

The idea of stringing together six dumkas to form a piano trio was a rather novel one, as the traditional four-movement scheme (opening-slow-scherzo-finale) seemed inalterable in 19th-century chamber music. Yet here it is, a suite of six movements, all of which, at least nominally, have the same general character. How is it possible to avoid monotony in such a work?

Dvorák achieved a real tour de force with this most unusual formal plan, as audiences unanimously agreed as soon as the new work was introduced in Prague on April 11, 1891. Violinist Ferdinand Lachner and cellist Hanuš Wihan, with the composer at the piano, took the piece on tour throughout the Czech lands, and played it more than thirty times in five months.


Each of the six dumkas incorporates a contrast between slower and faster tempos—the former often coming across as sad and the latter as cheerful; the contrasts generally involve changes between the major and minor modes as well. But there are innumerable shades and gradations between those emotional states in the music, just as there are in life. And this is what prevents monotony in Dvorák's trio: each movement is a different personality, or rather, if we consider the fast and slow parts separately as we should, a different pair of personalities. Each of the six movements is also in a different key (in E minor/major, C-sharp minor, A major/minor, D minor-major, E-flat major, and C minor, respectively); therefore, it is not correct to refer to the entire work as the "Trio in E minor" as is frequently done.

The first movement juxtaposes a certain majestic pathos with a wild, syncopated dance. In the second, a melancholy Adagio alternates with a light-hearted melody that, however, stays in the minor mode and gradually takes on a furioso character. In the third, the slow theme is in the major and the fast one in the minor, not the other way around as before. The expressive cello melody of No. 4 continues with a playful "scherzando." In No. 5, both the tempo and the key relationships are reversed: a passionate melody in a major key is followed by a dreamy, "quasi-recitative" episode in the minor. The biggest surprise, however, comes in the last dumka, scored in an unremittingly tragic C minor. Its slow melody is perhaps the most poignant of all, and the fast theme ends the work with breath-taking dramatic force, without the slightest relief from the accumulated tensions.



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Cornelia Didenco, Violin
 &
The Three Generations Trio

Works by Schubert piano trio in E flat major, Dvorak Dumky Trio

Rebecca Bendre Cello
 Cornelia Didenco Violin
 Veronica van der Knaap Piano

Saturday 30 January 7.30 p.m



Programme

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First Half

F. Schubert (1797-1828) **Piano Trio in E-flat Major op.100**

- I - Allegro
- II- Andante con moto
- III-Scherzo: Allegro moderato - Trio
- IV-Allegro moderato

The Trio No. 2 in E-flat major for piano, violin, and violoncello, D. 929 or opus 100, was one of the last compositions completed by Franz Schubert, dated November 1827. It was published by Probst as opus 100 in late 1828, shortly before the composer's death and first performed at a private party in January 1828 to celebrate the engagement of Schubert's school-friend Josef von Spaun. The Trio was among the few of his late compositions Schubert heard performed before his death.

Like Schubert's other piano trio, this is a comparatively larger work than most piano trios of the time, taking almost 50 minutes to perform. The second theme of the first movement is based loosely on the opening theme of the Minuet and Trio of Schubert's G major sonata (D. 894).

This trio was conceived on a grand scale, both in its length (when all repeats are observed) and its expressive depth. In spirit and substance it would seem the kind of work Mahler would have loved. The big first movement (Allegro), with its stately opening and sense of grandeur, is ultimately restless and troubled in its energetic flow, though one could hear the music as perky and uplifting, if a little conflicted. The second movement (Andante con moto) features one of Schubert's most haunting melodies: somber in its sadness, it conveys a sense of loneliness, of loss. The alternate theme is consolatory, but does not relieve the gloom. The ensuing panel (Scherzando – Allegro moderato) is a country dance that clearly shifts away from the darkness. The finale (Allegro moderato), at nearly nineteen minutes, is another long-breathed creation, but here the brighter mood from the Scherzo remains, at least until the second movement main theme returns. Though its reappearances provoke tension, even a sense of chaos for a time, they ultimately fail to dispel the high spirits.

Refreshments, Curtesy of Nut Point Studio Cafeteria



Second half

A.Dvorak(1841-1904) **Piano trio no 4 in e minor ("Dumky")**

- I. Lento maestoso - Allegro vivace, quasi doppio movimento
- II. Poco adagio - Vivace non troppo
- III. Andante - Vivace non troppo - Andante - Allegretto
- IV. Andante moderato (Quasi tempo di marcia) - Allegretto scherzando - Meno mosso - Allegro - Moderato
- V. Allegro

VI. Lento maestoso - Vivace, quasi movimento - Lento
what is a "dumka"?

The word "dumka" is the diminutive of the Ukrainian word "duma" (meaning "thought", "idea", "reflection", "contemplation") which will be found in various mutations in other Slav languages (the Czech "dumat" means "to ponder" or "to contemplate"). In musical terms, the word originally refers to a specific type of Ukrainian (Little Russian) song form which is typical for its leisurely tempo and meditative, melancholic character. During the course of the 19th century, the dumka was transferred to higher artistic genres by composers – largely Slavs themselves – who drew inspiration from it: Tchaikovsky, Mussorgsky, Chopin, Janacek and, most notably, Antonin Dvorak.

In the "Dumky" Trio, Dvorák was more strongly and more exclusively influenced by folk music than in any of his other major works. This folk-music influence, however, did much more than simply providing "local color" or affirming and celebrating the composer's national identity. Rather, it brought forth one of the most profound artistic utterances in Dvorák's entire output.

In Ukrainian folk music, the name dumka was given to a certain type of song with a nostalgic, elegiac character. (Dvorák had a long-standing interest in the music of other Slavic nations; the "pan-Slavic" movement, which promoted the unity of all Slavic nationalities, was gaining ground in his native Bohemia.) Yet Dvorák did not use any original dumka melodies. He preferred to invent his own, and had first done so in a solo piano work as early as 1876. Dumkas served as slow movements in several of Dvorák's chamber compositions, the most famous example being the Piano Quintet, Op.81.