

Total performance time: approximately 60', with no interval

Astatine Trio II

Jelena Horvat violin
Riya Hamie cello
Berniya Hamie piano

Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)
Piano Trio No.45 in E flat, Op.86 No.3
(c.1795–7) 16'
i. Poco allegretto
ii. Andantino ed innocentemente
iii. Finale: Allemande: Presto assai

Germaine Tailleferre (1892–1983)
Piano Trio (1916–17; revised 1978) 15'
i. Allegro animato
ii. Allegro vivace
iii. Moderato
iv. Très animé

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)
Piano Trio No.2 in C minor, Op.66 (1845) 31'
i. Allegro energico e fuoco
ii. Andante espressivo
iii. Scherzo: Molto allegro quasi presto
iv. Finale: Allegro appassionato

The **Astatine Trio** is a Britten Pears Young Artist for 2023–24 and a participant on Chamber Music in Residence at Snape Maltings.

Formed at the Royal College of Music in 2021, the Astatine Trio was unanimously awarded first prize at the 2022 Senior Intercollegiate Piano Trio Competition. It went on to win the first prize and Luigi Boccherini Prize at the International Virtuoso & Belcanto Chamber Competition (Lucca, Italy) in 2022 and was joint first-prize winner at the Birmingham International Piano Chamber Music Competition, also in 2022. Most recently, the trio was the youngest finalist in the 2023 Lyon International Chamber Music Competition and was awarded the SEAM prize for contemporary music.

The trio's past and upcoming engagements include performances at Wigmore Hall, St James's Piccadilly, St George's Bristol, the Austrian Cultural Forum and St Mary's Perivale. It is grateful for the support of Maggie Grimsdell (Music at Longhill Road), Philip Carne, ChamberStudio, the Piano Trio Society and the Nicholas Boas Charitable Trust.

The trio will be working with guest violinist Jelena Horvat for this residency.

Haydn: Piano Trio No.45 in E flat

Haydn played a vital role in the development of the keyboard trio and was one of the first composers to respond to the rise of the piano. Previously, these 'accompanied sonatas' had featured a single melodic instrument (violin or flute) with continuo accompaniment on the harpsichord and a cello doubling the bass line. From the mid-18th century, however, the piano rapidly became the musical accessory of choice and soon, no middle-class home was without one.

Haydn produced more than 40 piano trios, gradually refining the genre over four decades and ending with three works written in 1797 during one of his highly successful visits to England. They were dedicated to the eminent pianist Therese Jansen Bartolozzi, who had studied with Clementi, hence the sophisticated keyboard parts. This final trio is full of humour, balanced with moments of more sober reflection. It ends with a German dance, based on a Ländler folk melody, complete with hints of gypsy fiddles and even the occasional hurdy-gurdy.

Tailleferre: Piano Trio

Although Germaine Tailleferre showed prodigious early talent, her father refused to support her studies: in his view, female musicians were little better than prostitutes. Tailleferre responded by changing her surname (from Taillefesse), enrolling at the Paris Conservatoire and later becoming the only female member of Les Six – a group of composers active in 1920s Paris that included Poulenc and Milhaud. Her association with such eminent figures helped to raise her profile and she had significant early success, but thereafter her life was peppered with misfortune. Although Tailleferre continued to compose until a few weeks before her death at the age of 91, she never quite regained her early reputation.

The Piano Trio spans almost all of her adult life, the original, three-movement work having appeared in 1917 when she was in her early twenties. It shows the influence of Ravel, from whom she later had lessons, but it attracted scant attention and she soon put it aside. In her mid-eighties she revised the piece, replacing the original second movement with a jaunty, folk-like allegro and adding a lively finale. The result was one of her most enduringly popular compositions, with the new movements in particular providing a deliberately cheerful feel. 'I have had a very difficult life,' she said. 'Things were always against me. But I do not like to talk about it, because I write happy music as a release.'

Despite the movements having been composed individually over such a long period, together they form a cohesive whole. This would not have surprised Milhaud, who maintained that Tailleferre – even in her final years – was 'always 20 years old'.

Mendelssohn: Piano Trio No.2 in C minor

If the trio by Tailleferre can be described as 'happy', this Mendelssohn work has a far more complex character. When he wrote it in 1845, Mendelssohn was at the peak of a hectic career as composer, pianist and conductor. His first Trio had already found a permanent place at the heart of the chamber music repertory and had been described by Schumann as 'the master-trio of our time'. This second one, however, can justifiably be called its equal.

Mendelssohn chooses the 'ambivalent' key of C minor, beloved by Mozart for its ability to convey a mood of what Beethoven called 'serene tragedy'. This is an intensely emotional work – its passion is clear from the start – the opening movement deliberately marked to be played 'with fire'. Calm is restored in the subsequent *Andante*, evoking one of his trademark *Songs without Words*, and then comes a frantic Scherzo with echoes of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The best-known movement is the grand, climactic finale, at the heart of which Mendelssohn quotes a Lutheran chorale, a hymn imploring God not to abandon the dying sinner.

He dedicated the trio to the violinist Louis Spohr. The two men had great respect for each other and the overworked Mendelssohn told Spohr he was disappointed not to be able to offer something 'more substantial'. The actual manuscript was to be a birthday present for his sister Fanny: it was completed shortly before she turned 41. This was the last chamber work Mendelssohn lived to see published. The pressures of his high-octane existence were taking their toll: he was only 36 but his energy and health were already failing, and two years later, both he and Fanny were dead.

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The Britten Pears Young Artist Programme is made possible with the generous support of our Trusts & Foundations and Individual supporters



Supported using public funding by
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