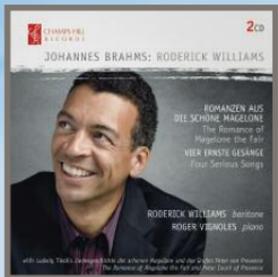


ALSO AVAILABLE ...



CHRC108

**JOHANNES BRAHMS:
RODERICK WILLIAMS**

Roderick Williams & Roger Vignoles

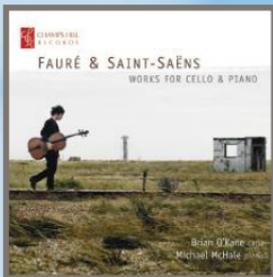
"Roderick Williams is a wonderful storyteller ... grips you all the way through ..."

Radio 3 Record Review

"... the passion and commitment behind this recording are palpable at every turn."

"Williams simply sings [them] with his own kind of rhetoric and, again, is a clear prism through which the songs emerge. Sound quality is excellent, leaving plenty of air around the voice but never losing immediacy."

Gramophone Magazine



CHRC113

**FAURÉ & SAINT-SAËNS:
WORKS FOR CELLO & PIANO**

Brian O'Kane & Michael McHale

"... Brian O'Kane has got the measure of [the distinctively French style of cello-playing], and in partnership with Michael McHale the sheer idiomatic elegance of his playing pays rich dividends throughout this handsomely filled disc."

"The idea of pairing Fauré's two cello sonatas with comparable works by his teacher and friend Saint-Saëns is an illuminating one, and both these players have a natural sense for this music's less obvious qualities."

Gramophone Magazine



**BARTHOLOMEW
LAFOLLETTE: BRAHMS**

WORKS FOR CELLO AND PIANO



BARTHOLOMEW LAFOLLETTE *cello*
CAROLINE PALMER *piano*

FOREWORD

To say that I've always had a great love for these sublime works is an understatement. I grew up knowing the sonatas by Brahms as so many cellists do – the E minor in particular being a piece I've played since I was 12 (although I'm sure not very well back then) so to me, playing these works feels like coming home.

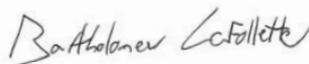
The case of the songs is somewhat different. I grew up hearing my mother, a wonderful pianist, play with many singers over the years. Of all the singers with whom she played, perhaps the most influential to me was my father, who despite officially being a doctor and computer scientist was also classically trained. I well recall her practising the *Four Serious Songs* and it was perhaps by osmosis that my love for them came to be.

Thus, when it became time to make the decision as to what to record for my first disc, it was not a difficult choice for me to make.

Home and family. Two very important facets of both my existence as a human being and as an artist.

It goes without saying that this project would not have happened without the incredible help and support of Mary and David Bowerman. Also, many thanks to Bärenreiter who generously provided pre release access to their new (and wonderful!) edition of the Brahms F major Sonata, making this almost certainly the first recording of this new edition, and recorded 129 years to the day of its original premier.

Finally, I'd like to dedicate this disc to my cousin Alex.



TRACK LISTING

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)

Cello Sonata No.1 in E minor Op.38

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Allegro non troppo | 14'04 |
| 2 | Allegretto quasi Menuetto | 05'51 |
| 3 | Allegro | 06'35 |

Vier ernste Gesänge Op.21 (arr. Shafran)

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-------|
| 4 | Denn es gehet dem Menschen | 04'51 |
| 5 | Ich wandte mich, und sahe an | 04'18 |
| 6 | O Tod, wie bitter bist du | 04'05 |
| 7 | Wenn ich mit Menschen | 04'51 |

- | | | |
|---|---|-------|
| 8 | Hungarian Dance No.20 in E minor Wo01 (arr. Piatti) | 02'54 |
|---|---|-------|

Cello Sonata No.2 in F major Op.99

- | | | |
|----|--------------------|-------|
| 9 | Allegro vivace | 08'29 |
| 10 | Adagio affettuoso | 06'33 |
| 11 | Allegro passionato | 06'59 |
| 12 | Allegro molto | 04'22 |

Total playing time: 73'52

Produced and edited by Matthew Bennett

Engineered by Dave Rowell

Recorded on 24th–26th November 2015 in the Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex, UK

Executive Producer for Champs Hill Records: Alexander Van Ingen

Label Manager for Champs Hill Records: Joanna Wilson

As a young boy, Brahms was given rudimentary lessons on both the violin and cello by his father, although it was the piano that primarily activated his executant and creative imagination. Accordingly, his first published works included three virtuoso piano sonatas that rejoice in the instrument's potential for rich and powerful middle-register (cello) sonorities.

Brahms's understanding of string instruments and their expressive potential was considerably enhanced by early contact with two of the most renowned violinists of the age. He spent much of his early teens trying to help support his poor family by playing the piano in back-street taverns (thinly disguised brothels), the anguished memory of which was to haunt him for the rest of his life. He was finally released from this sordid existence when in 1850 the celebrated gypsy violinist Eduard Reményi, asked him to become his official accompanist, and such was Brahms's immense skill that at one concert he compensated for an out-of-tune piano by transposing all of the accompaniments at sight. The impact of playing popular East European folk music with Reményi is felt particularly in his 21 Hungarian Dances as exemplified by the moody swagger and irresistible chutzpah of No.20, heard here in an expert arrangement by celebrated Italian virtuoso and teacher Carlo Alfredo Piatti (1822–1901).

Two years later, Brahms was introduced to the great German violin virtuoso Joseph Joachim, for whom he would later compose his Violin Concerto, three violin sonatas and Double Concerto for violin and cello. Joachim was overwhelmed by Brahms's 'undreamt-of originality and power' and immediately arranged a visit to Weimar for Brahms to meet Franz Liszt and then in September 1853 Robert Schumann, who enthusiastically hailed him as the 'natural heir and successor to Beethoven'.

It was inevitable that sooner or later Brahms would beat a path to Vienna, the musical capital of Europe, although his first visit during the winter of 1862–63 was only intended as a short stay. However, when a vacant conducting post with the Philharmonic back in Hamburg went unexpectedly to someone else, he was forced to rethink his options and auditioned successfully for the directorship of the famous Vienna Singakademie.

By now, Brahms was already working on his first accompanied sonata, not for the violin as might have been expected, but for the cello. The inspiration to finish the sonata came from one of the Singakademie's most distinguished members, Lieder composer and vocal expert Josef Gänsbacher (1829–1911), who it turned out was also an enthusiastic amateur cellist. Brahms designed an unusually sonorous piano part focussed on the tenor and baritone registers, so much so that during an early play-through with Gänsbacher, the cellist complained that he was struggling to make himself heard, to which the quick-witted composer responded with a twinkle in his eye: 'It's probably just as well!'

Brahms got as far as completing the first three movements of the intended four-movement structure – an *Allegro non troppo* of profound emotional and structural density, followed by a noble *Adagio affettuoso* and an *Allegretto quasi Menuetto* that tantalisingly fuses stylistic retrospection with a beguiling Romantic impulse. Yet such was the expressive richness of the music he had so far produced that he struggled to come up with a finale that would provide a convincing foil. Three years later he returned to the work and putting the slow movement to one side (it would re-emerge 20 years later in the F major Sonata), moved the *minuetto* into central position and added a powerful, fugal finale of inexorable forward momentum.

If the yearning, deeply felt phrases of the E minor Sonata's opening *allegro* show an obvious kinship with the lyrical intensity of the near-contemporaneous string sextets and first two piano quartets, the F major of 1886 lies closer to the motific concision and compression familiar from the Fourth Symphony (completed the previous year) and Double Concerto of 1887. The concerto's solo cello part and that of the new sonata were written specifically for Robert Hausmann (1852–1909), Piatti's most famous pupil and cellist in the Joachim Quartet, who five years previously had premiered Max Bruch's *Kol Nidrei* and whose dazzling playing of Dvořák's Cello Concerto caused Brahms to exclaim that if he had known such a thing were possible he would have written one himself.

It was Hausmann's massive tonal projection that inspired Brahms to employ an imposing range of full-blooded piano textures that would overwhelm many a lesser cellist. Elizabeth von Herzogenberg, one of Brahms's closest friends and a regular correspondent for over 20 years, was ecstatic when she first set eyes on the score, enthusing perceptively in a letter from Berlin dated 2 December 1886: 'So far I have been most thrilled by the first movement. It is so masterly in its compression, so torrent-like in its progress, so terse in the development... I can't tell how much I enjoyed the soft, melodious *Adagio*... and I should love to hear you [i.e. Brahms] play the vigorous *scherzo* third movement... It must be agitated without being hurried, *legato* despite its unrest and impetus.' This recording takes account of the latest research in Bärenreiter's recently published urtext edition.

Only three years after composing the F major Sonata, the 56-year-old Brahms announced the first of several semi-retirements, although it wasn't long before his

creative pen was active again, composing some of his most introspective and nostalgic masterpieces, including the Clarinet Quintet, Trio and sonatas, and a series of solo piano miniatures of exquisite poignancy. During 1896, he began suffering symptoms of the liver cancer (diagnosed initially as jaundice) that would claim his life early the following year.

During May, the month in which his beloved Clara Schumann (widow of the composer Robert) died and he turned 63, Brahms's thoughts understandably turned towards death and the transience of life. In the first three of his *Vier Ernste Gesänge* ('Four Serious Songs'), originally written for baritone and piano and therefore particularly appropriate for cello's dark introspection, he faced his own mortality as never before in three passages from Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiasticus in the Old Testament.

Brahms was by no means a conventional believer in God, which explains his carefully chosen texts' occasional ambiguities. In the first ('One thing befalleth the beast and the sons of men') death comes to us all whether we be human or animal, while the second ('So I returned and considered') reflects on whether the unborn are the luckiest of all as they have not born witness (unlike the dead and living) to the sins of the world. 'O death, how bitter you are' reflects that the advance and decrepitude of old age is unavoidable no matter how much wealth one has accumulated, although at least the final song from 1 Corinthians ('Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels') ends on a more positive note with the famous lines that of the eternal virtues of faith, hope and charity, 'the greatest of these is charity.'

British/American cellist Bartholomew LaFollette has a rich and varied career as an international soloist and chamber musician. After being launched by YCAT (Young Classical Artists Trust) with numerous performances at the Wigmore Hall, Barbican Centre, Bridgewater Hall and the Royal Festival Hall, Bartholomew went on to win first prize at The Arts Club's and Decca Records' inaugural Classical Music Award. He was also the first recipient of the Irish Chamber Orchestra's Ardán Award. Bartholomew is artistic director of the Marryat Players International Chamber Music Festival, which takes place annually in Wimbledon Village.

Hailed by the *Irish Times* for being "as free in touching the heartstrings as he was in dashing off dazzling runs", Bartholomew's highlights with orchestra include performances of Dvořák's Cello Concerto with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Walton and Elgar Cello concertos in the Barbican Hall as well as appearing as soloist with the City of London Sinfonia. He has also performed the Brahms Double Concerto with Daniel Stabrawa and the Poznań Philharmonic in Poland and Elgar's Cello Concerto at the Sibelius International Music Festival in Helsinki.

Bartholomew is also a sought-after chamber musician and his recent musical collaborators have included Anthony Marwood, Christian Tetzlaff, Alina Ibragimova and András Keller. He frequently appears with the award winning Doric String Quartet with whom he recorded Eric Wolfgang Korngold's string sextet for the Chandos label.

In 2011 at the age of twenty-six, Bartholomew LaFollette was appointed Principal Cello Teacher at the distinguished Yehudi Menuhin School.

Bartholomew plays on an especially fine example of a Giovanni Dollenz cello from 1841 and a bow by François Xavier Tourte from 1790. He is deeply grateful to the Stradivari Trust for making this possible.





I CAROLINE PALMER

Internationally renowned pianist Caroline Palmer has established a reputation as an outstanding chamber musician and soloist. She has worked with many artists including Johannes Goritzki, Alexander Rudin, Truls Mork, Enrico Dindo, Melissa Phelps, Atle Sponberg, Krzysztof Smietana, Matthias Lingenfelder, Philippe Graffin and Leonid Gorokhov.

She has made over 50 broadcasts for the BBC and is a widely recorded chamber musician, her discs including works by Fauré, Busoni, Saint-Saëns, Fuchs and Brahms.

Caroline was artistic director of the Paxos Music Festival and appears in international music festivals across the Americas and Europe. Recent performances have taken her to festivals in Norway, Germany and Switzerland.

She is a professor of Piano and Chamber Music at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London where she was also awarded a Fellowship.

Caroline was born in Singapore and moved to London to study at the Guildhall School with Edith Vogel and later with Peter Wallfisch and Hans Keller.