



 CHAMPS HILL
RECORDS

DVOŘÁK PIANO QUARTETS



London Bridge Trio
with Gary Pomeroy



I FOREWORD

The Dvořák piano quartets have been close to our hearts for many years; works that we have lived with for over a decade since the birth of our ensemble. The mature E flat is one of the acknowledged masterpieces for the combination and the earlier D major makes a wonderful foil with its free-flowing melody and charm. This is music that is hugely liberating and enjoyable to play. On the one hand, we cannot help but share in Dvořák's natural exuberance. On the other, he occasionally requires the utmost intimacy and profound introspection. We are asked to revel in the spirit of Czech and gypsy music in conjuring up the sounds and instruments of the folk band; to sing and to dance. We have always loved welcoming Gary Pomeroy into the middle of our trio and it was very natural for Gary to join us for this project.

Dvořák's journey is a dramatic one but in the end this is often music of the utmost joy and abandon. It was an immense pleasure to collaborate in this spirit during our sessions at Champs Hill with Raphaël Mouterde. Heartfelt thanks to David and Mary Bowerman for giving us this opportunity and the use of their magnificent music room.

Daniel Tong ~ *piano*
Kate Gould ~ *'cello*
Tamsin Waley-Cohen ~ *violin*

TRACK LISTING

PIANO QUARTET NO.1 IN D MAJOR, OP.23 | ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841–1904)

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | <i>i</i> Allegro moderato | 14'52 |
| 2 | <i>ii</i> Andantino, con Variazioni | 10'41 |
| 3 | <i>iii</i> Finale | 7'24 |

PIANO QUARTET NO.2 IN E FLAT MAJOR, OP.87 | ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|------|
| 4 | <i>i</i> Allegro con fuoco | 8'24 |
| 5 | <i>ii</i> Lento | 9'27 |
| 6 | <i>iii</i> Allegro moderato | 7'08 |
| 7 | <i>iv</i> Finale | 9'22 |

Total playing time: 67'20

Produced, engineered and edited by Raphaël Mouterde
Recorded on 13th–15th October 2014 in the Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex, UK
Executive Producer for Champs Hill Records: Alexander Van Ingen
Label Manager for Champs Hill Records: Matt Buchanan

DVOŘÁK PIANO QUARTETS

The chamber music of Antonín Dvořák is one of the great gifts of the Romantic era. Its unique character is imbued with the spirit of the folk music of his homeland and so at one is he with this idiom, that it seems that hardly a phrase can go by without invoking the rhythmic or melodic intonations of popular Czech music. Even more surprising then, that he encountered almost all of his 'folk music' through playing arrangements at the piano or in local orchestras and bands, hearing stylised versions rather than the real thing.

Married to this however, and particularly in Dvořák's later music, is a mastery of form and an aural imagination that produced many works of genius. He stands with Brahms in the German Romantic tradition, yet on the cusp of Janáček and even Bartok in his nationalist intent. His most famous works – the *American Quartet*, Piano Quintet or *Dumky Trio* for instance – have become firm favourites with audiences around the world. Nevertheless, there is a huge body of Dvořák's chamber music that is rarely heard. He left fourteen completed string quartets, four piano trios, two string quintets, a string sextet and numerous songs and duos, as well as the two piano quartets on this recording.

In 1875, Dvořák in his early thirties, was still finding his way as a composer. He had only recently been able to drop the daily grind of piano teaching and, most importantly, had early that year learned of his success in the prestigious Austrian State Prize. On the jury were the influential critic Eduard Hanslick and Johannes Brahms, who would go on to champion the works of the younger composer. In the wake of this definite upward turn in his fortunes, Dvořák went on to produce a host of works that year including his fifth symphony, an opera (*Vanda*) and an early jewel, the *Serenade for Strings*. Chamber music featured prominently too and, hot on the heels of a first piano trio in B flat major, came the **Piano Quartet in D, Op.23**. It's more than likely that the young Dvořák had encountered the piano quartets by Brahms, but it seems that at this stage in his development, Schubert may have been more of an inspiration. Indeed, much later in life, in an article in 1894, Dvořák

writes about his admiration for “classical models”, citing Schubert as a particular example, alongside Beethoven, Mozart and Bach.

In the first movement of Dvořák’s early piano quartet there are several distinct echoes of Schubert’s B flat trio: the jaunty opening quaver accompaniment, the rhythmic triplet figure that follows and a charming formal device where the music seems poised on the verge of the second subject in a new key, only to revert to the home key and original theme once more. Such influences aside though, Dvořák is also laying the foundations of the harmonic language and formal strategies that would last him a lifetime. For instance, within the opening moments of the first movement it is immediately clear, with a move of disarming charm, that two different keys (in this case D and B majors) can live happily side by side within the same theme. The second subject, when it finally arrives, is a wonderful complement to the first, working its way effortlessly down the triad, where the opening had reached up. There is no conflict here, *à la* Beethoven, but ease and concord. Of course there are stormy passages, but the air clears quickly. The overriding impression of Dvořák in this movement is of a young composer full of ideas, who can hardly bear to put down his pen. With the repeat observed, it weighs in at over a quarter of an hour. Heavenly length indeed! (to borrow Schumann’s comment on Schubert’s great C major symphony).

For the remainder of the work, Dvořák departs from the Schubertian model in original and effective fashion. The second movement variations are, to my ear, the high point of this joyful quartet. The simple and poignant, folk-like theme oscillates beautifully between B minor and D major before five variations and a *coda* take us through a range of different dances, each deliciously characterised. As in the first movement, the theme is concerned with the three notes of a simple tonic triad and the first three variations stay close to this shape, despite transforming it with charming invention in rearranging the order and emphasis of the notes. A brief transitional passage ushers in a whirling fourth variation in a new key (or rather, keys) as E flat major this time alternates with B minor before the music returns to the tonic for the

final variation, with its hint of a Viennese waltz, and concluding section which remembers the opening theme without ever quite quoting it *verbatim*.

The last movement combines *scherzo* and finale. There are overtones of a *dumka*, as graceful music alternates with more energetic sections, but at times this music feels less Bohemian and more in the world of the Viennese minuet, waltz and Brahmsian striding finale (when in duple time). Playfulness is never far away and a deft, witty ending caps a piece that has been smiling throughout.

Fourteen years later in 1889, Dvořák was now a composer of international celebrity and standing and his mastery of composition had also travelled a long way. The **Piano Quartet in E flat, Op.87**, was written after persistent pestering from his publisher over several years. “I should like to receive a piano quartet from you at last – you promised me this a long time ago! Well? How is it faring?” wrote Simrock, knowing that these days a new chamber work from Dvořák would be a very lucrative thing to receive. The work was composed quickly during the summer months (“The melodies just surged upon me,” wrote Dvořák to a friend) and by the end of the year performances had already taken place in Frankfurt, Munich and Manchester as well as in Prague, where the composer was present. The quartet was an immediate success and it is easy to see why.

The E flat piano quartet is one of Dvořák’s mature masterpieces, perhaps this time rather more in the mould of Brahms than Schubert. Certainly the opening motto in bare octaves, giving a distinctly minor slant to the opening of a piece “officially” in the major, is reminiscent of Brahms (or even Beethoven). The music is tightly constructed and the orchestration masterful. Since the first quartet, Dvořák has developed a far broader palette in what he can achieve with four instruments: sometimes symphonic, at other times limpid and crystalline. There is far more musical material packed into this work than its endearing predecessor, but the argument is terse. Notes are not wasted. A particularly Brahmsian device in the first movement, borrowed perhaps from the elder composer’s own G minor piano quartet, is to lead back to the beginning as if to repeat the exposition, only for the listener to discover

shortly after that he is actually already in the development. The music is muscular and defiant, but there are intimate and lyrical moments too, not least in the soaring second subject, given initially to Dvořák's favourite instrument, the viola.

The rapt slow movement is formally simple, certainly based on the 'classical models' that Dvořák so admired, although somewhat expanded. The music unfolds in five sections, each with a folk-like flavour reminiscent of the *Gypsy Songs* of a few years earlier and beginning with a ravishing cello theme in three sentences. The fourth section is of almost frenzied passion and provides the contrast needed between the other, essentially lyrical, episodes. All five sections are then recapitulated, but in delightful re-scorings that shed even more wondrous light on this irresistible music. The scherzo that follows – some kind of minuet-cum-ländler – punctures the reverie with an opening salvo similar to that of the equivalent movement in the *New World Symphony*. Amongst the earthy good-nature of the main material there are alternate sections that are exotically folk-tinged in their vocal character and this is a sizeable movement with a surprising number of different ideas within it. The central trio introduces a galloping, foot-stamping dance and the return to the *scherzo* is particularly skilfully achieved over dream-like piano figurations.

The *zigeuner* finale would have made Brahms proud, but of course Dvořák's gypsy music is second to none. The initial minor key echoes the beginning of the whole work and here the flow of different ideas is kept on a tight rein, each deriving from and reinventing the initial material. There is a moment of particular delight when the violin and cello share the opening theme in a blithe major. The greatest contrast is reserved for the glorious second subject, which Dvořák again gives to the viola, and the explosive coda is designed to bring the house down. Rarely in the Romantic era have we been gifted with two such marvellous chamber works: music with an ebullience of spirit that soars, sings, and dances to our perpetual delight.

Daniel Tong

I BIOGRAPHIES

LONDON BRIDGE TRIO

The London Bridge Trio are one of Britain's most exciting and brilliant chamber groups, widely recognised for offering programmes with strong, composer-led themes. Their name reflects, through Frank Bridge, an admiration for the English music of the early twentieth century, which has from the outset formed an important part of the group's varied repertoire, and is represented by their hugely successful Frank Bridge recordings.

Originally formed in 2002 as the London Bridge Ensemble, their projects in collaboration with guest artists continue to present larger chamber works and also Lieder, through a long association with baritone Ivan Ludlow. Together they also perform chamber song cycles and have recorded Fauré's *La Bonne Chanson* and the three songs with viola by Frank Bridge, as well as commissioning a new work for voice and piano quartet from David Matthews. The London Bridge Trio's focus on both core trio repertoire as well as collaborative performances allows the ensemble to wholeheartedly dedicate themselves to the exploration of trio repertoire whilst also devising special projects featuring repertoire for extended chamber ensembles.

Engagements since the group's Wigmore Hall debut in 2005 have included Kings Place, Goldsmiths' Hall, St. George's Bristol, Queen's Hall in Edinburgh, St. John's Smith Square, Turner Sims, Bridgewater Hall, Sheffield Music in the Round and St. David's Hall Cardiff. Festival appearances have included the City of London Festival, the Kerry Chamber Music Festival, the Leicester International Music Festival's lunchtime series and the Ponte de Lima Festival in North Portugal. The ensemble's own festival – The Winchester Chamber Music Festival – quickly established itself as a highly successful event following the inaugural festival in 2008 in the home town of their cellist Kate Gould and now welcomes capacity audiences in April each year.

The ensemble's first recording was of works by Frank Bridge, which was released by Dutton to much critical acclaim including glowing reviews and recommendations by both *Gramophone* and *International Record Review*. The subsequent release of the second disc in their survey of Bridge's early works for Dutton was again met with plaudits from the critics, including unreserved commendations from *Gramophone* magazine, *American Record Guide* and BBC Radio 3 (CD Review), and was shortlisted for the Gramophone Chamber Music Award 2011. Their next release was a Schumann recording for Sonimage Classics, which drew observations such as "rendered with a bubbling brilliance", and "heart-touchingly eloquent" from the *Sunday Times*. A collection of works by Fauré followed on Sonimage Classics, and received excellent reviews from both *The Strad* and *Gramophone* magazines.

www.londonbridgetrio.com

KATE GOULD ~ 'cello

Kate was previously a member of the Leopold String Trio who became BBC New Generation Artists and ECHO 'Rising Stars' and won prestigious awards from the Royal Philharmonic Society and Borletti-Buitoni Trust. She has been a member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe since 2000 and is frequently invited to play as guest-principal cellist of the UK's leading orchestras. She enjoys giving duo recitals, often with pianist Viv McLean, since they won the Tillett Trust and BBC Radio 3 'Young Artists' schemes together. Kate is co-artistic director of the Winchester Chamber Music Festival, Hampshire, and Ironstone Chamber Music Festival, north Oxfordshire. She plays a Carlo-Giuseppe Testore cello of 1711. The purchase of this instrument was made possible through the Kate Gould Cello Trust, put together and managed by the Stradivari Trust.



DANIEL TONG ~ piano

Daniel Tong enjoys a varied and diverse career, primarily as a chamber music pianist but also as soloist, song accompanist, teacher, writer and festival director. His first solo CD of music by Schubert was released on the Quartz label, with *Gramophone* magazine describing him as "an extraordinarily sympathetic Schubertian". As soloist he has also recorded short works by Frank Bridge for Dutton with the London Bridge Ensemble, broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 and given a series of lecture-recitals on Beethoven's Piano Sonatas at St George's, Bristol.

As chamber musician, Daniel has collaborated with the Elias, Heath, Navarra, Dante, Callino and Allegri Quartets. He is founder of the Wye Valley Chamber Music Festival and, with Kate Gould, the Winchester Chamber Music Festival. He has curated series of Dvořák and Elgar at Kings Place in London, Schubert & Brahms at St George's Bristol, frequently performed at Wigmore Hall and appeared on BBC Radio 3. With 'Music Discovery Live', Daniel collaborates with musicologist Richard Wigmore on study sessions and concerts exploring a particular theme or aspect of music. 'Beethoven Plus' commissioned ten new works to be performed alongside the ten sonatas for violin and piano, which Daniel has performed with Krysia Osostowicz at various venues around the UK.

Daniel is Head of Piano Chamber Music at the Birmingham Conservatoire. He also teaches piano at Bristol University.

www.danieltong.com





GARY POMEROY ~ *viola*

South African Gary Pomeroy was awarded an international scholarship to study the viola at the Royal Northern College of Music where he enjoyed lessons from Mark Knight, Christopher Rowland and Thomas Riebl. He is a member of the Heath Quartet with whom he studied further at the Escuela Superior de Música Reina Sofia in Madrid. They have appeared on French, German, American and BBC radio, been awarded by the Borletti-Buitoni Trust, Festspiele Mecklenberg Vorpommern and recently become the Royal Philharmonic Society's 'Young Artists'.

TAMSIN WALEY-COHEN ~ *violin*

Born in London in 1986, Tamsin Waley-Cohen enjoys an adventurous and varied career. In addition to concerts with the Royal Philharmonic, London Philharmonic and BBC orchestras, amongst others, she has been associate artist with the Orchestra of the Swan and works with conductors including Andrew Litton and Tamás Vásáry. She enjoys a duo partnership with Huw Watkins, whose Concertino



she premiered, and together they have recorded for Champs Hill and Signum Records, for whom she is a Signum Classics Artist. With her sister, composer Freya Waley-Cohen, and architects Finbarr O'Dempsey and Andrew Skulina, she holds an Open Space residency at Aldeburgh. Her love of chamber music led her to start the Honeymead Festival, now in its ninth year, and she is also artistic director of the Sunday Series at London's Tricycle Theatre. In 2016-2017 she will be a recipient of the ECHO Rising Stars Awards. She studied at the Royal College of Music and her teachers included Itzhak Rashkovsky, Ruggiero Ricci, and András Keller.

www.tamsinwaleycohen.com

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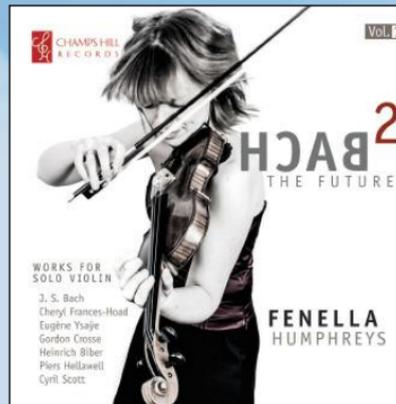
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