

WILSON  
AUDIOPHILE  
Definitive Recordings, Inc.

# Brahms & Beethoven

## *Clarinet Trios*



Charles West, Clarinet  
Roger Drinkall, Cello    Dian Baker, Piano

## PROGRAM NOTES

### Ludwig van Beethoven

Beethoven wrote his *Trio in B-flat for Piano, Clarinet and Cello, Op. 11* in 1798, when he was twenty-eight years old, and published it that same year. Dedicated to the Countess Maria von Thun (a patroness and advocate of Gluck, Haydn and Mozart), the work's first performance was in 1800 at a soirée given by the Count von Fries. This concert was a musical duel between Beethoven and another pianist, Daniel Steibelt. When Beethoven played his newly-composed *Trio for Piano, Clarinet and Cello*, Daniel Steibelt, unable to top the fluid virtuosity of the last movement, conceded that Beethoven had won the musical contest.

The *Trio* was a critical success, as well. Following the publishing of the *Trio*, a critic for the Leipzig journal "Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung" said: "This trio, which in places is not easy, but which flows more smoothly than some other works of its composer, makes a good ensemble effect with the accompaniment played on a fortepiano. This composer, with his uncommon understanding of harmony and his love of profound expression, would give us a great deal of value, leaving the insipid efforts of many a celebrated composer far behind, if he would only write always in a more natural than far-fetched manner." (page 133, cited in "Beethoven's Piano Trios and Piano Quartets" by Friedhelm Klugmann, from *Ludwig van Beethoven*, ed. Joseph Schmidt-Görg).

Luckily, Beethoven ignored this well-meaning critic's advice, and continued to write the music as it came to him. Even as young as he was when he composed the *Trio, Op. 11*, Beethoven was very serious about his craft and maintaining the musical integrity of his works, regardless of the fashion of the times. As he later told a young musician of the times, "You will ask me where I get my ideas. That I cannot tell you with certainty; they come unsummoned, directly, indirectly—I could seize them with my hands-out in the open air; in the woods; while walking; in the silence of the nights; early in the morning; incited by moods, which are translated by the poet into words, by me into tones that sound, and roar and storm about me until I have set them down in notes," (cited in *Beethoven: The Man and the Artist*, trans. Henry E. Krehbiel, page 29).

Beethoven's *Trio, Op. 11*, written at the onset of his musical career, exhibits an exuberance and an impetuosity that contrasts sharply with the other piece on this recording, Brahms's *Trio in A Minor for Clarinet, Cello and Piano, Op. 114*.

## Johannes Brahms

Prior to the 1890-91 musical season, Brahms was feeling discouraged and depressed. He began going through all of his manuscripts and destroying everything he thought was unworthy of being published. He wrote to a friend, "I have tormented myself to no purpose lately and till now I never had to do so at all; things always came easily to me," (cited in *The Chamber Music of Johannes Brahms*, by Henry Drinker, page 45).

In March 1891, when Brahms was fifty-eight (and six years before his death), he was invited to



Meiningen Castle, home to the music-loving Duke Georg and Baroness von Heldburg and the grand-ducal orchestra. It was at Meiningen that Brahms first heard the playing of clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld. Brahms was so impressed by Mühlfeld's playing that he requested a private recital, where Mühlfeld played all the pieces in his repertoire, one after another, and discussed the musical capabilities of the clarinet.

Brahms wrote two chamber works for clarinet that following summer, the *Trio in A minor for Clarinet, Cello and Piano*, Op. 114, and the *Quintet for Clarinet and String quartet*, Op. 115. The

first public performance of the *Trio* and the *Quintet* was scheduled for December 12, 1891, in Berlin, with Brahms at the piano, Mühlfeld on the clarinet, and Hausmann on the cello. The *Quintet* was to be premiered with Mühlfeld and Joachim's Quartet (Joachim was an extremely gifted musician and a dear friend of Brahms'.) This premiere was particularly important because Joachim had a strict stipulation that on his Quartet's concerts, no work could be performed which was not written exclusively for strings.

Brabms was gratified by Joachim's compliment, as he states in a letter to a friend: Joachim has sacrificed the virginity of his quartet to my newest things. Hitherto he has carefully protected the chaste sanctuary but now, in spite of all my protestations, he insists that I invade it with clarinet and piano, with Trio and Quintet. This will take place on the 12th of December, and with the Meiningen clarinetist." (cited in Florence May, *The Life of Johannes Brahms*, vol. II, p. 625-26).

The concert was a phenomenal triumph. At the public rehearsal, held on 10 December, every seat was filled, and as the programme concluded (the last piece was the *Quintet*), the audience demanded a repetition of the entire *Quintet*. Joachim and the other musicians finally agreed to repeat the slow movement of the *Quintet*. Subsequent performances were just as successful, and on March 28, 1892, both works were premiered in London, at a concert which was repeated on April 2, due to popular demand.

-Natassja Olsen

## THE ARTISTS

### Charles West • Clarinet

Charles West has performed as a soloist throughout the United States, and in Mexico, Asia, and South America. He was Principal Clarinetist of the El Paso Symphony Orchestra for ten years, and has been Principal Clarinetist of the Flagstaff Festival Orchestra for eleven. Currently, he performs in Richmond with the contemporary music ensemble Currents. He holds a Doctorate in Performance from the University of Iowa, where he studied with Himie Voxman. Other teachers have included Loren Bartlett, Robert Marcellus, Leon Russianoff and Steve McNeal.

West is currently Professor of Clarinet at Virginia Commonwealth University, with previous appointments at the University of Arizona, New Mexico State University and Grinnell College. He has served as Visiting Professor of Clarinet at Shanghai Conservatory and (Beijing) Central Conservatory in China, Soochow University in Taiwan, and as a Fulbright Scholar at the National School of Music in Peru, and he was President of the International Clarinet Association from 1988 to 1990.

Mr. West's publications take the form of articles and compositions, and many recordings of his performance have been issued on various labels. He performs on Buffet clarinets, and is a Boosey-Hawkes Buffet Crampon clinician.

## The Roger Drinkall-Dian Baker Duo . Cello and Piano

Any two accomplished musicians, given enough rehearsal time, can produce a competent performance. Roger Drinkall and Dian Baker, however, go far beyond the merely competent, rising to a higher plane where technical mastery and a perfect melding of mind and spirit make each performance pure magic.

In the eight years since they formed the Drinkall-Baker Duo, the two musicians have taken that magic to more than six hundred concerts all over the world, garnering critical acclaim and a

growing international reputation.

The pair's approach is unique. They do not regard themselves as soloist and accompanist, but rather as two soloists, a true partnership of two equals. This philosophy brings to their playing a striking unity of thought and execution.

"At times, both piano and cello seemed to merge to become a single entity," wrote a reviewer in the New Straight Times of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. "They played with an intensity and passion that one rarely sees in classical musicians."

In addition, the duo's extensive repertoire - ranging from

Bach, Beethoven and Chopin to Ginastera, Kodaly and Weill - is entirely memorized, giving them an intimacy with the music and a freedom from the page that is clearly reflected in their playing.

The combination of these qualities means that Drinkall and Baker never merely play it safe. They embrace each piece completely, playing with a sure elegance and verve that opens new vistas.



Reviewers often comment on the musicality and passion of the duo's performances:

"A profound sense of taste ... richly nuanced and emotionally packed with astounding musicality and technique," said La Stampa of Italy.

"A delightful experience, and I can't remember when I last saw performers return for five encores ... uncommon vigor and commitment ... truly a delight," said Dawn of Karachi, Pakistan; and from The Georgetown Times of South Carolina: "It had to be magic ... pure sorcery ... unsurpassed for excitement ... a real pleasure."

Roger Drinkall has been making his cello sing on stages all over the world for nearly three decades in more than thirty countries and has made a number of recordings for Asian and European networks. He graduated from the Curtis Institute of Music where he studied with Leonard Rose.

Drinkall's cello is itself a classic: an 1830 Pressenda, which the New Straight Times says he plays "like he was born with it, and made it sing with a tone that was dulcet even on the high notes."

The Deseret News of Salt Lake City concurs: "Drinkall has an exhilarating tone, bright and lively, youthful and virile - indeed a kind of heldentenor among cellos - which he enjoys using to galvanic effect."

Dian Baker was already well on the way to establishing herself as a virtuoso performer on two instruments at a young age. By age 15, she won the Bank of America award in both violin and piano and played her orchestral solo debuts on both instruments. Her virtuosity on violin gives her unique insights into playing with stringed instruments. "Baker brought ... liquid clarity ... beyond technical security to match (Drinkall's) intrepid music making," said the Deseret News.

Recently the duo performed in Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, and the Czech Republic. The Prague concert was broadcast nationwide by Czech TV 1. Following this European tour, the Yamaha Music Corporation engaged the Duo for a second tour of Malaysia.

## TECHNICAL NOTES

This recording took place in March 1995 at Maurice Abravanel Hall in Salt Lake City, Utah. The hall is noted for its clean acoustics, linear reverberation and midrange focus. As in most other Wilson Audiophile chamber recordings, the perspective is close...as though the instruments are performing in your listening room.

The piano is a nine-foot Fazioli. One of its unique characteristics is that it is entirely hand-made.

This piano began its life in Italy's valde de memme's forest of red spruce, where Stradivarius sought wood for his violins. When the trees are one-hundred and fifty years old, one out of every 200 of them has the special resonant qualities to make them perfect for use throughout this instrument. This rare timber is then entrusted to the finest craftsmen, who spend two years building each piano. Less than twenty have been shipped to North America. This recording was made using the five-hundredth Fazioli piano. The cello is an example of the Italian Luthier Pressenda, crafted in 1830, in Turino. Its wood comes from the same forests as the Fazioli piano, making these two instruments the perfect pair. The cello bows are the work of William Salchow of New York.

When listening to this recording, the cello is positioned in front of the piano. The cello is to the right of center, facing the front of the soundstage. The image of the cello is rather large, and moves slightly in the soundstage as the cellist plays the instrument. This is a normal consequence of the spaced omni configuration, as is the recording's naturally rich harmonic structure. The microphone preamps, designed and built by John Curl, are sophisticated, fully class A, direct coupled units.

The master tape was recorded on the Ultramaster, Wilson Audio's exclusive 30 ips analog recorder. This instrument, designed and built by John Curl, is fully direct-coupled, and exhibits a record/playback frequency bandwidth of over 45 KHz. The mastering tape used was 3M 996. Location monitoring was on Wilson WATT V/Puppy V precision loudspeakers powered by a Brown Electronic Labs Model 1001 Mark II amplifier. At Wilson Audio, master tapes, and reference lacquers were evaluated on both the WATT V/Puppy V and on the WAMM series VII, powered by a variety of amplifiers including Mark Levinson, Audio Research, Krell, Spectral, Jadis, Rowland and Audio Note. Excellent compatibility was realized with all of these designs.

This recording was made and mastered using the multi-patented CVT (Constant Velocity Transmission) technologies provided under license to Wilson Audio Specialties by MIT. The use of these technologies preserves details in the recording and mastering process that result in a record or CD with increased clarity and transparency. This ensures a more natural and lifelike representation of the original event. CVT and MIT are registered trademarks of Music Interface Technologies of Auburn, California. Both analog and digital mastering were performed at Wilson Audio's mastering facilities in Provo, Utah.

WCD-9533

# *Brahms & Beethoven*

## **Brahms: Trio in A-minor for Piano, Cello and Clarinet, Op. 114**

- |                     |        |
|---------------------|--------|
| 1. Allegro          | (6:50) |
| 2. Adagio           | (7:29) |
| 3. Andante grazioso | (3:55) |
| 4. Allegro          | (4:07) |

Total: (22:39)

## **Beethoven: Trio in B-flat Major for Piano, Clarinet and Cello, Op. 11**

- |               |        |
|---------------|--------|
| 5. Allegro    | (9:33) |
| 6. Adagio     | (5:11) |
| 7. Allegretto | (7:05) |

Total: (22:04)

## **CREDITS**

<b>Executive Producer</b>	Sheryl Lee Wilson
<b>Musical Producer</b>	Bruce Leek
<b>Production Coordination</b>	J. Troy Bankhead
<b>Production Assistant</b>	Matthew G. Tucker
<b>Technical Direction</b>	David A. Wilson
<b>Recording Engineering</b>	David A. Wilson, Bruce Leek
<b>Editing</b>	Bruce Leek
<b>Digital Mastering</b>	Bruce Leek, Wilson Audiophile Mastering Lab, Provo, Utah
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