

# Colin TWIGG

## CHAMBER MUSIC

PHANTASY VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF HAYDN  
STRING QUARTET NO. 1  
PIANO QUARTET  
STRING TRIO  
PIANO TRIO

Bridge String Quartet  
Montpellier String Trio  
Hiroaki Takenouchi, piano

FIRST RECORDINGS

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## COLIN TWIGG Chamber Music

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### ***Phantasy Variations on a Theme of Haydn* (2009) 11:49**

|   |                        |      |
|---|------------------------|------|
| 1 | <i>Con moto</i>        | 1:28 |
| 2 | <i>Tempo 1</i>         | 4:20 |
| 3 | <i>Poco meno vivo</i>  | 2:20 |
| 4 | <i>Tempo 1</i>         | 1:14 |
| 5 | <i>Non troppo vivo</i> | 2:27 |

### **String Trio (1996) 13:10**

|   |                          |      |
|---|--------------------------|------|
| 6 | I <i>Tempo moderato</i>  | 4:00 |
| 7 | II <i>Scherzando</i>     | 2:44 |
| 8 | III <i>Adagietto</i>     | 2:36 |
| 9 | IV <i>Allegro vivace</i> | 3:50 |

### **Piano Trio (2004) 14:47**

|    |                              |      |
|----|------------------------------|------|
| 10 | I <i>Andante con moto</i>    | 5:56 |
| 11 | II <i>Scherzo (Vivace)</i>   | 3:39 |
| 12 | III <i>Adagio non troppo</i> | 5:12 |

### **String Quartet No. 1, *Hommage à Hukvaldy* (1997) 20:52**

|    |                                  |      |
|----|----------------------------------|------|
| 13 | I <i>Molto moderato</i>          | 6:38 |
| 14 | II <i>Scherzo</i>                | 4:18 |
| 15 | III <i>Adagio, ma non troppo</i> | 3:52 |
| 16 | IV <i>Allegro vivace</i>         | 6:04 |

**Piano Quartet (2000)**

- 17 I *Allegro moderato*  
18 II *Andante sostenuto*  
19 III *Allegro giocoso*

**16:08**

6:41

5:28

3:59

**TT 77:11**

**Bridge String Quartet**

- Colin Twigg, violin 1–5 10–19  
Catherine Schofield, violin 1–5 13–16  
Michael Schofield, viola 1–5 13–19  
Lucy Wilding, cello 1–5 10–19

**Hiroaki Takenouchi, piano** 10–12 17–19

**Montpellier String Trio** 6–9

- Marcus Barcham-Stevens, violin  
Colin Twigg, viola  
David Powell, cello

# AN INTRODUCTION TO MY CHAMBER MUSIC – AND TO ME

by Colin Twigg

I was born in Settle in North Yorkshire on 20 June 1960. Prominent in my earliest memories was my father's keyboard-playing and the music of Bach, especially on the organ. Like my elder brother, I started on the piano at age six, although I soon changed to violin, which suited me better. Around this time I began to read about the lives of the great composers, and an early compositional effort was noticeably influenced by Schubert. Frequent family moves characterised this period: after Yorkshire, we also lived in Wolverhampton, Middlesbrough and Grimsby before I entered the Menuhin School in 1970, mainly because of my violin-playing. After that, I also learned viola, and both featured in my chamber-music participation. Bartók string quartets especially were a revelation: their distinctive musical language began to have an impact on me. I was soon involved in numerous violin and piano recitals. Performer-composers such as Wieniawski, Paganini and Ysaÿe loomed large in my imagination. Eventually the free-improvisation classes of composer John White provided a welcome antidote to the rigours of written harmony and theory, as was a friendly encounter with Sir Michael Tippett after performing in his *Concerto for Double String Orchestra*.

Gaining the Royal Society of Arts Jubilee Award in 1978 enabled me to travel to the Yale School of Music in Connecticut, where I studied violin with Oscar Shumsky. An invitation to be a resident performer at the Yale Norfolk Composers' Seminar in 1979 motivated me to start a journal of compositional ideas. While performance remained at the forefront, with awards from the Juilliard School in New York for intensive violin studies with Tossy Spivakovsky, I was also acquiring composition-related skills including counterpoint and orchestration. I recall Suzanne Bloch's Early and Renaissance Music Class at Juilliard as noticeably impacting me. Compositional

activity from around this time (1981–85) included a first wave of chamber music: duo sonatas for violin, viola, cello and piano, as well as a fantasia for piano solo, two sonatas for unaccompanied violin, and a vocal setting of Psalm 22. Performing highlights from the same period included broadcast recitals on Radio WQXR New York and the Tchaikovsky Concerto with the Manchester Camerata.

Building a performing career, followed by an intensive Christian ministry in Walthamstow, kept me busy until 1991 when I joined the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. This new stimulus helped me at the time to write a string *Sinfonietta*, a violin concerto (and, most recently, a symphony, *Symphonic Reflections*). Chamber music followed (as heard on this album) when I joined the Montpellier String Trio (as violist) in 1995 and the Dadelson Piano Trio (as violinist) in 1997. Having briefly been a founder-member of the London-based Bridge String Quartet between 1989 and 1991, I was invited to rejoin as leader in 2007, and was happy to accept. In that same year my *Echoes of Eternity* for string orchestra and solo cello was performed at the Deal Festival. These chamber groups have been kind enough to assist me in performances of my trios and quartets in Britain and on the Continent, and a Bridge Quartet performance of my *Phantasy Variations* was given an enthusiastic reception in Kenya in 2011.

Clearly, much of my chamber music has been written for instrumental combinations leading from, or enabling, my own participation: works for violin, or viola and piano, which I can programme in recitals, string or piano trios for groups with my personal involvement and quartets for Bridge Quartet performance. My music is most often sourced internally from musical ideas which in many cases will have their origins in something I heard or performed, possibly decades earlier. My style is usually accessible, concise and concentrated, avoiding extensive repetition of material, which can often give rise to quite a number and variety of carefully selected ideas. Typically, these might be bound together by a recurring initial musical idea, or alternatively more through-written. I also hope these works in some way reflect my long-held aspiration to write music which has 'something to say' – but that's for you to judge.

### *Phantasy Variations on a Theme of Haydn (2009)*

Three main stimuli provided the genesis of this composition. The first was a suggestion from the Bridge Quartet, shortly after I rejoined in 2007, to write a piece for string quartet in the ‘phantasy’ form – a title specified for English chamber works in one movement written for the Cobbett competition established in 1905. The second was the music of Joseph Haydn, the bicentenary of whose death fell in 2009. And the third was a kind commission from Christine Talbot-Cooper of Gloucester Music Society to write a string quartet for performance during the Society’s 80th season (2009–10). I dedicated this piece to her.

The piece does combine ‘phantasy’ with ‘variations’: it provided me with the happy situation in which I had some discipline and variety within the former and some freedom of movement within the latter, although it does loosely take the form of variations. I was almost inevitably drawn to the ‘Emperor Hymn’ (which, of course, Haydn himself varied in the third of his Op. 76 quartets) as my thematic source and inspiration. After a brief introduction, marked *Con moto* [1], the first part of the theme (G–A–B–A: ‘Gott erhalte’, to A–B–G–D: ‘hellstem Glanz!’) is treated in (phantasy) variation from *Tempo I* [2]. (At this point, the first three notes of the theme – G–A–B – are heard in entries on cello, then viola, followed by the second violin with a more extended statement). Ideas from the middle part of the tune (the notes being A–B–A–F sharp–D: ‘Ihm erblühen’) are the subject of ‘variation’ from *Poco meno vivo* [3], starting with a solo-cello variant. Likewise the final part of the hymn (G–F sharp–E–D, etc.: ‘Gott erhalte’) features briefly in ‘variations’ from *Tempo I* [4], starting with a brief chorale-like variant, quickly followed by a lively fugato passage based on this material. The conclusion – from *Non troppo vivo* [5] – includes ideas from the complete ‘Emperor Hymn’, of which the very final section receives its due attention as the work draws to a resolute, then chromatic conclusion. No normal composer can hope to match the majesty of Haydn’s material, but I hope my piece adds something to the fundamental beauty, good nature and positive focus of Haydn’s mode of expression.

## String Trio in D (1996)

Not long before I started work on this String Trio in the spring of 1996, I had originally planned to write a string quartet. At the time I was violist, and on occasion violinist, in the Midlands-based Montpellier String Trio, and my colleagues' call for more repertoire turned my thoughts to the challenge of trying to write texturally satisfying and complete music for this combination of instruments. My goal was to draw fully on the musical and technical resources of each instrument (double stops, *pizzicato*, virtuoso playing and so on) so as to create a piece that performers and audience alike might find interesting and worthwhile. Written in a concise and accessible style, it reflects formal influences and stylistic tendencies from the Renaissance through to the twentieth century – including dance music (*sarabande*, *minuet*), harmonic false relations and frequent changes of metre and tempo, although I hope that I managed to reshape these influences according to my own style and imagination. The two outer movements – the first marked *Tempo moderato* [6] and the fourth *Allegro vivace* [9] – are mainly through-composed, with little structural repetition of material (although there is a distinctive brief quotation near the very end which is derived from the first movement). These outer movements are often searching and conflicted, at times expressing sharply contrasting moods and emotions, and both contain a strong driving passion that begins to resolve only at the end. The two central movements are more traditional and straightforward in their forms, their moods suggested by their tempo indications: *Scherzando* [7] and *Adagietto* [8].<sup>1</sup>

## Piano Trio (2004)

My Piano Trio was written with the 'Centre Stage' chamber-music concert-series of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra in mind. Written during the early months of 2004, it was given its first performance at the CBSO Centre in April of that year by the Dadelsen Piano Trio (with Anne de Dadelsen, piano, David Powell, cello, and myself on violin).

Three contrasting musical ideas in different tempi form the introduction to the first movement [10]. The first (*Andante*) is a lyrical line of parallel chords for solo piano.

<sup>1</sup> The recording here is by the Montpellier String Trio as constituted in August 2006, with Marcus Barcham-Stevens on violin, David Powell on cello, and myself on viola.

The second (*Meno vivo*) is a tonal, chorale-like progression for all three instruments with violin embellishment. The third (*Più vivo*) is an angular, whole-tone idea for each instrument, starting on cello. It leads into a fiery dance in duple time with a continuous quaver (eighth-note) whole-tone ostinato (*Allegro con moto*) which climaxes with steady *pesante* chords for piano solo. The section of repose which follows, like much of the rest of this movement, is developed from the three introductory ideas. The opening of the Scherzo [11] is elusive and fragmentary. A jagged triplet rhythm is initially prominent in the violin, then cello, where it soon features ostinato in an ominously restless passage. A fiery, demonic dance then ensues, with conspicuous piano syncopation. Initially, the middle section features solo piano in a searching, rising chromatic line of close resolving intervals. This darker, more mysterious mood is taken up by the strings, and soon all three instruments arrive at a sustained and intense climax, finally interrupted by *espressivo* solo cello. A brief Scherzo recollection of the opening closes this movement. The next opens with an *Adagio* violin recitative [12]. The urgent rhythmic ostinato of the *Allegro vivace* which follows soon gives way to an expressive descending cello melody with tranquil violin and piano accompaniment. As the cello again takes the melodic lead, the violin joins for an exotic, *cantabile* interchange. At length, bold solo-piano octaves banish any uncertainty. After a final elegiac cello melody, soon all instruments recombine *con molto forza* before a quiet and concise ending.

### **First String Quartet, *Hommage à Hukvaldy* (1997)**

I began my First String Quartet (there are now two) during summer 1997, at the prompting of my multi-talented violinist friend and former colleague in the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the late Jeremy Ballard, and found that its composition proceeded, for me, unusually fluently. As a string-player I am obviously no stranger to string quartets, and as a composer I had already written (initially following Hindemith's example) a number of works featuring the violin and other instruments, as I mentioned above, but I needed the impetus of Jeremy's suggestion finally to grasp the challenge of the string quartet. The four movements of this work feature whole-tone and other scale-patterns as well as polytonality, only rarely arriving at atonality. The whole tones give something



of an eastern European flavour to much of this piece. Having previously performed in, and been impacted by, Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass* and *Sinfonietta*, there are places in this quartet which bear witness to his influence, hence the subtitle.

The opening *Molto moderato* [13] begins with an imitative whole-tone melodic interchange between first and second violins. The measured pacing of this introduction soon builds up to a vigorous *Allegro*, deeply felt, full of life and emotion. The music takes contrasting directions, but recurring focal points are provided by material derived from the very opening idea. Gradually the music builds in intensity until a brief fiery fugato breaks into virtual atonality and obsessive unresolved chords. The movement ends mysteriously. The Scherzo [14] features a stable and bright tonality, with varied time-signatures and playful interaction between triplets and duplets: it is initially a welcome contrast. A 'Trio' section follows, but unwelcome, aggressive intrusions – starting in the cello and taken up by the viola – soon begin to predominate and climax in an ugly fashion. This section and its later reappearance end in a bare and muted way. The *Adagio* [15] follows on closely, heavy and almost tragic in mood. Here, two 'serious' keys – C minor and B flat minor – pull against each other simultaneously, although midway a flowing melody in dotted rhythm, heard as counterpoint between first violin and cello, lightens the mood. The Finale, a lively *Allegro* [16], starts with a long-breathed melody in the first violin which builds up in an almost Brucknerian fashion and is followed by a kind of *ritornello*. These long sweeps and simpler textures contrast with much of what has been heard previously, and the Quartet, perhaps surprisingly, ends on a positive note.

### **Piano Quartet (2000)**

The Piano Quartet was the first work I wrote with the CBSO 'Centre Stage' series of chamber-music concerts in mind: it was intended to be performed alongside the Elgar Piano Quintet in a lunchtime concert during the 2000–1 season. It had begun life six months earlier in the form of ideas and basic outline as a piece for viola and orchestra, and there are moments in this final form where its origins can still be observed: the viola solo in the opening bars, for example, and the central melody of the second movement. But I hope I succeeded in my ultimate intention: to write a piece in which

all four instruments were on equal terms – more the language of changing role-play and intimacy than an assumed equivalency between piano and collective strings.

The ‘Romantic’ opening of the first movement, *Allegro moderato* [17], briefly features cello, then viola solo. After all the instruments enter and create an ardent climax, the piano emerges with a somewhat Mozartian ‘Classical’ theme. Soon after the strings have joined, this interlude is interrupted by terse statements of the opening ‘jagged’ motifs (sharply rising, then falling intervals, rhythmically angular) on cello, then violin. The movement continues as a series of musical landscapes, interspersed with variants of the opening motif. The opening of the *Andante sostenuto* [18] presents a brighter, more other-worldly musical landscape, which leads into an ethereal melody on the viola. After a more complete statement for all four instruments, the mood changes, and the movement concludes with a soberer variant of the opening. The Finale, *Allegro giocoso* [19], heralds a brief return on the piano to the upbeat ‘Classical’ idea of the first movement, followed by a more extended fantasy on the violin, also drawn from the initial motif of the first movement. A rhythmically lively fugato climaxes before the Quartet concludes in a more reflective manner.

**The Bridge Quartet**, founded in 1989, soon established a reputation as leading interpreters of English music. They have since travelled widely to festivals in the USA, France, Spain, Italy, Croatia, Bulgaria and Kenya, broadcasting English music live on the BBC and on various Continental radio stations. Their recordings of the chamber music of their eponymous composer Frank Bridge have been well received, the most recent, for SOMM, featuring his Piano Quintet, *Rhapsody* String Trio, *Lament* for two violas and smaller quartet works (SOMMCD0082). The reviewer for *The Strad* called it ‘an outstanding recital of Bridge chamber works’ and felt that ‘this fine ensemble sounds utterly transported by these rarefied sounds’.

The history of the Bridge Quartet has been sprinkled with ‘discoveries’, some of which have now gone into publication, such as the Delius quartet of 1888 and Alwyn *Winter Poems*, not to mention Bridge’s own early works for quartet and quintet. BBC Radio 3 gave a first broadcast



Photo: Allan Watson

of Ivor Gurney's *Adagio* from the 1925 String Quartet as part of its breakfast-time series 'Music from the Western Front'. Recording for EM Records, the Bridge Quartet has enjoyed more opportunities to research and perform the ravishing chamber music of Norman O'Neill (EMR CD005), two extensive unrecorded string chamber works by Parry (EMR CD016) and latterly prize-winning examples of the 'Phantasy' genre (EMR CD 025).

As Kirckmann Concert Society artists the Bridge Quartet has given three recitals in London's South Bank concert halls and have subsequently given several concerts in the Wigmore Hall. Other highlights have included appearances at the City of London Festival, the English Music Festival, the 'Haydnfest' in Manchester, and Warwick International Chamber Music Series. The Bridge Quartet enjoys performing with other guest artists, who have included the cellist Paul Watkins, clarinetists David Campbell and Richard Hosford, pianist Nigel Clayton and more recently the pianist Michael Dussek and tenor Charles Daniels in Vaughan Williams' *On Wenlock Edge*.

**The Montpellier String Trio** came into being in 1995 and comprised three players from the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra: David Powell (cello) and Colin Twigg (violin/viola) were founder members, and Marcus Barcham-Stevens (violin) joined in 2000. Their many performances included collaborations with oboists Jonathan Kelly and Rainer Gibbons, and their broad repertoire included string trios by Robert Simpson, Elizabeth Maconchy and John Joubert. The group disbanded in 2011.

Heralded by *The Times* as 'just the sort of champion the newest of new music needs,' and praised by *Gramophone* as 'impeccable in his pianism and unfailing in his idiomatic grasp', **Hiroaki Takenouchi** has a natural curiosity which makes his vast repertoire unusual amongst his generation of pianists. His discography includes Haydn (Artalinna), Cosmos Haptic (*Contemporary Piano Music from Japan*, LORELT'), as well as the first



Photo: Alan Wood



Photo: B. Ealovega

recordings of works by James Dillon (NMC), Edwin Roxburgh (NMC) and Jeremy Dale Roberts (LORELT). Recent releases have included two-piano arrangements of Delius' orchestral works (with Simon Callaghan on SOMM), and an album of piano concertos by Catoire and Sherwood (also first recordings) with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (Dutton Epoch).

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*Colin Twigg*

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