

steps of Mozart and Beethoven by giving the keyboardist top billing). The Sonata was premiered in Vienna a few weeks before Christmas 1886 by Brahms and then-famous violinist Joseph Hellmesberger.

The A major Sonata is both the shortest and the most immediately ingratiating of Brahms' three violin sonatas; not for a single moment is the radiant, happy mood ever put in real jeopardy (even during the fractured contrapuntal passages in the first movement's development), and the tunes are of the long-spun, heart-warming variety that sticks in the mind's ear. Brahms achieves a three-movement plan by combining slow movement and scherzo into one -- in this central movement, passages of sweet and simple Andante tranquillo alternate with fleet-footed Vivace episodes during which Brahms introduces hemiola and off-beat rhythmic accents. The Allegro amabile first movement is aptly summed up by that word, "amabile" -- one hardly expects that the second theme could possibly outdo the first in terms of sheer lyric beauty, but somehow Brahms manages it. In the Allegro grazioso (quasi Andante) last movement Brahms builds a relaxed rondo around a main theme whose contours are so deep and velvety that it has become customary for violinists to play the entire theme on the instrument's rich G string.

# BRAHMS

## HORN TRIO

in E flat major, for  
violin, horn, and piano

## SONATA NO. 2

in A major, for  
violin and piano

## Joseph Szigeti

VIOLIN

## Mieczyslaw Horszowski

PIANO

## John Barrows

HORN



This Trio comes at the end of Brahms' early chamber compositions and in many ways looks back nostalgically to his youth. First of all, the specification for "natural horn" (without valves) as opposed to the modern and more familiar valved horn was for Brahms a keen reminder of his childhood. His father had been a professional natural horn player and had instructed the young Brahms on that instrument. Second, Brahms quotes the folk song "Dort in den Weiden steht ein Haus" (There in the Willows Stands a House) in the Adagio movement, one of his childhood favorites, learned from his mother. There is some evidence that this entire, deeply emotional movement was an elegy in her memory. And last, the entire mood and tone of the piece, aided in no small part by the scoring, is evocative of nature and hunting, two of the most important themes of the Romantic movement to which Brahms was closely allied, via Schumann, in his youth. Also, mainly because of the scoring and its allusions to "occasional" rather than "serious" music, this Trio stands somewhat apart from Brahms' other chamber works. It is unique in his output, yet remains a deeply personal statement.

Instead of the usual sonata movement, Brahms opens the Trio with an expanded ternary-form Andante movement (ABABA) that alternates a longing and nostalgic melody with a faster, yearning passage. Again Brahms avoids the usual form and puts the

principal section of the Scherzo into an abbreviated sonata form. It is a rousing hunting song, full of energy and good spirits. The central Trio is a Ländler, an Austrian folk dance, which adds to the rustic flavor of the entire movement. Introspective and deeply personal, the third movement Adagio is in a simple ternary (ABA), yet is complicated by Brahms' use of a fugal exposition to present the principal material. It is in the emotionally charged reprise that Brahms quotes the aforementioned folk song, to great rhetorical effect, one of Brahms' most intense compositions. As if to compensate for the Adagio, Brahms concludes the Trio with as light and rollicking an Allegro as he was capable of writing. Again the horn's hunting qualities are featured, and the Trio ends in a virtuosic tour de force for all three instruments.

While on vacation in Thun during August 1886, Johannes Brahms found himself so refreshed and musically invigorated that he proclaimed the area to be "so full of melodies that one has to be careful not to step on any." Indeed, during his time there Brahms composed three of his most beloved chamber works in just a matter of days. Op. 99 is the second of Brahms' two cello sonatas, and Op. 101 the great C minor piano trio; in between these is Op. 100, the Sonata for piano and violin No. 2 in A major (the order in which the instruments are listed -- piano first and then violin -- is Brahms' own indication; he was following in the foot-

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## SONATA NO. 2

in A major, for  
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Piano – Mieczyslaw Horszowski

*Horn Trio In E Flat Major, Op. 40 Trio For Violin, Horn And Piano*

1 Andante

2 Scherzo (Allegro)

3 Adagio Mesto

4 Finale (Allegro Con Brio)

*Sonata No.2 In A Major, Opus 100 For Violin And Piano*

5 Allegro Amabile

6 Andante Tranquillo

7 Allegretto Grazioso

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