Trio Shaham Erez Wallfisch

Brahms

Piano Trio No. 1, Op. 8
Piano Trio No. 2, Op. 87
Piano Trio No. 3, Op. 101
Concerto for Violin & Cello, Op. 102

Hagai Shaham, violin
Arnon Erez, piano
Raphael Wallfisch, cello

Staatsorchester Rheinische Philharmonie
Daniel Raiskin, conductor
Trio Shaham Erez Wallfisch

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Daniel Raiskin

A son of a prominent musicologist, Daniel Raiskin grew up in St. Petersburg where he attended music school from the age of six and went on to the celebrated conservatory to study viola and conducting. Inspired to take up the baton by an encounter with the distinguished teacher Lev Savich, he also took classes with maestri Mariss Jansons, Neeme Järvi, Milan Horvat, Woldemar Nelson und Jorma Panula.

Since 2005, Daniel Raiskin has been the Chief Conductor of the Staatsorchester Rheinische Philharmonie in Koblenz, and between 2008 and 2015 has held the same title with the Artur Rubinstein Philharmonic Orchestra in Łódź.

His regular guest engagements around the world include the NDR Radiophilharmonie Hannover, Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz, Düsseldorfer Symphoniker, Belgian National Orchestra, Copenhagen Philharmonic, Mozarteumorchester Salzburg, RTE National Symphony Orchestra, Prague Symphony Orchestra, Orquesta Nacional do Porto, Orchestre National de Lyon, Estonian National Symphony, Filarmónica de Buenos Aires, Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de México, Osaka Symphony Orchestra, Japan Century Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra Taiwan, Shanghai Philharmonic, Hong Kong Sinfonietta, San Antonio Symphony, Mariinsky Orchestra and Russian State Symphony Orchestra.

Recent recordings include the Brahms symphonies cycle for the label TwoPianists and Shostakovich Symphony No. 4 for the label AVI Music, both to great critical acclaim. His recording of cello concertos by Korngold, Bloch and Goldschmidt with Julian Steckel for the label AVI Music received an Echo Klassik Award in 2012. His recording of Mahler’s 3rd Symphony was recently nominated for the Prize of German Music Critics.
Felix Mendelssohn
Trio No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 49
Trio No. 2 in C Minor, Op. 66

Robert Schumann
Clavierstücke in canonischer form, Op. 56
arr. Theodor Kirchner

'The trio's sheer pleasure of playing is bouncing off this beautifully recorded CD'
Kassieke Zaken

Maurice Ravel
Piano Trio

Claude Debussy
Cello Sonata
Violin Sonata

Gabriel Fauré
Piano Trio, Op. 120

'A superbly played collection of French Duos and Trios from a starry ensemble'
The Strad Magazine

Johannes Brahms (1833 - 1897)

DISC ONE

Trio No. 1 in B Major, Op. 8 (1854 revised 1889) 36.10
1 I Allegro con brio 14.41
2 II Scherzo. Allegro molto 6.35
3 III Adagio 8.11
4 IV Allegro 6.43

Total playing time  66.10

Trio No. 2 in C Major, Op. 87 (1882) 29.56
5 I Allegro 9.55
6 II Andante con moto 8.58
7 III Scherzo. Presto – Poco meno presto 4.40
8 IV Finale. Allegro giocoso 6.23

Total playing time  54.42

DISC TWO

Trio No. 3 in C Minor, Op. 101 (1886) 21.43
1 I Allegro energico 7.35
2 II Presto non assai 3.50
3 III Andante grazioso 4.07
4 IV Allegro molto 6.11

Concerto Violin and Cello in A Minor, Op. 102 (1887) 32.56
5 I Allegro 16.44
6 II Andante 7.25
7 III Vivace non troppo 8.47

Total playing time  54.42
Born on 7th May 1833 in the Hanseatic port of Hamburg, Johannes Brahms was the son of a musician who earned his living entertaining at the taverns and dance halls of the city, later finding employment as a double bass player in the Hamburg Philharmonie. His mother was a seamstress who was seventeen years senior to her husband. The young Johannes was given lessons on the cello and the horn, but it was his ability as a pianist that brought him into contact with one of Hamburg's leading teachers, Eduard Marxsen. This pedagogical relationship laid the foundations for his love of the music of Bach and Viennese composers such as Beethoven, while he supplemented the family's income by giving piano lessons and performing at private social gatherings and in the city's theatres.

Brahms is considered Beethoven's successor in terms of his orchestral output, but for chamber music it was as much from the archetypically Romantic figure of Robert Schumann that he took over the torch, redefining its boundaries and scale in the nineteenth century and remaining a powerful influence until well into the twentieth. Written when he was in his twenties, the Piano Trio No. 1 in B major is Brahms's first surviving chamber work. Brahms had met the violinist Joseph Joachim while on a concert tour through northern Germany in 1853, and it was Joachim who encouraged Brahms to seek out Robert and Clara Schumann at their home in Düsseldorf. Schumann's enthusiastic recommendations helped Brahms find new contacts and a publisher in Leipzig, and the future looked bright. Brahms started work on the trio early in 1854, but February of that year saw Robert Schumann's final breakdown, suicide attempt and confinement to a sanatorium in Endenich. Brahms travelled to the aid of Clara Schumann in Düsseldorf, helping take care of the family and other business while Clara resumed her career as a concert pianist. Brahms saw Clara as his feminine ideal despite or perhaps even in part because of her fourteen years seniority over him. Her affection was returned in the form of a close friendship, and this endured for their whole lives.

Always extremely self-critical, Brahms knew there were weaknesses in his youthful opus 8, but as it had already been published it wasn't until 1889 that he was able to make revisions, when Breitkopf and Härtel sold the rights to their catalogue of his music. A comparison of the two versions provides fascinating insights into what Brahms considered valuable, such as the expansive and song-like opening with cello and piano and the Beethoven-tinged hymn which sets the mood of the Adagio. Allusions to Beethoven whether intended or coincidental can also be found in the fourth movement, with a suggestion that Brahms is quoting Nimm sie hin denn diese Lieder, the last song from Beethoven's cycle An die ferne...
Trio Shaham Erez Wallfisch

Trio Shaham Erez Wallfisch was founded in 2009 and comprises three of the finest international instrumentalists performing today. Hailed for his thrilling virtuosity, lustrous tone and profound artistic expression, Hagai Shaham is internationally recognized as one of the most exciting Israeli violinists. A student of the renowned Professor Ilona Feher. Among Shaham’s awards is a first prize at the ARD Munich Competition. As a soloist he performed with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, English Chamber, Israel Philharmonic, Jerusalem, Prague Phil, Baden-Baden, São Paulo, Hong Kong, Taipei, Singapore and KBS Seoul Symphony orchestras. Hagai Shaham recorded 30 albums for Hyperion, Nimbus, Avie, Chandos, EMI, Champs Hill, Naxos and Decca which have been enthusiastically received by international press. Hagai Shaham is a professor at the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music at Tel Aviv University, as well as an Artist in Residence at Stony Brook University, New York. He is a co-founder and of the Ilona Feher Foundation for promoting young Israeli violinists.

Highly acclaimed for his sensitivity, virtuosity and profound musical interpretation, Arnon Erez has gained a worldwide reputation as an outstanding pianist. Erez partnership with violinist Hagai Shaham, winning the first prize at the Munich ARD International Duo Competition in 1990, has led to numerous concerts and recordings, highly praised by the critics. He has performed at many major venues including NY Carnegie Hall, Musikverein in Vienna, The Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and London’s Wigmore Hall. Arnon Erez has recorded numerous CDs for Nimbus, Hyperion, Delos, Classic Talent, Eroica, Cello Classics, CRI and Biddulph labels. Arnon Erez heads the Chamber Music Department and is a piano professor at the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music, Tel Aviv University.

Raphael Wallfisch was born in London into a family of distinguished musicians, his mother the cellist Anita Lasker-Wallfisch and his father the pianist Peter Wallfisch. At the age of twenty-four he won the Gaspar Cassado International Cello Competition in Florence. Since then he has enjoyed a worldwide career playing with the world’s greatest orchestras including London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia, BBC Symphony, Halle, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Berlin Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Indianapolis Symphony, Warsaw Philharmonic, Czech Philharmonic and many others. He is regularly invited to play at major festivals such as the BBC Proms, Edinburgh, Aldeburgh, Spoleto, Prades, KBS Seoul and Schleswig Holstein. With a discography of over 70 discs on EMI, Chandos, Black Box, ASV, Naxos and Nimbus Raphael Wallfisch is one of the most recorded classical artists in the world.

Geliebte, to which Schumann’s Fantasie, Op. 17 also refers. The changes between the two versions amount to a re-composing of much of the piece, but Brahms retained the unusual minor key poignancy of this final movement. It can only be speculation as to whether this mood had any relation to the tragedy taking place in the Schumann household, but the music must have held strong associations with this stressful period for all concerned.

The Piano Trio No. 2 in C major was written at the height of Brahms’s fame in Europe and the USA, his performing calendar as busy as his composing schedule. Brahms had completed his Violin Concerto in 1878 in close collaboration with Joseph Joachim, but the two had fallen out over Brahms’s support for Amalie Joachim during the couple’s divorce in 1881. Ideas for a new piano trio were brewing in 1880, and sketches for a work in E flat major and what would become the Op. 87 trio were shown to some close friends by the composer in that year. Brahms took up the C major trio again in 1882, finishing it while spending his summer in the fashionable resort of Bad Ischl near Salzburg. The first movement contrasts heroic stirrings in the opening with introversion in the second theme, setting up fertile ground for extended development on a symphonic scale. Brahms had been fascinated by Hungarian folk music since encountering political refugees in Hamburg in 1848, and the rhythms in the violin and cello at the start of the soulful second movement embrace that gypsy style. The rippling piano figures and opening out of the melody into a bea tific final major-key modulation in the final minutes of the movement might serve as a model for composers of romantic film music today. The Scherzo brings us back into a darker minor key mood of mystery and drama, its fleeting nature given a grander landscape through the flowering of a lofty central section. Brahms indicates the joyous nature of the Finale in his Allegro giocoso marking, and there is a palpable sense of fun in the way he adds variations into his chosen rondo form.

The Piano Trio No. 3 in C minor was also written at a summer resort, this time in 1886 at Hofstatten, looking out over the beautiful Lake Thun in Switzerland. This dramatic work contrasts with other chamber music from this period: the monumental Cello Sonata, Op. 99 and the lyrical Violin Sonata, Op. 100, but these pieces all share a non-nonsense directness and concentrated intensity of means, bringing Brahms’s chamber music to new levels of expressive power. Clara Schumann could be as critical as Brahms himself about his compositions, but even she declared ‘what a piece!’ in her diary. The kinetic energy of the first movement carries through into a restless urgency throughout the entire work, with even the calm waters of the Andante grazioso third movement disturbed by irregular phrases and
the spreading ripples of darker, more anxious harmonies. Shifts between the time signatures of 3/4 and 2/4 and 9/8 and 6/8 generate rhythmic uncertainty and constantly wrong-foot any listener intent on conducting along with the music. Brahms creates compactness and piles up stresses elsewhere in the trio through reduction and anticipation, allowing phrases to crash into each other like waves onto a stony shore. He has also largely moved away from the sequential passages and moments of extended transition still evident in the Piano Trio No. 2, also delivering an uncanny clarity of texture through an enhancement of the identity of each instrument individually, or in their unified function as a kind of orchestral ‘section’.

From Brahms’s first completed chamber-music work in the Piano Trio No. 1, we now move to his last orchestral work in the Concerto for Violin and Cello (Double Concerto). As mentioned previously, Brahms’s relationship with Joseph Joachim had cooled in 1881, but the violinist had continued to champion the composer’s works and their correspondence in 1887 shows Brahms’s rather tentative proposals for a new collaboration being replied to with enthusiasm. Before long, rehearsals were underway together with the cellist from the Joachim Quartet, Robert Hausmann. The reconciliatory nature of Brahms’s double concerto is flagged from the outset in a musical statement which declared a bond between the two musicians. Brahms and Joachim apparently shared an admiration for Giovanni Battista Viotti’s violin concertos and No. 22 in particular, and while the new Double Concerto shares the A minor key of Viotti’s Concerto No. 22, more specifically there is an audible connection between the answering phrase of the first theme of that work and Brahms’s opening orchestral declaration in his Op. 102.

The unusual combination of these two solo instruments has led to the relative neglect of this concerto when compared to the Violin Concerto or two Piano Concertos, but even with the forthright Clara’s remarking on ‘a few rough passages’ it won her admiration as something ‘fresh [and] full of interesting themes and development’. Suggestions have been made of the work’s indebtedness to Mozart’s Sinfonia concertante for violin and viola and Beethoven’s Triple Concerto, and while Brahms would undoubtedly have been aware of these examples this Double Concerto remains resolutely individualistic and characteristic of his style. Features from the piano trios can be traced in the way the solo violin and cello unite expressively in playing the gorgeous first theme of the central Andante in octaves, while the distinctive symphonic colours of Brahms’s orchestration are infused throughout the work like rock strata on the face of a cliff. The first movement is truly symphonic, though its architecture is constantly in a state of tension between the clarity of the orchestral themes and the rhapsodic nature of the solo parts, something which is declared from the outset with the cello cadenza and subsequent duet which occupy the first few minutes of the work like a declaratory prelude. As ever with Brahms his material is in constant flux, and the constant varying of themes and motives means there is never a falling back on established patterns and conventions. Even in this most abstract of worlds it is tempting to imagine Brahms hearing himself as the cello, talking to Joachim in modo d’un recitativo as indicated by the first solo entry, but also in the affectionate tenderness of some of the music given to that instrument. Clara commented more on the beauty of sound than the actual music with regard to the slow central movement, which unsentimentally climbs away from the key of A minor into an uplifting D major. The amorous lyrical nature of the music turns into an almost programmatically illustrative discussion between the soloists at one point, the aloof sounding violin replied to with gruff defiance by the cello three times before unity is restored. The third movement brings us back to the Hungarian gypsy style that emerged in the Piano Trio No. 2, this time with dancing rhythms, extrovertly playful writing for the soloists and some potent moments of harmonic inventiveness comparable in quality to anything in Brahms’s orchestral work; the whole thing concluding in an expansively radiant A major.

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Trio Shaham Erez Wallfisch
Brahms
The Piano Trios • Concerto for Violin & Cello