

# WIGMORE HALL

Monday 13 January 2025  
1.00pm

Tabea Zimmermann viola  
Andrei Banciu piano

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Scherzo in C minor from *F-A-E Sonata* (1853)

Clara Schumann (1819-1896)

3 Romances Op. 22 (1853)  
*Romance in D flat* • *Romance in G minor* •  
*Romance in B flat*

Joseph Joachim (1831-1907)

Sostenuto from *Hebräische Melodien* Op. 9 (1855)

Robert Fuchs (1847-1927)

From 6 *Phantasiestücke* Op. 117 (pub.1927)  
*Ländler Tempo* • *Ruhig und ausdrucksvoll* •  
*Leicht bewegt* • *Mässig bewegt*

George Enescu (1881-1955)

Concertstück (1906)

Stan Golestan (1875-1956)

Arioso et Allegro de concert (1932)



This concert is being broadcast on BBC Radio 3



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When, in May 1853, **Clara Schumann** heard the brilliant young Hungarian violinist **Joseph Joachim** play Beethoven's Violin Concerto at a festival in Düsseldorf, she was captivated. Her admiration for Joachim's playing would blossom into a lifelong friendship. She composed these 3 Romances between 4-18 July 1853 and dedicated them to 'the esteemed musician and friend Joseph Joachim'. Before long, they were playing the Romances together on tour. King George of Hanover reportedly adored them, and it's easy to hear why – their tender, song-like melodies fit the violin like a glove, and they possess a poetry, a playfulness (in the second Romance) and a bittersweet passion (in the third) that gives a vivid impression of what it meant to be part of this particular musical friendship circle.

Around midday on 30 September 1853, the 20-year old **Johannes Brahms** arrived, unannounced, at the Düsseldorf home of Robert and Clara Schumann. They welcomed him wholeheartedly - 'Visit from Brahms, a genius' noted Robert in his diary. Brahms settled in Düsseldorf for the autumn, visiting the Schumanns every day. Since Joseph Joachim was to visit for a recital at the end of October, it seemed the most natural thing in the world that Schumann, Brahms and Schumann's pupil Albert Dietrich should write a movement each of a collaborative violin sonata for their friend. Brahms agreed to write the Scherzo.

Unified by the three notes F-A-E (after Joachim's artistic motto *Frei aber einsam* - 'Free but lonely'), the sonata was presented to Joachim on 26 October, concealed in a basket of flowers. As he played it through with Clara, he was challenged to guess who wrote each movement. By all accounts, he didn't have much trouble.

The young Brahms had met Joachim in Hanover in the spring of 1853, and by the time he called on the Schumanns the pair had already become close friends and artistic confidants. Their mutual involvement with Robert and Clara merely set the seal on what was already a potent creative relationship; in fact, Joachim dedicated his three Hebrew Melodies to Brahms when they were published in 1855.

Joachim was himself Jewish, but as his subtitle – *Impressions of Byron's Poems* – indicates, these three pieces were actually inspired by Byron's 1816 verse anthology *Hebrew Melodies*: the poet's typically fantastic response, in turn, to the musical inventions of the Jewish composer Isaac Nathan. This first of Joachim's pieces is less an expression of a Hebrew musical heritage than a meeting of romantic minds – the fruit of a musical imagination that was always ready to be fired by tales and images from far away and long ago.

'Fuchs is a splendid musician' wrote Brahms, late in life, of his Viennese colleague, the organist conductor and composer **Robert Fuchs**. 'Everything is so fine and so skilful, so charmingly invented, that one is always pleased'. Fuchs, in his lifetime seems to have pleased

many of his colleagues. A student of Anton Bruckner, this 'dear, quiet and gracious teacher' maintained a relatively quiet public profile in his post as Professor of Music Theory at the Vienna Conservatoire, where his students included Enescu, Mahler, Sibelius, Korngold, Richard Strauss and Robert Stolz.

Fuchs was a prolific composer and though contemporaries knew him best for his series of inventive orchestral Serenades, he had a special fondness for string chamber music. His Phantasiestücke for viola were published in 1927, the last year of his life. As their title suggests, they're romantic miniatures in a tradition that extends back to Robert Schumann, by turns tender, lyrical and skittish – with occasional glances (such as the *Ländler* that opens today's selection) back to his youth amid the mountains of Styria.

**George Enescu** was a public figure in his native Romania before his 30th birthday, and the fact that he spent much of his adult life in France (where he had travelled to study in 1895) barely seemed to matter. Born to a landowning family in the rural Botoşani district, he was a child prodigy on the violin. But this national hero was also a young man in a hurry; possessed of a vaulting ambition that went far beyond mere musical flag-waving. 'Music, for me, is not a state of mind, but action', he remarked.

His Concertstück for viola dates from 1906 – commissioned from the 25-year old composer by Théophile Laforge, the famously progressive professor of viola at the Paris Conservatoire. The brief was to create an end-of-term, test-piece for Laforge's pupils but Enescu, true to form, let his imagination soar – deploying all his fantasy, as well as his own intimate understanding of string instruments, to create an extended romantic rhapsody in which the piano plays anything but a secondary role.

Enescu's compatriot **Stan Golestan** was born in the northeast of modern Romania, and he was also drawn to study abroad – though while Enescu looked first to Fuchs in Vienna, Golestan went directly to the Schola Cantorum in Paris. Like Enescu, Golestan remained loyal to his Romanian roots while playing an active role in the lively musical scene of early 20th century France. In 1915, he was an early recipient of the Prize that Enescu had established in his own name for outstanding Romanian musicians.

And like Enescu's Concertstück, Golestan's *Arioso et Allegro de concert* was a test-piece for the Paris Conservatoire – commissioned in 1932 by Laforge's successor Maurice Vieux. Its purpose is the same, and the spirit is similar. But there's a wilder, more angular edge to Golestan's invention – which takes the improvisatory spirit of the Romanian *doina* and the headlong virtuosity of the *hora* and dresses them in the clean-cut, boldly-harmonised fashions of jazz age Paris.

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