

Program Notes by Dr. Peter Miyamoto



Ludwig van Beethoven

Piano Trio No. 1 in E-flat Major, Op.1, No. 1 (1795)

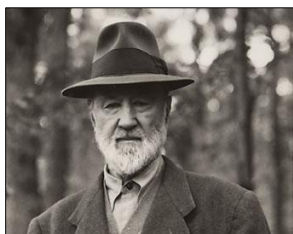
Although the works we know as Beethoven's first published works are the Three Piano Trios Op. 1, in truth he had already published a set of Piano Variations on a March by Dressler, WoO 63 in his Bonn years, and had actually completed a piano concerto, nine quartets, four trios, a quintet a wind octet, and fifteen piano pieces and some thirty songs among other compositions. Beethoven's plan to move to Vienna in 1792 in order to study with Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was thwarted by the revered composer's death in 1791; instead Beethoven found himself studying with Franz Joseph Haydn, himself an accomplished composer of the piano trio. Indeed, the spirit of Haydn permeates Beethoven's early set of trios.

In 1793 or 1794, a performance of the three piano trios was arranged at the home of Prince Karl Lichnowsky, the set's dedicatee, one of Beethoven's important patrons, and the later dedicatee of the *Pathétique* Sonata. The performance included an impressive list of Vienna's musical intelligentsia and marked Beethoven's arrival on the city's musical scene. Beethoven's student, Ferdinand Ries, commented about the event:

Most of the artists and music lovers were invited, especially Haydn, for whose opinion all were eager. The trios were played, and at once commanded extraordinary attention. Haydn also said many pretty things about them, but advised Beethoven not to publish the third, in C Minor. This astonished Beethoven since he considered the third the best of the trios. Consequently, Haydn's remark left a bad impression on Beethoven, and led him to think that Haydn was envious, jealous and ill-disposed toward him.

In the Piano Trio in E-flat Major, Op. 1, No. 1, one hears Haydnesque humor throughout the first movement, paired with harmonic innovation and unprecedented virtuosity. The spaciousness of the second movement's vocal lines contains an expressivity that was particularly striking to the audience, and the shift to C Major at the movement's climax is an early example of the thirds-relationship modulations that would become standard fare for later Romantic Composers like Schubert. Even in this first, four-movement trio, Beethoven replaces the expected third movement Menuet with a humorous Scherzo. The final movement Rondo, opening with its large leaps of the interval of a tenth in the piano, is again Haydnesque in its humor.

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Charles Ives

Piano Trio (1904/1911)

The modern American composer Charles Ives wrote his Piano Trio between 1904-1911, and significantly revised it between 1911-1914. It is a remembrance of Ives' college days at Yale, and on the title page, Ives left alternative titles for the work of "Trio Yalensia & Americana – Fancy Names" and "Real Names- Yankee jaws – at Mr. (or Eli's) Yale's School of nice bad boys."

Ives called the first movement "a short but serious talk, to those on the Yale fence, by an old Professor of Philosophy. It consists of 27 measures repeated three times, first sounded with just cello and piano parts, then just the violin and piano parts, and finally with all three parts.

The second movement Presto, titled TSI AJ ("this scherzo is a joke), was said by Ives to describe "games and antics by the students on a Holiday afternoon, and some of the tunes and songs of those days were suggested in this movement, sometimes in a rough way." The movement is one of Ives' funniest, and features polytonality and a plethora of musical quotations, including the Delta Kappa Epsilon tune "A Band of Brothers in DKE," "The Campbells Are Comin," "My Old Kentucky Home," "Marching Through Georgia," "Long Long Ago," "Pig Town Fling," and "Ta-ra-ra-Boom-de-ay" among others.

The lyrical third movement is the longest. After an introduction and violin recitative, the movement alternates sweeping melodies with contrasting syncopated sections. The movement quotes "The All Enduring," a song that Ives wrote for the Yale Glee Club that was rejected. Ives called the movement a remembrance of a Sunday Service, and the cello quotes Thomas Hastings' hymn, "Rock of Ages" in the movement's coda.



Felix Mendelssohn

Piano Trio No. 2 in C Minor, Op. 66 (1845)

Composed in April 1845, Mendelssohn's Piano Trio No. 2 in C Minor, Op. 66 was written while Mendelssohn was leading a hectic professional life as conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, founding director of a new conservatory of music, and a much-in-demand guest conductor and pianist all over German. The Piano Trio No.

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2 in C Minor has in some ways been overshadowed in popularity by the Piano Trio No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 49, but it is in no way a lesser work.

An impassioned restlessness pervades the opening *Allegro energico e con fuoco*, only momentarily relieved by the lyrical second theme. The movement features an extensive development, and concludes in an explosive Coda that builds upon the already brilliant piano writing found throughout the movement. The second movement first presents a lilting theme in the piano, in the style of a *Song Without Words*. The piano's opening is followed by a continuation of the theme in the strings with a waltz-like accompaniment texture in the piano part. The movement's middle section is a poignant, impassioned dialogue between the instruments sustained by the flowing accompaniment part in the piano. The sprightly *scherzando* third movement is a dark variant of Mendelssohn's *Scherzo* from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, bustling with energy throughout. The finale's opening minor ninth signals the return to a more serious sound world, at times almost Brahmsian in weight. The master stroke of the movement is the sudden appearance of a theme evoking a Lutheran chorale. The work ends with a triumphant, symphonic coda in C Major.

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