Piano Trio in B Minor
Opus 13 — 1848

Charles Edward Horsley
1822 – 1876

Edited by
Richard Divall

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Introduction

Charles Edward Horsley was born in London in 1822 and died in New York in 1876. He came from an intensely musical family, and his father William Horsley, also a composer was a close family friend of Felix Mendelssohn and others. Horsley evinced a great musical talent early in life, and he studied in London with Mendelssohn, and Ignaz Moscheles, Franz Liszt's own teacher. He later continued studies first in Kassel, and then in Leipzig with the above composers and also composition with Louis Spohr. The Editor has found over 170 compositions by Horsley and edited most of these already, including three symphonies, the piano and violin concertos, two string quartets, two piano trios, several sonatas and many lieder and works for piano solo. The full catalogue (2011), of Horsley’s works to date is included in this introduction.

After returning to London in 1853 he saw performances of his oratorios Gideon and Joseph given in Liverpool and later his David was performed in 1860 in Glasgow. One year later he decided to migrate to Melbourne, then experiencing huge growth because of the gold rush and the development of large scale agricultural industry. His services were obtained by the Royal Melbourne Philharmonic, which is still in existence. He served as organist variously at St Ignatius Church Richmond; St Peter’s Eastern Hill and St Francis Church in Lonsdale Street. He was a brilliant improviser, although no organ works have survived from his hand.

His financial and personal life went into a decline and making significant losses, combined with the decamping of his wife with a neighbour, did little to lift his confidence. After a return to London in 1873 he went to work in New York where he remarried, but died in 1876. However he left numerous manuscripts in Australia, of two symphonies and other works. Horsley was possibly the finest composer to come to Australia before G.W.L. Marshall-Hall, and the uncovering of his more mature works in Australia has resulted in a revision of his status as a composer. His excellent Concerto for Violin was published in full score by Lyrebird Press in 2007 and a detailed biography is available in that publication.

Horsley’s Piano Trio, opus 13 was originally published in parts by Breitkopf and Härtel. This fine trio received a long delayed modern performance in Melbourne, followed by a national tour given by the excellent Seraphim Trio. The manuscript has not survived.

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Richard Divall.
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