

MUSICA VIVA

INTERNATIONAL CONCERT SEASON 2018

REVISED BRISBANE PROGRAM

Wednesday 7 November, 7pm

Due to illness, Leonard Elschenbroich is unable to perform in this evening's concert.
Nicola Benedetti and Alexei Grynyuk will perform the following revised duo program.

Johannes BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Violin Sonata no 1 in G major, op 78 (1878-79) 27 min

- I Vivace, ma non troppo*
- II Adagio*
- III Allegro molto moderato*

Sergei PROKOFIEV (1891-1953)

Violin Sonata no 2 in D major, op 94 (1944) 24 min

- I Moderato*
- II Scherzo: Presto*
- III Andante*
- IV Allegro con brio*

INTERVAL

Richard STRAUSS (1864-1949)

Violin Sonata in E-flat major, op 18 (1887-8) 23 min

- I Allegro ma non troppo*
 - II Improvisation: Andante cantabile*
 - III Finale: Andante – Allegro*
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Johannes BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Violin Sonata no 1 in G major, op 78 (1878-9)

- I Vivace ma non troppo (Lively but not too fast)
- II Adagio (Slow)
- III Allegro molto moderato (Moderately fast)

This Sonata was very special to Clara Schumann. She was a wonderful pianist and it has a great keyboard part; and she was anyway a lifelong dear friend and supporter of Brahms and his compositions. But aside from that, its manuscript was sent to her, for her consideration and feedback, during a particularly tough time in her life when several of her family had died or become ill. Just as another tragedy came to light – a terminal diagnosis for her son Felix – Clara first played through this Sonata. She recognised that Brahms had included quotes from two (maybe three) of his songs, songs she loved and which he knew had particular secret meaning for her. She said she wept on playing it.

The Sonata was written – as were many of Brahms's great works – mostly during his summer holidays, which in 1878 were taken in Pörtschach. He had probably written earlier sonatas but trashed them with his usual ruthless self-censorship. This one may have survived because it crosses paths with Brahms' mighty Violin Concerto, also chiefly composed at Pörtschach in 1878, and some of what Brahms learned then from the virtuoso violinist Joseph Joachim appears in this Sonata too, including delicate and idiomatic use of double-stopping (playing two notes at once) and refinements of phrasing that are perhaps surprising from a composer-pianist. But here, the two players can claim a sense of equality in the roles allotted to them; the violinist has more of the tunes, but the pianist is no mere background supporter.

Brahms' Eight Songs op 59 were written in 1873, to texts by his friend Klaus Groth. The opening three notes of the third song, 'Regenlied', is the first thing heard on the violin, and appears as the principal motif throughout the G major Sonata – and is the reason why Clara later referred to it as the 'Regen-sonata'. That beautiful repeated long-short-long motif is heard somewhere in each movement, in different contexts and moods; at one point Brahms even lets the pianist have a go at it, with the violinist softly strumming the accompaniment. There are also references to no 4, 'Nachklang' ('lingering note' or 'after-resonance'). The Finale is particularly rich in slabs of quoted melody, and the staccato raindrop-like pattern for the piano. Clara called it 'the music she would like to accompany her to the next life'.

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Program notes for the **Prokofiev** and **Strauss** can be found in the printed concert guide.