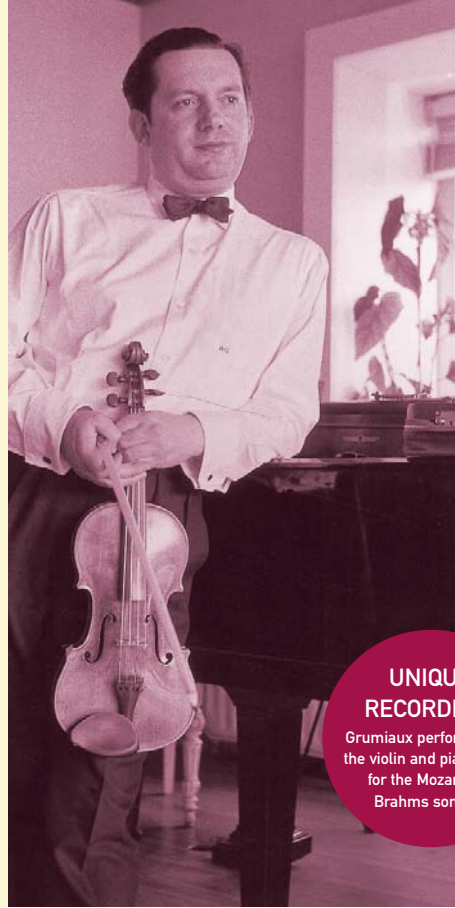


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PHILIPS
ELOQUENCE

MOZART

Violin Sonata in E flat, KV 481

BRAHMS

Violin Sonata No. 2 in A major

GRIEG

Violin Sonata No. 3 in C minor

**UNIQUE
RECORDING!**

Grumiaux performs both
the violin and piano parts
for the Mozart and
Brahms sonatas

**Arthur Grumiaux
István Hajdu**

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)

Sonata in E flat major for Piano and Violin, KV 481

1	I	Allegro molto ed appassionato – Presto	5'11
2	II	Allegretto espressivo alla Romanza – Allegro molto – Tempo I	6'26
3	III	Allegro animato – Cantabile – Prestissimo	6'45

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Sonata No. 2 in A major for Violin and Piano, Op. 100

4	I	Allegro amabile	8'05
5	II	Andante tranquillo – Vivace – Andante – Vivace di più – Andante vivace	6'01
6	III	Allegretto grazioso. Quasi andante	5'01

Arthur Grumiaux, violin & piano (overdubbed)

EDVARD GRIEG (1843-1907)

Sonata No. 3 in C minor for Violin and Piano, Op. 45

7	I	Molto allegro	9'29
8	II	Adagio	5'46
9	III	Allegretto	7'35

Arthur Grumiaux, violin
István Hajdu, piano

Total timing: 60'58

Arthur Grumiaux (1921-1986) was an outstanding interpreter of the great violin concertos by Beethoven, Brahms, Tchaikovsky and others. Nevertheless, it is as a chamber musician that he is most fondly remembered today and his extended partnership with pianist Clara Haskil is considered to be one of the most refined and profound of the past century. Grumiaux's unusually intense interest in and sympathy for chamber music might not have come about were it not for World War II. At the war's start, he was on the brink of a fine career as a soloist. However, as a Belgian, he was repulsed by the prospect of being compelled to perform for the occupying German forces, so he stepped out of the public eye during wartime and devoted himself to private performances of chamber music with friends.

At the age of eleven, Grumiaux already had distinguished himself as a well-rounded musician, winning first prizes in both violin and piano from the Charleroi Conservatory. Although the violin remained his primary instrument, Grumiaux's pianism was scarcely less accomplished and he maintained it throughout his career. His multifarious talents, combined with the possibilities

offered by modern recording technology – specifically, overdubbing – allowed him to play both the violin and the piano parts in the Mozart and Brahms sonatas presented here. Some might call this a mere stunt, but the eloquence and musical wholeness of the results speak for themselves. They also attest to Grumiaux's almost obsessive need to make music with artists whom he perceived as kindred spirits; he was not a violinist who could be happy with just any partner. Indeed, when Clara Haskil died in 1960 after a fall in a Brussels train station, Grumiaux was both personally and artistically devastated. Curiously, Haskil also was a talented violinist, and it is said that, on occasion, she and Grumiaux would trade instruments! (Grumiaux was famously careful with his Stradivarius violin, and if he willingly allowed Haskil to play it, then that speaks volumes of the high regard in which he held her!)

The Mozart and Brahms sonatas are appropriate repertoire for Grumiaux's one-man recordings, as both sonatas require the pianist to be a full participant in the music-making, and more than simply an accompanist. Mozart's E-flat sonata was completed at the end of 1785, at almost

exactly the same time as his Piano Concerto No. 22, KV 482, which is in the same key. It is during this period that Mozart's popularity as a Viennese composer-pianist had reached its pinnacle. He scarcely was able to compose new piano concertos for subscription audiences quickly enough, and so this relatively little – in length if not in stature – violin sonata must have seemed like a bagatelle to him. Little is known about why Mozart composed it, but the primary motivation behind its composition might have been a financial one: shortly before Mozart is likely to have begun writing this sonata, he wrote to his friend, the publisher Franz Anton Hoffmeister, requesting temporary financial assistance. Hoffmeister published this sonata the following January, suggesting that the new sonata might have been Mozart's repayment, in whole or in part, for Hoffmeister's loan.

Including his juvenile works, Mozart composed three dozen violin sonatas. Brahms published just three – all of them dating from the last two decades of his life – although he also experimented with the medium when he was a young composer. His Op. 100 sonata was written during the summer of 1886,

when he was vacationing in Switzerland near Lake Thun. Brahms' music has on occasion been subjected to the jibe of being dour and unrelievedly serious – a reputation that the composer himself impishly did nothing to discourage, on occasion. The mood of the present sonata, however, is anything but grey and foreboding. Was the composer in love? Hermine Spies was a contralto for whom Brahms – always the bachelor – had found a warm place in his heart. He was 23 years her senior. During that summer, she was not far from Thun, and she visited Brahms. In his biography of the composer, Jan Swafford goes so far as to state that 'the Second Violin Sonata paints a picture of Brahms at his desk yearning for Hermine'.

The sonata's first movement shares material with Brahms' song *Wie Melodien zieht es mir* ('As if melodies were moving through my mind') and possibly with other Spies-inspired songs, namely *Komm bald* (which in turn bears some resemblance to the 'Prize Song' from Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*) and *Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer*. What happened to Hermine, one might ask. That autumn, Brahms shepherded her entry into Vienna's musical scene, and

accompanied her debut recital. By the end of the year, however, the composer seems to have become somewhat disillusioned with his young protégé on musical grounds (or was this only an excuse?), and Spies became another 'might have been' in Brahms' life. She died only six years later at the age of 36.

While Mozart and Brahms wrote copious amounts of chamber music, Grieg composed relatively little. His warhorse piano concerto notwithstanding, he was less comfortable with classical idioms – symphonies, quartets, sonatas, and the like – than he was with genres which allowed his Romantic and less disciplined imagination greater freedom. Like Brahms, however, he published three sonatas; the last is the most popular. After the premiere of the nationalistic second sonata, elder composer Neils Gade advised Grieg to make the next one less Norwegian. Grieg proudly responded that he would do the opposite. Twenty years went by, however, and the third sonata now seems to be the one most likely to appeal to audiences outside of Norway – the composer spoke of a 'wider horizon' in connection with this work.

It was inspired by a young Italian violinist who

had visited the composer in 1886. (He referred to her 'the little fiddle-fairy on my troll hill,' an allusion to 'Trolldhaugen' – the name given to Grieg's villa.) The sonata's dedication went to painter Franz von Lenbach, however. When the work was premiered in Leipzig, a critic complained of 'a lack of organic development, a laborious talent barely concealed by all manner of affectations, especially in harmony, a want of invention, faults of taste and absence of seriousness, under the cloak of Norwegian nationalism,' (as quoted in John Horton's biography of the composer). Time seems to have made the sonata's 'faults' and 'affectations' far less noticeable however – if they ever were present to begin with!

Raymond Tuttle

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Recordings: October 1959 (Mozart, Brahms); December 1961 (Grieg)

Cover photograph: Arthur Grumiaux (photo: Decca / Paul Huf)

Eloquence (Australia) series manager: Cyrus Meher-Homji

Art direction: Chilu Tong