

## **Villanelle for Horn and Piano (1906)**

*Paul Dukas*

Composed as a test piece for the horn class of the Paris Conservatoire, Villanelle reflects Paul Dukas's characteristic blend of Classical balance, Romantic lyricism, and Impressionist colour. Its title, derived from the Italian *villanella*, refers to a light-hearted rustic song or dance popular in the 16th and 17th centuries, and Dukas's work evokes a similar pastoral charm. Opening with a noble horn call reminiscent of the natural horn, the piece unfolds into virtuosic passages that showcase the full expressive and technical range of the modern instrument. Dukas evokes the lilting 6/8 rhythms of pastoral music and creates an open-air atmosphere. Flaunting a diverse sound palette and a mastery of technique across the different ranges of the horn, Villanelle is exciting to listen to.

## **Adagio and Allegro, Op. 70 (1849)**

*Robert Schumann*

Adagio and Allegro showcases Schumann's gift for capturing conflicting emotions within a single work. The Adagio opens introspectively, singing with deep lyricism and tenderness—an intimate outpouring of emotion. In contrast, the Allegro bursts forth with fiery passion and exhilaration, only to be briefly interrupted by a poignant recollection of the opening's calm before its brilliant close. The Allegro also nods to the horn's hunting heritage, with its energetic 6/8 rhythm and bold triadic fanfares evoking the sound of the natural horn. Blending Romantic expressiveness with virtuosic brilliance, Adagio and Allegro embodies Schumann's poetic spirit and remains one of the most beloved works in the horn repertoire.

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Both Villanelle and Adagio and Allegro resonate deeply with my own musical journey. Years or even months ago, I would never have imagined challenging myself to play these pieces. Learning the horn has often felt like navigating the same contrasts found in these works—the moments of struggle, frustration, and self-doubt balanced by moments of breakthrough and satisfaction when things finally come together. Dukas's nods to the natural horn remind me of exploring the natural horn during my studies, while Schumann's emotional extremes mirror the highs and lows of practice and performance. Together, these pieces reflect the dual nature of my growth: demanding yet deeply rewarding, technical yet profoundly human.