

# BRAHMS

## THE THREE PIANO TRIOS

David Perry, violin  
Paulina Zamora, piano  
Uri Vardi, cello



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# JOHANNES BRAHMS: THE THREE PIANO TRIOS

Disc 1:

PIANO TRIO NO. 2 IN C MAJOR

Allegro ♦ Andante con moto

Scherzo: Presto ♦ Allegro giocoso

PIANO TRIO NO. 3 IN C MINOR

Allegro energico ♦ Presto non assai

Andante grazioso ♦ Allegro molto

Disc 2:

PIANO TRIO NO. 1 IN B MAJOR

Allegro con brio ♦ Scherzo: Allegro

molto ♦ Adagio ♦ Allegro

Program total time: 83:24

David Perry, violin

Paulina Zamora, piano

Uri Vardi, cello



# JOHANNES BRAHMS: THE THREE PIANO TRIOS

## CD1:

Piano Trio No. 2 in C Major, Op. 87  
(29:58)

1. I. Allegro (9:57)
2. II. Andante con moto (8:49)
3. III. Scherzo: Presto (5:08)
4. IV. Finale: Allegro giocoso (6:04)

Piano Trio No. 3 in C Minor, Op. 101  
(21:28)

5. I. Allegro energico (7:54)
6. II. Presto non assai (3:30)
7. III. Andante grazioso (4:11)
8. IV. Allegro molto (5:53)

## CD2:

Piano Trio No. 1 in B Major, Op. 8 (31:58)

9. I. Allegro con brio (10:56)
10. II. Scherzo: Allegro molto (6:33)
11. III. Adagio (7:39)
12. IV. Allegro (6:48)

Total time: 83:24

David Perry, violin  
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## BEHIND THE EYES

Johannes Brahms was photographed frequently during his lifetime, and took pleasure in sharing candid photos with friends. In this professional portrait from 1853, the single feature often noted by his contemporaries is evident: his powerful gaze.



**Johannes Brahms. Leipzig, 1853.**

Whether clean-shaven or—after 1876—bearded, he garnered compliments for his eyes. One observer described the young man’s “fine brow with flashing blue eyes ... [and seen standing] apart in pleasant company, an unconscious force would emanate from him.” As he aged, his short stature and casual dress could distress his friends, yet his eyes kept their appeal. Sir Isidor George Henschel—baritone, conductor, and close friend reported: “What struck me most was the kindness of the eyes. They were a light blue; wonderfully keen and bright, with now and then a roguish twinkle in them, and, yet, at times, an almost childlike tenderness.” C. V. Stanford, an Irish-born conductor and advocate for Brahms in England, described the composer’s eyes during his final years as “astonishingly deep and luminous velvet.” (Michael Musgrave. *A Brahms Reader*. Yale Press, 2000: p. 5.)

Yet, despite the directness with which the composer meets his observer in numerous images, Karl Geiringer, a prominent twentieth-century biographer, dubbed him “Brahms the Ambiguous.” This ambiguity reflects the shifting musical values concurrent with his maturity,

making it unclear whether to consider him conservative or progressive. Brahms compounded this ambiguity with apparent expressions of self-doubt and his destruction of numerous finished compositions as well as unfinished pieces and sketch materials. If self-doubt was his motivation, it is curious that he did not seem worried about the survival of a substantial record of correspondence.

This material reveals his reliance on friends from whom he sought unvarnished opinions of his works-in-progress, underscoring the composer's respect for connoisseurs and professional musical friends in equal measure. An engagement with both amateur and professional musicians sprang naturally from Brahms' lifelong engagement with performance. A pianist of considerable accomplishment, he was, however, not among the leading virtuosos of his day. Chamber music was the genre for which he was most celebrated as a composer and the one that offered him great personal pleasure. He appreciated that professional musicians would be cognizant of emerging musical styles, whereas dedicated amateurs, many among the prominent intelligentsia, embraced the

prevailing aesthetic preferences. Serving both forward-thinking musical trends and the pleasures of private engagement with music was no easy task, but remained central to his compositional projects.

And through it all, he cheerfully preferred to live among the emerging bourgeoisie, rather than assume the mantle of "celebrated artist." The struggle to create music that addressed both the pleasures of highly sophisticated, yet amateur taste and the desire of professional musicians for works suitable for large public concerts factored into his progress on the works of his mature style, particularly the remarkable string quartets, violin sonatas, piano quartets, and piano trios. In each instance, these magisterial triptychs are unified by an overarching sense of chamber style, yet at the same time, are distinctively individual. The three piano trios, in particular, preserve a lifelong engagement with two sensibilities.

Breitkopf und Härtel's publication of the **Piano Trio No. 1 in B, Op. 8** in 1854 ramped up attention for the young composer, whose name was already in the limelight due to Robert Schumann's

praise in his 1853 article in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*: “May the highest genius lend him strength, for which the prospects are good, for another genius, that of modesty, dwells within him.” After a premiere performance in Danzig, Boston was the site for the North American premiere. Numerous performances followed, with the composer at the keyboard. Correspondence with his friends preserves some doubts about this trio from the beginning. Over thirty years later, in 1890, he jumped at the opportunity to undertake a substantial revision when his principal publisher, Fritz Simrock, took over the rights. With typical humor he quipped, “I didn’t provide it with a new wig, just combed and arranged its hair a little.” Both versions remain in print, although performers have long favored the revised version with its leaner proportions. The success of the revision speaks well of his youthful maturity—no doubt, the coherence of the earlier version made possible the sleeker later version.

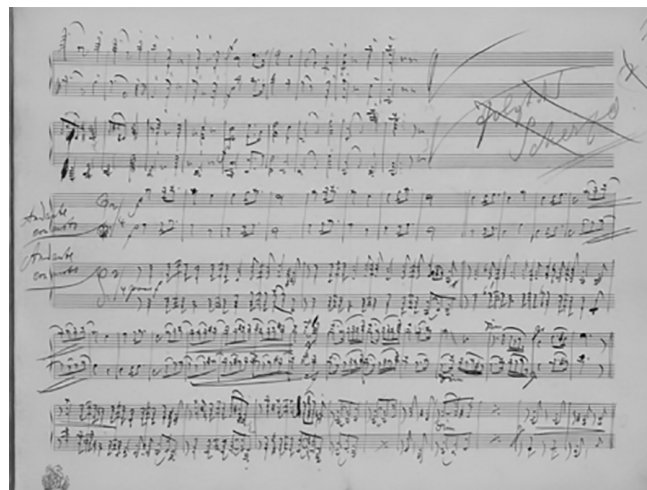
The trio opens with the cello’s radiant lyrical theme, establishing B major decisively without a hint that a somber, B-minor mood would bring the work to

a close. The movement’s second theme, a product of the 1890 revision, adds a layer of powerful contrast, not present in the first version. Overall, the revision shortened the work by a third, synthesizing the broad lyricism with a tautness governed by forward-looking elements. Whereas the cello’s opening long-limbed melody is characteristic of an earlier style favored by music for the home, the revision’s more tightly controlled unfolding suffuses the work with drama, tension, and technical complexity, qualities that appeal to high-caliber professional performers. The minor-mode Scherzo’s obsessive rhythmic drive builds drama, suggesting Beethovenian qualities. A return of the lyrical style in this movement’s middle section prepares the major mode conclusion. The third movement’s opening chorale texture establishes a feeling of Arcadian peace until the more mysterious second theme destabilizes this calm, echoing the B major/G-sharp minor key relationship from movement I. Extensive revisions in the last movement create intensity, its stormy blasts of downward arpeggios and minor mode scales suggesting the impossibility of a return to the warmth of the trio’s B major begin-

ning, a shocking denouement given that works which begin in major, most always find a way to conclude in this more optimistic mode. No doubt, the revised version successfully embodies two opposing worlds—the openhearted expressiveness of the connoisseur and the forward-leaning drive of the professional.

The **Piano Trio No. 2 in C, Opus 87** (1880-82) reached its first audience with a performance in Frankfurt-on-Main. Once again, the composer sat at the keyboard. Since his Opus 8 inaugural Piano Trio, the composer, who also played the French horn, combined piano, violin, and horn—Opus 40 in E-flat Major (1865)—in inventing a combination ideal for a pastoral range of celebration and mourning. Returning to the traditional piano trio combination with Opus 87, the majestic C major resounds in the first and last movements, framing the exquisite variations in A minor, *Andante con moto*, and the enigmatic scherzo, *Presto*, in C minor. The strings resound a broad, noble tune in unison to begin movement I—they remain a united force throughout. The piano ignores the triple meter in the strings, asserting a counterweighted duple organization. Rhythmic battles such as this

one dominate the overarching drama. The composer's autograph exposes his uncertainty as to whether the scherzo or the variation movement should come next:



**Opus 87. Brahms Autograph.**  
**Composer's crossed out direction**  
**(top right) to follow the first movement**  
**with the Scherzo**

The Andante's theme features a distinctive rhythmic declamation, suggestive of a nationalistic style, most likely Hungarian. Remarkable for a variation movement theme, it continues for twenty-seven measures without internal repeats, marked by a distinctive four-measure close in which the string unison and

steady eighth notes dissolve into a brief moment of imitation and modal shift to A major. This strategy pays significant rewards, marking closure at the end of each variation. These same measures also move decisively away from the theme's characteristic exotic coloring, creating an intriguing cultural mixture. For the fifth variation and coda, a flowing compound meter draws the movement to a close, a strategy that succeeds by virtue of the movement's overall inner cohesion. The Scherzo's C minor spinning song reunites the strings in close partnership for most of the way. The movement's middle section breaks out in uninhibited lyricism, until the scherzo returns, and eventually exits without dramatic closure. The final movement, *Allegro giocoso*, begins with a boisterous quickstep, resembling in spirit the Violin Concerto's final last movement. Its rising arpeggio figure creates a strong pull toward the second half of each measure, lingering on the sharp-four scale degree, urgent for resolution. This chromaticism soon spreads, giving a sense of urgency to the fast-moving accompaniment figures. The expansive coda is announced with a slow-motion version of the main tune, at which point

the texture takes on symphonic qualities in its resolve to close in the major mode. Again, the composer provides substantial public presentation scale mixed with the pleasures of chamber music dialog.

In 1886, vacationing at his favorite summer retreat at Lake Thun, Switzerland, near Interlaken, he completed the **Piano Trio No. 3, Op. 101** along with Cello Sonata No. 2, Op. 99 and Violin Sonata No. 2, Op. 100. He circulated all three compositions through performances instead of offering them for publication immediately: the second cello sonata performed on 24 November by Brahms and cellist Robert Hausmann; the second violin sonata on 2 December with Brahms and Josef Hellmesberger; and the trio in Budapest, Hungary, on 20 December 1886 with Brahms at the piano, joined by violinist Jenő Hubay and cellist David Popper, soon followed by the Vienna premiere on 26 February 1887. Simrock, at the composer's request, waited to publish the compositions until April 1887.

This cluster of new chamber works brought praise for his mature late style and reinforced the prestige the compos-



er added to chamber music. His musical confidant Heinrich von Herzogenberg described the trio as “ripe and wise in its incredible compactness.” (*Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Heinrich und Elizabeth von Herzogenberg II*. Berlin, 1921, p. 146.) After the Viennese premiere an anonymous reviewer wrote: “This time the composer has drawn from the depths of his undeniably great lyric talent and given us a work that offers pleasure not only to the expert through its artistic working out, but also to the soul and ear of the naïve listener.” (*Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*, 27 February 1887, quoted in Margaret Notley, *Lateness and Brahms*. Oxford, 2007: p. 47.)

With this last work for piano trio, he continued to honor his lifelong dual loyalties: to chamber music aficionados—sweeping lyricism creating immediate appeal, and to the cognoscenti—motivic depth and emotional complexity adding intellectual challenges. The trio’s first movement, the *Allegro energico*, pours forth a powerful timbral force with the strings assigned grand four-note chords. The characteristic triplet figures carry distinctive profiles that permeate the main melodic material.

The exposition does not repeat, offering a tightly coiled form. The distant key of C-sharp minor emerges in its development, and although C major attempts to take control, C minor returns, creating a devastating, tragic-hued landscape. Muted strings whisper fleet-footed utterances in the C minor hush of movement II, *Presto non assai*. A broad lyricism ensues through spacious piano chords and charming string *pizzicato* that replace the opening gossamer texture. This middle section ultimately cannot overcome the restlessness that reasserts control with the return of the opening section. The *Andante grazioso* of movement III retreats to a faraway world, where a mesmerizing tune in C major cunningly alternates a triple meter measure with two measures of duple. These seven beats are introduced in alternating utterances—contrapuntally intertwined strings alone, then piano without strings. The string partnership suggests Brahms thinking ahead to his next undertaking, the Double Concerto for Violin and Cello, Op. 102. This separation of forces—strings vs. piano—sets up the exploration of new combinations as the movement proceeds. Leaving the world of seven beats behind,

five groups of triplets create another flowing unfamiliar meter of 15/8. The final *Allegro molto* in movement IV reasserts C minor. Gradually, the 6/8 drives to a C major close, fulfilling the iconic Beethovenian Fifth Symphony paradigm—from struggle to triumph.

The composer's presence at the keyboard for each of the trio's earliest performances underscores their purpose: a means for companionship, musical pleasure, and deep joy. They invite us to enter a Brahmsian world designed for everyone, for amateurs and professionals, filled with generous emotion.



**Brahms Among His Friends.**  
Photo by Herr Eugen von Miller zu  
Aichholz, 1894 (Robert Schaufner. *The  
Unknown Brahms.*  
New York, 1929: p. 134.)

Considering once more the “sparkling blue eyes” and imagining what lies behind the gaze, one senses encouragement — for performers *and* audiences—to share the journey.

Jenny Kallick  
Amherst, Massachusetts  
June 2015

Violinist **David Perry** joined the Pro Arte Quartet and the University of Wisconsin - Madison music faculty in 1995 and was granted a Paul Collins Endowed Professorship in 2003. He is artist in residence and professor of violin.

Perry is concertmaster of the Chicago Philharmonic and the Aspen Chamber Symphony (Colorado), and frequently serves as guest concertmaster of groups including the Ravinia Festival Orchestra (Illinois), the American Sinfonietta (Washington, D.C.), and the China National Symphony Orchestra. He has been a soloist with numerous symphony orchestras in the United States, including St. Louis and Chicago, and abroad. He is





a founding member of the Aspen Ensemble, a quintet of faculty artists of the Aspen Music Festival, which regularly tours the United States and Japan.

For more than twenty years Perry has been active with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra (New York), renowned for playing without a conductor. He has performed with the group, often as concertmaster, in Carnegie Hall and at most of the major cultural centers of North and South America, Europe, and Asia, and he can be heard on many of their Deutsche Grammophon recordings. His solo recordings include music of Pleyel (Naxos), Mendelssohn (Sonos), and Sarasate (Sonari), and he has numerous releases with the Pro Arte Quartet.

A 1985 U.S. Presidential Scholar in the Arts, Perry's first prizes include the International D'Angelo Competition, National Music Teachers' National Association Auditions, and the Juilliard Concerto Competition. Perry's early training was with John Kendall and Almita Vamos, followed by studies with Dorothy DeLay, Paul Kantor, and Masao Kawasaki at The Juilliard School. He plays a 1711 Francis-

cus Gobetti violin thanks to the generous support of the UW Foundation.

Cellist **Uri Vardi** has performed as a recitalist, soloist, and chamber player across the United States, Europe, Far East, South America, and his native Israel. Born in Szeged, Hungary, Vardi grew up on Kibbutz Kfar Hahosh, Israel. He studied at the Rubin Academy in Tel Aviv, was an Artist Diploma student at Indiana University, and earned his master's degree from Yale University. His cello teachers have included Janos Starker, Aldo Parisot, Eva Janzer, and Uzi Wiesel. Other influential musicians in his life have been Gyorgy Sebok, Rami Shevelov, Rachel Adonaylo, and Lorand Fenyves. Vardi served as Assistant Principal cellist of the Israel Chamber Orchestra, Principal cellist of the Israel Sinfonietta, and was a founding member of the Sol-La-Re String Quartet. In 1990, following an extensive teaching and performing career, Vardi was appointed cello professor at the University of Wisconsin - Madison.

Vardi is the founder and artistic director of the National Summer Cello Institute in Madison, Wisconsin. He is



regularly invited to perform and present workshops, seminars, and master classes at major music schools, summer music festivals, and professional orchestras. Trained as a Feldenkrais practitioner, Vardi focuses on the correlation between musical expression, sound, body awareness, and movement in his teaching and performance. Throughout his career, Uri Vardi has continuously initiated new projects and collaborations, bringing to life rarely performed music (e.g., a CD of Jewish music from the St. Petersburg School), and bridging cultural and musical divides (e.g., *Fusions* - a chamber music project of Jewish music and Arab art music that toured the US and Israel on multiple occasions and culminated in the commission of *Forty Steps* by Joel Hoffman, a double concerto for cello, oud, and symphony orchestra, premiered with the Madison Symphony Orchestra).

Vardi's students have been successful as soloists, chamber players, faculty members of major music schools (such as Oberlin College and the Peabody Institute), and members of major orchestras such as The New York Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the Israel Philharmonic

Orchestra, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Simon Bolivar Orchestra in Caracas, Venezuela, and the Seattle Symphony Orchestra.

Chilean-American pianist **Paulina Zamora** was born in Antofagasta, Chile. She was educated at the University of Chile, the Eastman School of Music, and Indiana University (DMA). Her major teachers have included pianists Mercedes Veglia, Rebecca Penneys, and Gyorgy Sebok, and cellist Janos Starker in the area of chamber music. Paulina's solo recitals, concertos with orchestras, and chamber music appearances have taken her throughout the Americas, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. She is a sought-after collaborative pianist, and has concertized with distinguished cellists Janos Starker, Iseut Chuat, Uri Vardi and Pablo Mahave-Veglia; with violinists Corey Cerovsek and David Perry; with violists Atar Arad and Jodi Levitz; with pianists Rebecca Penneys, Cecilia Cho and Karina Glasinovic; and with tenor Alan Bennett and flutist Jacques Zoon, among others.



She taught at the Valencia Conservatory in Spain and was Associate Professor of Piano and Theory at EAFIT University in Medellín, Colombia, from 1999 to 2001. From September 2001 through August of 2005, she was a member of the Felici Piano Trio in residence in Mammoth Lakes, California, an integral part of Chamber Music Unbound, a nonprofit organization. From 2006 to 2010, Ms. Zamora was professor of piano, theory, and coordinator of the Theory Department at the 'Instituto Profesional Escuela Moderna de Música' in Santiago, Chile. At present she is associate professor of Piano at the University of Chile School of Music, where she maintains a successful studio for graduate and undergraduate students.

Dr. Zamora is frequently invited to give piano master classes combined with solo and chamber recitals. Recent engagements have taken her to Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, China, Boston Conservatory in Boston, Massachusetts, Carleton College in Carleton Minnesota, University of Wisconsin at Whitewater, Wisconsin, University of Arizona in Tucson, Arizona, Idaho State University in Pocatello, Idaho, as well as University of

Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Universidad de Antioquia, Colombia, and Conservatorio Nacional de Lima, Peru.



Recorded Mills Hall, University of Wisconsin-Madison, August 2010

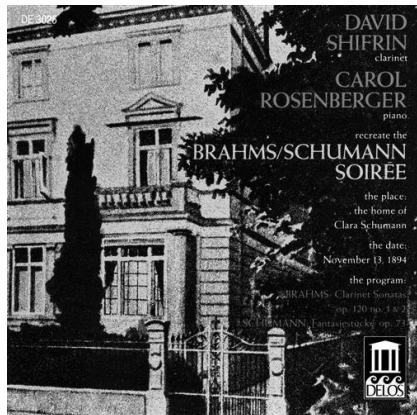
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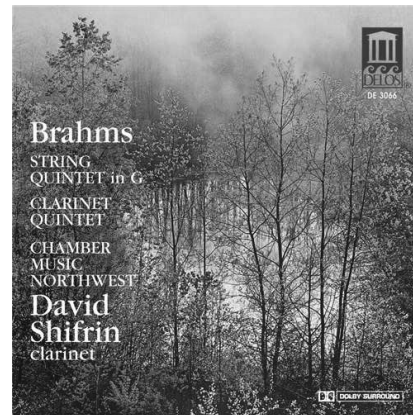
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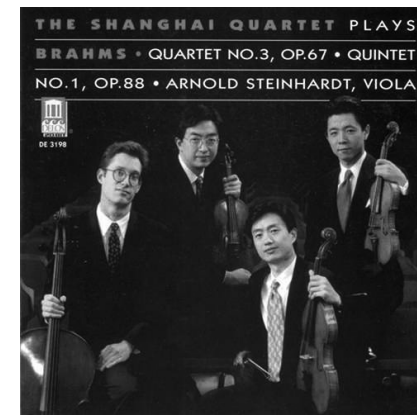
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DE 3025  
A Brahms/Schumann Soirée  
David Shifrin, clarinet  
Carol Rosenberger, piano



DE 3066  
BRAHMS:  
String Quintet  
Clarinet Quintet



DE 3198  
The Shanghai  
Quartet  
Plays Brahms

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Paulina Zamora, piano



Uri Vardi, cello

Dedicated to the memory of György and Eva Sebök