

Romantic Rivals and a Brotherhood at the Keyboard

Thursday, February 19, 2026 · 20:00 · Philharmonie Berlin
Michael Sanderling, conductor · Lucas & Arthur Jussen, piano duo

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	LISZT 1811–1886 <i>Two Episodes from Lenau's Faust: No. 2, "Der Tanz in der Dorfschenke" (First Mephisto Waltz)</i>	12'
2	MOZART 1756–1791 <i>Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra in E-flat major, K. 365</i>	25'
3	BRAHMS 1833–1897 <i>Piano Quartet No. 1 in G minor, Op. 25 (orchestrated by Arnold Schoenberg)</i>	42'
TOTAL MUSIC		79'

Franz Liszt

12 minutes

1811–1886

Two Episodes from Lenau's Faust: No. 2, "Der Tanz in der Dorfschenke" (First Mephisto Waltz)

THE COMPOSER

Franz Liszt was the greatest piano virtuoso of his age, perhaps of any age. Born in Hungary in 1811, he was a child prodigy who studied with Beethoven's pupil Carl Czerny and the court composer Antonio Salieri in Vienna. By his twenties, he had invented the modern piano recital and toured Europe amid a public hysteria that the poet Heinrich Heine dubbed "Lisztomania."

Yet Liszt was far more than a showman. In 1848, he abandoned his touring career to become musical director at the Weimar court, where he championed the revolutionary music of Wagner and Berlioz, premiered *Lohengrin*, and invented the symphonic poem, the extended orchestral work that tells a story. His circle included the pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow, who married Liszt's daughter Cosima. Later in life, he took minor orders in the Catholic Church and composed visionary late works that anticipate the harmonic language of the twentieth century.

Liszt and Johannes Brahms stood in opposing camps in the "War of the Romantics": Liszt led the progressive "New German School" alongside Wagner, while Brahms was claimed by the defenders of classical forms and absolute music.

ABOUT THE WORK

The First Mephisto Waltz originated as part of *Two Episodes from Lenau's Faust*, written around 1860. The literary source is not Goethe's *Faust* but the darker, more despairing verse drama by the Austrian poet Nikolaus Lenau, published in 1836.

Liszt's program note, drawn directly from Lenau, describes the scene: A wedding feast is in progress at a village inn. Mephistopheles and Faust happen by, and the devil persuades Faust to enter. Mephistopheles snatches a violin from a lethargic fiddler and draws from it "indescribably seductive and intoxicating strains." The villagers are whipped into an orgiastic frenzy. Faust seizes a beautiful peasant girl; they waltz out of the room, out of the inn, away into the forest. The violin fades into the distance. A nightingale sings.

What to listen for tonight:

- **The devil's fiddle:** The work opens with stacked fifths that suggest a fiddle being tuned: Mephistopheles preparing his instrument. Then the sinister dance begins, diabolically seductive rather than overtly threatening.
- **The waltz:** Listen for the obsessive waltz rhythm that drives the villagers (and the music) into ever-greater abandon. The tempo and intensity build relentlessly.
- **The love scene:** Yearning cello cantilenas represent Faust falling under the spell of the village beauty. The music becomes suddenly tender and seductive.
- **The nightingale:** As the couple slip away into the forest, flutes take up the nightingale's song. The stars are still shining; innocence persists despite the evening's devilry.
- **The return:** The dance music gradually resumes, building to a final virtuosic *Presto*.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

1756–1791

Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra in E-flat major, K. 365

THE COMPOSER

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart needs little introduction. Born in Salzburg in 1756, he was a prodigy whose talents were cultivated and exhibited across Europe by his father Leopold. By the time he composed this concerto in 1779, the twenty-three-year-old Mozart was restless in provincial Salzburg, dreaming of Vienna and larger stages. Within two years he would make the move that defined his mature career.

Less well known is his sister Maria Anna, called “Nannerl,” five years his senior. She was an equally brilliant pianist as a child, and the siblings toured together as wonders of nature until Nannerl’s touring career ended when she was about seventeen. Following the customs of the time, she stayed at home while Wolfgang continued traveling with their father. The brother and sister remained close, and this concerto was written for the two of them to play.

ABOUT THE WORK

Mozart composed this concerto in 1779, shortly after returning from an extended trip to Paris, a journey that had begun with high hopes and ended in personal tragedy with the death of his mother. The work was most likely written for Wolfgang and Nannerl to perform together in Salzburg.

The concerto is scored for the two soloists with a modest orchestra of oboes, bassoons, horns, and strings. Years later Mozart played it in Vienna with his pupil Josepha Auernhammer, and in 1782 clarinets, trumpets and timpani were added to the score, though the authenticity of those additions is not beyond question.

Brothers Lucas and Arthur Jussen bring their own sibling bond to this work tonight, performing music originally written for another brother-sister duo. The Jussen brothers’ uncanny synchronicity and intuitive dialogue may well mirror what Mozart experienced with Nannerl.

What to listen for tonight:

- **First movement (Allegro):** After a jaunty orchestral introduction the two pianos enter together, immediately establishing their equality. Listen for how the material is divided almost evenly between them, creating a stereophonic dialogue.
- **Second movement (Andante):** A slow, refined movement in B-flat major. The orchestra stays largely in the background, letting the soloists’ intimate conversation bloom.

- **Third movement (Rondeau: Allegro):** One of the finest examples of wit and humor in all Mozart. The tuneful rondo theme returns repeatedly, with rhythmic drive offset by moments of lyrical grace. The dialogue between the pianos becomes especially intense as fragmentary themes pass rapidly from one to the other.

Johannes Brahms

42 minutes

1833–1897

Piano Quartet No. 1 in G minor, Op. 25 (orchestrated by Arnold Schoenberg)

THE COMPOSER

Johannes Brahms was born on May 7, 1833, in Hamburg, into a family of modest means. His father, a jobbing musician who played horn and double bass in taverns and dance halls, gave him his first lessons; later, the talented boy studied with the distinguished teacher Eduard Marxsen. Stories that the young Brahms played piano in Hamburg's waterfront bars to help support his family are persistent, but they rest on anecdote, and many modern scholars doubt them.

Brahms's life changed dramatically in 1853 when, at age twenty, he met the violinist Joseph Joachim, who introduced him to Robert and Clara Schumann. Robert, recognizing genius, hailed Brahms in print in his article "Neue Bahnen" (New Paths) as the composer the age had been waiting for. When Robert's mental collapse led to his institutionalization and death, Brahms became devoted to Clara, remaining close to her for the rest of his life, though the exact nature of their relationship remains one of music history's enduring mysteries.

In 1863, Brahms settled in Vienna, which would be his home until his death. A lifelong bachelor, gruff and sometimes tactless but capable of great tenderness, he became the acknowledged master of symphonic and chamber music in the second half of the nineteenth century. His four symphonies, two piano concertos, this violin concerto, and vast quantities of chamber music and songs represent the culmination of the Classical-Romantic tradition. He died of cancer on April 3, 1897, just weeks after attending a performance of his Fourth Symphony.

ABOUT THE WORK

Schoenberg explained his reasons for orchestrating the quartet in characteristically blunt terms: "1. I like the piece. 2. It is seldom played. 3. It is always very badly played, because the better the pianist, the louder he plays, and you hear nothing from the strings. I wanted once to hear everything, and this I achieved."

The result is a lavish orchestration calling for a full late-Romantic orchestra including xylophone, glockenspiel and a battery of other percussion, colors Brahms himself never used. The arrangement has often been nicknamed “Brahms’s Fifth Symphony.” Klemperer conducted the first performance in Los Angeles in May 1938.

George Balanchine later choreographed a ballet to this version, the *Brahms–Schoenberg Quartet*. The orchestration brings out colors and voices that can easily be lost in the quartet texture: Schoenberg finally heard everything he had always wanted to hear.

Tonight’s performance places Brahms alongside Liszt, two composers who represented opposing factions in the aesthetic wars of the nineteenth century.

What to listen for tonight:

- **First movement (Allegro):** The passionate opening theme announces Brahms’s Romantic intensity from the first bar. Listen for the interplay between agitated, driven passages and moments of lyrical tenderness; the tension between these moods defines the movement.
- **Second movement (Intermezzo: Allegro ma non troppo):** Not the expected slow movement but a haunting, veiled *Intermezzo* in C minor. The central trio section brings brief warmth before the mysterious opening music returns.
- **Third movement (Andante con moto):** The true slow movement, noble and singing. Schoenberg’s orchestration reveals inner voices and harmonic shadings that can be obscured in the original chamber texture.
- **Fourth movement (Rondo alla zingarese: Presto):** The famous “Gypsy Rondo” finale, reflecting Brahms’s lifelong fascination with Hungarian folk music. This rousing, high-spirited music builds to an exhilarating conclusion, the moment where Schoenberg’s orchestration truly sounds like a Brahms Fifth Symphony. Listen for the fiery gypsy-style fiddling and the wild abandon of the *coda*.

FURTHER READING

ACCESSIBLE **Franz Liszt: Musician, Celebrity, Superstar**

Oliver Hilmes, Yale University Press 2018

A brisk modern biography of Liszt as a celebrity performer and restless Romantic, including the Weimar years in which he wrote the Mephisto Waltz after Lenau's Faust.

ACCESSIBLE **Mozart: The Reign of Love**

Jan Swafford, Harper Perennial 2021

A readable modern life of Mozart that covers the Salzburg years around the Concerto for Two Pianos, a work he wrote to play with his sister Nannerl.

DEEPER **Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years, 1811-1847**

Alan Walker, Cornell University Press 1988

The first volume of Alan Walker's three-volume scholarly biography of Liszt, covering the touring virtuoso whose Romantic persona the Mephisto Waltz still carries.

SOURCES

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2. Michael Sanderling and the piano duo Lucas & Arthur Jussen, Digital Concert Hall. <https://www.digitalconcerthall.com/en/concert/56395>
3. Programme Note: Franz Liszt, 2 Episodes from Lenau's Faust: No. 2 Der Tanz in der Dorfschenke (1st Mephisto Waltz), Berliner Philharmoniker. <https://www.berliner-philharmoniker.de/en/programme-notes/franz-liszt-2-episodes-from-lenaus-faust-no-2-der-tanz-in-der-dorfschenke-1st-mephisto-waltz>
4. Mephisto Waltzes, Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mephisto_Waltzes
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6. Piano Concerto No. 10 (Mozart), Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piano_Concerto_No._10_\(Mozart\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piano_Concerto_No._10_(Mozart))
7. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wolfgang_Amadeus_Mozart
8. Maria Anna Mozart, Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Anna_Mozart
9. Programme Note: Johannes Brahms, Piano Quartet No. 1 in G minor op. 25 (orchestrated by Arnold Schoenberg), Berliner Philharmoniker. <https://www.berliner-philharmoniker.de/en/programme-notes/johannes-brahms-piano-quartet-no-1-in-g-minor-op-25-orchestrated-by-arnold-schoenberg>
10. Piano Quartet No. 1 (Brahms), Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piano_Quartet_No._1_\(Brahms\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piano_Quartet_No._1_(Brahms))
11. Johannes Brahms, Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Brahms
12. Franz Liszt: Musician, Celebrity, Superstar, Open Library. <https://openlibrary.org/isbn/9780300228755>
13. Mozart: The Reign of Love, Open Library. <https://openlibrary.org/isbn/9780062433619>
14. Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years, 1811-1847, Open Library. <https://openlibrary.org/isbn/9780801494215>



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<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/bp-2026-02-19-sanderling>

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