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Seraphim Trio





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Program

Thursday, 18 November 2021, 7.30pm
Adelaide Town Hall

Anna Goldsworthy *piano*
Helen Ayres *violin*
Simon Cobcroft *guest cello*

Joseph HAYDN (1732-1809)

Piano Trio No. 43 in C major, Hob XV:27 (1797) 20 min

- I *Allegro*
- II *Andante*
- III *Finale. Presto*

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Piano Trio in B-flat major, Op. 97 'Archduke' (1811) 45 min

- I *Allegro moderato*
- II *Scherzo. Allegro*
- III *Andante cantabile ma però con moto*
- IV *Allegro moderato*

With special thanks to our Ensemble Patrons Stephen and Michele Johns and Anonymous for their support of this concert. And to our Concert Champions: Don and Veronica Aldridge.

About the Music

Haydn's piano trios date in their majority from his mature years and contain some of his most beautiful music. That they are not as often performed as their musical value would warrant is probably due to their strangely archaic, uneven scoring. The lion's share of the presentation falls to the piano, making them somewhat unrewarding to the violin and even more so to the cello which has little more to do than sustain and sometimes play around the left-hand part of the piano — a contribution to sonority which is not negligible as such but nowhere near the tasks which Mozart, Beethoven and later composers allotted to the instrument. This peculiarity may derive from the practice prevalent in Haydn's youth for piano and violin sonatas with a supporting bass instrument, or else it may have been adopted to suit the limitations of a particular class of performers envisaged for these works at the time.

The C major trio, No. 3 in the popular printed editions, was written in the mid-1790's. The first *Allegro* shows the manly, dignified sprightliness which is characteristic of Haydn the musician and the man, and which was ever deepening and widening as he advanced in years. The *Andante* features a melodious, lyrical section in A major and a more restless A minor middle part after which the main section returns. The fleet-footed C major *Finale* abandons itself to high spirits to such a degree that it more than once plunges headlong into darker harmonies — seemingly to its own surprise — only

to emerge again in alternate fiery and radiant moods. The momentum of the movement is sustained and presses on to a rousing conclusion which is characteristic of Haydn's greatest chamber works.

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The opening of **Beethoven's** 'Archduke' Trio, for the piano alone, declares a breadth, and promises a vast scale of musical conception and a calm nobility — amply fulfilled in all that follows. Beethoven, seemingly, was in an optimistic mood — it was the year of his emotional involvement with his 'immortal beloved', 1811, in which he completed only this major work. He told his factotum Schindler that its first movement 'dreams only of happiness and contentment. There is also some mischief, serene banter and caprice.' Although the final manuscript of the score dates from 1814-15, this was presumably a revision, since it also bears an inscription indicating that it was composed between 3 and 26 March 1811, perhaps using some material first conceived the previous year. In March 1811 the Archduke Rudolph, by then Beethoven's only piano pupil, had a sore finger, and his lessons had to be suspended. Beethoven, although suffering from headaches, told his pupil he was working very hard: 'One of the fruits of this diligence is a new pianoforte trio.'

Perhaps it would have been better if Rudolph, rather than Beethoven, had played in its first performance. Following a private tryout in a soirée organised in March 1814 by Schuppanzigh, who took the violin part, with the cellist Linke, the trio had its first public performance in May in the Prater, Vienna's public gardens. This was to be Beethoven's last public appearance as a pianist. The composer Louis Spohr, who attended a rehearsal in April, reported that Beethoven was by now so deaf that scarcely any of his once admired virtuosity was left. He pounded so hard in the loud passages that the strings jangled, and in the soft passages whole groups of notes were inaudible.

Beethoven was presumably striving to bring out the wide dynamic range of his concept, which is unprecedented. This announces what was to be revealed as his late style, already foreshadowed in the String Quartet op 95, of 1810-14. Also prophetic of Beethoven's late style is the turn, in the first movement, to G major instead of F major for the secondary theme, a strategy also followed in the 'Hammerklavier' Sonata, op 106 (1817-18). The development is almost entirely concerned with the first subject, and it returns, definitively, just before the movement's conclusion.

A *scherzo* comes second, characteristic in its brusque playfulness, and breaking three times into a very energetic waltz, in a different key each time. The trio's sinuous theme explores the minor mode,

with gloomy fugal wanderings. As in the Seventh Symphony, the entire Scherzo and Trio are repeated.

The heart of the work is the slow movement, where the distant key (D major) contributes to a mood of unworldly serenity. Here, Beethoven told Schindler, 'happiness is transformed into emotion, suffering, prayer... the highest ideal of holiness and divinity.' The form is a set of variations, so arranged as to give the impression of a gradual increase of speed. The fifth and final variation contains further development and leads away from the sublimity of the movement towards the tonic key of the whole work, and a direct link to the finale, which comes as a release and a return of energy.

The finale is in sonata rondo form. There is brusque wit, the same amplitude of scale and sound that marks the whole trio, and moments, too, which recall the serenity of the slow movement. The cello, in particular, is given some high passages, against piano tremolos, which must have seemed daring and novel. Finally, with an upping of the pace, the whole mighty progress moves headlong and brilliantly to its conclusion.

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Meet the Artists

Over the last two decades, **Seraphim Trio** have remained steadfastly committed to chamber music – from building the contemporary repertoire, to developing new audiences and teaching the next generation of performers. Inspiring others through intelligent programming and a deep knowledge and love of chamber music, Seraphim Trio never fails to delight audiences.

Winners of the Piano Trio Prize and the Audience Choice Award at the Australian National Chamber Music Competition in 2001 (now the Asia-Pacific Chamber Music Competition), Seraphim Trio has regularly performed at the Melbourne International Arts Festival, the Port Fairy Spring Music Festival, the Adelaide Festival of Arts, the Peninsular Summer Music Festival and in 2013, Opera Australia's Ring Festival in Melbourne.

Alongside its acclaimed subscription series Seraphim Trio is frequently broadcast on ABC Classic FM and on the MBS network and maintains a robust commissioning program.

Seraphim frequently collaborates with Australia's leading musicians: most recently with Diana Doherty, Paul Dean, Lisa Harper-Brown and David Elton.

The group has studied in Germany with Hatto Beyerle, and in Australia with William Hennessy, Eleonora Sivan, Mark Mogilevski, Ronald Farren-Price and Lois Simpson.

Please note – the Seraphim Trio's regular cellist, Timothy Nankervis, was unable to travel for this performance. The Trio are pleased to welcome Simon Cobcroft as guest cellist.

Anna Goldsworthy is currently a Lecturer at the Elder Conservatorium of Music, Research Fellow at the J.M. Coetzee Centre for Creative Practice at the University of Adelaide, and Kenneth Moore Memorial Music Scholar at Janet Clarke Hall. Anna has published two memoirs, *Piano Lessons* and *Welcome to Your New Life*, and is author of the Quarterly Essay *Unfinished Business*.

Helen Ayres is a Doctoral graduate of the University of Melbourne. She has appeared as guest of numerous Australian ensembles including Flinders Quartet, Melbourne Chamber Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and guest principal with Orchestra Victoria and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. Helen is currently playing as a guest with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and studying pedagogy at the Yehudi Menuhin School.

Simon Cobcroft, joining the Seraphim Trio as a special guest for this concert, enjoys a diverse life as a performer of solo, orchestral and chamber music in Australia and further afield. Since 2014 he has been Principal Cello with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra and has also held the positions of Associate Principal Cello with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra and Sub-Principal Cello with the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra.

Simon is passionate about education and has taught at the Elder Conservatorium and the Queensland Conservatorium. He plays on a beautiful English cello made in 1840 by Thomas Kennedy. In his spare time, he loves to cook.



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