

## Gather (2021) Disc 2.

1 **Scherzo in C minor, from F-A-E Sonata** (1853) 3:11  
**JOHANNES BRAHMS** (1833–1897)

KRISTIN LEE, *violin*; JI NA KIM, *piano*

2–5 **Piano Quintet in E-flat major, op. 44** (1842)  
**ROBERT SCHUMANN** (1810–1856)

<i>Allegro brillante</i>	8:37
<i>In modo d'una marcia, un poco largamente</i>	8:48
<i>Scherzo: Molto vivace</i>	4:59
<i>Allegro ma non troppo</i>	7:35

JI NA KIM, *piano*; KRISTIN LEE, JAMES THOMPSON,  
*violins*; PAUL NEUBAUER, *viola*; DMITRI ATAPINE, *cello*

6–9 **Piano Quintet no. 2 in A major, op. 81, B. 155**  
(1887)  
**ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK** (1841–1904)

<i>Allegro, ma non tanto</i>	13:53
<i>Dumka: Andante con moto</i>	13:29
<i>Scherzo (Furiant): Molto vivace</i>	4:20
<i>Finale: Allegro</i>	7:34

WU HAN, *piano*; ARNAUD SUSSMANN, YERI ROH, *violins*;  
TIEN-HSIN CINDY WU, *viola*; STERLING ELLIOTT, *cello*

The 2021 edition of Music@Menlo *LIVE*, titled *Gather*, celebrates the joy of coming together around a shared love of live music, after an immensely challenging year for the arts when concert halls largely fell silent. Each disc explores pinnacles of the chamber music art form, including both masterworks and tantalizing discoveries. This collection of recordings also celebrates the opening of the Spieker Center for the Arts, Music@Menlo's new home.

After arriving unannounced at the doorstep of Robert and Clara Schumann, Johannes Brahms developed a deep—and often complicated—friendship with the couple. One immediate result of their close bond was the *F-A-E* Sonata, a work for violin and piano composed collaboratively by Robert Schumann, Brahms, and Albert Dietrich. On Disc 2, we hear Brahms's fiery *Scherzo* movement from this sonata, a treasure of the violin-and-piano literature. Pianists owe a greater debt still to Robert and Clara Schumann: Clara, one of her generation's greatest piano virtuosos, inspired her husband's Piano Quintet, which stands as the point of origin of a grand repertoire tradition. Disc 2 concludes with Antonín Dvořák's Piano Quintet, one of the Czech composer's most popular creations.

Liner notes by Patrick Castillo © 2021

**JOHANNES BRAHMS** (1833–1897)  
**Scherzo in C minor, from F-A-E Sonata** (1853)

In the weeks and months after arriving unannounced at the doorstep of Robert and Clara Schumann with only a letter of introduction from the violinist Joseph Joachim and a stack of scores, Johannes Brahms developed a deep, and often complicated, friendship with the couple. One immediate result of the close bond between Brahms and Robert Schumann was the *F-A-E* Sonata, a four-movement work for violin and piano composed collaboratively by Schumann, Brahms, and Schumann's composition student Albert Dietrich. The sonata was conceived as a gift for Joachim, a close acquaintance of each of the three composers.

Schumann came up with the idea for the joint composition. Joachim had adopted for himself the Romantic-sounding motto "*Frei aber einsam*"—"Free but lonely." Schumann, Brahms, and Dietrich transposed the first letter of each of those words into the notes F-A-E to develop a musical motto for the sonata. Each composer was to build a movement of the sonata on this motto, with Joachim charged to guess who had composed each movement.

Dietrich composed the first movement, Schumann composed a short *romanze* for the second movement, Brahms provided the fiery *Scherzo* movement, and Schumann wrote the *Finale*. On hearing the work performed for him, Joachim is said to have identified each movement's composer correctly. Joachim forever treasured—and jealously guarded—the manuscript: near the end of his life, he allowed only Brahms's *Scherzo* to be published. Today, the *F-A-E* Sonata is rarely performed in its collaborative entirety, but Brahms's pithy *Scherzo* in C minor has become a widely beloved favorite of the Romantic violin repertoire.

**ROBERT SCHUMANN** (1810 – 1856)  
**Piano Quintet in E-flat major, op. 44** (1842)

Robert Schumann's compositions appear in clusters over the course of his creative career. The 1830s primarily saw the creation of piano works. His year of lieder was 1840, which was followed by a year of symphonic music. In 1842 came Schumann's most significant chamber pieces. Between February and July of that year, he completed his three string quartets, each dedicated to Felix Mendelssohn. In the fall, he composed two companion pieces: first, the Piano Quintet, op. 44, and then a month later, the Piano Quartet, op. 47. Both were composed for Clara Schumann. The Piano Quintet, which paved the way for such seminal works as the piano quintets of Johannes Brahms and Antonín Dvořák, took Schumann all of three weeks to complete. The work's fiendish piano part testifies to Clara

Schumann's virtuosic ability at the keyboard. Ironically, illness prevented her from taking part in the premiere, and Mendelssohn—likewise one of the nineteenth century's foremost pianists—filled in at the last minute, sight-reading at the performance.

The quintet is rife with searing expressivity, discernible, as with much of Schumann's music, as a dialogue between the composer's alter egos: Florestan, the masculine (in eighteenth-century parlance) and extroverted, and Eusebius, the feminine voice of tenderness and pathos. An ebullient energy drives the opening *Allegro brillante*. The first theme comprises two powerful ascending leaps answered by eight emphatic chords, unquestionably the work of Florestan, but Eusebius immediately transforms their stentorian might into a soft, loving gaze. The lyrical second theme, an enchanting duet between the cello and viola, contrasts the exclamatory first theme. The development section is all nervous energy, its devilishly intricate piano part audibly conceived with Clara Schumann's virtuosity in mind.

The second movement is a somber funeral march. Schumann offsets the movement's solemnity with an expressive second theme. A faster *agitato* section combines the two themes in a show of Romantic pathos before reprising the march. As if rising from the dead, the third *Scherzo* movement follows the elegiac march with ecstatic ascending scale figures, interrupted briefly by a poetic trio section and then by a longer, fiery second trio. The final movement recalls the first in its unrelenting character. A literal reprise of the first movement's opening theme, combined with the finale's own main theme in a magical fugue, brings the work to a blazing finish.

## **ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841–1904)** **Piano Quintet no. 2 in A major, op. 81, B. 155 (1887)**

Antonín Dvořák's Piano Quintet in A major, op. 81—celebrated along with the quintets of Robert Schumann and Johannes Brahms as one of the genre's essential works—actually represents the Czech composer's second such work. The first, also in A major, was completed in 1872, but Dvořák was not satisfied with it and destroyed the score. The piano quintet that survives began as an attempted revision of the earlier work, before evolving into a wholly new piece. Over a century later, it remains one of Dvořák's signature chamber works.

The opening *Allegro, ma non tanto* begins with a wistful melody in the cello, played over a light piano

accompaniment. Still dwelling on the same theme, the mood quickly turns somber, then suddenly violent. Dvořák uses the same musical idea to create passages that are in turns tender and forceful. After further transfiguration of this first theme, a rustic, dance-like second theme emerges in the viola.

The quintet's second movement is a *dumka*, a folk genre whose origins as a sung lament are audible in Dvořák's plaintive lyricism. Himself an avid violist, Dvořák assigns the opening *espressivo* melody to that instrument's dusky low register. This bittersweet theme recurs in alternation with music of a sunnier disposition introduced by the first violin.

Dvořák designates the *Scherzo* movement a "furiant," a fast Czech dance form. (The term literally describes the swagger of a conceited man.) The movement begins with a quick, rollicking theme, which carries the music into a broad, sweeping melody in the viola. The central trio section presents a tranquil contrast to the *Scherzo*, using the same melody but with a dramatically new inflection. The trio's serenity flows seamlessly back into the jaunty music of the *Scherzo*.

The quintet concludes with an *Allegro* of boundless energy. Though centering primarily on the peasant dance theme that begins the movement, the *Finale* offers a generous series of beguiling melodic ideas, including a tightly wrought fugato passage. Exuberant throughout, the music slows to a hymnlike chorale near the movement's end before blazing its way to a brilliant finish.

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