

Joachim RAFF

COMPLETE MUSIC FOR CELLO AND PIANO

SONATA FOR PIANO AND CELLO, OP. 183

DUO FOR PIANO AND CELLO, OP. 59

TWO FANTASY PIECES, OP. 86

TWO ROMANCES, OP. 182

Joseph Mendes, cello
Taeyeon Lim, piano

FIRST COMPLETE RECORDING

JOACHIM RAFF: THE WORKS FOR CELLO AND PIANO

by Mark Thomas

Joseph Joachim Raff was born on 22 May 1822, the son of a school-teacher in the small town of Lachen, by the side of Lake Zurich in Switzerland. Although his mother was Swiss, Raff was German: he inherited citizenship of the Kingdom of Württemberg from his father, who had fled the country in the Napoleonic wars. Although the young Raff received no formal musical training, his prodigious talent was recognised first by Mendelssohn and then by Liszt, in whose company he left Switzerland in 1845 to pursue an itinerant life in Germany as composer and critic. In 1850 he became Liszt's assistant in Weimar for a few years, after which he finally settled in the spa town of Wiesbaden in 1856, working as a music-teacher and composing in his spare time. Fame came suddenly in 1863 when both the patriotic cantata *Deutschlands Auferstehung*, already his Op. 100, and his First Symphony, Op. 96, which bore the equally evocative title *An das Vaterland*, won prestigious prizes, and it was as a symphonist that he established his reputation. His Symphonies No. 3, Op. 153, *Im Walde* (1869), and No. 5, Op. 177, *Lenore* (1870–72), were spectacularly successful and, together with the Second and Fourth Symphonies, Opp. 140 and 167 (1866 and 1871), rank amongst the best produced in the second half of the nineteenth century. Four fine symphonies should have been enough to secure Raff's legacy, but excessive popularity courted criticism, and later symphonies in his canon were more open to the charges of prolixity and inconsistent quality, which soon led to a decline in Raff's symphonic reputation. The acclaim heaped on Brahms' symphonies (the First premiered in 1876, followed by the Second the next year) and Raff's death on 24 June 1882 hastened the eclipse, which over a few decades spread to affect the fortunes of his many popular works in other genres. He was certainly a prolific composer, and the eleven symphonies represent only a small proportion of his catalogue of 329 works, which also includes six operas, a dozen large-scale

choral works, nine concertos, a score of other orchestral works, collections of a *cappella* choral music, many songs, well over a hundred works for piano and 53 compositions for chamber ensembles. All eventually left the repertoire and for many years, until the current revival of interest in Raff, his music was known only by the slight, if affecting, *Cavatine*, Op. 85, No. 3, for violin and piano.

Before this collapse, when Raff's reputation was at its high point in 1875, the English musician Ebenezer Prout wrote:

No living composer possesses the various qualifications [...] needful to the symphonist in so large a measure as Joachim Raff. I have no hesitation in saying that the [first six symphonies] are, taken as a whole, the greatest symphonies written since those of Schumann. The well never runs dry, and inexhaustible fluency seems to be one of the composer's striking characteristics. [...] He] has in a very detailed degree the gift of tune. [...] No less remarkable is his complete command of all the intricacies of counterpoint. Fugue, canon, augmentations, diminution – all seem equally easy to him. [...] Sebastian Bach himself need not have been ashamed to sign the page; and this is the work of a self-taught man!¹

The qualities justifiably listed by Prout are also present in most of Raff's major chamber works, and on the whole his compositions for smaller ensembles show him at his best, demonstrating a consistency and quality of inspiration which is lacking in some of his ambitious orchestral and vocal compositions. Possibly he felt better able to be himself when writing for smaller groups, relieved of the autodidact's instinct to prove his worth.

After the piano works, chamber music is the second largest category in his catalogue, and Raff composed it from the start of his career: amongst his earliest-known compositions are a pair of duos (now lost) for violin and piano, dating from 1840. Apart from a *sinfonietta* for ten wind instruments and a pair of romances for horn and piano,

¹ Ebenezer Prout, 'Raff's Symphonies', *The Monthly Musical Record* (London), 1 March 1875, pp. 32–33, and *The Academy* (London), 10 April 1875, pp. 386–88.

all his chamber works are for strings or strings and piano, with the backbone of this impressive collection being the sets of eight string quartets, four piano trios and five violin sonatas.

Raff's chamber music was often praised by his contemporaries. The great pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow (1830–94), a lifelong friend and supporter, wrote to Raff that he 'cannot help but declare from absolute conviction that your Quintet is the very best of you, and the most important work in the field of chamber music since Beethoven.'² Even after Raff's star had fallen, his accomplishments in the genre were not forgotten. The American critic William Henderson wrote in 1891: 'Lest it be supposed that Raff was deficient in musical learning, let us note that his chamber music, always melodious and graceful, frequently displays profound mastery of the resources of his art.'³ The German musicologist Wilhelm Altmann, reviewing Raff's chamber works in the 1920s when his reputation was at its nadir, wrote that some of them were worth reviving, particularly the Piano Quintet, some of the string quartets and the violin sonatas,⁴ and Altmann's editor, Walter Cobbett, added:

I would not willingly be without his sonatas for piano and violin. [...] A great virtuoso, Pablo Sarasate, spoke to me with enthusiasm of Raff's music, which he played very frequently, and it is certain that whenever he introduced such works [...] he was rapturously applauded by the public.⁵

The popularity of the violin sonatas was matched by frequent performances of the String Octet, Sextet, Piano Quintet, First and Seventh String Quartets and the Piano Trios Nos. 1 and 2. Raff himself even jokingly complained in 1872 about the popularity of his First Piano Trio, alleging that he couldn't bear 'the fact that my other three trios, which

² Letter dated 13 April 1869, published in *Hans von Bülow. Briefe und Schriften*, ed. Marie von Bülow, Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig, 1900, Vol. V, p. 282.

³ 'Joseph Joachim Raff', *Famous Composers and their Works*, J. B. Millet, Boston, 1891, Vol. III, pp. 497–502.

⁴ 'Raff, Joseph Joachim', *Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, Oxford University Press, London, 1930, Vol. II, pp. 265–68.

⁵ *Ibid.*

are also children of mine, are left on the shelf whereas No. 1 gets to go to the ball again and again⁶

Although these works were popular for the half-century that led up to the First World War, and were frequently reviewed in contemporary musical journals, Raff's comparatively slender catalogue for cello and piano received scant attention in the musical press. Even the publication of such a potentially important work as his **Sonata for Piano and Cello in D major, Op. 183**, seems to have escaped critical notice altogether. The Cello Sonata – his only work in the genre – was composed early in 1873 in Wiesbaden and, after virtually immediate publication by Siegel, was premiered on 1 December that year at the Berlin Singakademie by the cellist Anton Rohm and pianist Otto Alsleben. Raff's *Wunderjahre* were 1872 and 1873: it was then that he created some of his biggest successes – the Symphony No. 5, Piano Concerto, Suite for Violin and Orchestra, Sinfonietta, String Octet, String Sextet and the *Variations on an Original Theme* for piano all date from this time. In such company, the inability of the Cello Sonata to make a lasting impression is surprising, given the quality of the piece, the dearth at the time of good modern cello sonatas (the first sonatas of Brahms and Gernsheim are an exception) and the popularity of Raff's other major chamber works. The reason might lie in its also being one of the first of his compositions which demonstrate a shift in style. It is no sterile academic piece, but neither does it have the same fiery passion and lush sentimentality of the First Violin Sonata of two decades earlier. It is an evolutionary composition in which Raff attempted to fuse florid high Romanticism with a more restrained and Classical aesthetic, but it remains a powerful, generously melodic and satisfying work, worthy of revival. As with most of Raff's chamber music, the pianist is a full partner and no mere accompanist.

The vigorous opening *Allegro* (D major–D minor–C major–D major) [6] is in sonata form. It immediately introduces two principal themes, the second of which is one of those ideas of Raff's which, once heard, remains stubbornly in the memory. The movement is dominated by this descending six-note march-like fragment which lends

⁶ Letter to Adelheid von Schorn, 1872, in Helene Raff (trans. Alan Howe), *Joachim Raff – Portrait of a Life*, www.raff.org, 2012, p. 163.

the whole piece an insistent, driving quality. It is complemented by the virile first theme and a third, more lyrical idea which exploits the singing qualities of the cello. The variety and beauty of Raff's textures, frequently filled out by counterpoint, easily sustain interest until the movement ends in a splendid apotheosis of the 'march' motif. The short *Vivace* movement which follows [7] is of ternary construction: fleet-footed, Mendelssohnian, scherzo-like sections in D minor frame a slightly slower D major trio in which the cello briefly sings a *cantabile* melody. Speed, delicacy and concision make for a breathlessly effective piece which is gone almost as soon as it arrives. Raff's slow movements are often the centres of gravity of his compositions and the following *Andante* (B flat major) echoes that pattern [8]. It begins with alternating statements from each instrument of the limpid melodic material, all of which share a similar arched contour and which both players go on to embellish. There is a deliberate simplicity to this piece and a comparative absence of passion. Rather, the mood is of reflection and suppressed emotion. This movement is perhaps the one which most clearly marks Raff's move to a more Classical restraint. Raff's finales often serve not as the emotional culmination of a piece but rather to release the tension built up in the preceding movement, and that's the role of the final *Allegro* (D major–A minor–D major) [9]. It begins with the cello introducing a wistfully lyrical theme that contrasts with the lively dotted melody which follows from the piano. Raff combines the two in a dazzling contrapuntal display leading on, with plenty of virtuoso opportunities for each player, to the glittering final pages in which the piano finally takes over the opening cello melody, set against a surging cello accompaniment.

In contrast to his large body of music for violin and piano (five violin sonatas and sixteen other compositions), Raff composed only nine other short works for cello and piano, and six of those were arrangements of music by other composers. The first of these arrangements was made in autumn 1849 when Raff's employer, the Hamburg music publisher Julius Schuberth (1804–75), asked him to make transcriptions for piano and both violin or cello of songs by Carl Reissiger and Louis Spohr, two piano pieces by Adolf Henselt and a march and three études for piano by Karl Vollweiler. The song-transcriptions and arrangements of Vollweiler's études were never published and are now lost. Schuberth published the arrangements of Vollweiler's March and the

Henselt pieces in 1855 but credited his brother, the cellist Carl Schuberth (1811–63), as the arranger. In 1860 Raff made a reduction for violin and piano of Beethoven's Second *Romance* for Violin and Orchestra, and later in the decade also made a piano arrangement of the orchestral accompaniment of the First *Romance*. In 1869 Schuberth published a new edition of both *Romances* arranged for cello and piano, using Raff's piano accompaniments. The cello arrangements, which did not sit well with Raff's contributions, were made by the virtuoso cellist Robert Emil Bockmühl (1820–81). Finally, in 1875 Raff added a piano accompaniment to three cello sonatas by Benedetto Marcello, at the request of the cellist Ernest De Munck (1840–1915), who had found them in an archive in Paris. The arrangements stayed in manuscript and are now lost.

Of the remaining three original works, the earliest is the **Duo for Piano and Cello, Op. 59** [5], composed in Stuttgart in February 1848 initially as a *Caprice* for cello and piano. Raff subsequently added an arrangement for violin and piano and, renamed Duos, the companion works were published by Nagel in 1855. Raff later prepared an 'improved' version, which was published by Schuberth in 1867 and again in 1879, and it is this second score which was used for this recording. The work is dedicated to Raff's lifelong friend Bernhard Cossmann (1822–1910), a highly regarded cellist and teacher whom Raff first met when they were both members of Liszt's circle in Weimar in the early 1850s. Cossmann premiered several of Raff's chamber works and, when Raff became the founding director of the Hoch Conservatoire in Frankfurt in 1877, he appointed Cossmann to teach cello there. The Duo is divided into two sections, the first of which is a yearningly lyrical and melodically rich *Andantino* in A major. It gives way to the second section, accurately labelled *Allegro appassionato* (A minor–D major–A major), which wavers between drama and high spirits before settling on the latter as it dashes to its close.

While he was still in Weimar, Raff composed the **Two Fantasy Pieces for Piano and Cello, Op. 86**, in the summer of 1854 and dedicated them to Baron Olivier von Beaulieu-Marconnay (1811–89), the director of the Court Theatre there. No. 1 was first performed on 13 February 1855 in Weimar by two of Raff's friends: Bernhard Cossmann and the pianist and composer Hans Bronsart von Schellendorf (1830–1913). Both pieces

were published by Rieter-Biedermann in 1862. No. 1, ‘Begegnung’ (‘Encounter’) [3], is a gently flowing *Andante, quasi moderato* in E flat major in which Raff alternates and then combines lyrical passages of growing and then fading intensity with a rather scatty *pizzicato* idea, perhaps suggesting a chance meeting in which light-hearted banter masks deeper emotions. The second piece, ‘Erinnerung’ (‘Remembrance’ or ‘Recollection’), is marked *Andante, quasi Larghetto* and is in D flat major [4]. Beyond its title, Raff left no indication of what this more heartfelt and dense piece was intended to portray, but it is easy to imagine a conversation which gradually becomes more heated until a brief argument resolves matters and the parties return to calm companionship. Raff eschews *cantabile* melodies for shorter, more robust themes and carefully builds the tension by starting first with piano alone, then with each instrument dominating successive passages until they join in increasingly impassioned music, leading to an abrupt climax. The tension suddenly dissipates and, after a more modest and less conflicted upsurge, the piece closes in an atmosphere of bittersweet calm.

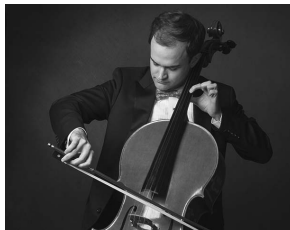
Raff had a habit of working on similar pieces in sequence, and his final original works for cello and piano were composed at around the same time as the Cello Sonata. The ***Two Romances for Horn (or Cello) and Piano, Op. 182***, were also composed in Wiesbaden early in 1873 and the two versions were published in the same year by Siegel. Romance No. 1 is an *Andante* in F major [1] which showcases Raff the melodist: the outer sections of the simple ternary structure feature one of his most winning creations. The short middle section in F minor is slightly more animated, but no less lyrical. No. 2, in B flat with a central excursion into E flat, is another *Andante* [2]. Raff strings together a series of melodic ideas employing a more complex structure than its companion (ABACDAB), in which lyrically flowing passages contrast with a sharply agitated idea which is repeated at the close.

The Cello Sonata and the *Two Romances* end Raff’s *œuvre* for cello and piano, but in the nine years that remained to him he did go on to compose two more significant contributions to the cello repertoire: his two cello concertos. The first of these, Op. 193 in D minor, was composed only a year after Op. 182 and 183 and proved to be

a very popular work, but the Cello Concerto No. 2 in G, WoO44 of 1876, had a much less happy history. It remained unpublished and unperformed until 1997 because Raff put the completed manuscript aside after he fell out with the proposed dedicatee, the virtuoso David Popper.

Mark Thomas has studied Raff's life and music for over forty years; his website www.raff.org is an acknowledged resource on the composer. He has been closely involved in the planning and production of seventeen albums of Raff's music, and has written one book and edited another on the composer. For the past four years he has been researching a definitive catalogue of Raff's compositions, in the course of which he has unearthed over thirty previously unknown works and rediscovered others once thought lost.

Joseph Mendoes is an active teacher and performer in the Los Angeles area. He began his studies through his local public-school programme and continued with private lessons under Doris Savery. In high school he studied cello and chamber music with Richard Naill at the Colburn School. It was at this time he performed in master-classes for Heinrich Schiff and Orlando Cole, and was also a member of the Colburn Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Daniel Lewis. He also won numerous prizes for solo and chamber-music performances, including the cello competition of the 1999 Southwestern Youth Music Festival and a second-place finish at the Southern California Competition of the American String Teachers Association.



In 2000 he was awarded a scholarship to study with Ronald Leonard at the Thornton School of Music of the University of Southern California and graduated with honours in 2004. During that time he performed frequently as a member of the Camden String Quartet. With the Quartet he performed in master-classes for the Emerson, Ysaÿe and Guarneri String Quartets, and was honoured with the Chamber Music Award at USC in 2004. The Camden Quartet also won first prize at the Palos Verdes Peninsula Music Festival.

In 2008 he was selected to participate in the Naumburg International Cello Competition in New York City. From 2006 to 2010, he was a faculty member and performer at The Viola Workout in Crested Butte, Colorado. In 2011 he performed all five of Beethoven's Cello Sonatas

in one concert. In 2014 he became the Cello Expert for Virtual Sheet Music, where he has published many educational videos about cello technique and musicianship. Currently he is a member (acting principal since 2014) of the Riverside County Philharmonic and is co-founder of J Concert Artists with his wife Jaimie Lee Mendes. He teaches at The Colburn School in Los Angeles.

Pianist **Taeyeon Lim**, a native of South Korea, has appeared across North America, Austria, Germany, Italy, South Korea and China as a recitalist and concerto soloist. She participated in the International Summer Academy of the Mozarteum in Salzburg, in the Beijing International Music Festival, where she won the concerto competition, and the International Keyboard Institute and Festival in New York City.

In South Korea she has performed with the Sorisam Chamber Orchestra and Kyung-Hee University Symphony. She has received chamber-music instruction from the members of the American String Quartet and Raphael Trio and has participated in master-classes given by Massimiliano Ferrati, Stephen Hough, John Perry, Victor Rosenbaum, Abbey Simon, Oxana Yablonskaya and Chenh Zong Yin.

Taeyeon studied at the Kyung-Hee University in Seoul, under Young-Hae Chun, and graduated in 2003 with honours. In the United States she continued her piano studies with Phillip Kawin and James Tocco as a scholarship student at the Manhattan School of Music, where she earned her Master of Music and Professional Study certificate. In 2008 she moved to Los Angeles, where she received the William H. Phillips and Beatrice C. Phillips Music Scholarship in the Graduate Certificate programme at the Thornton School of Music of the University of Southern California. Two years later she began her doctoral studies at the same institution. Also in 2010 she gave a recital in the Palos Verdes Library Classical Music Series and, as an accompanist, won the prestigious Beverly Hills Auditions, with the prize being performances at Trinity Lutheran Church, Manhattan Beach, and the 'Music in the Mansion' recital series in the historic Greystone Mansion in Beverly Hills. In 2015 she was awarded a Doctorate in Music from the University of Southern California. In addition to piano performance, she is deeply interested in sacred music and currently serves as pianist at the Holliston United Methodist Church in Pasadena; she is also a pianist for the Korean American Music Academy Choir.





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Joseph Mendes

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JOACHIM RAFF Complete Music for Cello and Piano

Two Romances, Op. 182* (1873) **9:04**

① No. 1 *Andante* 3:54

② No. 2 *Andante* 5:10

***Two Fantasy Pieces, Op. 86* (1854)** **15:45**

③ No. 1 Begegnung: *Andante, quasi moderato* 7:50

④ No. 2 Erinnerung: *Andante, quasi Larghetto** 7:55

⑤ **Duo, Op. 59** (1848, rev. 1867) **16:25**

Sonata for Piano and Cello in D major, Op. 183* (1873) **26:49**

⑥ I *Allegro* 9:30

⑦ II *Vivace* 2:59

⑧ III *Andante* 5:52

⑨ IV *Allegro* 8:28

Joseph Mendes, cello

Taeyeon Lim, piano

TT 67:01

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