



FINE QUARTET: Robert Plane (second from left) joins the Gould Trio

Timely Messiaen

CHRISTOPHER DINGLE asks what can follow the great *Quartet*



MESSIAEN

Quatuor pour la fin du temps;
Thème et variations; Pièce for
piano and string quartet;
Fantaisie; Le Merle noir

Hebrides Ensemble: Rosemary Elliot
(flute), Maximiliano Martin (clarinet),
Alexander Janiczek, Sarah Bevan Baker
(violin), Catherine Marwood (viola),
William Conway (cello)
Linn CKD 314 (hybrid CD/SACD)
73:59 mins

Quatuor pour la fin du temps;
Thème et variations

Trio Wanderer: Jean-Marc Phillips-
Varjabédian (violin), Raphaël Pidoux
(cello), Vincent Coq (piano);
Pascal Moraguès (clarinet)
Harmonia Mundi HMC 901987
62:27 mins

Quatuor pour la fin du temps;
Thème et variations;
Les Offrandes oubliées

Gould Trio: Lucy Gould (violin), Alice
Neary (cello), Benjamin Frith (piano),
Robert Plane (clarinet)
Chandos CHAN 10480 67:40 mins
BBC Music Direct (Linn) £12.99
BBC Music Direct (HM) £12.99
BBC Music Direct (Chandos) £11.99

Who would want to listen to
anything after the *Quartet* for the

end of Time? Yet as in most other recordings the Hebrides Ensemble and the Trio Wanderer place their fillers after the main event: 'and the Angel announced that there shall be Time no longer – apart from an encore or two'. The Gould Trio provide a much more satisfying experience, starting with a rarity, the composer's own piano transcription of his first published orchestral work *Les Offrandes oubliées*, admirably played by Benjamin Frith, before the ubiquitous *Theme and Variations* acts as a kind of curtain raiser for the *Quartet*, which is followed only by silence.

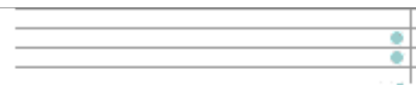
With numerous *Quartet* recordings available, the fillers can make a big difference. The Hebrides Ensemble offer all of Messiaen's published chamber music, including the first recording of the recently rediscovered *Fantaisie* (1933) for violin and piano, and also the little known *Pièce* (1991) for piano and string quartet alongside the more familiar *Le Merle noir* and *Theme and Variations*. Captured in marvellous SACD sound, these are superb performances, with delightfully jaunty piano in the *Pièce*. Violinist Alexander Janiczek and pianist Philip Moore combine transcendent intensity with finely judged pacing in the *Theme and Variations*, Messiaen's wedding present to his first wife, Claire Delbos, placing this firmly among the best accounts on disc. The *Fantaisie* was the composer's follow-up for Delbos and, while not as sublime, it is just as dramatic as its predecessor, if more fragmented.

Sadly, the Hebrides are more workmanlike in the *Quartet*, while clarinetist Maximiliano Martin's air-loss becomes a decidedly distracting hissing whenever things get exciting. Whereas the Hebrides are generally swift in approach, the Trio Wanderer are among the slowest on disc. The problem with these three discs, indeed most modern performances, is not so much the speed taken as the often pedantic approach to tempo.

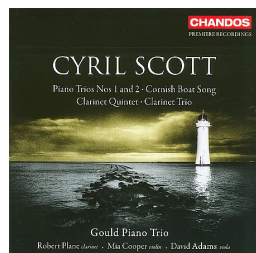
Messiaen's own recording (*Accord*) is instructive, with remarkable fluidity of tempo throughout. The Trio Wanderer have hints of flexibility, but there are also places that lack direction; the second movement's long violin and cello duet periodically becomes becalmed. There is plenty to admire, but the piano sound is harsh, dominating the texture, except in the opening 'Liturgie de cristal' where, rather than being quiet, it seems to have been placed at the other end of the room. There are no such problems with the Gould Trio, with Frith's rounded tone a perfect foil for the strings and clarinet. They make slightly heavy going at the opening of the fearsome 'Danse de la fureur', but there is greater nuance in the slower passages. Alice Neary uses a wonderful range of timbre and bow position in the cello 'Louange', so it is a pity that her vibrato becomes rather oppressive at the climax. Nevertheless, while they lack the freedom of Messiaen's recording, the Gould Trio and Robert Plane are among the best modern accounts.

PERFORMANCE (GOULD)	★★★★
(WANDERER, HEBRIDES)	★★★
RECORDING (HEBRIDES)	★★★★★
(GOULD, WANDERER)	★★★★

INTERNATIONAL RECORD REVIEW



APRIL 2010



Cyril Scott Chamber Works New
Piano Trio No.1; Trio for clarinet, cello and piano;
Clarinet Quintet; Piano Trio 2;
Cornish Boat Song
Robert Plane (clarinet); **Mia Cooper** (violin);
David Adams (viola); **Gould Piano Trio**
Chandos CHAN10575

When I was sent a score of Cyril Scott's Third Symphony in the 1980s, he was just a name. Apart from a handful of piano pieces, his music had largely been forgotten. Yet, in his youth – the years of his published Indiscretions – he was considered a pioneer; indeed, A. Eaglefield Hull opened his biography of Scott, published in 1919, with the words "The dominant feature of Cyril Scott's music is its originality, that is to say, its modernity. He is an innovator." Scott greatly admired the music of Debussy and Stravinsky, enjoyed their friendship and was regarded by some as being comparable to those great composers. The fickle finger of musical fashion and taste, however, was soon to consign the music of Scott to the dusty shelves of music publishers' store-rooms until he was re-discovered in the 1990s. Now, thankfully, much of his music is available on CD and we can reassess his apparent modernism anew.

In fact, as his Piano Trio No.1 - the earliest work on this fine CD having been composed in 1920 - shows, Scott was really a romantic with a taste for melodies based on the pentatonic and whole-tone scales, quirky harmonies based on chords built on fourths and flexible rhythms, marked by constantly changing time-signatures. If you listen to the Trio with an Innocent Ear, you may at first think that it's by Faure or another French composer of that period. It's a major four-movement work lasting just over half an hour and is given a powerful and persuasive performance by the Gould Piano Trio. Scott himself was a very fine pianist (though his great friend, Percy Grainger, gave the first performance of this work) and the piano-writing is very demanding. The other three major works come from later in Scott's life. The Trio for clarinet, cello and piano was composed for a Scott Festival in New Zealand, where it was first performed in 1958. After a substantial first movement come two short movements: an Intermezzo and a Rondo capriccioso. Again the writing is fluent and idiomatic and, although the musical ideas are less memorable than in the Piano Trio, the piece never outstays its welcome. Both in this piece and in the Clarinet Quintet that follows, Robert Plane is an eloquent and impassioned clarinetist. The Quintet is in one movement and was composed in 1951. It was inspired by the playing of Gervase de Peyer who gave the first performance. A few years later, Scott revised the work and this is the version recorded here. The playing is full-blooded and committed and, as you listen to the music, you begin to realise that Scott had a distinctive and individual voice and that he was a composer of real imagination and merit. According to Lewis Foreman, in his excellent notes, the Second Piano Trio, published in 1951, never seems to have been performed. It's a relatively short work in two sections, the first preceded by a slow introduction and the second rounded off by an imposing coda. The mood of the music is predominantly lyrical with the piano taking the lead in much of the musical argument. Throughout this disc, the playing of the Gould Piano Trio is highly impressive. They end the CD with a delightful short encore piece for piano trio, published in 1931, the Cornish Boat Song. Despite his friendship with Grainger, Scott always maintained that he eschewed folksongs, though he was not averse to using them on occasions as he did so marvellously in his Two Passacaglias on Irish tunes. Apparently, the companion-piece to the Cornish Boat Song, the Little Folk-Dance, can be downloaded free from the Chandos web-site. Do you really need a further incentive to buy this excellent CD?

Peter Marchbank



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EDITOR'S CHOICE



Hear James Inverne's pick of this month's most outstanding new discs

Chamber

Shades of Brahms in easy, inventive Fuchs, attractively played by the Gould Trio

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Fuchs

Piano Trios – No 1; No 2
Gould Piano Trio (Lucy Gould on Alice Neary or Benjamin Frith pf)
Quarta © 0722028 (38' + DDD)

'Fuchs is a splendid musician. Everything is so fine and deft, so charmingly invented that one always takes delight in it!' Brahms's comment is an admirable summing-up. The two piano trios flow easily and inventively in a highly agreeable manner that often draws close to Brahms himself, while possessing a lightness of touch all their own. Even Brahms was not free from a certain ponderous of texture in handling the difficult combination of piano and strings, and though his are by some way the more



powerful gifts, Fuchs's elegance is very attractive.

The B flat (Second) Trio's Andante sostenuto is more than elegant or 'charmingly invented' (reluctant

effluent); it has a grace but also a sadness that are movingly balanced and touch a deeper vein. The routine jollies of the succeeding finale are rather a let-down though, especially when Fuchs overworks his basic theme without drawing enough from it.

This Trio is perhaps the more sympathetic of the two, as Fuchs finds ways out of the Brahmsian shadows cast over the First and simplifies his idiom. The excellent Gould Trio respond sensitively to the two works' different natures, not holding back with the big gestures of the C major First or the somewhat funereal atmosphere of the Adagio, while lightening their touch with the more direct Second. These are very attractive performances of music that well deserves a return to the repertoire.

John Warrack



Fantastic Mr Fuchs from the Gould Trio

GOULD PIANO TRIO

Brahms Piano Trios Volume 1

Quartz QTZ 2011

Reviewed in Gramophone, April 2005

Brahms

Piano Trios – No 1, Op 8; No 2, Op 87
Gould Piano Trio (Lucy Gould *vn*
Alice Neary *vc* Benjamin Frith *pf*)
Quartz © QTZ2011 (65' • DDD)

Selected comparison – coupled as above:

Angelich, R Capuçon, G Capuçon (8/04) (VIRG) 545653-2

A vivid response and light touch to Brahms at his most Romantic

Last year I wrote enthusiastically about the Brahms trios recorded by Nicholas Angelich with Renaud and Gautier Capuçon. This new version of the first two trios is also very finely played; which one you prefer is likely to be a matter of taste. Lucy Gould and her colleagues play Op 8's first movement suavely, with lovely tone



and refined expression. The Capuçon/Angelich account is intense and full bloodied; the darker episodes have a more menacing air, and you may well feel that this

work, which even in its 1889 revision shows Brahms in his most Romantic vein, benefits from this grander, more forceful presentation.

In the *Scherzo*, by contrast, the Gould Trio, with their lightness of touch, make a special, slightly sinister effect in the quiet passages and, by this delicacy, enhance the explosive impact of the sudden *fortes*. In the finale, too, the more clearly articulated Gould version, with Benjamin Frith's ringing tone and virtuoso panache making the most of the brilliant piano writing, has a strength that the freer, more expansive French recording doesn't quite achieve.

Similar contrasts reappear in the Second Trio – the Gould's superb control and rhythmic precision brings the symphonic argument of the first movement and the *Scherzo*'s nocturnal rustlings into sharp relief. Angelich and the Capuçons, with their greater weight of tone and, it must be said, a fuller, more resonant recording, are able to characterise especially vividly

the *Andante*'s variations and the different episodes in the finale. And their strongly emotional tone pays dividends in the beautiful reflective episode at the start of the last movement's coda.



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GOULD PIANO TRIO

Brahms Piano Trios Volume 1

Quartz QTZ 2011

Reviewed in The Sunday Times, 30 January 2005

The hyper-self-critical Brahms destroyed more chamber music than he published. Luckily, the B major piano trio, written when he was only 21, escaped. Many years later, he revised and tightened it in a composite version that preserved and enhanced the magnificent sweep and energy of the original. By contrast, the late C major trio, masterly though it is, wants something of the B major's freshness of inspiration; but the performance by the Gould Trio is so good – strong, passionate and at the same time delicate – that you are hardly conscious of any lack. They are equally fine in the glorious B major.

David Cairns



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