

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: REINTERPRETING ROMANTIC SOUND
WORLDS: FLUTE ADAPTATIONS OF
BEETHOVEN, BRAHMS, AND
SCHUMANN

Yejin Choi, Doctoral of Musical Arts in
Flute Performance, 2026

Dissertation directed by: Associate Professor of Flute, Sarah Frisof,
School of Music

This Doctor of Musical Arts performance dissertation centers on the creation of a professional recording featuring flute adaptations of three major Romantic-era chamber works: Ludwig van Beethoven's Violin Sonata in F Major, Op. 24 ("Spring"), Johannes Brahms' Violin Sonata in G Major, Op. 78, and Robert Schumann's Three Romances for Oboe and Piano, Op. 94. The project addresses the relative scarcity of substantial Romantic chamber repertoire originally composed for the flute by examining how these canonical works can be reinterpreted for the instrument while preserving their expressive and structural integrity. Through performance, recording, written analysis informed by historical research, score study, and comparative listening, the dissertation explores issues of range, articulation, phrasing, breath, and timbral translation amongst violin, oboe, and flute, situating these adaptations within broader discussions of Romantic performance practice and evolving instrumental technology.

REINTERPRETING ROMANTIC SOUND WORLDS: FLUTE ADAPTATIONS OF
BEETHOVEN, BRAHMS AND SCHUMANN

by

Yejin Choi

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts
Flute Performance
2026

Advisory Committee:
Professor, Sarah Frisof, chair
Professor, Robert DiLutis
Professor, Joseph Grimmer
Professor, Jiyoung Kim
Professor, Michael Votta

© Copyright by

Yejin Choi

2026

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the musicians and scholars who may find inspiration or insight through this work, and whose continued exploration of music sustains the vitality of our artistic tradition. It is also dedicated to my family and friends, whose encouragement, patience, and unwavering support made this journey possible.

Acknowledgment

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Sarah Frisof, whose mentorship, guidance, and unwavering support have been invaluable throughout my studies at the University of Maryland. Her dedication to teaching and her constant encouragement have profoundly shaped both my musical and personal growth. I am truly grateful for her patience, insight, and commitment to helping me develop as a performer and musician.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to my collaborative pianist, Huichuan Chen, who spent countless hours working with me during the recording process for this project. Her artistry, professionalism, and thoughtful musical partnership played a vital role in bringing this dissertation to life.

This recording could have not been possible without the help of Antonino D'urzo for his time to record these pieces professionally in the Dekelboum at University of Maryland. My heartfelt appreciation goes to Dr. Barbara H. Haggh-Huglo for her suggestions. Her advice and expertise were instrumental in helping me shape and complete this dissertation.

I am also grateful to Ben Lee, Yeeun Choi, Sarah Han and Daniel Zheng for their patience, encouragement, and support throughout this journey. Their guidance and willingness help made this process far more manageable and meaningful.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who supported me during the completion of this project. Their encouragement and kindness have made this accomplishment possible.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgment	iii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: The development of the flute	3
The flute in the Baroque period	3
The flute in the Classical period	4
Boehm Flutes	5
Chapter 3: Beethoven’s Violin Sonata in F Major, Op. 24 (“Spring”)	9
I. Allegro	11
II. Adagio molto espressivo	13
III. Scherzo: Allegro molto	15
IV. Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo	15
Chapter 4: Robert Schumann.....	18
I. Nitch schnell	21
II. Einfach, innig	22
III. Nicht schnell.....	23
Chapter 5: Johannes Brahms	25
I. Vivace ma non troppo	30
II. Adagio	33
III. Allegro molto moderato.....	36
Conclusion	39
Appendix.....	41
Bibliography.....	42

Chapter 1: Introduction

The nineteenth century produced a vast body of chamber works for violin and piano that remains central to the Western classical canon. Prominent composers such as Beethoven, Brahms, and Schumann developed a stylistically “Romantic” language of expansive lyricism, motivic integration, and dialogue between musical voices. While these composers wrote extensively for string and keyboard instruments, the flute repertoire of the same period is comparatively limited, leaving flutists with fewer opportunities to engage directly with Romantic works outside of orchestral contexts. Being a flutist for almost two decades, I explored and performed many works considered “standard flute repertoire,” but as my musical career progressed, I began to lose my love for music and became exhausted with the limited expressive and artistic range of the flute canon. To broaden my skills as a musician, I was inspired to select the professional recording option for my DMA so that I could arrange chamber music that I truly would love to perform and listen to, while also contributing a historical and artistic analysis of this Romantic repertoire as flute literature.

The repertoire that I chose to record for this dissertation project consists of three canonical Romantic works arranged for flute: Beethoven’s Violin Sonata No. 5 in F Major, Op. 24 (“Spring”) and Schumann’s Three Romances, Op. 94 have some recordings available, but it is rare to find a recording of Brahms’s Violin Sonata in G Major, Op. 78 performed on the flute. For a deeper understanding of these works and to gain insight into what performing the Beethoven and Brahms sonatas entailed, I met with professional violinists Naoko Nakajima (member of San Francisco Ballet and Opera) and pianist Noah Sonderling (collaborative pianist at the Colburn School and UCLA). With their comments and feedback on how these sonatas are normally performed, as a flutist, I realized that I had to approach some technical and musical aspects creatively.

Style, according to Alfred Whitehead, is “the ultimate morality of mind.”¹ Edward T. Cone adds that “the comprehension and communication of musical style may well be the ultimate morality of performance—that is to say, its final responsibility... Any educated musician has a standard idea of how a given composer’s music should sound. For example, Bach should be more straightforward, Beethoven more passionate, Mozart more classical, Schumann more ‘romantic’, and so on.”² Norman Lebrecht says, “Each generation and every artist finds a different Beethoven. As in Shakespeare and the Bible, interpretation counts at least as much as text.”³ The unique challenge as a performer, then, is to respect and preserve each composer’s musical intention, while also exploring one’s own expressive range to reinterpret well-known pieces in new contexts. This dissertation integrates historical background, musical analysis, and performance technique to examine the arrangements of selected Romantic chamber works for the modern flute.

In Chapter 2, I provide an overview of the development of the flute to illustrate differences between the modern instrument and the flutes used in the nineteenth century. In Chapters 3, 4, and 5, I discuss the stylistic priorities and technical and expressive considerations required for an arrangement of the music of Beethoven, Schumann, and Brahms for the modern flute. I will explore how technical aspects of flute performance, including breath management, articulation, phrasing, and balance can be used to preserve Romantic musical expression.

¹ Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education*, (Macmillan, 1929), p. 19.

² Edward T. Cone, *Musical Form and Musical Performance* (W. W. Norton, 1968), p. 57.

³ Cone, *Musical Form and Musical Performance*, p. 57.

Chapter 2: The development of the flute

The flute has developed significantly from medieval times to the modern day. Various kinds of flutes have existed around the world since prehistory, but the developments that occurred in the Western world between the Baroque period and the modern day have most directly shaped the kind of flute playing we hear today. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, changes in flute construction expanded and improved the instrument's range, tonal consistency, and technical facility, factors that in turn affected composers' willingness to write extensively for the instrument. As Ardal Powell stated in his introduction to his book *The Flute*: "Historical studies have transformed our view of the flute's history along with our musical world over the past forty years. We can seek in the history of the flute not what the Victorians did, an abstract line of mechanical development, but rather a story of much greater detail, richness, and human interest: the practical and continual adaptation of a tool to the changing purposes it was meant to serve in changing times."⁴

The flute in the Baroque period

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and into the nineteenth century, the flute existed primarily as a wooden instrument with a simple key system, often consisting of one to eight keys. Figure 1 shows a typical Baroque flute.⁵

⁴ Ardal Powell, *The Flute* (Yale University Press, 2002), p. 2.

⁵ "All About the Flute," <https://allabouttheflute.weebly.com/history-and-development.html>. (March 16, 2026).



Figure 1. A Baroque flute

The flute in this period had three sections, the head, body, and the foot. The size of the cylindrical bore became wider on the head joint, the embouchure (lip plate) and key holes changed, and the tube walls became thicker. These changes in design helped flute players perform solo parts more often.

The flute in the Classical period

During the Classical period, flutes continued to develop towards their modern form. Innovations in key mechanisms and construction gradually expanded the flute's technical capabilities, enhancing its potential as a solo instrument. Figure 2 shows that more keys were added after the Baroque period (depicted in chronological order from the bottom up).⁶



Figure 2. Development of the flute from the Baroque period to its modern design

The additional keys on the flute allowed more repertoire to be performed. Figure 2

⁶ "All About the Flute," <https://allabouttheflute.weebly.com/history-and-development.html>. (March 16, 2026).

shows that the top three flutes introduced the thumb key and foot joint in order to produce low C and Bb. All of the flutes in the Classical period were still made of wood. It was not until the Boehm model was developed that metal flutes became more common in western Europe. “The wooden flute naturally gives a denser, more powerful sound than the metal and requires rather more forceful blowing and attack; lightness and delicacy of control being secured with skill and practice.”⁷ The flutes used in the Classical period were limited in technique compared to what modern flutes can achieve.

Boehm Flutes

Boehm flutes are named for their creator, the German flutist and inventor Theobald Boehm (1794-1881). This transition was the biggest change in the development of the flute. Boehm flutes included details added such as the G# key, left thumb, side key, low B key on the foot joint, and extra F# devices shown in Figure 3.⁸

⁷ Powell, *The Flute*, p. 116

⁸ Anthony Baines, *Woodwind Instruments and Their History* (Faber and Faber, 1963), p. 64.

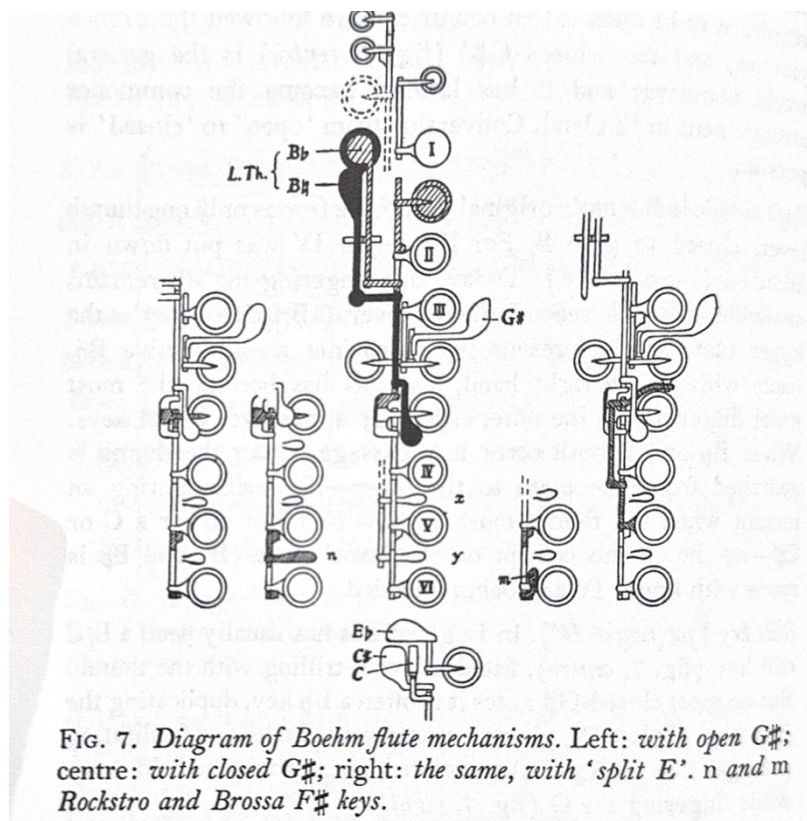


Figure 3. The key system and mechanical improvements of the Boehm flute

These additions helped flutists to execute technical passages requiring sustained pitches, projection, and more colors and varieties of sound, which led composers to write pieces for the flute requiring more diverse techniques. According to Anthony Baines, German composers such as Wagner and Brahms used Boehm flutes, and other composers like Tchaikovsky, Strauss, and Bartók liked to use low B (the lowest note possible on the modern-day flute).⁹



Figure 4. The evolution of the Boehm flute design

Figure 4 shows from left to right the changes that were made within the Boehm model.¹⁰ “Accordingly, Boehm applied on 8-10 May 1829 to make flutes in his own way, referring to his prior experience as goldsmith and flutist, and citing six characteristics of the flutes which, despite their unaltered acoustic, key systems, and fingering he was already calling ‘improved.’” Powell lists the following.¹¹

⁹ Anthony Baines, *Woodwind Instruments and Their History* (Faber and Faber, 1963), p. 66.

¹⁰ Ardal Powell, *The Flute* (Yale University Press, 2002), p. 165.

¹¹ Powell, *The Flute*, p. 165.

1. Purity of intonation
2. Evenness of tone
3. Facility of operation
4. Secure speech in the highest as well as the lowest register
5. Beautiful profile
6. Thoroughly neat and robust workmanship

The development of the flute throughout the Baroque period, Classical period, and into the era of the Boehm flute helped flutists to perform a broader and more diverse repertoire. These changes in the flute permit the lyricism, technical facility, projection, and soloistic sound. Performing the Beethoven, Brahms, and Schumann on the modern flute would not be the same as performing on the nineteenth-century instrument that these composers would have been familiar with. However, the development of the flute makes adaptations of this older repertoire for the modern flute both feasible and artistically convincing.

Chapter 3: Beethoven's Violin Sonata in F Major, Op. 24 ("Spring")

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) is one of the most notable composers of the late Classical and early Romantic era. Born in Bonn, Germany, he was raised in a musical family and received his first musical education from his father. He occupies a pivotal position in the history of Western art music, merging Classical formal traditions with Romantic ideals of expression and individuality. His life was marked by difficulties including illnesses and severe progressive hearing loss. Despite his disability, he still managed to compose many works considered masterpieces today, such as the Ninth Symphony and the late piano sonatas and string quartets.

Among Beethoven's compositions, the Violin Sonata No.5 in F Major, Op.24 ("Spring") stands out for its pastoral character, melodic expansiveness, and balance between technical brilliance and expressive warmth. According to Lewis Lockwood, "The 'Spring' Sonata, Opus 24, is clearly meant to be a work of great beauty; it is one of the most ingratiating and beguiling works Beethoven ever wrote. Beloved by performers and the public ever since it appeared, the sonata exemplifies Beethoven's use of thematic reciprocity, meaning that the musical material is balanced between the two instruments and this equilibrium is perpetually maintained."¹² It was composed in 1801, during the peak of Beethoven's creative activity, and dedicated to the composer's patron Count Moritz von Fries. According to the Beethoven biographer Wilhelm von Lenz, Beethoven's creative periods can be divided into distinct parts. The first period shows influences from Mozart and Haydn in musical form, harmony and tonal relationships, the second period is most often referred to as an "escape" because Beethoven was searching for a way to escape from Haydn

¹² Lewis Lockwood, *Beethoven: The Music and the Life* (W. W. Norton, 2003), p. 142.

and Mozart's styles. Op. 24 falls between the first and second periods and therefore displays both Mozartian influence and new techniques.

The flute edition I used for this recording was arranged by George Pope and published by Alry Publications ca. 2000; I also consulted the 2020 Bärenreiter edition of the original version. I mainly listened to a recording by violinist Itzhak Perlman and pianist Vladimir Ashkenazy, recorded and published by Decca Music Group Limited in 1976. I preferred this recording because of the choices of tempi. I compared the violin score to the flute edition to see the similarities and differences to the original version.

I. Allegro

This movement starts with a melismatic melodic line. This opening motive of the first theme comes back throughout the movement and recurs in the second movement. George Pope suggests a tempo of quarter note =126. This tempo works perfectly on the violin, and most of the violin recordings I consulted are in this range. However, because we as flutists have limited breath capacity, this tempo felt uncomfortably slow. For example, in mm. 11-24 (Figure 5), the long, legato accompaniment line in the violin part is difficult to sustain on the flute. In consideration of this, I opted to perform the movement at a faster tempo. When performing this passage, the flowing eighth notes evoked the feeling of walking through a park filled with blooming flowers during spring time. The flowing and faster tempo helped create this imagery.



Figure 5. Ludwig van Beethoven, Violin Sonata No. 5 in F Major, Op. 24 ("Spring"), ed. Jonathan Del Mar (Bärenreiter, 2000), I, mm. 11-24

Another issue in this same passage is that the flute cannot play the low A that Beethoven wrote for the violin. To solve this issue, Pope moves the A one octave higher and inverts the arpeggio as shown in Figure 6, continuing this pattern throughout this accompanimental section. The first movement of this sonata is straightforward, so it was not too difficult to perform.



Figure 6. George Pope, arr., Ludwig van Beethoven: Sonata No. 5 in F Major, Op. 24 (“Spring”) for Flute and Piano (Alry Publications), I, mm. 11–24



Figure 7. Beethoven, Violin Sonata No. 5, I, m. 231

Beethoven only uses fortissimo once in this movement (and, in fact, in the entire sonata), in m.231 (Figure 7). The power and energy of the violin part are particularly important here because Beethoven has given the violin the job of filling out the dominant 7th chord harmony, while the piano plays only a bare trill on C. To maintain this power, and to keep the passage within the flute’s range, I took the entire measure one octave higher.

Playing an octave higher creates the energy and powerful volume that Beethoven wanted to bring out in that measure. To convey the fortissimo character and high register of this passage on the flute, I sought to connect with the sense of excitement Beethoven may have felt when composing this measure. By adding the trill that leads into the cadence, he creates a dramatic and exhilarating arrival. As a performer, I experienced this moment as an expression of joy and anticipation of returning to the home key, which inspired my playing to sound brighter and more optimistic.

II. Adagio molto espressivo

According to Norman Lebrecht, “The second movement, an Adagio, is a declaration of love, open and utterly trusting.”¹³ The melodies are intensely expressive, yet also intimate. The piano starts with a bar of accompaniment before the violin enters, unlike the first movement. As in the first movement, the register is well-suited to the flute. This register makes it easy for the flutist to control the air flow. In this movement, the first movement’s first theme comes back in mm. 54-56 in the accompaniment.

I modeled the speed of my ornamentation on Itzhak Perlman’s recording. As Clive Brown stated, “Between the middle of the eighteenth century and the middle of the twentieth century the scope for performers to modify and elaborate on the strict meaning of the notation became increasingly restricted, and the orthodoxy of the second half of the twentieth century, (...) upon which scholarship has only recently begun to make a modest impact, is to regard Classical and Romantic composers’ notation as literal and definitive, and to adhere to it as closely as possible in performance.”¹⁴

¹³ Norman Lebrecht, “Why Beethoven” p. 189.

¹⁴ Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performance Practice*, p. 415.



Figure 8. Ludwig van Beethoven, Violin Sonata No. 5 in F Major, Op. 24 (“Spring”), ed. Jonathan Del Mar (Bärenreiter, 2000), II, mm. 14-17

In Figure 8, there are two turn markings, and I played both quickly, stretching the main note to make up the time. I chose to perform these turns quickly, to give the phrase liveliness and fluidity.

III. Scherzo: Allegro molto

This movement is written in a standard scherzo form. During this era, Beethoven often included a Minuet or Scherzo movement in his sonatas. “Beethoven’s decision to compose his earliest Viennese sonatas in four movements exemplifies his characteristic striving for innovation. Even though he returned to two- and three-movement designs in many later sonatas works.”¹⁵ The rhythmic character in this movement is very playful and giving the impression of a joke between the violin and the piano. As in the previous movements, the register of the violin part is good for the flute, so hardly anything needed to be changed. The only exception was in measure 28, where the violin plays low Gs, As, and B-flats that are below the flute’s range (see Figure 9a). This is the way it was originally written in the violin part:



Figure 9a. Beethoven, Violin Sonata No. 5, III, mm. 28-31

The modified version that I performed is shown in Figure 9b.

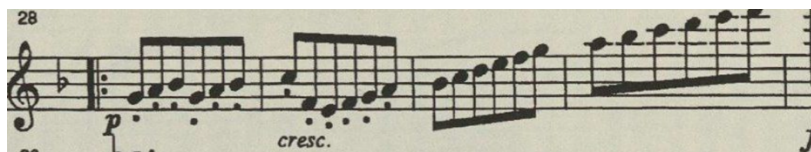


Figure 9b. Beethoven, Violin Sonata No. 5, III, mm. 28-31

IV. Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo

Beethoven marks this movement in cut time, giving it the feeling of a dance. The

¹⁵ Jeremy Yudkin, “Three Movements or Four? The Scherzo Movements in Beethoven’s Early Sonatas,” in *The New Beethoven: Evolution, Analysis, Interpretation*, ed. Jeremy Yudkin (University of Rochester Press, 2020), p. 389.

piano presents the main theme first, with the violin then taking it over. Czerny writes: “Of a similar melodious character to the first movement. The triplet middle section (in D minor) should be performed in a lively and marked manner, just as, in general, many passages also require fiery, brilliant playing.”¹⁶ This movement is also in a relatively easy register for the flute to perform.



Figure 10. Ludwig van Beethoven, Violin Sonata No. 5 in F Major, III, *mm.* 28-30

Figure 10 shows a motive that comes up frequently throughout this movement, with the dynamic of “sf” or sforzando used under every weak beat with a trill. Beethoven uses sf throughout whole sonata, but the flute cannot produce as powerful a sforzando as the violin. Sandra Rosenblum argues that “Beethoven’s very frequent employment of sf in all sorts of dynamic context suggests that it, together with sfp, is a relative accent, its intensity dependent on the prevailing dynamic, whereas ffp, fp, and mfp indicate absolute dynamic levels.”¹⁷ Browns adds, “In Beethoven’s case there is no reliable evidence from the composer himself or from his contemporaries to determine whether he intended his sfs to denote frequent explosive accents, leaving the lighter phrasing accents that he might have indicated with > to

¹⁶ Ludwig van Beethoven, *Sonata for Piano and Violin No. 5 in F Major, Op. 24 (“Spring”)*, ed. Jonathan Del Mar (Bärenreiter, 2000), editorial commentary.

¹⁷ Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performance Practice*, p. 82.

the performer, or whether his sfs were meant to cover the whole range of accents from the slightest to the most powerful.”¹⁸ In order to create that attack and strong effect on the flute, we have to articulate with a strong attack, with “Tu” in front of each note.

¹⁸ Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performance Practice*, p. 84.

Chapter 4: Robert Schumann

Robert Schumann was a German composer of the early romantic era, notable for his works for solo piano, orchestra, lieder, and orchestra. Theodore Baker describes Schumann's musical legacy as "express[ing] the deepest spirit of the romantic era," and "the quintessential artist of the Romantic period in German music."¹⁹ This German Romantic spirit originated as a reaction to woes of modernity, which could be summarized as people's alienation from "themselves, others and from nature," stemming from the new division of labor and a scientific, cold relationship with nature.²⁰ "In contrast, Romanticism sought to encourage individuality and an understanding of nature as beautiful, mysterious and magical. As the son of a bookseller and an educated and literate member of the middle class, Schumann was influenced by contemporary literature and philosophy and brought the *Zeitgeist* of individuality and emotionality and a rejection of pure rationalism to his music. Schumann described music as the 'spiritual language of emotion' and emphasized 'the art in art is to spiritualize matter so that everything material is forgotten.'"²¹

Schumann's Romanticism is best exemplified by the characters of Florestan and Eusebius. Schumann wrote music criticism for his journal the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, and in these articles, he would offer critique through the opinions of two fictional characters, Florestan and Eusebius. Florestan's perspectives were emotional, at times impulsive or even wild, whereas Eusebius represented a dreamier character, more reflective, thoughtful and mild. Scholars observe these characters to represent different sides of Schumann's

¹⁹ Theodore Baker, "Schumann (Robert)," in *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians* (Schirmer, 2001), 3234–36.

²⁰ Frederick Beiser, "Romanticism, German," *German Romanticism - Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed March 6, 2026, <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/romanticism-german>.

²¹ Alan Walker, "Schumann and His Background," In *Robert Schumann: The Man and His Music*, 1–41. Barrie and Jenkins, 1972.

personality.²² Not only do these characters make appearances in these articles, but they are also referenced in his music. There is scholarly speculation as to whether these characters are the products of mental illness, with some arguing that Schumann suffered from either bipolar disorder or schizophrenia.²³ Scholars make this assessment based on biographical details like Schumann's proclivity towards "nervous feverish attacks, and moods of bitter passion and despondency."

Understanding the characters of Florestan and Eusebius is important for interpreting a work like the Three Romances for Oboe and Piano Op. 94. Schumann wrote the Romances in December of 1849, and according to his budget book, he wrote the romances as a Christmas gift for his wife, Clara. The Romances are among Schumann's few works of chamber music for wind instruments, along with Fantasiestücke Op. 73 written for clarinet and piano, and his Adagio and Allegro Op. 70 for horn and piano. In a letter to Peter Simrock, Schumann wrote "if [I] had composed the work for violin or clarinet and piano, it would have become a completely different piece," suggesting specific considerations for the musical character of the oboe.²⁴ Nevertheless in 1851 Schumann released versions of the piece for violin and clarinet with piano, suggesting that the Romances are flexible enough after all to be adapted for other instruments.

The Three Romances have stood the test of time as among the most commonly performed works of Romantic oboe chamber music, even though the *Teacher's Guide to*

²² Lauren Lewis, "Florestan and Eusebius: A Look Into the Critical and Creative Mindset of Robert Schumann Through the Study of Selected Writings and Fantasiestücke, op. 73 für Klavier und Klarinette," The ScholarShip: East Carolina University's Institutional Repository, May 2018.

²³ Walker, "Preface" In *Robert Schumann*, p. xi

²⁴ Casey Knowlton, *Is There Romance after Schumann: An Analysis and Discussion of Robert Schumann's Three Romances for Oboe and Piano, Op. 94, Clara Schumann's Three Romances for Violin and Piano, Op. 22, and Other Selected Romances for Violin and Piano, Op. 22, and Other Selected Romances Written for Oboe and Piano* (DMA Diss., Florida State University, 2016), p. 4.

Literature of Woodwind Instruments describes the romances as “lovely works, but although they don’t look very hard they are not idiomatic and oboists find them very difficult, notably for endurance.”²⁵ I enjoyed listening to recordings by Albrecht Mayer and Heinz Holliger because of their beautiful interpretations. There are several arrangements for flute and piano, but the most common one that many flutists use today is the Jean-Pierre Rampal arrangement published by the International Music Company in 1976. This is the arrangement I selected for my recording.

The Three Romances for Oboe and Piano are each written in ternary form and exhibit musical conventions of the Romance genre: “tempi of moderate speed, quiet dynamics at the beginnings and ends of movements, and a prominent piano part.”²⁶

²⁵ Knowlton, *Is There Romance after Schumann*, p. 5.

²⁶ Knowlton, *Is There Romance after Schumann*, p. 7.

I. Nischt schnell

The first movement of Schumann's Three Romances begins in A minor with a smooth, slow-moving melody in the oboe. The A section of the movement does not modulate out of A minor, and trades melodic ideas between the piano and oboe. The melodic ideas are introduced by the oboe and later echoed by the piano. Both the piano and oboe parts remain languid throughout the A section. One could interpret this character as representing the mild, passive character of Eusebius for its stability of tempo and harmony. In contrast, the B section (beginning around measure 33) is often interpreted with a livelier tempo.

The piano part here is more active, and the oboe melody ascends into the instrument's upper register, indicating a shift in the piece's energy. In addition, the B section modulates back and forth between C major and A minor, with jarring harmonies marked by sforzando-pianos at measures 38 and 46 shown in Figure 11.



Figure 11. Robert Schumann, Three Romances for Oboe and Piano, Op.94 (Breitkopf & Härtel, 1879), *mm.* 38-50

The capricious, impulsive character of this section is more reminiscent of the Florestan character. The movement ends with a return to the secondary theme of the A section at measure 50, this time in E minor, before resolving and ultimately concluding with a return to the primary theme of the A section in its original key at measure 59.

II. Einfach, innig

The second movement of the Three Romances is both the most difficult movement of the piece for oboists and the piece's clearest example of the Florestan and Eusebius characters. The A section begins in a moderate but flowing A major, with the melody mainly carried in the oboe part, in contrast to the dialogue of the first movement. In fact, there are no written rests in the oboe part, making breathing in this section very difficult. This is even harder on the flute since a flutist has a smaller breathing capacity than an oboist. Whereas the melody in the A section of the second Romance is amorous and peaceful, the B section, marked at measure 26 as "etwas lebhafter" (somewhat livelier) is faster and more aggressive, with a much more active piano part and a darker melody in F sharp minor as shown in Figure 12.



Figure 12. Robert Schumann, Three Romances for Oboe and Piano, Op.94 (Breitkopf & Härtel, 1879), II, *mm.*27-28

As in the first movement, this B section contains extreme dynamic markings like sforzando-pianos and is more volatile in mood than the A section. This evokes the character of Florestan's impulsivity, emotionality, and wildness. The end of the B section transition gently back into the A section at measure 42 and reprises the A section nearly identically.

III. Nicht schnell

Whereas in the first two Romances, the A sections are peaceful and stable, the A section of the third Romance suggests the characteristics of Florestan. The oboe and piano introduce the A section's main melody in unison, creating a bare, tense texture in A minor. The tempo fluctuates nearly every two bars in the opening phrase, with *ritardando* in measures 2 and 4, and the marking "*zurückhaltend*" (holding back) at measure 6, after which Schumann modulates from A minor to C major, as shown as in Figure 13.



Figure 13. Robert Schumann, Three Romances for Oboe and Piano, Op.94 (Breitkopf & Härtel, 1879), I, *mm.*1-8

The section between measures 7 and 14 is often performed at a faster tempo than the opening melody. Between this section's volatility in tempo, harmony, and the tension established by the opening's sparse texture, the A section clearly represents the wild, impulsive qualities of Florestan. The oboe melody in the B section is sweeter, and the piano takes on a more clearly accompanimental role, with moments of dialogue at *mm.* 33-38. While the tempo is flexible in this section, and the harmonies are relatively flowing, the B section is performed with a narrower dynamic range and with a sweet tone, reflective of Eusebius' dreamier, milder character. While the reprisal of the A section is similarly tense

and aggressive to the movement's opening, Schumann adds an extended coda to finish the movement quietly.

Chapter 5: Johannes Brahms

For many, the mention of Johannes Brahms may immediately suggest this composer's profound and complex relationship with Clara Schumann and the perception that this bond was the emotional and professional axis upon which his life rotated. The many letters exchanged between the two of them revealed a period of shared grief when Robert Schumann, Clara's husband and Brahms' trusted mentor, was institutionalized.²⁷

Throughout his adult life, Brahms continued his performing career as a both pianist and conductor. He produced many compositions in the year 1877,²⁸ which is close in time to when he began the Sonata for Violin and Piano in G Major. In 1896, Clara Schumann died, and Brahms discovered that he was terminally ill. That year, he wrote "Four Serious Songs." Brahms' last public performance was in 1897, and a month later, on the third of April, he died.²⁹

Brahms was a champion of "absolute music": the concept or opinion that music should be non-representational and should exist for its own sake, as opposed to the idea that music should tell a story. As Eduard Hanslick, Brahms' foremost critical advocate, wrote in *The Beautiful in Music*: "The well-known figure of speech is relevant only so long as nothing but the abstract relations between music and words are referred to, quite irrespective of aesthetic requirements, and when the only point to be settled is on which of these two factors the exact and definite meaning of the subject depends. It ceases, however, to be appropriate when the point at issue is, not the abstract relation."³⁰

More than a century after Brahms' prolific career of composing, and his death, we

²⁷ Avins, *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, p. 319.

²⁸ Avins, *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, p. xxi

²⁹ Avins, *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, p. xxiii

³⁰ Eduard Hanslick, *The Beautiful in Music*, trans. Gustav Cohen (Novello, 1891), accessed March 2026.

are left with compositions across almost all musical forms, including the Sonata for Violin and Piano in G Major. Brahms was in his late 40s when he wrote the Sonata for Violin and Piano in G Major, 1878-1879. It was dedicated to husband-and-wife duo Robert Heckann (violin) and Marie Heckmann-Heftig (Piano), and it was premiered in Bonn, Germany in 1879. “In relation to his other works for violin and piano, this particular sonata was Brahms fifth attempt, but the first of the attempts that the self-critical composer would consider worthy of sharing. It may be the first attempt that signaled the more mature works in his later life.”³¹

A listener hearing this work may occasionally perceive a relatively equal partnership between the violin and the piano; however, the violin provides the leading role where the two instruments echo and bounce off another. The partnered voices create and elevate melodies that feature “bursting lyricism” and tenderness.³²

The idea for this sonata was born from a poem gifted to Brahms. Klaus Groth, a friend of Brahms, wrote this poem, entitled ‘Regenlied’ (‘Rain Song’), which Brahms later quoted in one of his art songs. The melodic motive and idea are from Brahms’ lieder Op. 59 no.3 “Regenlied” and no.4 “Nachklang.” The raindrop motif appears throughout the first and third movement. Brahms again used this poem as inspiration for this violin sonata, which is referred to as “Regensonate” (Rain Sonata). This opening lines of the poem run thus:

³¹ Los Angeles Philharmonic, “Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Major, Op. 78,” <https://www.laphil.com/musicdb/pieces/4597/violin-sonata-no-1-in-g-major-op-78> (accessed March 2026).

³² The Violin Channel, “Brahms Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Major Premiered on This Day (1879),” <https://theviolinchannel.com/brahms-violin-sonata-no-1-g-major-premiered-on-this-day-1879/> (accessed March 2026).

Pour, rain, pour down,
Awaken again in me those dreams
That I dreamt in childhood,
When the wetness foamed in the sand!

When the dull summer sultriness
Struggled casually against the fresh coolness,
And the pale leaves dripped with dew,
And the crops were dyed a deeper blue.³³

³³ Earsense Chamber Music Database, “Johannes Brahms: Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Major, Op. 78 (‘Regensonate’),” accessed March 2026.



Figure 14. Johannes Brahms, 8 Lieder and Song, Op. 59
(Breitkopf & Härtel, 1926), Opening

Figure 14 shows the opening melody of the Regenlied, op. 59 no. 3. Brahms reused the first portion of this melody in the first theme of the last movement of the Violin Sonata, op. 78 shown in figure 15.



Figure 15. Johannes Brahms, Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Major, Op. 78, III, *mm. 1-5*

The sonata stands on its own as an absolute musical work, but it evokes themes of nostalgia through musical allusions to rain. As Kai Christiansen writes, the poem "traces the path from rain to childhood dreams as nature and reverie turn inward towards a longing for the simplicity and magic of youth."³⁴ For reference, I used Mark Sparks' arrangement for

³⁴ Earsense Chamber Music Database, "Johannes Brahms: Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Major, Op. 78 ('Regensonate')," accessed March 2026.

flute from 2020 and the original version in the Urtext Breitkopf & Härtel edition of 1997 for the violin.

I. Vivace ma non troppo

The opening theme of the first movement provides at least two broad and lyrical themes and a stormy blast of intense development for a substantial sonata-allegro form that is by far the longest movement of the entire work.³⁵ Performing the first movement of this sonata on the flute was physically difficult because of the breath and energy required to express the thick textural and harmonic weight. In fact, this is the only one of all ten movements in Brahms' three violin sonatas in which the violin plays continuously.³⁶ The second theme in this movement, which I personally think is one of the most beautifully melodious lines that Brahms wrote, has a long lyrical line that is almost impossible to imitate on the flute. Performing this first movement was deeply emotional in my personal experience. Much of that emotion originates from the raindrop motive Brahms introduces in the opening measure. The rain drops motif (Figure 15), heard in the pickup to the downbeat of the first measure, conveys a remarkable depth of expression through rhythm alone. I interpreted it as a combination of hope and desperation. The sixteenth rest creates a brief pause that suggests hope for what is to come, while at the same time expressing a sense of longing.

³⁵ Earsense Chamber Music Database, "Brahms: Violin Sonata No. 1, Op. 78.

³⁶ Joel Lester, *Brahms's Violin Sonatas: Style, Structure, Performance* (Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 90.



Figure 16. Johannes Brahms, Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Major, Op. 78, I, *mm.* 36-43

Figure 16 is the opening of the second theme of this movement. The line keeps moving continuously, so it is difficult to find a good place to breathe. I decided to breathe after the downbeat of measure 40. Measures 36-39 form a four-measure phrase, and I did not want to interrupt the phrasing by taking a breath.

Another question a flutist needs to ask a violinist is: how do we interpret a double-stop on a flute? Double-stopping is a technique on the violin when the player presses two strings with the left hand and bows them simultaneously, producing two pitches at the same time. Unlike the violin, the flute cannot play more than one note at a time.



Figure 17a. Johannes Brahms, Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Major, Op. 78, I, *mm.*82-83

As seen in Figure 17a, beginning at measure 82, the violin has a series of three-note chords. A flutist cannot physically perform this passage as written. In this performance, I decided to play only the top notes of each chord because they are part of the most important voice of the three voices in the violin part going from B-D-C-B-A-D-C#-A-D-A. Mark Sparks, in his arrangement, puts a grace note before the half note shown in Figure 17b.



Figure 17b. Mark Sparks, arr., Johannes Brahms: Sonata No. 1 in G Major, Op. 78, for Flute and Piano (Hal Leonard, 2010), I, *mm.* 82-83

I chose not to play the grace note before the half note because it detracted from the pizzicato effect. Instead, I placed a light attack on each half note and held it for a quarter note value with a slight lift at the end.

II. Adagio

Although much of Brahms' work falls into the category of absolute music, as discussed earlier, this movement's inspiration can be linked to a specific incident from Brahms' life. "His godson, Felix, who was also the youngest son of Robert Schumann and Clara Schumann, contracted tuberculosis which eventually caused his death in 1872."³⁷ Brahms wrote a letter to Clara Schumann on the back of his hand-written score of the Adagio's opening twenty-four measures:

Dear Clara,

If you play quite slowly what appears on the other side of this page, it will say to you, perhaps more clearly than I otherwise could, how heartfelt my thoughts are concerning you and Felix-even concerning his violin, which, however, is surely at rest.³⁸

Most performers and audiences do not know these details of why and how Brahms was thinking when writing this Adagio. However, Brahms clearly believed that the G-major sonata was understandable as music on its own terms. Implicitly, he believed that any narrative would emerge from the notes and not be imposed upon the notes by words.³⁹

The violin's melodic line fits well on the flute due to the wide range required by this movement, as well as the need for playing in a high register, which occurs often in this movement. I made the decision to play m.10 an octave higher. The note is Bb, and it is the first note the violin has in the movement. It is harder to play in a piano dynamic an octave

³⁷ Lester, *Brahms' Violin Sonatas*, p. 170

³⁸ Lester, *Brahms' Violin Sonatas*, p. 169

³⁹ Lester, *Brahms' Violin Sonatas*, p. 171

higher than what is written, but I decided to play it octave higher to give it a more mysterious and anxious character.



Figure 18. Brahms, Violin Sonata No. 1, II, *mm.* 5-18



Figure 19. Sparks, arr., Brahms Sonata No. 1, II, *mm.* 250-261

As shown in Figure 18, the violin's melody begins within the flute's range, but in m. 13, it dips too low. Mark Sparks' arrangement (Figure 19) keeps most of the passage in

the original octave, transposing only the low A and B-flat up one octave. I opted instead to play all of mm. 9-13 up an octave in order to preserve the original contour of Brahms' melody. I then shifted back to the original octave beginning with the pick-up to m. 14.



Figure 20. Brahms, Violin Sonata No. 1, II, *mm.* 291-292

Another change that I made from Mark Sparks' arrangement is in measure mm. 47-48, as shown in Figure 20. Despite being in a slow tempo, playing so many notes with big leaps makes it difficult for the flutist to maintain the energy and volume above the piano. My alternative was to emphasize each 32nd note and bring out the A-A#-B-D, so that the flute part moves together with the piano's sixteenth notes. Then, in measure 48, I performed an arpeggio on F, due to the low C# not being heard to improve the flow to the F natural.

III. Allegro molto moderato

The last movement of this sonata was the most exhausting of the three movements. It required a great amount of energy, and I did not understand at first why I would feel so tired after playing it. The last movement felt like it was a combination of all the emotions that Brahms wanted to express in his music, a combination of desperation, hope, and death. As a performer, understanding the emotional effect that Brahms wanted to convey is vital to one's interpretation. After looking closely at the score, I found that I was fighting against the thick harmonic texture in the piano part. Figure 21 shows mm. 45-49, where the piano and the violin parts are both marked *poco forte*. Note however that *poco forte* in Brahms is softer than *mezzo forte*. The register of the violin part is not a good register for the flute to project, so it is difficult for the flute to achieve Brahms' intended effect here. In order to be heard, I really had to push the sound, project as loud as I could, and give a strong attack at the beginning of each slur.



Figure.21 Sparks, arr., Brahms Sonata No. 1, III, mm. 45–49

The thick harmonic texture of this movement makes it difficult for a flutist to produce a sound comparable to that of a violin. Vibrato is a technique that both the flute and the violin can apply, and I have used vibrato frequently in this movement to replicate the richness of the harmonic texture. According to Brown, “There were, of course, always faster and slower vibrato effects, depending on the context, but a fair amount of evidence points towards a faster norm in the period after 1800.”⁴⁰ Given that Brahms’ violin sonata was composed in the later Romantic period, I believe that the use of vibrato is very important in this piece. Vibrato helps to create passionate and dark colors.

“As in more than one of Brahms’ great works, the end recalls the beginning, nearly wrapping around in a full circle to start the whole work again. Like the *Regenlied*’s

⁴⁰ Brown, *Classical and Romantic Performance Practice*, p. 545.

backward-looking nostalgia for youth, the finale recalls musical elements from both the first and second movements in a masterful use of subtle suggestion with a miraculous effect. Inspired and mirrored by the finale, the beginning only makes full sense at the end.”⁴¹ The last movement feels like the answer to all the questions that were raised in the first and second movements. What Brahms asked in the first movement is all answered in the last movement.

⁴¹ Earsense Chamber Music Database, “Brahms: Violin Sonata No. 1, Op. 78.”

Conclusion

Classical music possesses a depth of history and artistic significance that allows it to remain meaningful across generations. That is why works by Beethoven, Brahms, and Schumann are still performed and heard by audiences, and why people are still willing to do research on these works. Compared to pop music in today's world, where the trends change quickly and people forget the old trend once a new trend appears, works by great composers like Beethoven, Brahms, and Schumann still continue to be valued today.

Period instruments were lacking in their ability to execute music as demanding as Beethoven's Violin Sonata No. 5 in F Major, Op. 24 ("Spring") or Brahms' Violin Sonata in G Major, Op. 78. However, as the flute's mechanical construction has developed, so has its capacity for undertaking the idiomatic challenges posed by this repertoire. This capacity enabled me to take on this repertoire that has for so long inspired me. Interpreting these pieces on the flute has offered new insight born from both the capabilities and the limitations of the flute. Understanding these works through the flute breathes new life into these works, continuing the practice of finding spontaneity, novelty and in new and old music.

When I first had the idea of wanting to perform works by Beethoven, Brahms, and Schumann, I was scared and worried that I was doing something out of the norm. But after completing a full professional recording of this repertoire and engaging at a deeper level with the music, I am glad I made the right choice to take courage and take action. I felt a deep connection to these pieces, and I relished the challenge of interpreting these quintessential chamber works. Adapting violin repertoire onto the flute required me to reexamine each phrase through breath, tone color, articulation, and line, which deepened my appreciation for these pieces and allowed me to immerse myself into the emotional world of each composer. Some of my most cherished recordings by Perlman inspired this project and became a guide

for me to find Beethoven's vitality and Brahms' nostalgic warmth, which naturally emerge through the warmth of solo violin. At the same time, the need to incorporate breathing challenged me to find new ways to communicate emotional depth through the tone of the modern metallic flute. Working through these technical challenges quickly became a personal journey that pushed my creativity as a flutist and demonstrates why this music continues to resonate across generations. I hope that my interpretations of Beethoven's Violin Sonata No. 5 in F Major, Op. 24 ("Spring"), Brahms' Violin Sonata in G Major, Op. 78, and Schumann's Three Romances, Op. 94, can help others who have the same interest in performing music from the Romantic Era.

Appendix

Recording Information

Project title: DMA Dissertation Recording

Date Recorded: 1/23/2026

Location: Dekelboum Hall at University of Maryland Clarice Smith Building

Recording Engineer: Antonino D'urzo

Track 1:

Ludwig van Beethoven's Violin Sonata in F Major, Op. 24 ("Spring")

1. Allegro
2. Adagio molto espressivo
3. Scherzo: Allegro molto
4. Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo

Track 2:

Robert Schumann's Three Romances for Oboe and Piano, Op. 94

1. Nicht Schnell
2. Einfach, innig
3. Nicht Schnell

Track 3:

1. Vivace ma non troppo
2. Adagio
3. Allegro molto moderato

Bibliography

- Avins, Styra, ed. *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*. Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Baines, Anthony. *Woodwind Instruments and Their History*. Faber and Faber, 1963.
- Baker, Theodore. "Schumann (Robert)." In *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, 3234–3236. Schirmer, 2001.
- Brown, Clive. *Classical and Romantic Performance Practice 1750–1900*. Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Cone, Edward T. *Musical Form and Musical Performance*. W. W. Norton & Company, 1968.
- Ganioglu, Ceyla. "Form in Beethoven's Sonata for Violin and Piano, Op. 24." *Saudi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 6, no. 2 (2021): 48–52.
- Hanslick, Eduard. *The Beautiful in Music*. Translated by Gustav Cohen. Novello, 1891.
- Knowlton, Casey. "Is There Romance After Schumann? An Analysis and Discussion of Robert Schumann's Three Romances for Oboe and Piano, Op. 94." DMA diss., Florida State University, 2016.
- Lester, Joel. "First-Movement Sonata Forms." In *Brahms's Violin Sonatas: Style, Structure, Performance*. Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Lebrecht, Norman. *Why Beethoven: A Phenomenon in One Hundred Pieces*. Pegasus Books, 2020.
- Lewis, Lauren. "Florestan and Eusebius: A Look Into the Critical and Creative Mindset of Robert Schumann Through the Study of Selected Writings and *Fantasiestucke op. 73 für Klavier und Klarinette*." The ScholarShip: East Carolina University's Institutional Repository, May 2018.
- Lockwood, Lewis. *Beethoven: The Music and the Life*. W. W. Norton, 2003.
- Powell, Ardal. *The Flute*. Yale University Press, 2002.
- Walker, Alan. "Schumann and His Background." In *Robert Schumann: The Man and His Music*, 1–41. Barrie and Jenkins, 1972.

Musical Scores

- Beethoven, Ludwig van. *Violin Sonata No. 5 in F Major, Op. 24 ("Spring")*. Bärenreiter, 2000.
- Brahms, Johannes. *Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Major, Op. 78*. Breitkopf & Härtel, 1997.

Brahms, Johannes. *8 Lieder and Songs, Op. 59*. Edited by Hans Gál. Breitkopf & Härtel, 1926.

Robert Schumann, *Three Romances for Oboe and Piano, Op. 94*. Breitkopf & Härtel, 1879.

Schumann, Robert. *Three Romances, Op. 94 for Oboe (or Violin) and Piano*. Edited by Louis Moyse. International Music Company, 1948.

Sparks, Mark, arr. *Johannes Brahms: Sonata No. 1 in G Major, Op. 78 for Flute and Piano*. Hal Leonard, 2010.

Pope, George, arr. *Beethoven: Sonata No. 5 in F Major, Op. 24 for Flute and Piano*. Alry Publications, 2000.

Online Sources

All About the Flute. “History and Development of the Flute.” Accessed March 13, 2026. <https://allabouttheflute.weebly.com/history-and-development.html>

Beiser, Frederick. “Romanticism, German.” *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Accessed March 6, 2026. <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/romanticism-german>.

Earsense Chamber Music Database. “Johannes Brahms: Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Major, Op. 78 (‘Regensonte’).” <https://www.earsense.org/chamber-music/Johannes-Brahms-Violin-Sonata-No-1-in-G-major-Op-78-Regensonte/>.

Internet Archive. “The Beautiful in Music.” <https://ia601604.us.archive.org/33/items/beautifulinmusic00hansiala/beautifulinmusic00hansiala.pdf>

Los Angeles Philharmonic. “Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Major, Op. 78.” <https://www.laphil.com/musicdb/pieces/4597/violin-sonata-no-1-in-g-major-op-78>

The Violin Channel. “Brahms Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Major Premiered on This Day (1879).” <https://theviolinchannel.com/brahms-violin-sonata-no-1-g-major-premiered-on-this-day-1879/>

Vancouver Recital Society. “Program Notes: The Beethoven Project.” <https://vanrecital.com/2012/05/program-notes-the-beethoven-project/> (accessed March 2026)