

## Kungsbacka Piano Trio

Formed in 1997, the Kungsbacka Piano Trio is rapidly gaining an enviable reputation as one of the most outstanding ensembles of their generation with a flourishing international career. Since winning 1st Prize in the Melbourne International Competition, the Trio has appeared at major festivals and venues throughout Europe and further afield. In 2003 they took part in the ECHO 'Rising Stars' scheme, performing in New York, Amsterdam, Vienna, Salzburg, Brussels, Athens, Stockholm, Baden-Baden and Cologne.

Invited to become BBC Radio 3's New Generation Artists in 2000, the Trio has broadcast extensively, including concerts live from Wigmore Hall, Bridgewater Hall, City of London, Cheltenham and Edinburgh International Festivals, and a recording of Beethoven's Triple Concerto with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra.

They have recorded Schubert for Naxos, to critical acclaim and Rehnqvist for BIS. A new recording of Mozart's Piano Trios under the Naxos label is due to be released in 2008.

Recently the Trio has returned to Wigmore Hall, Purcell Room, Concertgebouw, Mecklenburg Festival in Germany, and given recitals at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Cheltenham International Festival, Muziekcentrum Vredenburg in Utrecht, Oslo Chamber Music Festival, Schwetzingen Festspiele and Berliner Philharmonie in Germany. Further afield, they toured throughout Argentina and gave concerts in Canada and the USA.

They have recorded a series of Mozart concerts for BBC Radio 3, taken part in the International Chamber Music Series at the South Bank with Roger Vignoles, and undertaken a second Arts Council England 'Around the Country' tour. The Trio has performed at the Schwetzingen, Mecklenburg Vorpommern and Trondheim Festivals and given recitals in Ireland, Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands.

In 2006/2007 their concert schedule included performances at Wigmore and Cadogan Hall, Germany, and Sweden, and in Holland with flautist Emily Beynon, residencies at Båstad Chamber Music Festival in Sweden and Lofoten International Chamber Music Festival in Norway. In August/September 2007 they toured Australia and for the first time New Zealand. Plans for 2008 include concerts in the UK, Scotland, Ireland, Sweden, Spain and Germany.

The Trio frequently returns to Sweden to give concerts and since 2001 the members have taught at the Gothenburg Conservatoire. The name comes from the town in which the Trio gave its first performance – Kungsbacka in Sweden, where they have established an annual festival, now in its eighth year.

For more information, please visit: [www.pianotrio.com](http://www.pianotrio.com)

### Forthcoming events

Saturday 17 May 7.30 pm, Constable Hall East Bergholt **Jazz Concert and Supper**  
Tickets £15 now on sale (phone 01206 299448 or 01206 298491)

**2008-9 Season First concert: The Carducci Quartet on Sunday 19 October 2008 at St. Mary's Church East Bergholt - 4 pm** (followed by AGM)

**For full preview of 2008-9** see our 2008-9 Diary Note, available this evening.

# Stour Valley Arts & Music

Fifty-seventh  
season  
2007-8

8.00 pm  
Friday  
4 April 2008  
2008

St. Mary's Church  
Dedham



SVAM is a member of Making Music  
and a Registered Charity (No 276640)

## Kungsbacka Piano Trio

Malin Broman, violin  
Jesper Svedberg, cello  
Simon Crawford-Phillips, piano

### Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Variations on 'Ich bin der Schneider  
Kakadu', Op 121a

**Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904)**  
Piano Trio in G minor, Op 26

*Allegro moderato*  
*Largo*

*Scherzo: Presto - Poco meno mosso*  
*Allegro non tanto*

### INTERVAL

**Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)**  
Piano Trio No 2 in E minor, Op 92

*Allegro non troppo*  
*Allegretto*  
*Andante con moto*  
*Grazioso, poco allegro*  
*Allegro*

*Complimentary interval refreshments*

## Programme Notes

The study of strict counterpoint was an obligatory discipline for would-be composers in the eighteenth century. Another was the composition of variations – which could have commercial possibilities if their theme was a popular operatic melody. In his early Viennese years, **Beethoven** wrote a stream of such works for the piano - his own solo performances in princely houses would have provided a ready means of publicising them. The variations on the song 'Ich bin der Schneider Kakadu' ('I am Kakadu the tailor') from Wenzel Müller's 1794 comic Singspiel *Die Schwestern von Prag* ('The sisters from Prague'), probably originated at this time. Twenty years later, in 1816, Beethoven wrote to the Leipzig publisher Härtel offering 'Variations with an introduction and supplement, for piano, violin and cello, on a well-known theme by Müller, one of my earlier compositions, though it is not among the reprehensible ones'. Wenzel's opera was revived in Vienna in 1814, and this may well have prompted Beethoven to dust down and revise his youthful variations, taking account of the extended compass of the newest pianos and perhaps adding his 'supplement' (i.e. coda) plus the exaggeratedly sombre G minor introduction that gradually outlines the 'Kakadu' theme. When the somewhat naïve melody finally emerges, in a blithe G major, it is with an absurd sense of anticlimax – the kind of comic deflation Dohnányi emulated a century later in his *Variations on a Nursery Theme*. The variations broadly follow the traditional pattern by adorning the melody with increasingly brilliant figuration, though No 5, with its spare contrapuntal textures, and No 7, a delicate imitative duo for violin and cello alone, deconstruct rather than merely decorate the theme. After the traditional slow variation in the minor key, - No 9, full of chromatic pathos (echoes here of the slow introduction) – and a following jolly variation, Beethoven launches a long and capricious coda, which calls to mind his youthful counterpoint studies by turning Müller's ditty into a mock-learned fugato

In his early thirties, **Dvořák** had not yet achieved international recognition and was finding it hard to make ends meet. Several times he received an Austrian State Stipendium available to artists by submitting a number of recently composed scores for consideration by a judging panel. In 1874 and 1875 he was awarded 400 gulden. In 1876 his portfolio contained the Piano Trio in G minor - the judging panel now included Brahms, and awarded him 500 gulden. Financial considerations apart, Dvořák's applications for the Stipendium were to prove crucial to his future career. Brahms was so enthusiastic about his 'Moravian Duets' that he wrote to his Berlin publisher Fritz Simrock: "As for the state Stipendium, for several years I have enjoyed works sent in by Antonín Dvořák of Prague. This year he has sent works including a volume of 10 duets for two sopranos and piano, which seem to me very pretty. Dvořák has written all manner of things: operas (Czech), symphonies, quartets, piano pieces. In any case, he is a very talented man. Moreover, he is poor! I ask you to think about it! The duets will show you what I mean, and could be a 'good article'." Brahms's letter set off a kind of avalanche of publication and performance. Simrock accepted the duets, and in one of his earliest letters to Dvořák commissioned the Slavonic Dances. When they appeared, an enthusiastic review in the Berlin *National-Zeitung* led to

what it later called 'a positive assault on the sheet music shops', and made the previously unknown Czech composer's name 'in the course of a day'. The G minor trio is thought by some critics to show Dvořák's relative inexperience – the first movement over-long, with too much insistence on the repeated figure of four quick notes, and so on. It is true that Dvořák was destined to write more imposing works, none the less this early trio carries his authentic voice, and offers many things which can be enjoyed – the monothematic slow movement and the atmospheric scherzo amongst them.

Like Mozart and Mendelssohn before him, Camille **Saint-Saëns** was an immensely gifted child prodigy. Like them, he was blessed with an easy and natural facility, both as a composer and as a performer, and he himself wrote that he spent his long career 'fulfilling the function of my nature, as an apple tree grows apples'. He began composing at the age of three, and was playing concertos in public from memory by the age of ten. Wagner, who first met Saint-Saëns in 1859, later wrote that he could play his operas, including *Tristan*, from memory 'with such precision that one might easily have thought that he had the actual music before his eyes'. The second piano trio is a serious and subtle work. It shows Saint-Saëns writing on a grand scale and steadfastly sticking to his principles of composition - it contains none of the intense chromaticism that other French composers, such as Franck and Chausson, had already adopted from Wagner and Liszt. Of the five movements, the first and last are substantial, the middle three much shorter, creating a satisfyingly symmetrical structure to the whole work. The opening is one of Saint-Saëns's most telling inspirations. The piano plays a pattern of repeated chords, rising and falling in a wave, and marked 'very lightly' (extremely difficult to achieve on the modern concert grand). Over this pattern, alternating violin and cello float a sombre melody. The melody itself suggests that Saint-Saëns might have had the opening of Tchaikovsky's massive Piano Trio in mind - the two composers had struck up a friendship in Moscow in the 1870s. The second movement is a sort of irregular minuet in five-time. The slow movement is brief, simple and heartfelt. A sorrowful descending phrase dominates the entire movement, already marked *appassionato* at the beginning and becoming more so as the intensity increases. The fourth movement, like the second, is a dance, this time a more straightforward fast waltz. The finale returns to the grand scale of the first movement, with a solemn theme in bare octaves. Much of the movement is highly contrapuntal, almost ecclesiastical in feel, though real fugal writing is reserved for a completely different theme in the centre of the movement. Late in the movement, the piano introduces a melody with a gentle limp to the rhythm, which sounds almost as if it is harking back to the irregular dance of the second movement, but this moment of relaxation is short-lived. The new theme is combined with the fugue subject, and the work reaches its end in a mood of powerful determination.