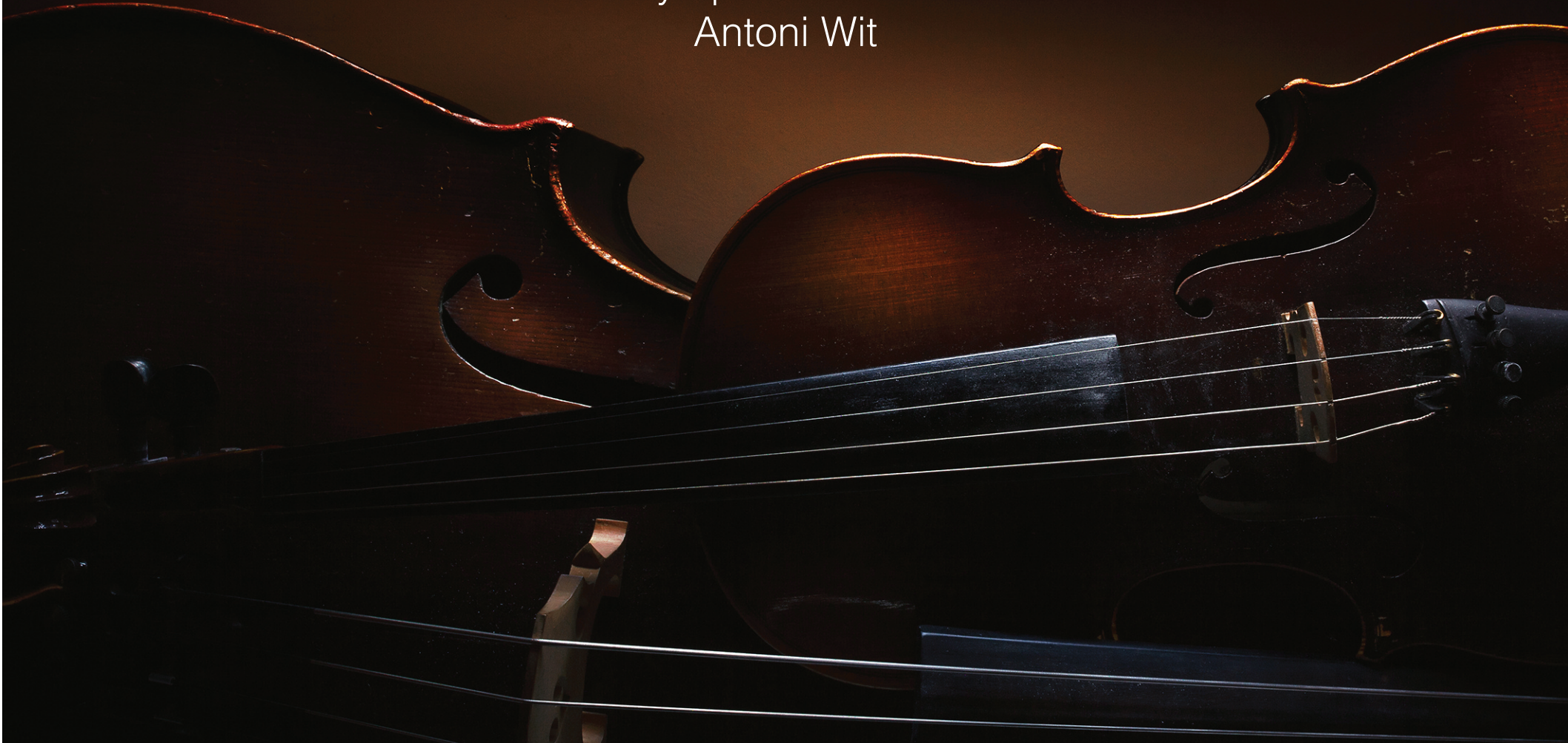




# BRAHMS

Violin Concerto, Op. 77  
Double Concerto, Op. 102

Tianwa Yang, Violin  
Gabriel Schwabe, Cello  
Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin  
Antoni Wit



## Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

### Violin Concerto, Op. 77 • Double Concerto, Op. 102

Johannes Brahms was born in Hamburg in 1833, the son of a double bass player and a woman 17 years his father's senior, who kept a small haberdashery shop. It seemed at first as if he might follow his father's relatively humble profession as an orchestral player, but his ability as a pianist and as a composer, the latter fostered by his generous teacher Marxsen, suggested higher ambitions. After a period of hack work, teaching and playing in summer resorts, he had his first significant success in a tour with the Hungarian violinist Reményi in 1853. Friendship with the violinist Joachim led to an unproductive visit to Liszt in Weimar and to a more fruitful meeting with Schumann, now established in Düsseldorf as director of music. It was Schumann who detected in the young musician a successor to Beethoven – a forbidding prognostication. Brahms was to continue his relationship with Clara Schumann after her husband's breakdown and subsequent death in 1856.

It was not until 1872 that Brahms finally settled in Vienna, having failed to realise his first ambition for recognition in his native Hamburg. In Vienna he became an established figure, known for his tactlessness and occasional rudeness, but proclaimed as the champion of pure music by his friends against the eccentricities of Liszt and Wagner, a role which his four great symphonies did much to reinforce. He died of cancer in April 1897 at the age of 64.

Following his usual custom, Brahms worked on the *Violin Concerto* during his summer holiday at Pörschach, where in 1877 he had started his *Second Symphony*. The first performance of the work was given in Leipzig on New Year's Day in 1879, with Joachim as the soloist. The concerto combines two complementary aspects of the composer: that of the artist concerned with the great and serious, as a contemporary critic put it, and that of the lyrical composer of songs. As always Brahms was critical of his own work, and the concerto, long promised, had been the subject of his usual doubts and hesitations. Originally four movements had been planned,

but in the end the two middle movements were replaced by the present *Adagio*, music that Brahms described as feeble but that pleased Joachim as much as it has always pleased audiences.

The first movement opens with an orchestral exposition in which the first subject is incompletely presented in the initial bars. Its full appearance is entrusted to the soloist, after the orchestra has offered a second subject and other themes that will later seem eminently well suited to the solo violin. The actual entry of the soloist and the approach to it must remind us of Beethoven's *Violin Concerto*, with its rather longer orchestral exposition that had so taxed the patience of Viennese audiences 70 years earlier. The cadenza Brahms left to Joachim, whose advice on this and other matters he was willing to heed. The slow movement is splendidly lyrical, based on a melody of great beauty, which is expanded and developed by the soloist and the orchestra, dying away before the vigorous opening of the Hungarian-style finale. This, in *rondo* form, is of great variety, intervening episodes providing a contrast with the energetic principal theme, leading to a conclusion of mounting excitement.

The association of Brahms with Schumann, and for so many years with his widow and champion, Clara Schumann, had an overwhelming effect on his career as a composer. It was Schumann who had publicly expressed his prophetic expectations of the younger composer and his wife whose approval was constantly sought. In 1887, staying for the summer by Lake Thun in Switzerland, Brahms wrote to Clara Schumann about the new concerto he was writing for violin and cello – an unusual combination. In his letter he expressed regret that he did not have a more intimate knowledge of the two solo instruments, as he had of the piano, but found the prospect of handling the two instruments amusing. Clara Schumann, in her reply, gave Brahms every encouragement and was present when the work was first rehearsed in Baden-Baden by Joseph Joachim and the cellist of the

Joachim Quartet, Robert Hausmann, accompanied by the composer. From the beginning Brahms had had Joachim and Hausmann in mind. In particular he needed to make some gesture to Joachim, whom he had known for some 34 years but with whom there had been a breach when Brahms wrote a letter of support to Joachim's wife Amalie, used by her in court to defeat Joachim's petition for a divorce. The letter was couched in such terms that no complete reconciliation could result, but at least some semblance of friendship was restored by the composition of the *Double Concerto* and the affection and admiration that lay behind it. Joachim made a number of suggestions for the revision of the solo parts, which suggested, at least, revisions made subsequently by the composer, and the reminiscence of a Viotti concerto, a favourite of Joachim, in a passage in the first movement was a clear sign of the composer's intentions.

The concerto starts with four bars for the orchestra, the opening of the principal theme of the first movement. There follows a passage in *modo d'un recitativo* for the cello, followed, after a brief intervention from the woodwind, by the violin and the two instruments together, leading to the first major orchestral tutti with the main and secondary themes. This material is treated in various ways by the soloists, with the full orchestral texture that is characteristic of Brahms. A rising fourth from the French horns, echoed by the woodwind, opens the D major *Andante*, allowing the theme to unwind with violin and cello together. A second theme is introduced by pairs of flutes, clarinets and bassoons, to be developed by the soloists. A brief cadenza-like passage leads to the return of both themes. The cello opens the Hungarian *rondo* finale, followed by the violin, and other material is introduced, notably a chordal secondary theme entrusted to the cello at first and a passage in dotted rhythm in thirds for the soloists. The final coda is derived from the principal theme of the movement.

Keith Anderson



## Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

### Violinkonzert op. 77 • Doppelkonzert op. 102

Johannes Brahms wurde am 7. Mai 1833 im Hamburger Gängeviertel als Sohn eines Kontrabassisten und einer siebzehn Jahre älteren Näherin geboren. Eigentlich hätte der Knabe in die Fußstapfen des Vaters treten sollen, weshalb er auch auf der Geige und dem Violoncello unterwiesen wurde, doch sein Interesse am Klavier überwog. Bald konnte er mit seinen Darbietungen in Sommerlokalen zum Familienunterhalt beitragen, indessen er bei Eduard Marxsen wertvollen Unterricht erhielt. 1853 unternahm der junge Mann eine Konzertreise mit dem ungarischen Geiger Eduard Reményi, in deren Verlauf er Franz Liszt in Weimar kennenlernte. Diese Begegnung blieb allerdings ohne positive Folgen. Dafür freundete sich Brahms mit dem Geiger Joseph Joachim an, durch dessen Vermittlung er das mittlerweile in Düsseldorf lebende Ehepaar Schumann kennenlernte. Dieser Kontakt war von großer Bedeutung. Schumann war von den Kompositionen, die ihm sein Gast vorspielte, so begeistert, dass er ihn als den langersehnten Nachfolger Beethovens feierte. Nach dem Nervenzusammenbruch, der Schumann im Februar 1854 ins Irrenhaus brachte, kam Brahms erneut nach Düsseldorf, um der Witwe mitsamt ihren kleinen Kindern beizustehen. Die Beziehung zu Clara Schumann, einer der vorzüglichsten Pianistinnen ihrer Zeit, währte bis zu deren Tod im Jahre 1896.

In Wien ließ sich Brahms erst 1872 nieder, nachdem es ihm nicht gelungen war, in seiner Heimatstadt Hamburg die gebührende Anerkennung zu finden. In der Donaumetropole wurde er zu einer bekannten Größe: Trotz seines oft taktlosen und bisweilen groben Benehmens wurde er als Komponist absoluter Musik gegen die exzentrischen Zeitgenossen Richard Wagner und Franz Liszt ins Feld geführt – und diese Rolle wurde durch seine vier großen Symphonien noch wichtiger. Am 3. April 1897 erlag der kaum 64-jährige Johannes Brahms einem Krebsleiden.

Wie es so seine Art war, widmete sich Brahms während seiner Sommerferien in Pörtschach, wo er 1877

auch seine zweite Symphonie begonnen hatte, der Arbeit an seinem Violinkonzert. Die Premiere fand am 1. Januar 1879 in Leipzig statt. Der Solist war Joseph Joachim. Das Konzert verbindet zwei Aspekte, die sich in dem Komponisten komplementär ergänzen: den nach den Worten eines Kritikers ins Großartige und Ernste strebenden Tonkünstler und den Verfasser lyrischer Lieder. Auch diesem Werk stand Brahms kritisch gegenüber, und das seit langem verheißene Konzert hatte unter den üblichen Zweifeln und Vorbehalten zu leiden: Ursprünglich waren vier Sätze geplant, dann aber tauschte Brahms die beiden Mittelsätze gegen ein *Adagio* aus, das er selbst für schwach hielt, von dem aber Joseph Joachim ebenso entzückt war wie das Publikum seit der ersten Aufführung.

Der Kopfsatz beginnt mit einer Orchestereinführung, in deren ersten Takten das Hauptthema nur unvollständig exponiert wird. Seine ganze Gestalt ist dem Solisten vorbehalten, der sich freilich erst zu Worte meldet, wenn das Orchester das Nebenthema sowie verschiedene andere Gedanken ausgeführt hat, die sich nachher für die Violine als äußerst brauchbar erweisen werden. Der Weg bis zu dem tatsächlichen Einsatz des Solisten erinnert zwangsläufig an Beethovens Violinkonzert, dessen noch längere Orchesterexposition die Geduld des Wiener Publikums siebzig Jahre zuvor auf eine harte Probe gestellt hatte. Die Ausführung und Komposition der Kadenz überließ Brahms seinem Freunde Joachim, dessen geigerische Ratschläge er nicht nur in diesem Punkte gern beherzigte. Der wunderbar lyrische Mittelsatz gründet sich auf eine außerordentlich schöne Melodie, die vom Solisten und vom Orchester erweitert und entwickelt wird, bevor sie vor dem kraftvollen Beginn des Finales verklingt. Dieses Rondo im ungarischen Stil ist überaus abwechslungsreich: Verschiedene Episoden kontrastieren mit dem energischen Hauptthema, das einem immer erregteren Schluss zusteuert.

Die Beziehung zu Robert Schumann und die langjährige Freundschaft mit dessen Witwe und

Sachwalterin Clara hatte auf Brahms' kompositorische Laufbahn einen übermächtigen Einfluss. Schumann hatte mit prophetischen Worten von den Hoffnungen geschrieben, die er in den jungen Mann setzte, der späterhin unablässig Claras Anerkennung suchte. Als er den Sommer des Jahres 1887 am Thuner See in der Schweiz verbrachte, schrieb er Clara Schumann von einem neuen Konzert für die ungewöhnliche Kombination von Violine und Violoncello. Er bedauerte in diesem Brief, die beiden Soloinstrumente – anders als das Klavier – nicht besser zu kennen, meinte aber, der Umgang mit diesen könne recht amüsant werden. Clara Schumann ermutigte Brahms in jeder Hinsicht und war auch zugegen, als er das Werk mit Joseph Joachim und Robert Hausmann, dem Cellisten des Joachim-Quartetts, in Baden-Baden ausprobierte. Von Anfang an hatte Brahms bei der Komposition die beiden Solisten im Sinn gehabt. Insbesondere schien ihm die Geste gegenüber Joachim erforderlich, den er mittlerweile seit beinahe 35 Jahren kannte, mit dem es aber zum Zerwürfnis gekommen war, weil Joachims Frau Amalie einen ihr dienlichen Brief des Freundes bei Gericht benutzt hatte, um die Scheidungsklage ihres Ehemannes abzuweisen. Brahms hatte sein Schreiben zugunsten Amalies in derartigen Begriffen formuliert, dass eine vollständige Versöhnung unmöglich war; zumindest aber wurde durch das Doppelkonzert und die liebevolle Bewunderung, die sich in der Komposition verbarg, ein gewisses freundschaftliches Verhältnis wieder hergestellt. Aus den Revisionen des Soloparts lässt sich vermuten, dass Joachim wieder einige Änderungen vorgeschlagen hatte. Und die Reminiszenz

an Joachims Lieblingskonzert von Giovanni Battista Viotti in einer Passage des ersten Satzes war ein deutliches Signal für die Intentionen des Komponisten.

Der erste Satz des Werkes beginnt mit vier Takten des Orchesters, das den Anfang des Hauptthemas spielt. Darauf folgt das Violoncello *in modo d'un recitativo*, und nach einem kurzen Einwurf der Holzbläser fällt auch die erste Violine ein, worauf die beiden Solisten gemeinsam das erste große Orchestertutti ansteuern, in dem nun beide Themen des Satzes erklingen. Das Material wird solistisch und orchestral in der für Brahms typischen Vielfalt behandelt. – Mit einer Quarte der Hörner, die in den Holzbläsern ihren Widerhall findet, beginnt das *Andante* in D-dur, dessen erstes Thema sich in den beiden Soloinstrumenten gemeinsam entwickeln darf. Das Nebenthema wird von den zwei Flöten, Klarinetten und Fagotten exponiert und von den Soli weitergesponnen. Eine kurze, kadenzartige Passage kehrt zur Reprise der beiden Themen zurück. Das Werk endet mit einem ungarisch getönten Rondo, dessen Hauptthema zunächst vom Violoncello gespielt und dann von der Violine aufgegriffen wird. Weitere Materialien treten hinzu, darunter ein akkordischer, vom Solocello exponierter Nebengedanke sowie eine punktierte Terzpassage beider Solisten. Die abschließende Coda ist aus dem Hauptthema des Satzes abgeleitet.

Keith Anderson

Deutsche Fassung: Cris Posslaci

## Tianwa Yang



Photo: Andrej Grlic

Winner of the prestigious ECHO KLASSIK Instrumentalist of the Year (Violin) 2015 Award for her Naxos recording of Ysaÿe's *6 Sonatas for Solo Violin, Op. 27* (8.572995), the Best Up-and-Coming Artist 2014 Award and the annual prize of the German Record Critics' Award Association 2014 for her Naxos recordings of Mendelssohn's *Violin Concertos* (8.572662) and her multiple volumes of Sarasate's complete works for violin, Tianwa Yang has been critically acclaimed by *American Record Guide*, and has performed worldwide with major orchestras including the Seattle Symphony, the Detroit, Baltimore, WDR-Cologne, MDR-Leipzig, HR Radio Frankfurt, Malmö, Singapore and New Zealand Symphony Orchestras, in addition to the Gürzenich-Orchester Köln and the Bayerisches Staatsorchester, the London, Helsinki and Hong Kong

Philharmonic Orchestras, and the Dresden and BBC Philharmonics. Yang has also given live concert broadcasts from the Schwetzingen Festival, the Berliner Philharmoniker, the Montpellier Festival, and Alte Oper Frankfurt. Yang's constantly expanding discography for Naxos includes Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale* (8.573537), Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole* with Manén's *Concierto español* (8.573067), the complete works for violin and piano by Wolfgang Rihm (8.572730), Piazzolla's *Las cuatro estaciones porteñas* (8.572271) and Vivaldi/Piazzolla *Acht Jahreszeiten* ('Eight Seasons') (8.551228), performed with her own ensemble. Her *Best of Tianwa Yang* album was highly successful. She performs on a Guarneri del Gesù violin (1730) on kind loan from the Rin Collection in Singapore. [www.tianwayang.com](http://www.tianwayang.com)

## Gabriel Schwabe



Photo: Giorgia Bertazzi

Gabriel Schwabe has established himself among the leading cellists of his generation. He is a laureate of numerous national and international competitions, including the Grand Prix Emanuel Feuermann and the Concours Rostropovich in Paris. In 2009 he won the prestigious Pierre Fournier Award in London. As a soloist, he has worked with orchestras such as the Philharmonia Orchestra, the NDR Radiophilharmonie, the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, the Malmö and Norrköping Symphony Orchestras and the Royal Northern Sinfonia with conductors including Marek Janowski, Eivind Gullberg Jensen, Dennis Russell Davies, Cornelius Meister, Marc Soustrot, Lars Vogt and Michael Sanderling. In 2010 Gabriel Schwabe gave his recital debut at Wigmore Hall in London. He is a regular guest at

festivals such as the Jerusalem Chamber Music Festival, the Kronberg Festival and the Amsterdam Biennale, and has performed with artists including Isabelle Faust, Christian Tetzlaff, Lars Vogt, Albrecht Mayer, Kirill Gerstein and Jonathan Gilad. Gabriel Schwabe was born to German-Spanish parents in 1988. He studied with Catalin Ilea in Berlin and with Frans Helmerson at the Kronberg Academy, and received further stimulus from János Starker, Gary Hoffmann and Gidon Kremer. He plays a rare Italian instrument made in Brescia (c. 1600). [www.gabrielschwabe.com](http://www.gabrielschwabe.com)

## Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin

Robin Ticciati, Music Director • Kent Nagano, Honorary Conductor



Photo: Frank Eidel

For more than 70 years the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin (DSO Berlin) has distinguished itself as one of Germany's leading orchestras. The ensemble is unique in its variety of work, and its particular emphasis on contemporary repertoire. Eminent music directors that shaped the first decades of the orchestra include Ferenc Fricsay, Lorin Maazel, Riccardo Chailly, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Kent Nagano, Ingo Metzmacher and Tugan Sokhiev. Robin Ticciati is the current music director, joining the orchestra in September 2017. The ensemble's reputation is enhanced by its long association with top-class guest conductors such as Herbert Blomstedt, Roger Norrington, Sakari Oramo, Leonard Slatkin and David Zinman, as well as its regular collaborations with Kent Nagano, now honorary conductor, and other former music directors. The orchestra has performed internationally, making many guest appearances. Its discography features many award-winning releases, including the 2011 GRAMMY® Award for Best Opera Recording. In 2019 the orchestra will release its third and fourth albums with Robin Ticciati on Linn Records. [www.dso-berlin.de](http://www.dso-berlin.de)

## Antoni Wit



Photo: CJ Multarzyński

Antoni Wit is one of the most highly regarded Polish conductors and a champion of Polish music. A top prizewinner at the Herbert von Karajan International Conducting Competition in 1971 and an assistant to Karajan at the Easter Festival in Salzburg, he subsequently worked with all of the leading orchestras in Poland (including the National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra) before taking up the position of general and artistic director of the Warsaw Philharmonic in 2001 for twelve years until the end of the 2012–13 season. He was music director of the Orquesta Sinfónica de Navarra in Spain between 2013 and 2018, and he is currently conductor laureate of the Kraków Philharmonic in Poland. In 2015 he was awarded the French Légion d'honneur. Antoni Wit has enjoyed an international career with major orchestras throughout Europe, America and the Far East. Past highlights have included the Berliner Philharmoniker, the Staatskapelle Dresden, the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, the Filarmonica della Scala, the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Rome, the Royal Philharmonic, the Philharmonia and the BBC Symphony Orchestras as well as the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, the China Philharmonic Orchestra and the Cleveland Orchestra among others. He has made over 200 records, including an acclaimed release for Naxos of the piano concertos of Prokofiev, awarded the Diapason d'Or and Grand Prix du Disque de la Nouvelle Académie du Disque. In January 2002 his recording of the *Turangalila Symphony* by Olivier Messiaen (8.554478-79) was awarded the Cannes Classical Award at MIDEM Classic 2002. In 2004 he received the Classical Internet Award. He has completed for Naxos a series of Szymanowski's symphonic and large-scale vocal-instrumental works, each rated among 'discs of the month' by *Gramophone* magazine and *BBC Music Magazine*. He also received the Record Academy Award 2005 of Japanese music magazine *Record Geijutsu* for Penderecki's *A Polish Requiem* (8.557386-87), and four Fryderyk Awards of the Polish Phonographic Academy. In 2012 he received a GRAMMY® Award for Penderecki's *Fonogrammi*, *Horn Concerto* and *Partita* (8.572482), and six other nominations for Penderecki's *St Luke Passion* in 2004 (8.557149), *A Polish Requiem* in 2005, *Seven Gates of Jerusalem* in 2007 (8.557766), *Utrenja* in 2009 (8.572031) and Karol Szymanowski's *Stabat Mater* in 2008 (8.570724) and *Symphonies Nos. 1 and 4* in 2009 (8.570722). In 2010 Antoni Wit won the annual award of the Karol Szymanowski Foundation for his promotion of the music of Szymanowski in his Naxos recordings. He has recorded for Naxos all the symphonic works of Szymanowski, Lutosławski, Penderecki, Karłowicz, and other Polish composers. Wit studied conducting with Henryk Czyż at the Academy of Music in Kraków, continuing his musical studies with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. He also graduated in law from the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. Antoni Wit was formerly a professor at music academies in Poland and Korea, and is now an honorary professor at Keimyung University in Daegu.

Brahms' string concertos are indissolubly linked with the musicians for whom the works were written. He wrote his *Violin Concerto* for Joseph Joachim, and in it he combined what a contemporary critic termed 'the great and serious' with songful lyricism, melodic beauty, and a fiery Hungarian finale. To mend a breach with the violinist, Brahms later composed a concerto with the unusual combination of violin and cello, the latter played at the premiere by Joachim's colleague Robert Hausmann. Neither instrument predominates in a work of reconciliation that embodies both drama and reflection.



Deutsches  
Symphonie  
Orchester  
Berlin

an Ensemble of



Johannes  
**BRAHMS**  
(1833–1897)

**Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 77 (1878) 39:14**

- |          |   |              |
|----------|---|--------------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>I. Allegro non troppo</b>                      | <b>22:26</b> |
| <b>2</b> | <b>II. Adagio</b>                                 | <b>8:59</b>  |
| <b>3</b> | <b>III. Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace</b> | <b>7:41</b>  |

**Double Concerto for Violin and Cello  
in A minor, Op. 102 (1887) 33:05**

- |          |                               |              |
|----------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>4</b> | <b>I. Allegro</b>             | <b>16:51</b> |
| <b>5</b> | <b>II. Andante</b>            | <b>7:20</b>  |
| <b>6</b> | <b>III. Vivace non troppo</b> | <b>8:42</b>  |

**Tianwa Yang, Violin • Gabriel Schwabe, Cello 4–6**

**Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin**

**Antoni Wit**

Recorded: 5–7 July 2017 at Jesus-Christus-Kirche, Berlin-Dahlem, Germany

Producer and editor: Eckhard Glauche • Engineer: Clemens Deller

Publisher: Breitkopf • Booklet notes: Keith Anderson

Cover photo by dejankrmanovic (iStockphoto.com)