

## PROGRAM for MARCH 7, 2024

Sonata for violin and piano  
in A minor, op. 105 no. 1  
(transcription for clarinet by D. Desautels)

Robert Schumann  
(1810-1856)

- I. Mit leidenschaftlichem Ausdruck
- II. Allegretto
- III. Lebhaft

*Trio Pathétique* for clarinet, bassoon  
and piano

Mikhail Glinka  
(1804-1857)

- I. Allegro moderato
- II. Scherzo vivacissimo / Trio
- III. Largo
- IV. Allegro con spirito

### INTERMISSION

Duo for clarinet and piano  
in E flat major, op. 15

Norbert Burgmüller  
(1810-1836)

*Three Romances*  
for violin and piano op. 22  
(transcription for clarinet by D. Desautels)

Clara Schumann  
(1819-1896)

- I. Andante molto
- II. Allegretto: Mit zartem Vortrage
- III. Leidenschaftlich schnell

Sonata for clarinet and piano  
in E flat major, op. 120 no. 2

Johannes Brahms  
(1833-1897)

- I. Allegro amabile
- II. Allegro appassionato
- III. Andante con moto

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*Tuning Your Mind Lecture:*

*The Clarinet in Chamber Music*

*Peter Stoll, clarinetist and teacher at the Faculty of Music, U of T*

Open to all, 12.15 p.m. sharp | Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building

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## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Principal clarinetist with the Canadian Opera Company orchestra, **Dominic Desautels** is one of the most sought-after wind instrumentalists in Canada as a soloist, chamber musician and pedagogue. He made his debut as a soloist with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in 2003 at the age of 21 — being invited the same season as acting principal clarinetist (and youngest player to be hired in this position) with the TSO. He has since been a guest soloist with several orchestras in Canada and abroad, including Orquestra Filarmônica de Minas Gerais, Symphony Nova Scotia, Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestre Symphonique de Sherbrooke, Sinfonia Lanaudière, Orchestre de la Francophonie and Orchestre de l'Université de Montréal. Dominic appears as a guest artist and faculty in several music festivals across the country and beyond, notably since 2013 at Scotia Festival of Music with its fine history of clarinet artists, initiated with Robert Marcellus in the 1980s. As co-artistic director of The Parcival Project chamber ensemble, he has toured in Canada and South America. Other tours include 40 recitals presented by Jeunesses Musicales of Canada during their 2012-2013 season.

Before his position as principal clarinetist at the COC since 2017, he also held the principal clarinet chair at the Orquestra Filarmônica de Minas Gerais in Brazil (2008-2012), Symphony Nova Scotia (2012-2017) and Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra (2018-2022). Dominic started playing the clarinet at age 15 and studied mainly with Jean-François Normand, Robert Riseling and Joaquin Valdepeñas. More recently, he has received guidance from François Benda and James Campbell. After studies at several institutions such as the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal and the Glenn Gould School, he graduated from the Université de Montréal in 2007.

The winner of several competitions, he was the first clarinetist to ever win a top prize at the 33rd edition of the prestigious International Stepping Stone at the Canadian Music Competition. He is now in demand as an adjudicator at institutions such as the Glenn Gould School, University of Toronto, the Concours at the Conservatoires de Musique du Québec, the national finals of the Canadian Music Competition and many more. He has taught at Dalhousie and Acadia Universities, and from 2019 to 2022 was the adjunct professor of clarinet at the University of Toronto.

Dominic Desautels plays on Schwenk & Seggelke clarinets made of mopane wood and handcrafted in Bamberg, Germany, and is an Endorsing Artist for companies Légère Reeds and Silverstein ligatures.

Qualified as a poet of the piano by conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin, **Jean-Philippe Sylvestre** was awarded the prestigious Virginia Parker Prize in 2008, the highest distinction given by the Canada Council for the Arts. First prize winner of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra competition and recipient of the people's choice award, he is also a laureate of the CBC National Competition for Young Performers, receiving the people's choice award, as well as the Concertino Praga International Competition. He has won first prize in the Canadian Music Competition three times and received the highest score in the competition on one of these occasions.

Mr. Sylvestre has performed on stages such as the Berlin Philharmonic, Musikverein in Vienna, Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Salle Gaveau in Paris, Sala Oriol Martorell in Barcelona, Sydney recital hall in Australia, Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels, Auditorium St-Pierre des Cuisines in Toulouse, Teatro Mayor in Bogotá, and Teatro Metropolitan in Medellín, Colombia. Additionally, he has performed at Theatro Municipal in Rio de Janeiro and Teatro B32 in Sao Paulo, Brazil, the National Arts Centre, Glenn Gould Studio, and the Maison Symphonique of Montreal in Canada. He has appeared with conductors such as Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Jacques Lacombe, Christian Schulz, Richard Bradshaw, Boris Brott, Simon Streatfeild, Fabien Gabel, and Rolf Bertsch. He has recently released a CD as a soloist with the London Symphony Orchestra under the Chandos label, and his recordings have earned JUNO Award nominations and more.

Born in Ste-Julie, Québec, Jean-Philippe Sylvestre began his musical studies at the age of four. He received a diploma from the École de Musique Vincent-d'Indy and a bachelor's degree from the Université de Montréal with Marc Durand. He continued his musical studies under the guidance of John Perry and obtained an Artist Diploma from the Glenn Gould School of the Royal Conservatory of Music of Toronto. After perfecting his skills in Italy and Germany under the direction of Louis Lortie, he continued his musical expertise with masters such as Michel Dalberto, Jacques Rouvier, Gerhard Oppitz, Jerome Lowenthal, Leon Fleisher, Mikhail Voskresensky, and Menahem Pressler.

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**Zsófia Stefán** is a winner of multiple international bassoon competitions. She has been celebrated at many national and county competitions and events. She began her university studies at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music as a student of György Lakatos, György Keszler and Tibor Fülemlé, and was awarded a degree with honours (2007). She then went on to study the bassoon under Richard Galler for a year at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna. She went on to receive a Yehudi

Menuhin "Live Music Now" scholarship (2008) in Vienna. She was a bassoon teacher at the Erno Dohnányi Music High School from 2008-2012. She is a founding member of the Corridor Bassoon Quartet which released its first album, *Corridooors*, in 2014. Before relocating to Canada, she was the principal bassoonist and soloist of a leading Hungarian orchestra, Concerto Budapest (2011-2020). *Exploring Enchanted Gardens*, her first solo album, was released in 2018.

Living in Toronto since 2022, she has since been in high demand in Canada as a chamber musician and freelance orchestral musician, regularly performing with top ensembles including the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, and the Canadian Opera Company where she has also been heard as principal bassoonist on numerous occasions.

## NOTES for MARCH 7, 2024

When news is slow you still see occasional stories in the newspapers about people who look like their dogs – or perhaps it is just that they choose dogs that resemble them as pets. This is obviously not true of performers and their instruments, but there do seem to be examples of players having similar characters to their instruments. Humourists have mined this particular vein with some success. Gerard Hoffnung's inimitable cartoons often played with this idea and Garrison Keillor's *Young Lutheran's Guide to the Orchestra* is based on it. Keillor characterizes the clarinet, and by extension its players, as "sardonic, skeptical and definitely worldly." Berlioz, who is speaking just of the instrument, and certainly not as a humourist, believes it has a "proud quality tempered by noble tenderness, and [is] thus ideal for expressing feelings and ideas of the most poetic kind." Leaving aside whether this characterizes today's performer, it is clear from these quotations why composers might be drawn to this very versatile instrument.

Brahms was drawn to the instrument by the playing of one particular performer, Richard Mühlfeld, calling him the "nightingale of the orchestra" - in a letter to Clara Schumann he said "nobody can blow the clarinet more beautifully than Herr Mühlfeld of this place." "This place" was Meiningen, the capital of the German duchy of Saxe-Meiningen. During Duke George's reign (1866 - 1914) this became a cultural centre with a strong theatrical company and an orchestra that under the direction of Hans von Bülow became one of Europe's leading ensembles. Richard Mühlfeld, who had spent his early years in a spa in Salzungen playing clarinet and violin, came to Meiningen first as a violinist and only after six years on that instrument was made

principal clarinetist. Von Bülow invited Brahms to hear the orchestra and he was impressed by the quality of the performance and a close association grew up between them. He was especially drawn to the playing of Mühlfeld and wrote four works for him: in 1891 the Trio for clarinet, cello and piano, shortly followed by the Quintet for clarinet and string quartet. In 1894 he added the two sonatas for clarinet and piano and he and Mühlfeld performed them often. As a token of this newfound friendship, Brahms left the manuscript of the sonatas to the man he called "Meine Primadonna."

Schumann wrote no sonata for clarinet. Brahms might have influenced him in that direction, but Schumann died long before that fruitful meeting with Mühlfeld. He must have known the Duo by Burgmüller that appears later on today's program, but this didn't result in comparable works. So it is not surprising that clarinetists feel that there is an obvious gap in the repertoire that ought to be filled. And of course there are perfect examples of works having a double life as clarinet or string works: Brahms two sonatas, which he also authorized in versions for viola. Why not the reverse process?

Schumann's first violin sonata was written in 1851, the year after the composer and his wife moved to Düsseldorf, where he was employed as municipal music director. His first year had been very successful and he managed to combine his conducting duties with an immense amount of composition, but by the second year things had turned a little sour. There were frequent complaints both from singers and from the orchestral musicians about his conducting. They had a point. Contemporary accounts of him in rehearsal describe him as becoming so lost in the imagined sounds his mind created from the score, that he was oblivious of the real ones around him. In the autumn of 1851, probably in reaction to these complaints, he formed a small chamber ensemble from the orchestra's better instrumentalists. His compositional output now turned towards chamber music, today's sonata being one of the results. The concertmaster of the Düsseldorf orchestra, Joseph Wasielewski, gave the first performance of this sonata with Schumann's wife Clara as the pianist.

Besides being a virtuoso pianist, Clara Schuman was also a composer of considerable ability, although, as one of her biographers points out, this activity was "always in competition with the demands of the family and the duty to support Robert professionally." And that is without taking into consideration a generally held belief at the time, that composition was not an occupation for a woman. The *Three Romances* were written in 1853 when her husband's duties in Düsseldorf were becoming increasingly stressful and his health was deteriorating fast –

he was to be hospitalized in an asylum the following year. Clara was helped greatly in these years by her friendship with Brahms and the violinist Joseph Joachim, and these pieces were dedicated to Joachim.

In *Music Ho!*, Constant Lambert's often outrageous survey of the state of music in the 1920s and 30s, the author has this to say about Glinka. He is "one of those convenient historic figures, like Sir Walter Raleigh, to whom almost all discoveries can be ascribed – and in his case with justice." He is referring to the often-quoted description of Glinka as the "Father of Russian Music." Put this together with the title *Pathétique* and you might expect a rather different work from the one on today's program. This composition was written in 1832 when the 28 year old composer was on an extended tour of Italy, and well before his move towards a more Russian-based style. The tour was ostensibly for the benefit of his health, which was indeed poor, but exacerbated by hypochondria. Glinka wrote on the score, "I have known love only by the pain it brings," and some writers have speculated that this refers to an actual affair that ended badly; it seems just as likely to have been a typical romantic trope that the young artist felt he ought to experience. Whatever the depth of his personal feelings, the musical language Glinka used to express them was based on the operatic world of Bellini and Donizetti, the music he was surrounded by at that moment. The result is an approachable, tuneful piece, and if there is any touch of the pathétique about it, it seems more play-acting than anything very traumatic.

The article on Norbert Burgmüller in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* opens with what must be one of the sadder sentences in that massive work: "A son of Johann August Franz Burgmüller, Norbert possessed far greater ability than his father or his brother Friedrich, but lacked their ambition and worldliness." The father, Johann, was the first municipal music director in Düsseldorf, the same position that was later held by Mendelssohn and Schumann. Norbert, who was born in 1810, studied with Ludwig Spohr and Moritz Hauptmann and by the late 1820s was making frequent appearances as a pianist and composer. In 1831 he attempted to get a permanent position in Düsseldorf, but that came to nothing and he declined into a reclusive life, marred by frequent financial troubles and increasing epileptic fits. He drowned at the age of twenty six on a visit to the spa at Aachen, "one of the great might-have-beens of the romantic era" in Calum MacDonald's words. Clarinetists especially are thankful that among his surviving works is the fine Duo on today's programme.

*-John Mayo*