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BY BERT VAN DER WOLF



## **JOHANNES BRAHMS**



Serenade no. 1 | Variations on a Theme by Haydn

**Residentie Orkest | The Hague Philharmonic**

**Jan Willem de Vriend** conductor



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**JOHANNES BRAHMS** (1833-1897)

**Serenade no. 1 in D major op. 11** (1857-1860)

- |     |   |       |
|-----|---|-------|
| [1] | Allegro molto                                     | 12:57 |
| [2] | Scherzo: Allegro non troppo – Trio: Poco più moto | 7:54  |
| [3] | Adagio non troppo                                 | 11:25 |
| [4] | Menuetto I – Menuetto II                          | 3:34  |
| [5] | Scherzo: Allegro – Trio                           | 2:57  |
| [6] | Rondo: Allegro                                    | 6:29  |

**Variations on a Theme by J. Haydn op. 56a** (1873)

- |      |  |      |
|------|--|------|
| [7]  | Theme: St Anthony Chorale. Andante               | 2:02 |
| [8]  | Variation 1: Poco più animato (Andante con moto) | 1:20 |
| [9]  | Variation 2: Più vivace (Vivace)                 | 1:06 |
| [10] | Variation 3: Con moto                            | 1:50 |
| [11] | Variation 4: Andante con moto (Andante)          | 1:42 |
| [12] | Variation 5: Vivace (Poco presto)                | 0:58 |
| [13] | Variation 6: Vivace                              | 1:23 |
| [14] | Variation 7: Gracioso                            | 2:37 |
| [15] | Variation 8: Presto non troppo (Poco presto)     | 1:11 |
| [16] | Finale. Andante                                  | 3:49 |

total time 63:23

In the nineteenth century, the old principality of Lippe-Detmold lay hidden away on the edge of the Teutoburg Forest, which at that time was still inaccessible to the outside world by train and where paper money had yet to be introduced. Prince Leopold III resided at the castle dating from the Renaissance. His court still showed many traces of the protocol observed in the eighteenth century, and it goes without saying that music thus played an important role there. Leopold himself loved to sing, and his sister Princess Friederike was a competent pianist.

Johannes Brahms was offered a post at the court in 1857. It was an attractive offer – he would be paid a good salary simply for being present during the last three months of the year, conducting choral concerts, performing as a soloist with the court orchestra and playing in the prince's private chamber ensemble. He would also give piano lessons to the princess. The young Brahms would have plenty of time to compose and, not least, to take long walks in the woods. Here Brahms could relax after a particularly trying and emotional period in his life.

Indeed, his good friend Robert Schumann had died just the year before. Brahms had first met Schumann and his wife Clara at their home in Düsseldorf in September 1853. Right from the start, Schumann had been deeply impressed with Brahms's music, describing how the twenty-year-old Brahms had made the piano sound like an orchestra with a host of voices ranging from the plaintive to the exuberant. Schumann gave Brahms's career a tremendous boost. Just a month after their first meeting, he praised Brahms to the skies in an article appearing in his own *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* entitled 'New Paths'.

Brahms' works were both published and performed. Such prominent musicians as Liszt, Berlioz and Moscheles heard them and showered him with praise.

But Brahms also had a close personal connection with Robert and Clara. They became friends for life, and so it was that the young Brahms witnessed first-hand how Robert slowly but surely wasted away in an asylum.

During her husband's illness, Brahms helped Clara in all sorts of ways, teaching her students, running errands, organising Robert's library and looking after her children when she gave concerts. Over this period, their feelings for each other grew into something more than friendship, yet they decided to part ways while on holiday in Switzerland. Nevertheless, the two remained closely bound for the rest of their lives, Brahms surviving Clara, who was thirteen years his senior, by barely a year.

In the beautiful natural surroundings of the castle at Detmold, Brahms' adult life actually commenced. It was here that he decided to shut himself off from all intense desires and passions (except for music and his collection of tin soldiers). He remained a bachelor all his life. Of central importance to his music was the rational order of the eighteenth century and the music of Haydn and Mozart in particular. He would often hear their serenades and divertimenti on court concerts, for which Brahms himself composed a serenade for nine instruments in the 'relaxed' atmosphere of the court during the first months of his stay there. Encouraged by friends and colleagues, he then arranged the piece first for small, and later for full, orchestra, calling it his *Serenade no. 1*. It had even held the title

of *Symphony Serenade* for a short time, but, under the long shadow cast by the Beethoven symphonies, Brahms's self-doubt eventually drove him to drop the first word.

Brahms' *Symphony no. 1* would not appear until 1876. In that same year, he made a tour through the Netherlands, giving a concert at the Gebouw voor Kunsten en Wetenschappen (Building for Arts and Sciences), located in Zwarteweg in The Hague. There he both performed his *Piano Concerto no. 1*, under the baton of Johannes Verhulst, and conducted his *Serenade no. 1*.

In today's world, one often perceives a division between art and academia, and composers and musicologists generally don't have much to say to one another. But that division has not always existed. Bach, for instance, had a lively friendship with such scholars as the rhetorician Abraham Birnbaum, and Brahms himself was surrounded by a circle of academics who for him were also a source of animated comradeship. This circle included such leading musicologists as Gustav Nottebohm, Philipp Spitta and Carl Ferdinand Pohl. With some of them, Brahms would go on long walks outside Vienna and even on summer holidays. These encounters were hardly pensive, silent occasions – quite the contrary, in fact. The men enjoyed long, and sometimes loud, discussions about their shared obsessions, discoveries and findings. Brahms had these very discussions to thank for his lifelong interest in 'early music'. He even collaborated intensively on the critical editions of Couperin, Handel and Bach's sons, and received interesting and useful advice from his friends. One such tip came from the Haydn

biographer Pohl, who recommended the very theme Brahms would later use in his *Variations on a Theme by J. Haydn*.

The theme comes from a relatively unknown work by Haydn, one which was only published for the first time in 1932. It is from one of the wind octets or *Feld-parthien* (music intended to be performed outside) which Haydn wrote for musicians from the orchestra at Estherháza. The second movement of the sixth octet begins with a very deliberate melody, one which Brahms immediately embraced. It was probably the beautiful, full brass sound that he found so irresistible, as well as the odd number of five bars from which the melody is constructed. This irregular structure alludes to an even older source, a pilgrim's song called the *St Anthony Chorale*. Brahms composed the eight variations, or *Veränderungen*, in the Bavarian municipality of Tutzing in the summer of 1873. Like the *Finale*, the piece is a testament to Brahms's masterly counterpoint, the technique he and the Bach scholar Philipp Spitta had exchanged views on during their walks together, and on which the two had later corresponded. The hint of fresh air we hear comes not only from all that congenial erudition, but also from the original performance setting Haydn had anticipated, the musicians cheerfully sounding their wind instruments out of doors.

Annelies van Gent and Katja Reichenfeld

*Translation: Josh Dillon/Muse Translations*



### **Jan Willem de Vriend**

Since 2006 Jan Willem de Vriend is chief conductor at the Orkest van het Oosten in Enschede, where he will stay until the end of season 2016-2017. As from 2015-2016 he also is appointed principal conductor at the Residentie Orkest of The Hague and principal guest conductor at the Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona i Nacional de Catalunya.

Between 1982 and 2015 De Vriend was artistic director and violinist of the Combattimento Consort Amsterdam, established by himself. This ensemble excelled in known and, more especially, unknown masterpieces of the 17th and 18th century belonging to the forefront of Dutch classical music. It achieved a huge success abroad as well; starting with their own series in the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, it toured around the world.

Also to be mentioned are the opera productions the ensemble accomplished, based on works by Monteverdi, Handel, Telemann, Bach, Gassmann and Mozart among others. With these operas, directed by the much-acclaimed Eva Buchmann, tours have been organized throughout Europe and America. A great number of cd's, dvd's and tv-recordings exist to document this very productive and intense period. De Vriend continues from then on as full-time conductor and in his many roles as charismatic promotor of classical music.

Right at the start of his appointment in 2006 as artistic director and chief conductor at the Orkest van het Oosten, he attracted attention with a striking performance of Mahler's first symphony, in the first, so-called 'Hamburger version'. The rave reception (Absolutely a must – *The Gramophone*) resulted in invitations by the Koninklijk Concertgebouworkest as well as many orchestras abroad.

Again with the Orkest van het Oosten he completed a very successful series, recorded on cd, of all Beethoven's symphonies. A new series is planned with Mendelssohn's symphonies, unjustly rarely performed according to

De Vriend. He already recorded his 3rd and 4th symphony on dvd with the Belgian director Pannekoek: a fascinating mix of popclip and classical music.

As chief conductor in Enschede his lifelong fascination for and experience with opera was bearing fruit. In 2013 and 2014 the orchestra was invited to Sankt Moritz/Basel to perform respectively the Don Giovanni and La Gazetta by Rossini, both with a stage direction by Eva Buchmann. In 2015 Don Giovanni was successfully performed six times in the Netherlands.

In addition Jan Willem de Vriend since 2008 worked as guest conductor at the Philharmonie Zuidnederland. Besides he conducted the Konzerthaus Orchester Berlin, NDR Orchester, Philharmonie Stuttgart, WDR Orchester, in Hong Kong, Luxemburg, Barcelona and at the Koninklijk Concertgebouworkest. He conducted opera in Swetzingen, Luzern, Straatsburg and Barcelona. For the near future concerts and recordings are scheduled, of course with the Orkest van het Oosten, Residentie Orkest, Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest, Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona i Nacional de Catalunya and Orchestre National de Lille.

He is also invited in Berlin (Konzerthaus Orchester), Zurich (Tonhalle), at Bergen Philharmonic and the National Orchestra of Flanders.

In 2012 Jan Willem de Vriend won the prestigious 'Radio 4 Prize' for his undefatigable promotion of classical music.



## **The Hague Philharmonic (Residentie Orkest)**

Since adopting a new artistic profile, The Hague Philharmonic is demonstrating more than ever that symphonic music can still be meaningful to large and diverse audiences in the 21st century. At the new Zuiderstrandtheater in Scheveningen, the orchestra's home venue, prior to concerts audiences are treated to a lively RO-Starter pre-programme of live music and interviews. Special productions are also provided at The Hague's Paard van Troje throughout the season, making the orchestra appealing to both students and young professionals as well. In addition, The Hague Philharmonic performs regularly at various other major concert halls at home and abroad.

### **Principal conductors**

Over the next few years, The Hague Philharmonic will be working with two principal conductors: Jan Willem de Vriend and the young Englishman Nicholas Collon (from summer 2016). Richard Egarr has been appointed principal guest conductor of the orchestra.

### **Regional importance**

The Hague Philharmonic is renowned throughout The Hague and Leiden region. The orchestra takes part in many important high-profile events, including the annual Speech from the Throne, Festival Classique and, starting in 2018, the performance of Bach's St Matthew Passion at St Peter's Church in Leiden. During Christmas, New Year and Prince's Day, the orchestra celebrates with people across the region by performing various special

concerts. There are also many prolific collaborations with a wide range of local partners, including the Dutch National Theatre, Paard van Troje, Gemeentemuseum and The Hague African Festival, as well as with the Dutch National Opera and the NTR Saturday Matinee.

### **A rich history**

In the early years, The Hague Philharmonic was conducted by Henri Viotta, who founded the orchestra in 1904. The orchestra soon attracted composers like Richard Strauss, Igor Stravinsky, Max Reger, Maurice Ravel, Paul Hindemith and Vincent d'Indy. Guest conductors included Arturo Toscanini, Bruno Walter, Leonard Bernstein and Hans Knappertsbusch. After World War II, Willem van Otterloo was appointed chief conductor. He led the orchestra from 1949 to 1973 and built a strong reputation by combining high-quality performances with adventurous programming. After Van Otterloo, the chief conductor mantle passed to Jean Martinon, followed by Ferdinand Leitner, Hans Vonk, Evgenii Svetlanov, Jaap van Zweden and Neeme Järvi.

## Residentie Orkest

### conductor

Jan Willem de Vriend

### 1st violin

Lucian-Leonard Raiciof

Ilya Warenberg

Momoko Noguchi

Yuki Hayakashi

Agnes Houtsmuller

Jan Paul Tavenier

Ronald Touw

Pieter Verschuyl

Myrte van Westerop

Mara Oosterbaan

### 2nd violin

Janet Krause

Faina Makhtina

Justyna Briefjes

Barbara Krimmel

Ben Legebeke

Margot Leger

Vasilica Mihailescu -

Popa

Gonnelieke van

Oosterom

Cato Went

### viola

Jacomine Punt

Jan Buizer

Guus Ghijsen

Georg Pudill

Elisabeth Runge

Tanja Trede

Moira Bette

\* Sevilya Hendrickx

### cello

Roger Regter

Caecilia van Hoof

Mileva Fialova

Justa de Jong

\* Eduard Ninot Roig

\* Xandra Rotteveel

### double bass

Quirijn van Regteren

Altena

Astrid Schrijner

Jos Tieman

Jasper Tjallingii

### flute

Martine van der Loo

Dorine Schade

Claire Chabrier

### oboe

Jeroen Soors

Theo Peeters

### clarinet

Ab Vos

Jasper Grijpink

### bassoon

Dorian Cooke

Erik Reinders

\* Marieke Stordiau

### horn

Rene Pagen

Ron Schaaper

Mariëlle van Pruijssen

Mirjam Steinmann

### trumpet

Robert-Jan Hoffman

\* Bas Duister

### trombone

Timothy Dowling

Arno Schipdam

Twan Dubbers

### percussion

Martin Ansink

Murk Jiskoot

\* substitute

This High Definition Surround Recording was Produced, Engineered and Edited by Bert van der Wolf of NorthStar Recording Services, using the 'High Quality Musical Surround Mastering' principle. The basis of this recording principle is a realistic and holographic 3 dimensional representation of the musical instruments, voices and recording venue, according to traditional concert practice. For most older music this means a frontal representation of the musical performance, but such that width and depth of the ensemble and acoustic characteristics of the hall do resemble 'real life' as much as possible. Some older compositions, and many contemporary works do specifically ask for placement of musical instruments and voices over the full 360 degrees sound scape, and in these cases the recording is as realistic as possible, within the limits of the 5.1 Surround Sound standard. This requires a very innovative use of all 6 loudspeakers and the use of completely matched, full frequency range loudspeakers for all 5 discrete channels. A complementary sub-woofer, for the ultra low frequencies under 40Hz, is highly recommended to maximally benefit from the sound quality of this recording.

This recording was produced with the use of Sonodore microphones, Avalon Acoustic monitoring, Siltech Mono-Crystal cabling and dCS - & Merging Technologies converters.



[www.northstarconsult.nl](http://www.northstarconsult.nl)

**This production is also available as High Resolution digital download  
at [www.spiritofturtle.com](http://www.spiritofturtle.com)**

Executive producer: Anne de Jong  
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