

Programme Notes By Pat O'Kelly

Lea Hausmann, violin

Samuel Shepherd, cello

Mengjie Han, piano

Programme:**Franz Joseph Haydn (1732 – 1809)**

Trio in C major, Hob XV:27

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante
- III. Presto

Robert Schumann (1810 – 1856)

Trio No. 3 in G minor, Op. 110

- I. Bewegt, doch nicht zu rasch
- II. Ziemlich langsam
- III. Rasch
- IV. Kräftig, mit Humor

INTERVAL**Amanda Feery (b.1984)**

Gone to Earth

(New commission by Music Network)

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (1809 – 1847)

Trio No. 1 in D minor, Op. 49

- I. Molto allegro agitato
- II. Andante con moto tranquillo
- III. Scherzo: Leggiero e vivace
- IV. Finale. Allegro assai appassionato

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732 – 1809)

Trio in C major, Hob XV:27

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante
- III. Presto

This is one of the piano trios written by Haydn towards the end of his second visit to London in 1794/95 and where he was the toast of the town, an experience relatively new to him following his years of comparative obscurity in the service of the Austro-Hungarian Esterházy family.

It is one of three trios dedicated to the German-born pianist Thérèse Jansen whose family had settled in London. Thérèse had studied there with Muzio Clementi and was described, along with Dublin-born pianist/composer John Field, as being among his most eminent pupils. She married the art dealer Gaetano Bartolozzi in 1795 after which they lived for a while in Vienna and Venice before resettling in London in 1800. Thérèse Jansen-Bartolozzi then preferred teaching and composing to playing in public.

With its virtuoso piano part, the C major Trio suggests Ms Jansen was indeed a very capable musician. Haydn also dedicated three of his late piano sonatas – Hob XVI 50-52 - to her. The Trio was published in London in 1797 some time after the composer's return to Vienna.

Earlier in his career Haydn had regarded the piano trio as essentially 'for entertainment more suited to amateur musicians' or as 'background music' where the piano, or harpsichord, was the dominant instrument. Indeed, Haydn referred to them as 'Sonatas for harpsichord or forte-piano with violin and cello'. The London trios, however, balance the instruments more evenly and while the piano still has the more interesting role, Haydn raised the status of the strings, especially that of the violin.

The sonata-form first movement is a substantial Allegro abounding in ceaseless activity. There are elaborate figurations, grace notes and rapid octaves with sudden contrasts of mood and dynamics. The violin part has considerable independence allowing it frequent periods of dialogue with the piano.

The Andante begins gently but, full of unexpected accents, it becomes increasingly decorative and, similar to the first movement, also engages in surprising changes of mood and colour.

There is a restless central section and towards the end Haydn inserts a strange little piano cadenza seasoned with a Hungarian gypsy flavour.

The completely contrasted Presto finale has a somewhat cheeky principal main theme that produces an 'off beat' effect. Full of amusing instrumental banter, Haydn copies a device used by Beethoven in his Op 1 Trios by binding notes across bar lines. It shows Haydn's admiration for the work of a man forty years his junior. The movement comes to a delightful conclusion.

Robert Schumann (1810 – 1856)

Trio No. 3 in G minor, Op. 110

I. Bewegt, doch nicht zu rasch

II. Ziemlich langsam

III. Rasch

IV. Kräftig, mit Humor

Among Schumann's three piano trios and his Op 88 Fantasiestücke for the same instrumental grouping, the G minor Op 110 Trio is something of a Cinderella figure left alone on the popularity shelf with performances less frequent than those of its sibling works. It dates from 1851 when Robert and Clara were living in Düsseldorf where he had been appointed conductor of the city's municipal orchestra two years earlier. Schumann's relationship with its musicians and governing body were not running smoothly and, besides, the composer was beginning to show signs of his mental instability. However, 1851 brought a number of chamber works to fruition including two violin sonatas and the G minor Piano Trio being played on this tour.

Clara Schumann mentioned in her diary for 11th October, 'Robert is working busily on a trio for piano, violin and cello but he won't let me hear any of it at all until he is completely finished. I know it is in G minor'. The first rehearsal of the piece impressed her and she wrote, 'It is original, and increasingly passionate, especially the scherzo, which carries one along with it into the wildest depths'.

The finished work was heard for the first time in the Schumanns' house on 15th November with Robert's violinist friend Joseph von Wasielewski, Christian Reimers – principal cellist with the Düsseldorf orchestra - and Clara at the piano. Schumann dedicated the Trio to the Danish composer/conductor Niels Gade, whose music was much admired by both Schumann and Mendelssohn, and who followed the latter briefly as conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra.

Of its four movements, the turbulent 6/8 first is the Trio's longest and possibly the most satisfying. Marked 'agitated, but not too fast', it has a darkly restless opening theme. With constantly intermingling violin and cello exchanges it shows Schumann's penchant for intricate counterpoint. The music, as Clara Schumann pointed out, is passionate and reaches profoundly expressive depths.

A second theme is less intense and both subjects are carefully developed. A climax is reached before mysterious cello pizzicati lead into an extended passage of short motifs brilliantly woven into the contrapuntal textures. A sustained tremolo in the piano's bass brings some relief and the reprise of the first theme while the cello's earlier pizzicato idea has a fleeting return. There is a coda before the movement ends quietly.

"It is original, and increasingly passionate, especially the scherzo, which carries one along with it into the wildest depths."

Clara Schumann on Robert Schumann's Trio No. 3 in G minor Op. 110

The second movement, marked 'rather slowly' begins with an ardent duet for the strings with its melody related to the lyrical second theme of the first movement. Soon the music becomes faster and also dramatically darker. The opening idea is now given an agitated variation but calm is later restored and the movement ends with the feeling of serenity with which it began but with the piano joining in the melodic conversation.

Clara was particularly taken with Robert's Scherzo – the shortest of the Trio's movements. Its descending principal theme is somewhat reminiscent of the main subject of Schumann's D minor 4th Symphony, which he was revising at the time of writing this Trio. There is also a

rather sweet second theme followed by two trio sections. The first has an expressively syncopated tune while the dotted rhythms of the second create a march-like effect.

The energetically humorous main theme of the episodic Finale is distantly related to the first movement's second subject and the opening of the slow movement. Later on an idea from the Scherzo's first trio makes an appearance while the march-like rhythm of the second is also briefly recalled. Throughout, the music has a folk-like charm with its development inspired and imaginative even if Schumann scholar and critic the late Joan Chissell found the Finale suffered from 'weakness of structure and rhythmic vagaries'. The movement ends in a spirit of exuberance.

Amanda Feery (b.1984)

Gone to Earth

New commission by Music Network

"The musical material attempts to represent a propulsive chase followed by a respite and refuge." Amanda Feery on 'Gone to Earth'

Amanda Feery has recently completed her PhD in Composition at Princeton University in New Jersey and has been part of the Mizzou International Composers Festival in Columbia, Missouri where her instrumental piece This is the House of received its première by the Mizzou resident ensemble Alarm Will Sound on 28th July 2018.

The Co. Offaly-born composer studied at TCD from where she graduated with a BA in Music in 2006 and was awarded an M Phil in Music and Media Technologies three years later. She was the winner of the West Cork Chamber Music Composers Award also in 2009 and the Jerome Hynes Young Composers Award in 2013.

Since then Amanda Feery's works have been receiving extensive performances at home and abroad from, among others, the RTÉ NSO, Crash Ensemble, Fidelio Trio, Ensemble Mise-en, RTÉ ConTempo Quartet, Mivos String Quartet and Orkest de Ereprijs as well as by vocalist Michelle O'Rourke and instrumentalists Lisa Moore, Cora-Venus Lunny, Zoë Conway and Paul Roe.

Over the past few years Amanda Feery has participated as a composer fellow at festivals and residencies overseas including the Ostrava Days in the Czech Republic, soundSCAPE festival in Cesena in Italy, Bang on a Can Summer Festival in the US and the International Young Composers Meeting in the Netherlands.

Current and future projects include a large-scale multimedia work for choir and the So Percussion ensemble based on the diary entries of businessman and amateur sailor Donald Crowhurst who died at sea while taking part in the single-handed Sunday Times Golden Globe Race in 1969, as well as pieces for the Crash Ensemble, RTÉ ConTempo Quartet and New York-based cellist Amanda Gookin.

Amanda Feery has kindly supplied the following note on her Music Network commissioned piece, *Gone to Earth*: -

'The white calm of unselfsh love wrapped Edward, for he felt that he could make Hazel happy. As he fell asleep that night he thought:

"She was made for a minister's wife."

Reddin, leaning heavily on the low wall, staring at the drunken tombstones and the quiet moon-silvered house, thought:

"She was made for me"

Both men saw her as what they wanted her to be, not as she was'

Mary Webb – *Gone to Earth*

*My piece, *Gone to Earth* is inspired by a novel of the same name, written by Mary Webb. 'Gone to Earth' is also a term used in fox hunting, when the hunted fox has taken refuge, hidden from its predators. The plot of the book centres around one female character in the middle of the obsessed 'love' of two men. There is a supernatural backdrop to the plot represented in the mythological 'wild hunt' of the death hounds, which encapsulates the theme of the book; predatory behaviour and men's desire to take what they feel is their own.*

I was immediately drawn in to the book, stunned that it was written in 1917, and angry that the notion of the predatory hunt and desire to control women is still very much a threat to womens lives today. The musical material attempts to represent a propulsive chase followed by a respite and refuge.

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (1809 – 1847)

Trio No. 1 in D minor, Op. 49

- I. Molto allegro agitato
- II. Andante con moto tranquillo
- III. Scherzo: Leggiero e vivace
- IV. Finale. Allegro assai appassionato

English Victorian composer Hubert Parry said of Mendelssohn that 'he squeezed as much work into his short life as most get into a life of twice the length'. The composer was 38 when he died in Leipzig in 1847 following a series of strokes. Born in Hamburg, the well to do Mendelssohn family moved to Berlin in 1811, when the northern city was occupied by French forces. With his sister Fanny, six years his senior, Felix developed an extraordinary musical talent from an early age and showed a decided inclination towards composition.

Both of them came under the influence of the director of Berlin's prestigious Singakademie, Carl Friedrich Zelter, and a visit to Paris when he was sixteen brought Felix into contact with Luigi Cherubini who, unusually for him, greatly encouraged the young musician. In the meantime Mendelssohn was composing at an alarming rate with his Octet, String Quintet, the Midsummer Night's Dream overture, the opera Die Hochzeit des Camacho and his String Quartet in A minor dating from this period. It seems Mendelssohn was even more musically precocious than Mozart at the same age.

Completing his studies in the University of Berlin in 1829, and from where he acquired a particularly broad education, Mendelssohn decided to travel. He made the first of his many visits to England where he was welcomed at court and became a favourite musician of Queen Victoria. Back in Germany he was appointed general music director in Düsseldorf in 1833 and moved to Leipzig two years later to become conductor of the Gewandhaus Orchestra. It was in Leipzig that he met Schumann for the first time and where he established a conservatory in 1842.

During this time he was also recalled to Berlin by Frederick William IV of Prussia to undertake the directorship of the music section of the Academy of the Arts where he not only supervised and conducted a wide variety of programmes but also held the post of royal composer.

Besides all this musical activity Mendelssohn was also known for his paintings and drawings and for his ability to converse fluently in several European languages.

Sometime in 1832 Felix confided in Fanny that he would like to compose 'a couple of good trios'. However, it was not until the beginning of 1839 that he actually put pen to paper with the D minor Trio being completed by the end of the summer. On hearing it Schumann was enthusiastic, considering it outstanding and 'the master trio of this age'.

Interestingly when Mendelssohn showed the score to his close pianist friend Ferdinand Hiller he thought the piano part was too conventional and 'old-fashioned' and urged Mendelssohn to incorporate some of the advanced piano techniques of Liszt and Chopin into his score.

Mendelssohn heeded Hiller's advice and revised many of his original ideas. The resultant piano writing is remarkably virtuosic and makes extraordinary demands on the player.

"...he squeezed as much work into his short life as most get into a life of twice the length" Composer Hubert Parry on Mendelssohn

The somewhat intense opening movement is in sonata form. There are two themes both introduced by the cello. The first could have a leisurely feel to it were it not for the piano's agitated chords underneath. However, when the theme is repeated the piano indulges in flying arpeggios to ruffle the feathers.

The second subject has a more song-like melody with the piano murmuring below. Both ideas are beautifully, ingeniously and extensively developed and when the first theme returns the cello's melody has haunting descending violin phrases to accompany it. Towards the end, marked *assai animato*, the piano has the dominating role in a brilliant climax.

Led by the piano, the three-part structure of the slow movement is one of Mendelssohn's expressive Songs-without-Words. The strings repeat its piano theme. Then moving from major to minor the piano takes the violin's descending line, already heard at the return of the first theme of the opening movement, and turns it into probably the most magical section of the entire Trio. Mendelssohn develops this into an impassioned sequence which, when it subsides, leads to the opening idea being delicately elaborated by the piano.

The challenging Scherzo is one of charming delicacy that moves at a whirlwind pace. It is monothematic but there are delightfully contrasted episodes with the opening motif tossed

about between the instruments. There may be hints of darkness suggesting some of the Midsummer Night's Dream fairies are up to mischief but at the end the effervescent music, like the elves, vanishes into thin air.

The three-theme Finale starts quietly but the piano writing soon raises it to another plateau. The movement begins with a dactylic (long-short-short) motif and this becomes a kind of germ for the rest of the movement. The first two themes abound in dashing virtuosity. The third changes tack somewhat with an impassioned cantabile from the cello. The opening ideas return and are wonderfully developed with ripping piano cascades. It seems the movement may be drawing to a close but the cello's theme reappears. However, Mendelssohn's genius then fuses the lyrical and volatile elements of the movement together in a final exhilarating tour de force.

“Young, enormously talented and extremely exciting”

Rhein-Neck-Zeitung on Amatis Piano Trio