

— FESTIVAL —
MOZAIC

BRAHMS PIANO QUARTET

May 14, 2023

Trinity Episcopal Church
Santa Barbara

ARTISTS

SCOTT YOO

Violin & Host

Music Director, Festival Mozaic

ORION WEISS

Piano

Steinway Artist

JESSICA CHANG

Viola

Chamber Music by the Bay

SOPHIE SHAO

Cello

University of Connecticut



Mercedes-Benz
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PROGRAM

This event will last just over one hour without an intermission

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833 - 1896)

Piano Quartet No. 3 in C minor, op. 60 (1875)

Allegro non troppo

Scherzo: Allegro

Andante

Finale: Allegro comodo

In the first part of this event, Scott Yoo and the artists will lead a "Notable Encounter," Scott's hybrid lecture/performance format that will take you on a journey behind this amazing piece of chamber music. You will learn about the history of the piece, hear some stories about Brahms and what was happening in his life at the time, and gain some insight into the musical elements featured in the piece. Following the Notable Encounter, Scott and the group will perform the entire piece.

PROGRAM NOTES

When Brahms sent his third piano quartet to his publisher, he made an odd suggestion: that the cover illustration should depict himself, dressed and posed like Werther. Austrians would have immediately recognized that "meme": Werther—the title character in a novel by Goethe—shoots himself in despair over his hopeless love for a married woman. Why would Brahms want to evoke that anguished suitor? We know that Brahms had staunchly supported Clara Schumann during the two years of her husband Robert's declining mental and physical health, and we also know that Brahms's friendship with Clara strengthened during her widowhood. Scholars disagree, however, whether Clara ever allowed that relationship to flame up into physical passion. Brahms's comment hints that his feelings, like Werther's, had gone unrequited.

It has escaped no one's notice that the quartet features a piano—Clara's instrument—and she had given Brahms feedback as he refined the work. Storm and stress dominate the first movement; the subsequent Scherzo is equally energetic, but more exuberant in mood. The Andante is a peaceful respite from the preceding energy, but the restlessness of the opening returns for the finale. Its abrupt ending has led scholar Malcolm MacDonald and others to wonder: did "Werther" pull the trigger?

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