

## Potters Enigma

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By George Hall

**Question:** Who apart from Elgar composed a set of Enigma Variations? **The answer** – as all readers of M & M will doubtless know – is Cipriani Potter. Potter (1792-1871), known to his friends as “Little Chip”, was a prolific English composer of instrumental music whose output – mostly written between 1816 and 1837 – included nine symphonies, one of which Wagner conducted in London in 1855. Wagner apparently labeled Potter an “amiable elderly contrapuntist”.

I had never heard of any of Potter’s music before 15 October, when The International Trio opened their London debut recital at St. James’s, Piccadilly with his Second Grand Trio Opus 12 No. 2. The style of the piece is roughly halfway between Haydn and Mendelssohn, and although the music – like the man – is amiable, there is precious little counterpoint. Much of the trio is facile or pedestrian, though it is, not without the old graceful touch.

But it was splendidly played all the same, as was Beethoven’s *Ghost* Trio, in a performance combining precision with great musicality. In spite of the bathroom like acoustic of the church. Howard Aibel negotiated the difficult piano part with skill, and the group's ensemble was flawless.

International in spirit as well as name, the group followed English and German music with Russian: Arensky’s First Piano Trio, a highly attractive late-Romantic piece, rich in melody and well-written for the combination, which we should hear more often. Once again their performance was one fine detail, spirit and cogency. Altogether an impressive debut.