

# David MATTHEWS

## COMPLETE PIANO TRIOS

PIANO TRIO NO. 1, OP. 34

PIANO TRIO NO. 2, OP. 61

PIANO TRIO NO. 3, OP. 97

JOURNEYING SONGS, OP. 95, FOR SOLO CELLO

Leonore Piano Trio  
Gemma Rosefield, cello

FIRST RECORDINGS

# AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE

by David Matthews

I am a Londoner, born on 9 March 1943 in Walthamstow and brought up in nearby Leytonstone. I have lived in London for most of my life. Being near to Epping Forest as a child gave me a sense of closeness to the Essex countryside, and in my early teens I developed an intense interest in natural history. Nature and landscape have since become important influences on my music, as have painting – I draw and paint in an amateur way – and literature: my main recreation is reading. Recent pieces have been based on texts by Nietzsche, Baudelaire, Edwin Muir, Homer and Shakespeare.

I began to compose when I was sixteen, at the same time as my brother Colin, and for a number of years we were each other's only teachers, as there was no music at our school. I read Classics at Nottingham University, but I was determined to become a professional composer, and after leaving university I was helped by Deryck Cooke, whom Colin and I had met through our interest in Cooke's performing version of Mahler's Tenth Symphony (we both helped with the final orchestration). I started working for Faber Music, who are now my publishers, and became an assistant to Benjamin Britten for four years. At the same time I had composition lessons with Anthony Milner, and unofficial ones with Nicholas Maw; later I was much helped by the Australian composer Peter Sculthorpe. I have managed to pursue a freelance career without teaching full-time, though I supplement my income by editing, orchestrating film music, making arrangements, and writing programme notes and reviews. I have also written short books on Tippett and Britten.<sup>1</sup> I was artistic director of the Deal Music Festival for fifteen years, from 1989 to 2003.

As a composer I have continued along a path similar to that taken by Tippett and Britten: one rooted in the Viennese Classics – Beethoven above all – and also in Mahler, Sibelius and the early twentieth-century modernists. I have always been

<sup>1</sup> *Michael Tippett: An Introductory Study*, Faber & Faber, London, 1980; *Britten*, Haus Publishing, London, 2003.

a tonal composer, attempting to integrate the musical language of the present with the past, and to explore the rich traditional forms. I retain a firm commitment to a music that is grounded in song and dance, and is connected to the vernacular.

I have now written over 200 works, in almost all musical media except opera – a genre I hope to turn to. My interest in traditional forms has led to my composing nine symphonies, five symphonic poems, five concertos and thirteen string quartets. I enjoy close working relationships with a number of prominent musicians, in particular with the leader of the Kreutzer Quartet, Peter Sheppard Skærved, for whom I have written many solo pieces, including a cycle of fifteen fugues.<sup>2</sup>

## MY TRIO OF PIANO TRIOS

by David Matthews

It was Hans Keller who was responsible for my first attempt at a piano trio, a medium I find particularly appealing. Hans – the Austrian *émigré* writer, broadcaster, teacher, polemicist, above all superb musician – was a big influence on me in my youth. There was, perhaps, an element of irony in his obtaining a commission for me to write my Piano Trio No. 1 in 1983 for the Trio Zingara, as Hans had somewhat rigid views on the piano-trio medium: that since Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and Mendelssohn, hardly any composer has written a trio with a satisfactory balance between piano and strings. He particularly disapproved of Brahms' trios, and Ravel's – which I and most other musicians think is one of the masterpieces of the genre – was to him anathema. So I took especial care not to overload the piano part, and have continued to do so in my two subsequent trios. At the premiere of No. 1, I was much flattered by Hans' comment that it was 'better than Brahms'.

The first movement of No. 1 [1] is a concise sonata movement (there had to be at least one in a piece dedicated to Hans) in which the slow introduction is the source of

<sup>2</sup> Recorded by Peter Sheppard Skærved on Toccata Classics TOCC 0152.

the thematic material and is later integrated into the structure. The movement is much concerned with fierce development of its first three notes, a descending minor triad. The scherzo [2] was intended in part as a portrait of Hans. It is marked 'Drily humorous'; it is conversational, even argumentative, in manner; the opening theme has a somewhat Jewish character and another has a Viennese lilt, and there are some deliberate harmonic references to early Schoenberg. The movement has many changes of mood, but overall an intentional lightness of touch.

The slow movement [3] begins with a more or less literal transcription of a song from my cycle *The Golden Kingdom*, to words by Kathleen Raine. The poem is one of her visionary nature-poems, 'Bright Cloud'. Many of her poems at this time were written on the Hebridean island of Canna, which I happened to visit during the composition of the Trio. This was the first of a number of journeys to the West Highlands of Scotland, and I am sure that my initiation into that magical landscape and seascape had some influence on the character of my finale [4], which in place of any ambitious attempt at summing up, opts for utter simplicity: a long melody is presented three times, by violin, piano and cello in turn. For the third verse, the tonality slips down from G to G flat; the initial tonal centre of the first movement was F sharp, so we have returned home.

My Second Piano Trio was composed between March and September 1993 for the Chagall Trio. It is classical in shape and tonality: there are four movements, the *Adagio* being the longest. The first movement [5] is again a sonata allegro, but a particularly concise one. The concision is such that the first and second subjects, for instance, are recapitulated simultaneously. It is in A minor, with a coda in the major. The *Adagio* [6] is a memorial piece for my partner of ten years, the novelist Maggie Hemingway. It was written immediately after her death from a serious illness in May 1993, and is a slow barcarolle in D flat major (I had in mind her love of Venice, where her last novel, *Eyes*, was partly set). The scherzo [7], the last movement to be written since I had originally planned a three-movement piece, is based on scraps of vernacular melody. It is fiercely energetic. There is a trio, then a partial repeat of the scherzo before an abrupt coda – the kind of movement ending I have learned from Beethoven. The finale [8] has three

sections: the first and last are fantastic, with much use of string harmonics; the central section is a broad song.

The Third Trio was written in 2005 for The Chamber Music Company. In the first movement [9] I attempted something I tried out in the first movement of my Fourth Symphony: to build a movement out of a single melodic line, which is passed between the instruments. I carried out this scheme more strictly than I was eventually able to do in the Symphony: apart from some pedal points, there is no harmony until the tiny C major coda at the end. There are three ideas, presented on piano, cello and violin respectively, each markedly different in character. The three ideas are augmented, developed, and shared between the players; in the recapitulation (this is again a sonata movement), all three are played consecutively by the three instruments in octave unison.

The second movement, which makes full use of chromatic harmony and counterpoint, is twice as long as the first [10]. It is based on the same material, but inverted – that is to say, upside-down. I don't expect listeners necessarily to notice this fact, but it was a helpful compositional device. Again, the three ideas appear consecutively, and after a condensed repeat (the second theme appearing in counterpoint with the first), the main *Andante* tempo is interrupted by a brief scherzo, before a return to the *Andante* in which all three ideas, now in their original form, are combined in counterpoint. The movement, which had begun in A minor, ends in a gentle A major (the key also of the scherzo passage). The Trio is dedicated to my friend Alistair Hinton, the C major ending of whose magisterial String Quintet I chanced to hear for the first time very shortly after I'd sketched my own C major coda to my first movement, somehow confirming its rightness (both of us are well aware of Schoenberg's famous pronouncement about that key), and whose lowest-A-on-the-piano ending to his *Étude en forme de Chopin* I gratefully appropriated for my own final chord.

It has been an enormous pleasure for me to hear the Leonore Piano Trio play these pieces, first at Kings Place, London, together with Beethoven trios, then at the recording sessions. Their performances seem to me definitive.

*Journeying Songs* for cello solo began as a single piece composed in the autumn of 2004, much of it conceived on a long walk along the Suffolk coast in September that

year. The opening melody [11] is a ‘walking tune’ in C minor, and has a folkish character; in fact, there is a kinship with the Spanish/Arabic folksong ‘El Rey de Francia’, a setting of which Judith Weir wrote for piano quartet as a 50th-birthday present to me in 1993; so in return I dedicated this piece to her in her own 50th-birthday year. There are two distinct sections, played without a break: the first is a set of variations on the ‘walking tune’; the second, a further series of variations on the first part, but *Molto energico*. The coda returns to a slow tempo, and is a little Pastoral, with another version of the opening tune accompanied by distant horn-like calls.

The short interlude ‘Song for Elaine’ [12] was composed in July 2007 for Elaine Gould in celebration of her twenty years as chief editor for Faber Music. Elaine is also a cellist and the piece was written for her to play.

‘Song for Gemma’ [13] was written for Gemma Rosefield in the summer of 2008. It was composed during several journeys: begun at home in London, it was continued on a holiday in Crete, resumed at my seaside house in Deal, and finished on a trip to Helsinki. Whether all those places affected the character of the music I don’t know. The first part of the piece alternates *Andante trasognato* (‘dreaming’) and *Allegro appassionato* sections; the *Andante* opening in fact emerged out of a dream. The culmination of the third *Allegro* section is a broad, song-like tune: although not intended as a direct portrait of Gemma it is certainly a tribute to her intensely expressive playing, which I could hear in my mind all the time I was writing her piece. I later made it the chief theme of my Seventh Symphony.

It was while I was writing ‘Song for Gemma’ that I decided to put the three pieces together, and ideally they should be played as a group, though each piece can also be performed separately.

The **Leonore Piano Trio** brings together three internationally acclaimed artists – the violinist Benjamin Nabarro, cellist Gemma Rosefield and pianist Tim Horton – whose performances as part of Ensemble 360 were met with such enthusiastic responses that they decided to form a piano trio in their own right. The Trio has now given concerts throughout the UK, Italy and New Zealand. Recent highlights include performances at the Wigmore Hall and Kings Place in London, the Lakeside Arts Centre in Nottingham, the Holywell Music Room in Oxford and the Oslo Concert Hall. Recent festival appearances have taken place at the Bergen International Festival, Presteigne, Cambridge Summer Music, Little Missenden and the Leicester International Music Festival. Further highlights include a Beethoven project at Music in the Round in Sheffield comprising all Beethoven's piano trios, violin sonatas and cello sonatas, as well as the Leonore Piano Trio's own brand of family concerts.



Committed to contemporary music, the Trio has premiered *Holkam Beach*, a piece dedicated to it by Simon Rowland-Jones, and it plays the piano trios of a number of distinguished composers, among them Harrison Birtwistle, David Matthews and Huw Watkins.

For Hyperion the Leonore Piano Trio has recorded the two piano trios by Anton Arensky, about which *Gramophone* wrote 'it is hard to imagine playing of greater empathy', and the three trios by Édouard Lalo, which was selected as 'Disc of the Week' on BBC Radio 3 *Record Review* and which *The Sunday Times* described as 'remarkable'.

The website of the Trio can be found at <http://leonoretrio.com>.

Winner of the prestigious Pierre Fournier Award at the Wigmore Hall in 2007, **Gemma Rosefield** made her concerto debut at the age of sixteen when she won First Prize in the European Music for Youth Competition in Oslo. After her 2003 Wigmore Hall debut *The Strad* labelled her 'a mesmerising musical treasure'. She performs regularly on BBC Radio 3 and, outside the UK, has played widely throughout Europe, as well as in Japan, Kenya, Mexico, New Zealand, Russia and the USA. Gemma gives some fifty performances a year as cellist of Ensemble 360.



In 2011 Hyperion released a CD of Stanford's complete works for cello and orchestra with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and Andrew Manze. *BBC Music Magazine* considered the Stanford Concerto to be 'superbly played' and *Gramophone* commented that Gemma 'plays with disarming character and freshness; her technique too is enviably sure and tone beguilingly rounded'.

Recent concerto performances include the Dvořák with the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra under Vello Pähn in Tallinn, the Elgar at the Royal Festival Hall with the Philharmonia Orchestra under Christopher Warren-Green and the UK premiere of *Concello* by the Polish composer Maciej Zielinski at the Presteigne Festival.

Gemma studied with David Strange at the Royal Academy of Music and with Ralph Kirshbaum at the Royal Northern College of Music. She also studied with Johannes Goritzki, Bernard Greenhouse, Gary Hoffman and Zara Nelsova and has since performed with such eminent musicians as Julius Drake, Stephen Kovacevich, György Pauk and Menahem Pressler. She has a deep interest in contemporary music, and works have been written for her by James Francis Brown, Julian Dawes, Michael Kamen, David Knotts, Cecilia McDowall, David Matthews and Rhian Samuel.

She plays a cello made in Naples in 1704 by Alessandro Gagliano, formerly owned and played by the Prince Regent.

Her website can be found at [www.gemma-rosefield.co.uk](http://www.gemma-rosefield.co.uk).





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## DAVID MATTHEWS Complete Piano Trios

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### Piano Trio No. 1, Op. 34 (1983)

**18:35**

- 1 I *Lento – Allegro moderato* 4:36
- 2 II *Allegretto*. Drily humorous 4:40
- 3 III *Adagio* 5:15
- 4 IV *Molto moderato* 4:04

### Piano Trio No. 2, Op. 61 (1993)

**18:32**

- 5 I *Allegro* 3:17
- 6 II *Adagio* 7:00
- 7 III Scherzo: *Molto allegro* 3:42
- 8 IV *Allegro moderato – Andante con moto – Presto* 4:33

### Piano Trio No. 3, Op. 97 (2005)

**16:52**

- 9 I *Con vivacità* 6:00
- 10 II *Andante moderato* 10:52

### *Journeying Songs*, Op. 95, for solo cello (2004–8)

**20:36**

- 11 I Song for Judith: *Robusto* 11:25
- 12 II Song for Elaine: *Poco lento e quieto* 1:45
- 13 III Song for Gemma: *Andante trasognato – Allegro appassionato* 7:26

### Leonore Piano Trio 1–10

**TT 74:35**

### Gemma Rosefield, cello 11–13

FIRST RECORDINGS

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