

Please note that the article appears first complete in English, then afterwards the Spanish version...

and 1862. He had a long career as a teacher, conductor and composer, moving among musical posts in Germany: Mannheim (1862-1864), Koblenz (1865-1867), Sondershausen, (1867-1870) Berlin (1870-1872), Bonn, where he spent 1873-1878 working privately. At the height of his reputation he spent three seasons as conductor of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society (from 1880), but he did not get along with the players, who in his opinion had rather lax standards. In 1883 the eminent composer travelled to the United States for an extensive tour which took him, among other cities, to Cleveland where on 26 April an enormous concert of his works was presented in the Ontario Street Temple. In 1883 Bruch left the Liverpool Philharmonic and became director of the Breslau (now Wroclaw, Poland) Orchesterverein, where he stayed through to the end of the 1890 season. That autumn, Bruch took up an appointment as professor of composition at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik, working there until his retirement in 1911 and retaining his rank as a professor there until his death in 1920. Bruch died in his house in Berlin-Friedenau in 1920, suffering delicate health in his last years. It has to be said that the last nine years were not happy ones for Bruch. He was angry at conductors for poor performances of his works, and was eager to attack important figures in the Germanic musical world such as Reger, Strauss, Schillings, Pfitzner, Korngold etc (although he did accept that Pfitzner was a generous human being who did try to help with performances of his works). The reality was that he now lived in a world of music which had finally 'passed him by'. On top of this, he had to come to terms with living through the agony of the First World War as an old man and the consequences of Germany's defeat, the tragedy of losing his wife, and cope with his own bitterness, resignation and personal isolation.

However, for a long time, Bruch fully realized where he stood. Consider these confessions with the American musical chronicler Arthur Abell:

"Brahms was a far greater composer than I am for several reasons. First of all he was much more original. He always went his own way. He cared not at all about the public reaction or what the critics wrote. . . . I had a wife and children to support and educate. I was compelled to earn money with my compositions. Therefore I had to write works that were pleasing and easily understood. I never wrote down to the public; my artistic conscience would never permit me to do that. I always composed good music but it was music that sold readily. There was never anything to quarrel about in my music as there was in that of Brahms."

Having read that, we have to remember that Brahms was also himself a 'conservative romantic' composer. When Bruch died in late 1920, three months before his 83rd birthday, we were at a time when Stravinsky was already very famous, Schoenberg was immersed in dodecaphony, Bartók had his first two string quartets behind him, and microtonal music was well enough established that in some places it was being viewed as the

next big thing. Bruch obviously did not relate to any of this. As a composer he was always a conservative, in the style of Brahms. Bruch was a strong opponent of the 'modern madness' and 'modernists' like Strauss, Reger, Debussy (the latter defined by him as an 'unqualified scribbler') and others, and felt bitter that he was being boycotted because of his traditional style and his open opposition to these new tendencies.



Max Bruch

In fact, what he was composing in 1920 did not differ in its musical fundamentals from what he had composed when he first walked into the German musical scene 70 years before. A forcible reminder of this is his Octet for Strings in B-flat major, a three-movement piece completed in early March 1920 (seven months prior to his death), and it was one of several chamber works clustered at the end of his life. Funnily enough, chamber music was not high on Bruch's list for most of his career; and given the respectable size of his output and the popularity of chamber music in Germany during the late 19th century, it is surprising he didn't write more of it. The string quartets are certainly recommendable. *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music* quoted: "His published chamber works are one and all distinguished by beauty of tone and musical architecture." The general impression is that Bruch's chamber music are "light Brahms" by which one means to say not that they are objectively lightweight but rather that listeners who finds Brahms's string quartets forbidding— an understandable and not uncommon reaction—will find here something born of a similar spirit but entirely approachable. Also, at the end of 1919 Bruch wrote two String Quintets (in E flat major and A minor), and at the beginning of 1920 he also wrote the afore-mentioned String Octet modelled on Mendelssohn's (though the instrumentation of four violins, two violas, and two cellos differed slightly when Bruch substituted a double bass for the second cello).

There is also one extra curiosity to take into account with the subject of the clarinet writing of Max Bruch before the circumstances of *Opus 83* is brought to the fore – this is his Double Concerto in E minor for Clarinet, Viola and Orchestra, Op.88 – written at the end of 1911 and premiered in March 1912. It is, up to the end of the 20th century at least, the only concerto in existence for this combination, but early reviews classed it “*weak, unexciting ... unoriginal*”. This again should be judged in the context of the times; only two years later in 1913 the world witnessed the premiere of Stravinsky’s *Sacre du Printemps*! In historical perspective it can be seen that the Double Concerto well features the expressive, lyrical tendencies of each solo instrument. In this work, as in the ‘8 Pieces, Op.83’ which we will examine shortly, Bruch’s son Max Felix was to have an important role. The *Concerto for Clarinet and Viola* is a well-crafted work for an unusual combination of instruments. Bruch recognized that the dissimilar sounds of the instruments would work exceedingly well together, perhaps because they were in basically the same register. His son, Max Felix Bruch (to whom the score is dedicated) was a gifted clarinettist, his playing even compared to the great Mühlfeld, so he certainly understood the potential of the instrument. However, unfortunately this work is only very rarely performed nowadays.

In the eight pieces of Max Bruch – *Opus 83* – we are indeed talking of autumnal music – Bruch had again selected instruments of that mellow character of the alto register. This work, more than any other, is perhaps what helps keep Bruch on the concert programmes in the genre of *chamber music*. Interestingly, this music presented important considerations for Max Bruch in the process of composition, and also for the musicologists to investigate in subsequent years. The eight pieces vary in length, but taken together they are twice as long as the Double Concerto, and in many ways more daring.

The official date of the compositions is generally given as 1910 – and indeed, Simrock published the work this very year shortly after its completion, also producing parts for violin and cello. However, the seeds of the creations actually began some two years previously when Bruch had pencilled in much of the part-writing. Today it is generally heard in one of two possibilities – *Clarinet-Cello-Piano*, or *Clarinet-Viola-Piano*. However, Simrock imagined that the Violin-Cello-Piano possibility would appeal to a wider audience (and thus prove the most economically interesting!). But its path was not easy, and few knew the effort that Bruch went to arrive at the definitive versions!

Bruch was certainly aware of the predecessors he had at his disposal to make an initial judgement as to the effectiveness of a new work for these instruments: especially the ‘Kagelstatt’ trio of Mozart, the ‘Fairy Tales’ of Schumann, and the trio Op.114 of Brahms. The result was the new set of character pieces in the same tradition of Mozart and Brahms, and surely

above all are cousins to the *Fairy Tales* of 1854. They bear no programmatic titles, and the eight pieces do not form a cycle in any sense. It is thus feasible to perform selections from them in any satisfying order, especially taking into account that this precisely tallies with the composer's wish that he did *not* intend the work to be performed in its entirety at any one time. Apart from the obvious remark that each piece is a self-contained unit, this was probably on account of the overwhelmingly minor keys that are set beautifully almost everywhere, and some forty minutes of autumnal expression without respite might prove 'lugubrious' to those not accustomed to highly intense romantic music. Bruch himself gave no indications of his preferred order, or even of *how many* should be performed at one hearing, and only referring as to his favourite numbers individually (for example No.3 in C# Minor, and No. 5 in F Minor).

Back in 1908 Bruch had different sorts of problems with the pieces which one would never guess at unless told about; in which to use harp and in which to use the piano, and how to programme the two blocks! His letter to Arnold Kroegel states "There are now 5 [clarinet] viola and piano, and 3 for the same instruments with harp, but they are not yet printed". He then said that his son Max Felix, (as previously indicated, a very good clarinettist, but at that moment a theory teacher at Von Barmuth's Conservatoire in Hamburg) was going to play the pieces on 20th January (1909) in Bonn with Grütters, J. Scharz and a harpist from Cologne. There is some clear confusion here. The clarinet was not listed, and does the harp join the clarinet-violin-piano trio or does it substitute for the piano? The logical thing would be that it is employed *instead of* the piano. The end part of his letter is rather clearer. He hoped that the C# minor trio (piece No.3) would be well received and believed it was one of the most important - with its special dialogue between clarinet and violin/cello, and that consequently this piece would be imperative to include; also that if the harp was finally present (at Bonn) then the 'Nachtgesang' (piece No.6) and the 'Rumänische Melodie' (piece No.5) must also be played. A quick assessment of the piano arpeggio-type accompaniment to Nos. 3, 5 and 6 would surely confirm the possibility that the harp, and not piano, was originally intended to join the other instruments in these pieces. Unfortunately no news has been discovered about the Bonn performance, but his son did give further successful performances in Cologne and Hamburg in later in 1909. Prior to the Simrock publication in 1910 there has been no correspondence unearthed with the publisher as to what actually happened with the harp part; one can only assume that Bruch finally had to discard its use (probably upon pressure from Simrock) on account of its potentially very limited sales in such a published form. In recent times efforts have been made to re-install the harp - for example in a 1998 Arizona festival (USA) there were transcriptions made for harp at the festival. For the same reasons of no having harp part at Simrock (financial!) also came the additions of having the violin part and the cello part, well possible in place of the clarinet and the viola respectively. In the

case of the cello part, Bruch revised the writing – this is no mere exercise writing out for cello an octave lower or nothing of this sort, but in many cases the cello possesses a different line altogether (though generally somewhat simpler than viola). In the preparation to their new historical recording, the B3 Classic trio has re-analyzed these two parts, and in some places the cellist now replays the original intentions of the violist, making this a unique recording. The clarinet and cello have perfectly matched parts in terms of importance, whilst the piano can be either of melodic importance or of an accompanying nature.



This work is very important in the output of Bruch for two principal reasons:-

- a) it represented a successful return to chamber music, many years after his previous second string quartet, and was to be first of several interesting chamber works
- b) with this very work he entered into the last phase of his life. From April 1911 he retired from his official duties at aged 73.

The first six pieces are either in binary or ternary form, whereas the last two are in sonata form. They display an inventive freshness and expressiveness in chromaticism (for example, using a far number of diminished sevenths, and key-related thirds). Above all, the moods are highly contrasted, even within individual pieces.

Bearing in mind all said relating to the individuality of the pieces and their programming possibility in whatever convincing and satisfying order, the B3 Classic Trio generally present the order publically as: Pieces 8 – 6 – 2 – 7 – 1 – 5 – 3 – 4 (as the order given in the piece descriptions shortly below). In this way one can easily perceive two different sets of four pieces, and in each group it can be appreciated the gradual rise of tempo and tension in a most satisfactory way. Frequently the trio plays a half programme; that being 8 – 6 – 2 – 7 or 1 – 5 – 3 – 4.

We now proceed with the briefest remarks of each piece (in the order indicated above):

1) - Eb minor. (Op.83 No.8). This piece is especially romantic, in which the melody is totally given to the autumn and sentimental mood. It contains the most daring harmonies from the 'Bruch-ian language' which are indeed in some moments almost post-Brahms, and where one feels an 'out of this world' feeling, giving the impression here that Bruch was exploring his own stylistic limits.

2) - G minor (Op.83 No.6). "Nachtgesang". A piece with an individual title - nocturne - which is a worthy example of atmospheric contrast, and where the clarinet and cello need careful control of phrasing, and a fine understanding of the type of sound production.

3) - B minor. (Op.83 No.2). This piece is cast in a fast 3/4 time, but without the character of a waltz or a scherzo. It is a somewhat stormy piece, perhaps reminiscent of Brahms. However finally the piece comes to rest in the major key.

4) - B major. (Op.83 No.7). An energetic scherzo, that remains us of Mendelssohn. This piece, the most festive composition of all, contains two secondary episodes of a more relaxed and contrasted nature.

5) - A Minor. (Op.83 No.1). Begins with the rhythm of a funeral march which, little by little, transforms itself into a dream-like melody. This piece in binary form has the aspect of a meditative prelude.

6) - F minor (Op.83 No.5). "Rümanische Melodie". In this piece, containing its own title, the idea was suggested by the delightful young princess 'Princess zu Wied', and finally the entire dedication of the eight compositions went to her. The use of Rumanian or gipsy feeling is illustrative of Bruch's interest in folk resources.

7) - C # minor. (Op.83 No.3). Seemingly the most important piece for Bruch according to his comments, combining intense and rhapsodic flourishes from the cello, then with a sublime slow clarinet melody. Each has his own turn 'two verses'; however in the last clarinet section the cello dialogue is 'clamed' to produce a heavenly ending.

8) - D Minor (ending D major). (Op.83 No.4). An intense movement that maintains driving propulsion, even in the more lyrical episodes. Towards the close the music switches to the home major key to produce a glorious finish.

In summing up, we find ourselves before one of the most valuable and singular chamber music works of late romanticism, and the 'B3 Classic Trio' hopes that this new recording might give an impulse to Bruch having a greater presence in the concert hall.

B3 CLASSIC TRIO

BRUCH – SU VIDA, MÚSICA, Y LAS OBRAS PARA CLARINETE, VIOLONCELLO Y PIANO

Max Christian Fiedrich Bruch nació en Colonia, provincia del Rin. Recibió sus primeras clases de música de la mano de su madre, soprano y profesora de la música. Su padre era abogado. Max inició sus estudios pianísticos y comenzó a componer tempranamente, exhibiendo un talento musical extraordinario que pronto fue reconocido por Ignaz Moscheles. En 1852, apenas con 14 años, escribió una sinfonía y un cuarteto de cuerdas; esa obra le proporcionó una beca, la cual le permitió estudiar con Ferdinand Breunung, Ferdinand Hiller, y Carl Reinecke. En 1858, se establece como profesor en Colonia, produciendo entonces su primera ópera. Visitó varios importantes centros culturales alemanes entre 1861 y 1862. Tuvo una larga carrera como profesor, director y compositor, ocupando diversos cargos musicales en Alemania: Mannheim (1862-1864), Koblenz (1865-1867), Sondershausen, (1867-1870) Berlín (1870-1872), y Bonn, en donde él pasó los años 1873 -1878 trabajando de manera privada. En la cima de su reputación pasó tres temporadas como director del la Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society desde 1880. En 1883 el eminente compositor realizó una larga estancia en los Estados Unidos. En 1883 Bruch dejó la Liverpool Philharmonic para ocupar el puesto de director del Breslau Orchesterverein (ahora Wroclaw, Polonia), donde permanecería hasta el final de la temporada 1890. Ese otoño, Bruch tomó un cargo como profesor de composición en la Berlín Hochschule für Musik, trabajando allí hasta su retiro en 1911.

En la época en la que murió Bruch, a finales de 1920, tres meses antes de sus 83 cumpleaños, Stravinsky se hallaba en la cima de sus éxitos, Schoenberg estaba inmerso en su música dodecafónica, Bartok había compuesto sus primeros dos cuartetos de cuerdas y la música micro-tonal había dado sus primeros pasos firmes. Bruch no se relacionó obviamente con ninguna de estas estéticas. Como compositor siempre se mantuvo ligado a la tradición, en el estilo de Brahms. Bruch fue un detractor de la 'locura moderna' y de los 'modernistas' como Strauss, Reger, Debussy (este último definido por él algo así como un 'incompetente anotador de notas') y otros, y sintió gran amargura al comprobar cómo la música se iba alejando de esa tradición que él veneraba, en aras de las nuevas tendencias.



Max Bruch

Una de las obras más particulares de su creación musical es su 'Doble Concierto en Mi menor para Clarinete, Viola y Orquesta, Op.88', escrito a finales de 1911 y estrenado en marzo de 1912. Es el único concierto existente -al menos hasta el final del siglo XX-, para esta combinación; sin embargo, las primeras críticas lo clasificaron como "débil,... sin originalidad, sin impacto". Este juicio debería valorarse en el contexto de la época; solamente dos años más tarde en 1913 el mundo atestiguó el estreno de 'Sacre du Printemps' de Stravinsky. Desde la perspectiva histórica observamos que el Doble Concierto tiene un notable nivel musical y ofrece interesantes posibilidades expresivas a los instrumentos solistas. El Doble 'Doble Concierto en Mi menor para Clarinete, Viola y Orquesta, Op.88' es una obra bien escrita, y Bruch percibió acertadamente que los sonidos diferenciados de los instrumentos podrían funcionar estupendamente juntos. En esta obra, así como en las 'Ocho Piezas, Op.83' su hijo, Max Felix (a quién dedicó la partitura) iba a tener un papel clave. Max Felix era un clarinetista dotado - su manera de tocar incluso fue comparada con la de Mühlfeld- de modo que él conocía de primera mano ciertamente las posibilidades del clarinete. Sin embargo, desafortunadamente, esta obra se interpreta muy raramente hoy en día.

En las 'Ocho Piezas Op. 83', Max Bruch seleccionó de nuevo los mismos instrumentos -clarinete y viola-, caracterizados por su suave carácter y tesitura media. Las ocho piezas, de duración variada, suponen el doble de minutaje que el Doble Concierto, siendo más audaces en algunos aspectos. Se considera generalmente 1910 como la fecha oficial de composición de estas piezas - y de hecho, Simrock publicó la obra ese mismo al poco de ser completadas, editándose también partes para el violín -en lugar de clarinete- y el violoncello-sustituyendo a la viola-. Sin embargo, el germen de la composición comenzó realmente unos dos años antes, teniendo Bruch ya entonces un borrador con gran parte de la partitura. Hoy en día las 'Ocho Piezas Op.83' se escuchan generalmente en una de estas dos posibilidades: Clarinete-Violoncello-Piano, o Clarinete-Viola-Piano.

Bruch, como es natural, conocía las obras anteriores consagradas a dichas combinaciones instrumentales y era por tanto sabedor de las ricas posibilidades sonoras de éstas. Nos referimos –como no– en especial al trío ‘Kegelstadt’, de Mozart, los ‘Cuentos de Hadas’ Op.113 de Schumann, y al trío Op.114 de Brahms. Como resultado, Bruch nos ofrece este grupo –que no ciclo– de ocho piezas. En teoría es factible realizar selecciones de ellas en cualquier orden, de acuerdo con el deseo explícito del compositor, que no quiso que, necesariamente, la obra se interpretara en su totalidad en cualquier momento. Cada pieza, pues, es una unidad autónoma, no habiendo dado Bruch ninguna indicación acerca de su orden de preferido, o aún de cuántos se deben interpretarse juntos etc. Solamente se refirió en ocasiones a cuales eran sus piezas favoritas (por ejemplo la No. 3 en Do # menor, o la No. 5 en Fa menor).

Volviendo un poco atrás hasta 1908, Bruch estaba preocupado con las posibilidades de instrumentación de las nuevas piezas – tenía en mente utilizar el piano en al menos la mitad de las piezas, pero también en algunas otras contemplaba emplear el arpa. En su confusa carta a Arnold Kroegel manifiesta: “ahora existen cinco {clarinete} con la viola y piano, y tres para los mismos instrumentos con el arpa, pero que todavía no se han publicado”. Nos surgen, claro, las siguientes preguntas: ¿porqué el clarinete no es mencionado siquiera?, y ¿acaso el arpa se conjuntaba con el ensemble de clarinete-violita-piano o era sustituida por el piano?. Aunque Bruch aclara algo más esta cuestión al indicar que ... su hijo Max Felix iba a interpretar las piezas el 20 de enero (1909) en Bonn con Grütters, J. Scharz y un arpista de Colonia. Bruch esperaba que la Pieza en Do # menor (No.3) sería bien acogida por el público con toda seguridad, y creía que ésta era unas de las más importantes de todas – por el conseguido diálogo entre el clarinete y la viola/violoncello -. La inclusión de esta pieza, por tanto, era absolutamente imprescindible. Por otro lado, si el arpa hubiese estado finalmente presente en la actuación (de Bonn), entonces la Pieza ‘Nachtgesang’ (pieza nº 6) y la llamada ‘Rumänische Melodie’ (pieza nº 5) deberían también haber sido interpretadas. Una valoración a priori del tipo de acompañamiento en arpeggios en la parte del piano en los nos. 3, 5 y 6 confirmaría seguramente la hipótesis de que fue el arpa y no el piano, el instrumento en que Bruch pensó originalmente como compañero de los otros instrumentos en estas piezas. Desafortunadamente no se ha descubierto ninguna noticia sobre la actuación de Bonn, pero su hijo dio otras interpretaciones con éxito en Colonia y Hamburgo más tarde en el año 1909. Antes de la publicación de Simrock en 1910 no se ha podido encontrar correspondencia entre Bruch y el editor, que hiciese referencia a qué sucedió realmente con las partes de arpa; podemos asumir que seguramente Bruch tuvo que descartar su uso,

debido probablemente a que el editor Simrock le aconsejase sobre la poca viabilidad comercial de esa combinación. Recientemente ha habido iniciativas interpretativas reestableciendo el uso del arpa en las piezas - por ejemplo, en 1998 durante un festival de música en Arizona (E.E.U.U.)-. En el caso de la parte del violoncello, Bruch revisó la escritura en profundidad, no limitándose a una mera transcripción de octava de la parte de viola, y dotando a la parte del violoncello en muchos casos de una propia línea musical.



Esta obra ocupa un lugar muy relevante en el opus de Bruch por dos razones principales:

a) representó una vuelta exitosa del compositor a la música de cámara muchos años después de su segundo cuarteto de cuerdas, siendo la primera de una nueva serie de interesantes obras dedicadas a este género.

b) con esta misma obra podemos considerar que Bruch entra en la etapa final de su vida. A partir del abril de 1911 se retiró de sus deberes oficiales ya con 73 años. .

Detallamos a continuación unas breves observaciones sobre cada pieza (en el orden que aparecen en el CD de B3 Classic titulado 'Autumn'):

1) - Mi b menor. (Op.83 No.8). Una pieza especialmente romántica en la que la melodía se entrega absolutamente al ambiente otoñal y sentimental; contiene quizás algunas de las armonías más audaces del lenguaje de Bruch, en algunos momentos incluso más allá del mundo armónico de Brahms, consiguiendo atmósferas muy sugerentes y casi intemporales, dando la impresión de estar aquí el compositor explorando sus propios límites estilísticos.

2) - Sol menor (Nachtgesang). (Op.83 No.6). Se trata de una de las dos piezas con un título individual -nocturno- es un magnífico ejemplo de contraste de atmósferas sonoras, donde el clarinete y el violoncello necesitan de un cuidadoso control del fraseo y la emisión sonora.

3) - Si menor. (Op.83 No.2). Esta pieza escrita en un 3/4 debe tener un tempo algo rápido, pero sin carácter de vals o scherzo. Es una música algo tempestuosa, evocadora de colores brahmsianos. Finalmente la pieza viene a reclinarsse en la tonalidad mayor.

4) - Si Mayor. (Op.83 No.7). Un scherzo enérgico, que nos recuerda a Mendelssohn. Esta pieza, la más festiva de toda la obra, contiene dos episodios secundarios de naturaleza contrastante y relajada.

5) - La menor. (Op.83 No.1). Da comienzo con un ritmo de marcha fúnebre que poco a poco se transforma en una melodía ensoñadora. Esta pieza, en forma binaria, toma el aspecto de un preludio meditativo en el que siempre reina un ambiente de tranquilidad.

6) - Fa menor. (Op.83 No.5). "Rümanische Melodie". En esta otra pieza con título propio, la idea fue sugerida por la joven 'Princesa zu Wied', siendo finalmente la dedicataria de la serie de ocho composiciones. El uso de giros musicales rumanos o zingaros es ilustrativo del interés demostrado por Bruch también hacia los recursos musicales populares.

7) - Do # menor. (Op.83 No.3). Aparentemente es la pieza más importante para Bruch, a tenor de sus comentarios. Combina intensidad, florituras rapsódicas para el violoncello y después, una melodía lenta y sublime del clarinete. Cada instrumento tiene su propia intervención, mas en la última parte del clarinete el violoncello dialoga 'pacíficamente' en conclusión excelsa.

8) - Re menor (conclusión en Re Mayor). (Op.83 No.4). Un movimiento intenso que mantiene su vuelo y propulsión incluso en los episodios más líricos. Hacia el cierre de la pieza, el cambio a la tonalidad mayor transfiere un carácter glorioso a este epilogo.

Nos hallamos en definitiva, ante una de las creaciones camerísticas más valiosas y singulares del tardo-romanticismo a la que B3 Classic Trio espera, con esta nueva grabación, dar un impulso a su mayor presencia en las salas de conciertos.