

Violin sonata no.3

The third and last violin sonata is a very contrasting work compared to the other two violin sonatas. Where the first and the second sonatas are very calm the third sonata is a typical example of the *Sturm und Drang* period that was especially present in the youth works of Brahms. It became one of the most fashionable pieces in the violin-piano repertoire and can be heard rather often compared to his other violin sonatas.

This piece was written in Thun, Swiss, between 1886-88 and dedicated to the pianist Hans von Bulow, who was a student of Franz Liszt and premiered as a conductor, among other pieces, the opera *Tristan and Isolde* of Richard Wagner.

This sonata is the only one of the set which has 4 movements. In time, the piece does not exceed the other two making it more compact in structure.

The first movement is written in an *Alla-breve* and has a very dark and 'foggy' mood. The themes in this movement are being used and developed extensively, a talent that Brahms was famous for. The piece is written in a sonata form and has a major development section in which he modulates and evolves all the thematic material that was introduced in the introduction. The recapitulation is expanded in comparison to the exposition leading it to the coda, which has an extended organ-point on D in the piano.

The second movement reminds us of the mood of the first sonata's slow movement, though in this sonata both instruments start together. It is written in a rather simple form and the extraordinary melody that Brahms wrote can be seen as one of the finest of all his compositions.

The third movement, which is written as a Scherzo does not have the happy Scherzo mood that can be found elsewhere. It reminds in mood more of the first movement. It is extremely playful and virtuosic for the piano which should be rather light in the sixteenth notes. The piece is very quick in mood-changes and gives a great contrast to the second movement. The coda which is very light and playful concludes the Scherzo in a rather different way than it started.

The fourth movement can be seen as a very stormy movement. It definitely is the most extroverted movement of all the violin sonata movements and the 6/8 metre brings a drive to the music that is most contrasting to the second and the third movement. The movement is written in such a way that both instruments are constantly in conversation, especially during the middle section where the syncopated rhythms give the impression of a very different metre. This movement can be seen as the most difficult movement, technically, for the piano. From the point of view of chamber-performance, the piano-part should be taken very cautiously due to overpowering the violin.