



**VIENNA PIANO TRIO**

Thursday, March 1, 2018, at 7:30pm

Foellinger Great Hall

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# PROGRAM

## VIENNA PIANO TRIO

David McCarroll, violin

Matthias Gredler, violoncello

Stefan Mendl, piano

Robert Schumann  
(1810-1856)

*Piano Trio No. 2 in F Major, Op. 80*

Sehr lebhaft

Mit innigem Ausdruck

In mässiger Bewegung

Nicht zu rasch

Johannes Brahms  
(1833-1897)

*Piano Trio No. 2 in C Major, Op. 87*

Allegro

Andante con moto

Scherzo: Presto

Finale: Allegro giocoso

*20-minute intermission*

Robert Schumann  
(1810-1856)

*Piano Trio No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 63*

Mit Energie und Leidenschaft

Lebhaft, doch nicht zu rasch

Langsam, mit inniger Empfindung

Mit Feuer

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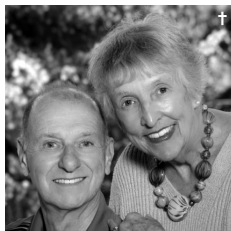
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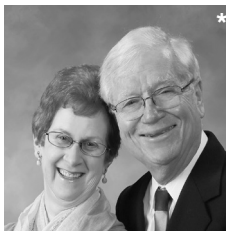
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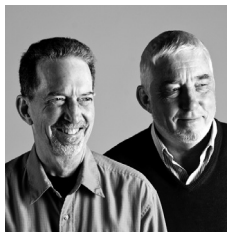
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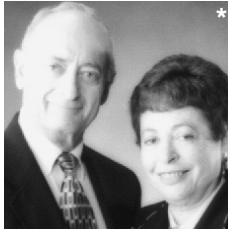
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# PROGRAM NOTES

## ROBERT SCHUMANN

Born June 8, 1810, in Zwickau, Germany  
Died July 29, 1856, in Endenich, Bonn, Germany  
*Piano Trio No. 2 in F Major, Op. 80*

Among Schumann's three piano trios, the F Major No. 2 of 1847 has taken a back seat both to his earlier D Minor Trio No. 1, composed in the same year, and to his later G Minor No. 3 of 1851. This might be explained by the challenging complexity of the work. That complexity, however, is one of the many virtues of the work and can be most satisfying to the careful listener who will appreciate its many bows to counterpoint and its new directions in harmony and rhythm. The year in which it was composed was a stressful one for Schumann that encompassed the deaths of his son, Emil, his close friend and mentor Felix Mendelssohn, as well as Mendelssohn's beloved sister Fanny. Despite those conditions, Schumann produced a remarkable piece of music in the F Major Trio.

We are plunged into the bright first movement *Sehr lebhaft* (very lively) without hesitation. While some might attribute the movement's irregular rhythmic patterns to Schumann's state of mind, it might be best to assign them to his compositional skills and his new ideas on Romanticism in music. Despite the cheerful strength of the movement, there are poignant melodic moments reminiscent of Schumann's gift of song.

Poignancy certainly pervades the second movement *Mit innigem Ausdruck* (with intimate expression), but still it is not without the rhythmic challenges typical of Schumann. Here each instrument is used to its fullest, an effect not always present in piano trio form. A careful integration of the instruments is also honored here.

If comparisons are useful to understanding the work, Brahms is brought to mind in the third movement *In mässiger Bewegung* (in a moderate tempo) with its strong use of the *appoggiatura* or the two-note slur with the accent on the first. While we associate this so clearly with Brahms, it is lavishly and artistically employed here by Schumann.

A certain new excitement and power infuses the last movement *Nicht zu rasch* (not too fast) which again offers a close melding of instruments with equal demands for each. Evident in the movement are Schumann's contrapuntal skills even though they may be subtly masked within his Romantic spirit.

## JOHANNES BRAHMS

Born May 7, 1833, in Hamburg, Germany  
Died April 3, 1897, in Vienna, Austria  
*Piano Trio No. 2 in C Major, Op. 87*

This C Major Trio of 1882 represents Brahms at his compositional peak. For Brahms that means a wealth of his sweeping melodies, harmonic intricacies, and rhythmic complexities. These characteristics might be applied to any number of Brahms' works, but in the C Major Trio they translate into a lavish abundance of melody, a wide emotional color underscored by a rich darkness, and an extraordinary inventiveness. Even the better-known B Major Trio, written 30 years before the C Major but revised eight years after, cannot match in complexity.

The heroic quality of the first movement pervades the entire work with the instruments playing against each other in something more than intimate conversation. The second movement crowns the work with its beautiful but troubled

melody and curious rhythmic devices such as the short-long pairs of notes known as a “Scotch snap” or “catch” used in many Scottish airs. The piano enters off beat, further complicating matters. In this second movement, Brahms also exercises one of his favorite disciplines, the variation, this time an ingenious set of five. The mysterious Scherzo follows, straining our concept of the comic with its darker undertones despite its breathtaking speed and intervening lyrical Trio section. Even the exuberant last movement is still not free of the complexity and restlessness that permeate the work.

The Op. 87 Trio was premiered in Frankfurt on December 29, 1882, with Brahms, violinist Hugo Heermann, and cellist Wilhelm Müller.

## **ROBERT SCHUMANN**

Born June 8, 1810, in Zwickau, Germany  
Died July 29, 1856, in Enderich, Bonn, Germany  
*Piano Trio No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 63*

If, as suggested by some sources, the year 1847 was a relatively “dry” one for Robert Schumann, it is not evident in the D Minor Piano Trio. True, that year extends beyond his period of concentration on chamber music and coincides with the death of his first son and with his encroaching mental collapse, yet the Trio shines with his genius and confirms the notion that he wrote in spite of his illness not because of it. Interestingly, Clara Schumann also produced her G Minor Piano Trio in 1847, a work that seemed to inspire her husband’s D Minor Trio.

Tempo markings tell much about the D Minor Trio and confirm the work as a splendid expression of Romanticism in its purest form. Indicated to be played *Mit energie und Leidenschaft*

(with energy and passion), the first movement is just that, energetic and passionate, but with an added tenderness and even delicacy in the middle section. The remarkable piano part varies between rippling arpeggios and strong chordal statements. Yet each instrument has its special moments and all combine for a heroic climax before a quiet ending.

The second movement, marked *Lebhaft, doch nicht zu rasch* (lively, but not too lively), honors those words. The liveliness is not dependent on speed but rather on the energy that Schumann infuses into the music. While Schumann is the quintessential Romantic composer, he does not ignore sonata form artfully woven into his Romanticism nor the fugue which he here adeptly uses with themes handed back and forth among the three instruments. There is barely a hint of clouds in this sunny movement.

Things change, however, in the third movement marked *Langsam, mit inniger Empfindung* (slowly with sincere feeling). An almost funereal opening with a solemn piano part accompanying a touching violin solo leads to an aching beautiful song. The tempo becomes more urgent before a conclusion that is second only to the Adagio of Samuel Barber’s Op. 11 String Quartet in its moving qualities.

*Mit Feuer* (with fiery passion) is the direction for the last movement where the sun shines again, although a few clouds remain. The passion of this movement is not so fiery that it loses its elegiac qualities. Again, themes are stated by one instrument and then taken up by the others before a final heroic climax leads to a brilliant conclusion.

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# VIENNA PIANO TRIO

Founded in 1988 and celebrated for its finesse, infectious exuberance, tonal allure, and its irresistible panache, the Vienna Piano Trio has long been hailed as one of the “world’s leading ensembles of piano, violin, and cello” (*The Washington Post*). As of September 2015, that reputation is being kept alive with David McCarroll as its new violinist who brings to this ensemble an already-rich relationship with the chamber music repertoire.

The Vienna Piano Trio today performs in the major concert halls worldwide. In North America, the group has appeared, among others, in New York City (Lincoln Center, Weil Recital Hall, Frick Collection), Washington (Kennedy Center, National Gallery, Library of Congress), in Baltimore, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Seattle, Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa, Montréal, Québec City, Mexico City, and the Caribbean.

In addition, the trio has been invited to many of the leading music festivals, including the Schubertiade Schwarzenberg, Wiener Festwochen, Salzburg Mozartwoche, Grafenegg, Carinthischer Sommer, Casals Festival Prades, Rheingau, Festival of Flanders, Aix-en-Provence, Schleswig-Holstein, Kuhmo and Bratislava Music Festivals, Princeton Summer, Caramoor, Chautauqua, and to the Canadian festivals of Ottawa International Chamber, Toronto Summer Music, Ottawa Music and Beyond, Lanaudière,

Domaine Forget, Orford, Québec City International, the Casals Festival in San Juan, and the Morelia and Santa Lucia Festivals in Mexico.

For a number of years, the ensemble performed in Vienna at the Wiener Musikverein within the *Jeunesse Musicale* series; in November 2016 it celebrated the 10th anniversary of its concert series at the Konzerthaus’ Mozartsaal. It was ensemble-in-residence at Wigmore Hall for the 2011-12 season and at the BBC series at St. Luke’s in 2012-13, and will return to Wigmore Hall through 2018. As of the 2015-16 season, the trio has also been serving as ensemble-in-residence at the University of Southampton’s Turner Sims Hall.

The Trio performed Beethoven’s Triple Concerto with orchestras such as the Orchestre Philharmonique Belgique, the English Chamber Orchestra, Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal, the Munich Chamber Orchestra, and the Capella Istropolitana, among others. In 2016 the trio performed the work at the Grafenegg Festival with the Tonkünstler Orchester under Simone Young, and under Christoph Poppen at the Festival International de Música Marvão in Portugal.

Concerts of the ensemble have been repeatedly broadcast on ORF, BBC3, WNYC, NPR, WQXR stations, and the trio has appeared live on WGBH Boston and St. Paul Sunday and radio stations world-wide.

After first recording for Naxos and Nimbus, the ensemble has been recording for the German MDG label since 2003. *BBC Music Magazine* declared its Vols. I and II of Schubert "Benchmark Recordings." Its Dvořák Vols. I and II were met with critical acclaim as well; a recording of the Steuermann arrangement of Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht* won, among others, *Pizzicato's* Supersonic Award. A recording of Tchaikovsky and Smetana, was named to the *Gramophone* Editor's Choice List for February 2009. A Haydn recording, released in May 2009, was given five stars by *BBC Music Magazine* and was awarded the Echo Klassik Prize 2010. A recording of a live concert with works by Beethoven, Schumann, and Ravel was released in 2011. A year later, recordings of Saint Saens and an all-Beethoven CD released in 2012. Brahms Volume I was released in the fall of 2015 and has been repeatedly named the recording Choice of the Month, while it also won the trio its second Echo as Ensemble of the Year 2017. The von Herzogenberg piano trios were released in the fall of 2016 followed by the Brahms II album in August 2017.

Besides its concert activities, the ensemble has been giving masterclasses at London's Wigmore Hall and Royal College of Music, at Sydney's Conservatory of Music, at the University of Wellington as well as in Finland, France, Canada, Mexico, and throughout the United States.

The trio has won numerous prizes at international competitions and has had among its most important mentors Isaac Stern, Ralph Kirshbaum, Joseph Kalichstein as well as members of the Trio di Trieste, the Beaux Arts Trio, and of the La Salle and Guarneri Quartets.