



BRAHMS CELLO

Zoe Knighton | *cello*

Amir Farid | *piano*

Johannes Brahms 1833–1897

Cello Sonata No. 1 in E minor, Op. 38

- 1** i. Allegro non troppo 14'39"
- 2** ii. Allegretto quasi menuetto 5'58"
- 3** iii. Allegro 7'43"

Sonata No. 2 in F, Op. 99

- 4** i. Allegro vivace 8'54"
- 5** ii. Adagio affettuoso 8'00"
- 6** iii. Allegro passionato 7'58"
- 7** iv. Allegro molto 5'01"

Songs

- 8** Von ewiger Liebe Op. 43, No. 1 4'34"
- 9** Meine Liebe ist grün Op. 63, No. 5 1'42"
- 10** Die Mainacht Op. 43, No. 2 3'26"

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mastered at Move Records
studio by Martin Wright and
Vaughan McAlley

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One of my favourite memories from a concert is hearing Amir play the opening of the B major trio Op. 8 by Brahms and since then, we have been planning to record these sonatas. Given Amir's love of *lieder* and his incomparable ability to bring out the best in singers when he plays with them, I couldn't resist asking him to choose three of his favourite songs by Brahms to pair with these two sonatas for cello and piano.

Brahms learnt the cello as a child before he went on to become known as a pianist, so it is no surprise that his first offerings as a duo sonata involves cello. One of the first contacts Brahms made upon arriving in Vienna was with Dr. Josef Gänsbacher, a teacher of singing at the Conservatory and an administrator of the Singakademie. Gänsbacher was also an accomplished cellist, and in 1862, Brahms began to write his first duo sonata for him.

Three movements were written for the work in that year, but the Adagio Brahms originally wrote was destroyed. Many suspect the original Adagio was reworked to go with the second sonata. Brahms was infamous for destroying less than adequate manuscripts so the truth may be that the Adagio fell victim to the furnace.

At the initial read through of the sonata, Gänsbacher complained that he was being drowned out by the richly voiced piano part. "I can't even hear myself," he proclaimed. Apparently Brahms could only respond with "You're lucky."

Other composers (namely Liszt and his school of followers) of the time were far more obsessed with orchestral rather than chamber music but at this point in his compositional career, Brahms chose smaller ensembles. His two sextets, piano quintet, horn trio were written close to the first sonata for cello and piano and rather than following the trend of programmatic music and Liszt's fascination with music having a reference to literature, Brahms, like his predecessor Beethoven, was composing "pure" music. The sheer romanticism within this sonata is best described by Walter Neimann: "so rich and fervent in its inspiration, both human and spiritual." Whether or not it had an impact on the writing, I like to remember that Brahms was on holiday with his unrequited love, Clara Schumann at the time of writing.

There is a famous photo of Brahms with his friends. Brahms is seated and behind him is the cellist, Hausmann. Hausmann (who was the cellist in Joachim's quartet) has his arms over Brahms, pretending to play him like a cello. Quite literally playing Brahms! Hausmann was responsible for reviving the first sonata and it was he who implored Brahms to write its successor. Hausmann and Joachim were the inaugural players in Brahms' double concerto.

The second sonata is best summed up by Elisabet von Herzogenberg who received a manuscript from Brahms. She wrote:

"I'd like to hear you yourself play the Scherzo, with its driving power and energy (I can hear you constantly snorting and grunting in it!) No one else would succeed in playing it as I imagine it: agitated without rushing, legato and yet inwardly restless and propulsive. Needless to say, we reveled in the beautiful warm sounds of the Adagio, and especially at the magnificent moment when we find ourselves again in F-sharp major, which sounds so marvelous. I really do want to point this moment out to you, because it brings a tear to my eye whenever I hear it. It has such nostalgia and love."

Songs

When I think of Brahms, my mind doesn't immediately turn to lieder or songs but his gift of setting words to music is a worthy successor to Schubert. He purposefully avoided the texts from the great German poets as he believed great poetry had no need of music. These three songs definitely illustrate the 19th century word painting tradition and perhaps Brahms would forgive this arrangement where no words are heard at all.

Von ewiger Liebe, Op. 43: No. 1 *Eternal Love*

Dark, how dark in forest and field!
Evening already, and the world is silent.
Nowhere a light and nowhere smoke,
And even the lark is silent now too.
Out of the village there comes a lad,
Escorting his sweetheart home,
He leads her past the willow-copse,
Talking so much and of so many things:
'If you suffer sorrow and suffer shame,
Shame for what others think of me,
Then let our love be severed as swiftly,
As swiftly as once we two were plighted.
Let us depart in rain and depart in wind,
As swiftly as once we two were plighted.'
The girl speaks, the girl says:
'Our love cannot be severed!
Steel is strong, and so is iron,
Our love is even stronger still:
Iron and steel can both be reforged,
But our love, who shall change it?
Iron and steel can be melted down,
Our love must endure forever!'

August Heinrich Hoffman von Fallersleben
English Translation © Richard Stokes

Meine Liebe ist grün, Op.63: No.5 *Songs of Youth I: My love's as green*

My love's as green as the lilac bush,
And my sweetheart's as fair as the sun;
The sun shines down on the lilac bush,
Fills it with delight and fragrance.
My soul has a nightingale's wings
And sways in the blossoming lilac,
And, drunk with fragrance, exults and sings
Many a love-drunk song

Felix Schumann
English Translation © Richard Stokes

Die Mainacht, Op. 43: No. 2 *May Night*

When the silvery moon gleams through the bushes,
And sheds its slumbering light on the grass,
And the nightingale is fluting,
I wander sadly from bush to bush.
Covered by leaves, a pair of doves
Coo to me their ecstasy; but I turn away,
Seek darker shadows,
And the lonely tear flows down.
When, O smiling vision, that shines through
my soul
Like the red of dawn, shall I find you here on
earth?
And the lonely tear
Quivers more ardently down my cheek.

Ludwig Christoph Heinrich Hölty
English Translation © Richard Stokes



Zoe Knighton

After starting cello at the age of nine with Jill Kahans, and graduating from the University of Melbourne with the highest mark of her year, Zoe went on to establish herself as one of the country's most sought after cellists. Having studied with Christian Wojtowicz, Michel Strauss (Paris) Nelson Cooke, and Angela Seargeant, she is now in demand as chamber coach and teacher at various institutions. A regular panelist for major competitions, Zoe combines many facets of her career with performing. Zoe has been praised for her "thrilling tenor sound" (Limelight Magazine), "sublime phrasing" and "many great technical demands carried off with ease."

Zoe is Artistic Director and cellist with Flinders Quartet and plays a 1780 Benjamin Banks, a 2020 Rainer Beilharz cello made in Castlemaine, Victoria, and a Michael Taylor bow made in 2012.

"Knighton has produced a reading of great artistic integrity." Gordon Kerry

"She radiates confidence in her work and participates with personality and no little finesse ... Well worth hearing for the pleasure given through this player's familiar warmth and honesty of musical character." Clive O'Connell

Amir Farid

Winner of the 2006 Australian National Piano Award, US born Iranian-Australian pianist Amir Farid has been described as "a highly creative musician – a pianist of great intelligence and integrity. He brings strong musical substance to all that he does, imbuing it with his own particular experience and understanding", and who "in a well-populated field...distinguishes himself for all the right reasons".

Amir has performed concerti with major orchestras, collaborating with conductors such as Christopher Hogwood, Oleg Caetani, Johannes Fritzsch, Alexander Briger, Marko Letonja and Benjamin Northey. Highlights include Rachmaninoff's 2nd piano concerto with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra in front of a 13,000-strong crowd at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl, Mozart's concerto No.14 with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and



"The Mozart Dances" with the Mark Morris Dance Group and West Australian Symphony Orchestra as part of the 2015 Perth Festival.

He has performed numerous times at Carnegie Hall in a collaborative and solo capacity, has been a member of Benaud Trio, Exponential ensemble in NYC and since 2017, has been staff pianist with the Vocal Arts Department of the Juilliard School, New York City and rehearsal pianist with the New York Philharmonic.

