

GRAMOPHONE

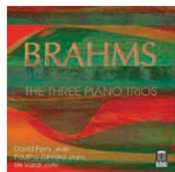
USA CANADA SOUNDS OF AMERICA

A special eight-page section focusing on recent recordings from the US and Canada

Brahms

The Three Piano Trios

David Perry *vn* Uri Vardi *vc* Paulina Zamora *pf*
Delos © ② DE3489 (83' • DDD)



Jenny Kallick's booklet-notes for this recording of the three Brahms trios for piano, violin and cello are as elegant and insightful as the performances themselves. The notes point out how much can be gained by knowing the contexts in which these pieces came to life – and, in the case of the Op 8 Trio, how Brahms improved upon what he first set down.

The two discs are divided to reflect the chronology of Brahms's final thoughts on the trios. The Second and Third take up the first disc; the revised Op 8 follows by itself. What results is a seamless expedition through the stages of the composer's distinctive weaving of ideas and instruments, especially as played with heightened sensitivity by pianist Paulina Zamora, violinist David Perry and cellist Uri Vardi.

To say that musicians let music speak for itself is always a dicey proposition; it could mean they are simply presenting the score without much (or any) interpretative motivation. Zamora, Perry and Vardi take Brahms at his word even as they lift phrases to subtle and urgent effect. There is no temptation to overdramatise the impassioned moments or wallow in Brahms's tender lyricism. Each of the trios unfolds as if these artists are engaging in a series of natural and compelling conversations.

Balances are superb, not always a given when it comes to the cello in the genre of the trio, and the musicians apply tonal beauty to everything they touch. In all, a wonderful release. **Donald Rosenberg**

R Sierra

Sinfonía No 3, 'La salsa'. Borikén.

El baile. Beyond the Silence of Sorrow^a

^aMartha Guth *sop* Puerto Rico Symphony

Orchestra / Maximiano Valdés

Naxos American Classics © 8 559817 (75' • DDD)

GRAMOPHONE *talks to...*

Blaise Déjardin

The Boston Cello Quartet player on the group's 'Latin Project' and life away from the orchestra



After your previous disc, 'Pictures', what made you embark on the 'Latin Project'?

Our fans were asking us for a second album, so we knew there was a demand. An audience favourite from 'Pictures' is our version of *La muerte del Ángel* by Piazzolla; we took another tune by Piazzolla, *Adiós Nonino*, as a point of departure to explore the Latin music.

How did you choose the repertoire?

We had already played many of the pieces so it made sense to find or arrange more to complete a programme. We were also thrilled to commission a new piece, *Bossa do Fim*, from Cambridge-based Venezuelan composer and cellist Paul Desenne.

What are the challenges of arranging existing works for cello quartet?

The cello is a very versatile instrument and I think the only danger is to write all the cello parts in the same medium register. To breathe well, music needs different registers and different textures, so I write for us mostly as if we were a regular string quartet.

What's fun about being in the quartet?

Simply playing together is a great joy for all of us. It allows us an unusual chamber-music life next to our roles as section players in the Boston Symphony Orchestra. We also get to live many experiences together: we've played with the pop band Train, were invited by Yo-Yo Ma to join him for a special cello octet concert at Tanglewood last summer, and played the National Anthem at Fenway Park, our iconic baseball stadium in Boston... the list gets longer every year!

What's next?

One concept we are toying with for the future is a jazz programme with vibraphone, bass and drums around the music of Thelonious Monk. Whatever our next album is, it should surprise you!



Commissioned by the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra in 2005, Roberto Sierra's big-boned, entertaining *Sinfonía No 3, La salsa*, infused with Spanish Caribbean colours and rhythms, moves forward in addictive Technicolor surges.

'Danzas' is the most purely hedonistic of the four movements, a wild, exuberant outpouring of joy quoting Puerto Rico's

iconic 19th-century danza composer Juan Morel Campos.

Two shorter orchestral works are even more potent. The 15-minute *Borikén*, the original name of Sierra's homeland, is a chaconne cocktail that shakes up Spanish and native musical vernaculars with a brilliant Puerto Rican twist. The shorter *El baile* ('The Dance') is as impressively powerful as its conceptual basis, a theme and variations based on B-A-C-H with urgent suggestions of African Caribbean music from 17th-century plantations thrown in.