

Ludwig van
BEETHOVEN



Septet, Op. 20
Clarinet Trio, Op. 11

BERKELEY ENSEMBLE

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Septet, Op. 20
Clarinet Trio, Op. 11

Berkeley Ensemble

Sophie Mather *violin*

Dan Shilladay *viola*

Gemma Wareham *cello*

Lachlan Radford *double bass*

John Slack *clarinet*

Andrew Watson *bassoon*

Paul Cott *horn*

Libby Burgess *piano*

About the Berkeley Ensemble:

*‘Wit and polish [...] The playing is superb
throughout, the recording warm and clear’*
BBC Music Magazine

*‘[...] there is the high quality of the performances
by the Berkeley Ensemble, a malleable group which, like the Nash Ensemble,
can adapt itself to different formats and plays as if it were truly inside the music’*
The Daily Telegraph

Septet in E-flat major, Op. 20

- | | |
|--|--------|
| 1. Adagio – Allegro con brio | [9:27] |
| 2. Adagio cantabile | [9:01] |
| 3. Tempo di Menuetto & Trio | [3:07] |
| 4. Andante con Variazioni | [7:27] |
| 5. Scherzo & Trio | [3:02] |
| 6. Andante con moto alla Marcia – Presto | [7:29] |

**Trio for Clarinet, Cello and Piano
in B-flat major, Op. 11 ‘Gassenhauer’**

- | | |
|------------------------|--------|
| 7. Allegro con brio | [8:44] |
| 8. Adagio | [4:45] |
| 9. Tema con variazioni | [6:55] |

Total playing time	[60:04]
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Ludwig van Beethoven (1804) by Joseph Willibrord Mähler (1778–1860)

Ludwig van Beethoven: Septet, Op. 20 & Clarinet Trio, Op. 11

Beethoven's **Trio for Clarinet, Cello and Piano** dates from his early years in Vienna, where he had moved from his native Bonn in 1792. It was completed during the winter of 1797–98, although the first movement incorporates a theme sketched much earlier, while he was still in Bonn. Like most of his works from the late 1790s, the trio was probably written in response to a specific commission, but no details are known. The clarinet had become firmly established as a standard member of the orchestra during the previous two decades, and was increasingly being used as a solo instrument, as in some celebrated works by Mozart. Nevertheless there would have been limited demand for a clarinet trio, and so, to make the work more widely accessible, Beethoven wrote the top part for clarinet or violin. Typically violinistic effects such as very high notes or pizzicato are avoided, and double or triple stopping is used only occasionally. Conversely, he generally steered clear of characteristic clarinet sounds such as the use of low notes: only once does the clarinet part go too low for the violin, necessitating two different versions at

this point. Elsewhere there are only occasional differences between the clarinet and violin parts, and Beethoven contrived to employ a style that suits either instrument equally well, so that neither version sounds like an arrangement of the other.

The first movement is in standard sonata form with a repeated exposition, and the contrast between the bold unison opening and the quiet, chordal answering phrase is much exploited later on, with numerous sudden changes between loud and soft. In a piano trio like this one, the instrument most likely to be neglected is the cello, and so in the 'Adagio' Beethoven gives the main theme to this instrument before passing it to the clarinet. The piano is then in danger of missing out, but it follows the clarinet at a two-beat interval – creating some considerable rhythmic disruption since there are three beats in a bar. The movement is again in sonata form, this time without a repeat, and the piano part becomes increasingly decorative, so that at the return of the main theme the piano is given wonderful arabesques that swirl around the melody, which is now shared between cello and clarinet.

The finale consists of a theme and nine variations, followed by an extended coda. Uniquely in his chamber works Beethoven borrowed the theme from another composer – perhaps at the request of his sponsor. The theme is adapted from a vocal trio in the comic opera *L'amor marinaro*, by Joseph Weigl (1766–1846), which enjoyed a highly successful run after its premiere in Vienna on 15 October 1797. The original text reads: 'Pria ch'io l'impegno magistral prenda far vuo merenda' ('Before I take on this mighty commitment I want to make a snack'). Beethoven's variations are suitably humorous, with a mock-serious minor Variation Four, and the final variation leads via a trill into a lengthy coda that starts in the remote key of G major and different rhythm, before eventually returning to where it began.

Beethoven composed his **Septet in E-flat major, Op. 20** in 1799 during the period when he was working on his first set of string quartets, and immediately before composing his First Symphony. It was dedicated to no less a figure than Empress Marie Therese (1772–1807), wife of the Austrian emperor Franz, and may have been written specifically for her. She was a great music-lover with a large music library. The Septet received

its first private performance on 20 December 1799, with the ensemble being led by Beethoven's friend Ignaz Schuppanzigh. It was then performed publicly in the Burgtheater on 2 April 1800, in Beethoven's first-ever benefit concert. It was on this occasion that the dedication to Marie Therese was announced, although the work was not published with the dedication until over two years later. Its unusual scoring for violin, viola, cello, double bass, clarinet, horn and bassoon was always likely to limit the number of opportunities for performance, and so the work was soon being arranged for numerous other combinations of instruments. One of these arrangements, for piano, cello and clarinet or violin, was actually made by Beethoven himself and published as Op. 38. In these various guises the Septet became very widely played – so much so that Beethoven was eventually irritated by its extreme popularity, since he felt he had written many better works.

Whereas the serious genre of the string quartet generally had only four movements, music of the

divertimento type often had five or even six. By composing six movements in the Septet, Beethoven was signalling that it belonged in this divertimento category, and its generally melodious and elegant character confirms this. For the two extra movements he composed two different types of slow movement and two different types of minuet: the second and fourth movements are respectively a profound Adagio and a tuneful theme with variations, while the third and fifth consist of a stately, traditional minuet, typical of the eighteenth-century genre, and a rapid Beethovenian scherzo. By preceding the first and last movements with a slow introduction, Beethoven created eight different tempos, in which slow and fast ones neatly alternated. When the work was composed he could not provide precise tempo marks since Maelzel had not yet invented the metronome; but after he had done so around 1815 Beethoven took the trouble to provide metronome marks for each of the eight tempos.

Much of the music contains echoes of Mozart's style, but there are some distinctive Beethovenian features such as the intensity of some of the thematic

development, the lengthy codas, and the sudden shifts of mood or dynamic level that occur so frequently. After a slow introduction, the 'Allegro con brio' is in a very regular sonata form of exposition (repeated), development, recapitulation and coda. The second movement is a broad 'Adagio' in 9/8 time, and as in the first movement the themes are mostly given to the clarinet and violin. Again it starts out in sonata form, but the expected return of the second main theme does not materialise, being replaced by an extended coda.

Beethoven borrowed the theme of the third movement from the second movement of a piano sonata (Op. 49, No. 2), which he had composed some three years earlier. The sonata was still unpublished and he probably intended it to remain so, thus enabling him to use the theme in a different work without criticism. Later, however, his brother persuaded him to publish the two sonatas of Op. 49, which appeared in 1805. Only the main theme was adapted for the Septet, with the rest of the 'Tempo di Menuetto' being newly composed. Its central Trio section includes some spectacular figuration for horn, answered by arpeggios on the clarinet. For the fourth movement

Beethoven composed a 16-bar theme (with repeats) followed by five variations and a coda. The first variation is scored for just the three upper string instruments, with the melodic material shared between viola and cello; and the horn is omitted in each of the first three variations before returning for the fourth, which is in the minor. The final variation is closely modelled on the original theme, while the coda gives Beethoven the chance to break free from rigid variation structure and compose a more developmental ending.

The horn leads the way in the helter-skelter 'Scherzo', which is about three times as fast as the 'Menuetto' heard earlier. Its central 'Trio' section is dominated by a lovely melody in the cello's tenor register, and is often played at a slightly slower pace. The finale opens with a solemn march in E-flat minor, but this soon gives way to a very lively 'Presto'. This is again in sonata form, and the violin has an elaborate cadenza immediately before the recapitulation. Schuppanzigh was clearly a very accomplished violinist, judging by the demands Beethoven makes, here and elsewhere in the finale. Despite Beethoven's own

reservations, his Septet is an outstanding example of the divertimento genre, and is unmatched by any other septet before or since.

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This recording, made during the Berkeley Ensemble's tenth birthday year, would not have been possible without the support of our Friends and Trustees, whom we thank wholeheartedly for their past and ongoing support. We would specifically like to thank Richard Ireland and Chamber Studio for their guidance whilst preparing for this recording, and Jan Bonar and Simon Over, whose assistance, support and advice as trustees over our first decade has been invaluable.



Photography: Nigel Luckhurst

Berkeley Ensemble

Hailed as ‘an instinctive collective’ (*The Strad*) the Berkeley Ensemble was formed with the aim of exploring little-known twentieth- and twenty first-century British chamber music alongside more established repertoire. It now enjoys a busy concert schedule performing throughout the UK and abroad, and is also much in demand for its inspiring work in education.

The ensemble’s flexible configuration and collaborative spirit have led to performances with leading musicians including Sir Thomas Allen, Gabriel Prokofiev and Nicholas Daniel. Its numerous recordings have attracted critical acclaim, with *Lennox Berkeley: Chamber Works* selected by *BBC Music Magazine* as Chamber Choice (September 2015) and *Lennox Berkeley: Stabat Mater* nominated for a Gramophone Award (2017) and praised in the magazine’s initial review for ‘a performance of shimmering intensity’.

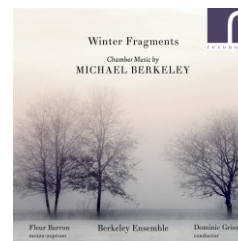
The group’s innovative and thought-provoking programming has received official recognition with a Help Musicians UK Emerging Excellence award and support from the PRS for Music Foundation. It

enthusiastically champions new music and has commissioned composers including Michael Berkeley, John Woolrich and Misha Mullov-Abbado. A frequent fixture of the festival circuit, the ensemble has performed at the Spitalfields, Cheltenham, Lake District Summer Music and Presteigne festivals, and curates the Little Venice Music Festival in London.

Engaging new audiences, most importantly through education, is central to the ensemble’s activities. Recent collaborations have included schemes with PRS for Music and Tŷ Cerdd, supporting emerging composers and generating new works. The group is also ensemble-in-residence at the University of Hull and Ibstock Place School, and runs an annual chamber music course in Somerset.

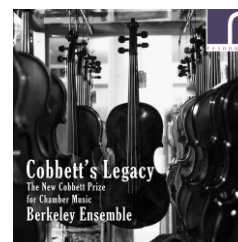
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