

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

### **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) Piano Trio in C, K.548 (1788)**

*Allegro*

*Andante cantabile*

*Allegro*

Unlike the piano concerto and piano sonata, the piano trio does not figure prominently in Mozart's compositions. There are six very early works (K.10-15) written in London when he was 8, better known as duos for piano and violin, followed after 12 years by a Divertimento (K.254). It was not for another 10 years, between 1786 and 1788, that his five major piano trios appeared: the 'Kegelstatt' trio for piano, clarinet and viola, and the four trios for piano, violin and cello. As a form, the piano trio was a slow starter compared with the string quartet. Even the prolific and experimental Haydn did not produce his major piano trios until after 1784, having dramatically revolutionised the string quartet in his Op 20 works of 1772. By comparison, Beethoven hit the ground running with his set of three Op 1 piano trios in 1793. One reason for the piano trio's late emergence is undoubtedly the limitations of early pianofortes, which, though producing a sound of admirable clarity, lacked substance in the bass and the ability to sustain slow melodic lines; the cello thus had to play a reinforcing role in the bass and the violin a sustaining one in the treble. The inverse problem for today's performers is how to balance modern instruments in music written for those with very different sounds.

Nobody knows why or for whom Mozart wrote his C major piano trio, or indeed what was the occasion of its early performances. In June 1788 he had asked Michael Puchberg, fellow mason and his benevolent patron, "when are we to have a little musical party at your house again? I have written a new trio!" (K.542 in E). So the C major, written a month later, might have been aimed at a similar occasion. Alternatively, the two trios may have been intended as additional items in concerts of his recently written 39<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> Symphonies.