Gather (2021) Disc 7.

1–3 Piano Quartet in G minor, K. 478 (1785)
WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)

Allegro	10:51
Andante	7:11
Rondo: Allegro	7:52

GILBERT KALISH, *piano*; TIEN-HSIN CINDY WU, *violin*; MATTHEW LIPMAN, *viola*; DAVID FINCKEL, *cello*

4–7 Fantasy in F minor for Piano, Four Hands, op. posth. 103, D. 940 (1828)
FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828)

Allegro molto moderato	4:46
Largo	2:28
Allegro vivace – Con delicatezza	5:53
Tempo I	5:28

WYNONA (YINUO) WANG, GILBERT KALISH, *piano*

8–11 Piano Quartet no. 3 in C minor, op. 60 (1875)
JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)

Allegro non troppo	10:32
Scherzo: Allegro	4:08
Andante	8:32
Finale: Allegro comodo	10:31

WYNONA (YINUO) WANG, *piano*; KRISTIN LEE, *violin*; PAUL NEUBAUER, *viola*; STERLING ELLIOTT, *cello*

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.

The final disc of Music@Menlo *LIVE* 2021 contrasts brooding musical tempers with light, lyricism, and optimism. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Piano Quartet in G minor, the first notable work of its kind, would inaugurate a rich repertoire tradition, nurtured in subsequent generations by Robert Schumann, Johannes Brahms, Antonín Dvořák, and many others. Franz Schubert's sublime Fantasy in F minor likewise adopts a genre closely associated with Mozart—four-hand piano—but the "Prince of Song" makes it unmistakably his own. The disc concludes with Johannes Brahms's Piano Quartet no. 3 in C minor, op. 60, written in the throes of romantic despair. "You may place a picture on the title page, namely a head—with a pistol in front of it," he wrote to his publisher. "This will give you some idea of the music."

Liner notes by Patrick Castillo © 2021

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791)
Piano Quartet in G minor, K. 478 (1785)

Though now a standard chamber music genre, the combination of piano, violin, viola, and cello had no substantial tradition when the Viennese publisher Franz Anton Hoffmeister commissioned Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart to compose three such works in 1785. The piano trio constituted the majority of chamber works for piano with strings—a genre that Haydn had elevated from piano sonata with obbligato string accompaniment to a sophisticated musical dialogue between equal partners. In similar fashion, Mozart's innovations represent the modern piano quartet repertoire's point of origin. His accomplishment in the quartets commissioned by Hoffmeister—simultaneously enlisting all four players as equal chamber partners while fashioning a concertante piano part supported by an ensemble of strings—would provide a model for subsequent piano quartets by Robert Schumann, Johannes Brahms, Antonín Dvořák, and others.

Upon first receiving the Quartet in G minor from Mozart, Hoffmeister is said to have urged the composer, "Write more popularly, or else I can neither print nor pay for anything of yours!" Mozart's supposed reply: "Then I will write nothing more, or go hungry, or may the devil take me!"—an appealing but dubious tale, belied by Hoffmeister's successful publication of nearly a dozen more works by Mozart's pen over the following four years. In any event, the G-minor Quartet did prove too difficult for the amateur market, and Hoffmeister released Mozart from fulfilling the commission. Nevertheless, Mozart completed a second quartet, the Piano Quartet in E-flat, K. 493, but never wrote a third.

The Quartet in G minor, K. 478, opens on a startling note: a terse *fortissimo* fragment, presented in forbidding octaves by the full ensemble, as if reprimanding the audience. A dramatic response in the piano, like a plea for mercy, is met with further reproof. The subsequent modulation to friendlier B-flat major notwithstanding, a forbidding tone prevails throughout the movement.

In contrast to the opening *Allegro*, the *Andante* second movement presents a tranquil aria, introduced by the piano and then colored by the strings. A classic Mozartian *Rondo* ends the work, testifying to the composer's powers of melodic invention. An inexorable flow of musical ideas pervades the *Rondo*'s first episode. Over the course of the movement, Mozart traverses more inclement territory, but

he ultimately guides the listener through the storm toward a satisfyingly sunny ending.

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797–1828)
Fantasy in F minor for Piano, Four Hands, op. posth. 103, D. 940 (1828)

Franz Schubert's Fantasy in F minor, op. 103, endures as one of the four-hand piano repertoire's greatest triumphs. The piano duet genre—virtually invented by Mozart for performances given with his elder sister—suited Schubert's compositional purposes well: while lending itself to the intimate environment of the *Schubertiades*, the private drawing room concerts in which much of the composer's music was first heard, the expanded range on the keyboard covered by two players provided a proper vehicle for the expressive depth of Schubert's musical language. He indulged in the four-hand medium many times, leaving roughly sixty works for four-hand piano.

Schubert composed the Fantasy in F minor between January and April 1828, just months before he died. The work bears a dedication to Countess Caroline Esterházy and was likely designed for the two to play together. Schubert first met the countess in 1818 when Caroline's father, Count Johann Carl Esterházy, hired Schubert as a private music teacher for his two daughters. An account of Schubert's residency with the Esterházys offered by a close acquaintance that the composer had met through the family noted that Schubert kindled a "poetic flame that sprang up in his heart for the younger daughter of the house, Countess Caroline. This flame continued to burn until his death. Caroline had the greatest regard for him and for his talent but did not return his love; perhaps she had no idea of the degree to which it existed." (Prior to receiving the fantasy's dedication, Caroline had once teasingly asked Schubert why he had never dedicated a work to her; he stoically replied, "What is the point? Everything is dedicated to you anyway.")

The work's designation as a "fantasy" serves more to indicate an expressive flavor than a standard form; the sixteenth-century composer and writer Luis de Milán defined the term as a work designed "solely from the fantasy and skill of the author who created it." Nevertheless, Schubert's F-minor Fantasy is an impeccably constructed work. It comprises four uninterrupted movements held together by unifying melodic and rhythmic ideas. It may even be heard as organized into a quasi sonata form: the first movement functions as an exposition, in which primary musical ideas are introduced; the two inner movements develop these materials; and the final movement serves as a recapitulation, reaffirming the musical ideas of the first movement.

The work begins with a plaintive melody, whose dotted rhythms recur throughout the work, seamlessly connecting its four movements into a coherent whole. Soon after introducing the F-minor theme, Schubert restates it in F major, the juxtaposition of major and minor tonalities representing a characteristically Schubertian device. As an impassioned secondary theme appears, the dotted rhythm accelerates into blustery triplets, a new rhythmic idea that likewise recurs throughout the work.

The following *Largo*, underpinned by the dotted and triplet rhythms, cries out with heroic pathos. Schubert introduces a new musical idea: a genteel melody, evocative of the Viennese salons in which much of his music was first heard. The third movement, marked *Allegro vivace,* further demonstrates Schubert's melodic genius. Witness the seamless integration of an intrepid anthem and an aristocratic dance. A crafty modulation brings the fantasy into the final movement, a recapitulation of the opening theme.

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)
Piano Quartet no. 3 in C minor, op. 60 (1875)

Johannes Brahms completed the last of his three piano quartets, the Quartet in C minor, op. 60, in 1875, but he had begun work on the piece some two decades prior, during a period of intense personal anguish. In 1853, the twenty-year-old Brahms, on the advice of the violinist Joseph Joachim, traveled to Düsseldorf, Germany, to play for Western music's reigning power couple, the composer Robert Schumann and composer and pianist Clara Schumann. Robert Schumann, also a prolific music critic, published an account of their first meeting:

There inevitably must appear a musician called to give expression to his times in ideal fashion; a musician who would reveal his mastery not in a gradual evolution, but like Athena would spring fully armed from Zeus's head. And such a one has appeared; a young man over whose cradle Graces and Heroes have stood watch. His name is Johannes Brahms...Even outwardly he bore the marks proclaiming: "This is a chosen one." Sitting at the piano he began to disclose wonderful regions to us. We were drawn into even more enchanting spheres. Besides, he is a player of genius who can make of the piano an orchestra of lamenting and loudly jubilant voices. There were sonatas, veiled symphonies rather; songs the poetry of which would be understood even without words...Should he direct his magic wand where the powers of the masses in chorus and orchestra may lend him their forces, we can look forward to even more wondrous glimpses of the secret world of spirits.

Brahms quickly got on well with the Schumanns and stayed in their home for the next two weeks, developing deep and consequential personal ties. The following year, Robert Schumann, who for years had been battling significant mental illness, attempted suicide. He survived and committed himself to an asylum near Bonn, Germany, for fear of harming his family; Clara Schumann was forbidden to visit for the following two and half years and did not see her husband again until the final two days of his life in 1856.

During this time, Brahms lived in the Schumanns' home, helping to care for Robert and Clara's children and assisting with domestic affairs. He moreover fell deeply in love with Clara Schumann, fourteen years his senior—an affection that was reciprocated, if complicatedly so. Clara Schumann later shared the following with her children:

He came as a true friend, to share with me all my sorrow; he strengthened my heart as it was about to break, he lifted my thoughts, lightened, when it was possible, my spirits. In short, he was my friend in the fullest sense of the word. I can truly say, my children, that I have never loved a friend as I loved him; it is the most beautiful mutual understanding of two souls. I do not love him for his youthfulness, nor probably for any reason of flattered vanity. It is rather his elasticity of spirit, his fine gifted nature, his noble heart that I love...Believe all that I, your mother, have told you, and do not heed those small and envious souls who make light of my love and friendship, trying to bring up for question our beautiful relationship, which they neither fully understand nor ever could.

In 1859, with the *Adagio* of his First Piano Concerto, Brahms wrote to Clara Schumann that he had created a "gentle portrait" of her. If that sublime movement serves as an expression of ecstatic love, the depth of Brahms's angst finds voice in the Opus 60 Piano Quartet.

When sending the quartet to his publisher, Brahms wrote, "You may place a picture on the title page, namely a head—with a pistol in front of it. This will give you some idea of the music. I shall send you a photograph of myself for the purpose. Blue coat, yellow breeches, and top-boots would do well, as you seem to like color printing." A nineteenth-century reader would immediately have understood this reference to *The Sorrows of Young Werther,* Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's classic story of unrequited love, in which the protagonist is hopelessly in love with a woman engaged to another man. Unable to bear being without her, he shoots himself.

The character of the quartet's opening measures immediately sets a grave tone. Brahms is less than subtle about his expressive motivations; embedded in this disconsolate opening melody is a cipher that Robert Schumann periodically used to spell Clara's name: C–B-flat–A–G-sharp–A (replacing the letters *l* and *r*, which don't have equivalent musical pitches, with B-flat and G-sharp).

This cipher appears in various works by Robert Schumann, including his song "*Die Lotosblume*," from the song cycle *Myrthen,* op. 25, composed as a wedding gift to Clara. In the Opus 60 Piano Quartet, Brahms turns Robert Schumann's loving Clara theme (transposed here to wretched C minor) into an expression of deep Romantic Sturm und Drang.

The quartet comprises four movements. Following the *Scherzo* comes the work's emotional centerpiece: a lovely *Andante*, whose opening cello solo one biographer has surmised to be Brahms's farewell to Clara—a reluctant acceptance that their love is never to be fulfilled.

The work's *Allegro* finale is at once understated yet brimming with nervous energy. The attentive ear will detect an insistent rhythmic figure underpinning the sinewy melodic lines in the strings. As with Brahms's allusion to *Werther,* this rhythmic motif would have been immediately familiar to nineteenth-century listeners as a nod to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. What Beethoven deployed as shorthand for the unfeeling cruelty of fate, Brahms uses to express his quiet despair.

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