

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

Pamela Frank, violin

Peter Wiley, cello

Stephen Prutsman, piano

Tuesday, October 11 –7:30 PM

Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center

PROGRAM

Violin Sonata in G Major, Op. 78, No. 1

Johannes Brahms

Born: May 7, 1833, Hamburg, Germany

Died: April 3, 1897, Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1878-1879

Duration: 27 minutes

Composed in the high summer of his creative career after the completion of the Symphony No. 1 and the Violin Concerto, Brahms' Violin Sonata in G major is a gloriously lyrical work with long-breathed melodies rather than terse themes, and expansive extrapolations rather than concise developments. It is also one of Brahms' most tightly structured and cogently argued works, with a degree of formal integration rare in his works. The sonata is in three movements: Vivace ma non troppo, Adagio, and Allegro molto moderato. The opening Vivace, significantly slowed by its modifying ma non troppo, is a sweet-tempered movement in sonata form with two lyrical themes. The central Adagio is in ternary form, with a heartfelt main theme full of double and triple stops in the violin. The closing Allegro molto moderato starts with a direct quotation from the opening of Brahms' *Regenlied*, Op. 59/3, a melancholy minor-keyed song recalling the lost days of youth. The work ends with a warm, sunset coda of great beauty.

Cello Sonata in E Minor, Op. 38

Johannes Brahms

Composed: 1862-1865

Duration: 26 minutes

The chamber music of Brahms has sometimes posed a challenge for music criticism. Even in his day, Robert Schumann claimed the exalted status of veiled symphonies for certain of Brahms' more intimate works (though some have pointed to chamber-esque qualities in his symphonic writing, as well). It does not help those trying to characterize this music

that the typical Brahmsian mix of forward- and backward-looking elements also appear. His Sonata for Piano and Violoncello, Op. 38, presents just such a simultaneously progressive and elegaic face. He composed three movements in 1862, dedicating them to his friend and patron in Vienna, Joseph Gänsbacher, a singing teacher and cellist and a man instrumental in Brahms' appointment as director of the civic choir. Brahms rejected the Adagio he composed at this time (he may not have destroyed it, but rather recycled it in the Second Cello Sonata decades later), and added a fugal third movement to the first two in 1865. The resulting sonata is both sonorous and playful, progressive, and deeply rooted in the music of history.

Piano Trio in B Major, Op. 8

Johannes Brahms

Composed: 1853

Duration: 35 minutes

It is well known that Brahms was in the habit of destroying those of his works which did not please him, and this fate befell not only youthful experiments, but entire mature works. So great was his insecurity that perhaps even great symphonies and concertos, which might have warmed all humankind, produced instead only a few moments of warmth from the composer's fireplace. A youthful work which escaped such a dire fate is Brahms' First Piano Trio. Completed in early 1854, it was the first of the composer's chamber works to be published. This occurred in spite of criticism from none other than Clara Schumann, whom Brahms adored and respected as friend and musician. Some 34 years later, Brahms accepted the invitation of his publisher, Simrock, to revise some of his early works, including this trio. Uncharacteristically, Brahms permitted both versions of the work to exist, and even suggested the two be promoted together. A century later, it is the revised version that is most often performed and recorded. syncopation and snappy rhythm are found in abundance.

