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Definitive Recording

# *Pieces for Clarinet and Piano*

*Schumann, Fantasy Pieces,  
op. 73*

*Brahms, Sonata in F Minor,  
op. 120 no. 1*

*Brahms, Sonata in E-Flat Major,  
op. 120 no. 2*

*Charles West, Clarinet*

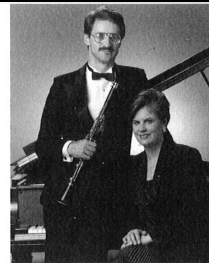
*Susan Grace, Piano*



# PIECES FOR CLARINET AND PIANO

CHARLES WEST, *CLARINET*

SUSAN GRACE, *PIANO*



Susan Grace  
Pianist

## Side One

1. Fantasy Pieces Op. 73 - Robert Schumann
  - I. Zart und mit Ausdruck . . . . . 03:04
  - II. Lebhaft, leicht . . . . . 03:13
  - III. Rasch und mit Feuer . . . . . 03:59

2. Sonata in F Minor, op. 120 no. 1 - Johannes Brahms
  - I. Allegro appassionato . . . . . 07:06
  - II. Andante un poco adagio . . . . . 04:31

## Side Two

- III. Allegretto grazioso . . . . . 04:12
- IV. Vivace . . . . . 04:54

3. Sonata in E-Flat Major, op. 120 no. 2 - Johannes Brahms
  - I. Allegro amabile . . . . . 07:35
  - II. Allegro appassionato . . . . . 04:46
  - III. Andante con moto - Allegro . . . . . 06:42

## Sonatas, op.120

One of the remarkable musical personalities of the Nineteenth Century must have been Richard Mühlfeld, whose warm, affable nature and consummate artistry rekindled Brahms' intention to compose chamber music. In 1890, Brahms' G Major string quartet, op. 111 was sent to his publisher, Simrock, with a note saying that "the time has now come for you to say good-bye to any further compositions of mine." The composer's regard for Mühlfeld can be inferred from the nicknames "Fräulein von Mühlfeld, meine Primadonna" and "Fräulein Nachtigall" that Brahms affectionately awarded the artist. The four monuments to the respect that Brahms held for Mühlfeld are the only four chamber works written after 1890, all involving the clarinet and all masterworks in their own rights. The profound B Minor Quintet (1891), op.115 universally receives the highest praise among performers and writers. That the A Minor Trio, op. 114 (1891) is overshadowed by the Quintet owes not so much to the trio's lack of inspiration or craftsmanship as to the Quintet's sheer greatness.

Following at three years' distance (1894) were the Sonatas of op.120, in F minor and E flat major. Brahms' assertion that his op.120 was to have been played by "piano and Mühlfeld" rather than simply by clarinet and piano leaves little doubt that the composer was fully aware of Mühlfeld's gifts. The four movements of the F Minor Sonata are cast in well-proven classical forms: a sonata allegro, an *Andante un poco adagio* in song form, a traditional minuet-trio, and a rondo. One or another form of a three-note motive pervades the movements, from the descending clarinet figure at the outset and the rising *ben marcato* figure in the second key area to the opening three notes of the *Andante*, the group of eighths in the waltz, and finally to the triumphant piano figure in the *Vivace*. It was after a performance of this sonata by himself and Mühlfeld that Brahms took his final bow as a performer.

The Second Sonata begins in an another sonata allegro design, this time much more mellow in character than the F Minor's opening. However, the *sturm und drang* of the First Symphony and B Major Trio are recalled in the passionate second movement—similar in form to the third movement of the first sonata, but altogether different in character. The variation form which follows begins with

Brahms' familiar *poco forte* marking, applied to a three-beat motive in search of a downbeat. Throughout the first four variations, that downbeat is never found within the *forte* dynamic; the tune finds its home only within the gentler *piano* dynamic at the end of each section. The final variation, *Allegro*, becomes an affirmation of the cadential portion of the phrase, this time expressed in a stronger dynamic.

The E-flat sonata was the composer's final chamber work, and as one of his four final chamber works, completes the crowning jewels of the clarinetist's repertoire.

## Fantasy-Pieces, op.73

The winter of 1848-49 saw an especially prolific period in Robert Schumann's compositional life. During two days in February (the 11th and 12th), he produced his *Fantasiestücke*, followed a few days later by the *Adagio and Allegro* for horn and piano, and the *Konzertstück* for four horns and orchestra. With the horn work, the *Fantasiestücke* are normally enumerated with Schumann's lesser chamber works--the greater chamber works having already been written during a period of intense activity in this genre some seven years earlier. They may be considered to be experimental, with certain oddities immediately apparent. The traditional fast-slow-fast arrangement of movements was abandoned in favor of a relatively slow-medium-fast design. Originally called *Soireestücke*, these pieces were published during the year in which they were written, with *ad lib* alternative parts for violin or violoncello.

-- notes by Charles West.

Charles West  
Clarinetist

As a solo clarinetist, Charles West has performed throughout the United States and Mexico, and in Asia and South America. Among the orchestral principal positions he has held are the El Paso Symphony Orchestra, and he currently performs as principal in the Flagstaff Festival Symphony Orchestra and with the Virginia Opera. As a performer of contemporary music he has held positions with the University of Iowa Center for New Music and is now in Richmond Virginia's new music ensemble CURRENTS. West was the first president of the combined International Clarinet Society/ClariNetwork International and he performs frequently on this organization's international convention programs.

Charles West is currently Professor of Clarinet at Virginia Commonwealth University. Previous appointments have included the University of Arizona, New Mexico State University, and Grinnell college. He holds the Doctorate in Performance and is a Fulbright Scholar. Having studied at the University of Iowa with Himie Voxman and at the University of Northern Colorado with Loren Bartlett, he has done additional study with Leon Russianoff and Robert Marcellus. West has published many articles and a composition for band, he has performed for national and international conventions of composers, teachers and performers.

Susan Grace is Lecturer, Artist-in-Residence, and Director of Student Performance at Colorado College where she has been on the faculty since 1976. She is also Artistic Director of the Colorado College Summer Conservatory and Music Festival. She has been Principal Pianist for the Colorado Springs Symphony, Principal Accompanist for the Central City Opera, the Colorado Opera Festival, the Colorado Children's Chorale, and has performed with the National Affiliate Artist Program.

Ms. Grace studied at the University of Iowa with John Simms; she currently coaches with Benjamin Kaplan in London. She has performed solo recitals and appeared as soloist with orchestras in the United States and Europe. She has, in addition, earned recognition as a chamber music artist with performances in the Soviet Union, and China, and has performed in numerous festivals, including the Grand Teton Festival, the Music at Oxford and Helmsley Festivals in England, and the Astoria Concert Series in Brussels, Belgium. She has recorded for the Belgian National Radio and the American Society of University Composers. Ms. Grace is a member of The Colorado College Trio, Bricolage -- a piano-percussion duo specializing in new music, and Quattro Mani -- a two-piano ensemble with Alice Rybak.

## Technical Notes

The recorded perspective of the instruments in this recording is close... As though the 9' Hamburg Steinway and the clarinet are being played for you in your living room. Of course the actual recording was not made in a living room! Instead, the great room at Lucasfilm's Skywalker Ranch, with its incredibly low noise floor and fully adjustable acoustics, was used.

To capture a clean, dynamic, and harmonically rich instrumental presentation, a pair of Schoeps Omni microphones were employed. The microphones' signals were amplified by two superb pure class-A microphone preamps custom-built for Wilson Audio by John Curl. MIT cable carried the balanced line level signal to Wilson Audio's Ultramaster™ 30 ips analog recorder. Subsequent digital master tapes were made through the Pygmy A/D converter on a Panasonic SV-3700. Playback reference monitoring was performed on Wilson Audio WATT II/Puppies, driven by a Spectral DMA-50 amplifier through MIT CVT Terminator cables.

## Acknowledgements/Credits

Executive Producer  
Musical Producer  
Editing  
Technical Direction  
Recording Engineering  
Studio Manager

Booklet/Liner Design  
Analog Mastering  
Digital Mastering  
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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

**PRODUCED BY:** Wilson Audiophile Recordings, LLC

**ORIGINAL RECORDING ENGINEER:** David A. Wilson

**PROJECT MANAGER:** Daryl C. Wilson

**ANALOG TO HIGH DEFINITION DIGITAL TRANSFER:**  
Bruce Brown, Puget Sound Studios

**TRANSFER EDITING:** Bruce Brown, Puget Sound Studios

**SONIC EVALUATION:** David A. Wilson, Sheryl Lee Wilson, Daryl C. Wilson

## **TECHNICAL NOTES:**

Description of equipment and processes used for Master Tape transfers in  
Dave Wilson's Music Room:

**BRUCE BROWN FLEW FROM SEATTLE TO PROVO TO WORK HAND-IN-HAND WITH DAVE AND DARYL WILSON. EACH MASTER TAPE WAS INSPECTED, CLEANED, AND TREATED WITH LAST #9 AND #10 PRESERVATIVES. ALL OF THE MASTER TAPES WERE BAKED TO REFORMULATE THE BINDING. THIS WAS DONE IN AN INCUBATOR AT 135 DEGREES AND THEN THEY WERE LEFT TO COOL BACK DOWN TO ROOM TEMPERATURE. ALL SPLICES WERE INSPECTED AND REPAIRED, IF NECESSARY.**

**EACH TRANSFER WAS EXECUTED ON THE ULTRAMASTER, A ONE-OF-A-KIND STUDER A80 DESIGNED AND BUILT BY JOHN CURL WITH CUSTOM ELECTRONICS.**

**EACH MASTER TAPE WAS STORED BY WILSON AUDIOPHILE "TAILS-OUT" IN WHICH PUGET SOUND STUDIOS DID A LIBRARY WIND TO THE TAKE-UP**

REEL. ALL LEVELS WERE SET ACCORDING TO INCLUDED EQ SHEETS AND EACH 1 KHZ TONE WAS FURTHER SET AT PRECISELY 1 KHZ, VIA A CUSTOM VARI-SPEED ADJUSTMENT. THIS PROVIDED THE EXACT SPEED THE MASTER TAPES WERE RECORDED AT.

A TOTAL OF FIVE DIFFERENT ANALOG-TO-DIGITAL CONVERTERS WERE USED TO PROVIDE SAMPLES FOR THE WILSONS TO EVALUATE. ULTIMATELY AN EMM LABS ADC-8 MK IV, CUSTOM MODIFIED BY ANDREAS KOCH, WAS CHOSEN BY DAVE AND DARYL WILSON FOR THE TRANSFERS FROM THE ULTRAMASTER USING THE ORIGINAL MASTER TAPES INTO A SONOMA DSD WORKSTATION FOR CAPTURE AND EDITING. MONITORING FROM THE SONOMA DSD WORKSTATION WAS ROUTED THROUGH A MODIFIED PLAYBACK DESIGNS MPS-5 VIA USB-X WITH LIGHT HARMONIC USB CABLE. ALL DSD FILES WERE TRANSFERRED INTO A MERGING TECHNOLOGIES PYRAMIX DSD/DXD MASSCORE WORKSTATION FOR SAMPLE RATE CONVERSION, FORMAT CONVERSION, AND META-DATA TAGGING. THE PYRAMIX HEPTA FILTER WAS USED FOR CONVERSION TO PCM. FILES WERE THEN LISTENED TO FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE.

Description of the Equipment used in the Provo, Utah "Wilson Music Room" that Wilson Audiophile Recordings, LLC put to use for Sonic Evaluation:

**SPEAKERS:** WILSON AUDIO ALEXANDRIA XLF, TWO THOR'S HAMMERS  
**ELECTRONICS:** APPLE MAC MINI, AMARRA & AUDIRVANA PLUS, WEISS  
INT 202, AUDIO RESEARCH DAC8, VTL 7.5 MK3 PRE-AMP, VTL  
SIEGFRIED MK2 AMPLIFIERS, 2 WILSON AUDIO W.A.T.C.H.  
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**CABLES:** AUDIOQUEST FIREWIRE, TRANSPARENT OPUS

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*2233 Mountain Vista Lane*  
*Provo, UTAH 84606*  
*801.377.2233*