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# AMATIS TRIO

Thursday 16 March 2023, 7.30pm  
Djanogly Recital Hall

## PROGRAMME

Piano Trio in B flat, Op.97 'Archduke'  
*1. Allegro moderato*  
*2. Scherzo. Allegro*  
*3. Andante cantabile, ma però con moto*  
*4. Allegro moderato – Presto*

**Ludvig van Beethoven**  
(1770-1827)

Interval

D'un soir triste

**Lili Boulanger**  
(1893-1918)

Piano Trio No.2 in E minor, Op.67  
*1. Andante*  
*2. Allegro con brio*  
*3. Largo*  
*4. Allegretto*

**Dmitri Shostakovich**  
(1906-75)

There is a Sennheiser Infrared enhanced hearing system in the Djanogly Recital Hall; please request a headset from our front-of-house staff to enhance your enjoyment of this evening's concert.

## PROGRAMME NOTES

### Piano Trio in B flat, Op.97, 'Archduke'

Ludvig van Beethoven  
(1770-1827)

1. *Allegro moderato*
2. *Scherzo. Allegro*
3. *Andante cantabile, ma però con moto*
4. *Allegro moderato – Presto*

Archduke Rudolph, younger brother of the Austrian Emperor, Leopold, showed exceptional musical talent as a child, performing as a pianist at the age of fifteen. He is said to have met Beethoven in the winter of 1803–4, and began piano and theory lessons with him; a bond of mutual affection and esteem quickly developed. Beethoven taught him composition for over two decades, and Rudolph composed steadily, mostly for piano solo or small ensembles, including a clarinet sonata, and a contribution to the variations commissioned from a number of composers by the music publisher Anton Diabelli, for whom Beethoven eventually composed his massive set of thirty-three Variations, Op 120.

Beethoven dedicated no fewer than eleven major works to Rudolph, more than he dedicated to anyone else. They include the Fourth and Fifth Piano Concertos, the piano sonatas 'Les Adieux', Op 81a, and 'Hammerklavier', Op 106, and the Missa Solemnis, but it is only this trio to which the nickname has stuck.

It was completed in the spring of 1811. Beethoven's compositional output had slackened considerably after the feverish pace of the previous decade, and the Trio is his only major work from that year. It seems likely that he revised it in 1814, which may be one reason why the music suggests the composer on the threshold of his late style. As he moves towards his last decade, the volcanic turbulence of, say, the Fifth Symphony is less dominant, and a vein of broad, noble spaciousness comes more to the foreground.

The expansive opening theme sets the tone for the whole work. Its mood of undemonstrative confidence is scarcely disturbed throughout the whole of the first movement, even though the second main theme introduces a more skittish mood. The development section culminates in a quirky passage where everyone seems to be dancing on tiptoe, the notes all short and detached, with the violin and cello plucked, not bowed. Moments later, extended trills for the pianist's right hand herald the recapitulation – the music's return to its starting-point. This is normally a climactically intense passage, but here it is among the most magically understated in all Beethoven.

Similarly, the second movement has little in common with the rampaging scherzos of some of Beethoven's earlier works. Its gently humorous manner gives way, in the central trio section, to something darker and more elusive – an eerily chromatic fugato led by the cello, and



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punctuated by an energetic waltz theme from the piano, which somehow only serves to compound the mystery.

The Andante is a set of variations on a simple song-like theme. The first four variations become increasingly elaborate, but the music's essential profound stillness remains unbroken. The fifth returns to the theme in more or less its original form, eventually linking this movement to the finale, bringing us back to earth with a jolt as it does so. The stamping peasant-dance character, with typically Beethovenian off-beat accents, is tempered by frequent dolce ('sweet', 'gentle') markings, which give the music another dimension altogether. The theme is finally turned into a runaway coda which speeds up still further for the thunderous final bars.

### ***D'un soir triste***

**Lili Boulanger  
(1893-1918)**

Lili Boulanger achieved a considerable amount in her tragically short life. She did not begin formal musical education until the age of sixteen, but three years later she became the first woman to win the Paris Conservatoire's prestigious Prix de Rome, following such distinguished predecessors as Berlioz, Bizet and Debussy. Her output consists mainly of songs, instrumental pieces and a small but impressive group of choral works.

*D'un soir triste* (On a Sad Evening), dating from 1917-18, is believed to be the last score Lili wrote out herself, though her sister, Nadia, later added tempo and expression marks (Lili's final work, *Pie Jesu*, for soprano, string quartet, harp and organ, was dictated to Nadia). It exists in versions for piano trio, for cello and piano, and for orchestra. Beginning with a sombre extended theme over a steady pulse, it rises to an agonised central climax, and finally sinks back into the mood in which it began, with just a tiny glimmer of light at the very end.

### **Piano Trio No.2 in E minor, Op.67**

**Dmitri Shostakovich  
(1906-1975)**

- 1. Andante*
- 2. Allegro con brio*
- 3. Largo*
- 4. Allegretto*

Shostakovich began work on his Second Piano Trio towards the end of 1943 and completed it the following August. By dedicating it to the memory of his close friend, Ivan Sollertinsky, he was following the example of Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov, who both composed piano trios as memorials to fellow musicians. Sollertinsky was Artistic Director of the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra from 1939, and a brilliant scholar who, by all accounts, combined phenomenal intellect with considerable wit and personal charm. He died suddenly in February 1944, while Shostakovich was working on the first movement of the Trio.



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As for the Trio's public face, this is coloured, naturally, by the events of the war years. Like Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony, which immediately preceded it, its tone is mostly tragic, but with a strong vein of savage, bitter humour.

The first movement opens with the extraordinary sound of the cello, unaccompanied and high up in eerie harmonics, beginning a desolate fugato in which the violin and piano soon join. A pattern of repeated notes on the cello brings a change of pace for the main part of the movement, which builds steadily to a sonorous climax, heralded by a brief withdrawal into *pizzicato* mystery. The movement winds down to a quiet, no-fuss ending.

It is followed by one of Shostakovich's quick, three-in-a-bar scherzos. Sollertinsky's sister described it as "an amazingly exact portrait of Ivan Ivanovich, whom Shostakovich understood like no-one else." The music certainly suggests the workings of an alert mind. At the same time the high spirits take on an obsessive quality which hints at an underlying unease.

Although not headed as such, the third movement is in the form of a *passacaglia* – a piece based on a continuously repeated phrase. In this case it is the piano's opening eight-bar chord-sequence that is repeated, supporting long, sinuous lines on the violin and cello. As the movement comes to rest, the finale steals in, with soft repeated notes on the piano and a tortuous *pizzicato* theme for the violin. On one level, the impulse behind this brutally eerie music was the news of the Nazi death camps at Treblinka and elsewhere, which was then just beginning to filter through to the Russian public in the wake of the retreating German army. At the same time, it can be heard as another of Shostakovich's attacks on the anti-Semitism of his own society. It moves inexorably towards a powerfully ferocious climax. At the very end the chordal pattern from the third movement returns to support the last expiring wisps of the finale's opening theme, with the violin and cello reminding us of the harmonics with which the Trio began.

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## AMATIS TRIO

Lea Hausmann - violin  
Sam Shepherd - cello  
Mengjie Han – piano

The Amatis Trio was founded in Amsterdam in 2014 and is now based in Salzburg, Austria. German violinist Lea Hausmann, British cellist Samuel Shepherd, and Dutch pianist Mengjie Han are celebrated for their energy, insight, creativity, communication and passion. The trio is regarded as one of the leading ensembles of its generation.

The Amatis Trio has performed in 43 countries across 5 continents and has won many major international competitions and awards. They are former BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists and were selected as ECHO Rising Stars (European Concert Hall Organisation) by Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Köln Philharmonie, Festspielhaus Baden-Baden and Dortmund Konzerthaus. The trio has been awarded some of the most prestigious music prizes from around the world including the Kersjesprijs of the Netherlands and the Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship award.

In addition to performances in many of the world's leading festivals including the BBC Proms, Verbier Festival, Switzerland and the Edinburgh International Festival, the trio are regularly invited as soloists in triple concerto repertoire, appearing with orchestras such as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Wales and Frankfurt Museums Orchestra. They are currently 'Artists in Residence' at Cambridge University and appointees of the Irene R Miller Piano Trio Residency at the University of Toronto, Canada.

The Amatis Trio released their debut CD on AVI Records featuring the music of Enescu, Ravel and Britten. The disc received high praise amongst critics and earned the ensemble inclusion in Gramophone Magazine's 'Artists to Watch'.

Their strong commitment to contemporary music led the trio to form the 'Dutch Piano Trio Composition Prize', aimed at encouraging young composers to expand the piano trio repertoire. Since its inception they have commissioned and premiered 15 contemporary pieces, most recently Moorlands, a work by Swedish composer Andrea Tarrodi.

Prize-winning accolades include the 2018 Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition, the 2018 International Joseph Haydn Competition in Vienna, the International Joseph Joachim Competition in Weimar, Germany.

Both Lea and Sam play on very fine Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume instruments kindly loaned by generous patrons through the Beares International Violin Society.