

Program Note

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

Violin Sonata No. 2 in A Major, Op. 100

Johannes Brahms composed his Violin Sonata No. 2 in A Major, Op. 100, during the summer of 1886 in Thun, Switzerland —a period of inspiration in which he also completed his Cello Sonata No. 2 and the Piano Trio No. 3. Often referred to as the “Thun Sonata,” this work radiates warmth and lyrical beauty, contrasting with the more dramatic and expansive first and third violin sonatas.

Brahms dedicated this piece to his close friend Joseph Joachim, a renowned violinist, but its intimate and songlike nature suggests that he may have also been influenced by his deep admiration for Hermine Spies, a singer with whom he was particularly close at the time.

I. Allegro amabile

– The opening movement is gentle and songful, with a flowing dialogue between the violin and piano. The term “amabile” (“lovable” or “tender”) perfectly captures the warmth and intimacy of this movement. The violin sings with lyrical ease, while the piano provides a delicate, supportive accompaniment.

II. Andante tranquillo – Vivace – Andante

– This movement begins in a contemplative manner, but it soon gives way to a lively interlude before returning to the initial mood of tranquility. The interplay between the instruments is delicate and fluid, showcasing Brahms’ masterful handling of contrast.

III. Allegretto grazioso (quasi andante)

– The final movement is elegant and dance-like, though restrained and refined. Brahms avoids virtuosic flourishes, opting instead for a more intimate and heartfelt conclusion to the sonata.

This sonata stands out for its warmth, subtlety, and seamless interplay between the violin and piano, reflecting Brahms’ deep understanding of both instruments.

Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897–1957)

Sonata for Violin and Piano in G Major, Op. 6

Erich Wolfgang Korngold was a musical prodigy whose talent was recognized early on by luminaries such as Gustav Mahler and Richard Strauss. His Violin Sonata in G Major, Op. 6, composed in 1913 when he was just 16, is a remarkable work that showcases his early genius. Though Korngold is often remembered for his later Hollywood film scores, this sonata exemplifies his late-Romantic roots and his ability to blend lyricism with complex harmonic textures.

I. Ben moderato, ma con passione

– The first movement begins with a broad, expressive violin melody, accompanied by a richly textured piano part. The harmonies are lush, reminiscent of Richard Strauss, yet with a youthful exuberance unique to Korngold.

II. Scherzo: Allegro molto (con fuoco)

– This fiery, virtuosic movement is full of rhythmic drive and playful energy. The rapid exchanges between the violin and piano create an almost orchestral effect, showcasing Korngold’s flair for drama.

III. Adagio

– The heart of the sonata, this movement is deeply expressive, with long, singing violin lines over lush piano harmonies. The music seems to reflect the sweeping emotions and cinematic scope that would later define Korngold’s film compositions.

IV. Finale: Allegretto quasi andante (con grazia)

– The sonata concludes with a charming and graceful movement, where the violin and piano engage in a lively dialogue. The piece ends with an air of elegance rather than grandiosity, displaying Korngold’s refined sense of balance.

Though composed in his teenage years, this sonata already reveals Korngold’s extraordinary gift for melody and orchestral-like textures within the duo setting. It is a work that bridges late Romanticism with the emerging musical language of the 20th century, making it a fascinating counterpart to Brahms’ Violin Sonata No. 2.