

Eight Pieces, Op. 83 (1909)

Max Bruch

The *Eight Pieces, Op. 83* were originally written for clarinet, viola, and piano and first performed in 1909 in Cologne and Hamburg with Bruch's son Max Felix playing the clarinet part. Bruch also scored the pieces for violin, viola, and piano as well as for clarinet, cello, and piano. The violin, clarinet, and piano combination is yet another viable alternative since each different instrumentation imparts its own subtle and characteristic flavor to these lovely late Romantic pieces.

Wilhelm Altmann, the famous chamber music authority, wrote that Bruch's chamber works "are one and all distinguished by beauty of tone and musical architecture." Further, concerning the *Eight Pieces*, he enthuses: "How nobly inspired are the melodies that he produced this late in life; how mature his development of them and how effective his handling of each individual instrument."

—Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr

Max Bruch (1838–1920), the composer of the celebrated *Violin Concerto in G Minor*, the *Scottish Fantasia* for violin and orchestra, and the *Kol Nidrei* variations for cello and orchestra, belonged to the generation of romantics, even with new musical endeavors moving in the world around him. *Eight Pieces, Op. 83* belong wholly to the world of Schumann and Brahms.

Bruch conceived the *Eight Pieces* as a collection rather than a cycle, and each piece was published separately. The composer leaves it up to the performers to determine the choice of individual pieces and the assembly of the cycle, and thereby the aggregate result. Each piece is written in a different key, has a free two- or three-part form, and for the most part, a free tempo. Only two, Nos. 7 and 8, are in sonata form. Nos. 2, 4, and 7 are at a faster tempo, and No. 7 is the only one in a major key. The complete collection is arranged as follows:

1. *Andante* (a minor)
2. *Allegro con moto* (b minor)
3. *Andante con moto* (c minor)
4. *Allegro agitato* (d minor)
5. *Romanian melody* (f minor)
6. *Night Song, Andante con moto* (g minor)
7. *Allegro vivace* (B Major)
8. *Moderato* (e-flat minor)