were beyond the budgets of most musicians. Finally, with the advent of computers, digital scanners and music notation software, it became possible to enter music publishing without the outlay of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Edition Silvertrust is a family business run by professional and amateur musicians who have played, performed and become familiar with the literature from the wider world of chamber music as few others have. This experience has been invaluable in helping the family to choose those works they feel are most deserving of republication or new editions. There are a whole host of piano trios listed with a general description of each and with the cost of printing generally in the region of $30.00. Most orders are printed within 72 hours after which it may take 14 - 21 days after posting to reach you. The postage cost is $21.95 for the first item (ie score and parts of a piano trio) plus $7.95 for any additional items. Optional insurance is $5.50. At present there is a sale of works by a number of composers which runs throughout November so we urge you to take a look.

We have been in touch with the family - Raymond, Skyler and Loren - who are pleased for us to pass on information about their work. Please let us know of any discoveries you make!

Details may be found on their website **www.editionsilvertrust.com**

Musical Opinion

The two latest editions of *Musical Opinion* have been full of interest. This is a quarterly magazine which provides fascinating reading on many topics which are not generally to be found in other magazines. The cover of the July-September edition features our Vice President **Howard Blake** on its cover and an article by Howard entitled " 'Unfolding a dream' - realising the concept of symphonic film." Also in this edition is an extensive article on the life and music of Nikolay Anosov plus "Musica in Tempore Belli - Lockdown Listening" by regular contributors to the magazine which covers a wide range of music from Felice Anerio to the Beatles! Also included is an article by **Martino Tirimo** "Recording the complete piano works of Beethoven" - a topic which has been covered in our own Newsletters. John McCabe was a former Vice President of our Society and it was interesting to read Monica McCabe's reflections on a little-appreciated influence on her late husband's music throughout his composing life.

Howard Blake features too in the current edition of the magazine which gives an excellent review of his new disc "Agatha" which features the symphonic film score inspired by the motion picture for which he composed the music. Also included is a five star review by Robert Matthew Waliker on the new double CD by **Robert Max** - JS Bach: the Six Suites for Solo Cello on Guild GMCD7822 about which Robert wrote in our last Newsletter. "Here is musicianship of a high order, interpretively and technically, allied to a natural recording quality which never obtrudes on the goal of these recordings - the music of JS Bach. There is a warmth and humanity to these performances which dig deep beneath the surface of the often single-line writing." Other articles are by **Martino Tirimo** plus tributes **to Edward Gregson** on his 75th birthday and to the late **Sir John Manduell.** Your administrator **Christine Talbot-Cooper** was also interested to read about Elgar's friendship with Billy Reed, which included a number of photographs of Elgar and his friends taken during the Three Choirs Festivals: Christine sang in many of the festivals in recent years and as Chairman of Gloucester Music Society, which has strong links to our Society, Christine was also pleased to find a review of the recital given as part of the Society's 90th anniversary season by the **Villiers Quartet.** The programme featured quartets by Alwyn and Parry and included the wonderful "Hymnos" Quartet of **Graham Whettam**, another of those composers who appears to be all but forgotten today. Incidentally, Christine was instrumental in commissioning Whettam's Piano Trio which received its première in 2004 by the Israel Piano Trio.

Musical Opinion is published quarterly and is currently among the oldest such journals to be still publishing in the UK, having been continuously in publication since 1877. In its first year *Musical Opinion* critically reviewed Brahms' new Second Symphony, and in 1879 his Violin Concerto. The October 1936 issue carried an interview with Rachmaninov and championed the young William Walton as Britain's most exciting young composer. Between 1927 and 1940 it was then a leading journal in its field with contributors including some of the most prominent British writers on music of the time. Editors have included Arthur W. Fitzsimmonds, Havergal Brian (an assistant editor), Denby Richards and, currently **Robert Matthew Walker** who also edits *The Organ* - a sister magazine founded in 1921, also finding time to write reviews and compose substantial pieces such as the Concertante on a Theme of Paganini for Piano and Double String Orchestra, Opus 168 scheduled for performance on 21 October by Mark Bebbington and the RPO conducted by Jan Latham-Koenig at St John's Smith Square.

www.musicalopinion.com