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EDINBURGH
UNIVERSITY
CONCERTS

1973-74

ORION PIANO TRIO

PETER THOMAS *violin*

SHARON McKINLEY *cello*

IAN BROWN *piano*

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BEETHOVEN 1770-1827

Trio in E flat for piano, violin and violoncello, op.70 no.2

Poco sostenuto—allegro ma non troppo

Allegretto

Allegretto ma non troppo

Finale—Allegro

A year in which a composer sees the publication of seven major works must be accounted as a good year. The compositions of Beethoven which were first made public in 1809 were the cello sonata in A, opus 69, the two trios, opus 70, the violin concerto and the fourth, fifth and sixth symphonies. Every one of these, along with his entire output up to his piano sonatas, opus 31, shows his unflinching belief in the sonata and rondo types of composition as an increasingly valid way of projecting the essence of drama into sound. The trio in E flat from opus 70, and indeed its partner in D, opus 70 no.1, offer in their outer movements a concentrated working out of thematic gestures rather than the long melodic strains of the 'cello sonata in A major. In the E flat trio Beethoven constructs, after his five previous essays in trio writing, a continuity built upon the difference between the strings and keyboard, in short and concentrated ideas which use the ornaments of an earlier time quite copiously, a feature which in Beethoven's hands can so often become fixed and thematic. The *Finale* finds him making time to state twice over, where once usually suffices, the thematic idea perhaps to be called the most memorable of the whole work, so much so that it is tempting to imagine Liszt re-casting it for his own purposes in his first piano concerto. The second movement seems to be laden with affectionate remembrances of past forms and devices, with its gavotte-like opening and its recalling of Haydn's fondness for proceeding from major to minor and back, while the third movement takes the familiar Minuet and Trio through many new moments of enchantment. C.K.

MARTIN DALBY b.1942

Trio for violin, cello and piano (1967)

Martin Dalby's Piano Trio was commissioned by the University of Glasgow under the terms of the McEwen bequest and was first performed in Glasgow in 1967 by the Scottish Trio. It is in four movements and the music is largely concerned with the contrast and, more important, blend of the two forces—the piano and the two stringed instruments. The first and last movements have the outward features of classical sonata form; the

second movement is a scherzo and the third an impressionistic slow movement. The weight of the work lies in the last movement where references to material already heard in the other movements are made. M.D.

INTERVAL

RAVEL 1875-1937

Trio in A minor

Très modéré

Pantoum—vif

Passacaille—très large

Final—très vif

A notable feature of Ravel's output is the fact that he chose never to repeat a form of composition, once he had brought it to life in his own way. In the characteristic sound of his music one can recognise a chosen path, but the direction and shape of a work was in each case a unique experience. In fact he may have unconsciously lived up to the condition of musical criticism described by Roland-Manuel in his study of Ravel, referring to the early years of this century, when 'criticism was imbued with romantic subjectivism, requiring each composer to live in a world apart, possessing not only his own harmonic vocabulary but also his own peculiar brand of diction'.

The trio was completed in 1914, according to Ravel writing to his friend Lucien Garban, by doing five months' work in five weeks, since he hoped fervently to have a chance to fight for his country. Its first movement may reflect a project which he had begun in 1913, never to be completed, which was to compose a piano concerto on Basque themes. The real reason for the ultimate abandoning of this project must have been his instinct warning him that national melodies had their limitations, and a character which would be damaged or lost by being subjected to the processes of extended composition. However, in 1914 he still writes of the temporary impossibility of working on the concerto, since the material he had collected for it was elsewhere. During this time of waiting for a chance to join up, Ravel was working on two compositions which reveal his taste for the past, through the homage of imagination rather than through any actual imitation. The evocation of ancient Greece had claimed him earlier in the ballet *Daphnis and Chloe*; now it was the turn of his orchestral poem *La Valse* and the beginnings of *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, an admiring glance back to the traditions of the Clavecinistes, to occupy the composer. C.K.