

Scherzo. Shortly afterwards, during the last three days of October, Schumann added two further movements to replace those by Brahms and Dietrich, and thus completed his own Violin Sonata No 3. It was to be his last surviving major work.

The Sonata is an extraordinary piece—strange, certainly, but fascinating. From the grand opening chords of the introduction we know that this is an important statement, as if Schumann knew that it was to be a valedictory work. This is music of extreme contrasts: the wild passion of the first movement is interrupted by the quiet second subject, imbued with the very special intimacy that sets Schumann apart from any other composer. The second movement is highly original, even experimental: it is impossible to tell whether the scherzo section lasts for only eight bars, and is followed by two trios, or whether the first 'trio' section is in fact the main scherzo, with a singing melody above the dancing rhythm. The Intermezzo is touching, magical—surely there is a strong sense of farewell here? The finale, meanwhile, is touched throughout with eccentric humour, highlights including a crazy fugue that occupies the entire development section, and a coda that explodes into an astonishing blaze of virtuoso fireworks. It is a fitting conclusion to a work that rounds off Schumann's career as a composer of large-scale forms.

Our Next Concert will be on Saturday 29th April
when the Odysseus Trio will perform works by Mozart,
Clara Schumann and Schubert

*This concert is sponsored by
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Programme Notes compiled by John Walker and kindly sponsored by Avril Philips



Programme Notes
Saturday 25th March 2023

Maja Horvat (Violin)
Julia Hamos (Piano)

Maja Horvat

Maja gave her debut performance at Wigmore Hall in 2021 as first violinist of the Brompton Quartet, of which she is a founding member and with whom she gives frequent world premieres. They won the St Martin-in-the-Fields Chamber Music Competition and have collaborated with record producer Andrew Keener and many other currently active composers. She has performed with some of the world's most prominent chamber musicians including Sir Andras Schiff, Tabea Zimmerman, Christian Tetzlaff, Vladimir Mendelssohn and Thomas Carroll. In 2019 Maja was awarded the Royal Philharmonic Society's Emily Anderson Prize for an outstanding violinist.

Julia Hamos

Pianist Julia Hamos combines her American and Hungarian roots with an adventurous spirit to explore the essence of repertoire ranging from Bach to composers living today. Instinctive artistic expression, a forward-thinking attitude, a joyful physical flexibility at the instrument, and an unyielding fascination with the music she plays makes her an artist to watch. A graduate of the Royal Academy of Music in London with Christopher Elton and the Mannes College of Music in New York with Richard Goode, Julia studied with Sir András Schiff at the Barenboim-Said Akademie in Berlin and is now studying at the Kronberg Academy where her studies are generously supported by the Henle Foundation.



Mozart: Violin Sonata No.18 in G major (K.301)

1. *Allegro con Spirito* 2. *Allegro*

The Violin Sonata No. 18 in G Major is Mozart's first in the newer style, and remains one of his warmest, most recognizable violin pieces. The first movement immediately proclaims the equality of violin and piano: the amiable melody is first presented in the violin with keyboard accompaniment, but then, after a brief intrusion, the instruments switch, with the piano playing the melody and the violin accompanying. The second movement rolls along with similar exchanges, its recurring theme set between varied episodes in a rondo form.

Schubert: Fantasie in C major (D.934)

1. *Andante molto* 2. *Allegretto* 3. *Andantino* 4. *Allegretto vivace*

In December 1827, shortly after completing the final twelve songs of *Winterreise*, Schubert composed another work, the Fantasy in C major D.934, premiered at a Viennese concert in January 1828. From a contemporary review we know that the audience was less than enchanted. "The Fantasie occupied rather too much of the time a Viennese is prepared to devote to pleasures of the mind. The hall emptied gradually, and the writer confesses that he too is unable to say anything about the conclusion of this piece."

Original listeners seem to have been fazed by both the Fantasy's length and its unusual structure: a series of contrasted, loosely linked sections built around a sequence of variations on a Schubert song. The not-so-slow *Andante molto* introduction opens with the same C major-minor ambiguity as the String Quintet, composed the following autumn. Here the violin cantilena soars above flamboyant figuration in which the piano seems to be aping an orchestral string tremolo. Next comes a delightful Hungarian-style *Allegretto* in A minor-major, with the two instruments playing in canon. After some colourful Schubertian modulations, the music works its way to the verge of A flat major for the Fantasy's long centrepiece: a series of four variations on Schubert's 1822 setting of Friedrich Rückert's *Sei mir gegrüsst!* ('I greet you!'), whose soulful melody and suave waltz lilt had made it one of his most popular songs. This in turn leads to the Fantasy's 'finale', a swaggering *Allegro vivace* in Schubert's best *Marche militaire* vein. A swerve to A flat brings a final reminiscence of *Sei mir gegrüsst!*, before the march launches a tumultuous send-off.

***** Interval *****

Beethoven: Violin Sonata No.10

1. *Allegro moderato* (G major) 2. *Adagio espressivo* (E-flat major) 3. *Scherzo: Allegro - Trio* (G minor) 4. *Poco allegretto* (G major)

This, the last of Beethoven's ten violin sonatas, was also the last work of the so-called Middle Period, following closely after the composition of the seventh and eighth symphonies. Thereafter Beethoven lapsed into a period of silence, perhaps caused by the unhappy outcome of his hopeless adoration of Antonie Brentano, the "immortal beloved," until gradually his creative spirit began to work towards a new style and a new and profound solution of structural and personal problems.

The Sonata was first performed in December 1812, by the renowned French violinist Pierre Rode, accompanied by Beethoven's generous patron, the Archduke Rudolph. Rode's playing influenced the style of the finale: "In our finales," wrote Beethoven, "we like rushing and resounding passages, but this does not please R, and this hindered me somewhat." The ethereal serenity of the work, however, is due entirely to Beethoven's limpid classical muse, with a fascinating equality of dialogue between the two instruments. The very first phrase of the Sonata, four simple notes with a characteristic trill, are passed from violin to piano and back before anything like a phrase or a theme develops. Very rarely does one instrument offer a new idea without the other dutifully responding a few bars later. The wandering arpeggios which pervade the movement are perhaps its most striking and original feature.

The slow movement opens with a solemn hymn in the piano, but instead of repeating the melody, the violin offers a serene, and more secular, melody of its own. In the reprise the instruments exchange melodies. A brisk and jerky scherzo follows directly, with a smoother trio.

The finale is a set of variations on the lightest and prettiest of themes, with a neat lapse from the key of G into B major for its second half. After four variations, the fifth is an intense adagio. Before the sixth we hear a brief snatch of the theme in the wrong key (E-flat); the sixth variation itself is full of "rushing" if not "resounding" passages, the seventh is a lugubrious fugato, and the melody returns before a witty, carefree coda. Some of Beethoven's greatest utterances are thinly disguised as jokes.

Schumann: Sonata No.3 in A minor

1. *Ziemlich langsam* 2. *Scherzo* 3. *Intermezzo* 4. *Finale*

The third Violin Sonata has had a chequered history, to put it mildly. In late September 1853, both Robert and Clara were thrilled by the visit of a charismatic young man called Johannes Brahms, who appeared at their home bearing a letter of recommendation from the great violinist Joseph Joachim. Joachim himself was to follow a few weeks later, and his imminent arrival suggested a pleasing project to Schumann: he would combine with Brahms and another young disciple, Albert Dietrich, to compose a violin sonata based on the letters of Joachim's personal motto: 'F-A-E' (*frei aber einsam* - 'free but alone'). Joachim had to play it through on his arrival, his rather easy task being to identify the composers of each movement. Schumann himself contributed the Sonata's slow movement—an Intermezzo—and the finale, while Dietrich composed the first movement and Brahms the