

15
JUNE

Thursday

8 PM

AN EVENING OF BRAHMS

Andrew Rangell, *piano*Sarita Kwok, *violin*Robyn Bollinger, *violin*Jessica Bodner, *viola*Rafael Popper-Keizer, *cello*

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

INTERMEZZO, OP. 116, NO. 5 IN E MINOR (1892)

Andante con grazia ed intimissimo sentimento

INTERMEZZO, OP. 119, NO. 2 IN E MINOR (1893)

Andantino un poco agitato

ES IST EIN ROS' ENTSPRUNGEN, OP. 122, NO. 8 IN F MAJOR (1896)

Andante

INTERMEZZO, OP. 76, NO. 4 IN B-FLAT MAJOR (1878)

Allegretto grazioso

THIRD MOVEMENT FROM VIOLA QUINTET, OP. 111 (1890)/

arr. W. Steinkauler

Un poco allegretto

Andrew Rangell

PIANO TRIO IN A MAJOR, OP. POSTH. (CA. 1853?)

Moderato

Vivace—Trio

Lento

Presto

Robyn Bollinger, Rafael Popper-Keizer, Andrew Rangell

:: INTERMISSION ::

QUINTET FOR PIANO AND STRINGS IN F MINOR, OP. 34 (1862-1864)

Allegro non troppo

Andante, un poco adagio

Scherzo: Allegro—Trio

Finale: Poco sostenuto—Allegro non troppo—Tempo I—Presto, non troppo

*Sarita Kwok, Robyn Bollinger, Jessica Bodner,**Rafael Popper-Keizer, Andrew Rangell*

GLOVSKY

*Counselors-at-Law*Festival
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Notes
ON THE
PROGRAM

BY
Sandra Hyslop



Johannes Brahms, a brilliant pianist as a young man (above), composed prolifically for the instrument throughout his life. In addition to nearly one hundred solo piano works, Brahms composed many for piano duet (four hands at one piano) and piano duo (two pianists, two pianos). Out of his 24 chamber music pieces, all of them large-scale works, seventeen are written for the piano in combination with other instruments. Brahms also wrote more than two hundred Lieder—songs for solo voice and piano.



*Johannes Brahms
photograph 1890*

SOLO PIANO WORKS

Johannes Brahms (b. Hamburg, May 7, 1833; d. Vienna, April 3, 1897)

Composed 1878–1896; 19 minutes

Intermezzo, Op. 116, No. 5 in E minor (1892)—Intermezzo, Op. 119, No. 2 in E minor (1893)—Intermezzo, Op. 76, No. 4 in B-flat major (1878)

Early in his twenties, the pianist Johannes Brahms composed three piano sonatas, his earliest published compositions, all of them well received, and all of them in the active piano repertoire to this day. They were his last piano sonatas, but not his last big piano works. Major sets of themes and variations, for example, and the set of Op. 39 Waltzes kept Brahms close to the piano. Throughout his life, he continued to write for the solo piano, but in ever more concise forms.

Brahms composed ca. thirty shorter piano works that he called by titles such as “Rhapsody,” “Intermezzo,” “Capriccio,” and “Romance.” These were published in five sets of “Klavierstücke” [piano pieces] as Op. 76 (1878), and Opp. 116, 117, 118, and 119 (1892–93). These shorter pieces are tightly constructed, largely cast in an A – B – A’ format. They range in mood from tender and lyrical to impulsive and impassioned—the pieces titled “Capriccio” tend toward the exuberant and extravert and the “Intermezzo” pieces tend to be lyrical and introspective. The three Intermezzi on this evening’s program are prime examples of the latter traits. Technically within reach of a capable amateur pianist, the pieces call for exceptional musicianship in rendering Brahms’s subtle beauties.

Es ist ein Ros’ entsprungen, Op. 122, No. 8 in F major (1896)

In his early twenties Brahms composed three short works for organ that he did not include in his official catalog. He appeared to have lost interest in that instrument, until four decades later, at the end of his life, very ill, and despondent because of the deaths in his circle of friends—especially of Clara Schumann—Johannes Brahms composed a set of eleven “Choral Preludes” for organ. Basing the eleven organ meditations on the model of J. S. Bach’s *Orgelbüchlein* [Little pieces for organ], Brahms took his leave from the world through this reference to his beloved master of counterpoint, Johann Sebastian Bach.

At the behest of Brahms’s publisher, N. Simrock, the composer pianist Ferruccio Busoni transcribed six of the Choral Preludes for piano. He elaborated on the original simplicity of the pieces, changing the key of “Es ist ein Ros’,” for example. Andrew Rangell performs the piece as Brahms wrote it, in its original key, F major, and with the affecting simplicity of Brahms’s original conception for organ.

Third Movement from Viola Quintet, Op. 111 (1890)/arr. Walter Steinkauler

Andrew Rangell closes his group of Brahms piano works with another adaptation, this time of the Allegretto movement from the String Quintet, Op. 111, the second of two string quintets that Brahms composed, both of which he scored for a string quartet with a second viola. “Not long ago,” writes Mr. Rangell, “I came across a 1925 Simrock edition of a piano arrangement [by Walter Steinkauler (1873–1921)] of the Allegretto movement of Brahms’s G-major viola quintet. I love the piece, and play it in a somewhat altered version of my own.”

PIANO TRIO IN A MAJOR, OP. POSTH.

Johannes Brahms

Composed ca. 1853 (?); 34 minutes

Performing the Piano Trio in A major, this evening's artists bring Exhibit A in an ongoing controversy to Rockport's audience. Instead of an Opus number, the Trio bears the catalog identification "Opus Posthumous," indicating that it was published after the composer's death, without a numbered place in the official works list. The performing score has been in publication for more than seventy years. Yet, neither the date of composition nor the composer has ever been definitively verified. Did Johannes Brahms compose this Piano Trio, or did he not?

In 1924 the German musicologist Professor Dr. Ernst Bücken (1884-1949) made public a copy of an unsigned piano trio that he said he had found in the estate of the well-known musicologist Dr. Erich Prieger (1849-1913) of Bonn. A collector of autograph scores and a respected authority on German music, Dr. Prieger had preserved such autograph works as the Beethoven Sixth and Ninth symphonies—to name only two examples of dozens—that would be published in editions that benefited greatly from his curatorial attentions. In 1901 he donated a large collection of such autograph scores to the State Library of Berlin.

Professor Bücken declared the work in his possession to be an undiscovered Piano Trio that Brahms had composed, he theorized, in the early 1850s. The score was not an autograph, but rather an anonymous copy of an autograph; the manuscript lacked a title page; on its plain paper cover someone had written a large question mark. Corrections in a second unknown copyist's handwriting also appeared in the score. None of the handwriting associated with the score was that of Brahms. When Professor Bücken presented the Trio for its first-ever public performance, at the 1925 Rhenish Chamber Music Festival, he announced it as "the work of an as yet unknown composer."

In 1938, Professor Bücken and a colleague, Karl Hass, provided editorial supervision for the publication of the Trio by the Leipzig publisher Breitkopf & Härtel. It was officially declared a composition by Johannes Brahms, with the designation "Op. Posth." Soon after that, Bücken's copy disappeared, and it has not been seen since.

Despite extensive research and theorizing, the mysteries of the manuscript's provenance and the composition's author remain unsolved. Those who believe in the Trio's authenticity rely heavily on stylistic traits that are consonant with the young Brahms's compositions, particularly the Piano Trio in B major, Opus 8. Brahms composed it in 1854, the year after Professor Bücken's proposed composition date for the A-major Trio. Brahms habitually destroyed compositions that did not meet his exacting standards. Could this one have escaped his notice, only to surface amongst Dr. Prieger's prized collection of manuscripts?

Those who doubt Professor Bücken's story—or, at least, his theory—have made suggestions regarding the Trio's provenance. It may have been the work of a young and highly skilled composer who had not as yet found a publisher. It may have been the work of someone in Brahms's circle, a composer who knew his style so well that they could create such a successful imitation.



Many musicians have accepted the A-major Piano Trio, Op. Posth., as one of Brahms's own, performing and recording it alongside chamber music indisputably by Johannes Brahms. In 1996 the Beaux Arts Trio recorded the A-major Trio together with the composer's Piano Quartets.

The manuscript lacked a title page, and it was covered by a plain paper upon which someone had written a large question mark. Corrections in a second unknown copyist's handwriting also appeared in the score.

Notes
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BY
Sandra Hyslop

Certainly, this A-major Trio is a beautifully crafted work, heavily evocative of Brahms, as well as of other Romantic-era composers. The long, sweeping melodies, rhythmic dance materials, moods swinging from melancholy to merry, and skillfully wrought contrapuntal passages all point to a mid-nineteenth century composer, and very possibly (or probably?) to Brahms himself. Not mature Brahms, but twenty-year-old Brahms, just finding his stride as a composer of piano trios. Until new facts emerge, performers and listeners can enjoy not only the mystery, but also the beauty of this composition.

QUINTET FOR PIANO AND STRINGS IN F MINOR, OP. 34

Johannes Brahms

Composed 1862-1864; 40 minutes



In his struggle to find the final form of the Piano Quintet, Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) relied on the advice and assistance of two trusted colleagues: the violinist Joseph Joachim (1831-1907), top, and the pianist Carl Tausig (1841-1871).

Like many of Johannes Brahms's compositions, his Piano Quintet came to life only after a long gestation period, during which the work changed form several times. In 1862 Brahms took a new *string* quintet—with two cellos—to his close friend and musical confidante, the violinist Joseph Joachim. After reading through it with Brahms, Joachim suggested some changes to “mitigate the harshness of some passages.”

After more tinkering failed to create the work he wanted, Brahms abandoned the string quintet and re-wrote the piece as a sonata for two pianos. In this form, Brahms performed it publicly in Vienna with the great pianist Carl Tausig (1841-1871), and saw the Sonata through to publication. The duo-piano score is still available today, published as Op. 34b.

A few months later, in the summer of 1864, Brahms returned to these materials and once again recast them. This third attempt, in the form of a piano quintet, finally pleased him. He allowed its publication in 1865. The Erard Quartet and the pianist Luise Langhans-Japha played the premier performance on June 22, 1866, in Leipzig.

Brahms was an outstanding pianist himself, so it is not surprising that he composed so frequently and so well for the instrument. Of his 24 chamber music pieces, all of them large-scale works, seventeen are written for the piano in combination with other instruments. The Piano Quintet is often called the strongest and most successful of them all.

From the grand beginning of the Quintet, *Allegro non troppo*, the ensemble declares, in unison, that they will tell a serious, even tragic tale. They allow little relief from the storm; even the first movement's calmer moments are unrelentingly sorrowful. The sweet *Andante*, with its preponderance of thirds and sixths, gives respite from the drama.

The strings' agitated entrance in the third movement, the *Scherzo*, recalls the tragic direction. The grim atmosphere relaxes only momentarily in the lyrical trio section. The five instruments set the *Finale* in motion with a poignant search for a harmonic home. The initial bewilderment is replaced by volatile shifts in tempo and mood. Moments of repose cannot forestall the eventual conclusion, a coda of explosive F-minor energy.

Piano quintets differ in no important aesthetic point from piano quartets. It is surprising how few have been written... The masterpiece of Brahms, which sets a pure standard for the style, attained its final form only after a chequered existence, first as a quintet for strings with two cellos, and then as a sonata for two pianos.

—Donald Francis Tovey