

# RONALD FARREN-PRICE



JOHANNES BRAHMS

Sonata No. 3 in F minor, Op. 5



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**JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)**  
**Sonata No. 3 in F minor, Op. 5**

- 1** Allegro maestoso (F minor)
- 2** Andante espressivo (A-flat major)
- 3** Scherzo. Allegro energico (F minor) – Trio (D-flat major)
- 4** Intermezzo. Andante molto (B-flat minor)
- 5** Finale. Allegro moderato ma rubato (F minor)

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To have completed his third sonata and to bade farewell to this form at the age of only twenty, placed Brahms in a unique niche in musical history. More particularly is this so when the work is endowed with such colossal proportions as well as an enormous range of expression. 1853 was also the year of Liszt's unique contribution to this form. One could not imagine two more radically different constructions than both these edifices.

The first subject of the **first movement** is on such a grandiose scale that the resources of the instrument seem driven to their absolute limits. Indeed the precipitous mood of the orchestral opening of the D minor concerto is foreshadowed in this movement.

There are few passages in the piano literature of the 19th century, that make greater demands on the stamina of the pianist than the explosive octave passages opening the development section.

The **slow movement** is sub-titled with these words:

*Der Abend dämmert, das Mondlicht scheint,  
Da sind zwei Herzen in Liebe vereint  
Und halten sich selig umfassen.* – Sternau

(Dusk falls, the moonlight shines,  
There are two hearts in love entwined  
Holding each other in blissful embrace.)

In this love song Brahms expresses such intimacy and beauty, that one has to continually remind oneself of the extraordinary fact that it is the fruits of a mere twenty years experience of life. The climax of the movement is indeed profoundly moving.

After the richly diatonic strains of the Andante the **Scherzo** is chromatically whimsical and brilliant, in contrast to the hymn-like harmonies of the Trio.

An ominous note is sounded in the **Intermezzo** – Brahms sub-titles this “Rückblick” (in retrospect). The triplet drum motif has portentous overtones, seeming to dissipate the serenity and happiness of the Andante from which the falling thirds of the theme is derived.

This monumental sonata is brought to a close with an energetic **Rondo** (ABACAD), the second episode of which is a chorale. Brahms embarks on two variations on the chorale each faster than the preceding section. The second one being the Coda is a veritable tour de force plummeting to the final chords: a plagal cadence as if to emphasise the religious overtones of the chorale.

**Notes: Ronald Farren-Price**

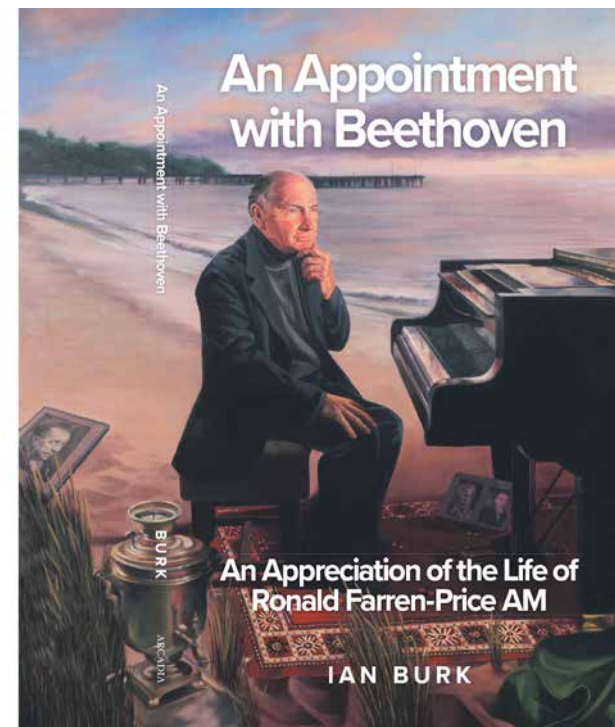
Ronald Farren-Price is the grand old man of the piano in Australia. His international career began with his recognition by the legendary pianist, Claudio Arrau, under whose guidance his distinctive style of playing matured.

He has appeared both in recital and as concerto soloist in the major concert halls of some forty countries. Among his noted appearances are those at Queen Elizabeth Hall London, Carnegie Recital Hall New York, Tchaikovsky Hall Moscow, Philharmonic Hall St Petersburg, Musikhalle Hamburg, Brahmsaal Vienna, Teatro Colon Buenos Aires, Sydney Opera house, Villa Pignatelli Naples, Royal Casino Bagni di Lucca, and the Melbourne Town Hall and Concert Hall.

In Melbourne his annual concert in December to celebrate Beethoven's birthday became something of an institution. Ronald Farren-Price's unique success as an Australian instrumentalist has been his twelve tours of the former USSR, where he played to capacity houses in the finest music centres. He is an Honorary Professor of the Tianjin Conservatory of Music, and was a pioneer in bringing Australian performance to China and to South-East Asia, including Vietnam, where he gave Vietnam's first televised concert in the Hanoi Opera House.

In 2013 Ronald Farren-Price gave

his final public concerts and retired from the concert platform. However, he remains Principal Fellow of the University of Melbourne where he teaches many of Australia's finest young pianists. He is a former Dean of the Faculty of Music, and also a former Director of the Australian National Academy of Music. His recordings are on the Move label. Ronald Farren-Price was awarded the Order of Australia in 1991 for services to music. He was the recipient of the University's Dublin Prize in 2002. In 2005, the AMEB awarded him an honorary FMusA, and the University of Melbourne conferred on him the honorary DMus. In 2014 he received the University of Melbourne Award.



This book on the life of Ronald Farren-Price, published in 2018 by Arcadia (Australian Scholarly Publishing) is written by Ian Burk. The book cover features a portrait of Ronald Farren-Price, an oil painting on canvas by Julia Ciccarone (1999).