

November 27th, 2023. 8:00pm.
Sebastian Gonzalez Mora MMus Viola Recital
Clara-Lichtenstein Hall – Schulich School of Music
McGill University

Studio of / Classe de Victor Fournelle-Blain

These program notes are written by the student performing and are presented by the student in partial fulfilment of the requirements of their course.

Ces notes de programme sont écrites par l'étudiant-interprète et sont présentées en tant que réalisation partielle des critères de leur cours.

Robert Schumann: Adagio and Allegro, Op. 70

Robert Schumann's "Adagio and Allegro, Op. 70" is a striking example of the composer's ability to craft expressive chamber music. Written in 1849, a year marked by Schumann's exploration of various musical forms, this piece was originally conceived for horn and piano. As one of Schumann's "Fantasiestücke" (Fantasy Pieces), this composition invites listeners into a world of contrasting emotions and musical textures. The interplay between the Adagio's introspective beauty and the Allegro's lively energy demonstrates Schumann's mastery in creating compelling chamber music for diverse instruments.

The Adagio unfolds with a lyrical richness, the viola taking center stage with a contemplative melody set against a sensitive piano accompaniment. Transitioning seamlessly into the Allegro, the atmosphere shifts dramatically. The viola's role becomes more assertive, navigating through nimble passages that demand technical precision. The piano engages in a spirited exchange, propelling the music forward with rhythmic vitality.

Originally intended for horn, the adaptation for viola brings a new tonal color to the work, allowing the instrument's warm timbre to shine. Schumann's "Adagio and Allegro" captivates audiences with its seamless blend of expressive lyricism and virtuosic flair, showcasing the viola's versatility.

Ludwig van Beethoven: Duet mit zwei obligaten Augengläsern

Ludwig van Beethoven's "Duet mit zwei obligaten Augengläsern" is a charming and unique work for viola and cello. The title, translated as "Duet with two obligato eyeglasses," hints at Beethoven's characteristic wit and playfulness. Composed in 1796, during Beethoven's early period, this duet showcases the composer's ability to infuse even the simplest forms with expressive depth. The title humorously refers to the eyeglasses, suggesting a lighthearted and perhaps theatrical element to the piece.

The work unfolds with a series of delightful exchanges between the viola and cello, each instrument taking turns in the spotlight. Beethoven's signature use of dynamic contrasts and unexpected harmonic turns adds a layer of sophistication to the playful dialogue. The duet's brevity does not diminish its impact; rather, it highlights Beethoven's mastery in crafting miniature gems that captivate listeners. The interplay between the viola and cello creates a delightful musical conversation, with moments of humor and elegance.

"Duet mit zwei obligaten Augengläsern" stands as a testament to Beethoven's ability to transcend convention and inject personality into his compositions. As performers, embrace the wit and charm embedded in the score, inviting the audience to experience the lighter side of Beethoven's musical genius.

Paul Hindemith: Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 11, No. 4

In 1919, Hindemith composed this sonata specifically for the prestigious Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge competition, held in the United States. This competition, initiated by Coolidge to promote contemporary chamber music, attracted submissions from notable composers of the time. Despite Hindemith not securing the top prize, his participation in the Coolidge competition played a role in garnering attention for his compositional talent. It's an interesting historical note that, in the end, Rebecca Clarke emerged triumphant with her own remarkable contribution to the viola sonata repertoire.

Despite the initial success of Hindemith's composition, the composer became dissatisfied with the piece. As his compositional style evolved, he moved away from the expressive language of the

sonata. In fact, Hindemith went so far as to dismiss his early works, including this sonata, as he shifted towards a more neoclassical and objective style in the 1920s and beyond.

This rejection of his earlier works, including the Sonata for Viola and Piano, reflects Hindemith's artistic restlessness and his constant quest for innovation. While he may have disregarded this particular piece, it remains a valuable testament to a pivotal moment in his career when he was exploring new harmonic and structural possibilities.

Furthermore, the sonata, composed in the aftermath of Claude Debussy's death in 1918, appears to retain certain impressionistic hues. While Hindemith was forging his own path into more dissonant and contrapuntal realms, the lingering influence of Debussy is perceptible in the sonata's evocative and nuanced use of color. This nuanced integration of impressionistic elements within Hindemith's distinct style creates a fascinating blend, capturing the zeitgeist of a period in flux, where musical traditions were both challenged and embraced.