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GUARNERI TRIO PRAGUE

Thursday 7 May, 7.30pm
Djanogly Recital Hall

PROGRAMME

Piano Trio No.9 in B flat major, WoO 39	**Ludwig van Beethoven**
Piano Trio No.6 in B flat major, Op.97 'Archduke'	**Beethoven**
Interval	
Piano Trio No.4 in E minor, Op.90 'Dumky'	**Antonín Dvořák**

Please ensure all mobile phones are switched off. Photographs and videos of the performance are not permitted. There is a Sennheiser Infrared enhanced hearing system in the Djanogly Recital Hall; please request a headset from our front-of-house staff to enhance your enjoyment of this evening's concert.

Please ensure hearing aids are switched to the appropriate concert setting.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Piano Trio No.9 in B flat major, WoO 39 **Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)**

This engagingly unpretentious little piece was composed in June 1812. WoO = Werk ohne Opuszall – work without opus number – a system of identifying works by Beethoven (and occasionally other composers) published without an Op number, usually because he didn't think they were important enough to need one.

He wrote it for Maximiliane Brentano, the ten-year-old daughter of Antonie Brentano, a close friend who is widely thought to have been the 'distant beloved' to whom he wrote, but did not send, an intensely passionate letter a month later. It was intended to encourage Maximiliane in her piano playing, and is suitably relaxed and straightforward, in terms of both its technical demands and its emotional character.

Piano Trio No.6 in B flat major, Op.97 'Archduke' **Beethoven**

1. *Allegro moderato;*
2. *Scherzo. Allegro;*
3. *Andante cantabile, ma però con moto;*
4. *Allegro moderato – presto.*

Archduke Rudolph, younger brother of the Austrian Emperor, Leopold, showed exceptional musical talent as a child, performing as a pianist at the age of fifteen. He is said to have met Beethoven in the winter of 1803–4, and began piano and theory lessons with him; a bond of mutual affection and esteem quickly developed. Beethoven taught him composition for over two decades, and Rudolph composed steadily, mostly for piano solo or small ensembles, including a clarinet sonata, and a contribution to the variations commissioned from a number of composers by the music publisher Anton Diabelli, for whom Beethoven eventually composed his massive set of thirty-three Variations, Op.120.

Beethoven dedicated no fewer than eleven major works to Rudolph, more than he dedicated to anyone else. They include the Fourth and Fifth Piano Concertos, the piano sonatas 'Les Adieux', Op.81a, and 'Hammerklavier', Op.106, and the *Missa Solemnis*, but it is only this Trio to which the nickname has stuck.

It was completed in the spring of 1811. Beethoven's compositional output had slackened considerably after the feverish pace of the previous decade, and the Trio is his only major work from that year. It seems likely that he revised it in 1814, which may be one reason why the music suggests the composer on the threshold of his late style. As he moves towards his last decade, the volcanic turbulence of, say, the Fifth Symphony is less dominant, and a vein of broad, noble spaciousness comes more to the foreground.

The expansive opening theme sets the tone for the whole work. Its mood of undemonstrative confidence is scarcely disturbed throughout the whole of the first movement, even though the second main theme introduces a more skittish mood. The development section culminates in a quirky passage where everyone seems to be dancing on tiptoe, the notes all short and detached, with the violin and cello plucked, not bowed. Moments later, extended trills for the pianist's right hand herald the recapitulation – the music's return to its starting-point. This would normally be a climatically intense passage, but here it is among the most magically understated in all Beethoven.

Similarly, the second movement has little in common with the rampaging scherzos of some of Beethoven's earlier works. Its gently humorous manner gives way, in the central trio section, to something darker and more elusive – an eerily chromatic fugato led by the cello, and punctuated by an energetic waltz theme from the piano, which somehow only compounds the mystery.

The Andante is a set of variations on a simple song-like theme. The first four variations become increasingly elaborate, but the music's essential profound stillness remains unbroken. The fifth returns to the theme in more or less its original form, eventually linking this movement to the finale, bringing us back to earth with a jolt as it does so. The stamping peasant-dance character of what follows, with typically Beethovenian off-beat accents, is tempered by frequent dolce ('sweet', 'gentle') markings, which give the music another dimension altogether. The theme is finally turned into a runaway coda which speeds up still further for the thunderous final bars.

Piano Trio No.4 in E minor, Op.90 'Dumky' **Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)**

1. *Lento maestoso/Allegro vivace;*
2. *Poco adagio/Vivace non troppo;*
3. *Andante/Vivace non troppo;*
4. *Andante moderato/Allegretto scherzando;*
5. *Allegro;*
6. *Lento maestoso/Vivace.*

A *dumka* (plural: *dumky*) is a kind of elegiac narrative ballad originating in Ukraine. It took various forms, and from these Dvořák gradually evolved his own conception of it as a slow, melancholy piece interrupted by quicker, livelier sections. He included *dumka* movements in a number of works, but in the E minor Trio he took the bold step of basing an entire multi-movement work on this form.

He began it towards the end of 1890, and it was first performed in April the following year as part of a concert celebrating his award of an honorary doctorate by Charles University, Prague. Dvořák himself was the pianist, and the cellist was Hanuš Wihan, for whom Dvořák wrote his Cello Concerto four years later.

The 'Dumky' Trio is his most radical departure from classical forms. The six movements follow a key sequence which defies symphonic logic, and all but the fifth are based on a striking contrast of slow and fast sections. Within this framework, Dvořák succeeds in producing not only one of his most charmingly characteristic works, but also a sequence of surprisingly varied explorations of the same basic contrast of mood.

The first three movements are marked to be played without a break. The first begins with a stormy, impassioned outburst for cello and piano. The violin's quiet response includes a four-note figure echoed by the cello, which becomes an important element in the quick music that follows.

There is a Schubertian feel to the start of the second movement, with its plaintive cello melody, consisting initially of repeated notes, unfolding over static piano harmonies, and its hesitation between major and minor. The quick dance-sections are based on a polka rhythm. A short unaccompanied cello solo, marked 'cadenza in tempo', leads into the return of the slow music.

Violin and cello are muted for the beginning and end of No.3, the slow sections of which are built on a gentle mazurka-like rhythm. The opening reaches a passionate climax before the quick section takes over. But now, Dvořák starts moving away from the slow-fast-slow-fast pattern of the first two movements. The return of the opening section is followed not by a repeat of the quick one but by an *allegretto* coda that gives the main theme a more wistful air.

The structure of the fourth movement is both more complex and more seamless than what we have heard so far. The moderately-paced opening section is interrupted by two brief quicker passages marked by continual fluctuations in speed. When the opening returns, it accelerates into a quick section with an exuberant, completely new theme, before the opening music re-appears, winding down to a thoughtful conclusion.

The fifth movement is the exception mentioned earlier. It is the only one that begins quickly, in an initially ambiguous and hesitant 6/8 metre which is later more straightforward. The opening theme becomes that of the first contrasting section, which is only marginally slower than the *allegro.* The second contrasting section, too, is only slightly different in tempo. The last few bars are vigorous and purposeful.

The finale opens with a rhetorical flourish, leading eventually to a wild, stamping dance. There are a number of tempo fluctuations, but only one main slow section. The dance brings the work to its exhilarating close.

GUARNERI TRIO PRAGUE

Čeněk Pavlík – Violin
Marek Jerie – Cello
Ivan Klánský – Piano

The Guarneri Trio Prague, belongs to the most renowned piano trios in the world of classical music. Founded by Ivan Klanský, Čeněk Pavlík and Marek Jerie, the Trio drew with its artistically spectacular performances the attention of the international press early in its career. The Trio has been playing since 1986 in the same line-up.

The ensemble performs regularly at many international music festivals including the Schleswig-Holstein Festival, Prague Spring, and Folle Journée in Nantes, Bilbao and Tokyo. The trio plays also at prestigious concert venues around the world, in cities like London, Paris, Prague, Madrid, Geneva and Hamburg. They have toured successfully throughout Europe, South and North America, Australia, Japan, the Philippines and China.

The Guarneri Trio Prague has recorded the complete piano trios of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Shostakovich, Schubert, Brahms and Mozart for the French label *Praga Digitals* and the piano trios of Dvořák for the Czech label *Supraphon.* For their recordings, the Trio was rewarded with many important prizes (Diapason d'Or, Le Monde de la Musique, Choc).

The ensemble bears the family name of the makers of both string instruments used by the Trio. Cenek Pavlík plays the famous "Zimbalist" violin by Guarneri del Gesù from the precious collection of Luigi Tarisio, while Marek Jerie plays a cello made by Andrea Guarneri in l684.

The Guarneri Trio Prague gives frequently master classes in different places all over the world.