

Kahn, R: Serenade Op. 73 Oboe, Horn & Piano



Robert Kahn (1865-1951) was born in Mannheim of a well-to-do banking family. He began his studies at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin. There, he got to know and became friends with Joseph Joachim who was the director. It was through both Joachim and his own family that he had a chance to get to know Brahms, who was so impressed with Kahn that he offered to give him composition lessons. However, Kahn was too overawed to accept. Nevertheless, Brahms did help Kahn informally, and while Kahn's work does, to some extent, show the influence of Brahms, he is an eclectic and independent composer whose music has its own originality. After finishing his studies in Berlin, Kahn, on Brahms' suggestion, went to Munich to study with Joseph Rheinberger. After completing his own studies, he worked for a while as a free lance composer before obtaining a position at the Hochschule in Berlin where he eventually became a professor of piano and composition.

The Trio Serenade has a very interesting history. When Kahn submitted it to his publisher Simrock, it was a trio for Oboe, Horn & Piano. Simrock took one look at it and told Kahn he would never sell more than a few copies if that were the only combination by which the work could be played. He told Kahn point blank that he would not publish it unless he made at least a version for standard piano trio. Kahn, who apparently was very fond of this work, did Simrock one better---he wrote the Serenade so that it could be played by 9 different ensembles! In a post-Brahmsian idiom, the lovely Trio Serenade is, unlike Brahms' own serenades, in one continuous substantial movement. It does, however, consist of two alternating parts, each with its own middle section or trio. The first part is a genial and relaxed Andante sostenuto which has for its trio section a lively Vivace. The second part consists of an Allegretto non troppo e grazioso, not terribly fast but elegant. It too has a faster middle section.

The composer specifically intended this work to be able to be played by the following trio ensembles:

1. Violin, Cello & Piano
2. Violin, Viola & Piano
3. Violin, Horn & Piano
4. Clarinet, Cello & Piano
5. Clarinet, Viola & Piano
6. Clarinet, Horn & Piano
7. Oboe, Cello & Piano
8. Oboe, Viola & Piano
9. Oboe, Horn & Piano