

PIZZETTI 1880-1968

Sonata in F (1921)

Largo

Molto concitato e angoscioso

Stanco e triste

Pizzetti was above all a composer of operas and choral works and his musical personality was intimately bound up with the problems of Italian Opera during the first decades of the century. Unfortunately his operas have not been widely performed outside Italy, and our knowledge of his music is largely confined to a small number of chamber and piano works, among which the cello sonata is probably the best known.

The sonata was the result of an intimate personal experience, the loss of a beloved companion, and it is characteristic that the very first phrase of the cello part should have the rhythm and shape of the name 'Maria', and that this phrase should provide a clue to the meaning of the work as a whole. The three movements do in fact depict three aspects of this emotional experience, grief, a revolt against the power of destiny, and finally a purification and serene contemplation of death. The forms are mainly rhapsodic, and the themes vocal in contour as one would expect in an operatic composer. The modal, almost Gregorian, nature of some of the themes blends well with an entirely personal harmonic language which has much in common with French music of the time. But the whole conception is fundamentally dramatic, and it seems as though the two instruments have quite distinct roles to play in the unfolding of the drama. While the piano evokes and describes the events the cello expresses the actual sufferings of the composer.

The whole is a moving personal document and one of the most important twentieth-century works for the medium. K.L.

Next concert : Thursday 7 December

TUNNELL STRING TRIO

SCHUBERT Trio in B flat, D. 581

JOUBERT Trio, opus 30 (1959)

WEBERN Trio, opus 20 (1927)

BEETHOVEN Serenade (Trio in D), opus 8

14

EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY CONCERTS

1972-73

THE TUNNELL STRING TRIO

JOHN TUNNELL *violin*

BRIAN HAWKINS *viola*

CHARLES TUNNELL *cello*

Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 7 December 1972

SCHUBERT 1797-1828

Trio in B flat for violin, viola and cello, D.581

I Allegro moderato

II Andante

III Allegro : Menuetto—Trio—Menuetto

IV Allegretto : Rondo

Schubert's earliest chamber works were written for domestic music-making. Like Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and Mendelssohn, he played the viola; his brothers were violinists and his father played the cello. From the age of thirteen he wrote, or at least started, two or more chamber works every year; between 1810 and 1816 he composed about two dozen assorted pieces for small groups of instruments, the majority of them intended for performance by the family string quartet. The first quartets, a group of three, which date from 1812, are experimental works, exploring the idea of progressive tonality. Those written in the following years, often strongly influenced by Haydn, are compact and unpretentious, though their distinctive lyricism and individualistic modulations foretell the later master.

In the autumn of 1816 Schubert left his family home and his teaching post as his father's assistant at the Liechtental School, and devoted most of his energies to composition. The main result of this move was a reassertion of his interest in the piano: four complete piano sonatas date from 1817. In the same year he composed the B flat String Trio, the last chamber work written before the *Trout* Quintet of 1819. The B flat Trio is the only complete work extant for this combination (of the earlier string trio D.471, also in B flat, only the first movement and a fragmentary *Andante* survive). It is a concise work, doubtless written for domestic consumption; the prominence given to the viola part suggests Schubert's own participation in its performance. The Italianate lyricism of its *Andante* and the Haydnesque qualities of its last two movements have led some commentators to dismiss the work simply as an essay in eighteenth-century style; but to do so is to disregard the essentially Schubertian features of the score—the poise of its thematic exposition, its characteristic tonal surprises, the beauty of its string texture—which rather suggest that this is a chamber work of Schubert's early maturity.

The opening *Allegro moderato* is a lyrical, song-like movement, from which the conventional sonata element of conflict is almost totally absent. Its exposition section lacks a contrasting cantabile idea; instead, the opening theme appears transformed in the dominant key, with a more distinctive rhythmic motive reserved

for the closing bars of this section. There is little real development, but central to the whole movement is a rhapsodic version of the main theme in the remote key of F sharp minor, after which the return to B flat is effected with typical Schubertian panache. The aria-like *Andante* continues the process of tonal exploration. The opening theme, in F major, has a false reprise in D flat major, which then breaks off dramatically; its central section in F minor, then A flat major, touches constantly on 'false' notes; in the final section A flat is again highlighted, before the richly ornamented last statement of the main theme, and the wry, virtuosic coda.

The *Menuetto* has the lilt and charm of Viennese popular music, but also a kaleidoscopic quality in its modulations that are readily associated with mature Schubert. The E flat major *Trio* continues strongly rhythmic, its melodic element allotted entirely to the viola. The last movement is a dynamic and dance-like rondo. There are three identical statements of the main theme, separated by episodes which contrast not only thematically, but in their entire musical character. They are rhapsodic and improvisatory, full of unexpected tonal shifts.

R.McA.

JOHN JOUBERT b.1927

String Trio opus 30 (1959)

(First performance in Scotland)

Adagio sostenuto

Scherzo (Presto—Trio; meno mosso)

Lento

My string trio was commissioned by the Birmingham Chamber Music Society and first performed in 1960 at one of the Society's Concerts. It was played on that occasion by three members of the Wang Quartet, but was subsequently taken up by the Oromonte String Trio who gave it its first broadcast performance. The Tunnell String Trio gave their first performance of the work at a concert of my chamber music given during the Birmingham Triennial Festival of 1971. The trio is in three movements. The first is an intense adagio whose middle section features cadenza-like passages for each of the instruments in turn. The second is a fast, muted scherzo with a more tranquil central trio. The third and final movement is a slow chromatic fugue.

J.J.

INTERVAL

WEBERN 1883-1945

String Trio opus 20

I Sehr langsam

II Sehr getragen und ausdrucksvoll—Zart bewegt

The String Trio opus 20, written in 1927, was an important landmark in the development of Webern's music. It was not only his first instrumental work written according to Schoenberg's twelve-note method; it was also his first purely instrumental work since the Three Little Pieces for Cello and Piano written thirteen years previously, and his first work on a large scale (it lasts nine and a half minutes) since the opus 1 *Passacaglia* of 1908. These facts are, of course, inter-related. Webern himself stated in one of his lectures that 'only after Schoenberg pronounced the law did longer forms become possible again'. His first three serial works are vocal: the Three Traditional Rhymes opus 17, the Three Songs opus 18, and the Two Songs opus 19; with the String Trio began his all-important search for form in twelve-note music. Schoenberg had begun by applying the serial method to the classical forms of tonality: to those of the Suite—Gavotte, Musette, Minuet, etc.—in the piano pieces of opus 25, and to those of the Sonata in the four-movement Wind Quintet of 1924. But the techniques of classical theme construction and working-out which Schoenberg was able to re-apply in a serial context were alien to Webern's revolutionary musical language. There was no possibility of his achieving half-hour-long sonata structure. A third movement for the Trio was begun, then discarded, and its resultant two-movement framework became standard for many of the longer instrumental works which followed: the Symphony opus 21, the Saxophone Quartet opus 22 and the Piano Variations opus 27. The slow first- and fast second-movement format of the Trio (the *Sehr getragen* introduction to movement II replaces the classical middle movement) is also used in the Symphony and Quartet.

The first movement of the Trio is built up as a variant of classical rondo form, in which, according to Webern's principle of endless variation, all the repeated material is considerably transformed. (This led Stravinsky, in an exuberance of self-justification, to compare Webern's methods with his own, i.e. that Webern's use of classical form was also, in a sense, 'historical'—"Take for example the Rondo of Webern's Trio: the music is marvellously interesting but no one could recognise it as a Rondo.") In fact Webern's layout of the movement ensures that something of its rondo feeling is bound to come

over to the listener. Its format is: Introduction—A—B—A—C—C—Introduction—A—B—A—Coda. Most of these sections are separated one from another by 'rit . . . tempo' markings, and each has its distinctive pace: B, for example, moves roughly twice as fast as A. Both A and C have recognisable themes, one seven and the other nine bars long, which emerge as the top of verticalised presentations of the row—which helps in the exposition of the overall structure.

Movement II is in sonata form, and here, as in the first movement of the Symphony opus 21, Webern helps one's aural grasp of the longer form by means of an exact repetition of the exposition section. Within this longer section, also, there are sufficient contrasts in texture to promote one's awareness of the architecture of the musical form: the 'first subject' is lyrical, with an expansive melody in the first violin, in the 'transition' short motives in triplets are exchanged between the instruments, the 'second subject' has arpeggio-like fragments in dotted rhythm, and the 'codetta' begins *con legno*. These units retain their basic features in the recapitulation, despite the considerable transformation of their detail. Nonetheless, the second movement of the Trio is one of Webern's most difficult works for the listener, and for many years it gave its composer a succession of disheartening experiences from both public and performers.

R.McA.

BEETHOVEN 1770-1827

String Trio in D major, opus 8 (Serenade)

I *Marcia (Allegro)—Adagio*

II *Menuetto (Allegretto)*

III *Adagio—Scherzo (Allegro molto)*

IV *Allegretto alla Polacca*

V *Andante quasi Allegretto—Marcia (Allegro)*

Not much is known of the history of Beethoven's Serenade opus 8 beyond the fact that its publication was announced in the *Wiener Zeitung* on 7 October 1797 by the publishers Artaria & Co. Sketches for the work were apparently found along with those for the G major Piano Trio opus 1 no. 2, known to be written in 1795; and so its composition would seem to date from then, or slightly later. That Beethoven published the Serenade so soon after its completion is doubtless an indication of the popular demand for light-weight chamber music of this sort. He later authorised an arrangement of it as a Notturmo

for piano and viola, which was published in 1804 and given the opus number 42—though probably not by Beethoven.

The Serenade is a charming and totally unpretentious work, hardly suited to the conventional solemnity of concert-hall performance. Its opening French march is repeated at the end, and in between there are five short, mainly dance movements, whose structures are simple and concise—two- and three-part forms, simple rondos and a set of variations (the *Andante quasi Allegretto* movement); the *Adagio* of movement I is the most 'serious' in mood, a ternary structure whose main theme is rhapsodically ornamented in the repeat. The *Menuetto* and *Trio* recalls some of Haydn's early quartet movements, its brief horn-call coda supporting the allusion. Movement III is a rondo structure, in which a song-like theme in the minor mode alternates with a breathless scherzo, dramatically abbreviated on its second appearance. In the *alla Polacca*—also a rondo—the cello emerges as soloist in the second episode, with a high, floating line whose range extends to E, two octaves above middle C. The penultimate set of variations are of the decorative sort, each instrument in turn offering a virtuosic exposition of the theme.

R.McA.

Next concert: 11 January

THE EDINBURGH QUARTET

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15

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Miles Baster Austin Patterson

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Reid Concert Hall, Thursday 11 January 1973