

NAXOS

MARSCHNER

Piano Trios • 1

No. 1, Op. 29 and No. 7, Op. 167

Gould Piano Trio



Heinrich August Marschner (1795–1861)

Piano Trios • 1

Heinrich August Marschner, born on 16 August 1795 in Zittau, Germany, is widely considered the most important exponent of German Romantic opera in the generation between Weber and Wagner. He made significant contributions to German opera and additionally composed incidental music, chamber music and numerous songs. He composed his first theatrical work, the ballet *Die stolze Bäuerin*, in 1810, which was successfully premiered in Zittau. Marschner then ventured to Prague and later Leipzig, where he initially studied law but developed a passion for opera through his friendship with the publisher Friedrich Hofmeister, the music critic J.A. Wendt and Johann Friedrich Rochlitz, founder of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*. In 1815, he visited Vienna, where he met Beethoven and found work as a music teacher in Pressburg (today Bratislava). His early operas were typically Singspiels and achieved little success; however, once he turned his attention to writing 'rescue operas', such as *Heinrich IV und D'Aubigné*, he became more exposed in the musical mainstream.

In 1823 Marschner became conductor for the municipal theatres in Dresden, replacing Carl Maria von Weber who was ill with tuberculosis. When his tenure ended in 1826, he briefly worked in Gdansk before moving to Magdeburg, the hometown of his brother-in-law Wilhelm August Wohlbrück. It was there that Marschner and Wohlbrück decided to collaborate on their first successful opera, *Der Vampyr*, which capitalised on the popular *Schwarze Romantik* ('Dark Romantic') literary movement. Encouraged by their initial triumph, Wohlbrück and Marschner went on to create two more operas together, *Der Templer und die Jüdin* and *Des Falkners Braut*. In 1830, Marschner relocated to Hannover with his family and became Hofkapellmeister. During this period Marschner partnered with Eduard Devrient to compose the opera *Hans Heiling*, which became his most popular work and is often considered his greatest achievement. While he continued to compose operas and incidental music through the 1840s and 1850s, only a few of his theatrical works, such as *Waldmüllers Margret* (1855) and *Der Goldschmied von Ulm* (1856), achieved moderate success. In 1859, he was forced to retire from his position in Hannover against his wishes, and he passed away in 1861 at the age of 66.

Marschner is probably best known today, if at all, for his operas, and his chamber works have not received much attention. He composed piano trios throughout his career, indicating his high regard for the genre even if his own trios achieved little commercial success. Marschner titled each of these compositions for piano, violin and cello 'Grand Trio'. Diary records reveal that he had a close relationship with Robert and Clara Schumann, who held a particular fondness for Marschner's Lieder and piano trios, and Marschner visited the couple and performed in their private salons several times at the homes of Carus and Wieck. The *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* refers to Marschner and his chamber works as having 'an uncommon talent for discovering melodies that are always interesting and never ordinary. The harmony is full, yet not overpowering.' Marschner composed his *First Piano Trio* during his time in Dresden, with its publication announced in the musical periodical *Cäcilia* in 1824. The trio is dedicated to A.B. Winkler, likely connected to Karl Gottlob Theodor Winkler (1775–1856) who wrote the play *Ali Baba* that Marschner had previously set to music in Dresden. The *Seventh Piano Trio*, the last of Marschner's piano trios, was composed during his Hannover years and published by Hofmeister in 1855.

Piano Trio No. 1 in A minor, Op. 29

The light-heartedness of the A minor opening of the first movement instantly grabs the listener's attention. The opening section is characterised by a descending dotted-note pattern, played initially by the violin and then the cello, that shapes much of the thematic material that follows. Just as the listener becomes accustomed to this rhythmic motif it is abruptly interrupted by an agitated passage in the left-hand piano part, which soon transitions into rapid scalar runs and arpeggios in the right hand. The introduction of a third theme provides yet another contrast – a lyrical melody in the key of E major, first played on the violin and then by the cello. The rest of the movement is not without surprises, most notably at the very end, where the music fades away almost to nothing over the course of a gradual *diminuendo*. The second movement, now in the key of F major, begins with a short solo on the piano, yet it is the violin and cello that capture most of the melodic interest here. Both instruments have the time and space to fully interact with each other, supported by occasional elaborate flourishes in the piano.

Back in the original key of A minor, the opening of the third movement takes us back to dotted rhythms in the piano, supported by *pizzicato* in the strings, and the influence of Felix Mendelssohn is clear. The *Trio* sees much of the melodic interest provided by the violin, often doubled by the cello playing an octave lower and with the piano providing a chordal accompaniment. The final movement serves as a platform for contrast. It opens with a scalar theme played by the piano, supported by a relentless semiquaver accompaniment in the strings, which leads into a slower, more lyrical violin melody that returns later in the movement. Marschner takes us through a number of keys – both major and minor – and the music is regularly interrupted by cadenza-like passages in the piano. Towards the end a *scherzo* theme that is loosely based on the third movement appears, before a furious, energetic final section that is broken by sudden contrasts in dynamics.

Piano Trio No. 7 in F major, Op. 167

Written some 30 years after his first trio, this work highlights Marschner's compositional maturity and his development of the piano trio genre. Unlike his first trio of 1823, there is much less octave doubling between the strings and piano and instead some clever interplay between all three instruments. The first movement starts with a dotted rhythmic motif played softly in the piano, interspersed with sudden *sforzandos*; this is then contrasted by a lyrical theme in the violin. The movement is typical of the mid-19th-century piano trio, adopting a similar style to the works of Beethoven and Schumann. The most immediate feature of the second movement is a lengthy passage of solo piano writing before the violin enters with a decorated melody, supported by broken chords in the piano. For the rest of the movement the piano only has an accompanying role and the melodic interest is mostly in the violin, with the occasional solo passage that passes to the cello. The movement concludes with another gradual *diminuendo* to a *pianissimo* chord, something that appears to be a hallmark of Marschner's compositional style.

In a similar vein to the second movement, the third movement also commences with solo piano, this time, however, playing a more ominous-sounding ascending chromatic motif. The piano motif is initially broken by long periods of silence; the gaps between each of these becomes shorter before leading to an almost relentless cascade of notes following the entry of the violin. The *Trio* section of the movement possesses a slightly different character, with less of a *moto perpetuo* quality. Here, the piano chords take on a more prominent role, still incorporating a significant amount of chromaticism. Echoes of the opening *Scherzo* theme can be heard lurking in the strings. The finale opens with yet another bold, powerful, and energetic theme played by all three instruments in unison. Just as the composer seemingly sets the stage for an unrelentingly energetic movement, the heavy chords of the piano are abruptly replaced by a brilliant violin melody. This violin melody is later echoed on the piano and accompanied by playful *pizzicato* figures in the strings. The movement as a whole alternates between powerful, even ferocious music and more serene, introspective sections – another hallmark of the mid-19th-century style and one influenced perhaps by Marschner's long involvement in writing dramatic music.

Sam Girling

Gould Piano Trio



Photo: Dan Reid

The Gould Piano Trio has remained at the forefront of the international chamber music scene for over a quarter of a century. Launched by winning First Prize at the Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition, it was European Concert Hall Organisation 'Rising Stars', making a highly successful and critically acclaimed debut at New York's Weill Recital Hall. Its many appearances at London's Wigmore Hall have included the complete piano trios of Dvořák, Mendelssohn, Schubert and Beethoven. Tours of North America, the Far East, Europe and New Zealand have been interspersed by adventurous recording projects. In addition to its highly praised recordings of the standard works, the Trio has thrown light on long neglected gems from late-Romantic British repertoire, such as trios by Charles Villiers Stanford and John Ireland, plus fascinating works by Arnold Bax, Robin Milford, York Bowen and Cyril Scott. The Trio's passionate belief in the importance of developing new repertoire has resulted in commissioning works from many leading contemporary composers. It also maintains a lively relationship with promising young chamber players by giving masterclasses worldwide, particularly in association with the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama.

www.gouldpianotrio.com

The instrumental parts and scores of the following works are available from:

www.artaria.com

Sources

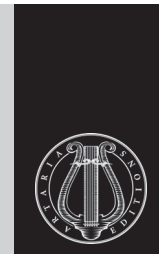
The sources upon which the editions used in this recording have been made are:

Piano Trio No. 1 in A minor, Op. 29

Edited by Sam Girling – Artaria Editions AE667
Richault edition (Paris, 1844)

Piano Trio No. 7 in F major, Op. 167

Edited by Sam Girling – Artaria Editions AE668
Hofmeister edition (Leipzig, 1855)



Heinrich Marschner's role as Germany's leading Romantic operatic composer in the generation between Weber and Wagner has tended to draw attention away from his accomplished chamber compositions. Marschner had a high regard for the piano trio genre, composing seven throughout his career, which won the admiration of his friends Robert and Clara Schumann. The *Trio No. 1 in A minor* is profusely lyrical and not without surprises and contrasts. Written three decades later, the *Trio No. 7 in F major* is a work of his maturity – assured, dramatic and energetic.



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Piano Trio No. 1 in A minor, Op. 29 (pub. 1823)	28:13
1 I. Allegro moderato	11:06
2 II. Andantino con espressione	6:00
3 III. Scherzo: Allegro molto	5:02
4 IV. Vivace	6:05
Piano Trio No. 7 in F major, Op. 167 (pub. 1855)	34:18
5 I. Allegro giusto	10:05
6 II. Andantino, quasi Allegretto grazioso	7:23
7 III. Scherzo: Presto	5:09
8 IV. Finale: Vivace	11:41

Gould Piano Trio

Lucy Gould, Violin • Richard Lester, Cello

Benjamin Frith, Piano

Recorded: 7–8 November 2023 at Wyastone Concert Hall, Monmouth, UK
Producer and engineer: Michael Ponder • Editor: Adaq Khan • Booklet notes: Sam Girling
Publisher: Artaria Editions • Cover: *Maschsee in Hannover* by igmarx (www.iStockphoto.com)

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