

SOMM
RECORDINGS



SCHUBERT
"Trout" Quintet

HUMMEL
Piano Quintet in C

PETER DONOHOE piano
I MUSICANTI
LEON BOSCH director



The spontaneity that shines through Schubert's music, from his earliest teen-aged years as a composer, would appear to have been – if recollections by his friends may be relied upon – a reflection of his essentially amiable character. He made friends easily, and rarely fell out with them, and the undoubted directness of utterance that one finds throughout his work was clearly the expression of an admirable human being, essentially at peace with the world, the events of his life being reflected through the one creative medium to which he devoted so much of his time – the composition of music.



Franz Schubert

Like many musical youths in the 18th and early 19th centuries, Schubert learned music as a choirboy, the experience of singing awaking his natural gifts. The expressive nature of song and the practicalities of the human voice never left him, and as his creative gifts became more apparent and more expressively mature, the young man's ability to marry words – poetry and occasional drama – to music made him the centre of a group of like-minded colleagues, to the point where both Schubert and his songs were much in demand – and not solely amongst his circle of friends.

A singer himself, Schubert almost instinctively knew what suited the voice and what did not. He had been a schoolteacher and knew his literature, so it would come as no surprise to learn that amongst his admiring friends was Johann Michael Vogl, 29 years Schubert's

senior, a widely-admired operatic baritone who, following his retirement from the stage in 1822, concentrated upon lieder singing, inspiring many of Schubert's best-known songs.

By that time, he and Schubert were already firm friends. The pair had spent the summer of 1819 on a walking holiday in the Alps, ending up in Vogl's home town, Steyr, a resort and iron-mining centre in an area that Schubert described as "inconceivably lovely".

It was at Steyr that Schubert met Sylvester Paumgartner, who was an amateur musician. Paumgartner had created a music room in his home, where he promoted recitals and chamber concerts. He was pleased to meet Schubert through Vogl's mutual friendship, and offered to put the travellers up in his home for a week or so.

Paumgartner was particularly fond of Schubert's song "Die Forelle" (The Trout) – which the latter had completed two years earlier and often chose to perform at impromptu concerts, including with Vogl in Paumgartner's home – and he invited Schubert to compose some variations on the song's melody. It affords us some indication of how happy and relaxed Schubert was at this time that he wrote far more than a set of variations but a five-movement work, at the heart of which is Paumgartner's set of variations alongside the four other movements.

Since that time Schubert's work has been called the "Trout" Quintet, and it is also quite unusual in its instrumentation, being scored for piano, violin, viola, cello and double bass. This is because Paumgartner had brought those instruments together to play a similarly scored work by Johann Nepomuk Hummel (his Piano Quintet in E flat minor, Op.87) and had therefore asked Schubert to compose the new variations for the same ensemble.

Whereas some composers may have felt a little uncertain at the absence of a second violin and the addition of a double bass in a chamber-music grouping, Schubert's instinctive

mastery rose to the challenge in superb fashion – carefully avoiding what might be termed the “normal” use of the piano’s bass compass – with the result that the music speaks throughout with a natural expressive range to produce one of Schubert’s most lovable and admired works: a unique masterpiece in the world’s chamber-music repertoire. This is enhanced by the lack of movements in a minor key, and reinforcing the composer’s genius is the fact that the “Trout” Quintet is Schubert’s first mature chamber work, written when he was just 22 years old.

The piano begins with a flourish, answered by the strings, somewhat less energetically. Schubert’s natural creative genius is so profound, it is as though the work simply needed to be written down (although of course it was), for it flows with a natural unfolding character, underpinned through reference to the piano’s opening triplets: here are friends, as it were, at home, conversing naturally, informally, and ranging widely over the musical matters in hand.

Schubert’s nuances are further apparent in the second movement: a tripartite structure, tonally remarkably subtle, contemplative but not sadly so, with Schubert wonderfully fluent in his use of instrumental colour and harmonic displacements.

After a high-speed and high-spirited Scherzo, we come to the heart of the matter – Paumgartner’s requested set of variations – in the event, five in number – on “The Trout”. The strings play the tune but without the rippling piano effects, surely suggesting the movement of water that Schubert used in the original song. The theme is followed by five variations, at the end of which we are reminded of the song – now with rippling keyboard figuration. The concluding movement, like the first, makes use of triplets in its overriding duple division – here, Schubert enhances his unique tonal language by repeating the lengthy exordium in a new key: it is all fresh and buoyant, in nature warm and friendly – as, surely, were Paumgartner’s, Vogl’s and Schubert’s intentions on that warm summer evening in Steyr. No doubt they planned to have trout for dinner.

Despite the obvious attraction of Schubert's "Trout" Quintet, it would only be published in 1829, the year following the composer's death. As we noted, it was Paumgartner who had specified the unusual instrumentation for the "Trout" Quintet, possibly with the idea of performing it coupled with the E flat minor Quintet by Hummel, a composer then at the height of his considerable powers (particularly as a pianist) and widely regarded as inferior only to Beethoven. Hummel had studied with Salieri and Haydn, and had succeeded the latter as kapellmeister to the Esterházy family.



Johann Nepomuk Hummel

We may never know Paumgartner's intentions with certainty, but on this disc, Schubert's "Trout" Quintet is indeed coupled with a quintet by Hummel for the same forces, albeit a different one: the Piano Quintet in C major, Op. 114a, an alternate arrangement by Hummel of his own "Military" Septet No.2.

The admiration between Schubert and Hummel was mutual – joined also by the admiration of both by Beethoven. In March 1827, Hummel, along with his student, the then teen-aged piano prodigy Ferdinand Hiller, found himself in Vienna and visited Beethoven, whose final illness was known both to musicians and to the wider public. Hummel also renewed his acquaintance with Schubert at that time, and both participated in Beethoven's funeral at the end of that month, having visited the master in the days prior to his passing.

But a more pleasant mood was to lighten this meeting. Schubert had been pressed by various publishers to consider setting a few English poems that had found their way into German, which, once they had passed through Schubert's hands, almost by virtue of his touch had become admired music. It was thus that Colley Cibber's "Blind Boy" ("O say! What is that thing call'd light?"), translated into German by J.N. Craigher de Jachelutta, became Schubert's "Der blinde Knabe", D.833. There is an allusion to this song being performed by Vogl and Schubert for Hummel and Hiller during their 1827 visit to Vienna, upon which Hummel in return, as a token of approval, took the theme of the Cibber song and to Schubert's delight gave a piano extemporisation on it.

Schubert was a pall-bearer at Beethoven's funeral, but less than two years later he himself would pass away. This was not, however, before he and Hummel had met once more. As a sign of their mutual admiration and respect, Schubert dedicated his last three piano sonatas to Hummel (though, as both Schubert and Hummel had died by the time they were printed, his publisher altered the dedication to Robert Schumann).

It was in October 1829, nearly a year after Schubert's death, that Hummel completed his Opus 114. On publication of this Great "Military" Septet (Großes Septett militaire) – in Vienna the following year – he also prepared a piano quintet version arranged for the "Trout" ensemble. The Septet's scoring – for flute, clarinet, trumpet, violin, cello, double bass and piano – already included four of the five "Trout" instruments, so in effect the alternate version redistributes the wind and brass parts among four strings with added viola. If Schubert could have heard the quintet, he undoubtedly would have been impressed by it. The work makes a powerful impression, opening with a heroic call to arms, but this music on the whole is no sequence of rodomontade, bluff and bluster.

It is a grandly imperious composition, one that shows a mastery of integration that would surely have earned the approval of Beethoven. What Hummel extracts from opening material as basic as the notes of the C major triad – in 1829! – is astonishing, allying it to an immediate juxtaposition of expressive melodiousness so finely balanced in character and length that the result forms a rare combination of classical gesture and early Romanticism. In an ostensibly “military” setting, this is deeply impressive. The achievement, throughout, is a remarkable demonstration of Hummel’s almost unselfconscious mastery of the art of composition. His music was admired by Liszt, and his compositional personality shines through a work that has more lasting qualities than he is often given credit for possessing. No less impressive is Hummel’s mastery as a pianist – he was a pupil of Mozart, and of Clementi in London – and it is the piano part, in this new version, that carries virtually the full range of the work’s expressive development. From the outset the listener is taken on a wide emotional and dramatic journey, exemplified in the A minor development in the first movement, tonally both unexpected yet fully, organically satisfying. The succeeding Adagio, in E flat major, and the following Scherzo in C minor – with its astonishing sudden *pianissimo* end – are further examples of Hummel’s originality. The Scherzo’s dynamic ending is then surprisingly recalled in the final bars of the work – a “military” work concluding *ritardando, pianissimo!*

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Leon Bosch conducts chamber and symphonic ensembles around the world and is one of the few double bass players to direct concertos from the instrument. Having worked with the finest conductors for 30 years as a member of groups such as the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Philharmonia and Hallé, he

learnt the repertoire and conductor's craft from inside the orchestra and finally made the transition to the podium in 2015. Since then he has conducted orchestras across the UK, Europe, India, South Africa and Mozambique.

During his playing career, he performed concertos around the world and served as a guest with ensembles such as the Lindsays, Brodsky Quartet and Zukerman Chamber Players.

Leon is committed to rediscovering neglected music, as well as expanding and diversifying the double bass repertoire, and throughout his career he has worked with leading composers. His discography features an ever-growing number of wide-ranging programmes.

He is professor of double bass at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in London and gives masterclasses in the US, Europe, South Africa and the Far East. He has also served as double bass coach for youth orchestras including the I, Culture Orchestra, National Youth String Orchestra, Miagi Orchestra and Buskaid. He has contributed to programmes on BBC Radio 3 and 4 and written for *The Strad* and *Classical Music* magazines.

Leon grew up in South Africa, the son of the political activist Jonas Fred Bosch, and spent time in a police cell for organising protests while at school. He left the apartheid regime behind to study at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester.

He became a British citizen in 2000. In recent years he has returned to his roots, musically, forming the Ubuntu Ensemble with other UK-based South African musicians, and commissioning music for the South African Double Bass project, the first CD of which was released in 2020. He also acts as a mentor for South African musicians worldwide.

Away from music, he runs marathons and ultra-marathons and holds a master's degree in Intelligence and International Relations from Salford University.

leonbosch.com

"I Musicanti embodies the universally cherished ideal of total artistic freedom and unrestrained self-expression, and it aims to provide a home to creative and imaginative artists who share the ambition of realising this dream." – Leon Bosch

A mixed instrument chamber ensemble, **I Musicanti** comprises some of the most experienced and respected musicians to be found in the UK, hand-picked by the group's artistic director, international double bass virtuoso Leon Bosch.

Under Bosch's direction, **I Musicanti** comes together to present distinctive programmes with a particular emphasis on music that has been lost and found or simply overlooked: great works by unknown composers and unknown works by great composers.

Many of the ensemble's projects are the result of Leon Bosch's vivid curiosity and commitment, something for which he is well known as a double bassist. But the ensemble

also provides a vehicle for its members to pursue their own artistic projects. And although the musicians of I Musicanti are all soloists in their own right, the group also collaborates with international performers of the highest calibre.

While I Musicanti works with prestigious venues to promote its concerts, its eye-catching programmes and the quality of performers add something unique to festivals and concert series.

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Photo © Susie Ahlburg

Since his unprecedented success as joint winner of the 1982 International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, **Peter Donohoe** has developed a distinguished international career. He is acclaimed as one of the foremost pianists of our time, for his musicianship, stylistic versatility and commanding technique.

Donohoe has performed with all the major London orchestras, as well as multiple European and American orchestras. He made his 18th appearance at the BBC Proms in 2012 and has appeared at many prestigious festivals.

Donohoe has an impressive discography. His long collaboration with SOMM Recordings boasts the complete piano sonatas of Mozart (in six volumes), Prokofiev (in three volumes) and Scriabin (on two discs). Other recent recordings include Haydn Keyboard Works, Volume 1 (Signum), Grieg Lyric Pieces, Volume 1 (Chandos), the Dora Pejačević Piano

Concerto (Chandos), Brahms and Schumann Viola Sonatas with Philip Dukes (Chandos) and Busoni: Elegies and Toccata (Chandos), which was nominated for a *BBC Music Magazine* Award.

Peter Donohoe was born in Manchester in 1953. He studied at Chetham's School of Music for seven years, graduated in music at Leeds University and went on to study at the Royal Northern College of Music with Derek Wyndham, and then in Paris with Olivier Messiaen and Yvonne Loriod.

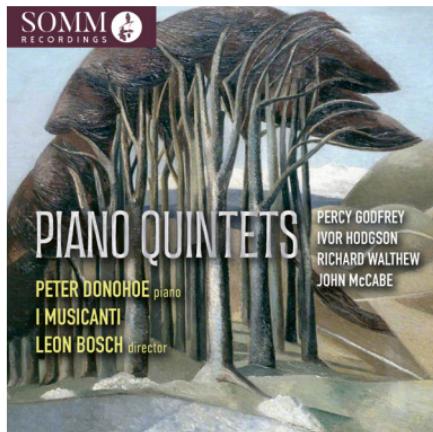
Peter Donohoe is an honorary doctor of music at seven UK universities and was awarded a CBE for services to classical music in the 2010 New Year's Honours List.

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SCHUBERT · HUMMEL
PIANO QUINTETS

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Zsolt-Tihamér Visontay *violin* · Robert Smissen *viola*
Richard Harwood *cello*LEON BOSCH *double bass & director*PETER DONOHOE *piano*

Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778–1837)

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Piano Quintet in C, Op.114a* | [28:46] |
| arr. Hummel, after Septet No.2, Op.114 "Military" | |
| 1 I. Allegro con brio | 10:46 |
| 2 II. Adagio | 7:18 |
| 3 III. Menuetto | 4:59 |
| 4 IV. Finale: Vivace | 5:42 |

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| Piano Quintet in A, Op.114 "Trout" | [42:51] |
| 5 I. Allegro vivace | 13:30 |
| 6 II. Andante | 7:14 |
| 7 III. Scherzo: Presto | 4:08 |
| 8 IV. Andantino – Allegretto | 7:33 |
| 9 V. Allegro giusto | 10:24 |

Total duration:

71:37

* FIRST RECORDING

Recording: St George's Headstone, Pinner View, Harrow, London, 13 & 14 December 2024**Executive and Recording Producer:** Siva Oke**Recording Engineer:** Adaq Khan**Front Cover:** Boys Fishing (1813) by John Constable (1776–1837)**Design:** WLP London Ltd**Booklet Editor:** Ray GranlundVisit somm-recordings.com for further information

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