

## ***Creative Capitals* (2018) disc 4.**

The sixteenth edition of Music@Menlo *LIVE* visits seven of Western music's most flourishing *Creative Capitals*—London, Paris, St. Petersburg, Leipzig, Berlin, Budapest, and Vienna. Each disc explores the music that has emanated from these cultural epicenters, comprising an astonishingly diverse repertoire spanning some three hundred years that together largely forms the canon of Western music. Many of history's greatest composers have helped to define the spirit of these flagship cities through their music, and in this edition of recordings, Music@Menlo celebrates the many artistic triumphs that have emerged from the fertile ground of these *Creative Capitals*.

Disc 4 celebrates the *Creative Capitals* of Berlin and Vienna with music by the incomparable Germanic titans Beethoven and Brahms. Beethoven composed his first two cello sonatas as an honorable offering to the King of Prussia, King Friedrich Wilhelm II, an amateur cellist, whose throne sat in the vital cultural center of Berlin. Nearly seventy years later, Brahms would compose his epic Piano Quintet in f minor while residing in the city of Vienna, the indisputable capital of the Western musical world.

1–2 **Cello Sonata in F Major, op. 5, no. 1** (1796)  
**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN** (1770–1827)  
*Adagio sostenuto – Allegro*  
*Rondo: Allegro vivace*

DAVID REQUIRO, *cello*; GILLES VONSATTEL, *piano*

3–6 **Piano Quintet in f minor, op. 34** (1862)  
**JOHANNES BRAHMS** (1833–1897)  
*Allegro non troppo*  
*Andante, un poco adagio*  
*Scherzo: Allegro*  
*Finale: Poco sostenuto – Allegro non troppo*

GILBERT KALISH, *piano*; KRISTIN LEE, BELLA HRISTOVA, *violins*; RICHARD O'NEILL, *viola*; NICHOLAS CANELLAKIS, *cello*

Liner notes by Patrick Castillo © 2018

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN** (1770–1827)  
**Cello Sonata in F Major, op. 5, no. 1** (1796)

In 1796, the twenty-five-year-old Beethoven embarked on a concert tour to Prague, Dresden, Leipzig, and Berlin. From Prague, Beethoven wrote to his brother Johann: “My art is winning me friends and respect, what more do I want? And this time I shall make a good deal of money.” In Berlin, he appeared before Friedrich Wilhelm II, King of Prussia, himself a talented amateur cellist. Joined by the king's first cellist, Jean-Louis Duport, Beethoven presented the Opus 5 sonatas and the variations on Handel's *See the Conqu'ring Hero Comes!* (a theme chosen, one can fairly surmise, to flatter the king). The king rewarded

Beethoven with a snuffbox filled with louis d'ors—“no ordinary snuffbox,” the composer proudly noted, “but such a one as it might have been customary to give to an ambassador.” Though ostensibly dedicated to Friedrich Wilhelm II, the Opus 5 sonatas' true honoree is Duport, whose groundbreaking contributions to the cello tradition are documented in Beethoven's writing for that instrument. The sonatas call for a range of technical effects introduced by Duport, bringing the cello in league with the violin as a solo instrument: arpeggios, double-stops, and soaring cantabile in high registers. Consequently, these sonatas, writes Beethoven scholar Lewis Lockwood, “emerged as the first true cello sonatas worthy to rank with Mozart's violin sonatas.”

The two sonatas of Opus 5 are structurally similar—a slow introduction leading to an *Allegro* first movement, followed by a spirited rondo—but are of contrasting humors. The Sonata in F Major, op. 5, no. 1, is the sunnier of the pair. The extended *Adagio sostenuto* introduction begins on a cautious note, cello and piano, in unison, taking tentative first steps. From these hesitant utterances emerges a cello melody of breathtaking lyricism, set in the instrument's sweet tenor register—an understated celebration of the instrument (and Duport's facility). This sinewy melody passes through light and dark harmonic shadings, the piano surrounding it with increasingly ornate filigree, until both arrive at a pregnant *pianissimo* fermata. The ebullient *Allegro* begins straightaway, with the piano issuing the first theme: a long-breathed melody, extroverted despite Beethoven's instruction that it be played *piano, dolce*. Bouncing staccato eighth notes in the cello and piano's left hand propel the music forward. This music steadily builds to a fortissimo cadence. The second theme begins with a thoughtful, chromatic gesture, but this music, too, soon reverts to the carefree spirit of the movement's opening strain. Though the development briefly indulges in a moodier, minor-key episode, the movement's prevailing character is light and joyful. The sonata remains in buoyant good cheer for the rondo finale. The innocuous subject belies the athleticism required from both cellist and pianist. The episodes that appear in alternation with recurrences of the refrain furthermore indulge in a broad palette of colors and characters: sforzando outbursts that puncture the music's seeming tranquility, a martial episode accentuated by stark cello pizzicato, clangorous arpeggios in the piano's bass register, and other such bold strokes result in a fiercely expressive finale.

**JOHANNES BRAHMS** (1833–1897)  
**Piano Quintet in f minor, op. 34** (1862)

Brahms's Piano Quintet underwent a curious genesis. The work began as a string quintet for two violins, viola, and two cellos. Completed in 1862, the quintet in this original version was deemed imperfect by both Brahms and the violinist Joseph Joachim, the composer's trusted confidant. Brahms rearranged the piece into a sonata for two pianos, which he premiered with the pianist Karl Tausig in 1864. Later that year, the work evolved towards its final incarnation, for piano and string quartet. The obsessive perfectionism illustrated by the work's gestation is equally in evidence in its musical content. An oft-noted defining quality of Brahms's music is its airtight craftsmanship: each note is meticulously vetted, the counterpoint between all voices is unassailable, and every motivic idea is essential to the work's structure. This last quality is particularly discernible in

the quintet's first movement, which begins with a four-measure introduction, stated in octaves, mezzo forte, by the first violin, cello, and piano. What sounds like an innocuous prologue in fact contains not only the first theme but a germinal motif from which springs the whole of the proceeding movement. Following an expectant fermata, the piano transforms these introductory measures into a propulsive sixteenth-note figure. Above this, the strings exclaim a sequence of chords, built on a two-note descending figure—a gesture likewise embedded in the four-measure introduction. As the music gathers steam, the piano develops these descending two notes, while the strings take up the propulsive sixteenth notes. Ensuing musical ideas likewise derive from the two-note descending motif: a keening melody, *piano, espressivo*, presented by the first violin—and, soon thereafter, a martial two-against-three passage which leads into an ardent strain in the viola and cello, marked *piano, sotto voce*. As this newly formulated theme develops, the piano accompanies with the sixteenth-note pattern derived from the quintet's opening.

Brahms continues in this manner, constructing a majestic movement with breathtaking mastery and elegance from the simplest materials. The second movement, marked *Andante, un poco adagio*, transfigures the two-note motif—the fuel for so much *Sturm und Drang* in the first movement—into a sweetly lilting lullaby. The piano sings the tune, *piano, espressivo, sotto voce*, to a gentle accompaniment in the strings. The key changes from warm A-flat major to radiant E major for the rhapsodic subsidiary theme, crooned by the second violin and viola. An initial stepwise descent expands into a series of cascading triplets. The lullaby returns to bring the movement to a tranquil close. The scherzo comprises three distinct musical ideas, heard in quick succession at the outset, building an irrepressible momentum from one to the next. The apprehensive opening, in 6/8 time, sets an offbeat rising arpeggio in the first violin and viola above persistent pizzicati in the cello and laconic piano commentary. This melody's fluid motion is abruptly halted by the second musical idea, a clipped, staccato march in 2/4. The third theme transmutes the march's inexorable rhythmic energy into a full-throated anthem. (All three musical ideas, naturally, abound with the germinal descending two-note cell.)

Brahms goes on to develop these themes with a restlessness quite exceeding a typical scherzo—demonstrating a technique later identified by Arnold Schoenberg as “developing variation.” In his essay “Brahms the Progressive,” Schoenberg described Brahms's facility at “variation of the features of a basic unit produc[ing] all the thematic formulations which provide for fluency, contrasts, variety, logic, and unity, on the one hand, and character, mood, expression, and every needed differentiation, on the other hand—thus elaborating the idea of the piece.” Witness the scherzo's climax, which brings together elements of all three ideas: the strings reprise the march while the piano restates the offbeat opening, now with the anthem's robust chordal texture. The movement features a noble trio section before reprising the scherzo. The quintet's finale begins with a lugubrious introduction, searching melodic lines in the strings buoyed by a tide of triplet chords in the piano. After a pregnant silence, the movement launches into its main *Allegro* section, driven by a dance-like tune redolent of the Gypsy music that so captivated Brahms throughout his life. A secondary theme contrasts this animated music with a mournful song yet retains something of its folk character, as does the exposition's closing theme, a variation of the Gypsy dance. After a duly realized development and recapitulation, the mighty quintet finishes with a blazing *Presto* coda.

Recorded July 28 and August 4, 2018, The Center for Performing Arts at Menlo-Atherton. Recording producer and engineer: Da-Hong Seetoo. Steinway grand pianos provided courtesy of Pro-Piano. Cover art: *Castrum Doloris*, by Gonzalo Fonseca. Photos by Geoff Sheil. Booklet design by Nick Stone. CD production: Jerome Bunke, Digital Force, New York. Production manager: Nathan Paer. Music@Menlo 2018 was made possible by a leadership grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Additional support provided by Koret Foundation Funds, U.S. Trust, 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 2018. © 2018 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](http://www.musicatmenlo.org)



DAVID REQUIRO, cello