

**SCHUMANN
BRAHMS**

**HARMONIES
UNVEILED**

JUAN CARLOS RODRÍGUEZ PIANO

J. BRAHMS (1833 - 1897)

VARIATIONS ON AN ORIGINAL THEME
IN D MAJOR OP. 21 / 1

CLARA SCHUMANN (1819 - 1896)

VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY ROBERT SCHUMANN
IN F SHARP MINOR OP. 20

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810 - 1856)

CONCERTO WITHOUT ORCHESTRA
IN F MINOR OP. 14

ALLEGRO · SCHERZO · QUASI VARIAZIONI
PRETISSIMO POSSIBILE

SCHUMANN - BRAHMS

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The intertwining musical legacies of Johannes Brahms, Robert Schumann, and Clara Schumann form a rich tapestry of Romanticism that continues to captivate audiences worldwide. This narrative unfolds against the backdrop of 19th-century Europe, where artistic expression flourished amidst political and social upheaval. At the heart of this narrative lies the profound connection between Brahms and the Schumanns—a relationship characterized by mentorship, collaboration, and enduring admiration.

Robert Schumann, a pioneering figure in the Romantic movement, played a pivotal role in shaping Brahms's artistic development. Schumann recognized Brahms's prodigious talent early on, proclaiming him as the savior of German music. Brahms, in turn, revered Schumann as a mentor and friend, deeply influenced by his innovative compositions and literary musings. Their bond transcended mere admiration, as Brahms supported Schumann during his struggles with mental illness and ultimately dedicated himself to preserving Schumann's musical legacy.

Central to this musical triumvirate is Clara Schumann, Robert's wife and a virtuoso pianist in her own right. Clara's profound influence extended beyond her acclaimed performances to her role as muse and confidante to both Brahms and Robert. Her interpretations of their works breathed life into their compositions, offering invaluable insights into their creative intentions. Clara's compositions, though overshadowed by the fame of her male counterparts, are increasingly recognized for their depth and emotional resonance.

The piano served as a focal point of artistic exploration for Brahms and the Schumanns, providing a canvas for their most intimate thoughts and emotions. Brahms's piano works, ranging from the

fiery virtuosity of his early compositions to the introspective depth of his later works, reflect his mastery of form and expression. Similarly, Robert Schumann's piano oeuvre embodies the Romantic ethos, blending poetic lyricism with innovative harmonic structures. Clara Schumann's compositions, imbued with elegance and grace, offer a glimpse into the complexities of her own artistic identity.

The symbiotic relationship between Brahms and the Schumanns is evident in their musical dialogues and thematic connections. Brahms's "Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann" pays homage to his mentor's musical legacy, while Clara's "Three Romances for Violin and Piano" reflects her enduring bond with both Robert and Brahms. Themes of love, loss, and longing permeate their compositions, echoing the personal and artistic struggles that defined their lives.

Despite their shared influences and collaborations, Brahms and the Schumanns each carved out distinct musical identities. Brahms's rigorous formalism and contrapuntal mastery contrast with Robert Schumann's impulsive creativity and Clara Schumann's lyrical elegance. Yet, their collective contributions to the piano repertoire remain indispensable, shaping the course of Romantic music for generations to come.

The musical legacy of Brahms, Robert Schumann, and Clara Schumann is a testament to the enduring power of artistic collaboration and mutual inspiration. Their compositions continue to resonate with audiences worldwide, offering a window into the complexities of the human experience. As we delve deeper into their musical world, we uncover a treasure trove of emotion, innovation, and timeless beauty—a legacy that continues to inspire and enrich our lives.



JUAN CARLOS RODRÍGUEZ

PIANO

"The legacy of Clementi calls for great interpreters to bring it closer, highlighting its significance in the development of piano technique and creation. That's why this new recording should be welcomed, especially when presented with the care and precision demonstrated by Juan Carlos Rodríguez in this, his second recording for Naxos. He proves to be a convincing advocate, forgetting any technical complacency to focus on the elements that characterize these works. The pianist from Cádiz explores the expressive possibilities of the modern piano effortlessly, with exquisite care in the bass, but with increasing contrasts and nuances that provide firmness and careful brightness to the sound." RITMO MAGAZINE.

"Rodríguez captures the essence of Schumann's expressive soul and skillfully infuses the music with freshness and youth through his well-chosen tempos, phrasing, and dynamics. Excellent sound." CLASSICAL NET.

"If one didn't see the cover of this album and were told the works included, they would immediately think it could be a recording by Sviatoslav Richter, so much did he love this Schumann, hidden behind Waldszenen, Kinderszenen, Carnival, Papillons, Humoresque, and other states of the soul oscillating between Florestan and Eusebius. But no, it is a Spanish pianist, a great pianist, with enviable taste in selecting a Schumann program and even greater in interpretation, for his piano playing has a quality rarely heard before in this music. A recording of exquisite taste." RITMO MAGAZINE.

"Rodríguez's playing is exemplary. It is beautifully crafted, sensitively shaped, and clearly demonstrates a great empathy for the composer's style." MUSIC WEB INTERNATIONAL.

"Between the early pieces, still reminiscent of Chopin, and the more personal late works, Rodríguez faithfully traces the composer's path. Rodríguez interprets with magnificent technique."
PIZZICATO MAGAZINE.

"Rodríguez shines with his pianistic technique, and every note of the intricate piano writing is beautifully captured in a sound that surpasses by far the versions of Alicia de Larrocha."
FANFARE MAGAZINE.

"When the final note of Alban Berg's Sonata op. 1 dissipates into the air, after ten minutes of poetic storm, pianist Juan Carlos Rodríguez raises his gaze, sheds the spirit of Berg that possessed him during the performance of the Sonata, and receives the passionate applause of the audience, who listened spellbound to a music that Juan Carlos, like so many others, has made his own on stage. Thus are the interpretations of this pianist from Cádiz, one of the great pianistic talents of his generation."
RITMO MAGAZINE.

"The record label Naxos has wisely chosen the Spanish pianist. Rodríguez enjoys each sonata with a brilliant articulation that conveys the joy found within these delightful works."
AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE.

Juan Carlos Rodríguez, one of the most brilliant musicians of his generation, distinguishes himself as a pianist through his fidelity to the composer, always placing his refined instrumental technique at the service of the music. With his fabulous ability to present a wide variety of styles, his interpretations exhibit a high degree of interpretative accuracy while also offering a touch of naturalness and freshness, transforming each concert into a completely new musical experience.

Throughout his musical career, Juan Carlos has been awarded numerous prizes in national and international piano competitions. Among these accolades are first prizes at Les Corts International Piano Competition, San Sebastián International Piano Competition, José Roca International Piano Competition, Manresa International Piano Competition, Gerardo Diego Piano Competition, Palau de la Música Catalana, among others.

He regularly performs concerts throughout Europe at international music festivals and collaborates with orchestras and international chamber music ensembles.

In 2013, Juan Carlos recorded a CD of works by Robert Schumann for the Naxos label, featuring lesser-known piano pieces of truly innovative musical and expressive quality. This recording was selected by the magazine RITMO as one of the best albums of 2013. In 2014, he made his debut in Japan with performances at Tokyo (Toppan Hall), Osaka (Phoenix Hall), and Nagoya (Denki Bunka Kaikan), which were celebrated by critics and audiences alike. At the same time, he was invited to give masterclasses and lectures on Spanish music. In 2015, a new album was internationally released for the Paladino Music label, recording the complete original works for solo piano by Manuel de Falla. This new recording offers an excellent insight into the composer's development through his piano repertoire.

Born in Cádiz, he completed his university studies in piano in Seville under Pilar Bilbao, a renowned pianist and student of the eminent Chilean pianist **Claudio Arrau**. Additionally, he received valuable piano advice from distinguished musicians of international stature such as Hans Graf, Brétislav Novotny, Edith Fischer, or Solomon Mikowsky.

Further international recordings include piano works by Clementi, Beethoven, and Albéniz. His extensive repertoire spans a variety of styles, from Baroque music to contemporary music, including the complete works of Bach, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven.

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