

**Notes on the Program by DR. RICHARD E. RODDA**

**Scherzo from “F.A.E.” Sonata for Violin and Piano**

Johannes Brahms

Born May 7, 1833 in Hamburg.

Died April 3, 1897 in Vienna.

**Finale from “F.A.E.” Sonata for Violin and Piano**

Robert Schumann

Born June 8, 1810 in Zwickau, Germany.

Died July 29, 1856 in Endenich, near Bonn.

*Composed in 1853.*

*Premiered on October 28, 1853 in Düsseldorf by violinist Joseph Joachim and pianist Clara Schumann.*

In April 1853, the twenty-year-old Johannes Brahms set out from his native Hamburg for a concert tour of Germany. The following month in Hanover, he met the violinist Joseph Joachim, and the two men warmed to each other as the young composer played some of his recent music at the piano. The following summer they spent eight weeks together at Göttingen, discussing music, studying scores, playing chamber works, and setting the foundation for a creative friendship that would last for almost half a century. Joachim learned of Brahms' desire to take a walking tour through the Rhine Valley, and he arranged a joint recital to raise enough money to finance the trip. Along with the proceeds of the gate, Joachim also gave Brahms several letters of introduction, including one to Robert and Clara Schumann in Düsseldorf. On the last day of September 1853, Brahms met the Schumanns for the first time. His reception was ecstatic. “Here is one who comes as if sent straight from God,” Clara recorded in her diary. Brahms was introduced around town, and among those he befriended was the young composer and conductor Albert Dietrich, a favorite student of Schumann and a frequent visitor to his home. Joachim was scheduled to appear in Düsseldorf on October 27th to give the premiere of Schumann's Fantasy for Violin and Orchestra (Op. 131) as part of the Music Festival of the Lower Rhine, with the composer conducting. As a surprise for him, Schumann, Dietrich and Brahms agreed to collaborate on a sonata for violin and piano, and then challenge Joachim to guess the author of each movement. Dietrich was assigned the opening movement, Schumann volunteered an intermezzo and finale, and Brahms offered to supply the scherzo. They dubbed the project the “F.A.E.” Sonata, after the phrase that Joachim had taken as his motto: *Frei aber einsam* (“Free but alone”). Dietrich and Schumann featured the pitches F, A and E prominently in their movements (Brahms did not), and the music was finished quickly and readied for performance.

At a reception the day after the concert, Joachim was presented, perhaps uncomfortably, with a large basket of flowers by Gisela von Arnim, the 25-year-old daughter of the extravagantly talented writer, composer, singer, visual artist, illustrator, social activist, and confidante of Goethe and Beethoven (she has been postulated as the “Immortal Beloved”) Bettina von Arnim, over whom he harbored amorous feelings that she did not return in kind. Joachim was amazed to find hidden among the blossoms the score of the “F.A.E.” Sonata, inscribed with a reversed-initial dedication: “In Expectation of the Arrival of an honored and beloved Friend.” He expressed delight with the gift, and played the entire Sonata through at sight with Clara at the keyboard, correctly announcing each movement’s composer without a moment of hesitation. Though Dietrich and Brahms allowed their contributions to remain isolated movements, Schumann immediately began expanding his pieces into a full sonata with the addition of an opening movement and a scherzo. Schumann finished his two new movements in three days (!), but his breakdown and attempted suicide (by throwing himself into the Rhine) in February threw his affairs into disorder, and the Sonata, his third for violin and piano, was never prepared for publication. The score of the Third Sonata was not published until 1956. (Joachim retained the manuscript of the “F.A.E.” Sonata, and had Brahms’ scherzo published in 1906, nearly a decade after the composer’s death and just a year before his own; Dietrich’s *Allegro* did not appear until the complete Sonata was issued in 1935.)

The Scherzo is Brahms’ earliest extant piece for violin and piano, though he had already composed at least one full sonata for that instrumental combination that either he or Schumann lost on its way to the publisher. The piece (“good fun — and harmless,” according to William Murdoch) follows the traditional three-part scherzo form, with a rather stormy C minor paragraph at the beginning and end surrounding a more lyrical central trio.

Schumann’s sonata-form finale begins with stern chords (F–A–E in the bass) that introduce the restless main theme, which combines short lyrical phrases with tense, snapping dotted rhythms. The snapping figures propel the music into its second theme, a downward leaping violin melody that incorporates the dotted rhythms. The compact development section deals mainly with the main theme before the recapitulation arrives upon the crest of an expressive climax. The second theme soars higher and brighter on its return, and the movement culminates in a brilliant virtuosic display of dazzling passagework for both violin and piano.

## **Romance in B-flat major for Violin and Piano, Op. 2, No. 1**

## Joseph Joachim

Born June 28, 1831 in Kitsee, Hungary.

Died August 15, 1907 in Berlin.

*Composed around 1850.*

In an age of fustian virtuosos, Joseph Joachim was a model of good taste, unsullied musicianship, and high ideals. Joachim was born on June 28, 1831 into a Hungarian-Jewish family in the village of Kitsee, near Bratislava, forty miles east of Vienna; the family moved to Pest when Joseph was two. He showed such delight in a toy violin he received as a gift at age four that he was given lessons on the instrument, for which he revealed a precocious genius. He played in public for the first time at age seven with such success that he was sent to Vienna the following year to study with Joseph Böhm, the principal teacher at the city's conservatory, and Georg Hellmesberger, Sr., concertmaster of the court opera orchestra. In 1843, when he was twelve, Joachim went to Leipzig to enroll at Felix Mendelssohn's newly opened conservatory, but Mendelssohn could find nothing to improve in his violin technique (though he did oversee his general education and his training in composition with Moritz Hauptmann), and so arranged for his formal debut (at a concert in which Mendelssohn also enlisted Clara Schumann and Pauline Viardot as participants) and his first appearance as orchestral soloist with the Gewandhaus Orchestra. In May 1844, Mendelssohn took his twelve-year-old protégé to London, where Joachim gave a sensational performance of the Beethoven Violin Concerto, an early indicator of his dedication to the highest musical standards and the greatest compositions. He became assistant concertmaster to Ferdinand David at the Gewandhaus and a teacher at the conservatory when he returned to Leipzig, and also began touring. In 1850, he accepted Franz Liszt's invitation to become concertmaster of the Weimar Court Orchestra, but found himself unsympathetic to Liszt's progressive ideas and compositional style, and so moved to the Hanover Court Orchestra as principal violinist and conductor in 1853. Joachim's dozen years at Hanover were the finest of his career: he built an international reputation as a unexcelled soloist; he founded a string quartet whose performance style and repertory set the model for later chamber ensembles; he composed most of his 56 works; he married the mezzo-soprano Amalie Weiss; and he developed close friendships with Robert and Clara Schumann, Hans von Bülow, Johannes Brahms, Max Bruch, and other of the day's leading musicians. (Schumann, Brahms, and Bruch all wrote violin concertos for him.) From 1868 to 1905, Joachim was director of the new Hochschule für Musik in Berlin, which his teaching and his renowned quartet recitals helped to make one of Europe's most important music schools; he also served as a conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic from 1882 to 1887.

Joachim continued teaching and performing until only a few months before his death, in Berlin on August 15, 1907.

The style of Joachim's compositions — five concert overtures, three violin concertos, several chamber works, a cantata, songs — is familiar from the music of Schumann and Brahms, but often marked by distinctive elements reflecting his Hungarian or Jewish background and by a fine sense of instrumental color. (The eminent English musicologist Sir Donald Tovey, who knew Joachim, contended that Joachim taught Brahms how to orchestrate.) Joachim achieved his early recognition and lasting fame as a violinist, but he was also deemed to have significant potential as a composer by Moritz Hauptmann, his teacher at the Leipzig Conservatory, who brought his work to the attention of the city's music publishers — around 1850, Franz Kistner issued Joachim's Op. 1, the *Andantino and Allegro Scherzoso* for Violin and Orchestra, and two years later Breitkopf und Härtel, one of Europe's most prestigious firms, published his *Drei Stücke* ("Three Pieces") for Violin and Piano, Op. 2. Joachim dedicated the *Drei Stücke* — *Romance, Fantasy Piece, and A Spring Fantasy* — to Hauptmann in appreciation. The *Romance*, a work of fine craft if not unbridled inspiration, takes a sweet, wistful melody as the subject of its outer sections and balances it with a central episode that hints at the Gypsy passion and flamboyance of Joachim's Hungarian heritage.

***Sostenuto and Andante Cantabile from Hebrew Melodies ("Impressions of Byron's Poems") for Viola and Piano, Op. 9, Nos. 1 and 3***

Joseph Joachim

*Composed around 1855.*

For nearly a half-century, George Thomson (1757-1851), "Secretary to the Board for the Encouragement of Arts and Manufactures in Scotland," was entrusted with promoting the culture and industry of his native country. Around 1790, he began collecting Scottish, Irish, and Welsh folksongs to, as he said, "furnish a collection of all the fine airs, both of the plaintive and lively kind, unmixed with trifling and inferior ones." Blithely unconcerned with ethnomusicological accuracy, he intended "to obtain the most suitable and finished accompaniments, with the addition of characteristic symphonies [*i.e.*, short instrumental passages] to introduce and conclude each air." The wholesale textual renovation of those songs whose verses Thomson did not like was carried out by such literary luminaries Burns, Byron, and Scott, while for the accompaniments (which squeezed the songs dry of their characteristic rhythmic irregularities and modal harmonic implications) he commissioned Haydn, Beethoven and several lesser-known musicians.

Thomson's collections were hugely successful not just as commercial ventures but also in heightening awareness of a previously little-known cultural resource, and in 1814 the singer and composer Isaac Nathan, son of the cantor at a synagogue in Canterbury and a graduate of Cambridge, conceived a similar project that would draw on the melodies of his Jewish heritage, "some of which," he claimed overzealously, "are proved to have been sung by the Hebrews before the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem." (In a 1952 article in *Studies in Philology*, Joseph Slater calculated that only seven melodies were of synagogal origin, just two of those ancient; at least four were German folksongs that had been taken into the liturgy.) Nathan persuaded Lord Byron, then England's most popular and glamorous poet, to write 29 new texts on appropriate Old Testament subjects fitted to his arrangements of these *Hebrew Melodies*, solicited an endorsement and a performance from the celebrated Jewish tenor John Braham, and published the volume in April 1815; Byron's poems — which included such now highly regarded verses *She Walks in Beauty* and *The Destruction of Sennacherib* — were printed separately the following year. The first edition of 10,000 copies sold out quickly, and *Hebrew Melodies* was translated into German, Italian, Russian, and Swedish and remained in print for the next half-century. The publication proved to be the high point of Nathan's career, at least in England. By 1841, after having failed to make a living from teaching, conducting, running a music warehouse and publishing business, singing, and composing comic operas (he had to give up the rights to *Hebrew Melodies* when faced with bankruptcy), Nathan emigrated to Australia, where he became a catalyst in the country's musical life — composing the first operas in Australia, collecting Aboriginal melodies, lecturing at Sydney College, writing patriotic odes; his descendant Harry Nathan claimed authorship of *Waltzing Matilda*. Isaac Nathan died in Sydney on January 15, 1864 when he was run over by a streetcar, the southern hemisphere's first recorded fatality from a horse-drawn tram. (Recordings of several of the original *Hebrew Melodies* are available on-line: <http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/douglass/music/album-hebrew.html>.)

Mendelssohn, Loewe, Bruch, Robert Franz, and others were inspired to compose works on both Nathan's music and Byron's verses, and around 1855, Joseph Joachim wrote a set of three original "Impressions of Byron's Poems" for viola and piano. It is unknown if Joachim had specific poems in mind or if he was just trying to evoke some general expressive states of Byron's verses. The first "impression" (*Sostenuto*) is thoughtful, noble, and lyrical in nature, balanced by a central episode of brighter mood. The third movement (*Andante Cantabile*) is built around a lovely pastoral melody presented by the viola at the outset.

## **Selections from *Cypresses* for String Quartet, B. 152**

**Antonín Dvořák**

Born September 8, 1841 in Nelahozeves, Bohemia.

Died May 1, 1904 in Prague.

*Composed for voice and piano in 1865; arranged for string quartet in 1887.*

In 1865, when he was playing viola in the orchestra of Prague's National Theater (under Smetana's direction), Dvořák started teaching piano to supplement his meager income. He fell in love with one of his students, Josefina Cermák, the sixteen-year-old daughter of a prosperous local jeweler, but his affections went unrequited. Dvořák, however, then 24, continued to press his suit by composing a series of eighteen songs in July 1865 set to love poems by the Moravian writer Gustav Pflieger-Moravsky (1833-1875) that he titled *Cypresses*; it was his first attempt at vocal music. (The cypress tree has been associated with grief and mourning since the time of the ancient Greeks.) "Think of a young man in love," he wrote in 1888 to his publisher when he revised eight of them as the *Love Songs*, Op. 83. "This is what they are about." He failed. Not only did Josefina continue to reject his advances, but Papa Cermák also refused to entrust his highly marriageable child to an impecunious musician. Dvořák's persistence with the Cermáks was not in vain, however, since by 1869 he had become interested in Josefina's younger sister, Anna, who had the additional attraction of singing in the chorus at the National Theater. Anna proved more amenable to his advances than had her older sister, though Papa Cermák still refused his consent, and it was not until he died in February 1873 that Dvořák finally won a bride; Anna and Antonín were married at St. Peter's Church in Prague on November 17th.

Despite his initial disappointment and his eventual marriage to her sister, Dvořák never completely extinguished his flame for Josefina or lost affection for the songs that she had inspired from him. He borrowed melodies from the *Cypresses* for his operas *King and Charcoal Burner* (1871) and *Vanda* (1875) and for the piano cycle *Silhouettes*, Op. 8 (1879), revised several of them as the *Four Songs*, Op. 2 (1882) and the *Love Songs*, Op. 83 (1888), and in the spring of 1887 transformed a dozen of them into a lyrical outpouring for string quartet, which he first considered calling "Echoes of Songs" before deciding to retain the songs' original title. Josefina went on to a successful career as an actress and in 1877 she married Count Václav Kaunic. Dvořák and his wife visited the Kaunics frequently at their home near Píbram, forty miles south of Prague, and in 1884, the Count sold the composer a piece of property on his estate for a country home that he

had long desired as a refuge from the city and as a secluded place to work; the Kaunics and the Dvořáks became good neighbors. When Dvořák was working on his Cello Concerto in New York City late in 1894, word reached him that Josefina was seriously ill, and he showed his concern by using one of her favorite pieces as the theme for the central portion of the *Adagio* — his own song, *Let Me Wander Alone With My Dreams*, Op. 82, No. 1. She died a month after he returned home in April 1895, and the Cello Concerto remains a touching memorial to his first love.

In making his quartet arrangement of *Cypresses*, Dvořák kept the forms, melodies, and harmonies of the original songs largely intact but enriched their accompanimental textures and scored them masterfully for the ensemble, a result of the experience he had gained in composing eleven string quartets and a host of other chamber pieces during the preceding quarter-century. The expressive quality of each movement is suggested by the line from Pflieger-Moravsky's poems that Dvořák placed at its head.

### **Selections from *Hungarian Dances* for Violin and Piano**

Johannes Brahms

Arranged by Joseph Joachim

*Composed in 1869 and 1880; arranged in 1871 and 1880.*

According to an old Hungarian saying, “Give a Magyar peasant a glass of water and a Gypsy fiddler, and he will become completely drunk.” So it is not surprising that when Kossuth and his Hungarian forces rose up in 1848 against the domination of their homeland by Austria, their ardor was reinforced by the sound of fiery Gypsy music played by Ede Reményi, a young violinist whose politics were as radical as his performances were inspired. Reményi was exiled for his participation in that unsuccessful coup, and he packed his fiddle and his chauvinism off to America for a time.

Returning to Europe in 1852, Reményi met a young pianist in Hamburg named Johannes Brahms, and the two lit out on foot to dazzle the world with their music. The hit of their programs was the traditional Magyar music that Reményi played “with a fire and abandon that excited his hearers to a wild enthusiasm,” according to one contemporary report. Brahms took part by improvising the accompaniments. They traveled mostly through villages and byways, where they added to their repertory by watching the peasants sing and dance. Despite a certain success as a team, however, the differences between the quiet, conservative Brahms and the flamboyant, revolutionary Reményi drove the two apart less than three months after they started their tour.

The seed planted by Reményi's playing and the enthusiastic music-making of the country villagers, however, stayed firmly rooted in Brahms' mind, and it later blossomed in such Gypsy-inspired compositions as the finale of the Violin Concerto, the closing movement of the G minor Piano Quartet (Op. 25), the *Zigeunerlieder* ("Gypsy Songs"), and, especially, the *Hungarian Dances*. The themes of most of the *Dances* were not original with Brahms. He collected them, thinking — as did almost everyone else — that the melodies were folk tunes, and he was specific in stating that they were arrangements of traditional melodies. He offered the set of ten *Dances* arranged in 1869 to the Budapest publisher Roszavolgyi for a very modest fee, but was refused because of Roszavolgyi's belief that the music would be a bad investment. Brahms then sent the manuscript to his regular publisher, Fritz Simrock in Berlin, who gave him a small one-time payment, and then proceeded to make a fortune from the *Hungarian Dances* when their popularity spread like wildfire across Europe. In 1880, Brahms composed a second set of *Dances* comprising eleven original numbers composed "in the Hungarian manner."

Brahms, one of the most honest and forthright of all the great composers, was accused of plagiarism by his old friend Reményi, who claimed that Brahms had stolen the tunes from him. When that tale was easily exploded, Reményi issued a list of the composers of the melodies in an interview printed in 1879 by the New York *Herald*, forcing Simrock to distribute a pamphlet defending Brahms on the basis of the *Dances* being arrangements that Brahms had never intended to pass off as his own original work — Brahms did not even give them an opus number. (When Brahms first sent the score to Simrock, he wrote, "I offer them as genuine Gypsy children which I did not beget, but merely brought up with bread and milk.") Despite this *petite scandale*, the *Hungarian Dances* proved to be the most popular of all Brahms' works during his lifetime.

Brahms retained a special affection for the Gypsy fiddlers and their music throughout his life, and he made frequent visits to the Prater, Vienna's amusement park, to hear them play there. He caught the fire and brilliance of their performances with such fidelity in his *Hungarian Dances* that Elizabeth von Herzogenberg, his close friend and constant correspondent, wrote to him about them, "This medley of twirls and grace notes, this jingling, whistling, gurgling clatter ... carries one right away into the midst of the fiddlers." The Dance No. 2 (D minor) derived from the *Emma Czàrdas* by Moritz Windt. The Dance No. 20 (D minor) is original with Brahms, written "in the Hungarian manner." The Dance No. 5 (G minor) is a setting of the melody *Bartfai-Emlek* ("Remembrance of

*Bartfa*”) attributed to the German-Hungarian bandmaster and composer of light music Kéler-Béla.

## **Quartet for Piano, Violin, Viola, and Cello in G minor, Op. 25**

Johannes Brahms

*Composed in 1857-1861.*

*Premiered on November 16, 1862 in Vienna by the composer as pianist and members of the Hellmesberger Quartet.*

The high-minded direction of Johannes Brahms’ musical career was evident from his teenage years — as a lad, he studied the masterpieces of the Austro-German tradition with Eduard Marxsen, the most illustrious piano teacher in his native Hamburg, and played Bach and Beethoven on his earliest recitals; his first published compositions were not showy virtuoso trifles but three ambitious piano sonatas inspired by Classical models; he was irresistibly drawn to Joseph Joachim and the Schumanns and other of the most exalted musicians of his day. When Schumann hailed him as the savior of German music, the rightful heir to the mantle of Beethoven, in his famous article in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* in 1853, Brahms was only too eager to accept both the renown and the responsibility inherent in such a lofty appraisal. He tried sketching a symphony as early as 1855 (not completing it, however, until two decades later), but his principal means of fulfilling Schumann’s prophecy during the early phase of his creative life were focused first on the genres of piano works and songs, and then on chamber music.

Finished compositions did not come easily for Brahms, however, and he made numerous attempts to satisfy himself with a chamber piece before he allowed the publication of his Piano Trio, Op. 8 in 1854. (He destroyed at least three earlier efforts in that form.) The following year, he turned to writing quartets for piano, violin, viola, and cello, a genre whose only precedents were the two by Mozart and a single specimen by Schumann. Work on the quartets did not go smoothly, however, and he laid one (in C minor, eventually Op. 60) aside for almost two decades, and tinkered with the other two for the next half-dozen years in Hamburg and at his part-time post as music director for the court Lippe-Detmold, midway between Frankfurt and Hamburg.

Brahms was principally based in Hamburg during those years, usually staying with his parents, but in 1860, when he was 27 years old and eager to find the quiet and privacy to work on his compositions, he rented spacious rooms (“a quite charming flat with a garden,” he said) in the suburb of Hamm from one Frau Dr. Elisabeth Rössing, a

neighbor of two members of the local women's choir he was then directing. Hamm was to be his home for the next two years, and there he worked on the *Variations on a Theme of Schumann* for Piano Duet (Op. 23), the *Handel Variations* (Op. 24) and the Piano Quartets in G minor (Op. 25) and A major (Op. 26). Brahms dedicated the A major Quartet to his hospitable landlady. The two Piano Quartets were finally finished by early autumn 1861, and given a private reading by some unknown local musicians and Clara Schumann during her visit to Hamm shortly thereafter. Brahms basked in the glow of Clara's approval of both his new pieces and the direction of his career.

In September 1862, Brahms succumbed to a long-held desire and visited Vienna. He had already made several professional contacts in the city, perhaps most notably with Joseph Hellmesberger, Director of the Vienna Conservatory and leader of a highly regarded string quartet. Hellmesberger introduced his German visitor to Julius Epstein, professor of piano at the school, and an evening of Brahms' music was planned for Epstein's apartment, located, fortuitously, at Schulerstrasse 8, the very building in which Mozart had composed *The Marriage of Figaro*. Hellmesberger and his colleagues eagerly joined Brahms in reading the two new Piano Quartets, and the violinist echoed Schumann's pronouncement when it was over: "This is indeed Beethoven's heir." Hellmesberger insisted that they mark Brahms' arrival in Vienna by presenting the G minor Quartet at his recital on November 16th in the hall of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde; the program garnered sufficient success to warrant scheduling another concert two weeks later to introduce the A major Quartet. Those events solidified Brahms' reputation in Vienna, and were instrumental in helping him decide to settle in the city for good in August 1863, the same month that Fritz Simrock published the G minor Piano Quartet.

The first movement of the G minor Piano Quartet contains an abundance of thematic material woven into a seamless continuum through Brahms' consummate contrapuntal skill. Balanced within its closely reasoned sonata form are pathos and vigor, introspection and jubilation, storm and tranquility. The second movement (*Intermezzo*), cast in the traditional form of scherzo and trio, is formed from long-spun melodies in gentle, rocking rhythms. The *Andante* is in a broad three-part structure, with the middle section taking on a snappy martial air. The *Gypsy Rondo* finale is a spirited essay much in the style of Brahms' invigorating *Hungarian Dances*.