

# BRAHMS & SHOSTAKOVICH PIANO QUINTETS



OLGA KERN, PIANO & DALÍ QUARTET

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# BRAHMS AND SHOSTAKOVICH PIANO QUINTETS

## **JOHANNES BRAHMS**

### **Piano Quintet in F minor, Op. 34**

Allegro non troppo • Andante, un poco adagio  
Scherzo: Allegro • Finale: Poco sostenuto. Allegro non troppo

## **DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH**

### **Piano Quintet in G minor, Op. 57**

Prelude • Fugue • Scherzo • Intermezzo • Finale

Total Playing Time: 71:56

**OLGA KERN**, piano

### **DALÍ QUARTET**

Domenic Salerni, violin

Carlos Rubio, violin

Adriana Linares, viola

Jesus Morales, cello



# BRAHMS AND SHOSTAKOVICH PIANO QUINTETS

## **JOHANNES BRAHMS**

### **Piano Quintet in F minor, Op. 34**

1. Allegro non troppo (14:25)
2. Andante, un poco adagio (8:37)
3. Scherzo: Allegro (7:14)
4. Finale: Poco sostenuto. Allegro non troppo (10:19)

## **DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH**

### **Piano Quintet in G minor, Op. 57**

5. Prelude (5:24)
6. Fugue (8:59)
7. Scherzo (3:16)
8. Intermezzo (6:30)
9. Finale (7:07)

**OLGA KERN**, piano

### **DALÍ QUARTET**

Domenic Salerni, violin

Carlos Rubio, violin

Adriana Linares, viola

Jesus Morales, cello

Total Playing Time: 71:56

## **Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)** **Piano Quintet in F minor, Op. 34**

Robert Schumann's Piano Quintet of 1842 paired a piano with a string quartet, setting a new standard in chamber music and serving as an example to many later composers. A decade later, the 20-year-old Johannes Brahms, carrying a letter from the world-famous violinist Joseph Joachim, was introduced to the Schumann family. As Robert's mental health declined, Brahms became more integrated with the family, helping the matriarch Clara—herself a world-class pianist and composer—with finances and other needs. Upon Robert's death in 1856, Clara committed herself to her career as a performer, but maintained a strong personal connection to Johannes as he set out on his own life as a composer.

When Brahms composed his String Quintet in F minor in 1863, he added a second cello to the ensemble, but Joachim told him the result lacked charm. This version was destroyed and reconceived in the form of a sonata for two pianos; Clara found this solution pretentious and suggesting a further rearrangement for orchestra. Brahms settled in 1865 on a version for piano quintet modeled after Robert Schumann's pace-setting piece and received abounding acceptance from

his advisors. "You have turned a monotonous work for two pianos into a thing of great beauty, a masterpiece of chamber music," wrote the conductor Hermann Levi, proving that good friends are honest ones.

European music had been changing for decades at the hands of mold-breaking composers like Liszt and Wagner, but the younger Brahms saw Beethoven as the model to emulate. Considered a classicist for his reverence for vestigial formalities, he begins his Quintet in a dark but neatly organized sonata form, which, in its moody conclusion, is offered respite by an Andante imbued with Schubertian lyricism. With electric energy, the Scherzo alternates between the buoyancy of a triumphant theme and the staccato of an aggressive military march. The expressionist chromaticism of the finale's opening measures foreshadows musical advancements in decades to come. Even with the charm of Brahms' signature gypsy melodies, the tragic manner of the F-minor Quintet persists through its final bars.

Brahms, always embracing the old forms, was snubbed for his conservative ways by Wagner and his followers. Despite the barrage of criticism, he secured his place as a key player in the musical advancement of Vienna. The profound influence he would



have on later composers like Mahler and Schoenberg can be heard in the tragedy of chromatic harmonies, gypsy melodies, and rhythmic lyricism suffusing his F-minor Quintet.

### **Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) Piano Quintet in G minor, Op. 57**

The term *formalism* may specifically refer to art that derives its meaning from its own construction or form, but in Stalinist Russia it was a polemical device used to condemn modernism, or any art unsuited to the regime's preference for the wholesome and immediately understandable. Such subjective distinctions were not easily definable and required composers like Dmitri Shostakovich to tread a fine line between the expressive, the progressive, and the politically acceptable.

Shostakovich was a celebrated young pianist and composer, so it came as a great shock when Pravda publicly admonished him in 1936 for his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. It was not a formalist opera, had a discernable narrative arc and was well-received by the public. However, the work's overt sexual themes tried the patience of Kremlin leadership, and Shostakovich was officially on notice.

The next few years saw Shostakovich repairing his image with his ideologically acceptable Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, and in 1940 with a new chamber work. Unofficially, chamber music was perceived as pretentious and bourgeois, leaving orchestral idioms (ballet, opera, symphonies) as the preferred outlet for composers. But Shostakovich's Piano Quintet was so beloved by the public that the piece received the inaugural Stalin Prize. The work premiered at the Moscow Conservatory with the composer at the keyboard alongside his longtime collaborators, the Beethoven Quartet.

The five-movement work begins with a slow but bold prelude, first with piano alone, followed by a dramatic entrance by the strings. The mood becomes suspiciously subdued, but the tempo is brisk, ending in a determined G major. The second movement recycles material from the prelude, now used in an adagio fugue. The violin begins with a desolate theme, but the other instruments enter one by one with the same music as new contrasting lines interact, creating various textures and harmonies. A welcome juxtaposition, the middle Scherzo provides swift jollity: the whole ensemble flies with a staccato waltz and biting melodies. Prior to the work's finale is an extensive intermezzo. A quietly plodding cello provides a bass line to a lonely violin melody, but the cello's rhythm is passed among the group

as various lines weave together toward an emotional climax.

Composed prior to Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, a time of deceptive optimism among the Russian people, even the despair-prone Shostakovich was hopeful that he could maintain his status as the country's most favored composer. The final movement of his Quintet is a forward-looking Allegretto, brimming with joyous nonchalance.

—Chaz Stuart

## ARTIST BIOS

Russian-American pianist **Olga Kern** has established herself as one of the leading pianists of her generation. Born in Moscow in a family of musicians, she jumpstarted her U.S. career with her historic Gold Medal win at the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in Fort Worth, Texas—the first woman to do so in more than 30 years.

First prize winner of the Rachmaninoff International Piano Competition at the age of 17, Ms. Kern is a laureate of numerous prestigious competitions. In 2016 she served as Jury Chairman of both the Seventh Cliburn International Amateur Piano Competition and the first Olga Kern

International Piano Competition, where she also holds the title of Artistic Director. Ms. Kern frequently gives master classes and since September 2017 has served on the piano faculty of the famed Manhattan School of Music. Beginning with the 2019 season, Ms. Kern was appointed the Connie & Marc Jacobson Director of Chamber Music at the Virginia Arts Festival. She was honored with the Ellis Island Medal of Honor in New York City in 2017.

Recent and upcoming highlights include performances with the Minnesota Orchestra, the symphony orchestras of Baltimore, St. Louis, Grand Rapids, Palm Beach, Colorado, Madison, Milwaukee, Austin and Toledo, the New Mexico Philharmonic, the National Symphony, the Iceland Symphony Orchestra, Hungarian National Orchestra, the Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie, the Orquesta de Sao Paulo, Academia La Scala, Concerto Budapest orchestra, Helsingborg Symphony and the New West Symphony. In 2017-2018, Ms. Kern served as Artist in Residence with the San Antonio Symphony and toured with the Chinese National Youth Orchestra in China. She has toured extensively in the United States with international orchestras such as the Royal National Scottish Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic, the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, National Philharmonic of Russia, Warsaw Philharmonic and many oth-

ers. In 2019 she helped celebrate Leonard Slatkin's 75th birthday in a series of special concerts with the National Symphony at the Kennedy Center. She will appear in recitals and concerts in Orford, Sunriver, Fort Worth (the Cliburn), Carmel, San Francisco, Dallas, Pecs, Budapest, Sicily and Calvia. In the autumn of 2019 Ms. Kern hosted her Second Triennial Olga Kern International Piano Competition. In the coming seasons, she will serve on the jury of many international competitions.

Ms. Kern's discography includes her Grammy-nominated recording of Rachmaninoff's Corelli Variations and transcriptions (2004), Brahms Variations (2007) and Chopin Piano Sonatas No. 2 and 3 (2010), the Tchaikovsky First Piano Concerto with the Rochester Philharmonic, a CD of Russian composers including works by Balakirev, the Chopin concerto with the Warsaw Philharmonic and a CD of the Rachmaninoff cello sonata with Sol Gabetta. She was featured in several documentaries including the award-winning films about the 2001 Cliburn Competition, *Playing on the Edge*; "They came to play" and "Olga's journey."

Visit Olga at — [www.olgakern.com](http://www.olgakern.com)  
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The **Dalí Quartet** is acclaimed for bringing Latin American quartet repertoire to an equal standing alongside the Classical and Romantic canon. Tours of this award-winning ensemble's *Classical Roots, Latin Soul* programming have reached enthusiastic audiences across the United States, Canada and South America. Its fresh approach has been sought out by distinguished series in New York, Toronto, Philadelphia, Washington, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Jose, Seattle, San Juan, Oaxaca and many communities beyond.

The Dalí Quartet—Domenic Salerni and Carlos Rubio, violins; Adriana Linares, viola; Jesus Morales, cello—is the 2021 recipient of the Guarneri String Quartet Residency, funded by the Sewell Family Foundation, and the 2021 Silver Medal at the inaugural Piazzolla Music Competition. The quartet is also the 2019 recipient of the Atlanta Symphony's esteemed Aspire Award for accomplished African American and Latino Musicians.

In 2004, the group founded the much-admired Dalí Quartet International Music Festival, which develops the performance skills of musicians through semi-professional level. Currently Quartet in Residence at West Chester University, the Dalí is an Iris Orchestra Resident Ensemble, has served as a resident ensemble at Lehigh University, and

given mini residencies at countless colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada.

In addition to the group's ongoing collaboration with pianist Olga Kern, the Dalí has recently recorded the Weber Clarinet Quintet with Ricardo Morales, famed principal clarinetist of the Philadelphia Orchestra, with whom they perform select dates.

Trained by world-renowned artists, members of the Dalí Quartet are from Venezuela,

Puerto Rico and the United States, and have degrees from esteemed institutions including the Cleveland Institute of Music, Indiana University, the New England Conservatory, The Juilliard School, and the Simón Bolívar Conservatory in Caracas, Venezuela. Based in Philadelphia, the Dalí Quartet proudly uses Pirastro Strings and WMutes.

[www.DaliQuartet.com](http://www.DaliQuartet.com)

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(L-R) Domenic Salerni, Adriana Linares, Carlos Rubio, Olga Kern, Jesús Morales