

Gather (2021) Disc 5.

1–18 *Liebeslieder Waltzes for Piano, Four Hands, op. 52a* (1874)

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)

- | | |
|--|------|
| 1. <i>Rede, Mädchen (Speak, Maiden)</i> | 1:05 |
| 2. <i>Am Gesteine rauscht die Flut (The Flood Rushes Beside Rocks)</i> | 0:43 |
| 3. <i>O die Frauen (Oh These Women)</i> | 1:21 |
| 4. <i>Wie des Abends schöne Röte (Like Evenings Beautiful Amber)</i> | 0:41 |
| 5. <i>Die grüne Hopfenranke (The Green Hop Tendril)</i> | 1:36 |
| 6. <i>Ein kleiner, hübscher Vogel (A Little, Pretty Bird)</i> | 2:30 |
| 7. <i>Wohl schön bewandt war es (Formerly It Was Well Ordered)</i> | 1:19 |
| 8. <i>Wenn so lind dein Auge mir (If Your Eye as Mild)</i> | 1:15 |
| 9. <i>Am Donaustrande (On the Danube Shore)</i> | 2:00 |
| 10. <i>O wie sanft die Quelle (Oh How Gentle the Well)</i> | 0:52 |
| 11. <i>Nein, es ist nicht auszukommen (No, One Can't Get Along)</i> | 0:53 |
| 12. <i>Schlosser auf, und mache Schlösser (Locksmith, Get Up and Make Locks)</i> | 0:43 |
| 13. <i>Vögelein durchrauscht die Luft (Little Bird Rushes Through the Air)</i> | 1:01 |
| 14. <i>Sieh, wie ist die Welle klar (Look, the Wave How Clear)</i> | 0:58 |
| 15. <i>Nachtigall, sie singt so schön (Nightingale, You Sing So Beautifully)</i> | 1:10 |
| 16. <i>Ein dunkler Schacht ist Liebe (Love Is a Dark Shaft)</i> | 1:11 |
| 17. <i>Nicht wandle, mein Licht (My Light, Don't Walk)</i> | 1:52 |
| 18. <i>Es bebet das Gesträuche (Bushes Are Trembling)</i> | 1:44 |

JI NA KIM, GILBERT KALISH, *piano*

19–22 *String Trio in G major, op. 9, no. 1* (1797–1798)

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

- | | |
|---|------|
| <i>Adagio – Allegro con brio</i> | 9:19 |
| <i>Adagio, ma non tanto e cantabile</i> | 6:40 |
| <i>Scherzo: Allegro</i> | 4:16 |
| <i>Presto</i> | 5:01 |

ARNAUD SUSSMANN, *violin*; PAUL NEUBAUER, *viola*;
DAVID FINCKEL, *cello*

23–26 *String Sextet in A major, op. 48, B. 80* (1878)

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841–1904)

- | | |
|---|------|
| <i>Adagio – Allegro con brio</i> | 9:19 |
| <i>Adagio, ma non tanto e cantabile</i> | 6:40 |
| <i>Scherzo: Allegro</i> | 4:16 |
| <i>Presto</i> | 5:01 |

ARNAUD SUSSMANN, ANGELA WEE, *violins*;
PAUL NEUBAUER, TIEN-HSIN CINDY WU, *violas*;
DMITRI ATAPINE, DAVID FINCKEL, *cellos*

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.

Disc 5 juxtaposes music by three signature voices in the chamber music canon. Ludwig van Beethoven's String Trio, op. 9, no. 1, which documents the composer's early career, is bookended by works from Johannes Brahms and Antonín Dvořák. It was Brahms himself who helped to launch Dvořák's career in 1877: at that time the Western world's most celebrated composer, Brahms discovered the young Dvořák's music while serving on the panel for a state prize. Thanks to the elder composer's endorsement, Dvořák signed a publishing contract and quickly produced a series of works that fueled his rise to international stardom; one of these early successes was the String Sextet in A major, op. 48.

Liner notes by Patrick Castillo © 2021

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)

Liebeslieder Waltzes for Piano, Four Hands, op. 52a (1874)

Between 1868 and 1875, Johannes Brahms composed two sets of *Liebeslieder Waltzes*, opp. 52 and 65. These delectable parlor songs for vocal quartet and piano, four hands, set texts from traditional folk songs in various languages, translated into German by the Romantic poet Georg Friedrich Daumer. They supposedly were inspired in part by Brahms's short-lived infatuation with Julie Schumann, Robert and Clara Schumann's daughter. The texts accordingly reflect a quintessentially Romantic sense of pining.

Brahms biographer Jan Swafford described the *Liebeslieder Waltzes* as "confectionery tunes with a large helping of Viennese *Schlagobers* (whipped cream)...The music testifies to Brahms's love of both Strauss and Schubert waltzes, but like most such testaments of his, they hardly resemble their inspiration; this is the Viennese waltz à la Brahms." The *Liebeslieder Waltzes* quickly became an essential item in the amateur musician's library. Their popularity impelled Brahms to create multiple versions, including a version of the eighteen Opus 52 waltzes for piano, four hands, sans vocalists, published in 1874 as Opus 52a.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

String Trio in G major, op. 9, no. 1 (1797–1798)

Before trying his hand at the string quartet, Beethoven prepared for the task of tackling his teacher Haydn's signature genre by writing a number of string trios. The ensemble of violin, viola, and cello is notoriously difficult to write for: without the benefit of a second violin, the composer is left with limited options for distributing

melody while filling out harmonies and textures. Beethoven methodically sharpened his part-writing blade on his Serenade, op. 8, and Three String Trios, op. 9, before setting to work on his Opus 18 String Quartets; these were the first of his iconic cycle of sixteen, and he never returned to the string trio medium.

Yet the Opus 9 Trios demonstrate no less ambition than the Opus 18 Quartets. Beethoven's handling of instrumental forces is masterful indeed, as he contrasts the rich sonority of the full ensemble with conversational passages between three voices. Each instrument emerges to the foreground here, recedes to the background there, resulting in dynamic textures throughout each of the three Trios.

The Trio in G major, op. 9, no. 1, is an irresistibly joyful work. Following a curtain-raising Adagio introduction—a grand *forte* gesture in octaves, followed by impish sixteenth-note figures and lyrical rejoinders—the first movement launches into its Allegro proper. The *joie de vivre* of this extroverted music is accentuated by audacious melodic leaps of more than two octaves. A contrasting second theme, though whispered *pianissimo* and staccato, is no less convivial. The depth of Beethoven's musical imagination is on display in the ensuing development section, which, though brief, reimagines earlier thematic material to significantly stretch the movement's expressive canvas.

The lovely Adagio second movement calls to mind the sublime slow movements of Mozart. Even occasional forays into dark minor-key passages are fleeting, and the prevailing air is one of idyllic serenity. The ephemeral Scherzo movement, buoyant and carefree, offsets the tranquil Adagio.

The Trio concludes with a spirited Presto. As in the first movement, thematic ideas here differ in their cosmetic details—loud or soft, staccato or legato—but the music's character remains bright and exuberant to the finish.

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1831–1904) **String Sextet in A major, op. 48, B. 80** (1878)

Antonín Dvořák composed his Opus 48 Sextet over a two-week period in 1878, and in the wake of important dual successes. His Three Slavonic Rhapsodies and the first set of his Slavonic Dances for orchestra had premiered in May of that year, fueling his rise to international stardom. Just as those works helped to establish Dvořák, not only as an important new compositional voice but as representative of a distinctly Czech style, so did the String Sextet reinforce that reputation in the realm of chamber music. The work received its first hearing in 1879 at a private performance in

the home of the great violinist Joseph Joachim in Berlin, which marked Dvořák's first premiere outside of Czechoslovakia. Over the next year, Joachim would perform the sextet in Vienna and twice in London, effectively solidifying Dvořák's international stature for good.

The sextet is brimming with Bohemian charm, even as it recalls Franz Schubert, Dvořák's favorite composer in his early years, in its abundance of inspired melodies. Moreover, Dvořák draws a rapturous sonic warmth from the ensemble of two violins, two violas, and two cellos. One benefit of this rich scoring is the ability of the second cello to serve as the bass voice, which allows the first to pursue a lyrical melodic role. The main theme of the first movement, introduced as a rhapsodic duet between first violin and first cello, demonstrates all these qualities. The second theme, in a quicker tempo, is marked by upward leaps and excitable dotted rhythms. In the spirit of Schubert, Dvořák extends each of these themes to euphoric effect within just the exposition, and then he reimagines them further in the movement's development section.

The sextet's middle two movements draw from traditional folk forms: the second movement is a *dumka*, a sung Slavic folk ballad. Phlegmatic pizzicati in the cellos and plaintive sighs in the violas accompany a ruminative melody in the violins. Midway through the movement, Dvořák introduces a poignant, Gypsy-like music, which soon gives way to a tender *andante* lullaby in the rarefied key of F-sharp major.

The understated tones of the *Dumka* are obliterated by the rambunctious third movement *Furiant*, a traditional Czech folk dance. The word *furiant* literally means “a proud, swaggering, conceited man”—an apt description of the music's impetuous energy.

The final movement is a set of five variations on a melancholy theme presented by the first viola accompanied by the second viola and cellos; the absence of the brighter-toned violins accentuates the theme's moodiness. The violins join in for the first variation: the deployment of the full ensemble playing long, legato phrases and the two-against-three rhythmic scheme lend the music a rich sonority. The second variation is redolent of a scherzo in Felix Mendelssohn's signature *Midsummer Night's Dream* style. The first cello issues the desolate melody in the third variation; the rest of the ensemble holds a spacious *pianissimo* chord, evoking a lonely wanderer in a barren landscape. That sense of desolation extends into the fourth variation but is now given anxious voice by the violins and first viola above a threatening undercurrent of triplets in the second cello. From the uneasiness of this fraught music emerges the fifth variation, which resets the theme with the immediacy of a folk song; flowing sixteenth notes punctuated by hocketing pizzicati make for a texturally rich accompaniment. Dvořák follows the fifth variation with an

Music@Menlo *LIVE*

energetic stretta—then, finally, as if he were simply biding his time throughout the five lugubrious variations, the composer allows wild elation to burst forth like a wound-up jack-in-the-box, and the sextet gallops excitedly to its blistering conclusion.

Recorded July 24, 2021, July 31, 2021, The Spieker Center for the Arts. Recording producer and engineer: Da-Hong Seetoo. Steinway grand pianos provided courtesy of Steinway & Sons. Booklet design by Nick Stone. CD production: Jerome Bunke, Digital Force, New York. Production manager: Libby Seidner. Music@Menlo 2021

was made possible by the generous support provided by the Koret Foundation, Bank of America Private Bank, and the many individuals and organizations that share the festival's vision. American Public Media was the official radio and new-media broadcast partner of Music@Menlo 2021.

© 2022 Music@Menlo *LIVE*. All Rights Reserved.
Unauthorized Duplication Is a Violation of Applicable Laws.
Printed and Manufactured in the U.S.A.
www.musicatmenlo.org