

A man and a woman are standing on a modern staircase with stone steps and glass railings. The man, on the left, is wearing a dark suit, a light blue shirt, and glasses. The woman, on the right, is wearing a strapless, floor-length dress with a gold and black abstract pattern. They are both smiling at the camera.

CEDILLE
Symphony

HERE WITH YOU
Anthony McGill
& Gloria Chien

THE BRAHMS SONATAS

Weber Grand Duo Concertant

Montgomery Peace

HERE WITH YOU

Anthony McGill & Gloria Chien

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

**Sonata in F minor for Clarinet and Piano,
Op. 120, No. 1 (22:17)**

- 1** I. Allegro appassionato (7:51)
- 2** II. Andante un poco adagio (5:04)
- 3** III. Allegretto grazioso (4:02)
- 4** IV. Vivace (5:06)

**Sonata in E-flat major for Clarinet and
Piano, Op. 120, No. 2 (21:55)**

- 5** I. Allegro amabile (8:49)
- 6** II. Allegro appassionato (5:40)
- 7** III. Andante con moto (7:18)

JESSIE MONTGOMERY (b. 1981)

- 8** Peace* (4:38)

CARL MARIA VON WEBER (1786-1826)

Grand Duo Concertant, Op. 48 (18:02)

- 9** I. Allegro con fuoco (6:24)
- 10** II. Andante con moto (5:27)
- 11** III. Rondo: Allegro (6:07)

TT: 67:15

* *WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING*

PERSONAL NOTE

By Gloria Chien and Anthony McGill

Once in a rare while, you find a musical partner with whom you share a particularly special bond, a deep, unspoken connection. This was the case when we first met 15 years ago, and that bond has continued to develop ever since.

These Brahms and Weber works have long been our dream album to record. Even though we have played many other pieces together, these are the ones which we feel closest to. When the pandemic stopped the world, we finally had the space in our lives to make this dream a reality. After many months without performing or playing with other musicians, it was serendipitous to spend a few days in the gorgeous Mechanics Hall with this music. Trust, connection, and friendship made it an unforgettable few days.

Jessie Montgomery's *Peace* was written in the early months of COVID-19 as a response to the shock felt by the whole globe and of experiencing a personal crisis. We feel it is essential to include it on this album because it sums up so many of the feelings of sadness and hope in the year 2020.

It was a gift to record our dream album together and we hope you will find meaning in its shared expression of beauty and friendship.

NOTES ON WEBER & BRAHMS

by Andrea Lamoreaux

Carl Maria von Weber was born in 1786 in Eutin, in the northern German state of Schleswig-Holstein. He died from tuberculosis a few months shy of his 40th birthday, yet his music influenced many generations to come, and it lives on today.

Weber's family moved around a great deal — his father went from one theater job to another with considerable frequency. Still, young Carl was able to acquire significant formal musical instruction: two stints with Michael Haydn in Salzburg and a period in Vienna under the noted teacher known as the Abbe Vogler. Weber was already composing during his teen years but his career did not truly take off until 1811, when he toured as a pianist in partnership with a famous clarinetist, Heinrich Baermann (1784–1847). As with Mozart, one of whose best friends was clarinetist Anton Stadler, and Brahms (see below about Richard Muehlfeld), Weber was inspired by Baermann's artistry on the clarinet. Some of his most enduring compositions feature that instrument, newly popular in concert music since about the middle of the 18th century. In 1811, Baermann was principal clarinet of the Munich Court Orchestra.

In 1813, Weber took over as head of the Prague Opera, and in 1817 became director of the even more prestigious

Dresden Opera. Also in 1817, he married a singer, Caroline Brandt. It was in 1821, in Berlin, that he unveiled his opera *Der Freischuetz*, one of the early landmarks of German Romantic opera and a powerful influence on composers as varied as Hector Berlioz, Giacomo Meyerbeer (a friend from Weber's Viennese student days) and, most notably, Richard Wagner. Indeed, Berlioz and Wagner frequently noted their indebtedness to Weber in terms of operatic composition and orchestration.

Weber was probably the first orchestral conductor as we understand that term today: not leading from a harpsichord or the first violinist's chair, but actually standing up in front of the orchestra and shaping the performance. His canon of works includes concertos, keyboard music, including the famous *Invitation to the Dance*, and sacred music. But it's with operas that he made his mark: *Silvana*, *Abu Hassan*, *Der Freischuetz*, *Die drei Pintos* (completed by Mahler), *Euryanthe*, and *Oberon*. In the latter, and in his incidental music for Carlo Gozzi's

play *Turandot*, he introduced non-European melodies to emphasize the tales' exoticisms. *Oberon* was premiered in London in 1826; not long after, Weber died.

Weber's works for Baermann include two full-length concertos, a concertino, a quintet with strings, and the *Grand Duo Concertant* recorded here, written in 1815–1816. British music critic John Warrack (b. 1928) has described it as “a double concerto without orchestra.” It's not quite a sonata for clarinet and piano, as the term “sonata” implies a depth of formal organization and development that, while not lacking here, is not emphasized as much as sheer virtuosic display for both instruments.

The Harvard Dictionary of Music defines “concertant” as follows: “Beginning in the 18th century, an adjective applied to works for two or more performers... in which one or more of the performers is called upon for soloistic display.” Mozart used the term in his *Sinfonia Concertante* for violin, viola, and orchestra. It essentially means a piece

where the main interest is in the skill and expressiveness of the artists.

The Duo is a merry piece in its outer movements but, in true Romantic fashion, it contrasts these with a middle movement of a completely different nature: plaintive and even melancholy. Throughout the piece, we can hear very clearly that Baermann and Weber were both virtuosos on their instruments. Curiously, perhaps, Weber wrote it “backwards”: the finale first, then the middle movement, and then the first movement.

To begin, the Allegro con fuoco — fast and fiery — in sonata form features a main theme with lively exchanges between the soloists, followed by a second theme, introduced by the clarinet, that’s more serene, yet also dance-like. There’s the expected development, recapitulation of the main themes, and coda, but throughout, the listener is caught up in the constant dialogue between wind instrument and keyboard, until the movement ends

with a final flourish. The Andante — moderately slow — is in C minor, the relative minor of the work’s home key of E-flat major. To open it, the clarinet plays a lyrical, contemplative melody. This is followed by a major section for the piano alone, but they soon reunite and become a duo again to complete this wistful interlude. The finale, back in E-flat major, is marked Allegro again. It’s a rondo: one dominant theme reiterated several times and interspersed with sections of contrasting mood. The clarinet plays the theme first, then the two progress, sometimes together, sometimes apart, in music that’s ever more virtuosic and brilliant.

In 1890, Johannes Brahms, then the most famous and admired of all European composers, told his publisher he was retiring. No more compositions. (He supposedly said, “It’s time for the younger folks to take over.”) The “retirement” didn’t last long. In 1891, Brahms visited the German city of Meiningen, where the orchestra had long been associated with his music,

and heard its principal clarinetist, Richard Muehlfeld (1856–1907). Fired up by his artistry, Brahms brought forth and dedicated to him a quintet with strings, a trio with cello and piano, and two sonatas with piano. These latter were completed in 1894, published as Op. 120, and received their public premieres from the composer and dedicatee in Vienna in 1895. The sonatas also exist as works for viola and piano, showing Brahms' fondness for mellow-toned, mid-range instruments — so thanks to Muehlfeld, the composer enriched both wind and string repertoires.

There are four movements to the Sonata No. 1 in F minor. The first, *Allegro appassionato* — fast and passionate — opens with a piano motive in octaves that will recur throughout the movement. The smooth, lyrical first theme is introduced on clarinet; then there's a transition to theme two, somewhat more abrupt in sound, going through several key changes to land on C minor. The development concentrates on material heard in the introduction.

The recapitulation and coda stay in the home tonality.

The second movement is labeled *Andante un poco adagio* — moderately slow, trending toward very slow. It's in A-flat major (mostly). There's a simple tune for the main theme, a more agitated "B" section with 16th-note passages for the piano and almost constant, transitory modulations until the "A" section returns and brings us back to A-flat. For the *Allegretto grazioso* — moderately fast and graceful — Brahms once again sets up an A-B-A structure, with the piano very much in the foreground throughout, although the clarinet introduces the main theme. The finale, in F major, features a tempo marking Brahms rarely employed: *Vivace* — very fast indeed (literally "lively"). This rondo movement gives both instrumentalists numerous opportunities to shine during a fast-paced, intense dialogue.

The marking for the first movement of the Sonata No. 2 in E-flat is *Allegro*

amabile — fast, but amiable: an odd tempo indication that nonetheless well characterizes the movement and, indeed, most of the work (although not all of it). The clarinet leads off with a highly lyrical melody, a song without words. Chords and octaves on the piano lead to the second theme, in B-flat, more rhythmic and even abrupt. The development goes through a number of ingenious key changes, and throughout the movement, it's notable how Brahms explores the entire tonal range of the clarinet, from very low to very high.

The three-movement structure means there's no real slow movement in this sonata. The central movement is a scherzo in the doleful key of E-flat minor, and the clarinet's opening theme has been described as a frenzied waltz. The tempo marking is Allegro appassionato, but the "B" section of the scherzo is labeled Sostenuto — sustained. This portion, introduced by the piano, in effect replaces the expected slow

movement. Quickly, however, the main portion returns, elaborated. The finale opens Andante con moto — moderately slow, with motion — transitioning to Allegro. This is a theme-with-variations movement, one of Brahms' favorite compositional proceedings. The theme comes in via the clarinet, in lilting 6/8 time with dotted rhythms. With more chords in the piano part, the movement continues through five short variations, the last of which goes back to E-flat minor, before an extended coda brings the sonata to its bright close.

Andrea Lamoreaux served as Music Director of 98.7WFMT, Chicago's classical music station, for 20 years (2001–2021).

PEACE

Note by Jessie Montgomery

Written just a month after the Great Sadness of the first quarantine orders due to COVID-19, facing the shock felt by the whole globe as well as personal crisis, I find myself struggling to define what actually brings me joy.

And I'm at a stage of making peace with sadness as it comes and goes like any other emotion. I'm learning to observe sadness for the first time not as a negative emotion, but as a necessary dynamic to the human experience.

— May 12, 2020

*Commissioned by Victoria Robey OBE
for violinist Elena Urioste and pianist
Tom Poster, premiered as part of
#UriPosteJukeBox*

*First performance of the clarinet
and piano version by Anthony McGill
and Gloria Chien*

ANTHONY MCGILL



Hailed for his “trademark brilliance, penetrating sound and rich character” (*The New York Times*), clarinetist Anthony McGill enjoys a dynamic international solo and chamber music career and is principal clarinet of the New York Philharmonic — the first African-American principal player in the organization's history.

He is the recipient of the 2020 Avery Fisher Prize, one of classical music's most significant awards given in recognition of musicians who represent the highest level of musical excellence.

McGill appears as a soloist with top orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, Metropolitan Opera, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and Kansas City Symphony. He performed alongside Itzhak Perlman, Yo-Yo Ma, and Gabriela Montero at the inauguration of President Barack Obama, premiering a piece by John Williams. As a chamber musician, McGill is a collaborator of the Brentano, Daedalus, Guarneri, JACK, Miró, Pacifica, Shanghai, Takács, and Tokyo Quartets, as well as with Emanuel Ax, Inon Barnatan, Gloria Chien, Yefim Bronfman, Gil Shaham, Midori, Mitsuko Uchida, and Lang Lang. He serves on the faculties of The Juilliard School, Curtis

Institute of Music, and Bard College Conservatory of Music and is the Artistic Director for the Music Advancement Program at The Juilliard School.

McGill's previous albums for Cedille are *Mozart & Brahms Clarinet Quintets* with the Pacifica Quartet; *Portraits — Works for Flute, Clarinet & Piano* recorded with his brother, flutist Demarre McGill, and pianist Michael McHale; and *Winged Creatures*, recorded with Demarre McGill and the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra led by Allen Tinkham. McGill collaborated with Chien on his first, self-released album, which featured music from France, Russia, and America. In 2020, McGill's #TakeTwoKnees campaign protesting the death of George Floyd and historic racial injustice went viral. Anthony McGill is a Buffet Crampon artist.

anthonymcgill.com

GLORIA CHIEN



Taiwanese-born pianist Gloria Chien leads a diverse musical life as a noted performer, concert presenter, and educator. She made her orchestral debut at age 16 with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Thomas Dausgaard and performed with the BSO again under Keith Lockhart.

She was subsequently selected by the *The Boston Globe* as one of its Superior Pianists of the year, “who appears to excel in everything.” In recent seasons, she has performed as a recitalist and chamber musician at Alice Tully Hall, the Library of Congress, Phillips Collection, Dresden Chamber Music Festival, and the National Concert Hall in Taiwan. She performs frequently with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. In 2009, she launched String Theory, a chamber music series in Chattanooga, Tennessee that has become one of the region’s premier classical music presenters. The following year, she was appointed

Director of the Chamber Music Institute at Music@Menlo. In 2017, she joined her husband, violinist Soovin Kim, as artistic director of the Lake Champlain Chamber Music Festival in Burlington, Vermont. The couple are artistic directors at Chamber Music Northwest in Portland, Oregon. Chien studied extensively at the New England Conservatory of Music with Wha Kyung Byun and Russell Sherman. She is Artist-in-Residence at Lee University in Cleveland, Tennessee, and is a Steinway Artist.

gloriachien.com

FROM ANTHONY MCGILL AND GLORIA CHIEN

We would like to thank our families;
they are amazingly beautiful, positive
people. All of our dreams have come
true because of their support.

Producer and Engineer Alan Bise

Steinway Piano Technician Barbara Renner

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