

# *Clara and Dora*

## PROGRAM

*Three Romances (1853)* ..... Clara Schumann  
(1819-1896)

Andante molto  
Allegretto: Mit zartem Vortrage  
Leidenschaftlich schnell

Juliana Athayde *violin*  
Chiao-Wen Cheng *piano*

*Viola Sonata, Op. 120 No. 1 (1894)* ..... Johannes Brahms  
(1833-1897)

Allegro appassionato  
Andante un poco adagio  
Allegretto grazioso  
Vivace

Joshua Newburger *viola*  
Chiao-Wen Cheng *piano*

*Piano Quartet, Op. 25 (1908)* ..... Dora Pejačević  
(1885-1923)

Allegro - Poco meno Allegro - Tempo I  
Adagio  
Minuetto. Allegretto  
Rondo. Allegro

Juliana Athayde *violin*  
Joshua Newburger *viola*  
David Ying *cello*  
Chiao-Wen Cheng *piano*

*Three Encores for Piano Trio* ..... Fritz Kreisler  
(1875-1962)

The Old Refrain  
Farewell to Cucullain (Londonderry Air / Oh Danny Boy)  
Miniature Viennese March

Juliana Athayde *violin*  
David Ying *cello*  
Chiao-Wen Cheng *piano*

## PROGRAM NOTES

### Clara Schumann: *Three Romances*

Clara Josephine Wieck Schumann is known today mainly as the wife of composer Robert Schumann and the intimate friend of Johannes Brahms. In her 61-year concert career, however, she was considered one of the most distinguished pianists of her day and was instrumental in changing the programs of concert pianists.

At an early age, her father, Friedrich Wieck, saw the potential in Clara's musical ability and began planning her career down to the smallest details. She received daily lessons in piano, singing, violin, theory, harmony, composition and counterpoint. This was followed by 2-3 hours of practice.

At the age of eight, young Clara performed at a musical evening in a Leipzig home, and there she met another gifted young pianist, Robert Schumann. At age 11, Clara went on a concert tour to Paris, where she gave her first performances of her blossoming career. By the time she was 18 her career as a pianist was established and she had been named the Royal and Imperial Chamber Virtuoso - the highest musical honour in Austria.

The epic romance of Clara Wieck and Robert Schumann was consummated when they married just after her 21st birthday. Clara continued to perform publicly even as she raised seven children, extending her own reputation beyond Germany and promoting her husband's compositions, especially at the start of his career when nobody knew of him or his music. Clara had less success, however, in winning the skeptical public to her music. She was a prolific composer in her early years, but at a time when women composers were frowned on by the music world, writing her first piano concerto at 14 and performing it at 16 in Leipzig with Mendelssohn conducting. Due to her very busy performing schedule and later family obligations, Clara could not commit to composing on a regular basis.

In 1854, Robert Schumann attempted suicide and was committed to an asylum for the last two years of his life. As a result, Clara composed nothing after the age of 34. Before that turning point, she had a final burst of creative activity in 1853, producing, between concerts, several works including these three romances for the violin and piano, dedicated to another friend, the great violinist Joseph Joachim.

"Romance" was a title favored by both Robert and Clara for an instrumental piece that is lyrical in character and tender or even sentimental in mood. Clara demonstrated a gift for melody and produced true chamber music with the two instruments on an equal footing rather than with the piano in an accompanying role. We can only wonder what she might have achieved if she had lived a century later.

The first romance begins with a "gypsy pathos opening" which leads into a very emotional melodic framework. This movement is passionate and the dialogue between the piano and violin is incredibly effective. The main theme is based loosely on arpeggios, with the final section of this movement referring to Robert Schumann's First Violin Sonata.

The second romance is in G minor and wistful in character. The main theme played by the violin is syncopated and there is a very melancholy atmosphere created throughout the movement. The middle section picks up in tempo and the use of embellishments gives this section a shimmering feel. The final section, which is back in G minor, reiterates the main theme before resolving with a charming pizzicato statement.

The third and final romance is the longest of the three. Instantly there is a rippling accompaniment from the piano which is bubbly and fast-paced. The long melody played on the violin is simple but it fits very well with a busy accompaniment. The work is developmental from the start and the main theme is taken and changed in a plethora of different ways with the use of dynamics, harmonics, and pizzicato playing.

The piano part is unrelenting, with its fast-paced arpeggiated motifs and constant moving parts. The end of the work is very beautiful, the tempo is broken and the piece slows and resolves in the lower register of the violin with some rich tonic chords from the piano.

### **Brahms: *Viola Sonata***

In the spring of 1891, having accepted an invitation from the Duke of Meiningen and Hans von Bülow, conductor of the Meiningen court Orchestra, Brahms was struck by the superb playing of the court's principal clarinet, Richard Mühlfeld and was so impressed by the possibilities of the clarinet revealed to him by Mühlfeld's performances that when he arrived in Bad Ischl, his customary summer retreat in the country, he settled down to write two chamber works, a Trio and a Quintet, both with a prominent part for the clarinet, despite his resolve a year earlier to retire from his composing career. He played in the premiere of the Trio, and so enjoyed the experience that in the summer of 1894, again in Bad Ischl, he wrote the two Sonatas of Op. 120 - his last chamber music - to play with Mühlfeld.

Brahms also loved the rich, warm sound of the viola, and created a viola alternative for the Clarinet Trio (as he had earlier for the Horn Trio, Op. 40). Within days of sending the Clarinet Sonatas to his publisher, Brahms sent in alternative parts for viola. They were published simultaneously in June 1895. There are passages that he re-voiced, usually transposed down an octave to take advantage of the husky throb of the instrument's low C-string, and other places where phrases are extended a few notes beyond what lies in the clarinet part, recomposed for double stops, or where he extended the melodic line at places where the clarinet part was silent.

The viola sonatas have become a cornerstone of that instrument's repertoire, just as the original forms have for the repertoire of the clarinet. It had long been Brahms's habit to compose some of his most significant works in contrasting pairs and the two members of Op 120 make a fascinating study in contrasts: No 1 in F minor has something of the turbulent passion which that key always evoked in Brahms, and is the more orthodox in form. No 2 in E flat major is a fantasia-like conception in three movements, none of them really slow. Within these broad confines the works display a kaleidoscopic range of color and motion, and a propensity for mercurial shifts of harmony and texture. Indeed, they are prime examples of that 'economy, yet richness' which Arnold Schoenberg said was one of the qualities he most admired in Brahms.

The opening *Allegro appassionato* of the Sonata Op 120 No 1 manages to convey an impression of gravity and tensile strength without compromising the predominantly lyrical nature of its ideas, which are typified by the yearning, wide-spanned melody that follows the brief piano introduction. The recapitulation features characteristically Brahmsian cross-rhythms, but the coda brings an ending in the major mode, though one touched with a sense of quiet resignation. The remaining three movements are all in the major key, but with subtle shadings that distill emotional complexity into relatively few and seemingly simple notes. The exquisite slow movement, *Andante un poco adagio*, is a still, entranced nocturnal song in A flat, just touched into motion by the viola's melancholy, rhapsodic turning figures and the slow descending arpeggios of the piano. The following intermezzo, *Allegretto grazioso*, also in A flat, is in the manner of an Austrian Ländler or country waltz, though developed with extraordinary contrapuntal skill. The waltz tune is in fact an amiable transformation of the opening theme of the sonata's first movement. The peasant vigor developed in its second strain expands to boisterousness in the *Vivace* finale, a bracing major-key rondo with a chuckling main theme, and a pealing, bell-like figure of three repeated notes, heard in both instruments, that enlivens the whole movement.

### **Dora Pejačević: *Piano Quartet***

Though born in Budapest, Dora Pejačević was Croatian. Her father, Count Theodor Pejačević, was a civil governor; her mother, Lilla Vay de Vaya, was a Hungarian baroness, an accomplished actress and musician. Dora studied piano, violin, and composition at Zagreb's Croatian Music Institute, and then in Dresden and Munich; however, biographers describe her as essentially self-taught. Her aristocratic birth and family means allowed her to travel to Europe's liveliest belle epoch cultural centers, including Budapest, Vienna, Prague, and Munich.

Pejačević's significance to Croatia's classical music history cannot be overstated. Her fifty plus compositions largely comprising songs and piano music are worthy examples of their kind. During her lifetime she enjoyed considerable success and her more expansive works, including much fine chamber music, a piano concerto and a symphony were performed throughout central Europe. The *Symphony in F sharp minor*, premiered in Dresden in 1920, was the first modern symphony by a Croatian composer. Despite her contributions to music in Croatia, and wider Europe, Pejačević faded from the classical canon following her untimely death at age 37 from complications of childbirth.

While an element of her initial success can be attributed to her family's position, Pejačević would come to turn her back on her life of privilege. She was buried separately to her family, and 'Dora' was the only inscription on her headstone. Instead of flowers at her funeral, Pejačević asked that donations be made to help impoverished musicians. This fierce devotion to her individuality resonates in the piano quartet, which Pejačević composed in 1908, aged only 23. Prior to writing it, she had composed primarily songs and piano miniatures. The Quartet was more ambitious and reflects a growing confidence with large forms. In its accomplished technique and the assimilation of late romantic style, the work bears all the hallmarks of a mature composer.

Cast in four substantial movements, the Quartet adheres to traditional sonata form in the opening Allegro. The swirling piano part stays busy throughout in textures often reminiscent of Mendelssohn. Pejačević's soaring late romantic themes, however, are far more harmonically adventurous than Mendelssohn's, frequently taking unexpected turns. She gives most of the melodies to the strings, relying on dense piano writing to fill out the texture with Schumannesque phrasing.

The first movement opens with a bold chord from the full ensemble, before the cascading first theme is introduced. While relentless, the first movement is not without lyricism, and features alternations of tender expression and thrumming energy.

The *Adagio* in B-flat major is a tender, lovely movement. In the central section, the piano provides ascending arpeggios to anchor the shifting harmonies implied in the strings. A romantic theme is toyed with sweetly, and although in a major key, the movement comes to rest with a tinge of melancholy. Once again, the lion's share of the melodic material belongs to the strings.

The third movement is a synthesis of German dance and scherzo, rushing off again, delightfully spirited, but delivered with humor and a light touch. Subtle syncopations in the piano part underscore phrasing in the strings.

The finale is a rondo in D minor with strong connections to folk music. The recurring A-section is dance-like, slightly varied at its recurrences. Elements of peasant stomping enliven the music, along with pizzicato in the strings and rhythmic variety in the keyboard. In this exuberant finale, although each instrument adopts more of an independent voice, the race towards the finish is unanimous. Delightful pizzicato interjections from the strings answer to the piano's flurry of staccato gestures.

### Kreisler: *Three Encores*

Fritz Kreisler, regarded by many music-lovers and musicians alike as one of the greatest violinists the world has known, was born in Vienna during the heyday of the city's dynasty of waltz kings, the Strauss family. The spirit of old Vienna lives and breathes in his compositions, with their subtle, pliable rhythms, their flirtatious charm and their unfailing flow of melodic inspiration. Strange to think that Kreisler's composition professor in his home city was not Johann Strauss II, but Anton Bruckner.

Kreisler showed prodigious violinistic talents early and went on to study at the famed Paris Conservatoire, winning its "Premier Grand Prix de Rome" when he was only twelve years old. His initial tour to the US, while still in his early teens, was only somewhat successful, and upon his return to Vienna, Kreisler met with rejection in his attempt to become a member of the Vienna Philharmonic. As a result, he turned to medicine and art for further study, and it was only a decade later, in the late 1890s, that he returned to performing in public. An engagement with the Berlin Philharmonic met with huge acclaim, leading to much-lauded tours across Europe and the US; in the UK he was awarded the Philharmonic Society's gold medal and gave the world premiere of Elgar's Violin Concerto.

Kreisler's legacy extends beyond his fame as one of the world's greatest violinists to that of a composer of ever-beloved miniature violin works, as well as arrangements and transcriptions and a small number of larger works.

John Rockwell observed "Kreisler often played works of his own in the latter part of a program or as encores. For a time, in that innocent era before musicologists ruled our lives, he passed off some of those compositions as recently discovered manuscripts by other composers."

Harold Schonberg said: "He would have been the last to claim that his *Liebesleid*, *Liebesfreud*, *Schön Rosmarin*, and *Caprice viennois* were tremendous intellectual contributions to music. But they are as good as anything written in that genre, they have given great pleasure to millions, and they will be played as long as there are violinists who can lift a bow."

Kreisler paid tribute to the Vienna of yesteryear in *Three Pieces for Piano Trio*, one of a selection of works he arranged for violin, cello, and piano. He played these popular tunes often with his brother, the cellist Hugo Kreisler, and the collection became a favorite of ensembles eager to bring a light, sentimental touch to concert programming.

*The Old Refrain*, which opens the group, originally was Kreisler's 1915 arrangement for voice and piano of an old Viennese song by the German composer Johann Brandl set to words by Alice Mattullath. Kreisler dedicated it to his friend the great Irish tenor John McCormack and later arranged it for violin and piano. The trio arrangement is by Robert Biederman.

*Farewell to Cucullain*, a tribute to the warrior hero in Irish mythology, is better known by two other titles — "Londonderry Air," the traditional Irish tune, and "Oh Danny Boy," whose lyrics are set to the air. The music itself needs no introduction. As set so sensitively for violin, cello, and piano, it is as touching as any version with words.

Kreisler initially arranged the *Miniature Viennese March* for violin and piano and later expanded the piece's sly exuberance with the addition of an earthy cello.

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Notes compiled by Eric Zeise from text by Alex Burns, Willard Hetz, John Henken,  
Malcolm MacDonald, Paige Gullifer, Laurie Shulman, Jessica Duchon, Midori,  
and Donald Rosenberg.  
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## Biographical Notes

**Juliana Athayde**, appointed concertmaster of the RPO in 2005, has made numerous solo appearances with the RPO, including several premieres, and with orchestras across the country. She has also appeared as guest concertmaster with several orchestras. A dynamic teacher, Ms. Athayde is Associate Professor of Violin at the Eastman School, and serves on the faculty at music festivals across the U.S. She has held visiting faculty positions at the Cleveland Institute of Music and at Cornell University, and has guest taught at Rice University Shepherd School of Music. Ms. Athayde holds a B.M. from University of Michigan, as well as M.M and A.D. degrees from Cleveland Institute of Music where she was the first graduate of the CIM's Concertmaster Academy.

A versatile musician and educator, Taiwanese pianist **Chiao-Wen Cheng** has performed as soloist, recitalist, and chamber musician in major venues throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia, and has won numerous piano competitions and awards. Since 2019, Cheng has been an Artist-Faculty Piano Collaborator at the Perlman Music Program. In 2022, she was hired as the Collaborative Pianist for the U.S. premier of Tan Dun's trombone concerto. Cheng's solo engagements include concerto performances as well as solo recitals in major venues. She began piano lessons with her aunt at the age of four. She completed her bachelor's degree at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, where she received a Van Cliburn Scholarship. She completed her master's degree at Peabody Institute, Johns Hopkins University, where she received a full scholarship. Cheng holds a doctoral degree from the Eastman School of Music, where she was a student and teaching assistant of Barry Snyder. At Eastman, she was also the recipient of a graduate assistantship as a collaborative pianist and large ensemble pianist. Currently she is an Assistant Professor of Collaborative Piano at the Eastman School of Music and Principal Keyboardist of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra.

**Joshua Newburger** is the newly appointed principal violist of the RPO. Formerly assistant principal violist of the Pacific Symphony, Josh has performed as a guest principal with the Fresno Philharmonic and the Santa Barbara Symphony, and subbed in the sections of the LA Phil, San Diego Symphony, Colorado Symphony, and Buffalo Philharmonic. He has toured extensively throughout the US, Europe, and Asia as a member of the Verbier Festival Chamber orchestra, and a guest musician with Ivan Fischer's Budapest Festival Orchestra. He was twice selected as the assistant principal violist of the New York String Orchestra and studied as a fellow at the Music Academy of the West and the Verbier Festival. Josh received his Bachelor's degree in violin from the New England Conservatory. Under the guidance of Rochester native and Eastman alum Michael Klotz, Josh found his voice with the viola and ultimately obtained his Master's degree in viola from Yale, where he studied with Ettore Causa.

Cellist **David Ying** is well-known to concert audiences as the cellist of the Grammy Award-winning Ying Quartet. With the Quartet, he has performed worldwide in celebrated venues from Carnegie Hall to the Sydney Opera House. The Quartet is also known for its enterprising view of concert performance, which has led to visits to the White House as well as correctional facilities, to business schools, and to hospitals. The Quartet has collaborated with chamber music greats Menachem Pressler, Gilbert Kalish, and Paul Katz, as well as explored new musical territory with Mike Seeger, the Turtle Island Quartet, as well as actors, dancers, chefs, and magicians. They have commissioned many works for string quartet. David is also highly-regarded as an individual artist, having been awarded prizes in the Naumburg Cello Festival and the Washington International Competition. He often performs with his wife, pianist Elinor Freer, and the couple serve as artistic directors of the Skaneateles

Festival. A graduate of both the Eastman School and the Juilliard School, David presently serves on the cello and chamber music faculty at Eastman.

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