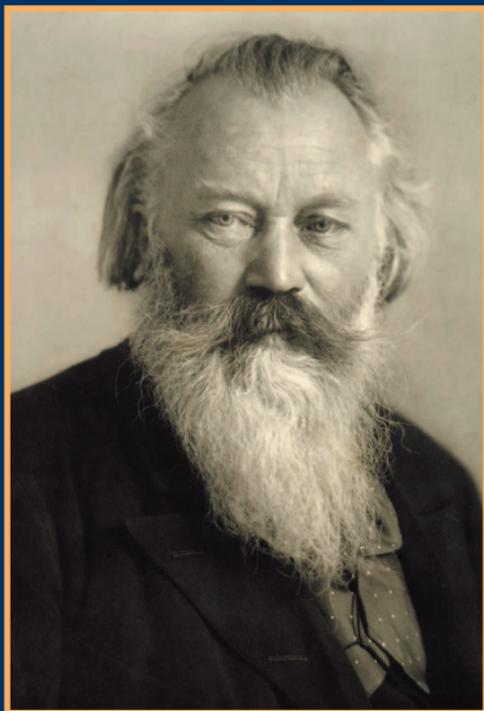




# Great Violinists • Menuhin

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## BRAHMS

Sonata No. 1 in G major

Sonata No. 3 in D minor

## SCHUMANN

Sonata No. 2 in D minor

Yehudi Menuhin, Violin

Hephzibah Menuhin, Piano

Recorded 1934 - 1940

## Ward Marston

In 1997 Ward Marston was nominated for the Best Historical Album Grammy Award for his production work on BMG's Fritz Kreisler collection. According to the Chicago Tribune, Marston's name is 'synonymous with tender loving care to collectors of historical CDs'. Opera News calls his work 'revelatory', and Fanfare deems him 'miraculous'. In 1996 Ward Marston received the Gramophone award for Historical Vocal Recording of the Year, honouring his production and engineering work on Romophone's complete recordings of Lucrezia Bori. He also served as re-recording engineer for the Franklin Mint's Arturo Toscanini issue and BMG's Sergey Rachmaninov recordings, both winners of the Best Historical Album Grammy.

Born blind in 1952, Ward Marston has amassed tens of thousands of opera classical records over the past four decades. Following a stint in radio while a student at Williams College, he became well-known as a reissue producer in 1979, when he restored the earliest known stereo recording made by the Bell Telephone Laboratories in 1932.

In the past, Ward Marston has produced records for a number of major and specialist record companies. Now he is bringing his distinctive sonic vision to bear on works released on the Naxos Historical label. Ultimately his goal is to make the music he remasters sound as natural as possible and true to life by 'lifting the voices' off his old 78 rpm recordings. His aim is to promote the importance of preserving old recordings and make available the works of great musicians who need to be heard.

The Naxos historical label aims to make available the greatest recordings in the history of recorded music, in the best and truest sound that contemporary technology can provide. To achieve this aim, Naxos has engaged a number of respected restorers who have the dedication, skill and experience to produce restorations that have set new standards in the field of historical recordings.

## Great Violinists • Yehudi Menuhin

SCHUMANN (1810-1856): Sonata No. 2 in D minor, Op. 121

BRAHMS (1833-1897): Sonata No. 1 in G major, Op. 78 • Sonata No. 3 in D minor, Op. 108

Musical families are not unusual but it often happens that one sibling outshines the others in public acclamation. So it was with the Menuhins. Elder brother Yehudi was so obviously talented that no one took much notice of the piano-playing sisters Hephzibah and Yaltah. It was often assumed that they were just adjuncts to his glorious progress through the musical capitals of the world; whereas in fact they were personalities in their own right, distinct from Yehudi – and from each other. This album is something of a celebration of Hephzibah's talent, as she has arguably the more difficult rôle in three of the great violin sonatas, written by two of the great pianist-composers.

Hephzibah Menuhin was born in San Francisco on 20th May 1920 and made her début there in 1928. Among her teachers were Rudolf Serkin in Basel and Marcel Ciampi in Paris. She started playing sonatas in public with Yehudi in Paris in October 1934. For a time following her first marriage in 1938 she lived in Australia; but after the Second World War she settled in London, where she remarried. A woman of firm principles, she was known to open her house to vagrants and other down-and-outs. As a musician she was happiest in Mozart, although she covered a wide repertoire. Her recordings include Schubert's 'Trout' Quintet with members of the Amadeus Quartet, Mozart concertos with her brother conducting, trios with Yehudi and Maurice Gendron – their collaboration lasted 25 years – and sonatas with Yehudi. She died in London on New Year's Day 1981 after a long illness. Her brother wrote of her: 'Such was Hephzibah's sensitivity that she did not need many words. She was an extraordinary instrument, almost an extension of myself.'

Born in New York on 22nd April 1916, Yehudi

Menuhin died in Berlin on 12th March 1999. Between those dates he metamorphosed from the child of obscure Russian immigrants into Baron Menuhin of Stoke d'Abernon, perhaps the best-known musician in the world and a sort of international statesman. He was brought up initially in San Francisco and after two years of lessons with Siegmund Anker, began studies with Louis Persinger in 1923. Two years later he gave his first full solo recital; then in 1926 came his New York début, his concerto début in San Francisco and his first trip to Europe, where he studied in Paris with Enescu apart from two summers spent in Basel with Adolf Busch. From 1931 the family, who lived off Yehudi's earnings, established their home near Paris; and the following year the boy recorded the Elgar *Concerto* under the composer's direction. After a world tour in 1935 he took an eighteen-month sabbatical and then entered on a disastrous first marriage: his tyrannical parents had not prepared him for real life. Many wartime concerts and a 1945 tour of the German death camps with Benjamin Britten were followed by a successful second marriage and a career lived in the limelight. In due course he took up conducting, making numerous recordings in that rôle; and although he never had much time available for teaching, he founded schools in England and Switzerland. The public, nevertheless, continued to associate him with the violin, even when he had given up playing it, and much of Menuhin's later life was spent trying to reconcile his increasing musical mastery with his diminishing control over his instrument.

The recordings here of the *D minor Sonatas* by Brahms and Schumann were made when the Menuhins were both young and inexperienced in life, so we should not expect the interpretations to be of the same

dramatic, heroic stature as the performances by the Busch-Serkin Duo (preserved in live recordings). The pleasures here are rather different. We hear a songful, easeful partnership which is in its springtime. Brother and sister returned to the Brahms work in 1947, 1959 and 1961, and each time they made a little more of it, but they never went back to the Schumann – in fact this composer was almost absent from Yehudi Menuhin's repertoire in his later years. He made a beautiful recording of Schumann's *Violin Concerto*, in 1938 with Barbirolli, but it soon passed out of his concert repertoire along with the *D minor Sonata*. We must, then, make the most of this recording, set down even before the Menuhins' public partnership began. It might have been better for them to essay the less stressful *A minor Sonata, Op. 105*, but that one had to wait until

1937, when Busch and Serkin recorded it. As it is, the Menuhins are heard at their best in the unusual second movement. By another of those quirks of fate which determine the history of recording, it is the lyrical Brahms *G major Sonata*, which would have suited the younger Menuhins down to the ground, that is played by the more mature duo. This recording was made in Australia, when Yehudi was touring there in 1940. Brother and sister were reunited for recitals in the major cities, and Yehudi was to look back on that southern hemisphere autumn and winter as an idyllic time before his own marriage (to the sister of Hephzibah's husband) went sour. His first child was even born in Melbourne. Something of that happy feeling finds its way into the performance.

**Tully Potter**

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## SCHUMANN • BRAHMS

Violin Sonatas

Yehudi Menuhin (1916-1999)  
Hephzibah Menuhin (1920-1981)

Playing  
Time  
74:42

NAXOS Historical

MENUHIN: SCHUMANN • BRAHMS

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Robert SCHUMANN (1810-1856):

Sonata No. 2 in D minor, Op. 121

27:58

1 Ziemlich langsam – Lebhaft

10:32

2 Sehr lebhaft

4:09

3 Leise, einfach

6:56

4 Bewegt

6:21

Recorded by HMV in Paris, 22nd May & 3rd July 1934;  
mats. 2PG 1614/21; cat. DB 2264/67

Johannes BRAHMS (1833-1897):

Sonata No. 1 in G major, Op. 78

26:38

5 Vivace ma non troppo

10:21

6 Adagio

8:10

7 Allegro molto moderato

8:07

Recorded by HMV Australia, 18th September 1940;  
mats. 2AA 32/38; cat. DB 5798/801

Sonata No. 3 in D minor, Op. 108

20:06

8 Allegro

7:18

9 Adagio

4:37

10 Un poco presto e con sentimento

2:41

11 Allegro

5:29

Recorded by HMV in London, 1st July 1936;  
mats. 2EA 11785/90; cat. DB 6441/43

Following his concert début at the age of seven, Yehudi Menuhin enjoyed a prodigious rise to fame. So extraordinary was his ability that his younger piano-playing sister Hephzibah was often overlooked as a musician in her own right. This album is something of a celebration of her talent, as she has arguably the more difficult rôle. These recordings of the D minor Sonatas by Brahms and Schumann were made when the Menuhins were both young and inexperienced, whereas the lyrical Brahms *G major Sonata* was recorded during Yehudi's 1940 tour of Australia. This was an idyllic time for him, and something of that happy feeling finds its way into the performance.

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THE EU



Producer and Audio Restoration Producer: Ward Marston

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(The Art Archive / Museum der Stadt Wien / Dagli Orti (A))



MENUHIN: SCHUMANN • BRAHMS

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