



Western
Music

Don Wright Faculty of Music

STUDENT RECITAL

Program Notes

Suite No. 3 in C Major

Johann Sebastian Bach composed his Six Unaccompanied Suites for Violoncello BWV 1007-1012 sometime between 1717 and 1725. Scholars believe Bach was serving as Kapellmeister for Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen at this time. The suites, along with many other works, were forgotten after Bach died. It wasn't until many years later, the Suites were discovered again and experienced a rise in popularity to transform into one of the most celebrated collections of music today. Bach's original manuscript of the Cello Suites have not been discovered, therefore the most authentic manuscript surviving is that of Anna Magdalena Bach, who was Bach's second wife from 1721-1750. All of the Suites are intended to be dances.

Suite No. 3 in C major, BWV 1009, transcribed for viola, consists of six movements which all showcase Bach's genius and mastery of composing and counterpoint. The first movement is the Prelude. This is a majestic opening movement that, in general, has a grandiose theme, perfect for showcasing the warmth and depth of the viola. The C major key of this suite is extremely effective on viola because of the open strings being C, G, D and A and this allows the instrument to resonate. The second movement is the Allemande. The word 'Allemande' is the French word for German and this dance originated in Germany in the 16th century. The Allemande is a dance that showcases the violas expressiveness with leaps and string crossings, testing a violists agility. The third movement is the Courante. 'Courante' means running or flowing in French. This movement feels like it is running with constant eighth note rhythms and constantly evolving motivic development throughout. The Courante is lively and expresses the lower register of the viola. The material in the second half of the movement is actually an inverted version of the first half.

The fourth movement is the Sarabande which is known for its slow tempo yet expressive character. Sarabande is from the Spanish word zarabanda, meaning 'bustle' or 'noise'. This dance is hauntingly beautiful and yet again, brings out the darker sounds of the viola. The fifth movement is the Bourrée I and II which are French Folk dances. These two Bourrées contrast each other with one being major and the other minor. To non-musicians, you'll be able to hear one is quite happy, extroverted and cheerful, while minor is typically sad and introspective sounding. The last movement is a cheerful and exhilarating conclusion to the Suite. The word 'Gigue' comes from the French word giquer, meaning to 'leap' or 'frolic', but the giges in general are in the Italian style with rapid tempos and an energetic nature. There is large leaps and quick movements across the strings.

The Cello Suites are considered to be some of Bach's greatest compositions. These Suites, transcribed for viola, are a testament to the timelessness and universality of Bach's music. Even without accompaniment, these suites demonstrate Bach's intimate knowledge of the instrument(s) and you can hear every voice, Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass all in one instrument.

*This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Master of Music Performance degree.*



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Sonata for Viola and Piano Op. 25 no. 4

Paul Hindemith's Sonata for Viola and piano Op. 25 no. 4 was written in 1922 and premiered in 1923. This sonata was part of a collection of sonatas written for different instruments but it was not published until fourteen years after Hindemith's death. This Sonata shows the unique characteristics and potential of the viola as Hindemith was a violist himself. The Sonata consists of three movements. The first movement, *Sehr lebhaft. Markiert und kraftvoll*, translates to 'Very lively. Marked and powerful'. It encompasses dissonances, double and even triple stops, which are two or three notes played at the same time. The second movement is *Sehr Langsame Viertel*, which translates to 'Very slow quarters'. The third movement, *Finale. Lebhaftes Viertel*, translates to 'Final. Lively neighborhoods'. This Sonata branches into new territories in terms of traditional tonality and is now a huge contribution to viola repertoire.

Sonata for Viola and Piano in E-flat major, Op. 120, No. 2

Johannes Brahms was considered to be one of the greatest composers of the Romantic period. He was a virtuoso pianist and premiered many of his own works. The Sonatas were written late in Brahms career and showcases the composers musicality and expression. These Sonatas were originally written for Clarinet and Piano in 1894 and dedicated to the clarinettist Richard Mühlfeld. The Eb Sonata is the second in a pair of sonatas which make up Opus 120, along with the F minor Sonata (Op 120 No. 1). However, Brahms himself transcribed the two sonatas for viola, and the viola's rich sonority and palette of colours complement the sonatas' emotional turbulence perfectly.

The Eb Sonata consists of three movements. The *Allegro amabile* is the lyrical first movement which is an introspective yet bright movement. This movement forms the main theme which is continuously developed throughout the rest of the piece. The second movement is the *Allegro appassionato*. This is a fiery, passionate movement characterized by dramatic contrasts, intensity and sensitivity which is heroic and beautiful. The third movement is the *Andante con Moto* and an extended theme and variations with a grandiose melody and an intricate use of rhythm and syncopation. Throughout this Sonata, Brahms displays his intrinsic gift of composing by using beautiful melody writing, expressive qualities and harmonic and rhythmic intricacies. The interplay between piano and viola is genius as well. Although originally composed for clarinet, this piece is a standard in a violists repertoire as it showcases the beauty and versatility of the viola as a solo instrument.

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