

LAWQ
CLASSICS

An die Musik

Torleif Thedéen
Cello

&

Marianna Shirinyan
Piano



An die Musik

Our stock image of Richard Strauss is of a musician who always went large — graduating from the swashbuckling symphonic poems of the 1890s to the litany of genre-bending operas that followed after 1900. Outlandish, expressionistic and pictorial those works may be, but they owed much — as did the composer's entire craft - to the strict musical diet fed him by his conservative father. In the composer's Cello Sonata, we hear flickers of Strauss's distinct musical personality sprouting amid cracks in a traditional Germanic facade. Not many works from Richard Strauss's teenage years still get performed, but this one does.

Before writing anything, Strauss had to get to know his Schubert, his Schumann(s) and his Brahms. Like Strauss, Clara Wieck enjoyed the privilege of being fathered by a well-known musician, even if the detail of being born a woman didn't do her many favours. Clara's father was one of the most influential music teachers of his time, and

set about using his daughter, with benevolent enough intentions, as a living example of his teaching methods. By her teens Clara was one of the finest pianists in Germany and was well on her way to becoming one of Europe's most rounded and influential musicians. At 16, she gave the premiere of her own Piano Concerto with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, conducted by Felix Mendelssohn.

Soon enough, another of her father's pupils caught Clara's eye — and entirely by design. Robert Schumann entered into a passionate relationship with Clara, of which their mutual teacher disapproved entirely. The two married nonetheless. To a point, Clara Schumann fell in line with societal expectations of a wife and mother and largely stopped writing music, particularly as her husband fell under the grip of a torturous mental illness. But she remained active across six decades in promoting and programming music by her male peers, that of her husband included.

In 1853, the Schumanns experienced something like a calm before an ultimate storm. In their apartment in Düsseldorf, Clara had

use of a studio where she could work out of earshot of her husband. The 20-year-old Johannes Brahms, a great inspiration to both Clara and Robert, visited for a entire month. This was one year before Robert would be committed to the medical institution where he would die. For Clara, it was the year she enjoyed an apparent last flush of creativity, returning to meaningful composition for the first time since 1846. 'There is nothing that surpasses the joy of creation', she wrote in her diary at the time. Among the works that flowed from her were songs, piano pieces and a set of three Romances, originally for violin and piano. The Romances were among the last pieces Clara would write.

The genre of the Romance — lyrical with a touch of the sentimental — was a favourite of Clara's. But the music here is anything but thin. So much of what Clara and her husband wrote seems imbued with the idea of partnership; of one entity dependent on another. The equality of the string-piano partnership in this work is no exception, even when rendered this arrangement for cello by Torleif Thedéen. A certain darkness lingers behind the Andante's restlessness

with key and its hints of gypsy music, while even the overtly chipper Allegretto employs a main theme whose octave leaps are somehow lined with pathos.

The third Romance, marked 'Leidenschaftlich schnell' ('passionately quick') is the longest and most intense of the three, the twisting cello melody of the opening returning later in a spiky, staccato form. Always, the music is suggestive of many more moods than immediately meet the ear - the inner life, perhaps, of a woman torn between expectation and impulse. Together with their dedicatee, the violinist Joseph Joachim, Clara played the Romances across 238 concerts between Germany and Britain, including a private performance for King Georg V of Hanover who described his 'marvelous, heavenly pleasure' on hearing them.

Two years previously, Robert had written the first of three violin sonatas, his wife giving the premiere of the score with Ferdinand David, concertmaster of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, shortly afterwards (Joachim, to whom Clara had dedicated her Romances, premiered the sonata's successor, No 2). Whether taken as a model

by Clara or not, Robert's sonata also puts the two instruments on a balanced footing, ensuring material is equally shared and offered between them. Again, we hear Torleif Thedéen's own arrangement of the piece for cello and piano here.

Apparent in this sonata is the sort of thematic unity that seems to have influenced Strauss — Robert's idea of recalling tunes and motifs from earlier movements to aid unification and comprehension. Strauss would also, doubtless, have been fascinated by Robert's unceasing oscillation between major and minor modes, itself lending the music an exploratory feel that allows for melodic evolution. Themes can appear to crop up again and again in different guises.

Robert's trademark intensity is all over the piece, from its headlong opening movement titled 'Mit leidenschaftlichem Ausdruck' ('with passionate expression' - note the similarity to Clara's marking in the third of her Romances) in which the stringed instrument clammers up from the depths against stormy arpeggios in the piano. The relationship between the two partners only gets more intense as the music appears to strive

for sunlit heights but can only momentarily glimpse them. Rhythmic displacement, as much as harmonic unease, does much to keep the music on the boil.

As in the movement before, the central Allegretto effectively pursues just one theme, elaborated upon by a ruminating cello whose phraseology can seem serene if quizzical (some have heard the influence of the young Brahms here). If the pianist does take more of a back seat here, she springs into the foreground again in the chase-down that characterizes Robert's finale. The turbulent mood also returns, courtesy of a mercurial theme whose distinctive semi-quaver patterning comes close to underpinning the entire movement, even exerting an influence on a second subject that wants to offer lyrical respite. When the main theme of the opening movement is briefly recalled, the circle is closed.

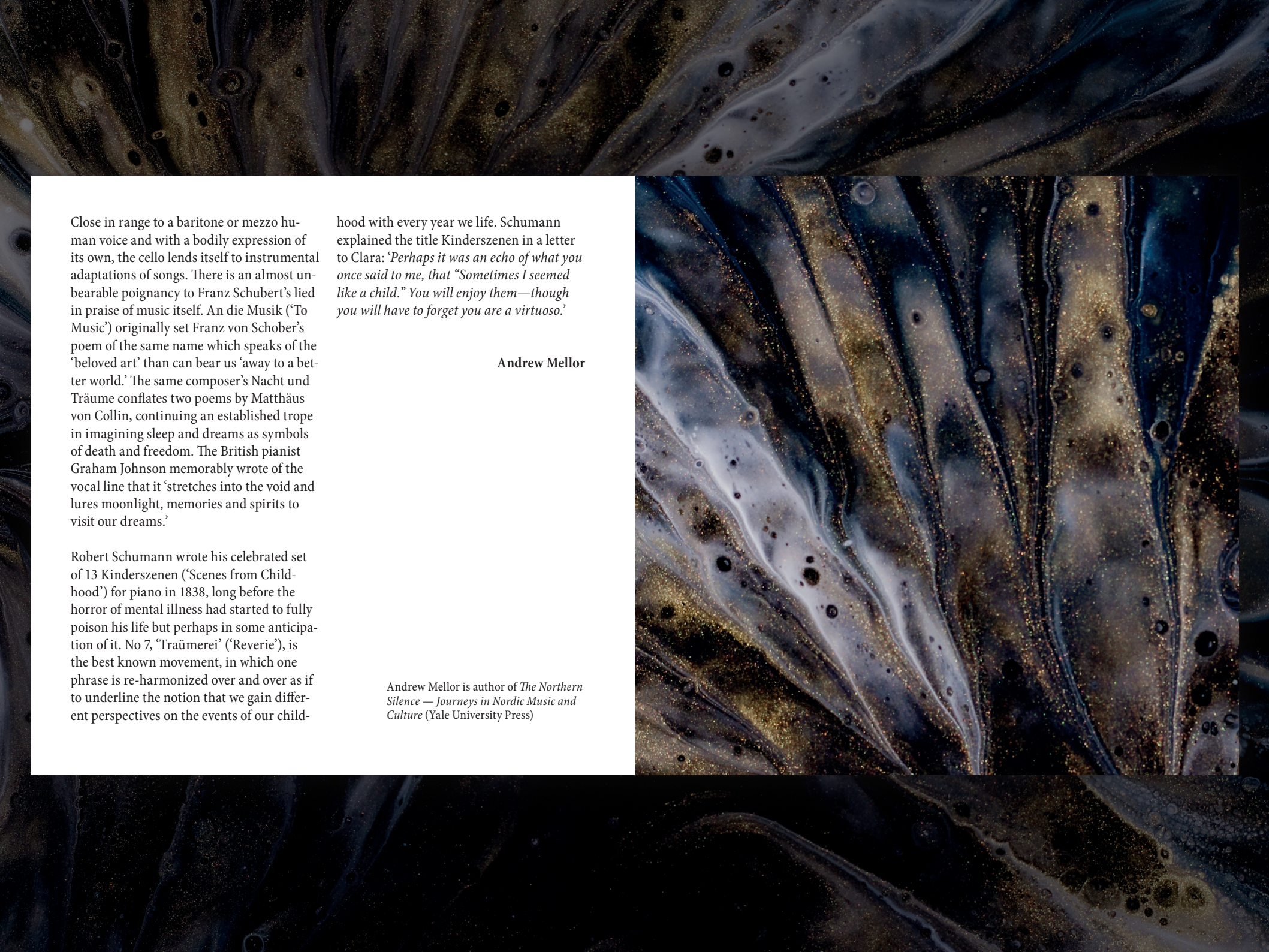
Strauss started work on his Cello Sonata in 1881, reworking material he'd originally conceived in response to a competition for new cello works announced in the pages of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (a periodical founded by Robert Schumann). Further

revisions over the next two years saw him ditch and replace two whole movements, leaving only his original opening Allegro con brio intact. The piece was first performed in Nuremberg on 8 December 1883, by the dedicatee, the Czech cellist Hanuš Wihan. Two weeks later, Strauss himself was at the piano for a performance in Berlin with Ferdinand Böckmann — a performance so successful Strauss literally wrote home about it.

Also present at the Berlin concert was Joachim, who congratulated the young composer on the lyrical power of the work's opening theme - a rollicking precursor to the ripping opening to the composer's orchestral tone poem of five years later, *Don Juan*. Again, piano and cello are woven tight here, in this case moving from the lyrical verve and heavy Brahmsian chords of the opening to a four-part fugue. Mendelssohn's easy lyricism can be heard in the song-without-words that is the pensive, Romance-like Larghetto while the same composer's elfin lightness peers through Strauss's final Allegro vivo. The idea of thematic unity and fluidity, already demonstrated by Schumann, is a given.

Strauss's exuberance, though, is subtly different to Robert Schumann's sense of obsessive, rallying urgency and Clara's nuanced depth of thought. Strauss's sonata is lit up with the confidence of youth and proto-heroism. The swaggering leaps of his Andante, the insistence on covering the cello's entire range, the horn-like figures in the last movement's main theme and that same movement's unusual modulations all adumbrate gestures which would become inseparable from the mature orchestral and operatic Strauss.

Around and in between these three sizeable multi-movement works, Torleif Thedéen and Marianna Shirinyan have chosen to weave smaller works for cello and violin, also in arrangements by Thedéen. In 1855, Strauss set a poem by Hermann von Gilm, telling of a woman emerging from trees to absorb all the world's light and colour before fearing the night will suck all love from her. Strauss's setting of 'Die Nacht', the third of his Op 10 set 8 Gedicht aus 'Letzte Blätter' — the first set of Strauss songs to be published — is a work that begins to tap the shimmering intensity he proved so adept at harboring in music, even when no words are sung.



Close in range to a baritone or mezzo human voice and with a bodily expression of its own, the cello lends itself to instrumental adaptations of songs. There is an almost unbearable poignancy to Franz Schubert's lied in praise of music itself. An die Musik ('To Music') originally set Franz von Schober's poem of the same name which speaks of the 'beloved art' than can bear us 'away to a better world.' The same composer's Nacht und Träume conflates two poems by Matthäus von Collin, continuing an established trope in imagining sleep and dreams as symbols of death and freedom. The British pianist Graham Johnson memorably wrote of the vocal line that it 'stretches into the void and lures moonlight, memories and spirits to visit our dreams.'

Robert Schumann wrote his celebrated set of 13 Kinderszenen ('Scenes from Childhood') for piano in 1838, long before the horror of mental illness had started to fully poison his life but perhaps in some anticipation of it. No 7, 'Träumerei' ('Reverie'), is the best known movement, in which one phrase is re-harmonized over and over as if to underline the notion that we gain different perspectives on the events of our child-

hood with every year we live. Schumann explained the title Kinderszenen in a letter to Clara: *'Perhaps it was an echo of what you once said to me, that "Sometimes I seemed like a child." You will enjoy them—though you will have to forget you are a virtuoso.'*

Andrew Mellor

Andrew Mellor is author of *The Northern Silence — Journeys in Nordic Music and Culture* (Yale University Press)



Torleif Thedéen

Swedish cellist Torleif Thedéen is one of the most distinguished instrumentalists in the Nordic countries and enjoys an international profile as a recitalist, concerto soloist, recording artist and pedagogue. He is a first prize winner of international cello competitions, including the Casals Competition. He is Visiting Professor of cello at the Royal College of Music in London and Professor at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo. In a career spanning four decades, Torleif has performed with some of the world's greatest orchestras, among them the Czech Philharmonic, Netherlands Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, DSO Berlin, Vienna Symphony Orchestra, The Hallé Orchestra, Moscow Philharmonic, City of Birmingham SO, Dresden philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic and BBC Philharmonic.

He has worked with conductors including Esa-Pekka Salonen, Paavo Berglund, Petrenko, Neeme Järvi, Paavo Järvi, Franz Welser-Möst, Gennady Rozhdestvensky,

Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Osmo Vänskä, Mario Venzago and Leif Segerstam. He continues to perform with all the major Nordic orchestras and enjoys a burgeoning relationship with orchestras and festivals in the Antipodes.

As a chamber musician, Torleif is familiar with the prestigious stages of the Wigmore Hall in London, Carnegie Hall in New York, Philharmonie in Berlin and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. He has appeared at the Prague Spring and the Verbier Festivals, and at the chamber music festivals in Schleswig-Holstein, Bordeaux, Oslo, Bath, Stavanger, Kuhmo and beyond. His collaborators have included Janine Jansen, Marianna Shirinyan, Julian Rachlin, Itamar Golan, Maxim Rysanov, Leif Ove Andsnes, Marc-André Hamelin, Lars Anders Tomter, Henning Kraggerud, Roland Pöntinen and Martin Fröst.

Torleif's recordings have attracted numerous accolades. He was awarded the Edison Prize in 2018 for his recording of Messiaen's Quartet for the End of Time with Martin Fröst, Lucas Debargue and Janine Jansen on the Sony label. His recording of

the Shostakovich Cello Concertos won a Cannes Classical Award and his account of the Bach Cello Suites was selected as a 'Choice of the month' by BBC Music Magazine. His discography also includes the concertos of Dvořák, Elgar, Saint-Saens, Lalo, Kabalevsky, Lutoslawski and a wealth of contemporary music. He plays the 1783 Guadagnini cello on loan from the Norwegian Dextra foundation, previously owned by M. Rostropovich.

www.torleifthedeem.com



Marianna Shirinyan

Armenian-born Marianna Shirinyan is one of the most creative and sought after pianists in Europe today. Her vibrant and virtuos musicianship puts her in demand, both as soloist and as chamber musician. Shirinyan plays with great sensitivity, understanding, technical brilliance and beauty of tone, which allows her to offer a wide range of repertoire. Her love for the music and her joy in sharing it with a larger audience are apparent in her performances.

With a repertoire spanning from classical masterpieces to contemporary works, she has graced renowned concert halls worldwide, captivating audiences with her expressive interpretations. Marianna has garnered a reputation as a leading pianist of her generation with solo appearances with orchestras such as Bavarian Radio Symphony orchestra, Oslo, Helsinki and Copenhagen Philharmonic orchestras, Potsdamer Kammerakademie, among others. Enjoyed collaboration with conductors

such as Andrey Boreyko, Zoltan Kocsis, Antonello Manacorda, Krzysztof Urbanski to name a few. She has long term collaboration with artists such as Torleif Thedeen, Daniel Rowland, Henning Kraggerud, Maja Bogdanovic, Natalie Clein, Lars Anders Tomter. Shirinyan's artistry has earned her numerous accolades including victories at international piano competitions and prestigious awards such as the Carl and Anne Marie Nielsen honorary award or the Prize of the Danish broadcasting corporation for her contribution to the Danish music life.

In addition to her thriving performance career as a soloist and chamber musician, she is deeply committed to music education, sharing her passion and knowledge as a professor and mentor. Marianna Shirinyan has as well curated several chamber music festivals across Scandinavia. She is a Steinway artist.

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Torleif Thedéen — Cello

Marianna Shirinyan — Piano

01. Johannes Brahms — *SCHERZO* 05:41
02. Clara Schumann — *ROMANCES*, OP.22, I. *Andante molto* (D-flat major) 03:24
03. Clara Schumann — *ROMANCES*, OP.22, II. *Allegretto: Mit zartem Vortrage* (G minor) 03:21
04. Clara Schumann — *ROMANCES*, OP.22, III. *Leidenschaftlich schnell* (B-flat major) 03:53
05. Robert Schumann — *VIOLIN SONATA NO.1*, OP.105, I. *Mit leidenschaftlichem Ausdruck* 08:13
06. Robert Schumann — *VIOLIN SONATA NO.1*, OP.105, II. *Allegretto* 03:56
07. Robert Schumann — *VIOLIN SONATA NO.1*, OP.105, III. *Lebhaft* 05:13
08. Franz Schubert — *AN DIE MUSIK*, D.547 03:02
09. Franz Schubert — *NACHT UND TRÄUME*, D.827 04:31
10. Richard Strauss — *GEDICHTE AUS 'LETZTE BLÄTTER'*, OP.10, III. *Die Nacht* 03:08
11. Richard Strauss — *CELLO SONATA*, OP.6, I. *Allegro con brio* 09:09
12. Richard Strauss — *CELLO SONATA*, OP.6, II. *Andante ma non troppo* 07:24
13. Richard Strauss — *CELLO SONATA*, OP.6, III. *Allegro vivo* 08:33
14. Robert Schumann — *KINDERSZENEN*, OP.15, VII. *Träumerei* 02:38