

BEETHOVEN
COMPLETE STRING TRIOS

LENDVAI
String Trio





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LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

CD 1

STRING TRIO IN E \flat MAJOR, OP.3

1	<i>i</i>	<i>Allegro con brio</i>	11'13
2	<i>ii</i>	<i>Andante</i>	6'57
3	<i>iii</i>	<i>Menuetto: Allegretto</i>	3'39
4	<i>iv</i>	<i>Adagio</i>	8'27
5	<i>v</i>	<i>Menuetto: Moderato</i>	3'38
6	<i>vi</i>	<i>Finale: Allegro</i>	6'52

SERENADE FOR STRING TRIO IN D MAJOR, OP.8

7	<i>i</i>	<i>Marcia: Allegro</i>	2'30
8	<i>ii</i>	<i>Adagio</i>	6'53
9	<i>iii</i>	<i>Menuetto: Allegretto</i>	2'24
10	<i>iv</i>	<i>Adagio - Scherzo: Allegro molto - Adagio - Allegro molto - Adagio</i>	5'46
11	<i>v</i>	<i>Allegretto alla Polacca</i>	3'36
12	<i>vi</i>	<i>Thema con variazioni: Andante quasi allegretto - Variazioni I-IV - Allegro - Tempo I</i>	7'52
13	<i>vii</i>	<i>Marcia: Allegro</i>	1'50
			71'42

CD 2

STRING TRIO IN G MAJOR, OP.9 NO.1

1	<i>i Adagio - Allegro con brio</i>	12'40
2	<i>ii Adagio ma non tanto e cantabile</i>	6'50
3	<i>iii Scherzo: Allegro</i>	4'59
4	<i>iv Presto</i>	5'08

STRING TRIO IN D MAJOR, OP.9 NO.2

5	<i>i Allegretto</i>	8'03
6	<i>ii Andante quasi allegretto</i>	5'03
7	<i>iii Menuetto: Allegro</i>	4'05
8	<i>iv Rondo: Allegro</i>	6'45

STRING TRIO IN C MINOR, OP.9 NO.3

9	<i>i Allegro con spirito</i>	7'51
10	<i>ii Adagio con espressione</i>	7'30
11	<i>iii Scherzo: Allegro molto e vivace</i>	3'11
12	<i>iv Finale: Presto</i>	5'56
		78'15

LENDVAI STRING TRIO

Nadia Wijzenbeek *violin*

Ylvali Zilliacus *viola*

Marie Macleod *cello*

LENDVAI STRING TRIO In their own words...

How did you meet?

We met as students, back in February 2004; Nadia and Marie shared a flat in London when they were students at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and were asked to perform a concert together. Marie had recently met Ylvali at a chamber music festival, and so we decided to programme a concert of string trio repertoire – including Beethoven's Op.8 trio! We were all quite curious about the string trio repertoire, as it was, and still is, performed so much less than the string quartet repertoire.

Where are you from?

Nadia is Dutch, Ylvali is Swedish and Marie is British, so we come from quite different musical educations within Europe, even though our last few years as music students were together in London. We have always shared a clear idea of how the music we play should communicate to audiences though, and have used our different backgrounds to strengthen and develop our musical vision as a trio.

Why the name 'Lendvai'?

Erwin Lendvai was a Hungarian composer who wrote three string trios and lived in England towards the end of his life. We were given the sheet music by a luthier in Cornwall a few months after our first concert, and we didn't have a name for the trio yet. We thought, coming from Holland, Sweden and England, why not have a Hungarian name?

What made you record the Beethoven string trios now?

Beethoven's string trios have been a core part of our repertoire ever since our first concert together back in 2004, and will hopefully continue to be so for many years to come! The wonderful thing about being musicians is that the pieces we play are constantly evolving every time we rehearse or perform them, with minute changes to phrasing, colour and character taking place the whole time. In February 2012, when we made this recording, we marked the eight years that we, as an ensemble, have lived and grown with these five extraordinary trios, capturing the snap-shot moment of how we view and experience each of them – today. We aimed for the atmosphere and nuance of live performance, and recorded the complete trios in five days. The recording was made possible through the generous support of the Kersjes Prize in Holland, which we were awarded in 2011.



Nadia Wijzenbeek

THE BEETHOVEN STRING TRIOS

Composed between 1795 and 1797, Beethoven's string trios span a period of decisive musical development for the composer. Likely first intended as apprentice pieces, with Op.3 written shortly after Beethoven finished his studies with Haydn in Vienna, the Op.9 trios are symphonic in scale and stand as a pinnacle of the chamber music repertoire.

The genesis of the **String trio in E \flat major, Op.3** remains somewhat hazy. Beethoven's friend and early biographer Franz Wegeler describes a request in 1795 from Count Apponyi for the composer to produce a string quartet, but wryly states that this 'led to no instant result' with Beethoven's first attempt instead turning into 'a grand string trio'. Perhaps hesitant to commence with a quartet so firmly in the shadow of Haydn (who had recently dedicated six quartets Op.71-4 to the Count), the Op.3 trio is the likely fruit of this call. While sometimes considered an exercise in self-instruction and bearing close structural resemblances to Mozart's *Divertimento* in E \flat major (K563), not least in its inclusion of a fourth movement *Adagio* set between a pair of Minuets, the work is nonetheless rich in rhythmic and textural invention.

The trio opens with a restless *Allegro con brio* in sonata form. The first subject shifts between syncopated declamation and its cautious echo, before an extended transition leads to a serene second subject group. The movement is notable for its complex development section which features a stormy false recapitulation in F minor, before the recapitulation-proper restores both subjects to the tonic.

The second movement is a gentle *Andante* in B \flat major. Also in sonata form, the movement is tightly constructed around a tip-toeing, three-note upbeat figure that forms the first subject. This is then paired with a fluid, almost bird-like flow of trills and demi-semiquavers in the second subject, before both themes are skillfully interwoven in the movement's more conventional development section.

The first *Menuetto* and trio of the work opens with a playful *Allegretto* that leads to the more expansive trio in E \flat minor. Here a simple but expressive violin melody sings across a plucked walking bass in the cello. There follows a warm A \flat -major *Adagio*.

A *coloratura*-style melody unfolds amid a rippling accompanying figure of sixths and octaves, passing first between viola and violin then latterly found in the cello. The second *Menuetto* and trio begins with a spry *Moderato* that features a merry horn-call between violin and viola. This pastoral feel is developed in the C-minor trio, simply titled 'Minore', with a double-stopped drone in the lower strings that recalls the grind of the hurdy-gurdy. Free now to develop the somewhat contained ornamentation of the *Moderato*, the violin here skips sweetly to the top of the fingerboard only to dissolve into silence on reaching a dominant-seventh preparation for the reprise of the E \flat -major *Menuetto*.

The work closes with a spirited *rondo*. Beethoven teams a witty use of silence with great rumbles of semi-quavers that burst across the trio. The movement's often fugal character likely owes much to Beethoven's studies in counterpoint with Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, the noted theoretician if obscure composer who often stood in for Haydn when the latter composer was otherwise indisposed to consider Beethoven's work. After numerous reprisals of the *rondo* theme, amid daring chromatic adventure and notably virtuosic scoring for violin, the pace halts for a somewhat tongue-in-cheek four-bar *Adagio*, before the movement tumbles to a vigorous close.

Published in 1797, the **Serenade for string trio in D major, Op.8** was written shortly after the E \flat trio and is generally held to have been composed more for entertainment than edification. However, the occasionally fiendish violin part suggests the work was not designed for amateur performance, as with many other serenades and *divertimenti* of the late 1700s, but perhaps bears the influence of Beethoven's friendship since moving to Vienna with esteemed violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh.

The *Serenade* commences with a robust *Marcia*, the extended double-stopping in viola and cello making for a grandiose opening and close, and suggesting a quartet texture rather than trio. While the trio as a whole does not feature extended motivic development among movements, the march is repeated at the close of the piece to



Ylivi Alimus

lend the work a simple symmetry. The *Marcia* leads directly to a tender *Adagio*, offering a moment of repose in its aria-like violin melody before building to a more anguished development section. The nimble *Menuetto* is straightforward in melodic contour but impish in structure, hopping from six- to sixteen- to ten-bar phrase lengths, while the trio section teams a range of articulation across the ensemble from *staccato* viola quavers, a *legato* cello pedal and tripping paired slurs in the violin.

The *Adagio* and *Scherzo* that follow have the air of an operatic *scena* in their sudden shifts in dramatic tone, albeit drolly set. The D-minor *Adagio* features a haunting melody for viola and violin, coupled in octaves above the cello's determined broken chords and then interspersed with passages of capering D-major *Scherzo*. There follows an *Allegretto alla polacca* that became a popular work in its own right. Arranged for solo piano and published under the title 'Favourite Polonoise', the piece gained considerable currency at the turn of the century among the more modish of Viennese ladies. The *Andante quasi allegretto* follows with a theme and four variations, likely demonstrating Beethoven's studies with Haydn in its classical poise. The trio thereafter draws to a close with a rousing reprise of the *Marcia*.

Published in 1798, the three Op.9 trios were composed towards the end of Beethoven's 'first' period, as he began the quartets and two years before completing the First Symphony. Indeed, the trios assume a near-symphonic dimension in their breadth and intensity, mirroring Haydn in their four-movement structure and moving beyond a reliance on violin as soloist to treat the ensemble as a set of equals in a 'concertante' approach to chamber music. Composed and published as a set of three works (characteristic of Beethoven's early opus numbers, such as the first piano sonatas, piano trios and violin sonatas), the trios were dedicated to the extravagantly-named Count Johann Georg von Browne-Camus, a Russian army officer of Irish descent. The Count was a long-standing if highly idiosyncratic patron of Beethoven, renowned for presenting the composer with a horse in return for the *Wranitzsky Variations* (WoO.71) and duly noted by Beethoven to have been 'one of the strangest men'.

The **String trio in G major, Op.9 No.1** opens with a substantial *Adagio - Allegro con brio*. The slow introduction promises a certain scale and substance to the trio as a whole, and moves between an incisive *tutti* flourish and a teetering question-and-answer passed between violin and lower strings. Similar to the *Andante* of the Op.3 trio, an anacrusis figure forms a central motif of the movement, initially outshone by the charged ascent of the *Allegro's* first subject and the military bite of the second, but later playing a key role in the development and coda.

The *Adagio ma non tanto e cantabile* offers a lullaby's warmth in its repeated, lilting triplets. Opening with a spacious and lyrical melody in E major, there follows a series of cadenza-like violin figures before a shift in *tessitura* brings beautifully low, close scoring across the trio. The third-movement *Scherzo* and trio is a study in surprise. The structure is intriguingly fitful, with the C-major trio three times fading away seemingly mid-phrase before the return of the nimble G-major *scherzo*.

In the *finale*, a dashing *Presto*, Beethoven here deploys a full sonata-*allegro* form rather than a simpler *rondo* device. The two subject groups offer a striking contrast, the scampering *staccato* opening met by a smoothly arching, chromatic melody in violin and viola. The movement's close draws on the opening four-note motif which scurries across the trio before a witty piece of augmentation in the violin line stretches the first subject into crotchets, here over a dominant pedal. The ensemble resumes the quaver rush in a last ascending burst, bringing the trio to exuberant close.

The first of Beethoven's chamber works to begin *pianissimo*, the **String trio in D major, Op.9 No.2** opens with an agile *Allegretto*. The first subject group sets out two contrasting themes; an unfolding chorale with meandering violin solo followed by a decorative yet assertive figure based around twisting melodic turns. This is matched by a lilting second subject for violin and viola, formed of playful falling fifths followed unusually by a reprise of the turning motif. All three themes weave throughout the development, the chorale motif of the opening now used as a shrewd vehicle for harmonic exploration. The development concludes with the cello rendering the

second subject material at the instrument's highest register, which leads to a sprightly, intermittently-syncopated recapitulation and a playful coda.

The second-movement *Andante* begins soberly but develops into a sweet, aria-like lyricism. Indeed, Angus Watson connects Beethoven's studies in vocal composition with Salieri between 1797-1801 with a new melodic fluency in Beethoven's instrumental writing during the period. By contrast, the outer passages of the subsequent *Menuetto* are strident and fitful, featuring a series of unexpected *forte-piano* accents. The central section is sparse and whispered. Set around a regular crotchet rhythm it delves into increasingly mysterious diminished harmonies before the ebullience of the opening music returns.

The final movement deploys a familiar *Rondo* form rather than the more exploratory *Presto* of Op.9, No.1. The movement's dancing main theme is heard predominantly in the cello, marked 'solo', and its lilting four-quaver motif is used across the *Rondo's* various developmental episodes, before being heard in spinning repetition on the violin and viola at the movement's merry close.

Not surprisingly, the final work of the opus, the **String trio in C minor, Op.9 No.3**, stands as Beethoven's most powerful and assured composition in the genre. Sharing a key with some of his grandest works, including his Piano Sonata Op.13 (the 'Pathétique') of 1798 and the Fifth Symphony, the trio is suitably stormy in tone and heroic in scale, drawing effectively on the force of the trio's open G and C strings, so readily available in this key. The first-movement *Allegro con spirito* opens with a looming, descending four-note motif heard in octaves. The phrase binds the entire movement; in a series of double-stopped *sforzandi* to launch the development section, as a slithering means of modulation, and as a brooding countermelody and bass line in the recapitulation.

The *Adagio con espressione* second movement is in C major, a radiant counter to the stormy C minor of the first, and the only movement of the trio where a major key predominates. Yet the *Adagio* is also halting, the first theme comprised of question-

and-answer phrases uttered tentatively across the trio. The second theme is a more flowing contrapuntal exchange between violin and viola. Initially serene, the movement grows increasingly agitated in the development, both themes now peppered with *sforzandi*, and calm only arrives at the movement's gentle coda. The *Scherzo* that follows is a driving *Allegro molto e vivace*, which similarly races through no fewer than six keys in its first fourteen bars. The central C-major trio is marked *pianissimo* throughout, and evokes a particularly refined country dance in its lilting long-short rhythms and whispered horn-calls.

The trio closes with a puckish *rondo*. Marked *Presto*, the movement veers between the playful and the menacing; the first theme comprised of a reeling, chromatic run of triplets while the second offers a more lyrical melody but quickly flips from E \flat major to minor. Indeed, the movement flickers constantly between major and minor inflections, until the recapitulation restates the opening theme in C major and the trio draws to a humming, *pianissimo* close.

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