

The Endeavour Trio
TRAVERSING THE PASSAGE OF TIME

Saturday 6 August 7pm, Salon
Presented by Melbourne Recital Centre & The Endeavour Trio

ARTISTS

Paul Dean, clarinet
Trish O'Brien, cello
Stephen Emmerson, piano

PROGRAM

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Trio in A minor for clarinet, cello & piano, Op.114

- I *Allegro*
- II *Adagio*
- III *Andantino grazioso*
- IV *Allegro*

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

Sonata for cello & piano

- I Prologue: *Lent, sostenuto e molto risoluto*
- II Sérénade: *Modérément animé*
- III Final: *Animé, léger et nerveux*

PAUL DEAN (b. 1966)

Traversing the passage of time
Trio for clarinet, cello & piano

ABOUT THE MUSIC

JOHANNES BRAHMS Trio in A minor for clarinet, cello & piano, Op.114

By the end of 1890 Brahms had decided that his career was at an end. On completing his String Quintet, Op.111, he polished off a handful of incomplete canons, studies and songs, and then systematically destroyed all his remaining unfinished works. Sketches for a fifth symphony were amongst the 'lot of torn-up manuscript paper' which, he told his publisher Simrock, he had thrown into the River Traun on leaving his summer resort of Ischl. Then, the following March, on a visit to Meiningen, Brahms heard the principal clarinet of the Court Orchestra, Richard Mühlfeld, in performances of a Weber concerto and Mozart's quintet, and was immediately fascinated. Mühlfeld, whose playing was so soft and expressive that Brahms dubbed him 'Fraulein Klarinette', became the sole inspiration behind what was to be the final, radiantly autumnal phase of Brahms' career - two sonatas, a quintet and this trio.

The A minor Trio was written that same summer in Ischl, together with its larger cousin, the B minor Quintet, Op.115. With these two works, Brahms 'restored wind instruments to the place in chamber music appointed for them by Mozart', although it is characteristic that, rather than the viola used by Mozart in his 'Kegelstatt' Clarinet Trio, Brahms opted for the darker, richer sonorities provided by the cello. It received its first performance in December 1891 at the Berlin Singakademie, with Mühlfeld, Brahms and the cellist Robert Haussman. The Trio is in four movements, characterised by lyricism and darkly romantic sonorities. The opening melody is supposed to have been that of the lost fifth symphony; it begins a broad, romantic movement with a terse, pensive development section and a beautifully-coloured coda. A lyrical sonata-form slow movement follows, characterised again by exquisite tone-colouring, and then a minuet-like *andantino* intermezzo with two trios. A concise sonata-form *allegro* closes the Trio, written with an economy and thoroughness that has been compared to late Beethoven.

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CLAUDE DEBUSSY Sonata for cello & piano

This is the first of a projected series of six sonatas 'pour divers instruments' and the only one whose original instrumentation was to survive. Doubtless Debussy had been thinking of writing a cello sonata for some time. He completed it in barely a fortnight, in late July 1915, during an extraordinarily prolific three-month summer vacation at the villa 'Mon Coin' near Pourville. By this stage of his life, beset by illness, financial difficulties, the War and the recent death of his mother, Debussy was ready to return to absolute music, to writing music for the sheer fulfillment of music itself.

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'It's not for me to judge the excellence [of the Cello Sonata],' Debussy wrote to his publisher Durand on 5 August 1915, 'but I like its proportions and its almost classical form, in the good sense of the word.' For some time, Debussy - who now styled himself 'Claude de France' or 'musicien français' - had been immersing himself in the claveçin music of the French Baroque, Leclair, Couperin, Rameau and their ilk. Like Ravel in his *Tombeau de Couperin* barely two years later, Debussy seems to have set his sights on the hey-day of French classicism, free from the sheer dead weight of Teutonic Romanticism. As the German army poured into France, Debussy opined to a one-time piano pupil, 'French art needs to take revenge quite as seriously as the French army does!'

Thus, in his sonatas, Debussy sets aside the formal procedures largely inherited from Austro-Germanic composers. Instead, as he wrote to Dr Pasteur Vallery-Radot in 1915, Debussy found it necessary 'to go back to a French tradition, not the narrow contemporary one, but to the true one which can join up with the legacy of Rameau.' Hence Debussy avoids the concept of development inherent in sonata form, preferring instead, as Roger Nichols has written, 'the fleeting impression, the miniature, the vignette {and} the mosaic'. Moreover, Ernest Newman has described the Cello Sonata as 'consisting mostly of a fog opening now and then and giving us a momentary glimpse of ravishingly beautiful country.'

In the Cello Sonata, timbre, rather than structure, is Debussy's palette. In the opening Prologue, the cello is the perfectly obedient 19th-century instrument, playing arco throughout. The middle Serenade transforms it into some kind of large guitar, playing harlequinesque strummed chords and pizzicato fragments for almost half the movement. The last movement, thought to have been based on an old French song, restores the balance between bowed and strummed music. The last 12 bars present a truly striking passage, marked 'con morbidezza'. In 1917, the last full year of his life, Debussy laid out a series of future projects, many of a patriotic nature, notably an extravagant Ode de France for solo soprano [a Joan of Arc figure], chorus and orchestra. On 14 March that year he made a rare public appearance to accompany Joseph Salmon in the first performance of the Cello Sonata. No doubt with his failing physical powers, he would have heeded his own instructions that the accompanist 'not fight against the cellist.'

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PAUL DEAN *Traversing the passage of time* Trio for clarinet, cello & piano

I have long wished to write a trio for this combination and in particular for my two wonderful colleagues in The Endeavour Trio. However, when the time came, sitting in the shadow of the Brahms and Beethoven trios - pieces I had played since my teenage years, the initial steps were painful. I had written a substantial amount of music for cello, piano trio and piano and cello and that part of it felt comfortable but writing for my own instrument amongst these two, proved more of a challenge than I was expecting. But once I got a sound picture in my mind, the notes began to flow.

The second movement quickly became the focus of my attention (as it is with the Brahms and Beethoven in many ways). I was inspired by a number of things all at once when the music began to appear on the computer screen. The first one was the memory I had from childhood of a Thames Television adaptation of an Alan Ayckbourn play called *The Norman Conquests*. In this play, you witness over three separate plays or episodes, the same play from three different locations or rooms in the house. And this proved to be the blueprint for the three sections of the second movement. Each telling a slight variation or perhaps a big variation of the same story. Whilst I was composing I also had visions of Japanese theatre and Beijing opera and also the remarkable Chinese act of "face changing". And in some way, these influences and factors resulted in the design and perhaps the mood of the movement as a whole. Especially in the meditative moments between the telling of the story/stories.

The outer movements in some way should be seen as a reaction to the emotional outpourings of the central movement and act perhaps as a precursor or an antidote... which is something best left to the listener to decide on. The Trio is of course written for The Endeavour Trio, a group that I love playing with and hope to until I take my last breath on this planet. And is dedicated to my wonderful partner Trish, whose love has inspired my music and life and filled my life with joy.

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