

21
june

THURSDAY

7:30 PM

SAMANTHA HANKEY, *mezzo-soprano*

CHEE-YUN, *violin*

BARRY SHIFFMAN, *viola*

ANTON NEL, *piano*

WILLIAM VERMEULEN, *horn*

GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY GARTH AND LINDSAY GREIMANN

An Evening of Brahms

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

**TWO SONGS FOR ALTO VOICE, WITH VIOLA AND
PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT, OP. 91**

Gestillte Sehnsucht (Stilled Longing) (1884)

Geistliches Wiegenlied (Sacred Lullaby) (1863-64)

Samantha Hankey, Barry Shiffman, Anton Nel

VIOLIN SONATA NO. 3, IN D MINOR, OP. 108 (1886-88)

Allegro

Adagio

Un poco presto e con sentimento

Finale: Presto agitato

Chee-Yun, Anton Nel

:: INTERMISSION ::

HORN TRIO IN E-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 40 (1865)

Andante

Scherzo: Allegro

Adagio mesto

Finale: Allegro con brio

William Vermeulen, Chee-Yun, Anton Nel

GLOVSKY

Counselors-at-Law

*Festival
Corporate Partner*

TWO SONGS FOR ALTO VOICE, WITH VIOLA AND PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT, OP. 91

Johannes Brahms (b. Hamburg, Germany, May 7, 1833; d. Vienna, Austria, April 3, 1897)
 Composed 1863, 1878; 12 minutes

The only solo Lieder by Brahms to include two instruments rather than solo piano, these two songs were both written for the singer Amalie Schneeweiss and her husband, the violinist (and earlier violist) Joseph Joachim. The earlier, *Geistliches Wiegenlied (Sacred Lullaby)*, was given to the couple in celebration of their wedding in 1863, then revised with the birth of their first child, named Johannes in honor of the composer. *Gestillte Sehnsucht (Stilled Longing)* followed two decades later, with the hope that the divorce proceedings Joachim had filed against his wife would go no further. With Brahms writing a letter of support in Amalie's defense, read in court, a rift was soon to develop between violinist and composer.

Both songs, two of Brahms's greatest, open with expansive instrumental introductions, establishing the mood and main musical material. The similarity in timbre between alto voice and viola is expertly exploited, often as though in a vocal duet. *Gestillte Sehnsucht*, to a text by Friedrich Rückert, contrasts the glow of an evening in the countryside with restless feelings of love. Voice and viola interweave throughout, building to a feeling of hopeful resolution. The viola introduces the 14th-century German carol "Lieber Joseph, Joseph Mein" as the *Geistliches Wiegenlied* opens. Out of it, Brahms draws voice and piano melodies by inverting the carol and setting a text by the German poet Emanuel Geibel based on a 16th century Spanish poem by Lope de Vega. It is a perfect complement to the old German carol, both texts telling of Mary asking for help in rocking her child Jesus to sleep.

Joseph Joachim (1831-1907)

- Austro-Hungarian violinist, composer, conductor and teacher
- Friend and interpreter of many of the leading composers of the second half of the 19th century
- Premiered the Brahms Violin Concerto and about half of his 25 chamber works
- Brilliant technique, but not a showman: music and composer trumped performer
- Continued to promote Brahms's music after his rift with the composer in 1884. Brahms, in turn, wrote the Double Concerto for Joachim as a peace offering
- Recorded for the Gramophone and Typewriter Company in 1903 (check out YouTube)
- Much more at josephjoachim.com



Joseph and Amalie Joachim
ca. 1878

Amalie Schneeweiss (1839-1899)

- Austrian mezzo, later contralto, and teacher
- Sang onstage from the age of 14, leading to acclaimed performances of Gluck's *Orpheus*, and Beethoven's *Leonore* in Hanover in 1862
- Stopped singing in the theater at Joachim's insistence when married in 1863; Four children
- Continued with oratorio and Lieder, maintaining a high reputation long after her divorce
- Premiered many works by Brahms, Bruch and others, also keeping a wide repertoire of contemporary Lieder and folk-inspired songs

JOHANNES BRAHMS AND THE TRAMP OF GIANTS

Brahms was the first great composer to fully appreciate the achievement of composers from the past. He had a deep knowledge of the music of Vienna, the city in which he chose to live. He knew the music of Beethoven and Mozart inside out. He revered the music of Bach. He edited scores by earlier composers, including C.P.E. and W.F. Bach and François Couperin.

For years he was known as the Great Conservative: a traditionalist, reactionary, even. He was viewed as a bearded philosopher, who brooded on the past and who, for decades, lived in fear of what he referred to as “the tramp of giants.”

Brahms made a comfortable living from his music. He knew his audience. He targeted the middle-class musician both in the concert hall and the home. He was able to benefit from a level of musical literacy among an educated European public that had never been higher. His publishers were able to offer large fees and Brahms lived off his publishing royalties. Unlike his idols from the classical past, Brahms never needed to accept a commission in his adult life.



Brahms in 1875, believed to be his last portrait without a beard



Brahms, the bearded philosopher, three years later, 1878

VIOLIN SONATA NO. 3, IN D MINOR, OP. 108

Composed 1886–88; 23 minutes

Brahms’s own instrument was the piano and he performed in public to the end of his career. But he gained a profound understanding of string instruments—the violin in particular—through his friendship with some of the best string players of the day. He had completed the Violin Concerto in collaboration with Joachim some eight years before starting his Third Violin Sonata. He drafted its outline in 1886, while completing the Second Sonata during a summer of chamber music composition in the pastoral setting of the Swiss town of Hofstetten, on Lake Thun. Its full working-out was completed two years later, after work on the *Zigeunerlieder* (Gypsy Songs), the C-minor Piano Trio, Op. 101 and the Double Concerto for violin and cello. Brahms structures the music meticulously, bar by bar, phrase by phrase. He works within the traditional four-movement sonata structure, putting a lyrical slow movement second and livelier scherzo third. Throughout, he builds in recurring themes and motifs, bringing a feeling of unity and wholeness to the score.

Tension underscores the first movement—a repressed tension that builds as the movement progresses, fueled by sonorous, restless piano writing, and only partly offset by a radiant second theme and by the soaring violin writing. Brahms’s economy of means is at its most striking and expressive in the central development, where time stands still over repeated, tolling piano As that extend over 46 measures. The two middle movements bring some release to the tension. The violin sings in unbroken song in the slow movement. Its thoughts seem contemplative and personal until they are released in a burst of joy and double-stopping at the climax of the melody. A brief scherzo—one of Brahms’s shortest—has an enigmatic quality, perhaps even a touch of irony. With the finale, marked *Presto agitato*, the restlessness of the opening movement returns, now more assertive and goal-oriented. Even a broad, chorale-like second theme cannot dislodge the progression of the music as it drives forward to a determined D-minor conclusion.



Johannes Brahms, ca. 1899

HORN TRIO IN E-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 40

Composed 1865; 30 minutes

When Brahms published his Horn Trio, he made his publisher re-engage the title page to specify the natural horn, or *Waldhorn*, as he knew it. He was familiar with the valved horn, the modern descendent of which is now in widespread use today. It was beginning to come into use roughly when he was born and had all but replaced the natural horn by the time of his death. Brahms, however, held onto vivid childhood memories of the natural horn; it was one of four instruments that his father taught him and played professionally. Its softer, more rounded tone quality was the sound he sought to blend with the violin and piano. In writing for the older, natural horn, both in the Trio and in all his orchestral music, he tended to view the instrument as an extension of the woodwind family. He left it to his contemporaries Wagner and Bruckner to explore the horn's potential as a powerful member of the brass group. But the color of the older horn—the instrument of his idols Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven—shapes and informs both the structure and content of the piece.

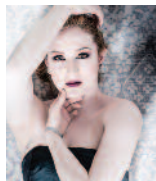
Still, not everything in the Horn Trio looks to the past. The concept of the piece is altogether fresh and Brahms was, indeed, the first composer to write a substantial chamber work for the combination of horn, violin and piano. It remains core repertoire for today's horn players and a challenge to the ensemble playing of any group. Much of the piece sticks close to the tonality of the natural horn, using just one crook in E-flat (additional, plug-in tubing to extend its range), bringing a nostalgic, noble eloquence and directness to the music. As usual with Brahms, there is an underlying connection between themes and their development within the four movements. The opening theme of the first movement at once sets a peaceful, rustic mood and it is not hard to picture the tranquil Black Forest countryside above Baden-Baden where Brahms composed the Trio in 1865. When out walking there, he could point out the exact spot "on the wooden heights above the fir trees" where he first thought of the work's opening theme to his friend, conductor Albert Dietrich. The structure of the opening movement is, for Brahms, unusual. Here, for the only time in a massive output of twenty-five published chamber works, he abandons his customary sonata movement in a quick tempo and writes a mellow Andante in an expanded song-like ternary form (in an ABABA pattern).

Brahms was 32, and thoughts of his mother's recent death a few months earlier were still in his mind. Hence, perhaps, there is a brooding middle section of the Scherzo (which is elsewhere cheerful, even exuberant), and the profoundly elegiac slow movement is one of Brahms's loveliest creations and the emotional heart of the work. This is Brahms's elegy for a mother he dearly loved; significantly, the movement is headed *mesto*, or sorrowful. Towards the end of this somber movement there is a foreshadowing of a folk melody that Brahms is soon to transform into the bucolic, hunt-like main theme of the Finale. This folk melody, "Dort in den Weiden steht ein Haus" (There in the willows, stands a house), taught to Brahms by his mother, would itself have generated feelings of nostalgia for the composer, whose entire musical output is sometimes viewed as enshrining a sense of loss.

As a lifelong conservative with roots proudly and squarely in the classics, Brahms looks back in his Horn Trio to the slow-fast-slow-fast design of the Baroque church sonata. At the same time, he writes one of his most Romantic scores. It is a work that Hungarian composer György Ligeti, when writing a Horn Trio of his own, described as "floating in the celestial spheres of the musical heaven as the incomparable example of this category of chamber music."

– Program notes © 2018 Keith Horner. Comments welcomed: khnotes@sympatico.ca

SAMANTHA HANKEY, *mezzo-soprano*



American mezzo-soprano Samantha Hankey is a rising star of the opera world. This past season, Ms. Hankey made her Carnegie Hall debut in Handel's *Messiah* with Musica Sacra and toured in recital and several operas. Next season, she makes her

Metropolitan Opera debut. A graduate of The Juilliard School, Ms. Hankey has won many major competitions, including 2017 Grand Finals Winner at the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and winner of the 2018 Glyndebourne Opera Cup. A recipient of the Peter Mennin Prize for Outstanding Achievement and Leadership in Music for her bachelor of music degree, she went on to become a Kovner Fellow during her master of music degree. Ms. Hankey's recent engagements include performing the title role in Handel's *Agrippina* at The Juilliard School, Alice Tully Hall performances; Rossini's *Stabat Mater* with The Chamber Orchestra of the Triangle; and *The Wake World*, a new commission by David Hertzberg for the Philadelphia Opera. Ms. Hankey has been featured in the HBO documentary *A Young Arts Master Class* with the soprano Renée Fleming and been heard on NPR's *From the Top*. Ms. Hankey is a native of Marshfield, Massachusetts, and attended the Walnut Hill School for the Arts.

ANTON NEL, *piano*



Winner of the 1987 Naumburg International Piano Competition, Anton Nel continues to tour internationally as recitalist, concerto soloist, chamber musician and teacher. Much sought after as a chamber musician, he regularly appears with some of the

world's finest instrumentalists and singers at festivals on four continents. He holds the Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Endowed Chair at the University of Texas at Austin, where he heads the Division of Keyboard Studies, and is currently a Visiting Professor at the Manhattan School of Music. For the past three years he has given master classes at the Glenn Gould School in Toronto, on the artist-faculties at the Aspen Music Festival and School and at the Steans Institute at the Ravinia Festival. His recordings include four solo CDs, several chamber music recordings (including the complete Beethoven Piano and Cello Sonatas and Variations, and the Brahms Sonatas with Bion Tsang), and works for piano and orchestra by Franck, Fauré,

Saint-Saëns and Edward Burlingame Hill. The Johannesburg-born Nel is a graduate of the University of the Witwatersrand, where he studied with Adolph Hallis, and the University of Cincinnati, where he worked with Bela Siki and Frank Weinstock.

BARRY SHIFFMAN, *viola*



Artistic Director of the Rockport Chamber Music Festival, violinist and violist Barry Shiffman is also Associate Dean and Director of Chamber Music at the Glenn Gould School and Dean of the Phil and Eli Taylor Performance Academy for Young Artists at The

Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto. A co-founder of the St. Lawrence String Quartet (SLSQ), he appeared in more than 2,000 concerts around the globe, and recorded several critically acclaimed discs under an exclusive contract with EMI Classics during his seventeen years with the SLSQ. While in SLSQ, Mr. Shiffman served as artist-in-residence at Stanford University and as visiting artist at the University of Toronto. He has also served in numerous roles at the Banff Centre, including Director of Music Programs, Artistic Director of the Centre's Summer Music Programs, and Executive Director of the Banff International String Quartet Competition, which he continues to direct. Recipient of the Longy School's Nadia Boulanger Prize for Excellence in the Art of Teaching, he received his formal studies at The Royal Conservatory in Toronto, University of Toronto, Utrecht Conservatory, Hartt School of Music, The Juilliard School and Yale University.

WILLIAM VERMEULEN, *horn*



William VerMeulen is one of the leading American horn soloists performing today. *In Tune* magazine wrote that, "the horn playing of William VerMeulen is miraculous....clearly one of today's superstars of the international brass scene." Mr.

VerMeulen has served as Principal Horn of the Houston Symphony since 1990 and maintains a busy schedule as a soloist and chamber musician worldwide. His performances and recordings have garnered high critical acclaim. Mr. VerMeulen has participated as a performer and faculty member with numerous music festivals and chamber music presenters, including Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Aspen,

Music@Menlo, Joshua Bell and Friends, Tanglewood, Interlochen and the Sun Valley Summer Symphony, where he also serves as Principal Horn. Mr. VerMeulen is married to Houston Opera and Ballet violinist Sylvia VerMeulen and they have two lovely children named Michael and Nicole. In his rare free time he enjoys having good friends over to share in his passion for fine cooking and wine.

CHEE-YUN, violin



Since her first public performance at age eight in her native Seoul, violinist Chee-Yun has enraptured audiences on five continents with her flawless technique, dazzling tone and compelling artistry.

Since winning the Young Concert Artists International Auditions in 1989 and an Avery Fisher Career Grant in 1990, she has performed regularly with the world's foremost orchestras, including The Philadelphia Orchestra and the London Philharmonic. Her orchestral highlights include a concert with the Seoul Philharmonic conducted by Myung-whun Chung that was broadcast on national network television, and a benefit for UNESCO with the Orchestra of St. Luke's at Avery Fisher Hall. She has toured the United States with the San Francisco Symphony and Japan with the NHK Symphony. In 2016 Chee-Yun performed as a guest artist for the Secretary General at the United Nations celebrating Korea's National Foundation Day and the 25th Anniversary of South Korea's membership in the U.N. Firmly committed to chamber music, Chee-Yun has recorded on the Denon and Naxos labels to exceptional acclaim, and she has been heard frequently on NPR's *Performance Today*. Chee-Yun plays the 1669 Francesco Rugeri violin that she has owned since 1991.

CLASSICAL CABARET

JUNE 21, JULY 6, JULY 14 :: 10 PM

Enjoy an intimate, casual performance in the third floor reception hall!

JUNE 21: Carmen and Liszt

JULY 6: Bach and Golijov

JULY 14: Schumann and Popper

Tickets: \$20



Matt Sharrock



Samantha Hankey



Dover Quartet