



M A C M I L L A N
M A X W E L L D A V I E S
B E A M I S H

www.champshillrecords.co.uk

GOULD PIANO TRIO



I FOREWORD

The composers represented here all have a connection with Scotland, as do many of their compositions. This Scottish theme probably wasn't the main reason why we chose this programme, but rather we intended to contrast other contemporary works with a newly composed piece.

After our long acquaintance with the riches of James MacMillan's *Fourteen Little Pictures*, we were delighted when he agreed to write a second piano trio for us. Nothing could have prepared us for the contrasting nature of the new work – embracing high spirits and an element of comedy, as opposed to the emotionally moving and intense narrative of his earlier work.

At the premiere it was programmed alongside Peter Maxwell Davies' *A Voyage to Fair Isle*, an evocative piece where the simple traditional folk-inspired material germinates from a complex motivic background. It was an exciting experience to have both Jimmy and Max in the audience!

The opening of Sally Beamish's *Piobaireachd* immerses the listener in a luminous soundscape before more jagged gestures activate the ensemble. With relatively few notes on the page, it remains an exacting piece which has never failed to make its impact wherever we've performed it.

Though each piano trio, then, has a powerful individual voice, we hope that a thread unites the whole, stimulating the imagination.

Jimmy Alice Ben

TRACK LISTING

- | | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 1 | JAMES MACMILLAN (1959–)
PIANO TRIO NO.2 | 13'25 |
| 2 | PETER MAXWELL DAVIES (1934–)
PIANO TRIO - A VOYAGE TO FAIR ISLE | 19'41 |
| 3 | SALLY BEAMISH (1956–)
PIOBAIREACHD | 10'33 |
| 4 | JAMES MACMILLAN
FOURTEEN LITTLE PICTURES | 22'36 |

Total playing time: 66'16

Produced, engineered and edited by Patrick Allen
Recorded on the 3rd–5th September 2014 in the Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex, UK
Cover image by Peshkova, tray image by Baltsars, both courtesy of Shutterstock library
Photographs of the Gould Piano Trio by Jake Morley

Executive Producer for Champs Hill Records: Alexander Van Ingen
Label Manager for Champs Hill Records: John Dickinson

PROGRAMME NOTE

The place where art is created may not influence its content. But the artist's imaginary landscape, the visions, memories and half memories of an internal world more real than reality itself, surely does. With so much music performed and consumed today in vast cities, by those whose lives revolve around the business – and busyness – of urban economies, it can be difficult to connect with the remote places and spiritual sanctuaries that have inspired countless composers since before history's dawn. The works on this album invite quiet contemplation of worlds far removed from the distractions and sensory overload of city life and, increasingly, of life lived before screens or behind screens. It will be for each listener to reflect on what those worlds might be, whether they transcend the mundane and open windows onto something other. In many ways they belong to a rich tradition of illustrative pieces of chamber music, compositions rooted in the deep cultural soil of place and collective memory. Scotland's monumental resource of visual and aural imagery, while not the sole influence, clearly contributed to the creative forces behind each composition in the Gould Trio's programme.

James MacMillan's *Fourteen Little Pictures* (also known as his Piano Trio No.1), completed in Glasgow in March 1997, is a set of miniatures 'stitched together', as the composer puts it, to form a work of considerable scope and great expressive variety. MacMillan conceived its section as individual pieces, each with its own character and complete in identity; however, he recognised sufficient points in common to be able to create a larger frame to support a continuous sequence of *Little Pictures*. He extended several 'common threads' between the pieces, as he notes, 'to establish references, resonances and recapitulations. This was to allow a sense of scale and unity to be projected onto a larger canvas.'

The first miniature opens in ferocious mood, propelled by an upward surging scale for violin and cello and buttressed by the piano part's strident ninths. MacMillan scatters his score with abrupt dynamic and textural contrasts, lurching from *fff* to *pp*

and shifting registers from high to low and back again. The movement's central section projects dry staccato piano chords through a veil of string tremolos, the tranquil yet unsettling preface to a brief echo of its opening bars. Traces of the second 'picture' arise in a chromatic melody for violin and cello, slowly stated at first before unfolding as an elaborate, lyrical duet for the two instruments. As so often in MacMillan's work, the soaring violin melody is tinged with fleeting grace notes and the modal colours of Scottish folksong (although without trace of pastiche). The violin's song becomes more ardent, more insistent as it moves towards the third 'picture', a movement in which piano and cello conduct a nervous dialogue beneath the haunting cry of sustained notes in the violin. The latter's long dying *glissando* intensifies the movement's sense of mystery which in turn is challenged by an energetic link into 'picture' four, with its jaunty piano part marked to be played 'lovingly, childlike, with a lilt'. For all the movement's rhythmic complexity, it remains childlike at heart, playful in the piano part's closing bass riff.

As in the first movement, the trio's three instruments share equal billing in the fifth 'picture'; the cello's plaintive song demands attention, however, while its companions provide a running commentary of countermelodies. MacMillan recalls the fourth movement's rocking bass line as a bridge to his sixth 'picture' and goes on to create a soundworld of violent contrasts, one in which the piano's outbursts constantly subvert the violin and cello's Shostakovich-like lament. Violin and piano gradually emerge as duo partners in the seventh movement, appearing behind the violin's tentative solo and moving towards a cathartic explosion of energy as the eighth 'picture', an *adagio* for violin and cello, comes into view. The spirit of sacred chant, albeit in its most elaborate solo form, prevails here until the piano's 'eruptive' return in the ninth movement, unleashed as soloist following the string players' fading *glissando*. Material from the first 'picture' launches and sustains the tenth movement, subtly varied and developed, then capped by echoes of the opening movement's chorale-like duo for

violin and cello. Silence is broken by the distant rolling rumble of a rapid piano scale, repeated many times over and becoming ever more present, 'like thunder', as MacMillan marks in the score.

'The eleventh "picture"', notes the composer, 'is the climax of the music's progress where the trio all play *fffff*, *desolato*, *martellato*, *feroce*, etc.' Clangorous piano chords dominate and drive the movement, although their momentum is finally arrested by a long pause for silence and the arrival of pictures 'twelve', an austere piano solo, and 'thirteen', with its slow-motion recollection of material from the sixth movement. 'The fourteenth and final 'picture' brings the music full circle,' observes MacMillan in his programme note, 'at first presenting some of the material from the first 'picture' but quickly transforming it into a long piano postlude marked "*teneroso*, *delicato*, *lontano e semplice*". The piece, so rich in colour and contrast, evaporates into silence from a sequence of fierce pedal notes in the piano, punched into life by the player's fist.

MacMillan's Piano Trio No.2 was conceived as a single, through-composed movement, launched in celebratory fashion with an insistent sequence of piano octaves. The music's vibrant nature and playful spirit are tempered slightly by what the composer describes as 'short brittle phrases on the two string instruments, sometimes *sul ponticello*, other times *pizzicato*; sometimes with little, sliding *glissandi*, other times in surging chromatic scales.' MacMillan soon effects a transition to another mood state, gentle and reflective, in which the violin's expressive modal melody and lapping cello drones offer refuge from the opening section's skittish energy. The piano writing here remains connected to what has gone before and, with the help of throbbing piano triads and a fanfare figure on the strings, allows the composer to break away from introspection. He describes what follows as 'a very fast, rollicking "music-hall" idea, quite clownish in character', which alternates 'back and forth with a stately, lilting waltz theme.' Shades of

Shostakovich pass like clouds over the music's surface, developing an unsettling sense of irony and impermanence. MacMillan strips his work down to bare essentials in its central largo, preserving the idea of a waltz in the piano accompaniment while the cello touches darker regions in its sustained melody. 'This segues into a fuller version of the earlier modal theme, before an abrupt recapitulation of the clownish idea,' notes the composer. He finally recalls the opening theme and develops its material in a *coda* of captivating power and élan.

Sally Beamish, who spent the first part of her career as a professional viola player in London, moved to Scotland a quarter of a century ago to establish her new life as a full-time composer. The relocation made all the difference. She and her husband, the cellist Robert Irvine, founded the Chamber Group of Scotland in company with James MacMillan. Her work, like that of MacMillan, has contributed to the surging confidence of the Scottish arts scene. While the origins and influences of *Piobaireachd* belong to Scotland and the Gaelic culture of her highlands and islands, the work was commissioned by the London Smetana Trio and first performed by them in Lewes on New Year's Day 1992. The term *piobaireachd*, known to many by its anglicized equivalent, *pibroch*, refers to a distinct genre within the Highland bagpipe tradition, regarded as the repertoire's 'classical' core. All *pibrochs*, whether ancient or recently composed, are cast in theme and variations form; the theme functions as a simple ground for increasingly elaborate melodic ornamentation.

Beamish became aware of *piobaireachd* when she wrote a piece for schools inspired by Neil Munro's *The Lost Pibroch*, the first of the Scottish author's *Sheiling Stories*. She incorporated bagpipes into her work and had them play the *piobaireachds* mentioned in Munro's tale. 'For the legendary 'Lost *Pibroch*' – a haunting melody which causes men and animals to desert their home and roam the world – I wrote my own full *pibroch*,' the composer recalls. She chose its melody as the basis of *Piobaireachd*.



‘There are various set types of [*pibroch*] variation, using a simple paraphrase of the original melody, laced with ever more intricate ornamentation, so that the music builds to a frenzy of rapid gracenotes,’ observes Beamish in her programme note to *Piobaireachd*. The theme, she continues, is usually repeated. ‘I have done exactly this, but ... have also used more contemporary methods of variation, experimenting with separation of ornament and melody into different keys, and even developing the ‘drone’, which extends downwards by a tone in each variation, so that in the end it encompasses a complete whole-tone scale.’ Beamish dedicated *Piobaireachd* to the piper Annie Grant, who guided her study of *pibroch*, offered advice about its form and content and introduced her to the genre’s legend and lore. ‘It is thought by some that the *Pibroch* may have been brought to Scotland from Cremona in Italy in the Fifteenth Century by the MacCrimmons,’ notes the composer, ‘and so [it] may well have roots intertwined with those better-known baroque and classical variation forms, such as the *Chaconne*.’

Peter Maxwell Davies found inspiration for his Piano Trio in the remote and desolate land of Fair Isle, midway between his home on Sanday and the Shetland Isles, where changing winds and weather patterns can rule on matters of life and death. While the island’s barren landscape touched the composer, he was struck above all by the community spirit and resilience of its inhabitants. He discovered the place and its people in July 2002 when he attended Fair Isle’s first music festival. ‘The physical remoteness and craggy beauty of the place are well-known,’ Maxwell Davies recalls, ‘but it was the involvement of the population of seventy or so souls in the mounting of a new work by Alasdair Stout, a Shetlander from there, which struck home most. This made demands on the island chorus and the folk musicians which would daunt professionals, but which, in performance, gave everyone concerned huge satisfaction. I was most of all moved through the extraordinary expression of a community’s essence – one felt that a challenging piece of new music had really

permeated, through months of rehearsal, into the spirit of Fair Isle, to become a part of its fabric in a way new music seldom can – affecting and even changing the lives of a very special community.’

A Voyage to Fair Isle stands as its composer’s ‘attempt to express my delight at, and appreciation of this ... experience.’ The piece was created in September 2002 for the Grieg Piano Trio and premiered by them the following January in Kongsberg, Norway. Maxwell Davies built his work from the raw melodic material of the plainsong proper to the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary (8 September), the composer’s birthday and the day on which he began writing his Piano Trio. The chant, alluded to in the single-movement composition’s expansive slow introduction, underpins the entire work. It flows through the jagged contours of the subsequent allegro, where it is reimagined as a jaunty folk tune.

‘I have tried to capture some characteristics of the local dance music, in the course of rigorous isometric transformations,’ observes Maxwell Davies. He develops his material over the course of a slow central section; rather than recall the music of the opening thereafter, the composer continues the process of thematic transformation in a helter-skelter scherzo. ‘Before and after the slow development, the flow is interrupted by short direct tributes to the indigenous musical tradition [of the Shetland Islands]; the tunes are mine, arising from, and returning to, the all-pervading plainsong – but fashioned “in style”’: *A Voyage to Fair Isle* draws its expressive power from the meeting of sacred and secular, a union celebrated and intensified in the work’s closing section.

Andrew Stewart

GOULD PIANO TRIO

Recently compared to the Beaux Arts Trio by the *Washington Post* for their 'musical fire' and dedication to the genre, the Gould Piano Trio continue to bring the masterpieces of their repertoire to an ever-widening public.

After winning Melbourne's inaugural International Chamber Music Competition, the Goulds quickly established a worldwide reputation with many tours throughout Europe, the USA, South America, Far East and New Zealand.

After their highly regarded rendition of James MacMillan's *Fourteen Little Pictures*, they commissioned a second piano trio from the composer, premiered at the Bath International Festival in May 2014 and subsequently toured in the UK. The Goulds have performed complete cycles of the Dvorak trios at Wigmore Hall and the Beethoven trios at St. George's, Bristol; this 'live' Beethoven appears on the SOMM label. The trio's discography is very far-reaching. Their Brahms cycle is unique in including both his early trios and those for clarinet and horn, and their exploration into the works of the late British romantics such as Stanford, Ireland, Bax, Scott and Milford (Chandos and Naxos) has brought critical acclaim.

The Trio have always found the space in their musical lives to coach, principally at the Royal Northern College of Music and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama where they hold residencies. Their outreach work with school children and in the community brings a sense of added communication and perspective to their outlook.

Of particular pride is the creation of the Corbridge and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama festivals by the Gould Piano Trio with clarinettist Robert Plane, where the collaboration with guest artists refreshes their musical inspiration.

The Goulds enjoy a special relationship with Champs Hill Records.

BIOGRAPHIES

Lucy Gould founded the Gould Piano Trio in 1992 whilst studying at the Royal Academy of Music. Alongside her work with the trio she is also a member of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe and much in demand as a guest leader of many leading orchestras in the UK. She has made concerto appearances with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, the Bournemouth Sinfonietta and the English String Orchestra.

As a much sought-after chamber musician, Lucy has collaborated with many artists, including Roger Vignoles and Leon McCawley. Her recordings include John Ireland's violin sonatas with Benjamin Frith for Naxos (*BBC Music Magazine* Chamber Music Choice), the premiere performance of violin works by Stanford for Naxos and the Mendelssohn Octet with Daniel Hope and colleagues from the Chamber Orchestra of Europe (Deutsche Grammophon). A CD of chamber music by Bax, including the premiere recording of the Trio for clarinet, violin and piano was shortlisted for a Gramophone Award.

Lucy has three children and lives in Cardiff, holding a teaching post at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

Alice Neary was the winner of the 1998 Pierre Fournier Award, and won major prizes in 2001 Leonard Rose Competition, USA and the 1997 Adam International Cello Competition, New Zealand.

Alice's performances have included concertos with the Ulster Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and Israel Symphony and recitals at the Wigmore Hall, Purcell Room and Bridgewater Hall. Festival appearances include Santa Fe, Bath and City of London. She has broadcast extensively on BBC Radio 3 and NPR (USA) and recordings include the Tovey Cello Concerto with the Ulster Orchestra, Ireland Cello Sonata and Paul Patterson Cello Concerto.

A passionate chamber musician, Alice joined the Gould Piano Trio in 2001 and has appeared as guest cellist with Nash Ensemble, Endellion and Elias string quartets.

Alice studied with Ralph Kirshbaum at the Royal Northern College of Music and with Timothy Eddy, as a Fulbright scholar in USA. She teaches at the Royal College of Music and Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. She plays an Alessandro Gagliano cello of 1710.

Benjamin Frith sought the guidance of Fanny Waterman and went on to win awards culminating in the Artur Rubinstein Piano Masters Gold Medal.

Subsequently he has enjoyed a varied career, playing concertos with such orchestras as the Hallé and Warsaw Philharmonic, recitals at major festivals and coaching mainly at the RNCM.

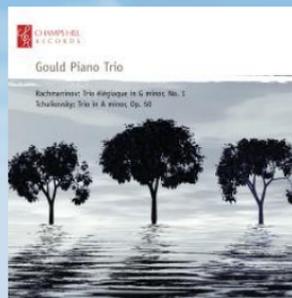
In recent years he has devoted much of his time to the chamber repertoire, principally as pianist in the Gould Piano Trio.

Throughout the latter half of his career he has had the good fortune to record much of the early romantic solo piano music (for Naxos) and a good deal of the late Classical and Romantic trio literature. His *Davidsbundler* Op.6 of Schumann was chosen as top recommendation by Radio 3.

Other releases include Moeran's 3rd Rhapsody with the Ulster Orchestra and the second concerto of C.V. Stanford with BBC National Orchestra of Wales.

He takes a particular pleasure in exploring the work of the late romantic British composers.

ALSO AVAILABLE



CHRC001Z

RACHMANINOV/TCHAIKOVSKY

RACHMANINOV: TRIO ÉLÉGIAQUE IN G MINOR, NO.1

TCHAIKOVSKY: TRIO IN A MINOR, OP.50

The outstanding Gould Piano Trio perform these two evocative works; the Rachmaninov almost a miniature piano concerto, the Tchaikovsky one of the finest works for piano trio of the Romantic era.

"meticulous skill, pristine intonation... convincing, engaging performances"
AllMusic.com

"polished, blended and heartfelt... difficult to imagine more robust, sensitive and responsive playing of these Late-Romantic works." **MusicWeb International**

BBC Music Magazine
Chamber Disc of the Month

★★★★★



CHRC0088

MENDELSSOHN - THE PIANO TRIOS & WORKS FOR CELLO & PIANO

PIANO TRIO NO.1 IN D MINOR OP.49

PIANO TRIO NO.2 IN C MINOR OP.66

VARIATIONS CONCERTANTES FOR CELLO & PIANO OP.17

ALBUMBLATT OP.117

SONG WITHOUT WORDS OP.109

"I love the way the Gould Trio... search out all the expressive details of harmony and melody, giving the piece its own unique character... Benjamin Frith revels in the brilliance of Mendelssohn's pianism..."
Gramophone Magazine

"Champs Hill's recording is superior in projecting both the clarity and warmth of these works... the shorter cello works make a welcome bonus, particularly given Alice Neary's highly expressive playing..."
BBC Music Magazine