



BERWALD

Piano Trios Vol. 2

Trio in C major (1845)

Trio No. 4 in C major

Kálmán Dráfi, Piano

Jozsef Modrian, Violin

György Kertész, Cello

Franz Berwald (1796-1868)

Piano Trios Volume 2

The Swedish composer Franz Berwald was the most distinguished of a musical dynasty of German origin. He was born in 1796 in Stockholm, the son of Christian Friedrich Georg Berwald, a former pupil of Franz Benda in Berlin, who had first moved to Stockholm in 1772. Franz Berwald's younger brother Christian August served as a violinist in the Swedish court orchestra from 1815 and as its leader from 1834 to 1861. He himself had followed family tradition as a violinist, taught by his father, and was a member of the court orchestra from 1812 until 1828. He also appeared as a soloist and in 1819 toured Finland and Russia on a concert tour with his brother. Meanwhile he was winning something of a reputation as a composer, in particular with a symphony, now partly lost, and a violin concerto that followed earlier works for violin and orchestra.

In 1829 Berwald at last found the necessary patronage for study abroad and moved to Berlin, where he took lessons in counterpoint, but at the same time developed an interest in medicine. The early 1830s found him occupied abortively with operatic composition, but in 1835 he opened his own orthopaedic institute, an enterprise that enjoyed some success over the next six years, until he decided in 1841 to sell the institute and move to Vienna. There he continued to pursue his medical interests, while turning his attention to a new opera, his tenth attempt at the form, *Estrelle de Soria*. In 1842 there was a successful concert of his music, after which he returned once more to Stockholm, where he hoped for similar success.

Now devoting his fuller attention to composition, Berwald completed his four surviving symphonies, but

failed to achieve a favourable hearing either for the first of these or for two operettas that he had staged. In 1846 he returned to Vienna, where critics valued his gifts, as elsewhere in Austria and Germany, and in 1847 he was elected a member of the Salzburg Mozarteum, a recognition of his distinction. Three years later financial pressure brought a return to provincial Stockholm once more, but his unsuccessful attempts to find musical employment either as a conductor of the court orchestra or at the University of Uppsala now led to a further change of direction and in 1850 he became manager of a glass factory at Sandö, in the north of the country, later extending his commercial interests to include a sawmill. Winter visits to Stockholm were still possible and he was able to continue his association with music in particular with the composition of chamber music. By 1859 he had settled again in Stockholm, returning to a musical career. In 1862 his opera *Estrelle de Soria* was staged with some success and two years later he completed his last opera, *Drottningen av Golconda* (The Queen of Golconda). At last he had begun to earn a measure of public recognition, with membership of the Swedish Royal Academy and the eventual, if at first disputed, appointment to a professorship. He died in Stockholm in 1868.

The period of Berwald's mature chamber music, roughly from 1845 to 1858, produced two string quartets, two piano quintets, two duos, and five completed piano trios with two fragments. An experienced violinist and violist, Berwald wrote idiomatically for the strings, and it is not surprising that the two string quartets of 1849 impress with their mastery. Strangely, the bulk of his chamber music

consists of piano trios. Given his lack of pianistic expertise, there is no wonder that his first attempts at piano-and-string balance met those problems that have bedevilled most composers since Beethoven's and Schubert's time.

The *Trio in C major*, which remained in manuscript until 1981, was presumably composed in 1845. The first movement, in fairly regular sonata form, begins promisingly with an attractive Beethovenian theme in C major, followed by a second subject group in the dominant, a languid, chromatic melody, a vigorous transitional passage and a descending motif with a tendency to modulate. The development is straightforward with the transitional passage playing an unexpectedly large rôle. The first subject is not heard again after the development, and the recapitulation begins directly with the second subject in the tonic key. Berwald's proclivity for enclosing the scherzo within the slow movement occurs again in the C major trio. The *Adagio molto* begins with a severe melody, relieved by a central fleeting, songlike episode. A delicate piano bridge passage leads to a triple-time *Scherzo*. The rhythmic momentum continues into a contrapuntal trio section. After the return of the *Scherzo* proper, a truncated and modified return of the *Adagio* closes the movement. The finale, *Presto*, follows without pause. It is the finest part of the Trio for all its endearing quirkiness. Here various introductory ideas frame a whimsical march in E flat major. Following the repeat of the opening material, condensed by about one third, the march returns briefly in C major to conclude the work.

The fragment in E flat major, dated 15th October 1849, is an entire first movement, complete but for a final cadence. It is the largest first movement of any Berwald trio, and its abandonment is cause for

puzzlement and profound regret. It is lyrical, expansive and seamlessly constructed. There is a well-controlled flow of ideas, and the first subject undergoes extensive development even before the exceptionally beautiful second theme makes its appearance. A sense of structural unity reigns over this beautifully shaped music, and furthermore, Berwald has solved his earlier problems of balance with the piano. The keyboard writing here is expressive and dramatically integrated with the strings. Berwald salvaged the thirteen-bar introduction as the beginning of his *Trio No. 1 in E flat major*, completed in 1849.

It may be presumed that around 1850 Berwald attempted to revise the *Trio in C major* of 1845. This fragmentary revision begins with the string parts in mid-air, and the piano part shows a relationship to the delicate transition between the 1845 *Adagio* and the *Scherzo*, although the exact placing of the 1850 fragment with the 1845 *Allegro* is conjectural. It is certain that Berwald was in search of greater unity, because the new material is in C major and not in the dominant G major of the original, for which there is a precedent in his *String Quartet in E flat major*. After 25 bars of *Adagio* the C major fragment goes into a triple-time *Scherzo* that is a marked improvement over the one it was meant to replace. It is fleet and assured, and lacks the rather academic counterpoint of the earlier *Scherzo*. An interesting detail is the introduction of a march-like passage that occurs twice, the second time leading into fourteen bars of the finale, identical to the 1845 version, but for a simplification of the piano part.

Having completed the *Trio No. 2 in F minor* and the *Trio No. 3 in D minor* during 1851, Berwald returned once more around 1853 to the unfinished business of the *Trio in C major*. Instead of further revision, he composed in effect a new work, based in part on the

earlier material. This was published only posthumously, in 1896. The work consists of three sections, corresponding to *Allegro*, slow movement (without a scherzo) and finale, notated as one movement and suggesting, at least, classical design. The first movement starts with a new theme, derived in part from an ascending theme in the 1845 finale, with the intention of providing an element of unity. After a descending motif in the transition, there is a G major second subject, restated a tone higher, with a third theme on the cello, suggesting Borodin. There is a development of the first subject, after which the

descending motif leads to a piano solo, prefiguring the beautiful G major slow movement, using an element that precedes the transition to the *Scherzo* in the 1845 work. The finale is a recognisable version of the original finale, with one idea replaced by the march-like motif from the discarded *Scherzo* of 1850. Berwald's reworking of this material in no way diminishes the appeal of the original Trio, since each version has its claim to legitimacy.

David Nelson

Edited by Keith Anderson

Kálmán Dráfi

Kálmán Dráfi was born in 1955 and started to play the piano at the age of four. Six years later he entered the Béla Bartók Conservatory in Budapest and at the age of fourteen became a student at the Ferenc Liszt Music Academy in the same city. He spent two years as a pupil of Bella Davidova at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow and in 1976 won the major award in the Liszt-Bartók Piano Competition. Since 1977 he has been a member of the teaching staff of the Liszt Academy.

Jozsef Modrian

Jozsef Modrian was born in Budapest in 1962 and completed his violin studies at the Ferenc Liszt Academy in 1985. He is concertmaster of the Hungarian State Orchestra and leader of the corresponding chamber orchestra.

György Kertész

Born in 1963, György Kertész studied music in Budapest, graduating at the Ferenc Liszt Academy. In 1986 he won the Budapest David Popper Cello Competition and enjoys an active career, particularly as a chamber music player, with a number of recordings to his credit in Hungary and abroad.

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BERWALD: Piano Trios Vol. 2

NAXOS

The Swedish composer Berwald found more welcome at home for his chamber music than for his larger scale compositions, in spite of his success abroad. This, the second volume of his *Piano Trios*, includes two of the five that he completed and fragments of two other unfinished works.

Franz
BERWALD
(1796-1868)

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|---|---|--------------|
| | Piano Trio in C major (1845) | 26:52 |
| ① | Allegro risoluto | 9:37 |
| ② | Scherzo: Adagio molto - Allegro molto - Adagio | 10:30 |
| ③ | Finale: Presto | 6:45 |
| | Piano Trio in E flat major (Fragment) | |
| ④ | Introduction: Largo - Allegro molto - Adagio | 10:31 |
| | Piano Trio in C major (Fragment) | |
| ⑤ | Scherzo: Adagio quasi andante - Presto - Adagio quasi andante
- Finale: Presto | 7:20 |
| | Piano Trio No. 4 in C major | |
| ⑥ | Allegro - Adagio | 18:46 |
| | Finale: Quasi presto | |

Kálmán Dráfi, Piano • Jozsef Modrian, Violin
György Kertész, Cello

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