



Photograph by Oliver Ford



BRAHMS & MOZART CLARINET QUINTETS
Badke Quartet with Maximiliano Martín



FOREWORD

Of course there are other Clarinet Quintets, but few would argue with the assertion that those by Mozart and Brahms are at the top of any 'best of' list. They are familiar works, often paired in recordings. No wonder. They may have been written a hundred years apart and in very different worlds, but aside from their shared instrumentation and their unquestionable status as masterworks, they have so much else in common. Both are 'late' works for their respective composers, sharing a sense of autumnal melancholy; both integrate idiomatic writing for the clarinet into the string quartet texture with absolute conviction; both are full of lyricism and emotional depth – well-exploited in their magical and eloquent slow movements; both reference folk idioms (Mozart in his Minuet's trio section and Brahms in his Adagio); both finish with a set of variations.

Above all, both composers were inspired by virtuoso clarinetists – Mozart by Anton Stadler, a fellow Freemason and drinking companion, described by Mozart as “a bit of an ass”; and Brahms by the inspirational artistry of Richard Mühlfeld, who he described as “absolutely the best [clarinetist] I know of.”

Similarly, we were indeed fortunate to be working with our much-respected colleague Maximiliano Martín. Maxi is a wonderfully insightful musician. The subtlety and expressiveness of his playing I believe bring a new and refreshing approach to both Quintets. There's a real vitality in his playing, which, along with his open-minded responsiveness to each moment, made this recording a richly rewarding experience for us all.

In 1785, Stadler's musicianship and virtuosity provoked a Viennese critic to write: “Your clarinet has so soft and lovely a tone that nobody who has a heart can resist it.” That surely applies to Maxi's playing in both these quintets.



Jonathan Byers, *Badke Quartet*

TRACK LISTING

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791) CLARINET QUINTET IN A, K.581

- | | | | |
|---|------------|---------------------------|-------|
| 1 | <i>i</i> | Allegro | 09'17 |
| 2 | <i>ii</i> | Larghetto | 06'18 |
| 3 | <i>iii</i> | Menuetto | 06'52 |
| 4 | <i>iv</i> | Allegretto con variazioni | 09'28 |

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897) CLARINET QUINTET IN B MINOR, OP.115

- | | | | |
|---|------------|---|-------|
| 5 | <i>i</i> | Allegro | 13'00 |
| 6 | <i>ii</i> | Adagio | 11'00 |
| 7 | <i>iii</i> | Andantino - Presto non assai, ma con sentimento | 04'35 |
| 8 | <i>iv</i> | Con moto | 09'12 |

69'45

Produced by Chris Hazell (Mozart) and Adam Gatehouse (Brahms)

Engineered by Dave Rowell

Edited & Mastered by Dave Rowell

Recorded May 12-13 (Brahms) and July 31, August 1, 2013 (Mozart) in the Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex, UK

Cover image by Patrick Vale

Executive Producer for Champs Hill Records: Alexander Van Ingen

Label Manager for Champs Hill Records: John Dickinson

Mozart's feel for the clarinet's sonority is a little remarked-on facet of his genius, yet it remains almost ineffably special. He had an uncanny ability to draw out his chosen instruments' finest qualities; but it was the clarinet that perhaps benefitted most of all from his attention.

The attraction for Mozart could well have been the instrument's affinity for the human voice, which was possibly his ideal medium; the clarinet has a similar mellifluous legato and plangent, speaking tone, yet also the advantages of a bigger range and greater capacity for technical precision. He first encountered the wind instrument during a visit to Mannheim in his child prodigy days, aged seven, at which time it had just been invented, and there he conceived an affection for it that would last his whole life. He went on to include prominent spots for it in orchestral genres in which it had not formerly been used and it features exquisitely in his operas *Così fan tutte* and *Le nozze di Figaro*. But more significant still were the late works in which he transformed it into a solo instrument in its own right.

During the last years of his short life, Mozart enjoyed a rewarding friendship with the clarinetist Anton Stadler (1753-1812), a fellow Freemason. It was for him that the composer created his famous Clarinet Concerto and the Clarinet Quintet. As second clarinet in the Vienna Court Orchestra – first clarinet was played by his brother, Johann Nepomuk Stadler – this remarkable musician also played the basset horn, a deeper version with a range four pitches lower than that of the standard instrument. This too became a favourite of Mozart's and was to appear prominently in his final masterpiece, the Requiem.

It is perhaps telling that to Stadler one Viennese critic remarked: "I would not have thought that a clarinet could imitate the human voice so deceptively as you imitate it. Your instrument is so soft, so delicate in tone that no-one who has a heart can resist it."

No-one who has a heart could resist, either, the music that Mozart wrote for him. The Clarinet Quintet, dating from 1789, just precedes *Così fan tutte* in his output and flows with the apparent ease and grace of that opera's finest ensembles. The clarinet's sonic colour both blends with the sound of the string quartet and stands out from it; it functions as less of a soloist than it would in a concerto, but is still more than just an equal member of the ensemble.

The work falls into the standard four-movement structure of a symphony or quartet: an opening allegro of suitably mellow quality, a generous and pure-hearted adagio, a minuet with two contrasted trios and a finale that presents a set of five variations and a speedy coda on a good-humoured theme that would not have been out of place as a number for Papageno in Mozart's opera *Die Zauberflöte*. It affords the clarinetist plenty of chance to display his or her virtuoso abilities as well as the full range of the instrument, from dizzying arpeggios to a hint of tragedy in the fifth variation.

Stadler gave the world premiere of the Quintet in Vienna on 22 December 1789 with a string quartet whose players included the composer himself.

Certain parallels exist between Mozart's path to his Clarinet Quintet and that of Brahms. The latter's work postdates the earlier composer's by 102 years, but it can claim Mozart's as a major influence while matching it soundly – indeed, perhaps exceeding it – in terms of beauty, emotional profundity and technical expertise.

Like Mozart, Brahms turned to the clarinet as a solo instrument only towards the end of his life; and like Mozart, he was inspired to do so by his personal acquaintance with a great clarinetist. Brahms's spur came from Richard Mühlfeld (1856-1907), a musician who ironically enough had started his career as a violinist and only moved to the wind instrument three years after joining the Meiningen Court Orchestra.

By the age of about 58, Brahms felt that his own powers were on the wane. He planned to retire from composition, declaring: "I have worked enough; now let the young people take over." Perhaps he was tempting fate, though, because it was not long afterwards that he heard Mühlfeld play, in a number of works including Mozart's Clarinet Quintet. Fortunately for us, this spurred him to rethink his former decision; instead of retiring, he produced a clutch of autumnal musical glories that are often termed his "Indian summer". Among them were further works for Mühlfeld: two masterful sonatas and a powerful trio for clarinet, piano and violin.

The Clarinet Quintet's world premiere took place in a private concert on 24 November 1891 in Meiningen, where Mühlfeld was still based. Brahms had written to the Baroness of Meiningen to request "a magnificent cellist" to match him for the occasion, and the ensemble was led by the great violinist Joseph Joachim, a close friend and long-time collaborator of the composer's.

Brahms's clarinet perhaps plays a role more equal with its string quartet than it is in Mozart's work, but the part is no less demanding for that. The quintet's construction makes much use of a compositional technique that Schoenberg later termed "developing variation"; the progression and intensification of musical argument by the constant varying of the themes' recurrences, whether in harmony, instrumentation, mood or more. Throughout the work the thematic material is closely integrated, yet never obtrusively so; the impression is of a tightly wrought and phenomenally inspired masterpiece.

The first two movements occupy most of the work's space. The first, marked Allegro, opens with floating, ambiguous, circling thirds which take time to settle into a deceptive D major. One would be hard-pressed at first to identify whether this music is chiefly in a major or minor key, so knife-edge is the balance between the two. Throughout the movement – which unfolds with a second theme of a rhythmic

definition and strength markedly different from the free flow of the first – Brahms maintains a mood of profound introspection. The clarinet's timbre adds warmth and tenderness to what might otherwise have seemed an austere concept.

The second movement, Adagio, is – as in Mozart – the heart of the work. Here the apparent simplicity of the clarinet's cantilena is wreathed with a soft, syncopated accompaniment; the phrasing extends across the barlines in a manner almost as ambiguous as the first movement's harmonies are. This gives way to a central section in which the clarinet enters a series of rhapsodic outbursts, winding up the emotional tension to a peak that seems to teeter on the edge of an existential abyss, comparable only to the terrifying slow movement of Schubert's A major Piano Sonata D959.

The third movement, as so often in late Brahms, replaces the (by then) traditional scherzo with a gentler-paced Andantino, again reflective and songful, yet subtly brightening the mood after the adagio's profound meditation. Contrasting sections appear (*Presto non assai*), fleet-footed this time but based on the same musical material as the opening theme; the instrumentation is delicate, the second section surrounding the solo clarinet with a halo of pizzicato on the strings.

To close, like Mozart, Brahms offers a set of five variations. They develop the two-sectioned theme through a range of contrasting characters - from the stormy syncopations of the second variation to a bubbling clarinet and pizzicato off-beat accompaniment in the third. But instead of a lively coda as in Mozart's work, towards the end the first movement's main theme – with those circling, unsettling thirds – makes an unexpected reappearance. This is one of the most overtly "cyclical" moments in all of Brahms's output. It ushers in last-minute hesitations and reflections that, far from providing a resolution or any measure of comfort, appear to leave Brahms's darker questions forever unanswered.

I MAXIMILIANO MARTÍN, clarinet

Principal Clarinet of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, International soloist, chamber musician: Spanish clarinetist Maximiliano Martín is rapidly establishing himself as one of the most exciting and charismatic musicians of his generation. Since being appointed Principal Clarinet of the SCO in 2002 and winning the Young Artists Platform Competition in the same year, he has made debuts at the Wigmore Hall, Queen's Hall Edinburgh, Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, Bridgewater Hall Manchester, St Davids Hall Cardiff, Perth Concert Hall, St George's Bristol, Brighton, Bedford, Newbury and East Neuk Festivals and overseas at the Tallin Festival, Palau de la Musica Catalana and Teatro Monumental in Madrid.

As a soloist Martín has performed all the major concertos with orchestras such as the SCO, European Union Chamber Orchestra, Lundstateorkester Malmo, Orquesta Sinfonica de Tenerife, Kwazulu Natal Philharmonic Orchestra in Durban and Macedonian Philharmonic under the baton of Brügggen, Manze, Ticciati, Antonini, Swensen, McGegan, Grazioli, Markovic, Boico and Gonzalez.

Martín's extensive discography for Linn Records include his debut album *Fantasia*, the Mozart Clarinet Concerto with SCO, Messiaen's Quartet for the End of Times, his second solo album *Vibraciones del Alma* and the Weber Wind concertos. Numerous broadcasts for BBC Radio 3 in recent years have included the Nielsen Clarinet Concerto, Mozart Clarinet Quintet, Poulenc Sextet and Beethoven Quintet for Piano and Winds. He has also recorded for Champs Hill Records, notably the Brahms Clarinet Sonatas and Gade's *Fantasy Pieces* (CHRCD065) with the pianist Julian Milford.



Photograph by Patrick Allen

Martín is a member of the London Conchord Ensemble, playing internationally in venues such as Wigmore Hall, Brussels Conservatory, Concertgebouw Chamber Series and at the Library of Congress in Washington. Together, they have made a number of recordings for Champs Hill Records, notably the complete chamber music of Poulenc (CHRC028), as well as for Orchid Classics.

Martín has performed in the most important concert halls and international festivals with orchestras such the London Symphony, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, the City of Birmingham Symphony, Hallé, Orquesta de Cadaques, Bergen Philharmonic, Munich Kammerorkester, Orquesta Sinfonica de Galicia, and worked with prestigious conductors including Abbado, Haitink, Colin Davis and Mackerras.

Martín was born in La Orotava (Tenerife) and studied at the Conservatorio Superior de Musica in Tenerife, Barcelona School of Music and later at the Royal College of Music where he held the prestigious Wilkins-Mackerras Scholarship, graduated with distinction and received the Frederick Thurston and Golden Jubilee prizes. His teachers have included Joan Enric Lluna, Richard Hosford and Robert Hill, and He is one of the Artistic Directors of the Chamber Music Festival of La Villa de La Orotava, held every year in his home town. Martín is a prize winner in the Howarth Clarinet and Bristol International Music competitions.

Maximiliano Martín is a Buffet Crampon Artist and plays with Buffet Tosca Clarinets.

www.maximilianomartin.com

'There's no place to hide in most of the Haydn quartets, nor was there any need for any in the Badke's performance of the Op.20 No.4 Sun Quartet. With playing that often barely had a hint of vibrato, there was an unswerving togetherness, not only in the ensemble but in the music's unfolding.'

The Strad

The Badke Quartet, formed in 2002, is widely recognised as one of Britain's finest string quartets. The Quartet has received widespread acclaim for its energetic and vibrant performances.

The Badke Quartet regularly performs at concert halls and festivals in the UK and abroad, including the Aldeburgh, Aix-en-Provence and Verbier festivals, West Cork Chamber Music Festival, London's Wigmore Hall, Kings Place, and the Musikverein in Vienna.

The Quartet has worked with some of the world's greatest string quartets and studied with Gabor Takács-Nagy at IMS Prussia Cove and members of the Alban Berg Quartet in Cologne. The Quartet also held the Senior Leverhulme Chamber Music Fellowship at the Royal Academy of Music.

No strangers to the airwaves, the Badke Quartet has frequently broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 as well as on Classic FM, RTÉ lyric fm (Ireland), ABC Classic FM (Australia) and for the European Broadcasting Union. The Quartet won 1st prize and the audience prize at the 5th Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition.

Believing strongly in the importance of education work, in building new audiences and making chamber music much more accessible, the Quartet performs in schools across the UK, bringing chamber music to hundreds of children in conjunction with the Cavatina Chamber Music Trust.

www.badkequartet.co.uk

Charlotte Scott (*violin 1*) gained a scholarship to study at the Royal Academy of Music where her teachers were Mateja Marinkovi and Marianne Thorsen.

Charlotte performs regularly with her duo partner James Baillieu; she has performed at the Zermatt Festival in 2007 and 2008, collaborating with members of the Berlin Philharmonic. Charlotte has performed concertos by Tchaikovsky, Mozart, Tippett and Barber, including performances at the Fairfield Hall and St John's Smith Square. Charlotte was awarded a scholarship to attend IMS Prussia Cove for three years where she performed in concerts and masterclasses with Ida Haendel, Ferenc Rados and Valeria Szervánszky.

Charlotte holds an extensive range of awards and prizes. She is associate concertmaster of Oxford Philomusica, alongside performing as guest leader with orchestras such as the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the European Chamber Players.

She plays on a violin by Antonio Stradivarius 1685 "Gagliano" with the kind assistance of the Stradivari Trust.

Emma Parker (*violin 2*) graduated in 2005 from the Royal Academy of Music in London with first class honours degrees. She was a pupil of Howard Davis of the Albemi Quartet, and Marianne Thorsen of the Nash Ensemble and the Leopold Trio.

Besides the Badke Quartet, Emma very much enjoys freelancing with orchestras across the UK. In 2013 she was appointed principal second violin with Manchester Camerata.

She is also in great demand as a chamber musician and plays regularly with groups such as Tamsin Waley-Cohen's Honey mead Ensemble.

Emma plays on a Nicolò Amati violin from 1672, generously on loan from a private donor.

Jon Thorne (*viola*) studied at the London College of Music with Maureen Smith and Penny Filer, and completed his studies at the Royal College of Music with Simon Rowland-Jones and Mark Knight. Upon leaving the RCM, Jon joined the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

In 2001 he left the BSO to form the Bronte String Quartet, prizewinners at both the Royal Over-Seas League and the Cremona International Quartet competitions. In 2009, Jon joined the Badke Quartet.

He is principal viola of Oxford Philomusica and is a regular guest principal for various other UK orchestras. Jon has played on many recordings for film, television and pop. As a soloist, he has recorded Puccini's *Requiem* and Malipiero's *De Profundis* for Naxos.

Jon is a strong believer in music education and is Professor of viola and chamber music at London's Royal Academy of Music. He also gives many masterclasses and plays at festivals across the UK and Europe. He has appeared on the jury for Europees Muziekfestival voor de Jeugd in Belgium, and the Royal Over-Seas League Competition. He is a trustee of the Vacation Chamber Orchestras.

Jon plays a fine 1692 Grancino viola.

Aside from his work with the Badke Quartet, **Jonathan Byers** (*cello*) performs as guest principal with many orchestras and period instrument groups, including the Academy of Ancient Music, English Concert, Gabrieli Consort, Irish Baroque

Orchestra and the Early Opera Company. Further afield, Jonathan has worked with John Eliot Gardiner's Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique and Gábor Takács-Nagy's Weinberger Kammerorchester in Zurich.

Jonathan is much in demand as a soloist and has also given solo recitals across Europe and in the USA and China. Closer to home he has performed many times as soloist with the Ulster Orchestra in Belfast.

He studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London with David Strange, and then completed a two-year postgraduate course in Historical Performance with Jennifer Ward-Clarke.

In May 2011, Jonathan was made an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music, an honorary award for former students of the Academy who have made a notable contribution to the music profession.

Jonathan plays on a fine Italian cello from c.1730, made available to him by the Stradivari Trust.

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Accordion sensation Ksenija Sidorova in a showcase demonstrating the full range and emotional power of her instrument. "As an accordionist you sort of have to carve your own path, so I consider it my mission in this way to introduce the instrument to a wider audience."

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CHRC0063

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An exploration of rarely-heard songs by Ludwig Thuille (including his three winsome trios), with some of the finest young voices in the UK – Sophie Bevan, Jennifer Johnston and Mary Bevan – accompanied by the first-rate Joseph Middleton.

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