

BRAHMS

Piano Quartets Nos. 1 and 3

Anton Barakhovsky, Violin
Alexander Zemtsov, Viola
Wolfgang Emanuel Schmidt, Cello
Eldar Nebolsin, Piano

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Piano Quartet No. 1 in G minor, Op. 25 • Piano Quartet No. 3 in C minor, Op. 60

Johannes Brahms was born in Hamburg in 1833, the son of a double-bass player. His childhood was spent in relative poverty, but his early studies in music developed his talent to such an extent that there was talk of touring as a prodigy at the age of eleven. It was in 1851 that he met the émigré Hungarian violinist Reményi, with whom, two years later, he set out on his first concert tour, their journey taking them, on the recommendation of the Hungarian violinist Joseph Joachim, to Weimar, where Franz Liszt held court and Brahms made a poor impression. Later in the year, however, he met the Schumanns, through Joachim's agency. The meeting was a fruitful one. In 1850 Schumann had been appointed director of music in Düsseldorf. Now, in 1853, he welcomed Brahms, publicly declaring him the long-awaited successor to Beethoven. The happy relationship with Schumann was soon disrupted by the latter's break-down and final illness. Brahms rallied to the support of Clara Schumann and her young family, remaining a firm friend until her death in 1896. He had always hoped that sooner or later he would be able to return in triumph to a position of distinction in the musical life of Hamburg. This ambition was never fulfilled. Instead he settled in Vienna, intermittently from 1863 and definitively in 1869, establishing himself there and seeming to many to fulfil Schumann's early prophecy. He remained there until his death in 1897.

Brahms completed three Piano Quartets. The first, a work in C sharp minor, was written in 1855-56 but revised in 1875 as the *Piano Quartet No. 3 in C minor, Op. 60*. The *Piano Quartet in G minor, Op. 25*, was seemingly written between 1859 and 1861 and submitted to Clara Schumann and Joachim for their comments. He played the work with friends during his first visit to Vienna in 1862, leading to a public performance. It was published by Simrock in 1863, with a dedication to the statesman Baron Reinhard von Dalwigk. The first movement, broadly in sonata form, starts with a motif that has continued importance, forming the substance of the first subject. Other thematic material is introduced, in D minor and D major, before the exposition ends with a ten-bar return to the opening of the movement, discontinued as the development begins. The recapitulation emerges with a G major subsidiary theme, before the return of the first

subject and the introduction of new material. The second movement, originally described as a *Scherzo* is better fitted to its later title of *Intermezzo*. In C minor, it is introduced by muted violin and viola over a repeated cello note, continuing in textures that find a place for Brahms's favourite cross-rhythms. The *Trio*, marked *Animato*, is in A flat major and provides a lively contrast. The movement ends with a graceful C major coda. The *Andante con moto*, in E flat major, presents a deeply felt melody, the texture significantly filled out by the double stopping of the viola. The introduction of a dotted rhythm prepares the way for the C major *Animato* with its marked rhythms, the original key and mood returning as the movement draws to a close. The work ends with a Gypsy Rondo, *Rondo alla zingarese*, a reminder of Brahms's early experiences in concerts with the Hungarian violinist Reményi, its principal theme providing a framework for contrasting episodes.

Brahms's earlier *Piano Quartet in C sharp minor* dates from the difficult period of Schumann's final months in the asylum at Endenich, where he died in July 1856. It was not until 1874 that Brahms recreated the work, retaining revised versions of the first movement and the *Scherzo*, the latter, it has been suggested, perhaps originally intended as the finale. In jocular remarks to his publisher, concealing possibly deeper significance, he compared himself to Werther, the romantic hero created by Goethe, whose unrequitable love in *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (The Sorrows of Young Werther) ended in his suicide, thus setting a romantic fashion, reflected also in Werther's characteristic dress including blue coat, yellow breeches and top-boots. The quartet was published by Simrock in 1875. The first movement opens with a piano octave C, followed by a melancholy descending motif from the three string instruments, a version of the theme that was associated with Clara Schumann. A similar procedure is followed after a piano octave B flat, plucked notes from the viola and then the violin, a descending harmonic minor scale for the piano and a bold statement of the first subject. The E flat major second subject provides a contrast in an exposition that is not repeated, this second theme developed by four succeeding variations. Further variations of this theme form

part of the central development. The *Scherzo* is also in C minor, propelled forward by its resolute principal theme, to which a second theme provides a contrast, followed by a third that moves towards the tonic major key, soon to be displaced, but returning in the final chords. The *Andante* is in E major, a key dictated, perhaps, by the requirements of the original work in C sharp minor. This starts with a moving cello melody, accompanied only by the piano, but eventually joined by the violin, proceeding in broadly sonata form. This movement of striking beauty leads to the final *Allegro comodo*, with its opening violin solo, leading some to suggest that this and the preceding movement may have

had their origin in solo sonatas for cello and for violin respectively. In this final sonata-form movement, with its repeated exposition, the strings introduce a chorale-like passage, a contrast to the preceding onward motion of the piano. The development is initially marked *Tranquillo e sempre pianissimo*, with chains of descending thirds, derived from the opening theme, accompanied by the piano with figuration from the same source. The original impetus returns and the work ends with final major chords, after the previous re-establishment of the minor key.

Keith Anderson

Anton Barakhovsky
Alexander Guriyanov



Eldar Nebolsin
Kirill Bashkurov



Wolfgang
Emanuel Schmidt
Christian Steiner



Alexander Zemtsov
Marije van den Berg



Anton Barakhovsky

First concertmaster of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Russian violinist Anton Barakhovsky is recognised as one of the foremost artists of his generation. In 2001 he was invited to join the Hamburg State Philharmonic Orchestra as its first concertmaster. As a soloist with orchestras around the world, Barakhovsky has been heard with the St Petersburg Philharmonic, the Russian State Orchestra, the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the NDR Symphony Orchestra, the Hamburg State Philharmonic Orchestra and the KBS Symphony Orchestra, Seoul. An avid chamber musician, Barakhovsky has collaborated with distinguished artists such as Leon Fleischer, Maurizio Pollini, Sabine Meyer, Yo Yo Ma, Kolja Blacher, and Maxim Vengerov. In 1999 he joined forces with violinist Vadim Repin to make a live recording at the Louvre, Paris, released by Erato to critical acclaim. Barakhovsky began studying the violin with Matvej Lieberman, continuing his studies in Hamburg with Mark Lubotsky and Kolja Blacher and in New York at The Juilliard School under the tutelage of the late Dorothy DeLay.

Eldar Nebolsin

Eldar Nebolsin is a former student of the renowned Russian pianist and teacher Dmitri Bashkurov. His albums for Naxos include Rachmaninov's *Preludes, Op. 23* and *32*, both Liszt *Piano Concertos* and *Totentanz*, Ernő Dohnányi's *Variations on a Nursery Theme*, Fernando Lopes-Graça's *Piano Concertos Nos. 1* and *2*, and Chopin's complete works for piano and orchestra. His second solo album of works by Schubert was released in May 2011. Eldar Nebolsin enjoys a busy international career as a soloist, recitalist and chamber-music player, appearing with conductors, orchestras and colleagues of international distinction. In 2005 he was unanimously awarded the Sviatoslav Richter Prize at the First International Piano Competition in Moscow, where he was also honoured with the special award for The Best Classical Concerto Performance. Eldar Nebolsin currently holds a place on the faculty of the International Institute of Chamber Music in Madrid, teaching alongside Ralf Gothoni, and is regularly invited to give master-classes both in piano solo repertoire and chamber music. He is Professor of Piano at the Hanns Eisler Hochschule in Berlin.

Wolfgang Emanuel Schmidt

Wolfgang Emanuel Schmidt is a first prize winner of many international competitions such as the International Rostropovich Competition, Paris and the Tchaikovsky Competition, Moscow. He performs worldwide with prestigious orchestras such as the Leipzig Gewandhaus, the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, the Staatskapelle Weimar, and the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, and in concert and recital at international festivals and venues such as the Ravinia and Piatigorsky Cello Festival (USA), Wigmore Hall, Carnegie and Alice Tully Halls, Suntory Hall and the Berlin Philharmonic Hall. He is the Founder and Music Director of the Chamber Orchestra Metamorphosen Berlin alongside violinist Indira Koch and in chamber recitals has performed with renowned artists including Lang Lang, Christoph Eschenbach, Emanuel Ax, and Gil Shaham. He has released several albums on the Sony label and recorded Cello Duello with Jens Peter Maintz for the Solo Musica label. He had the honour of working with Mstislav Rostropovitch during his later career.

Alexander Zemtsov

Alexander Zemtsov studied with Elena Ozol at the Gnessin School, Moscow, with Michael Kugel at the Hoogeschool, Maastricht and at the Hanns Eisler Hochschule, Berlin with Tabea Zimmermann. Since the age of 15 he has enjoyed a career as a viola soloist, with appearances in Europe, the United States, Asia and Australia in collaboration with leading orchestras and conductors. A prize-winner of various competitions, he was appointed principal viola of the London Philharmonic Orchestra at the age of 23, leaving that position after 10 years to concentrate on his career as chamber musician and conductor. His recordings include Britten's *Double Concerto* with the LPO, Mozart's *String Trios*, and Fauré's *Piano Quartets*. He has taught viola at the GSMD in London, the MUK in Vienna and since 2015 he has been a professor at the HEMU in Lausanne and HfMT in Cologne. He was recently appointed principal conductor of the INSO Lemberg. Upcoming guest conducting engagements include concerts with the BNRSO, Sofia and Mischa Maisky as soloist, Rijeka Opera and the Mannheim Chamber Orchestra.

Johannes Brahms is considered Beethoven's successor in terms of his orchestral output, but for chamber music it was more the Romantic mantle of Robert Schumann that he assumed, vastly expanding its scale and ambitions in the 19th century and remaining a towering influence until well into the 20th. The *First Piano Quartet* has a deeply felt *Andante con moto* at its heart, and a sprightly 'Gypsy Rondo' finale. Brahms started writing the *Third Piano Quartet* during the difficult period of Schumann's final illness, later re-composing it to create a work of symphonic proportions, distinctive power and striking beauty.

**Johannes
BRAHMS**
(1833–1897)

Piano Quartet No. 1 in G minor, Op. 25 (1861)	39:36
1 Allegro	13:48
2 Intermezzo: Allegro ma non troppo	8:06
3 Andante con moto	9:15
4 Rondo alla zingarese: Presto – Meno presto – Molto presto	8:15
Piano Quartet No. 3 in C minor, Op. 60 (1856, rev. 1874)	33:46
5 Allegro non troppo	10:30
6 Scherzo: Allegro	4:07
7 Andante	8:47
8 Finale: Allegro comodo	10:09

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Playing Time
73:32



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