

Seaford Music Society

Sunday 12th March 2023 at 3.00 pm

The Amatis Trio

Lea Hausmann	<i>Violin</i>
Samuel Shepherd	<i>Cello</i>
Mengjie Han	<i>Piano</i>

The **Amatis Trio** was founded in Amsterdam in 2014 and is now based in Salzburg, Austria. German violinist Lea Hausmann, British cellist Samuel Shepherd, and Dutch pianist Mengjie Han, are celebrated for their energy, insight, creativity, communication and passion. The trio is regarded as one of the leading ensembles of its generation.

The Amatis Trio has performed in 43 countries across 5 continents and has won many major international competitions and awards. They are former BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists and were selected as ECHO (European Concert Hall Organisation) Rising Stars by Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Köln Philharmonie, Festspielhaus Baden-Baden and Dortmund Konzerthaus. The trio has been awarded some of the most prestigious music prizes from around the world, including the Kersjesprijs of the Netherlands and the Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship award.

In addition to performances in many of the world's leading festivals, including the BBC Proms, Verbier Festival in Switzerland and the Edinburgh International Festival, the trio are regularly invited as soloists in triple concerto repertoire, appearing with orchestras such as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Wales and Frankfurt Museums Orchestra. They are currently Artists in Residence at Cambridge University and appointees of the Irene R Miller Piano Trio Residency at the University of Toronto, Canada.

The Amatis Trio released their debut CD on AVI Records, featuring the music of Enescu, Ravel and Britten. The disc received high praise amongst critics and earned the ensemble inclusion in Gramophone Magazine's 'Artists to Watch'.

Their strong commitment to contemporary music led the trio to form the Dutch Piano Trio Composition Prize, aimed at encouraging young composers to expand the piano trio repertoire. Since its inception they have commissioned and premiered 15 contemporary pieces, most recently Moorlands, a work by Swedish composer Andrea Tarrodi.

Prizes include the 2018 Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition, the 2018 International Joseph Haydn Competition in Vienna and the International Joseph Joachim Competition in Weimar.

Both Lea and Sam play on very fine Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume instruments kindly loaned by generous patrons through the Beares International Violin Society.



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Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756-1791)

Piano Trio in C, K.548

- I *Allegro*
- II *Andante cantabile*
- III *Allegro*

Apart from an early piano trio-divertimento, written while he was still in Salzburg in 1776, Mozart did not return to the genre until some ten years later, when he wrote five between 1786 and 1788 (works from the same period include The *Prague* symphony, the *Coronation* piano concerto, *Don Giovanni*, the last three symphonies and the *Hoffmeister* quartet). These five major piano trios all reflect the influence of Mozart as a composer of piano concerti, both in terms of their passage work for the piano, and for the partnership between piano and other instruments – not easy to achieve when writing for three instruments.

It is difficult to believe that opinions have been divided about this trio, ranging from a "sad falling off" to "beautifully crafted". No one can deny its joyous positiveness, from its opening confident rising tonic broken chord, and distinctive rhythm of long and dotted notes, to the final close of the last movement. That rising opening by all instruments is answered by a pert pattern of repeated notes on the piano with tripping descending slurs to round off the phrase. Immediately, the strings pick up the idea and then the piano takes off in a display of runs and passagework. The piano introduces the graceful second subject in thirds over a repeated bass and this time the first violin has its own bravura spot. The opening returns, now firmly in the dominant key, and then starts the development with a dramatic move to the minor key, but in canon between the strings and the piano. This alternates with a wistful slurred motif, descending by semitones, taking the music through various modulations, while the pert repeated notes herald the return of the recapitulation. Everything then proceeds on its untroubled way to a happy end.

The serene and poised *Andante* keeps moving with a gentle swaying melody over an Alberti (broken chord) bass on the piano, or repeated note accompaniment in the strings interspersed with delicate little runs and glints of chromaticism. A bold unison chromatic descending line of dotted rhythms heralds the development, in which the delicate runs are taken up by each instrument in turn to shift through various keys. The runs get more elaborate as the piano and violin gently vie with each other, and then the opening returns for a full repeat.

High spirits are the hallmark of the last movement in rondo form, which bubbles along with a constant stream of ideas developed from the perky opening. There is a contrasting episode in C minor which plays at being dramatic, before the rondo theme returns and the movement makes its way with great good humour and vivacity to the closing bars, which leave us where the whole work began.

Programme note by Janet Upward, courtesy of Making Music

Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

Piano Trio No.1 in C minor, Op.8

Shostakovich was still a student at the Leningrad Conservatory (where he had enrolled in 1919) when he composed his *First Piano Trio* in the autumn of 1923. It received its first performance at a student concert in December. It thus precedes his *First Symphony*, completed in 1925 and premièred in May 1926, but was not published until 1983, after his death.

It may technically be a student work, with the shades of Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov (even Grieg?) hanging over it, but there are already some clear Shostakovich hallmarks – melodies which combine close chromaticism and wide-ranging intervals, the use of extreme registers (particularly in the piano writing) –

whilst its constant changes of mood (perhaps foreshadowing his film music) from sinister to manic, which may seem episodic, do develop into a coherent whole.

The *Trio* is in one movement with constant changes of tempo which give it a rhapsodic flavour, although it is broadly in sonata form.

The dark, descending chromatic three-note motif with which the cello opens the Trio (*andante*) changes its character as the tempo picks up to *allegro* before the opening *andante* mood returns. The cello now introduces a dance-like variant of the descending chromatic theme, which quickly becomes more passionate and grander. The mood changes again, but not before a lingering look back at the chromatic motif, and, underneath the piano's rocking chordal accompaniment, the cello introduces the romantic sweep of the second subject (marked *andante*). This almost sounds like a slow movement interlude, but a development (*moderato*) follows, transforming both the first idea and the second subject, now in the bass of the piano and marked *allegro*. Ingeniously, Shostakovich inverts the order of the original material (now marked *prestissimo fantastico*) so that the *andante* opening only appears after other material from the exposition has already been heard. An extended coda (*allegro*), in which the second subject makes a final handsome appearance, closes the work with a triumphant final flourish.

Programme note by Janet Upward, courtesy of Making Music

COMFORT BREAK 15 MINUTES

There are toilets in the lobby at the back of the church, and downstairs via the stairs beside the stage.

Franz SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

Piano Trio No.2 in E-flat, D.929, Op.100

- I *Allegro*
- II *Andante con moto*
- III *Scherzo (allegro moderato) and trio*
- IV *Allegro moderato*

This great work received its first performance in one of the Viennese Entertainments organised by the violinist Schuppanzigh, on New Year's Day 1828, a year of which Schubert was not to see the end. It is not simply the key that tempts one to call it Schubert's *Eroica*. There is a spaciousness and at times a heroic grandeur about the music which evokes the comparison. But there are at least two paradoxes here: first, that a work for only three players can, without straining the language of chamber music, tread the ground of a symphony orchestra, and also that that very language should at the same time be Schubertian through and through.

Typically of Schubert, the fanfare-like first theme has hardly run a rounded course before modulations take place, and, after only about a minute, string trills and the piano's chromatic scales dump the music into a very distant key for a long flow of secondary material, broadly deployed, which settles at length into the orthodox complementary key (that is, the dominant key of B flat), confirmed by diatonic scales up and down. At the beginning of the development a held solitary note on the cello brings in the most lyrical of these secondary themes, which is treated to no fewer than three modulatory cycles, an astonishing procedure whereby the music seems to recede further and further away into a magical distance. The long process by which the home key is established, to say nothing of the cross-rhythms in this central section, are undoubtedly heroic in their effect. The large time-scale then produced enables not only a full recapitulation to be used, but also a tailpiece which seems reluctant to say good-bye to the wealth of themes.

The basic C minor of the next movement, and the dotted rhythms of the accompaniment of its main theme, remind us of the Eroica again, but the *con moto* direction forbids us to dawdle over the funeral march, if that is what it is. There are, in the midst of wonderful melodies, two thunderous climaxes both marked *fff*, no less. The second of them, with imagined trumpets and drums in C major, typically cannot bring the music to triumph. It ends at a slower tempo with two sighs.

The scherzo for a while plays in canon, that is, with the piano exactly imitated at a bar's distance by the strings, or vice versa. With the trio section, a much more beer-garden atmosphere sets in.

The last movement begins as though it is going to be content with easygoing dance measures. Within the basic two in a bar, the main subject divides into threes, the next – after one *pizzicato* note – into four in repeated notes. The third paragraph reverts to three to a beat and is marked by rapid scales, mostly, but not all, on the piano. With these ample materials the music proceeds to a development. In the midst of it, without changing the tempo, comes a surprise: the cello plays the main theme of the slow movement, *sotto voce*. Not only this, but in the intense quiet leading back towards the recapitulation the piano alludes to the slow movement's repeated chords, though without the tune. As the movement's design is apparently complete, the cello again plays the funeral tune. Great is the joy when the violin joins in and corrects it to the major, the essential Schubert effect.

Programme note by Ivor Keys, courtesy of Making Music

Do come and join us downstairs after the concert for tea or coffee and a biscuit.

Our forthcoming concerts

Sunday 23rd April 2023, 3.00 pm, at Seaford Baptist Church

Dream Haven, is a story-concert for children and adults, featuring actress and local resident Kate Isitt, Sharon Lewis on harp, and our own Kate Comberti playing the violin. However else you choose to celebrate St George's Day, put a rose in your buttonhole and bring your children and grandchildren to this afternoon's entertainment.

Children and young people (under 26) get in free, as do members of Seaford Music Society. Anybody else pays just £10 for this family concert.

Sunday 14th May 2023, 3.00 pm, at Seaford Baptist Church

Craig Ogden, internationally celebrated classical guitarist, brings this season to a close with music by composers ranging from Scarlatti to Villa-Lobos and Rodrigo. He last visited us in 2016, and those who remember that concert will know that this is one not to be missed! Children and young people (under 26) get in free, as do members of Seaford Music Society. Anybody else pays £17 for this concert.

Membership of Seaford Music Society grants you free entry to all of this season's concert series, and can be purchased from our Treasurer, Paul Moore, in the foyer at the back of the church. The subscription is reduced to reflect the fact that only two concerts remain in this season, and, furthermore, the cost of your ticket for today's concert will be credited towards your membership subscription if you join now.

Additional benefits for members of Seaford Music Society

Receive a £3 discount on your ticket when attending Uckfield Music Club, Haywards Heath Music Society and Nicholas Yonge Society concerts. Simply produce your Seaford Music Society membership card when you pay at the door. Details of the concerts can be found on each organisation's website.

Uckfield Music Club (www.uckfieldmusicclub.uk): tickets £12 instead of £15 *subject to review*

Haywards Heath Music Society (www.haywardsheathmusicsociety.org.uk): tickets £12 instead of £15

Nicholas Yonge Society (www.nyslewes.org.uk): tickets £17 instead of £20