

BRAHMS, BELOVED

Roy Malan, violin and concert director
Robin Sutherland, piano ♦ Carlos Ortega, clarinet
Susan Freier, violin ♦ Polly Malan, viola ♦ Stephen Harrison, cello

Allegro from F.A.E. Sonata (1853)

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Roy Malan and Robin Sutherland

Clarinet Sonata in f minor, Op. 120, no. 1 (1894)

Allegro appassionata

Andante un poco adagio

Allegretto grazioso

Vivace

Carlos Ortega and Robin Sutherland

Intermission

Clarinet Quintet in B minor, Op. 115 (1891)

Allegro

Adagio

Andantino—Presto non assai, ma con sentimento

Con moto

Roy Malan, Susan Freier, Polly Malan, Stephen Harrison, and Carlos Ortega

September 29, 7:30 PM and September 30, 3:00 PM

Christ Lutheran Church

10707 Soquel Drive, Aptos, CA

This concert is sponsored by **Rowland and Pat Rebele.**

Polly Malan is sponsored by **Robert Kaswen.**

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🏹 Notes About The Program 🏹

While Brahms is without a doubt one of today's most beloved composers, he got off to a slow start. The fact that he seemed to make a point of insulting people publicly didn't help. In Vienna, Brahms left a party saying, "If there is anybody here I have not insulted, I apologize."

At first, to some his music seemed too serious, but it turned out to have remarkable endurance, and by the 1960's he had elbowed Beethoven aside as the most popular of symphonic composers.

In his youth, Brahms was a handsome man, slim with fair hair and a high voice. In maturity, he became heavy-set, grew an enormous beard, and became the sloppiest of dressers in baggy, patched trousers with a plaid shawl around his shoulders secured by a safety pin. He always carried a hat, but never put it on. He retained his squeaky voice throughout his life as can be heard as he introduces himself before playing a few bars of a Hungarian dance on an ancient cylinder recording made at the height of his fame.

However, all of Brahms's biographers are unanimous in saying that beneath the gruff exterior was a heart of gold. He was especially helpful to Antonín Dvořák, even editing his music for publication while Dvořák was on a conducting tour in England.

Robert Schumann was another close friend, and the two of them joined by Dietrich, each wrote movements to a sonata for a mutual friend (the *F.A.E. Sonata*). Brahms' contribution, a brilliant scherzo, opens today's program and to us he will always be **Brahms, Beloved!**

By March 1891, Brahms' creative impetus appeared to have faded away! He had stopped composing: in fact had composed nothing for more than a year, and had completed his will. But then, apparently unexpectedly, while visiting Meiningen, the conductor of the court orchestra drew Brahms' attention to the playing of their erstwhile violinist, now principal clarinetist, Richard Mühlfeld (1856-1907), who then performed privately for Brahms. As Anton Stadler had previously inspired Mozart, so now Mühlfeld inspired Brahms. There rapidly followed four wonderful chamber pieces: the *Trio for piano, clarinet and cello Op. 114*, today's *Quintet Op 115*, and two clarinet and piano *Sonatas Op. 120, Nos. 1 and 2* (the first of which is also performed today).

In the hundred years since Mozart wrote his clarinet quintet, the instrument had evolved into something akin to the modern Boehm clarinet, which has the clarinet fingering system used by and large today. Its larger number of keys, and consequently (hopefully!) simpler fingerings, made rapid chromatic playing easier than was possible on the much simpler clarinets used before, albeit to great effect, by Stadler.

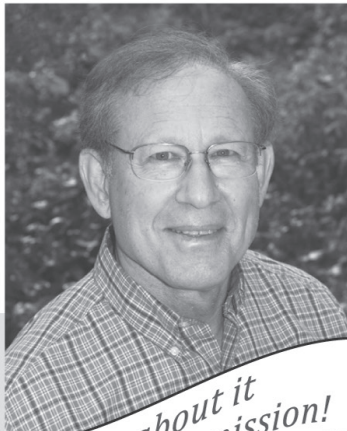
The opening B minor theme on the two violins provides much of the basic material for the work. The clarinet then enters with a rising arpeggio just as in Mozart's quintet, and leads us to a contrasting staccato motif with rapid accompanying triplets that are tossed between the instruments. The Adagio in B major has a slow melody in the clarinet accompanied by a Brahms trademark complex rhythm superimposing triplets with syncopated duplets in the strings.

The two illustrated themes are then combined in the turbulent B minor central section of the move-

ment with gymnastic flourishes from the clarinet. The third movement opens with a calm Andantino leading to the Presto scherzo and a contrasting Trio section with pizzicato strings. The last movement is a theme and five variations, with the theme related to many of those in the previous movements. The cello leads the first variation, the first violin and clarinet the second, the more embellished third and the fourth, which moves into B major. The viola then returns us to B minor with a restatement of the theme but in the rhythm of the first movement.

In the final coda the first violin returns to the very opening of the first movement, the clarinet adds a major version of the viola's restatement and the work ends in peaceful agreement.

--Program Notes by Roy Malan, Chris Darwin, and Jeff Gallagher



*Ask me about it
during intermission!*

Peter Martin Poriss

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