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Sunday 18 January

London Chamber Music Series

Chiron Piano Trio

Presented in Partnership with
the London Chamber Music Society

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Chiron Piano Trio
Hall One, 6.30pm

Daniel Becker piano
Ning Kam violin
Thomas Carroll cello

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)
Piano Trio in G Minor Hob XV/19 (1794-95)

Alexander Goehr (born 1932)
Piano Trio (1966)

INTERVAL (20 minutes)

Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770-1827)
Sonata for Piano & Violin in G Major *Op 30 N03* (1802)

Gabriel Faure (1845-1924)
Piano Trio in D Minor *Op 120* (1922-24)

Biographies

The Chiron Trio first performed together in 2007. However, Ning's and Tom's association goes much further back, as they were students together at the Menuhin School. Ning and Daniel have worked together since 2006, when they gave a recital for the Park Lane Group at the Purcell Room. The Trio have recorded Alexander Goehr's Piano Trio on a disc for Meridian Records. The members of the quartet all have successful solo careers.

Ning Kam has given chamber and orchestral concerts in Europe, Singapore, Canada and the United States, appearing with numerous orchestras such as the Cleveland Orchestra and the Helsinki Philharmonic. She has released three albums. Ning plays on a c.1730 Guarnerius Del Jesu which is on generous loan from Mr and Mrs Rin Kei Mei of Singapore.

Born in Swansea, **Thomas Carroll** studied with Melissa Phelps at the Yehudi Menuhin School and with Heinrich Schiff in Austria. As a concerto soloist Thomas has appeared with among others the London Symphony Orchestra and the Philharmonia Orchestra. Much in demand as a chamber musician, Thomas has worked with the Belcea Quartet, Chilingirian Quartet, Yehudi Menuhin, Gidon Kremer, Steven Isserlis, Mischa Maisky, and many others. Engagements over the last year have included concerts at Wigmore Hall and the the Louvre in Paris. Thomas is currently a Professor at the Royal College of Music in London and the Yehudi Menuhin School.

Daniel Becker performs regularly in the UK and abroad as a solo recitalist and chamber musician. In November 2005, Daniel gave the London premiere with the Elias Quartet of Alexander Goehr's *Piano Quintet* at the Conway Hall for the LCMS. He performed the *Quintet* again at Wigmore Hall in November 2007 in a concert to celebrate the composer's 75th birthday. Daniel's playing has been heard frequently on BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM. He has worked closely with many composers, and has given world or UK premieres of works by among others Edward Cowie and Alexander Goehr. Daniel also performs in the Zimro Trio.

Franz Joseph Haydn - Piano Trio in G Minor, Hob. XV/19

- I. Andante: Presto
- II. Adagio ma non troppo
- III. Presto

Dedicated to Maria Therese Esterhazy, the G-minor piano trio, together with Haydn's adjacent trios (XV/18-20), were composed at the tail-end of his residence in London in 1794-95. They marked Haydn's return to piano music for the first time since 1790 - a long time given his prolific flair and mastery of the instrument. He had been brought to London by Johann Peter Salomon, born in Bonn but then based in London as a violinist and impresario. Hearing of Nicolaus Esterhazy's death, Saloman travelled to Vienna to 'inform' Haydn he would now be going to London. The composer's affinity with this country had been foreseen: Haydn himself once described Symphony Nos. 76-78 as destined 'for the English gentlemen' and intended to 'produce' them at the Professional Concert (the successor to the Bach-Abel Concerts of 1774-82). London was the largest and economically most vibrant city in the world with an active, varied musical life made all the richer for the French Revolution's refugees. Haydn settled here quickly, plunging into a hectic social and professional life and remaining quietly pleased with the impact his presence made (he would later recount: 'My arrival caused a great sensation [...] I went the rounds of all the newspapers for three successive days.'). The G-minor trio is typical of Haydn's pleasing yet brilliant style. The opening movement is piano-led for the most part, with momentary violin flourishes, chromaticism and changes of mode. Later variation in the piano leads to the *Presto*, actually an extended coda. The second movement is now firmly in E-flat major but has a typically looser feel structurally. The whimsical *Presto* finale hops between the 'home' key of G minor and its 'relative' B-flat, with much interplay, flashy accompanying figurations and swapping of parts between the instruments.

Alexander Goehr - Piano Trio

- I. Con anima
- II. Lento possibile e sostenuto

Alexander Goehr comes from fine musical stock: his father was the conductor and composer Walter Goehr (who studied with Schoenberg in Berlin), his mother Laelia a classically trained pianist. Born in Germany, Goehr and his parents moved to Britain in 1933. Abandoning a scholarship to read Classics at Oxford, Goehr instead chose to read Music with Richard Hall in Manchester. Its progressively-minded atmosphere was a breeding ground for several British composers that would redefine Modernism in the second half of the century. His fellow students Harrison Birtwistle and Peter Maxwell Davies (both two years younger than Goehr), together with the pianist John Ogdon and trumpeter (later conductor) Elgar Howarth, formed the Manchester New Music Group in the mid 1950s. Goehr soon became a guardian-like figure within a group whose avant-garde leanings set them apart from other British ensembles. (This didactic streak found a future outlet at Leeds University, then Cambridge, where he taught for over twenty years). Goehr also did most to keep them abreast of new developments on the continent, attending Messiaen's masterclasses at the Paris Conservatoire and tasting his first success abroad at the seminal Darmstadt summer course, at which he befriended Boulez. Goehr's compositional method soon evolved into a style that was highly personalised and which combined 'Darmstadt'-type serialism with modality. This was no backward step, though, and the Piano Trio (composed in 1966 and commissioned by Yehudi Menuhin), was one of his greatest successes to use this approach. A two-part work, the trio opens with a dance-based first movement that unfolds in a typically Schoenbergian manner with a theme and variations and exhibits Goehr's distinctive temporal control.

The sheer intensity of the slow movement is a counterbalance to this - the cello's motif-cum-melody unwinds through several haunting passages that threaten to reach near stasis before the equally poised ending.

Ludwig van Beethoven - Violin Sonata No. 8 in G Major, Op. 30, No. 3.

- I. Allegro assai
- II. Tempo di Menuetto, ma molto moderato e grazioso
- III. Allegro vivace

The 'little G major' sonata, the eighth of Beethoven's ten violin sonatas, was a particular favourite of Fritz Kreisler's - he recorded it with Rachmaninov before recording the whole cycle (available on Naxos). The work was written at the start of the nineteenth century, an unhappy time for Beethoven, who already had to conceal his deafness. He spent the summer of 1802 on the outskirts of Vienna in the village of Heiligenstadt, putting the finishing touches to the Second Symphony and completing several other works including this sonata (and two others within Op. 30), the Op. 33 bagatelles, and (probably) the first two of the Op. 31 piano sonatas. As he prepared to return to the city, Beethoven penned an extraordinary document now known as the Heiligenstadt Testament. Full of enigmatic rhetoric and addressed to his two brothers, its poignant contents reflect Beethoven's trough of despondency and resignation to infirmity. Such biographical insights cast an interesting light of this little but vivid sonata. The Allegro assai opens with dramatic figures played together by the violin and piano; the violin seizes upon and extends a snatch of melody before the second subject, unexpectedly in D minor. The second movement, in E flat, is marked at the speed of a minuet and begins with a cantabile piano melody followed by the violin then developed. The finale is a lively *moto perpetuo* reminiscent of Haydn.

Gabriel Faure - Piano Trio in D Minor, Op. 120

- I. Allegro ma non troppo
- II. Andantino
- III. Allegro vivo

By all accounts, Faure would often question the merit of his own works, and only when his songs became popular in the Paris salons did he begin to gain real recognition for his compositions. His confidence in the chamber music medium was far greater and his interest in it spanned his entire career, from the First Violin Sonata to his String Quartet, published posthumously in 1925. His music for piano and strings, especially, draws on his intuitive sense of songwriting and his distinctive approach to melodic interaction with its accompaniment. Uncluttered and restrained, Faure's style would never to give way to showy uses of colour or "effects". Unlike the influential Saint-Saens, Faure was not a virtuoso pianist, yet his writing for the instrument is often extremely challenging: the unusual distribution of parts between the two hands and interesting finger substitutions are accounted for by the fact that he was a skilled, and ambidextrous, organist. From 1922, Faure's health declined rapidly. However, the two works he wrote until his death two years later - the Piano Trio heard this evening and the String Quartet - are among his finest. The trio's strings-led first movement showcases Faure's mastery of imitative writing and is typical of the characteristic, post-Romantic style he developed late in his career. The piano provides its surging quaver momentum and this type of relationship between piano and strings continues in the poignant centrepiece *Andantino* movement. The apparent rhythmic stasis of the piano masks the harmonic subtlety within, though the tables are soon turned with the strings in accompaniment. A declamatory call opens the finale, setting the scene for further instrumental interplay marked by its clever, subdivided rhythms and extended harmonies.