

Brahms Duets



Renee Grant-Williams - Soprano
Dorothy Barnhouse - Mezzo Soprano
Alden Gilchrist - Piano

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"Faithful Brahmsians had a chance to sit somewhere close to Heaven ..."

Arthur Bloomfield, San Francisco Examiner

The year is 1876; the elite of Leipzig take their seats in the ornate drawing room eagerly anticipating the pleasures of the liederabend that lie ahead. Two women, one soprano, one mezzo-soprano, stand in the crook of the piano ready to charm the guests with a recital of duets by Johannes Brahms. The maestro strikes a chord and the music begins ...

One hundred years later, in 1976, Renee Grant-Williams, Dorothy Barnhouse, and pianist Alden Gilchrist recaptured the spirit of this scene as they recorded an historic album of Brahms duets at 1750 Arch Records in Berkeley, California. These artists were the first to record this collection of these lovely and rarely heard examples of the Lieder genre. So, it is with pride that PopFree Records re-issues this unique musical gem as its 40th anniversary approaches in April, 2018.

The recording process was gimmick-free, two well-placed microphones in a large room, giving this recording an authentic quality that transports the listener back to a time a hundred years ago, when intimate ensemble singing and musicianship were valued over bells and whistles. The editing process, too, was unsophisticated by present standards. With only three splices in the album, the duets are presented virtually intact.

The duets are primarily from Opus 20, Opus 61, and Opus 66, spanning almost twenty years. As Brahms was frequently engaged as director of various women's choruses, he had a ready resource for the performance of his own compositions and an ongoing need to create new works. Many of the duets reflect Brahms' interest in German folk poetry and music, a genre which greatly appealed to the Romantic composers of the time. However, a number of these compositions, like the exquisite and complex setting of Goethe's poem, Phanomen, part with the folk tradition.

An arrangement of the composer's ever-popular Lullaby (Wiegenlied) for two voices is included, as well as Brahms' piano arrangement of one of Handel's 22 Italian duets, Beato in ver chi puo, written by Handel the month before the first performance of the Messiah.

Dorothy Barnhouse

Ms. Barnhouse began her singing career as a toddler in the 1930's, singing Bach Chorales in church choir. She studied piano and voice throughout her childhood, and continued music and language training at the Lycee Français during her high school years. She attended Harvard in the 1950's, where she studied music and linguistics, and performed with the Harvard glee Club and Radcliffe Choral Society, and gave numerous solo recitals at Harvard and other venues in Cambridge.



After college, she moved to Germany, where she continued to perform in church concerts and Lieder recitals, and studied with Doris Winkler at the renowned Berliner Hochschule für Musik. She returned to the U.S. and moved to the San Francisco Bay Area where she was a mezzo-soprano soloist with the San Jose and Oakland Symphonies, 1750 Arch Records, The Pocket Opera, and the San Francisco Bach Choir. It was during this period that she recorded the Brahms duets with Renee Grant-Williams.

As her teaching career developed, Dorothy joined the National Association of Teachers of Singing, and established the Bay Area NATS Chapter, and grew the membership to over 150 members. She has been a voice instructor at the San Francisco Conservatory and the SF Community Center. In 1988, She moved to Nicaragua, and established Musica en Los Barrios, which grew into a large organization teaching music to children in the poor barrios of Managua. She returned to San Francisco in 2000, and resumed her teaching career. In 2012, she received the lifetime teaching Award from the California Association of Professional Music Teachers.

Renee Grant-Williams

Ms. Grant-Williams is an American classical singer, vocal coach and conductor in Nashville, Tennessee. She earned a full scholarship to the San Francisco Conservatory and received a bachelor of Music Degree there. She also studied at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara California, the American Institute of Music Studies in Graz, Austria, and the Banff School of Fine Arts, Alberta Canada.



She has been the Director of Vocal Music at U.C. Berkeley, Music Director at the New York Actors Studio, adjunct voice faculty at the San Francisco Conservatory, Artist-in-Residence with the San Mateo Chamber Music Society, and national sales director for the David Horwitz music production company in New York. She also founded and conducted the San Francisco Community Chorus, the Music City Community Chorus in Nashville, and directs the Excelsior Chamber Orchestra. In addition to the Brahms Duets, Renee is featured on the KOTEKAN Percussion Ensemble recordings, has a featured solo in the movie "Good Old Boys, starring Tommy Lee Jones and Sissy Spacek, and, displaying a talent for diverse musical styles, she sang lead for the Timms Brothers, a country music band.

Her book, *Voice Power: Using your Voice to Captivate, Persuade, and Command Attention*, was endorsed by Paul Harvey of ABC News Radio, and US Senator Fred Thompson. She has been quoted or appeared in Business Week, New York Times, Boston Globe, Chicago Tribune, San Francisco Chronicle, New York Post, Cosmopolitan, Elle, Southern Living, American Songwriter, as well as ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, FOX, USA, MTV, BBC, PBS, and NPR.

Alden Gilchrist

Mr. Gilchrist was born Dec. 17, 1930 in Pomona, and grew up in Southern California learning to play piano, violin and organ. After earning an undergraduate degree in music at Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon he came to the Bay Area for graduate study in composition at UC Berkeley, where his teachers included Roger Sessions, Andrew Imbrie and Seymour Shifrin. He received the Prix de Paris, which enabled him to study with Olivier Messiaen in Paris. He has been a lecturer in music at UC Berkeley, a professor of Composition at San Francisco State College, and was conductor of the Berkeley Chamber Singers for 12 years. From 1965 until his retirement, Alden was Director of Music at Calvary Presbyterian Church in San Francisco. Mr. Gilchrist passed away on September 1, 2014 after a long illness.



Producer's Note

Lieder singing has its roots in a tradition wherein small groups gathered in private salons in the 1800's, and so did not lend itself to public exposure or interest. Lieder, the German word for "song", referring to poems set to music, is a format which is problematic for attracting large audiences, especially in the modern-day U.S. Performed in an intimate setting, in a foreign language, it could easily be overlooked by the casual listener. But these songs, by the very virtue of their intimacy, offer a unique musical experience that is not possible in other styles and settings. I found an alluring romantic quality in these songs which came through regardless of my lack of German language skills. The music itself tells stories, and will reward the listener with an enchanting experience if given the chance. So, gather in your salons in front of the fire, and transport yourselves back to a different time and place, when music was not a background for gatherings – it was their purpose. CGB, January, 2018

The Songs



Brahms Opus 20

- | | |
|---------------------|-------|
| 1. Weg der Liebe I | 02:11 |
| 2. Weg der Liebe II | 03:31 |
| 3. Die Meere | 02:22 |

Brahms Opus 61

- | | |
|------------------------|-------|
| 4. Die Schwestern | 01:35 |
| 5. Klosterfräulein | 02:32 |
| 6. Phänomen | 02:18 |
| 7. Die Boten der Liebe | 02:24 |

Brahms Opus 66

- | | |
|-----------------|-------|
| 8. Klänge I | 01:41 |
| 9. Klänge II | 02:23 |
| 10. Am Strande | 02:24 |
| 11. Jägerlied | 01:22 |
| 12. Hüt du dich | 02:44 |

Brahms Opus 49 no. 4

- | | |
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| 13. Wiegenlied Arr. Gilchrist | 01:34 |
| Handel Italian Duets No 18 Arr. Brahms | |
| 14. Beato in ver chi può | 06:35 |

Recording by 1750 Arch Company 1976

Digital re-mastering by Russ Ragsdale 2000

Liner notes artwork and design C. Beuscher

Produced for PopFree Records by Chris Beuscher, Jan. 2018

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