

Josef Haydn (1732-1809) Piano Trio in D, Hob XV:24 (1795)

Allegro

Andante

Allegro ma dolce

Haydn wrote about 45 piano trios throughout his life, starting in his early 30s and ending in 1797 when he was 65. They demonstrate well his creativity in musical structures, and his harmonic adventurousness. Michael Rosen described them as '*along with the Mozart concertos the most brilliant piano works before Beethoven.*' The emphasis on the piano is apt, since the cello very often doubles the keyboard bass, compensating for the thin tone of contemporary pianos, although the violin, particularly in the later trios, is often independent or in dialogue with the keyboard.

Though composed after Haydn had heard Beethoven's Op.1 piano trios, this D major trio maintains the overall style of Haydn's earlier trios. He wrote it towards the end of his second visit to London and is one of a set of three, that also includes the more famous '*Gypsy Rondo*' Trio, dedicated to Rebecca Schroeter. Mrs Schroeter, the daughter of a rich Scottish businessman, was the widow of the immigrant German composer Johann Schroeter, who had initially been her music teacher. She wrote to Haydn in 1791 shortly after his first arrival in London asking him for a music lesson, and fell in love for the second time with her music teacher. Unhappily married and 20 years older than Mrs Schroeter, Haydn reciprocated the affections of this '*beautiful and charming woman ... I would have married her very easily if I had been free at the time.*' Their continuing relationship ('*if he was not invited elsewhere, he usually dined with her*') was conducted with discretion and seems to have evaded the society gossip columns.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) Piano Trio in C minor, Op.1 No.3 (1793/5)

Allegro con brio

Andante cantabile con Variazioni

Menuetto & Trio Quasi Allegro

Finale: Prestissimo

Beethoven's three Op.1 trios are dedicated to Prince Karl von Lichnowsky who had been generous to Beethoven after his arrival in Vienna. A composer and collector of Bach manuscripts, Lichnowsky had also been very generous to Mozart lending him a substantial sum of money, which Mozart was unable to repay. It has recently come to light that the Prince sued Mozart and, a few weeks before Mozart died, the court found in the Prince's favour and requisitioned half of Mozart's salary from the Imperial Court. Beethoven initially fared better and secured a substantial annuity from the Prince which was paid until the two had a furious quarrel in 1806 causing Beethoven, in turn, to sue Lichnowsky.

Before his Opus 1 was published by Artaria in 1795, Beethoven had already written at least 3 piano quartets, 2 piano trios and a wind octet. He probably began work on these Opus 1 piano trios in his home town of Bonn, but continued to work on them after his move to Vienna in 1792, where Haydn heard them performed the following year. Haydn advised Beethoven not to publish the C minor trio. Beethoven took offence, thinking Haydn jealous and ill-disposed to him, though Haydn said he was simply trying to protect Beethoven from what he thought would be a hostile public response. Nonetheless, Beethoven delayed publication and revised the trios, partly as a result of Haydn's remarks, but also to ensure good sales on the basis of his growing reputation. His efforts and guile were well rewarded with an initial subscription of 241 copies bringing in the equivalent of many thousand pounds today.

The Trios are rich in ideas ('When I re-read the manuscripts I wondered at my folly in collecting into a single work materials enough for twenty') and have many of Beethoven's characteristic trade-marks. In Beethoven's hands the trio form moves beyond the traditional three-movement design of Haydn and Mozart: he adds a movement, casts the individual movements on a larger scale, and gives the strings, in particular the cello, a more independent role.

The C minor trio is the most powerful of the three, influenced by the *Sturm und Drang* movement of earlier decades. A sinister mood is set at the start in the introductory pause-filled first few bars but then contrasted with a more hopeful staccato figure (illustrated) and with an optimistic second theme. At the start of the development Beethoven plays a characteristic trick, moving to the remote key of B major by simply repeating a version of the third bar phrase (under 1.) down a semitone - bold and effective. That phrase is passed between the instruments building tension, and each motif is presented at different times in different moods swinging often violently from one to the other.



After the turbulence of the first movement, the *Andante cantabile* variations are altogether gentler. The initially worried *Menuetto* is relieved by rapid rising arpeggios in the piano and by its carefree *Trio* with cascading piano scales. Then we are back to the stormy emotions of the first movement in the headlong *Finale* opening with more arpeggios but in a very different, somewhat frantic mood. Relief comes with a sunny theme related to the opening two bars of the first movement (illustrated). But Beethoven works his moody magic on this and the opening theme until with pianissimo ascending scales the music simply evaporates.



Franz Schubert (1797-1828) Piano Trio No.1 in Bb major, D.898 (1827)

Allegro moderato

Andante un poco mosso

Scherzo & Trio: Allegro

Rondo: Allegro vivace

Schubert's two piano trios date from the final years of his life when, frustrated by his lack of success at opera and dissatisfied with his song writing, he turned to instrumental music. They were written after his Octet and late string quartets but before his 2-cello string quintet. They are both very substantial works, matching his contemporary 'Great' C major symphony in length and musical depth. Despite Schubert's failing health and erratic mood swings, the Bb Trio is radiant. Robert Schumann wrote of it: "One glance at Schubert's *Trio* and the troubles of our human existence disappear and all the world is fresh and bright again."

The glorious opening theme in unison on violin and cello is confident and optimistic. It also contains two ideas, one local, one global, which reappear in various forms throughout the piece. The local idea is the triplet – crochet pattern under [1]. The global idea is the pattern of the first four bars: simply put, “slow, slow, quick, slow”. The same pattern reappears immediately in the tender second theme introduced by the cello. After an expansive development of this material Schubert gives us three false starts for the recapitulation in 'wrong' keys.

The glorious *Andante* with its opening cello theme joined rhapsodically by the violin was, incredibly, an afterthought. Schubert originally wrote a slow *Adagio*, which was posthumously published as a *Notturmo* in Eb D.897. Its opening theme (illustrated) is a slowed down version of the opening of the first movement. It is not clear why Schubert rejected it, but we are lucky that he did since the replacement *Andante* is one of those movements that you cannot imagine being without – and we do still have the *Notturmo*.

The *Scherzo and Trio* are based on the *Ländler* and the waltz respectively. The opening figure of the *Scherzo* is based on the local triplet-crotchet figure of the first movement, whereas the first four bars of the Trio are in its global 'slow, slow, fast, slow' pattern. This global pattern also appears in 2-bar units in the 8-bar opening of the Rondo last movement with the dotted rhythm providing the 'quick' quality.