

HUMMEL

Cello Sonata, Op. 104

Piano Quartet

**Piano Trios,
Opp. 22 and 35**

Micaela Comberti, Violin

Simon Standage, Violin

Jane Rogers, Viola

Pal Banda, Cello

Susan Alexander-Max,

Fortepiano

Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837)

Chamber Music

Largely neglected by posterity, Johann Nepomuk Hummel in his own time enjoyed the highest reputation both as a composer and as a virtuoso performer. The increasing availability of his music, whether in print or in recordings, is evidence of the unjustified nature of the posthumous neglect of his work, although neither the bicentenary of his birth nor the 150th anniversary of his death in 1987 aroused the interest that his compositions clearly deserve.

Hummel was born in 1778 in Pressburg, the modern Slovak capital Bratislava, the son of a musician. At the age of four he could read music, at five play the violin and at six the piano. Two years later he became a pupil of Mozart in Vienna, lodging, as was the custom, in his master's house. On Mozart's suggestion the boy and his father embarked in 1788 on an extended concert tour. For four years they travelled through Germany and Denmark and by the spring of 1790 they were in Edinburgh, where they spent three months. There followed visits to Durham and to Cambridge before they arrived, in the autumn, in London. Plans in 1792 to tour France and Spain seemed inopportune at a time of revolution, so that father and son made their way back through Holland to Vienna.

The next ten years of Hummel's career found him occupied in study, in composition and in teaching in Vienna. When Beethoven had settled in Vienna in 1792, the year after Mozart's death, he had sought lessons from Haydn, from Albrechtsberger and from the Court Composer Antonio Salieri. Hummel was to study with the same teachers, the most distinguished Vienna had to offer. Albrechtsberger provided a sound technical basis for his composition, while Salieri gave instruction in writing for the voice and in the philosophy of aesthetics. Haydn, after his second visit to London, gave him some organ lessons, but warned him of the possible effect on his touch as a pianist. It was through Haydn that Hummel in 1804 became Konzertmeister to the second Prince Nikolaus Esterházy, effectively doing the work

of Kapellmeister, a title that Haydn held nominally until his death in 1809. He had Haydn to thank, too, for his retention of his position with the Esterházy family when in 1808 neglect of his duties had brought dismissal. His connection with the family came to an end in 1811 but his period of service had given him experience as a composer of church and theatre music, while his father, as director of music at the Theater auf der Wieden and later of the famous Apollo Saal, provided other opportunities.

Hummel had impressed audiences as a child by his virtuosity as a pianist. He returned to the concert platform in 1814, at the time of the Congress of Vienna, a year after his marriage, but it was the Grand Duchy of Weimar, home of Goethe, that was able to provide him, in 1818, with a basis for his career. By the terms of his employment he was allowed leave of absence for three months each spring, a period spent in concert tours. In Protestant Weimar he was relieved of responsibilities for church music but presided at the opera and was, with Goethe, one of the tourist attractions of the place, although in speech his homely Viennese accent sorted ill with the speech of the resident literati.

In 1828 Hummel published his study of pianoforte performance technique, a work that enjoyed immediate success and has proved a valuable source for our knowledge of contemporary performance practice. Towards the end of his life his brilliance as a player diminished. This was the age of Liszt and a new school of virtuosity, while Hummel represented a continuation of the classical style of playing of his teacher, Mozart, now carried into the age of Chopin, Liszt, Kalkbrenner and Thalberg.

The two-movement *Piano Quartet in G major* was published posthumously in 1839. The first movement casts principal light on the piano, which proposes the principal theme, before the excitement of the G minor central section, with its rapid piano octaves. The following D major *Allegro con spirito* again offers

virtuoso material to the piano, with a repeated exposition, an exciting development, and a conclusion with all the power of a concerto.

Hummel's *Piano Trio in G major, Op. 35*, dates from 1811. The piano proposes the first subject, with the second subject entrusted to the violin, in a repeated exposition. The characteristic snap rhythm of the first subject is heard at the start of the development, which soon moves into B flat major, with the piano recalling the first subject and the cello the closing theme of the exposition. The triplet figuration of each player in turn is followed by the violin leading into the recapitulation. The second movement is a C major *Tempo di Menuetto*, with an F major trio section that gives some prominence to the strings. The last movement is a *Rondo*, marked *Vivace e scherzando*. Its main theme offers a momentary surprise in a sudden pause, framing an episode in D major before returning with a further surprise to the listener. A fugal C major episode is followed by varied forms of the second theme, before the return of the main subject and a reminder of the second superimposed, before the emphatic conclusion.

The *Grande Sonata in A major for cello and piano, Op. 104*, was composed in 1826. A lyrical first movement is introduced by the cello, before the piano offers the first subject. There is an energetic transition before secondary material is proposed, leading to a gentle theme in C major, with a return to the dominant of the original key before the repetition of the exposition. Other tonalities are explored in the central development, before the return of the principal theme to start the recapitulation. The slow movement is a C major *Romanza*, with the principal melody entrusted first to

the piano, followed by the cello. A hint of agitation is suggested by dotted rhythms, before a dramatic change to C minor, mollified by a further lyrical shift to E flat major. The original key is restored, with the main theme given to the cello, echoed by the piano. The latter instrument starts the final A minor *Rondo*, a movement that continues the virtuoso treatment of the piano. The movement includes a C major episode, marked *innocente*, and an episode in A major, framed by the main theme in a work of the soundest craftsmanship.

Hummel's *Piano Trio in F major, Op. 22*, dates from 1807. In contrast with the preceding work, this is very much of its period, suggesting a musical language familiar from Haydn. With a less demanding piano part, the first movement starts with a sonata-form exposition, duly repeated. After a brief development, it is the secondary theme that forms the substance of the recapitulation, bringing a fugal treatment of the melody before the final section. The B flat major *Andante con variazioni* has the piano introduce the theme, capped by the cello and then the violin. The piano has the first variation, followed by a version for the cello, with plucked chords from the violin. There follows a variation in which the violin assumes prominence, while the cello leads the final version of the material. The fashionable *Rondo alla Turca* preserves the features borrowed from the janissary band, with the piano doing much to provide the essential percussive element of what was then known as Turkish music, with its standard harmonies and figuration.

Keith Anderson

Susan Alexander-Max



Susan Alexander-Max was born in New York City and is recognised internationally as a leading fortepianist and clavichordist specialising in the music of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Having graduated from the Juilliard School of Music with honours, she won a scholarship to study with Ilona Kabos in London, where she now resides. She was finalist in the International Bach Competition and has performed, recorded and taught extensively throughout the United States, the United Kingdom, the Far East and Europe. A featured performer on International radio and television, she has played, as soloist and chamber musician, in festivals, museums and galleries, universities and music colleges world-wide. She was professor at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London until 1996, when she formed the chamber

ensemble, *The Music Collection*, and is now in great demand as specialist in early keyboards, giving master-classes and lecture recitals throughout the world.

Simon Standage



Simon Standage is well-known as a violinist specialising in seventeenth and eighteenth century music. Leader and soloist with the English Concert from its foundation until 1990, he also fulfilled the same rôle for many years with the City of London Sinfonia. He has made many recordings, including all of Mozart's violin concertos. These were made with the Academy of Ancient Music of which he was, with Christopher Hogwood, Associate Director from 1991 to 1995. He is founder member of Collegium Musicum 90. As soloist and director of chamber orchestras, he is active both in Britain and abroad, where he has had a regular collaboration with Collegium Musicum Telemann in Osaka and Haydn Sinfonietta in Vienna. He leads the Salomon String Quartet and is Professor of Baroque Violin at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

Micaela Comberti



Micaela Comberti (1952–2003) was born in London of German/Italian parents, and studied in London, Vienna and Salzburg. For sixteen years she was principal violinist with the English Concert, with whom she made many recordings. She led the St James Baroque Players and the Birmingham-based orchestra Ex Cathedra, and often appeared as guest leader for other ensembles. She played as soloist with Collegium Musicum 90, with whom she recorded the Bach *Double Violin Concerto*. She was a member of the Salomon Quartet and was in demand as Professor of Baroque Violin at all the London Conservatories as well as the Birmingham Conservatoire. As chamber musician, she had a long-standing partnership with the harpsichordist Colin Tilney, and was the violinist in the chamber ensemble, *The Music Collection*.

Jane Rogers

Jane Rogers was born in 1968. Being one of a rare breed who was attracted to the sound of the viola rather than the violin, Jane Rogers bypassed studying the violin entirely and began to learn the viola at the age of twelve. When studying at the Royal Academy of Music, she became interested in Baroque viola. This led, in turn, to her participation with the European Baroque Orchestra. Since then she has been much in demand as a chamber and orchestral musician in the early music field, a member of the English Concert for eight years and violist with many of the period instrument groups in Great Britain. She is currently principal viola with Collegium Musicum 90 and Florilegium. She plays regularly with the English Baroque Soloists and the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra.

Pal Banda

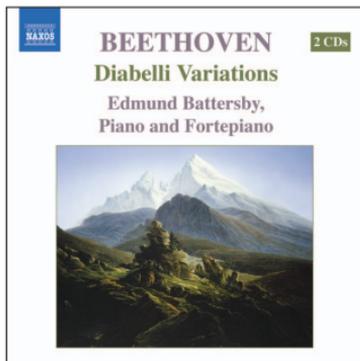


Pal Banda was born in Budapest into a musical family. From 1977 to 1984 he studied at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music with his father Ede Banda and studied chamber music with György Kurtág. In 1982 he received a commendation in the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow. In 1983 a British Council scholarship took him to the International Musicians Seminar at Prussia Cove where he studied with Ralph Kirshbaum and was invited by Sandor Vegh to Salzburg to become Principal Cello of the Camerata Academica. In the same year he won the Grand Prix of the Liszt Academy. In 1984 he joined the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. As soloist he has performed in Hungary, the former USSR, Austria, France, Holland, Denmark and England. He has been guest principal for numerous orchestras. He is the cellist of the Allegri String Quartet.

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Johann Nepomuk Hummel was considered one of Europe's finest pianist-composers. His music occupies the fascinating interim period between the Haydn–Mozart era and the great German romantic composers. While the often virtuosic piano writing of the *Piano Quartet in G major* has all the power of a concerto, the two *Piano Trios* and the *Cello Sonata* demonstrate Hummel's facility for writing graceful, lyrical melodies that made him especially popular with Viennese audiences during the last 25 years of his life.

Johann Nepomuk HUMMEL

(1778-1837)

Piano Quartet in G major, Op. posth.*

- ① *Andante cantabile* 5:32
② *Allegro con spirito* 11:45

Piano Trio in G major, Op. 35† 15:12

- ③ *Allegro con brio* 7:39
④ *Tempo di Menuetto* 3:38
⑤ *Rondo: Vivace e scherzando* 3:55

Grande Sonate in A major for Cello and Piano, Op. 104 23:26

- ⑥ *Allegro amabile e grazioso* 11:13
⑦ *Romanza: Un poco Adagio
e con espressione* 5:48
⑧ *Rondo: Allegro vivace un poco* 6:24
⑨ *Allegro moderato* 5:26
⑩ *Andante con Variazioni* 4:14
⑪ *Rondo: Alla Turca: Vivace* 3:45

Susan Alexander-Max, Fortepiano • Micaela Comberti, Violin*†
Simon Standage, Violin • Jane Rogers, Viola* • Pal Banda, Cello**

Recorded at Weston Parish Church, Weston, Hertfordshire, UK,
from 27th to 29th June, 2002, and on 7th March, 2003**.

Produced, engineered and edited by Michael Ponder

Publishers: Doblinger (tracks 1-2 and 6-8) and Musica Rara (tracks 3-5 and 9-11)
Fortepiano used for *Trios*: Reproduction after Michael Rosenberger, c.1795, by Derek Adlam,
Compass FF - c4 • Fortepiano used for *Cello Sonata* and *Quartet*: Reproduction after Nanette
Streicher, 1814, made by Bernd Fischer in the workshop of Derek Adlam, Compass FF - f4
Booklet notes: Keith Anderson

Cover image: *Garden of the house at Eisenstadt* by A. Gradwohl
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Playing Time
69:22



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