

William
SHIELD

Complete Chamber Works • 2

String Trios Nos. 1–9

The Dorrit Ensemble



**William
SHIELD**
(1748–1829)

String Trio No. 9 in A major (1791)

- 1 I. Andante e cantabile
- 2 II. Allegro
- 3 III. Romance: Adagio
- 4 IV. Waltz

**String Trio No. 6 in B flat major
(1791)**

- 5 I. Allegro con spirito
- 6 II. Adagio cantabile
- 7 III. Allegro scherzando: Aria, alla Livonia

**String Trio No. 1 in E flat major
(1791)**

- 8 I. Allegro
- 9 II. Largo
- 10 III. Giuoco: Alla Sclavonia Tempo Straniere
con variazione. Non troppo presto

String Trio No. 2 in D major (1791)

- 11 I. Allegro
- 12 II. Molto adagio
- 13 III. Rondeau: Allegro

10:19

- 0:46
- 4:32
- 1:50
- 3:11

11:37

- 4:07
- 3:55
- 3:35

8:04

- 3:51
- 2:15
- 1:58

11:59

- 5:44
- 1:26
- 4:49

String Trio No. 3 in A major (1791)

- 14 I. Allegro
- 15 II. Andante e Grazioso
- 16 III. Un Giuoco: Scherzando

String Trio No. 4 in E major (1791)

- 17 I. Larghetto cantabile
- 18 II. Allegro agitato
- 19 III. Rondo moderato e semplice

String Trio No. 5 in C minor (1791)

- 20 I. Larghetto e sostenuto
- 21 II. Tempo di ciaccona

String Trio No. 7 in G major (1791)

- 22 I. Allegro
- 23 II. Larghetto Siciliano
- 24 III. Rondo: Allegro

String Trio No. 8 in F major (1791)

- 25 I. Allegro
- 26 II. Romance: Andantino
- 27 III. Giuoco: Tempo Straniere

8:07

- 3:31
- 2:12
- 2:24

8:08

- 1:46
- 2:36
- 3:46

7:34

- 2:13
- 5:21

7:28

- 3:13
- 1:49
- 2:26

10:28

- 4:45
- 2:56
- 2:47

William Shield (1748–1829)

Complete Chamber Works • 2

1791 was an eventful year for William Shield – he met Haydn, travelled extensively and, according to his friend the oboist William Parke, he laid down plans for his retirement: ‘Mr. Shield did not accept any public engagement after his return from the continent and devoted himself to study’. While in Rome he eagerly set about composing nine string trios for a series of private performances; these works were written in the space of a few weeks.

William Shield, born in Swalwell, County Durham, was taught the violin by his father but music lessons were suspended when the death of his father saw the boy apprenticed to a Tyneside boat-builder. Shield soon extricated himself from the apprenticeship to take up violin and composition with Charles Avison. His reputation as a concert performer spread rapidly, and, on the advice of Felice Giardini, he travelled south to London where he secured the position of first violin, later first viola, in the orchestra of the King’s Theatre in the Haymarket. The opera repertoire seems to have stimulated Shield into writing his own stage music, and *The Flich of Bacon* (1778), written for the Haymarket Little Theatre, was a hit. About this time the viola player William Napier became Shield’s publisher, issuing two sets of violin duets as *Op. 1* (c. 1779) and *Op. 2* (c. 1780). Following his appointment at Covent Garden, Shield wrote a string of successful operas and pantomimes; the most popular were afterpieces, for example *Rosina* (1782), *The Poor Soldier* (1783), and *The Farmer* (1787), but his mainpieces, for example *Robin Hood* (1784), *Fontainbleau* (1784), and *The Noble Peasant* (1784), contain high-range arias of Queen of the Night-like difficulty. Haydn attended an early performance of *The Woodman* (1791), and he and Shield became friends. Shield often said that he learned more about music in the company of Haydn than from any other source, and Haydn, impressed by Shield’s ability to write extended arias with colourful concertante wind parts, presented him with a copy of *Pietà di me*. During 1791 Shield travelled abroad and began work on a set of string trios (1796) and two musical anthologies – *An Introduction to Harmony* (1800) and *The Rudiments of Thoroughbass* (1815). Shield, appointed Master of the King’s Music in 1817, wrote the last of all court odes. He was buried in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey, and willed his Stainer viola to George IV.

Shield embraced the experiences he gained through travel. In newly-liberated Paris he absorbed ideas on enlightened cosmopolitanism, and when crossing the Mont-Cenis pass to Italy he collected Russian folk songs from fellow travellers. Moving south, Shield enjoyed opera productions in Turin, Milan, Bologna, Florence and Sienna, before wintering in Rome. Here, he was hosted by Jacob More (1740–1793), an Edinburgh-born painter, whom Shield may first have met under the patronage of George, Seventh Baron Kinnaird, a Scottish representative peer and the dedicatee of Shield’s *Op. 3* quartets. It was probably More who encouraged Shield to write new works for home concerts but no performance details are cited in contemporary sources. When More died in 1793, Shield was moved to collect six string trios as a memorial volume published by Longman and Broderip (1796); the other three remained unpublished.

Shield’s trios, written for a continental audience, are seminal works in the composer’s output and mark a new level of compositional attainment in the English chamber music repertory. Technically, they contain a wide variety of ideas that are developed with great ingenuity and while there is no shortage of melody and accompaniment, in which the violin takes the lead, there are many memorable solos for the viola and the cello in high register.

The opening *Allegro* of *Trio No. 1* gets going with a theme sporting a two quaver plus minim motif first presented on violin, then viola, followed by cello; the short second movement, graced with a ‘Scotch-snap’ rhythm, is played on muted strings, while the finale, a set of variations in quintuple time, is marked *Alla Sclavonia* (‘Slavonic Style’). The *Allegro* of the innovative *Trio No. 2* is virtuosic in scope and thoroughly worked out; a wistful *Adagio* follows, and a rondo finale in the folk style of Shield’s best-known song *The Ploughboy*. The *Allegro* from *Trio No. 3* includes vigorous passagework for each instrument and a two quaver plus minim motif is picked up in the development; the *Andante e Grazioso* allows itself a boldly pulsating middle section in the tonic minor, and finally, there is an ingenious *scherzo* in quintuple time. An expressive cantabile, marked ‘sotto voce’ with a sighing melodic line first presented on viola, opens *Trio No. 4*: a vigorous movement follows, bristling with syncopated rhythm and scalic passagework (though with an easeful second idea), and then a quiet rondo. *Trio No. 5* opens with ceremonial dotted rhythms that sound almost Baroque, while a concluding rondo, marked *Tempo di ciaccona*, imitates the stylistic traits of Spanish dance with castanets. A fanfare opening to *Trio No. 6 (Allegro con spirito)* is picked up to animate the development, while a lilting second movement unfolds with an eloquent theme in viola then passed to the violin; the finale, marked *alla Livonia* was probably based on a folk song Shield collected from Russian travellers when travelling over the Mont-Cenis pass.

The sonata-form *Allegro* of *Trio No. 7* kicks off with a lively triadic theme and a central *Siciliano* movement is followed by a *Rondo* that keeps all three players on their toes. The triadic motif opening the first movement of *Trio No. 8* is picked up for the development before leading into a long viola solo; thereafter, a tender *Romance: Andantino* and finale, in quintuple time, that conjures up the thrum of folk instruments. The final trio (*No. 9*) is cast in four movements: a serene *cantabile*; an *Allegro* with a Haydnesque first theme; a cello-led *Romance*; and a *Waltz* to close.

Altogether, the trios represent a dazzling range of moods and style with each work demonstrating Shield’s mastery of the medium, both in his treatment of individual instruments and in the handling of textures. Aesthetically, they blend ‘popular’ and ‘learned’ taste along with ‘orchestral’ splendour and 18th-century notions of beauty.

Robert Hoskins

The Dorrit Ensemble



The Dorrit Ensemble is dedicated to performing chamber music from early Classical repertoire to the music of today, and approaches previously unrecorded works with musical skill and maturity. The ensemble is based at the Elder Conservatorium, one of Australia's leading tertiary music institutions, at The University of Adelaide. Its core members are University of Adelaide lecturers Elizabeth Layton and Edith Salzmänn, and they are joined on this recording by Caroline Henbest from the Australian National Academy of Music. For project work, they are also joined by other renowned Australian and New Zealand musicians, such as Michael Endres and Konstantin Shamray. The Dorrit Ensemble has been performing regularly throughout Australia and New Zealand since 2019. Members of the ensemble are regularly invited to perform and tour for chamber music presenters such as Musica Viva Australia, and they are in demand at festivals throughout Australia, Europe and North America, often performing with the world's most well-known musicians. www.elizabethlayton.net www.carolinehenbest.com

www.artaria.com

Sources

The sources upon which the editions used in this recording have been made are:

String Trios Nos. 1–6

Edited by Robert Hoskins – Artaria Editions AE347–352
Oxford, Bodleian Library: Mus.Instr.I 214(15) (Longman & Broderip,
1796)

String Trio No. 7 in G major

Edited by Robert Hoskins – Artaria Editions AE427
London, The British Library (Ms.Add.51015)

String Trio No. 8 in F major

Edited by Robert Hoskins – Artaria Editions AE428
London, The British Library (Ms.Add.51015)

String Trio No. 9 in A major

Edited by Robert Hoskins – Artaria Editions AE429
London, The British Library (Ms.Add.51015)



English composer William Shield was famous for his operas and pantomimes. He was admired by Haydn who was to prove a lasting influence, and rose to become Master of the King's Music despite coming from a relatively poor background. His *String Trios* from 1791 were written in Rome and mark a striking new level of compositional attainment in the English chamber music repertory of the time. Shield's scores are studded with an enlightened cosmopolitanism, encoding Spanish, Russian, Slavonic and Haydnesque elements, cast in his ingenious and lyrically attractive blend of styles.



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(1748–1829)



String Trios Nos. 1–9 (1791)

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|--------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| 1–4 | No. 9 in A major | 10:19 |
| 5–7 | No. 6 in B flat major | 11:37 |
| 8–10 | No. 1 in E flat major | 8:04 |
| 11–13 | No. 2 in D major | 11:59 |
| 14–16 | No. 3 in A major | 8:07 |
| 17–19 | No. 4 in E major | 8:08 |
| 20–21 | No. 5 in C minor | 7:34 |
| 22–24 | No. 7 in G major | 7:28 |
| 25–27 | No. 8 in F major | 10:28 |

FIRST COMPLETE RECORDING

The Dorrit Ensemble

Elizabeth Layton, Violin

Caroline Henbest, Viola • Edith Salzmann, Cello

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

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