SOULMATES

MUSIC FOR CELLO CLARINET AND PIANO

Amitai Vardi, clarinet
Uri Vardi, cello
Arnon Erez, piano

Beethoven: Trio, Op. 11
Radzynski: Concert Duos
Brahms: Trio, Op. 114

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Amitai Vardi, clarinet
Uri Vardi, cello
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Total Playing Time: 63:34

Dedicated to the memory of
musician and sound engineer
Victor Fonarov

Beethoven: Trio, Op. 11

- Allegro con brio
- Adagio
- Tema con Variazioni – Allegretto

Jan Radzynski: Concert Duos (2004)

- Polonaise – Maestoso
- Melody – Lentamente
- Andalusia – Con moto
- Valse – Tempo rubato e sentimentale
- Victory March – Deciso

Brahms: Trio, Op. 114

- Allegro
- Adagio
- Andantino grazioso
- Allegro

SOULMATES

MUSIC FOR CELLO, CLARINET, AND PIANO

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN: Trio in B-flat Major, Op. 11 (22:14)

1. Allegro con brio (9:46)
2. Adagio (5:28)
3. Tema con Variazioni – Allegretto (7:00)

JAN RADZYNSKI: Concert Duos (2004) (17:11)

4. Polonaise – Maestoso (4:23)
5. Melody – Lentamente (2:53)
6. Andalusia – Con moto (2:38)
7. Valse – Tempo rubato e sentimentale (4:28)
8. Victory March – Deciso (2:49)

JOHANNES BRAHMS: Trio in A Minor, Op. 114 (24:05)

9. Allegro (7:45)
10. Adagio (7:24)
11. Andantino grazioso (4:27)
12. Allegro (4:29)

Total Playing Time: 63:34

Amitai Vardi, clarinet
Uri Vardi, cello
Arnon Erez, piano

Notes on the Program

Before string quartets and wind ensembles flourished in the Classical era, aristocratic households turned to consorts of viols (an early version of string instruments) to enliven their social gatherings. Consorts, or chamber music ensembles, embodied the spirit of musical democracy: No one voice dominated the texture of shared musical utterance. In eighteenth-century Vienna, patrons enjoyed a regular supply of newly minted quartets and wind ensembles for their nocturnal gatherings in a style that continued the democratic spirit of consorts and came to be known as the music of friends. Mozart penned many works in this style, calling upon some of the city's prominent virtuosi as partners. In collaboration with the standout clarinetist Anton Stadler, team Mozart/Stadler urged instrument makers to upgrade the clarinet's technical features and give access to its haunting lowest register, the chalumeau. Their efforts prepared the clarinet for its first prominence in the music of friends.

Ludwig van Beethoven: Trio in B-flat Major, Opus 11 (1797-98)

In the 1790s, Beethoven was a newcomer to Vienna. His trio for piano, clarinet, and cello was one of a flurry of compositions with woodwinds that his many admirers ordered on commission. He bestowed its dedication on the elegant Countess Maria Wilhelmine von Thun, mother-in-law to Count Lobkowicz, who provided both patronage and encouragement to Mozart and Beethoven.

Beethoven, not yet burdened by the social isolation that his deafness would soon impose, enjoyed circulating within a wide social circle of prominent patrons both in the city and on tour. For his clarinet trio, he employed the manners of a musical style that embraced the outward charm and lively sociability associated with the music of friends, only occasionally interjecting his soon-to-be famous dramatic flashes.

The trio sparkles with friendly sociability, adhering throughout to Goethe's apt characterization of chamber music as "rational conversations among friends." Clarinet and cello shine equally alongside the brilliant piano passagework that afforded the composer an opportunity to display his prowess as a keyboard virtuoso. The clarinet generally remains confined to its more brilliant upper register, partly to facilitate the publisher's plan to increase sales by offering a violin part as an alternative to that of the clarinet. The first movement's unison opening suggests an orchestral grand tutti followed immediately by a polite self-introduction from each instrument. The structure of its metrical grid is first articulated with a stately half-note duple, then shifts to a prominent quarter-note pattern, dissolving into cascading eighth notes, creating a propulsive rhythmic accel-

eration, no doubt learned from Mozartian works. Striking harmonic gestures, such as the sudden appearance of D-flat major, add a lightly delivered element of dramatic intrigue.

The slow movement's vocal cavatina exploits the subdominant calm of E-flat major with the cello leading off. The long, plaintive lines of this movement continue, highlighting a shared characteristic of cello and clarinet—a sustained, singing quality, suggestive of the human voice. A pervasive pastoral style, signaling a contemplation of Nature, provides a mood of calm at first, later interrupted when Nature reveals its darker side. A turn toward the minor mode and a descent into other keys accompanies this darker weather.

Energetic festivities return in Movement III with a series of variations built on a tune from Joseph Weigl's latest Viennese opera success *L'amor marinaro ossia Il corsaro,* dramma giocoso (1797). Although the composer's pupil Carl Czerny would record in his memoirs that Beethoven came to regret relying on Weigl, these variations still hold their charm today, animated by a wide range of colorful opportunities for the threesome to shine.

Jan Radzynski: Concert Duos for Cello and Clarinet (2004)

Jan Radzynski sets forth on a captivating journey in five movements, featuring a kaleidoscope of national styles. He began his association with Uri Vardi in Israel, where the Vardi family from Hungary and Radzynski's from Poland first intersected. Meeting once again during graduate studies at the Yale School of Music, their friendship has been enriched by Jan's work as an esteemed composer with multiple cultural relationships to Poland, Israel, the United States, and Jewish tradition—and by Uri's commitment as celebrated teacher and performer with collaborations across musical boundaries. Jointly, they have found ways to embrace the complexities of their origins and diaspora. The duo's dedication to Vardi's entire family signals their deep connection.

In the hands of those less skilled than Radzynski, musical styles associated with national traditions can seem dull. But with Radzynski's sure-handed control, subtlety, and wit, each style expresses a spectrum of carefully modulated feeling. A signature Polish dance, "Polonaise," comes first, providing an exuberant opening that is at once expansive and tender. Movement II, "Melody," suggestively linked to the first movement with the continuation of a warm D-major harmony, evokes the familiar sounds of a dark night on the Hungarian plains à la Bartok.

Movement III, Spain's evocative "Andalusia," not only recalls the "otherness" of this world but also the feeling of hidden sensuality through the music's seductive interplay. Here,

as elsewhere, chromaticism convinces with its beautiful colors as the persuasive writing provides each player with a remarkable range of opportunities for expression. Movement IV, "Valse," unfurls as a celebration that recalls the glitter of high style in a Europe from long ago. The mixing of this innate joy with a sadness that reflects the catastrophes of twentieth-century Europe makes clear that national memory must always embody both. Movement V, "Victory March," embraces a spirit of fun that is countered by a sense of irony as if to say, history has been unkind, but we survive and live to celebrate. Remarkably, Radzynski brings together the beautiful simplicity of traditional musical styles juxtaposed against the historical contradictions and ironies that give his music depth and texture.

Johannes Brahms: Trio in A Minor, Opus 114 (1891)

Nearly a century had passed before Brahms wrote for the same combination of instruments called for in Beethoven's Op. 11 trio that begins this album. Had it not been for his newly blossomed musical friendship with clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld, a star performer in the Hofkapelle orchestra at Saxe-Meiningen, the composer might have held to his previously announced plans to retire. It was in March 1891, during one of his frequent visits to the ducal court, that Brahms and Mühlfeld discovered their deep musical kinship. A summer of intense composing followed, ensuring that by November the clarinet trio was ready for a private court performance with the composer at the keyboard, longtime chamber music partner Robert Hausmann on cello, and clarinet played by Mühlfeld, affectionately nicknamed by the maestro as his Fräulein Nightingale.

A public premiere in Berlin followed in December, attended by Adolph Menzel, an acclaimed visual artist and music aficionado. The Brahms-Menzel connection was a powerful one. They had fortuitously crossed paths when both were in the twilight of illustrious careers. Each had been frequently stung by the barbs of critics, who accused them of embracing a backward-facing conservatism in an era of proud progressivism. Menzel's companionship no doubt afforded the aging composer some measure of solace during their extended evenings of conversation and, reportedly, more than a little partying.

Brahms went to great lengths to bring together Mühlfeld, his newly acquired "nightingale," and his cherished lifelong friend, the virtuoso pianist Clara Schumann.

Clara embraced the opportunity to perform the composer's two sonatas for piano and clarinet with her guest in the Schumann home. Brahms sat by her side as page turner, offering gentle words of encouragement. It was reported by Clara's grandson, Ferdinand, that on this same occasion Brahms remarked

how he was now composing for himself. In so doing, he looked forward to drawing even closer to his most cherished soulmates.

His joy in congregating with musicians and friends is palpable in the music itself. Dispatching the trio for publication, he entrusted it to Eusebius Mandyczewski, his long-time amanuensis: a formidable music historian, conductor, teacher, and editor. Upon viewing the manuscript, Mandy, as his friends called him, was struck that the trio's instruments appeared to proceed "as if they were in love." He found it deeply moving that the trio appeared to trace the path of a delicate friendship, in which cello and clarinet encouraged each other in an ever-deepening responsiveness, with the piano at the ready to assist. The trio's ebb and flow traces in its textures and formal design a search for human connection, mirroring the composer's desire for achieving the same.

The cello sounds alone as the trio begins. The cello's opening gesture's triadic simplicity calls plaintively to its companions. The clarinet's response displays at once a remarkable fluidity through its melodies sustained over a cascading two-and-a-half octave register before melting away in its deep chalumeau register. Their palpable kinship emerges in a partnership of register, color, and singing tone. For the cognoscenti, this opening sequence resonates with an antiquated style of contrapuntal play in which the piano assumes the part of ground bass.

As this evocation of the musical past dissolves, the piano charges forward and gradually all three instruments declare a bolder presence. A second theme, again in the style of call and response, unfolds a chain of thirds that reinforces a tone of resignation. Pervasive whispering scales suggest a foreboding, harkening to the "dark wings" of fate and death that Brahms privately disclosed as ever-present in his music and his life. The instruments press on to finish the movement's opening section. Without a direction to repeat as would be usual, the group must forge ahead while embracing the same E-minor harmony that closed the exposition. Cello and clarinet take up positions in opposing registers—cello below and clarinet in the heights—landing together in a new, even darker minor key. This arrival signals a joining of forces, employing the stepwise motif announced during the piano's first utterance. There is no feeling of resolution as the movement closes, but rather the acceptance of a distant, yet inevitable, destiny. Descriptions of this movement as cool or abstract perhaps overlook the telltale signs of passion that are revealed but later retreat.

A lyrical cantabile emerges in the slow movement, suggesting pastoral serenity. The initial interweaving of clarinet, piano respondent, and cello ground bass evoke a sense of unending melody that suggests a stunning presentiment of the eternal. Performers must calculate precisely their cooperative exchanges to create this mellifluous flow.

Movement III begins with a waltzing intermezzo, suggesting the arrival of breezes from the out-of-doors. Its lightness of spirit enjoys a spirit of spontaneous exchange that eschews any hint of portentousness. Drawing from a rustic, folk idiom for the contrasting section, the movement expands into a world of easy social exchange and the relaxation of an untroubled daily life. The return of the waltz is left incomplete and, with that incompleteness, a cinematic cut insists on the return to a more ardent world.

The last movement assumes responsibility for the demands of an energetic, heroic, and even problematic world. As in Movement I, the cello initiates the journey. Cross-purpose rhythms generate a propulsive, sometimes dizzying effect. A welcome interlude brings the cello and clarinet together in a dark-hued quietude, requiring the piano to press them back into a more muscular commitment for the close.

— Jenny Kallick

Cellist **Uri Vardi** has performed as a recitalist, soloist, and chamber player across the United States, Europe, Far East, South America, and Israel. Born in Szeged, Hungary, Vardi grew up on Kibbutz Kfar Hahoresh, Israel. He studied at the Rubin Academy in Tel Aviv, was an Artist Diploma student at Indiana University, and earned his master's degree from Yale University. His cello teachers have included Janos Starker, Aldo Parisot, Eva Janzer, and Uzi Wiesel. Other influential musicians in his life have been Gyorgy Sebok, Rami Shevelov, Rachel Adonaylo, and Lorand Fenyves. Vardi served as Assistant Principal cellist of the Israel Chamber Orchestra, Principal cellist of the Israel Sinfonietta, and was a founding member of the Sol-La-Re String Quartet. In 1990, following an extensive teaching and performing career, Vardi was appointed cello professor at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Vardi is the founder and artistic director of the National Summer Cello Institute in Madison, Wisconsin. He is regularly invited to perform and present workshops, seminars, and master classes at major music schools, summer music festivals, and professional orchestras. Trained as a Feldenkrais practitioner, Vardi focuses on the correlation between musical expression, sound, body awareness, and movement in his teaching and performance. Throughout his career, Uri Vardi has continuously initiated new projects and collaborations, bringing to life rarely performed music (e.g., a CD of Jewish music

from the St. Petersburg School), and bridging cultural and musical divides (e.g., Fusions, a chamber music project of Jewish music and Arab art music that toured the United States and Israel on multiple occasions and culminated in the commission of Forty Steps by Joel Hoffman, a double concerto for cello, oud, and symphony orchestra, premiered with the Madison Symphony Orchestra).

Vardi's students have been successful as soloists, chamber players, faculty members of major music schools (such as Oberlin College and the Peabody Institute), and members of major orchestras such as The New York Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Simon Bolivar Orchestra in Caracas, Venezuela, and the Seattle Symphony Orchestra.

Clarinetist **Amitai Vardi**, an avid soloist, orchestral, and chamber musician, was appointed Professor of Clarinet at Ohio's Kent State University in 2012. Vardi made his solo debut at the age of sixteen with the Madison Symphony Orchestra as a first-place winner of the Steenbock Young Artist Competition. He has since won several concerto competitions, including the Round Top International Festival Competition, The Cleveland Institute of Music Concerto Competition, and the Agnes Fowler Competition. In addition, Vardi has been a featured soloist with the Blue Water Chamber Orchestra, Trinity Cathedral Chamber Orchestra, and Spoleto Festival Orchestra, and has performed the North American premiere of Srul Glick's concerto *The Klezmer's Wedding* with members of the Pittsburgh Symphony.

As an orchestral player, Vardi has served as principal clarinetist of Red (an Orchestra), Opera Cleveland, and Lyric Opera Cleveland. He currently holds positions with The Erie Philharmonic, Blue Water Chamber Orchestra, The Cleveland Ensemble, and the Blossom Band and Orchestra. Vardi has also performed with many ensembles, including the American Ballet Theatre, the Joffrey Ballet, the Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra, and most notably The Cleveland Orchestra,

with which he has performed well over one hundred and fifty concerts including many tours to New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Miami. During the 2014-2015 season, Vardi substituted on bass clarinet with The Cleveland Orchestra for most of the season.

His enthusiasm for chamber music has led to performances across the United States, South America, Europe, and Israel. He is featured on several chamber music CDs and is a member of the Black Squirrel Winds, Kent State University's faculty woodwind quintet.

Vardi received his Bachelor of Music degree from Indiana University, where he studied with Eli Eban; his Master of Music degree at The Cleveland Institute of Music, as a student of Franklin Cohen, and later pursued his post-graduate studies with Yehuda Gilad in Los Angeles. He has taught at the University of Akron, and in addition to his current position at Kent State University he teaches at the Cleveland Institute of Music Preparatory Department. During the summers, Vardi has been on the faculty at the Interlochen Arts Camp and the Kent/Blossom Music Festival.

Highly acclaimed for his sensitivity, virtuosity and profound musical interpretation, **Arnon Erez** has gained a worldwide reputation as an outstanding pianist.

Erez's partnership with violinist Hagai Shaham, winning the first prize at the Munich ARD International Duo Competition in 1990, has led to numerous concerts and recordings highly praised by the critics: "*A superb partnership ... the sheer verve of the playing is irresistible*." —The Gramophone

He is a member of the Trio Shaham-Erez-Wallfisch with violinist Hagai Shaham and cellist Raphael Wallfisch. Founded in 2009, the trio has achieved critical acclaim with their first recording of the Mendelssohn piano trios.

He has performed in numerous major concert halls, including Carnegie Hall in New York, Beethoven Halle in Bonn, Alte Oper in Frankfurt, Herkulessaal in Munich, Musikverein in Vienna, The Concertgebouw in Am-

sterdam, the New Auditorium du Louvre in Paris, and London's Wigmore Hall. Arnon Erez has appeared in major festivals around the world, and as a soloist he has performed with various orchestras including the Israel Philharmonic. In addition, he has given many recitals and recorded for radio and television stations in Germany, Austria, France, Holland, Israel, Turkey, China, Mexico, and Brazil.

His discography has won much praise and a BBC Music Magazine Choice. It includes piano trios by Mendelssohn, Ravel, Faure, Rachmaninov, Arenski, and Shostakovich; violin and piano duets by Grieg, Bloch, Debussy, Janacek, Dohnanyi, Hubay, Weiner, Achron, Bruno Walter, Hanns Eisler, Pizzetti, and Castelnuovo-Tedesco; the Brahms-Joachim Hungarian dances; and the complete cello and piano sonatas of Beethoven and Mendelssohn. He studied with Hana Shalgi, Michael Boguslavski, and Arie Vardi, graduating from Tel Aviv University, and later took an advanced course in chamber music with the Guarneri Quartet in the United States.

Currently, Erez is a professor at the Buchmann-Mehta School of Music, Tel Aviv University, and heads the Chamber Music Department.

Jan Radzynski left his native Poland in 1969. He first settled in Israel, where he studied composition with Leon Schidlowsky at the Tel Aviv University Academy of Music. He continued his studies in the United States with Krzysztof Penderecki and Jacob Druckman at Yale University, where he received his doctorate in 1984. He is presently Professor of Composition and Theory at the Ohio State University in Columbus.

His compositions have been performed by the Amadeus Chamber Orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Columbus Symphony, the Cracow Philharmonic, the Israel Camerata, the Israel Philharmonic, the Israel Chamber Orchestra, the Jerusalem Symphony, the Mexico National Orchestra, Moscow's Bolshoi Theater Chamber Orchestra, the New Haven Symphony, the Polish National Philharmonic, the Saarbrücken Radio Orchestra, the Silesian Philharmonic, the Virginia Sym-

phony, and the West German Radio Orchestra (Cologne), among others.

Jan Radzynski has received numerous awards and commissions for new works, among them the Creative Work and Research Grant from the Rothschild Foundation; residency at Mishkenot Sha'ananim, Jerusalem; commissions from the Cologne Radio Orchestra; individual artist grants from the Ohio Arts Council and from the Connecticut Commission on the Arts; and summer residency at the Foundation Artist's House, Boswil, Switzerland. In 1983, Radzynski's *Kaddish*, recorded by the Jerusalem Symphony, received a special commendation at the International Rostrum of Composers in Paris.

His compositions are recorded on the CRI, Channel Classics, Centaur Records, Music in Israel (IMI), and Naxos labels. His music is available from Israel Music Institute (represented in the United States by Theodore Presser) and from Keshet Music Publications.

This album is dedicated to the memory of musician and recording engineer Victor Fonarov.

Special thanks are due to the Jerusalem Music Center (which allowed the use of its facilities free of charge), and to the University of Wisconsin's Madison Art Institute, which provided funding through the Emily Mead Baldwin Award in the Creative Arts.

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Recording engineer: Victor Fonarov
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A light-hearted photo captures the bonhomie Brahms shared with clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld (front row, first on the right), seated proudly beside the composer in a chair dispatched for the photo, and cellist Robert Hausmann, standing (second row, second from the right) behind Brahms (front row, second from the right) as he mimes a bit of playing, having enlisted the composer to serve as his "cello."

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