

JACQUES THIBAUD STRING TRIO

MOZART
COMPLETE STRING TRIOS

audite



W.A. MOZART**Divertimento in E-flat major, K. 563**

- I. Allegro 9:08
- II. Adagio 9:10
- III. Menuetto. Allegretto – Trio 6:13
- IV. Andante 7:28
- V. Menuetto. Allegretto – Trio I – Trio II 5:29
- VI. Allegro 7:02

W.A. MOZART / J.S. BACH**Preludes and Fugues, K. 404a**

- No. 1 in D minor
 - Adagio 4:00
 - Fuga. Andante cantabile (J.S. Bach, BWV 853,8) 5:08
- No. 2 in G minor
 - Adagio 3:20
 - Fuga. Allegro (J.S. Bach, BWV 883,14) 3:09
- No. 3 in F major
 - Adagio 2:58
 - Fuga. Vivace (J.S. Bach, BWV 882,13) 2:35
- No. 4 in F major
 - Adagio (J.S. Bach, BWV 527) 3:07
 - Fuga. Allegro (J.S. Bach, BWV 1080) 6:13
- No. 5 in E-flat major
 - Largo (J.S. Bach, BWV 526) 3:12
 - Fuga. Moderato (J.S. Bach, BWV 526) 3:48
- No. 6 in F minor
 - Adagio 4:17
 - Fuga (W.F. Bach, F 31,8) 3:24

W.A. MOZART**String Trio in G major, K. Anh. 66 / K. 562e**

(Fragment) Allegro 4:11



A Threesome on an Equal Footing

The string trio has always been overshadowed by the string quartet, which holds pride of place as the pinnacle of chamber music. Yet it has a distinctive image of its own as a clearly delineated genre. The origins of the string trio as scored for violin, viola and cello are not entirely clear. The 18th-century trio sonata, which usually involved a pair of violins in dialogue as well as a bass line, was certainly a model. Following the disappearance of the basso continuo, which had served to lend harmonic support, the viola took over the function of the middle voice to fill out the texture. The orchestral writing typical of Italian opera, with its division into three voices, can also be regarded as a model. So can the musical genre of the divertimento, to which the trios of Haydn and Mozart have a link. Joseph Haydn was not only a groundbreaker in the medium of the string quartet but also wrote numerous trios for a wide array of string combinations, including well over 100 works alone for the baryton, in various pairings with violin, viola and cello. Luigi Boccherini became the most prolific pioneer of the standard string trio as we know it, comprising violin, viola and cello. It was Mozart, however, who composed the first indisputable masterpiece of this genre: the remarkable *Divertimento*, K. 563, the epitome of the string trio, which Beethoven obviously used as a model for his Op. 3 String Trio in E-flat major. Characteristic of Mozart's late style, K. 563 was composed shortly after the last three symphonies and before the final three string quartets (the so-called "Prussian" Quartets); the autograph score has not survived. Mozart wrote the *Divertimento* for his friend and fellow Freemason Johann Michael Puchberg, who supported him financially through this commission. The composer's personal *catalogue raisonné* of his works contains a brief entry for 27 September 1788: "Ein Divertimento à I violino, I viola, e violoncello; di sei Pezzi." Mozart took the work with him on a trip to Dresden, Leipzig and Berlin in 1789. At the premiere in Dresden, the violin, viola and cello parts were played, respectively, by the Dresden choirmaster Antoine Teyber, Mozart, and Anton Kraft (a former pupil of Haydn who had also performed that composer's cello concertos). In a letter from Dresden to his wife Constanze dated 16 April 1789, Mozart expressed his satisfaction with the premiere, remarking that the piece "was played well enough to be quite listenable." Lasting about 45 minutes, K. 563 is by far Mozart's longest work of chamber music. The designation "Divertimento" is misleading, insofar as it suggests a carefree cheerfulness; instead, the piece has a profound demeanour. In his biography of Mozart, Alfred Einstein reflects on this work's quality and personality, describing it as "unique in a more literal sense." He adds: "It seems to me that one does not compliment a masterwork like this by saying that it sounds 'like a quartet' [...] No, it sounds like a trio – like the finest, most perfect trio ever heard." Einstein's summation cannot be bettered. In the first printed edition of 1792 by Artaria, the work appeared under the title "Gran Trio". K. 563 is chamber music of the highest standard, harmonically rich and written with artful contrapuntal skill. In terms of

virtuosity, Mozart demands even more from the performers than in his violin concertos or in the *Sinfonia concertante*, K. 364, for violin, viola and orchestra. The profundities he is able to explore with just three voices astonish. Each instrument is often given a chance to take the lead, while double stops at times mimic the sound of a quartet. All of the difficulties inherent in string trio playing are concentrated within this work. The strings act as equal partners, with the viola and cello taking on particularly rewarding melodic roles. In a string trio, everything sounds even more exposed than in a string quartet: the smallest vibrations in sound and intonation are immediately audible. There are only leading roles here, which is why prominent soloists occasionally like to play string trios. The trio formed by Jascha Heifetz, William Primrose and Emanuel Feuermann garnered a truly legendary reputation. In 1941, they made one of the first recordings of the *Divertimento*. No one had to restrain himself and pull back, since all three voices in this work are given an equal footing. Yet only a few chamber groups – among them the Jacques Thibaud String Trio – have devoted themselves to the genre as permanent string trio ensembles.

Mozart effortlessly applied the refined compositional techniques that are so amazing in his “Haydn” Quartets to the string trio. In K. 563, he combines formal elements from the sonata and the divertimento: the title “Divertimento” here likely refers more to the larger number of movements (six rather than four) than to the musical content. Two fast movements frame two slow movements and two dance movements. The movements are interrelated through related thematic material involving descending or ascending motifs based on the triad. The first movement is in sonata allegro form, comprising an exposition, development, and recapitulation. The main theme begins with a characteristic descending triad, which is also heard at the beginning of the development section. The peaceful Adagio, set in the unusual key of A-flat major, is one of Mozart’s most sensual slow movements. This is also a sonata form movement teeming with soulful melody. The theme appears six times in all, but Mozart artfully transforms its character by changing instrumentation, adding melodic decorations, or shifting harmonies. The use of such remote keys as E-flat minor or of the violin playing remarkably high in its register confers an almost romantic quality to this movement. Both minuets follow the conventional pattern. The second minuet, with its striking hunting motif, includes a second trio. Between the two minuets is the Andante, a complex variation movement in B-flat major based on a simple theme. The theme comprises an eight-measure section followed by a second, sixteen-measure one; each is immediately repeated and varied. A complex structure of through-composed double variations of 48 bars each (8+8 + 16+16) unfolds. This structure appears in each of the ensuing variations. The intricate minor-key variation concentrates the theme, which is subjected to tightly reined counterpoint, into four times eight bars. The final variation calls for virtuosic playing from all three instruments, ending with a coda. The finale, which weightlessly lalts in $\frac{6}{8}$ metre, is a witty combination of rondo and sonata forms. Two expressive worlds converge in Mozart’s K. 563. If the two minuets represent the relaxed, entertaining

style of the divertimento, movements 1, 2, 4 and 6 are characterised by a rigour that is far outside the realm of that genre. Alfred Einstein gets to the heart of the matter: “Mozart wrote few development sections of such grim seriousness as that of the first movement, few adagios of such breadth, few finales of such loveliness and intimacy, and even the ‘gay’ movements – the minuets and the Andante variations – have a power and depth found in a work calculated to please connoisseurs.”

Through his connection with the music-loving Baron Gottfried van Swieten, a generous patron of Viennese composers, Mozart came into close contact with the works of Johann Sebastian Bach, his sons, and George Frideric Handel. Although the composer was already familiar with the contrapuntal style of Austrian-Italian church music, Bach’s fugal art in *The Well-Tempered Clavier* and *The Art of Fugue* opened up for him a new dimension and had a lasting influence on his work. “Every Sunday at noon I go to visit Baron von Suiten [sic] and there we play nothing but Handel and Bach – I am putting together a collection of Bach fugues, that is, Sebastian as well as Emanuel and Friedemann Bach,” Mozart wrote to his father in April 1782. Mozart’s collection included fugues by Johann Sebastian, Carl Philipp Emanuel and Friedemann Bach. These are the basis for the six three-part *Preludes and Fugues* for Violin, Viola and Violoncello, K. 404a. They include three fugues from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, a fugue from *The Art of Fugue* and an organ sonata, as well as a fugue by Wilhelm Friedemann Bach. Mozart likely wrote four slow introductions himself; two slow movements are from organ trio sonatas by Bach. The *Preludes and Fugues* have survived in only three anonymous copies from the 19th century, as the autograph score has been lost. Mozart wrote these arrangements for the Sunday gatherings with Baron van Swieten, at which he participated in the performances himself, playing the viola in a distinguished circle that included such colleagues as Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf on violin and Joseph Haydn on cello. The fact that Mozart consciously trained himself using models from the “Old Masters” had a significant influence on his composition. The *Preludes and Fugues* are unique testimonies to his preoccupation with Bach’s work, as are the *Five Fugues for String Quartet*, K. 405, and the *Adagio and Fugue*, K. 546. Without this training in strict contrapuntal style, the finale of the “Jupiter” Symphony would be just as unthinkable as the development section of its first movement or the minor variation in the Andante of the *Divertimento*, K. 563.

Norbert Hornig

Translation: Thomas May

Prize-winners in the prestigious 1999 Bonn Chamber Music Competition (Deutscher Musikwettbewerb), the Jacques Thibaud String Trio was founded at the Hochschule der Künste Berlin (today: Universität der Künste) in 1994. In its early stages the ensemble was closely related to László Varga (solo cellist of the New York Philharmonic, cellist of the Borodin Trio) and the pianist György Sebók. Later on important artistic impulses came from Adolphe Mandeau and Markus Nyikos. Today the trio consists of Burkhard Maiß, Hannah Strijbos and Bogdan Jianu.



Burkhard Maiß, violin • Hannah Strijbos, viola • Bogdan Jianu, cello

For over 25 years the Jacques Thibaud String Trio has received tremendous acclaim from audiences and critics alike through their charm, their youthful exuberance and their astounding virtuosity. Regularly the trio tours throughout Europe, Japan and North America. The musicians appeared at London's Wigmore Hall and New York's Lincoln Center, performed throughout Germany, major Japanese cities, and through India; they followed invitations to some of Europe's most prestigious festivals including Belgium's Musica Mundi, Gidon Kremer's Echternach Festival in Luxembourg, and Denmark's Roskilde Schubert Festival. Robert Groslot dedicated his string trio *The Vigilant Quest* to the Jacques Thibaud String Trio; it was premiered by the ensemble in 2017.

The trio's CD recordings for the German label audite have received great critical acclaim internationally. Their last two recordings – Beethoven's complete string trios and Martinů and Milhaud trios – were both nominated for an International Classical Music Award (ICMA).

Center stage of the trio's concert activities is North America, where the ensemble has appeared at hundreds of concert venues during their career including e.g. New York City's Alice Tully Hall, Washington DC's National Gallery, Stanford University, the Caramoor Festival, the Cleveland Museum of Art, and cities such as Boston, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, San Diego, Dallas, Indianapolis and Honolulu. A special highlight was also the concert for Ban Ki-moon, former Secretary-General of the UN, in New York in 2015. As ensemble in residence at the 2001 Florida International Festival, they drew an audience of over two thousand to their final concert. They have also given successful residencies in settings ranging from conservatories to music camps to an Indian reservation in Arizona.

The trio has a long-standing relationship with Missouri-based technology company Brewer Science and returns to the area to perform annually. The 2019/20 season marked the 20th anniversary of this collaboration and saw the trio perform several concerts throughout Missouri with pianist Tao Lin and world-renowned flutist Eugenia Zukerman, as well as giving a workshop at the St Louis University.

Exciting upcoming engagements include performing at London's Kings Place for their Beethoven 250 Series.

Alongside the numerous chamber music activities, the Jacques Thibaud String Trio also performs as solo ensemble with Mozart's rare, unfinished *Sinfonia Concertante* for Violin, Viola, Cello and Orchestra.

The trio was named after the French violinist Jacques Thibaud who enjoyed a global reputation not only as solo violinist but also as a chamber musician. The existing recordings of Jacques Thibaud have been a constant source of inspiration for the Thibaud Trio, particularly in regard to nativeness and spiritedness of music playing.

"There is nothing that is so enjoyable for the true artist as ensemble-playing with his peers. Solo playing seems quite unimportant beside it." (J. Thibaud).

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Jacques Thibaud String Trio

brewer science

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