

DAVID SHIFRIN

plays

Clarinet Concertos

by C.M. von Weber



DAVID GOLUB

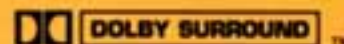
conducts

Orchestra di

Padova è del Veneto

DE 3220

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## *Carl Maria von Weber*

*Born 1786 in Eutin, Germany - Died 1826 in London, England*

The cornerstones of the clarinet literature are the solo, chamber and concerted works by Mozart, Weber, and Brahms. Coincidentally, all three composers wrote their pieces featuring clarinet for one specific player who was also a friend. Mozart drew his inspiration from Anton Stadler; Brahms in his turn was delighted by the tone and technique of Richard Mühlfeld. The world is a better place because of the musical masterpieces that arose as a result. Both Stadler and Mühlfeld have earned their footnotes in music history primarily because of their associations with Mozart and Brahms.

The relationship between Carl Maria von Weber and Heinrich Baermann was somewhat different. Mozart met Stadler in the early 1780s, but did not write specifically for him until 1789. Brahms was an old man when he met Mühlfeld in 1891. Weber and Baermann were both young when they first encountered each other. They developed a lifelong and genuinely close friendship that was curtailed only by Weber's untimely death in 1826 at the age of 40. (Baermann, who was born in Potsdam in 1784, lived to the comparatively ripe old age of 63). Baermann was himself a composer as well as a virtuoso performer, and played an active role in the shaping of themes and revision of

works written for him. Further, he was not exclusively associated with Weber. Both Giacomo Meyerbeer and Felix Mendelssohn also composed for him. Baermann's artistic stature and professional success were so widespread that his championship of these three composers' works added to *their* luster.

Weber composed all three works recorded on this disc within a span of barely four months from March to July, 1811. His accomplishment in so brief a period is one of music history's miracles. The high quality of his music and his substantial enrichment of the clarinet literature are, proportionally, analogous to what Mozart did for the piano concerto in 1784. Though Weber's reputation as a composer rests principally on his splendid German romantic operas, he is also remembered — with good reason — as a prolific and gifted composer for the clarinet.

Weber and Baermann first crossed paths in Darmstadt early in 1811. At the time, Weber was concluding a professional stint in Darmstadt and about to embark on a concert tour in the hope of securing a position elsewhere. He invited Baermann to participate in his farewell concert, for which occasion he had composed a duet for two contraltos, clarinet *obbligato*, horn, and strings. Baermann

was principal clarinet in the Munich court orchestra of King Maximilian I, a position that carried considerable prestige. The Darmstadt performance of Weber's new composition was a success, and the two young men, then 25 and 27, struck a good rapport.

Weber came to Munich in mid-March, 1811 on a concert tour. He carried a letter of introduction to the Royal Minister Maximilian Josef von Montgelas that led to an interview with the Bavarian Queen. Bavaria was an independent kingdom from Prussia, with a strong musical tradition that derived from the Elector of Saxony's move, in the late eighteenth century, of the fine Mannheim orchestra to Munich. The kingdom's political alliance with Napoleon had helped Bavaria achieve a thriving economy. Weber succeeded in arranging a court concert in early April, through which he hoped to curry favor with the King. Within two weeks of his arrival in Munich, he encountered Baermann at the home of one Karl von Wiebeking, the Court Director of Public Works. Weber asked Baermann to participate in the court performance, thereby ensuring the best possible presentation to the Bavarian monarch. Baermann agreed, provided that Weber produce a new work for the occasion featuring clarinet. The composer was pleased to oblige, and set to work furiously. Three days later, he presented Baermann with the score to the Concertino in E-flat. Baermann learned it

in record time, since the concert for the King was scheduled for 5 April, just a few days later.

Maximilian I was a patron of the arts who was justifiably proud of his 87-piece orchestra, and who appreciated the extraordinary talent of his gifted principal clarinetist. Fifty courtiers joined the King as his guests for the concert of Weber's music, and the entire court attended. Weber's new piece was splendidly successful, enchanting musicians, monarch and the rest of the audience. Tumultuous applause greeted Baermann's performance and the Concertino itself. In a legendary gesture of artistic vision, Maximilian commissioned Weber to write two new, full-scale concerti for Baermann. The commission was a signal honor for Weber, who responded with the F minor Clarinet Concerto in mid-May, and the E-flat concerto barely two months later. Even then, his imagination was not exhausted. He took a holiday in late summer and, his mind's ear still filled with the mellifluous sound of Baermann's playing, rapidly composed a Clarinet Quintet. (Weber's *Quintet for Clarinet and Strings* as well as other Weber chamber works with clarinet, featuring David Shifrin and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, is available on Delos - DE 3194.)

Weber's three concerted works for clarinet blur the border between vocal and instrumental styles. He seems to have thought of the clarinet as a *prima donna* among woodwind instruments, allowing it both extended *coloratura* and

*bel canto* passages. Weber was fundamentally a composer for the stage who was somewhat ill at ease with the constraints of sonata form. His most successful movements in these works are the slow movements, perhaps because they allow him recitative-like lines with greater formal flexibility. While it is clear from the virtuosic writing in all three pieces that Baermann was a brilliant technician, the slow movements reflect the depth of both men's musicianship and the obvious love that Weber had for his friend's rich tone quality.

The clarinet was a relatively new member of the orchestra in the early nineteenth century. The instrument's origins are obscure; it seems to be descended from the 17th-century *chalumeau*, a single-reed woodwind instrument with cylindrical bore, two keys, and a limited, low range. By the mid-18th century, the instrument had acquired five keys that afforded players greater flexibility and range. Baermann played on a ten-key instrument he purchased in 1809 and to which he remained faithful for his entire career. His clarinet gave him the best of the two prevailing schools: French clarity and brightness, plus German smoothness and a fuller timbre. Weber was enchanted by Baermann's sound, and wrote of his playing as "godlike." The composer's artistic inspiration flowered bountifully.

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In some respects the **Concertino** is the most successful of the three works, primarily because Weber did not write within a traditional formal framework. Concertino means, literally, "little concerto." In the early nineteenth century, the term connoted a work featuring a soloist with an orchestral ensemble, but freer in structure than a formal concerto and often in one extended movement. It was precisely the type of work that brought out the best in Weber, who composed more spontaneously when his imagination had freer rein. In his Concertino for Baermann, Weber chose an amalgam of slow introduction in C minor, followed by a theme and variations in E-flat major, with striking success. Variations provide the soloist opportunities to take full advantage of the clarinet's flexibility and range, contrasting the bright crisp tone of its upper register with the rich, creamy timbre of the lower *chalumeau* register.

With respect to emotional and musical substance, the **Concerto No. 1 in F minor, Op. 73** has the most depth among these three pieces. An ominous first movement foreshadows the sinister Wolf's Glen scene from *Der Freischütz*. Curiously, the soloist never really declaims the main theme, adding to a sense of foreboding. Weber's *Adagio ma non troppo* is a quasi-aria in A-B-A form, treating the clarinet vocally. Weber liked the entire woodwind family, and wrote gratefully for them in his orchestral

works. In this movement, the trio of muted horns at the reprise of the A-section is particularly fine, fulfilling an *obbligato* role that eloquently supports the clarinet's *bel canto* line. The First Concerto switches to major mode for the concluding Rondo, dispelling the shadows of the first two movements with music that shows the clarinet's flexibility as well as its capacity for humor.

The **Concerto No. 2 in E-flat, Op. 74**, shows an obvious effort on Weber's part to conform to expectations of a traditional sonata form virtuoso piece. The phrasing is foursquare, and the strings carry the lion's share of themes when the clarinet is not playing; the other woodwinds are primarily there as musical punctuation. In the slow movement, Weber

elevates the winds to a more prominent role. Indeed, the sextet of flutes, oboes, and bassoons alternating with the solo passages gives this movement the character of a woodwind serenade. Again, he treats the clarinet almost as if it were a coloratura soprano. Its emotionally charged melodic line, with its wide leaps, sudden dynamic changes, daring harmonic progressions, and passages of recitative, is distinctly operatic. A bouncy, syncopated *Alla polacca* adds eastern European flavor to conclude the concerto. Dazzling passage work at the end remind us that Weber composed for an instrumentalist of surpassing technique and musicianship.

Laurie Shulman ©1999

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Clarinetist **David Shifrin** has been artistic director of The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center since 1992. He is also the artistic director of Chamber Music Northwest, the summer chamber music festival in Portland, Oregon. He is in demand as a soloist with orchestras all over the world and appears frequently with ensembles such as the Emerson, Guarneri and Tokyo quartets. He has appeared at the Mostly Mozart Festival at Lincoln Center and the Kennedy Center performing the Mozart Clarinet Concerto in its original version on a specially built basset clarinet. The Delos recording by Mr. Shifrin and

the Mostly Mozart Orchestra of this same work received a Record of the Year award from *Stereo Review*. Mr. Shifrin has made significant contributions to the clarinet repertoire through the commissioning and premiering of new works by composers such as John Corigliano, Joan Tower, Bruce Adolphe and others, as well as championing the works of John Adams, Stephen Albert, and Ezra Laderman. Mr. Shifrin was recipient of an Avery Fisher Career Grant and a Solo Recitalist Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. He currently serves on the faculty of Yale University. He has also

served on the faculties of The Juilliard School, University of Southern California, University of Michigan, Cleveland Institute of Music and the University of Hawaii. Mr. Shifrin has made numerous recordings on the Delos label, with the Chamber Music Society: Dvořák's Wind Serenade (DE 3152), Beethoven's Septet (DE 3177), American Clarinet Quintets (DE 3183), Debussy's *Rapsodie* with pianist André Watts (DE 3167) (1999), and chamber works of Carl Maria von Weber (DE 3194); with Chamber Music Northwest: chamber works of Herrmann, Diamond, Porter and Ives (DE 3088), chamber works of Nielsen, Loeffler and Prokofiev (DE 3136), and the Brahms Clarinet Quintet (DE 3066); with the Seattle Symphony conducted by Gerard Schwarz: Drattell Clarinet Concerto (DE 3159); with Carol Rosenberger: A Brahms/Schumann Soirée (DE 3025); and with Rosenberger and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra Winds: Beethoven and Mozart Wind Quintets (DE 3024). Mr. Shifrin has also recorded for the Angel/EMI, Arabesque, BMG, CRI, Deutsche Grammophon, Nonesuch, and Sony Classical labels.

**David Golub** enjoys a versatile career as pianist and conductor, and records in both capacities.

As pianist, he performs with major orchestras, as solo recitalist, and as a member of chamber ensembles. He appears with

European orchestras such as the London Symphony, English Chamber Orchestra, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande and Orchestre de Paris and, in the U.S., with the orchestras of Philadelphia, Chicago, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Baltimore and others. He has performed at virtually every major American and European summer festival.

Mr. Golub maintains a strong interest in chamber music. He has performed with Isaac Stern, Pinchas Zukerman, Andre Previn, Leonard Rose and Josef Suk, and has appeared as guest artist with the Tokyo, Guarneri, and Emerson String Quartets. He is an Artist Member of The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, performing with the Society in New York and on tour. With violinist Mark Kaplan and cellist Colin Carr, Mr. Golub is a member of the Golub-Kaplan-Carr Trio, which performs throughout the U.S. and Europe.

Mr. Golub has toured both Italy and the U.S. as conductor and pianist with the Padua Chamber Orchestra. He conducted that orchestra in the critically acclaimed recordings of Haydn's opera, "L'isola disabitata," orchestral works by Dvořák, and Viotti violin concertos featuring Mark Kaplan.

He has conducted (from the keyboard) Rossini's "Petite Messe Solennelle" for The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, has conducted the Orchestra of Taiwan at the Taiwan Festival, the Leopoldinum Orchestra at

the Mecklenburg Festival and the Hong Kong Philharmonic. Mr. Golub will conduct the opera "Ippolito e Aricia" by Tommaso Traetta at the Festival at Martina Franca in 1999.

Mr. Golub is a graduate of The Juilliard School. He divides his time principally between North America and Europe.

**The Orchestra di Padova è del Veneto (Padua Chamber Orchestra)** was founded in 1966.

During these 30-plus years it has become one of the most important ensembles in Italy and has earned wide international acclaim with its intense schedule of more than 250 concerts a year all over Italy and abroad, including tours of Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, France, the Far East, Greece, South and Central America.

The history of the Orchestra has also been

highlighted by its association with such pre-eminent conductors as Sir John Barbirolli, Riccardo Chailly, Neville Marriner, Karl Richter, and Peter Maag (Principal Conductor since 1983), and with soloists such as Jean-Pierre Rampal, Marilyn Horne, Richard Stoltzman, Uri Bashmet, and Martha Argerich.

Among its many recordings, some of the Orchestra's most distinguished are the Grand Prix du Disque-winning recording of the twelve Boccherini Cello concertos with Giuranna and Geringas, Bach concertos for Teldec with Sviatoslav Richter, Mozart concertos with Franco Gulli for Claves, a live recording recital with Chris Merritt, Mozart oratorio "La Betulia Liberata" for Denon with Peter Maag, under whose baton the Orchestra has just completed the Beethoven Symphony cycle.

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Recorded June 3 - 5, 1997  
Palazzo Giusti, Padova, Italy

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**CARL MARIA VON WEBER** (1786 - 1826)

**Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra No. 2 in E-Flat Major, Op. 74 [23:21]**

- 1** Allegro (9:20)
- 2** Romanza (7:24)
- 3** Alla Polacca (6:36)

**Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra No. 1 in F Minor, Op. 73 [21:48]**

- 4** Allegro (8:28)
- 5** Adagio ma non troppo (6:48)
- 6** Rondo (6:31)

**7 Concertino for Clarinet and Orchestra in E-Flat Major, Op. 26 [10:06]**

**David Shifrin, clarinet**  
**David Golub, conductor**  
**Orchestra di Padova è del Veneto**

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 55:15

**ALSO AVAILABLE BY DAVID SHIFRIN:**

• **Chamber Music of Carl Maria von Weber** • David Shifrin, clarinet • David Golub, piano • Ani Kavafian, Maria Bachmann, Cho-Liang Lin, Toby Hoffmann, violins • Paul Neubauer, viola • Fred Sherry, Gary Hoffman, cello • Quintet for Clarinet and Strings, Op. 34 / Grand Duo Concertant, Op. 48 / Seven Variations, Op. 33 / Introduction, Theme and Variations, Op. Posth. • recorded 20-bit • Young People's Notes • DE 3194 (DDD)





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