

Programme notes by Chris Darwin. Use freely for non-commercial purposes

Benjamin Britten (1913 – 1976) Introduction & Allegro for Piano Trio (1932)

The 18-year-old Britten started to write this piece, according to his diary, after breakfast on 6 May 1932: '*Begin a new trio after breakfast – I'm putting my Concerto away for a bit*'. Britten was then a full-time student at the Royal College of Music, having won a £40-a-year scholarship there in 1930 from Gresham's School in Norfolk. He had been unhappy at Gresham's: he missed his mother and was unimpressed both by the music teaching and by the bullying of others. While there, Britten's genius had been nurtured by trips to London, to be taught by Brightonian composer and viola player Frank Bridge. Although the RCM suited Britten better than Gresham's, he did not see eye-to-eye with John Ireland, his composition teacher there, and Bridge continued to be a strong influence.

The 'new trio' was finished in a fortnight, and privately performed at least by 24 July that year, when Britten's diary records a weekend visit to Friston, near Eastbourne, to visit the Bridge household and play chamber music – including the now renamed *Introduction and Allegro*. The work was dedicated to two college friends: Remo Lauricella and Bernard Richards; it had originally been titled a *Phantasy-Scherzo* perhaps with an eye to the Phantasy-inclined Cobbett prize. Britten in fact won the Cobbett prize that year with his *Phantasy Quintet* for two-violin string quintet, which he and Bridge also played together that weekend on first and second violin - just as Mozart and Haydn used to play the younger composer's quintets! The trio was never published and never performed in public during Britten's lifetime; its first public performance was given at the Wigmore Hall in 1986 by Marcia Crayford, Chris van Kampen and Ian Brown. The work lasts about 15 minutes.