

# WIGMORE HALL

Friday 16 December 2022  
7.30pm

Johan Dalene violin  
Julia Hagen cello  
Igor Levit piano

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Violin Sonata No. 3 in D minor Op. 108 (1886-8)

*I. Allegro*

*II. Adagio*

*III. Un poco presto e con sentimento*

*IV. Presto agitato*

*Interval*

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Piano Trio No. 1 in B flat D898 (?1827)

*I. Allegro moderato*

*II. Andante un poco mosso*

*III. Scherzo. Allegro*

*IV. Rondo. Allegro vivace - Presto*

Igor Levit appears by arrangement with Classic Concerts Management GmbH

CLASSIC *fm*

Wigmore Hall £5 tickets for Under 35s supported by Media Partner Classic FM



This concert is part of the CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust ticket scheme, offering free tickets to those aged 8-25

## Friends of Wigmore Hall – celebrating 30 years of friendship

Over the past 30 years, Friends have been providing transformational support for the Hall, ensuring this historic building remains a home for great music making. Enjoy the benefits of friendship by joining as a Friend today, and be a part of the Wigmore story. Visit: [wigmore-hall.org.uk/friends](http://wigmore-hall.org.uk/friends) | Call: 020 7258 8230

FRIENDS OF  
WIGMORE HALL

30

Wigmore Hall is a no smoking venue. No recording or photographic equipment may be taken into the auditorium nor used in any other part of the Hall without the prior written permission of the management.

In accordance with the requirements of City of Westminster persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any other gangways. If standing is permitted in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating, it shall be limited to the number indicated in the notices exhibited in those positions.

Disabled Access and Facilities - full details from 020 7935 2141.

Wigmore Hall is equipped with a 'Loop' to help hearing aid users receive clear sound without background noise. Patrons can use this facility by switching hearing aids to 'T'.



Please ensure that watch alarms, mobile phones and any other electrical devices which can become audible are switched off. Phones on a vibrate setting can still be heard, please switch off.

The Wigmore Hall Trust Registered Charity No. 1024838  
36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP • [Wigmore-hall.org.uk](http://Wigmore-hall.org.uk) • John Gilhooly Director

Wigmore Hall Royal Patron HRH The Duke of Kent, KG  
Honorary Patrons Aubrey Adams OBE; André and Rosalie Hoffmann; Louise Kaye; Kohn Foundation; Mr and Mrs Paul Morgan



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



**Brahms** spent the summer of 1886 in the lakeside suburb of Hofstetten, just outside Thun in Switzerland. He rented simple rooms above a grocer's shop, with a view across the River Aare towards the pine-covered, snow-topped mountains beyond, and he loved it there. 'You have no conception of how comfortable and beautiful it is here in every respect', he wrote to Clara Schumann. 'Delightful lodgings, lovely walks and rides, good taverns, pleasant people...' Brahms was a fierce critic of his own work but that summer in Thun, chamber music just seemed to pour out of him. In a matter of weeks he completed his second cello and violin sonatas, as well as much of his third piano trio, and made substantial progress on this third violin sonata in D minor, although he would not complete it until 1888. It was published the following year by Simrock of Vienna.

Brahms dedicated the finished sonata not to a violinist, but to Hans von Bülow, the distinguished conductor (and former piano pupil of Clara Schumann), and perhaps that has some bearing on its scale and sweep. The Third is the only one of Brahms's completed violin sonatas to fall into a symphonic four movements, complete with a brief but potent scherzo, which walks a balletic line between featherweight poise and outright tempest (it was Brahms's friend Elisabeth von Herzogenberg who suggested that the violin should play *pizzicato* on the return of the opening material – 'it sounds twice as good').

Certainly, the two outer movements have a symphonic urgency and breadth: the first, a lyrical, restless sonata *Allegro*, the fourth an *agitato* gallop that starts out like one of Schubert's huge *totentanz* finales before revealing a grander and more tragic purpose. But at the heart of it all – and the key to the Sonata's poignant mixture of public passion and private *innigkeit* – is the lovely *Adagio*, 75 bars of tender, luminous D major song whose outwardly simple expression and sighing violin chords reveal a composer who has learned, through long struggle, exactly what he wants to say, and precisely how to say it.

In January 1828 **Schubert** wrote to his friend Anselm Hüttenbrenner that 'a Trio of mine, for pianoforte, violin and violoncello has lately been performed by Schuppanzigh and was much liked'. And that's it; Schubert's first reference to one of his new Piano Trios, and we're not even told which one. A 'New Trio' of Schubert's had been played at a matinée concert of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna on 26 December 1827, and because we know that Schubert planned a performance of his E flat Trio Op. 100 throughout the spring of 1828, describing it as 'New' (i.e. unplayed in public) it doesn't seem unreasonable to assume that the work performed that December was the Trio in B flat Op. 99.

If so, this is its first appearance in musical history. We can't say for certain what prompted its composition or even when it was composed. It was not published until 1836 and no manuscript survives, although by analysing the paper on which Schubert wrote his *Notturmo* for piano trio (D897) – believed to be the discarded original slow movement of the B flat Trio – musicologists have established with some certainty that this superb work was composed during October 1827.

Does this matter? That depends very much upon whether you believe an artist's life necessarily has any significant bearing on his work. But any music lover, surely, would have their interest piqued to learn that Schubert completed this Trio (without remark) at precisely the same time as he was finishing what he described to his friend Josef von Spaun as 'a cycle of grisly songs' – the final 12 songs of *Winterreise*. 'Schubert's mood became gloomy', recalled Spaun 'and he seemed upset'. And yet he continued to write this supremely sunlit music. Schubert gives the typically domestic medium of the piano trio an outdoor character, and creates an expansive classical structure from the material of Viennese dance and Romantic song. And this is certainly a Classical work, with its four standard movements and 'light' finale (as in many of Schubert's great chamber works, the burden of the musical argument rests on the first two movements).

The buoyant opening theme of the first *Allegro moderato*, with its swinging triplet-rhythm, establishes both the key and a sense of spirited and expansive optimism. Schubert's instrumental writing is both lyrical and breezy; his tendency to write right-hand piano melodies in octaves (as he'd have done in the upper part of a domestic piano duet), gives the texture an uncluttered, open-air feel, and the freedom he gives the cello (this is one of the highest and most lyrical cello parts in any piano trio up to this time) means that it is never less than expressive.

William Mann (in the days when music critics still could still get away with such language) described the *Andante* second movement as 'a haven of evening scents and quiet companionship'; but in mature Schubert the most tranquil repose often harbours shadows, and the darkness breaks cover in an *agitato* C minor central section. Schubert's *Scherzo* is just as characteristic with (as a trio section) a gracefully swaying violin-cello dialogue that doesn't quite lift off into a waltz. And the bustling Viennese *contredanse* that sounds (at first) like the principal subject of the closing *Rondo* reappears only twice, while the more assertive five-note motif that opens the second episode becomes the basis of some surprisingly vigorous development. Whatever the personal circumstances in which Schubert wrote this trio, it's a spirited reminder that creativity of this order has a life of its own.

© Richard Bratby 2022

*Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.*