

Christopher's Classics - Series XXVIX 2024

# Morton Trio & Friends



Alex Morton (horn), Jeremy Garside (cello), Arna Morton (violin), Sharon Baylis (viola), David McGregor (clarinet) and Liam Wooding (piano)

*Performing:* von Dohnányi and  
Penderecki

Presented by  
Sunday Classics Inc

Elizabeth Ball Trust



The Piano

Presented by the Elizabeth Ball Trust

Chamber Music  
New Zealand

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Tuesday, April 23rd, 2024, 7:00 PM  
**The Piano**, 156 Armagh St, Christchurch

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*The busiest lives deserve beautiful music.*

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# Programme

**Ernst von Dohnányi (1877-1960) – Sextet, Op. 37**

*Interval*

**Krzysztof Penderecki (1933-2020) – Sextet**

## Morton Trio

Comprising of husband and wife duo, **Alex** and **Arna Morton** (NZ freelance horn, CSO Principal 2nd Violin), and Aotearoa NZ pianist **Liam Wooding**, Morton Trio has been delighting and engaging audiences with charismatic performances throughout New Zealand and abroad for close to eight years.

Following two highly successful tours of the United Kingdom (supported by Pettman/ROSL) and New Zealand (CMNZ 'In Partnership' series) in 2019 that featured Brahms' iconic *Horn Trio in Eb Major op. 40* and NZ composer Kenneth Young's *Trio for violin, horn, and piano*, Morton Trio has enjoyed discovering and performing lesser known works for the genre, as well as expanding the horn trio repertoire through their own arrangements and compositions. Despite the last few years being riddled with pandemic-related cancellations and setbacks, most notably their inclusion as featured artists in the 2022 Adam Chamber Music Festival, Morton Trio is wasting no time in making up for lost opportunities.

In 2024, they kick off their performance season on a grand scale, collaborating with three of their fabulous Christchurch Symphony Orchestra colleagues (**David McGregor**, Principal Clarinet; **Sharon Baylis**, Associate Principal Viola; **Jeremy Garside**, Associate Principal Cello) for Chamber Music New Zealand's 'In Partnership' season of **Morton Trio & Friends**, delivering New Zealand audiences two behemoth's of the chamber music repertoire: Dohnányi and Penderecki's Sextets for Clarinet, Horn, Piano, and Strings.

# Programme Notes

## **von Dohnányi Sextet, Op. 37 (1935)**

- I. *Allegro appassionata*
- II. *Intermezzo. Adagio*
- III. *Allegro con sentimento*
- IV. *Finale. Allegro vivace, giocoso*

During his lifetime, the Hungarian Ernst von Dohnányi was known equally as a composer, pianist, and conductor.

Strongly influenced by the late Romantics Brahms and Liszt and working alongside the emerging nationalistic/folk-inspired voices of Bartok and Kodály, Dohnányi forged his own unique style which was at once rooted in tradition yet full of modern complexity. The Sextet Op.37 was written in 1935, at which time Dohnányi was Director of the Budapest Academy of Music and Music Director of the Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra. The instrumentation sets this work apart from other more traditional formats and Dohnányi makes masterful use of a broad spectrum of colours and tonal combinations. There is no escaping the virtuosity of the piano writing, which is unsurprising given Dohnányi's proficiency as a pianist, but here no single instrument dominates the musical landscape, making this a truly collaborative work of chamber music.

The first movement launches directly into a whirl of impassioned turbulence, with themes full of yearning, reaching intervals. Even the few moments of relative calm have a constant bubbling under the surface, never quite letting the momentum drop away. The opening of the second movement is in stark contrast, using the bare simplicity of the string trio in dense but understated harmony before moving into the sombre march theme. The sparse nature of this movement allows the blend of instrumental tonalities to feature. The clarinet presents the simple yet sultry theme of the third movement, until a change to *Risolto* brings a shimmering energy which builds to the *Presto* with ever-more lightness and agility. The return of the first movement theme carries the music seamlessly into the final movement, which introduces a folksy, rustic tune. As the movement progresses, this tune is interspersed with a range of soaring themes from earlier in the work, becoming jauntier as the changes become more fast paced, hurtling towards the breathless conclusion.

## Penderecki Sextet (2000)

- I. *Allegro moderato*
- II. *Larghetto*

Krzysztof Penderecki (1933 - 2020) was a prolific Polish composer and conductor with a monumental compositional output, including four operas, eight symphonies, and numerous orchestral works, concerti, vocal works, and chamber music.

*Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima* and *St. Luke's Passion* are arguably the works Penderecki is most well-known for; however, his sextet for violin, viola, cello, clarinet, horn and piano, composed in 2000, is generally considered to be his most substantial chamber work. It was commissioned by Auftragswerk der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, known today as the Wiener Musikverein (Viennese Music Association), and had its world premiere at the Musikverein in June 2000 with renowned performers Paul Meyer (clarinet), Radovan Vlatković (horn), Julian Rachlin (violin), Juri Bashmet (viola), Mstislav Rostropovich (cello), and Dmitri Alexeyev (piano).

Comprising of two movements, *Allegro moderato* and *Larghetto*, Penderecki's Sextet certainly extends the boundaries of virtuosity, with both movements requiring an intense level of musical and technical control. The *Allegro moderato* movement begins with a commanding repeated low A-flat from the piano, with the horn and clarinet adding emphasis and intensity to the pitch centre before descending into a rather chaotic scherzo. This movement demonstrates plenty of violence and disagreement with many instruments (notably the clarinet and violin) screaming and soaring above the texture as Penderecki explores various moods and emotions with abrupt changes of tempi that evoke feelings of whimsy, mystery, and seduction. The longer *Larghetto* movement is conversely introspective and melancholic, while preserving similar aggressive qualities of the active first movement. Pensive lyrical lines and static harmony are a prominent feature, exposing every instrument to raw emotions of sorrow, fury, and tranquillity. An ascending, harrowing cello melody supported by violin and viola harmonics, softly sustained clarinet and horn, with subtle punctuation from the piano brings this absolute masterwork to a poignant close.

In August, Morton Trio will be launching their debut album, featuring not just "the" Brahms Horn Trio (op. 40) but also his B Major Piano Trio op. 8 arranged by trio violinist Arna Morton alongside her brand-new composition for the ensemble, Summer.

Stay up to date with Morton Trio's latest updates and all the good behind-the-scenes content by following @mortontrio on Facebook and Instagram today.



MORTON TRIO

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BRAHMS Eb Major Trio op. 40

 

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# NZ String Quartet



performing **Holmes, Haydn, Shostakovich** and **Brahms**

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**Tickets: Door Sales: \$40** (students **\$15**) by cash  
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### **Acknowledgements:**

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