

Of the Franco-Belgian school, Arthur Grumiaux is considered to have been one of the few truly great violin virtuosi of the twentieth century. In his relatively short life his achievements were superb. He brought to performances guaranteed technical command, faithfulness to the composer's intent, and sensitivity toward the intricate delineations of musical structure. His fame was built upon extraordinary violin concerto performances and chamber-music appearances with his own Grumiaux Trio.

Grumiaux was born in Villers-Perwin, Belgium, in 1921, to a working-class family, and it was his grandfather who urged him to begin music studies at the age of 4. He trained on violin and piano with the Fernand Quintet at the Charleroi Conservatory, where he took first prize at the age of 11. The following year he advanced his studies by working with Alfred Dubois at the Royal Conservatory in Brussels, and also worked on counterpoint and fugue with Jean Absil. He received his first few major awards prior to reaching the age of 20; he took the Henri Vieuxtemps and François Prume prizes in 1939, and received the Prix de Virtuosit  from the Belgian government in 1940. During this time he also studied composition privately in Paris with the famous Romanian violinist Georges Enesco, Menuhin's teacher. His debuts were made in Belgium with the Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra playing Mendelssohn's concerto, and in Britain with the BBC Symphonic Orchestra in 1945. Due to the German invasion of his homeland, there existed a short time gap between these two important events. During that time he played privately with several small ensembles, while refraining from public performance of any kind. Regardless of this slight delay in the initiation of his international career, once started, it quickly developed. Following his British debut, he advanced into Belgium academia when he was appointed professor of violin at the Royal Conservatory, where he had once studied. There, he emphasized the importance of phrasing, the quality of sound, and the high technical standards of artistry.

Grumiaux's playing has been included on over 30 recordings, nearly all under Philips, although his name is also seen on the labels of EMI, Belart and Music & Arts. The titles on these releases tend to be the compositions of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Mozart, and Schubert, and on occasion include works by Ravel and Debussy. One of his greatest joys in life was his partnership with the pianist Clara Haskil. On occasion, the two would switch instruments for a different perspective and relationship. Grumiaux was left with a professional and personal absence when she died from a fall at a train station, en route to a concert with him. In addition to his solo work, he has recorded Mozart quintets with the Grumiaux Ensemble, and various selections with the Grumiaux Trio, comprised of the Hungarian husband-wife duo Georges Janzer (violin) and Eva Czako (cello). His successful performance career led up to royal recognition, as in 1973, he was knighted baron by King Baudouin, for his services to music, thus, sharing the title with Paganini. Despite a struggle with diabetes, he continued a rigorous schedule of recording and concert performances, primarily in Western Europe, until a sudden stroke in Brussels took his life in 1986. At the age of 65, Grumiaux left behind the memory of his elegant and solid musicianship.



HIGH DEFINITION TAPE TRANSFERS

Mozart Sonata for violin K. 481
Brahms Sonata for violin Op. 100

Arthur Grumiaux
plays
Violin & Piano



In addition to everything else – composer of astonishing invention and fluency, virtuoso pianist, all-round boy wonder – Mozart was an accomplished violinist and violist. He could hardly have avoided it, as his father Leopold was a master violinist and the author of the leading violin manual of the day. So it is hardly surprising that Mozart composed a number of sonatas for violin and piano – or rather, for piano with violin. In the duo sonatas that Mozart composed throughout his career, there is a constant development of equality in the partnership, which initially placed the burden entirely on the keyboard and left the string part almost optional.

This is one of Mozart's late essays in the genre, completed in December 1785. (He composed only two more violin sonatas, and the last one was a throw-back "for beginners.") The vestiges of the old inequities are apparent, particularly at the beginning of movements, but this is otherwise a mature, balanced conversation, full of robust give-and-take, laughter and sharp asides, and digressions that turn out to be pertinent in surprising ways.

It is also a marvel of construction and craft on every level. Each movement begins with the notes of the tonic triad, but each extends the phrase with different means to different ends. The limber opening *Molto allegro* is in the expected sonata form, but with three subjects and a chromatic development that consists mostly of a dramatic rising sequence and a long dominant preparation for the extravagantly teased recapitulation. The harmonically adventuresome middle movement is an idiosyncratic mix of rondo and variation, and the finale is a set of mostly figural variations, culminating in a *gigue* of freewheeling joy.

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 footsteps 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.

Mozart Sonata for violin K. 481

Brahms Sonata for violin Op. 100

Arthur Grumiaux plays Violin & Piano

Mozart: Violin Sonata No. 33 in E flat major K481 18:29

1. Molto allegro 5:11

2. Adagio 6:28

3. Allegretto (con variazioni) 6:50

Brahms: Violin Sonata No. 2 in A major, Op. 100 19:22

1. Allegro amabile 8:08

2. Andante tranquillo - Vivace - Andante - Vivace di più - Andante vivace 6:06

3. Allegretto grazioso (Quasi andante) 5:08

Grumiaux playing both Violin & Piano, with the violin over-dubbed

Recording Info: Transferred from a 15ips 2-track tape

Date of Recording: 1959 Recorded by Philip



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admin@highdeftapetransfers.com
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