



**WAWERS!**

**FALL CONCERTS** 2023

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**Timothy Ridout** viola  
**Jonathan Ware** piano  
Sunday November 5 2023

# From the Artistic Director

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Dear Friends:

British violist Timothy Ridout performed a Virtually VRS concert, with violinist Benjamin Baker, which we shared with you all during the early days of the pandemic (you can still find it on our YouTube channel). Ever since, I've been counting the days to hearing him live in Vancouver! Finally, the time has arrived and he's here with Jonathan Ware in a wonderfully rich and varied program for viola and piano.

I would like to thank our Season Sponsor, the Peak Group of Companies, and our Next Generation Artist supporters, the Edwina and Paul Heller Fund at the Vancouver Foundation and RBC Foundation through its Emerging Artists Fund.

We are delighted to welcome new concert sponsors, Colleen and Nick Filler, and we thank them for their generosity.

We are also grateful for the support of the City of Vancouver and the Government of British Columbia.

We are thrilled that, in addition to this performance for the VRS, Timothy and Jonathan will perform a concert for the students of the Killarney Secondary School strings program and will give a masterclass at the Vancouver Academy of Music.

Enjoy the performance.

Sincerely,



Leila



## CELLPHONES

The use of cellphones and recording devices is prohibited in the concert hall. Please take this opportunity to turn off all electronic devices.

音乐厅内禁止使用手机，禁止拍照，录音，录像。请观众关闭所有电子器材，感谢您的合作。

# Program

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**Timothy Ridout**, viola  
**Jonathan Ware**, piano

**Sunday, November 5, 2023 3:00 pm**  
**Vancouver Playhouse**

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)  
**Sonata No. 1 in F minor Op. 120 No. 1**

Allegro amabile  
Allegro appassionato  
Andante con moto  
Allegro

(approx. 24 minutes)

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)  
**Viola Sonata in C minor MWV Q14**

Adagio – Allegro  
Menuetto – Trio. Più lento – Tempo I  
Andante con variazioni  
Allegro molto

(approx. 28 minutes)

INTERMISSION

CLARA SCHUMANN (1819-1896)  
**Three Romances Op. 22**

Andante molto  
Allegretto  
Leidenschaftlich schnell

(approx. 10 minutes)

CÉSAR FRANCK (1822-1890)  
**Sonata in A major** (arr. for viola and piano)

Allegretto ben moderato  
Allegro  
Recitativo-Fantasia  
Allegretto poco mosso

(approx. 30 minutes)

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# Timothy Ridout viola

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**Early Life & Education:** Born in London in 1995, Timothy studied at the Royal Academy of Music, graduating with the Queen's Commendation for Excellence. He completed his master's degree at the Kronberg Academy with Nobuko Imai in 2019 and, in 2018, took part in Kronberg Academy's Chamber Music Connects the World. He plays a Peregrino di Zanetto viola, c. 1565–75, on loan from a generous patron of Beare's International Violin Society.

**This Season:** The 2023-24 season sees Timothy join WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln, Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra alongside the likes of Kazuki Yamada and Sir Simon Rattle. Further highlights include his return to the United States with Camerata Pacifica and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and his debut with Royal Northern Sinfonia.



Photo credit: Jiyang Chen

**Performances:** An iconic chamber musician, Timothy continues to present both solo and ensemble programmes across venues such as Wigmore Hall, Concertgebouw Amsterdam and Alice Tully Hall. In the 2023-24 season, Timothy appears frequently at Wigmore Hall, returning to the venue multiple times with a selection of leading names including Benjamin Grosvenor, Hyeyoon Park, Kian Soltani, Janine Jansen, Daniel Blendulf and Denis Kozhukhin, building on his existing collaborations with artists like Joshua Bell, Isabelle Faust, Christian Tetzlaff, Nicolas Altstaedt and Steven Isserlis. Timothy also continues to collaborate with Tim Posner and Tim Crawford as part of The Teyber Trio, as well as performing recitals with pianists Frank Dupree, Jonathan Ware and James Baillieu.

**Recordings:** Timothy regularly records for the Harmonia Mundi label. His latest release, recorded with Martyn Brabbins and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, features Lionel Tertis' arrangement of Elgar's Cello Concerto for viola and orchestra and Ernest Bloch's Suite for Viola and Orchestra. It builds on his already impressive discography comprising works by Prokofiev and Schumann on Timonthy's album *A Poet's Love* and a recording of Berlioz's *Harold en Italie* with John Nelson.

Timothy Ridout is represented by Harrison Parrott, London, UK.

# Jonathan Ware piano

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**Early Life & Education:** Jonathan was born in Texas and now resides in Berlin, where he teaches at the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler and the Barenboim-Said Academy. Jonathan studied at the Juilliard School, the Eastman School of Music and the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler.

**Performances:** Recent performances saw Jonathan with Elsa Dreisig at Bayerischer Rundfunk, Kölner Philharmonie and Wigmore Hall in a new 1920s program; with Bejun Mehta at Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Philharmonie Luxembourg and Mozartfest Augsburg; with Camilla Tilling at Spivey Hall in a Jenny Lind-inspired selection; and with Brenda Rae at Wigmore Hall in Schubert and Strauss. Following recent appearances at Verbier Festival and Festival Lied Würzburg with Ema Nikolovska, the pair reunited at Wigmore Hall this season, where Jonathan also collaborated with tenors Simon Bode and Kieran Carrel.



Photo credit: Kaupo Kikkas

**This Season:** Highlights from the 2023-24 season include a new collaboration with Samuel Mariño at the Sala Sinfónica Pablo Casals in Puerto Rico; a return to Carnegie Hall with Simon Bode; a UK tour with clarinettist Jonathan Leibowitz taking them to West Wight Arts Association, Bath Mozartfest and Falkirk; and a continuation of the 1920s program with Elsa Dreisig in Clermont-Auvergne.

**Recordings:** Over the last year, Jonathan has recorded with Elsa Dreisig for Warner Classics; Ludwig Mittelhammer for Berlin Classics and Bayerischer Rundfunk; and Renata Pokupić and Krešimir Stražanac for the Croatian Radio Television label.

**Awards & Prizes:** Awards include the Pianist's Prize at both Das Lied and Wigmore Hall/Kohn Foundation International Song competitions, as well as First Prize with Ludwig Mittelhammer in the International Hugo Wolf Competition.

Jonathan Ware is represented by Harrison Parrott, London, UK



# Program Notes

## Johannes Brahms

### Sonata No. 1 in F minor Op. 120 No. 1

At a time when European music was turning towards large programmatic orchestral works performed in grandiose public concerts, Brahms continued to write music created from just the basic building blocks of the tonal system, music intended for private performance by small ensembles in front of an audience of connoisseurs. In so doing, he stimulated the growth of a rich new literature of chamber works that featured hitherto neglected instruments such as the clarinet and viola in a leading role.

His special interest in the clarinet came late in life when, in 1891, he encountered the playing of Richard Mühlfeld, principal clarinetist in the court orchestra of Meiningen (Thuringia), noted for his warm tone and expressive playing. Brahms' last published chamber works were two sonatas, Op. 120, composed in 1894 for clarinet and piano (dedicated to Mühlfeld) and then re-issued by the composer in a version for viola. This was not a mere afterthought, as Brahms had intended the work to be played on either instrument from the outset, writing to his publisher when readying the work for publication: "I am planning to include *for clarinet or viola* in the title."

\* \* \*

The Sonata in F minor Op. 120 No. 1 is in the four canonical movements of the classical tradition: a sonata-form first movement, a serene and poetic slow movement, a gentle dance-like intermezzo (Brahms' stand-in for the Beethovenian scherzo) and, to conclude, a wonderfully upbeat rondo.

Despite being labelled as F minor – the key of Beethoven's stormy *Appassionata* Sonata Op. 57 and Brahms' own darkly passionate Quintet Op. 34 – the overall aesthetic direction of this work bends towards more optimistic emotions, in the major mode. The first movement, though turbulent in parts, resolves its fury by the end in a placid F major final cadence. The two middle movements are in the relative major of A flat. And the finale has no allegiance to the minor mode whatsoever, being centred in a cheerful and chipper F major from its opening bars. This is Brahms in the full "mellowness" of his last years.

The first movement *Allegro appassionato* contains a wealth of thematic material. It opens with an enigmatic passage in piano octaves that will, in typical Brahmsian fashion, feed motivic developments throughout the movement.



This leads directly into the first theme, an expansively broad, yearning melody presented by the viola in deep-breathing phrases constructed, like those in the opening bars of the Fourth Symphony, from a series of wide melodic intervals.



The second theme, also in the minor mode, could not be more different. Comprised of gruff little utterances in the low register, it introduces an element of irascible punchiness – a staple of the youthful Brahms – to what has been, so far, a fairly rhapsodic flow of musical ideas.



The development section is a further study in contrasts. Beginning in a wistful mood of innocent reverie, it erupts halfway through into volcanic passion, with the second theme, made sonorously grand in the scoring of the piano part, animating the lava flow. The eruption continues until the viola smooths out the waves of emotion with its re-introduction of the sweeping first theme to begin the recapitulation. Brahms loved to create textures bristling with cross-rhythms, but this final section features a rippling four-against-three passage that is remarkable even for Brahms.



This rocky ride completed, the remainder of the sonata guides us hand-in-hand through gentler emotional terrain, beginning with a serene and evocative *Andante un poco adagio* slow movement.



This exquisitely delicate movement is pervaded by a sense of longing created by its appoggiatura-laden bird-song melody, perched atop slow-to-resolve, widely spaced harmonies that float like sonic lacework in tonal space.

The *Allegretto grazioso* movement that follows evokes the gentle swaying of the *Ländler*, the Austrian rural equivalent of the Viennese waltz.



Brahms subtly promotes this swaying sensation by regularly switching between bars with the long note on the first beat and those with the long note on the second beat. Country dancing is even more explicitly evoked in passages featuring a bass drone and a hefty “stomping” rhythm.



A “raindrop” middle section of soft syncopations tumbling down from the upper reaches of the piano register provides a brief repose from all this dancing activity.

The finale is a congenial rondo that opens with a three-note “knock on the door” and accompanying 8th-note chatter, a motive that will ring in your ears in many guises before this movement is through.



This “motto” opening is of course just a fanfare to introduce the rondo refrain melody that will alternate with intervening episodes in the course of the movement. And what a carefree, tripping little melody it is, eminently suitable for humming in the shower or whistling to oneself while gardening.



Notice how craftily Brahms incorporates the three-knock “motto” motive into the bass line, as if it were the underlying topic in every musical conversation.

And indeed, while the movement unfolds in an alternating series of refrains and contrasting episodes in an A-B-A-C-B-A pattern, this three-note motto motive is so pervasive, in so many guises, that virtually every set of three long notes in the score – no matter what the pitch and where the notes occur – seems to remind us of it, even in the closing measures.





## Felix Mendelssohn Viola Sonata in C minor MWV Q14

Mendelssohn's *Viola Sonata in C minor* is a youthful work, its manuscript dated 24 February 1824, just after the composer's fifteenth birthday. It had remained largely unknown until the 1950s, when it was discovered in the archives of the Berlin State Library and then eventually published in 1966.

In its setting in the "troubled" key of C minor, its cyclical linkage between movements, and its massive end-weighting in a finale longer than the previous movements combined, it reveals the young composer's infatuation with the most famous works of Beethoven. And yet, in its transparency of texture, its lightness of touch and compositional ingenuity, it amply foreshadows the qualities for which the mature composer was later to be known.

The work comprises three movements: a sonata-form first movement with slow introduction, a minuet movement, and, to conclude, a set of variations of remarkable emotional range.

The first movement's slow introduction, tasked with building up suspense before the arrival of the first theme, is handled largely by harmonic wanderings in the piano. The viola adds little to the unfolding mystery.



All that changes, however, when the exposition begins and the viola bursts out of the starting gate, Pathétique-Sonata-style, heading for the sky.



This volley of arpeggio action is soon contrasted with a chatty but less wide-ranging second theme in the major mode. In the development section, both themes engage in a polite little sparring match, contrapuntally speaking, until an eerie calm settles over the proceedings that announces – to those who have heard this kind of set-up before – that the recapitulation is just around the corner.

Given the restless energy of this movement and its mock vehement tone, the only surprise awaiting the ears of listeners is just how quietly it ends.

Perhaps that is because there is no change in key for the following *Menuetto* and the serious young man composing this work has still more to say in C minor.



This dance-inspired movement is dominated by the alternation of a quirky “tie-over-the-bar” opening theme, with its chromatically descending bass line, and a smoother melody less prone to such frequent “sneezing”.

The contrasting *Trio* section could not be more contrasting, almost resembling the stolid, starchy pacing of a Lutheran chorale. Full marks to the young Mendelssohn, however, for his mastery of chromatic harmony.

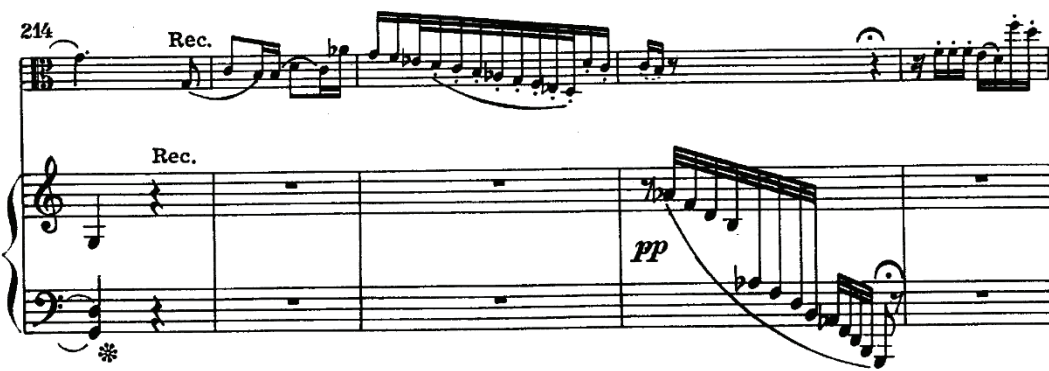


The last movement *Andante con variazioni* seems reluctant to abandon the musical motives used in the preceding *Menuetto*. Its variation theme is marked by the same suspension over the bar line and elements of the chromatically descending bass, as well.



The eight variations that follow are presented not as separate entities but as part of a continuous flow, with no separation between them, in the manner of Beethoven's *Variations in C minor* for piano. They start out following traditional procedure by filling in the theme's harmonic template with ornamental filigree and offering a bit of chatty by-play between the instruments. But in Var. 6, the mood changes as the piano begins to roam much more expansively over the keyboard, setting up a change in the very *character* of the movement.

This is confirmed in the aggressive dotted rhythms of Var. 7 and moves into full-on fantasy territory in the last variation, which emerges in the tone colours of a pure and luminous C major. Here we enter a completely different sound world, perhaps inspired by the magical transformations of timbre and texture in the final variations that conclude Beethoven's Sonata in C minor Op. 111. This is a sound world in which vast walls of keyboard sound pulse and shimmer while scraps of thematic material swim about in the swirling mix, culminating in a dramatic viola recitative.



This leads into an increasingly furious coda that gradually recalls the work's original inspiration in the serious character of the C-minor tonality and, in an accelerating whirlwind of 16<sup>th</sup> notes, brings the movement to an emphatic close.

## Clara Schumann Three Romances Op. 22

When in 1853 Robert Schumann was admitted to a sanatorium after his suicide attempt, the world lost two fine composers, not one, because from that point on, his wife Clara – the love of his life and mother of their eight children – virtually ceased composing. She had a unique voice as a composer, quite separate from that of her husband, but for the next forty years she devoted herself to caring for her family and promoting her husband's works in her position as one of Europe's most respected and admired concert pianists. Her *Three Romances for Violin and Piano*, the last work she composed in that fateful year 1853, gives us the measure of what was lost.

While this work was written for and dedicated to the legendary concert violinist Joseph Joachim (1831-1907), with whom Clara often performed it on tour, it nevertheless is a classic example of *Hausmusik*, music to be played at home, by the hearth, before an audience of friends and loved ones. These *Three Romances* are broadly lyrical without aspiring to achieve dramatic intensity or aiming to make grand statements of any kind. Each begins in an unassuming manner and ends peacefully. There is a Biedermeier warmth and coziness in each that reminds one of Mendelssohn, while the depth of sonority coming from the middle and lower registers is distinctly Brahmsian.

The *Andante molto* represents well the heartfelt sincerity of feeling in the set as a whole with its warm harmonic drapery, its striking conversational intimacy between the instruments and its melodic lines dimpled with endearing chromatic appoggiaturas.

The image displays the musical score for the first movement of Clara Schumann's *Three Romances*, Op. 22, No. 1, titled "Andante molto". The score is written for Violin (Violine) and Piano (Klavier). The tempo is marked "Andante molto". The key signature is three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor), and the time signature is 3/8. The score begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The Violin part features a melodic line with chromatic appoggiaturas. The Piano part provides a harmonic accompaniment with a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a more active bass line. The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the initial measures, and the second system, starting at measure 5, continues the melodic and harmonic development. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, accidentals, and dynamic markings.

The composer's way of alternating duple and triple groupings within the bar line gives the melodic flow the naturalness of human speech.

The *Allegretto* movement opens with a plaintive melody in the minor mode made all the more expressive by the yearning intensity of its repeated large leaps.

**Leidenschaftlich schnell**

**Leidenschaftlich schnell**

3

In the middle section, however, these same melodic gestures turn buoyantly cheerful when placed in the major mode and embellished with trills.

In the last movement, marked *Leidenschaftlich schnell* (passionately fast), the piano largely abandons its conversational role, preferring instead to simply furnish the harmonic background to the violinist's wide-ranging and intensely lyrical melodic line.

**Allegretto Mit zartem Vortrage**

The rippling, strumming and plucking of the piano's frequently changing accompaniment patterns provides an underlay of textural contrast within this unusually rapturous *romance*.

## César Franck

### Sonata in A major (arr. for viola and piano)

It will be a while yet before the *Huffington Post* is read by musicologists as a scholarly journal, and yet Alan Elsner, the Huff Po reporter hot on the trail of breaking news in 19th-century Belgian music, is not wide of the mark when he observes in a 29 Nov. 2011 article that:

*There is a kind of breathless religious ecstasy to Franck's music – soaring themes; simple, pure harmonies; those ceaseless, swirling, gliding accompaniments. This, one feels, is truly the music of the angels.*

The work inspiring such shortness of breath and heady spiritual delirium in the intrepid journalist is, of course, Franck's *Sonata in A major for violin & piano*, a work often played by violists and cellists, as well. It was composed as a wedding present for the Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe (1858-1931) and was in fact performed at the violinist's wedding in 1886 by Ysaÿe himself and a wedding-guest pianist.

The *Allegretto ben moderato* first movement floats in a world of harmonic uncertainty. It opens with a number of dreamy piano chords, each followed by a simple chordal interval, as if giving the pitches to the instrumentalist, who then obliges by using them to create a gently rocking, barcarolle-like melody, the outline of which will infuse much of the work as a whole.

Violon.

Piano.

*Allegretto ben Moderato.*

*molto dolce*

*pp*

This theme, played by the violin over a simple chordal accompaniment from the piano, builds in urgency until it can hold it no more and a second theme, played by the piano, takes centre stage in a lyrical outpouring of almost melodramatic intensity but ending in a dark turn to the minor.

*a tempo sempre forte e largamente*

The violin will have none of it, however, and dreams both sleepwalkers back to the major mode for an amicable review of the two themes, both in the home key. The serenity of this movement results from its rhythmic placidness, often featuring a sparse, simple chordal accompaniment in the piano and little rhythmic variation in the wandering pastoral “de-DUM-de-DUM” triplets of the violin.

Where drama breaks out for real is in the *Allegro* second movement, one of the most challenging in the chamber repertoire for the pianist. This sonata-form movement bolts from the starting gate with a swirling vortex of 16ths in the piano, fretting anxiously over a theme in the mid-range that is soon picked up by the violin.





Its worrisome collection of motives is based on the same small-hop intervals that opened the first movement but reversed in direction and cast in the minor mode. A sunnier mood prevails in the second theme



which, however, ebbs away as both instruments take stock of the ground covered in a sober interlude marked *Quasi lento*.

The development section engages in a full and frank discussion of the two themes until the convulsive agitation of the opening theme returns in the recapitulation. Despite the turbulence roiling at the heart of this movement, it manages to pull a major-mode ending out of a hat for its final cadence.

The slow third movement, a free-form meditation marked *Recitativo-Fantasia*, is bruised with the memory of the first movement's bliss. Its piano opening is almost a bitter parody of the sonata's very first bars.



As this thematic material is brooded over, the violin tries to change the subject several times in distracted flights of fancy, but eventually agrees to join with the piano in a ruminative journey that passes through nostalgic reminiscence to end in heart-wrenching pathos.

The searing intensity of the octave-leap “wailing” motif at the end of this movement is the most profound moment in the sonata. No major-mode ending here.

All tensions are eased, all hearts healed, however, in a last-movement rondo that offers up a simple tuneful melody in continuous alternation with brief sections of contrasting material.



This tune, so harmonically rooted as to suit being presented in strict canonic imitation (like a round), is shaped from the melodic outline of the theme that opened the sonata, bringing its cyclical journey full circle. Even the “wailing” motif from the previous movement is recalled to the stage to give it, too, a happy ending.

British musicologist David Fanning got it right when he intuited the celebratory meaning beneath Franck’s remarkable use of imitative counterpoint for the end of this “wedding present” sonata:

*It is hard to resist reading this as a musical symbol of married bliss, especially when the dialogue is placed even closer together, at a distance of half a bar rather than a full bar, on the deliriously happy closing page.*

Program notes by  
Donald G. Gíslason 2023

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There are many ways to support the VRS including making a philanthropic gift, sponsoring a concert and/or including us in your estate plans. If you would like more information, please contact us at 604.602.0363.

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