



# GOETZ: PIANO QUINTET & QUARTET

PRO ARTE QUARTET    PAUL MARRION double bass



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HERMANN GOETZ (1840-1876)

PIANO QUINTET IN C MINOR Op.16\*

- |   |            |                                       |       |
|---|------------|---------------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | <i>i</i>   | Andante sostenuto – Allegro con fuoco | 09'38 |
| 2 | <i>ii</i>  | Andante con moto                      | 06'58 |
| 3 | <i>iii</i> | Allegro moderato                      | 03'07 |
| 4 | <i>iv</i>  | Allegro vivace                        | 05'00 |

PIANO QUARTET IN E MAJOR Op.6

- |   |            |                                    |       |
|---|------------|------------------------------------|-------|
| 5 | <i>i</i>   | Rasch und feurig                   | 10'24 |
| 6 | <i>ii</i>  | Langsam (Theme and Variations)     | 12'15 |
| 7 | <i>iii</i> | Scherzo – Sehr lebhaft             | 05'26 |
| 8 | <i>iv</i>  | Sehr langsam – Frisch und lebendig | 11'36 |

Total playing time: **64'30**

PRO ARTE QUARTET

Kenneth Sillito *violin*  
Robert Smissen *viola*  
Stephen Orton *cello*  
Hamish Milne *piano*

*with*

Paul Marrion *double bass\**

Produced and recorded by Gary Cole  
Recorded 1st – 3rd December 2003 in the Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex, UK

Label Manager for Champs Hill Records: Joanna Wilson

This CD was originally released by ASV in 2004 as ASV1157, under a limited-term license from the Bowerman Charitable Trust. Following the deletion of this title, BCT are pleased to make it available once more here.

On 3 December 1876 Hermann Goetz, four days short of his 36th birthday, died from tuberculosis, an affliction he had suffered since his teens. In his life, he had earned the admiration of such musicians as his former teacher, the great conductor and pianist Hans von Bülow, and the composer Johannes Brahms. Decades after his death his music continued to be championed by such musicians and critics as Gustav Mahler and George Bernard Shaw. Shaw hailed Goetz's Symphony in F, a work which presages the music of Mahler and Richard Strauss, as "the only real symphony composed since Beethoven died"; and Goetz's operatic version of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Der Widerspenstigen Zähmung*, was recognised in its time as one of the most successful German comic operas ever composed – Mahler, who championed Goetz during his tenure as conductor of the Vienna Philharmonic, staged a new production at the Vienna Court Opera as late as 1906.

Yet by the mid-20th century Goetz was widely forgotten. With his compositional output respectable rather than prodigiously copious as Mozart or Schubert's had been (to name two other outstanding composers who died in their thirties), Goetz's legacy was perhaps too slender to attract much championship by musicians, let alone concert promoters in the face of the richer trove of, for instance, his near contemporary Antonín Dvořák. Yet his work is both attractive and extremely well crafted, surely ripe for discovery by a new generation of musicians and music lovers.

Born in Königsburg (today Kaliningrad) in East Prussia, the son of a well-to-do brewer, Hermann played the piano from an early age; by 14 he was composing pieces for his instrument as well as songs. Aged 20, he entered Berlin's Stern Conservatory where among his teachers was Hans von Bülow, who years later was to write to his former pupil: "You are one of the few I am glad and proud to have taught."

Goetz graduated in 1862, performing his own rather Lisztian Piano Concerto in E flat major for his final examination. Attempting to find a climate that would alleviate and perhaps cure his tuberculosis, Goetz took the post of church organist in Winterthur in Switzerland. In that town he met his future wife Laura, whom he eventually married in 1868. In the meantime he increased his income by teaching piano and giving recitals of Beethoven and Chopin in Zurich and Basel. In Basel, too, his fame as a composer grew with successful performances of his Piano Trio, Op.1, and his Second Piano Concerto, in which his distinctive style – more rooted in the compositional style of Beethoven and Schumann – now fully emerged.

While living in Winterthur, Goetz met Brahms when the great composer-pianist gave a concert there in 1865. The two became mutually respectful if not warmly affectionate friends. (Although Brahms tended to open out only to a very select handful of close friends, it seems likely that it was Goetz's increasingly severe tuberculosis that hindered their friendship. When Goetz finally invited Brahms to lunch with some friends, in the event Goetz felt so ill that he only listened in to the conversation of his guests from a darkened room next door.) Not long after meeting Brahms, whose music he greatly admired, Goetz enjoyed an apparent upswing in his fortunes, meeting the German-Swiss composer Joachim Raff. A close friend of von Bülow, Raff subsequently commended Goetz to his publisher, Breitkopf und Härtel. It was in this period of renewed optimism that in the autumn of 1867 Goetz composed his Piano Quartet in E major, Op.6.

Dedicated to Brahms and finally published in 1870, this is widely cited as Goetz's masterpiece, perhaps only rivalled by his Symphony in F completed in 1873. In its opening, alongside the obvious influence of Schumann, one can perhaps hear the

spirit of Mendelssohn's exuberant Octet, the violin theme buoyant above the piano's simmering bass figuration. Like Mendelssohn, too, there is a classical grace in this opening movement's form and structure, effectively a conventional sonata-allegro (albeit headed with the very German instruction 'Rasch und feurig' – 'Quick and spirited'). This ends with a coda, its initially brooding quality perhaps anticipating the solemn nature of the following movement. Marked *Langsam*, this is a set of variations on a soulful theme in E minor. The second variation sounds particularly Brahms-like with the ardent falling string melody in its latter half.

Rather like the ending of the first movement, towards the end of that set of variations appears an anticipation of the following scherzo movement. This lively movement follows without a break or even a closing cadence. One may detect in its high spirits the influence of Schubert, another composer close to Goetz's heart. After this, the finale opens in sombre mood with cello lugubriously meditative over a funereal piano accompaniment. The violin attempts to introduce some sunlight into this gloom, and after empathising with the lachrymose mood, the music finally livens up in Schumannesque style ('Frisch und lebendig'). It seems characteristic of Goetz that just before the movement's joyous end he offers a moment of more intimate reflection.

The Piano Quintet in C minor, composed in 1874, proved to be Goetz's last completed chamber work. It was finished in the year of the successful premiere of his opera *Der Widerspenstigen Zähmung*, which more than any other work spread Goetz's fame. By that time, Goetz had had to leave Winterthur for the sake of his health, settling with his wife and daughter, Margarethe, in the village of Hottingen just outside Zurich in 1870; two years later he cut his final tie with Winterthur as he relinquished his post as organist, now devoting himself almost entirely to composition.

Goetz's despair is evident from the manuscript of the Piano Quintet, on which he inscribed a quotation from Goethe's play *Torquato Tasso*:

*Und wenn der Mensch in seiner Qual verstummt,  
Gab mir ein Gott, zu sagen, wie ich leide.*

And when man falls silent in his torment,  
A God gave me the gift to say how much I suffer.

The Quintet was not published until 1878, two years after Goetz's death. At least this work was completed, unlike his second and final opera: based on an episode from Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Francesca da Rimini, Goetz had feverishly started to compose this in 1875, even knowing he was racing against time. No doubt the melancholic quality of Dante's work also had its influence. Anguished yet defiant, the Piano Quintet presents a striking contrast to the more mellifluous Quartet, and the later work appears more closely related to such composers of the earlier Viennese School as Beethoven and Schubert. Indeed, the Quintet involves an instrumental line-up of strings which harked back to the pre-Schumann tradition, not using a string quartet (with a pair of violins) as had Schumann's Piano Quintet, but one each of violin, viola, cello and bass – such as Schubert, for instance, had used in his Trout Quintet. The result is a vigorous, more quasi-orchestral sound. Furthermore, the Quintet's C minor key echoes, surely consciously, both Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and his *Coriolan Overture*, both of them highly dramatic works.

The first movement opens *Andante sostenuto*, a brooding and relatively short introduction to a vigorous *Allegro con fuoco* whose fury, like that of Beethoven's *Coriolan*, is occasionally halted in its tracks and then soothed by a more lyrical theme. The second movement, rather like Beethoven's Fifth Symphony or his *Pathétique Sonata*, presents lyrical balm after the storm of the opening movement.

The third movement is marked *Allegro moderato (quasi Menuetto)*, again implying a reversion to a pre-Romantic style with its reference to the minuet dance-form that had been displaced by the Romantic scherzo (introduced by Beethoven): yet one senses here the precarious nature of the minuet's refined tread, threatened as it is by the movement's vigorous introductory motif almost throughout. Disconcertingly, the Trio section has the cello blithely play a jolly tune – a moment worthy of Schubert in its apparent incongruity and looking forward to Mahler's similarly ironic twists. Finally, the *Allegro vivace* presents a tightly sprung dance, with a brief episode of fugal writing which suggests nothing so much as a fretful attempt to distract the music from its inevitable conclusion. However, the sunlight suddenly and unexpectedly shines through towards the movement's end, creating a stoic yet heartening effect.

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The Pro Arte Piano Quartet was formed in 1989 by members of the renowned Academy of St. Martin in the Fields Chamber Ensemble. Its repertoire includes lesser-known quartets by Schnittke, Walton, Douglas Weiland and Sally Burgess (especially commissioned for the Pro Arte) alongside the familiar masterpieces of Beethoven, Brahms, Dvořák, Fauré, Mozart and Schumann. *The Strad* commented that “the quartet is a group that – with total musical assurance – quietly produces concerts of exceptional calibre”.

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