

**Dissertation in Music Performance**

**by**

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Musical Arts  
(Music: Performance)  
in the University of Michigan  
2020**

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express my gratitude to members of my Doctoral Committee and to my teacher Professor Caroline Coade in particular, for making me a better musician. I also would like to give special thanks to my collaborators Arianna Dotto, Meridian Prall, Ji-Hyang Gwak, Taylor Flowers, and Nathaniel Pierce. Finally, I am grateful for the continuous support of my parents, and for the invaluable help of Anna Herklotz and Gabriele Dotto.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
ABSTRACT	iv
<b>FIRST DISSERTATION RECITAL:</b>	
Program	1
Program Notes	2
<b>SECOND DISSERTATION RECITAL:</b>	
Program	18
Program Notes	19
<b>THIRD DISSERTATION RECITAL:</b>	
Program	27
Program Notes	28
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	40

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation pertains to three viola recitals, which were respectively performed on 2 October 2019, 20 January 2020, and 9 March 2020. Each recital program embraced a specific theme involving little-performed works as well as staples from the viola repertoire, and covered a wide range of different musical styles.

The first recital, performed with violinist Arianna Dotto, focused on violin and viola duo repertoire. Two pieces in the Classical and early Romantic styles by W. A. Mozart and L. Spohr were presented in parallel with two pieces from the twentieth century in the Neo-Classical style by Ernst Toch and Bohuslav Martinů. This program explored repertoire from different aesthetics and techniques by demonstrating how composers from the twentieth century renewed traditional musical forms in terms of their own original vocabulary.

The second recital, performed in collaboration with pianist Taylor Flowers and singer Meridian Prall, offered a comparative experience of Johannes Brahms' two viola sonatas, Op. 120, No. 1 and 2, with his Two Songs, Op. 91. The program explored the historical context of each work, highlighting the intrinsic and philosophical connection between the sonatas, as well as the particularly personal nature of the songs, written as a present for a close friend.

The two pieces presented in the third recital program, Dmitri Shostakovich's Viola Op. 147 and Alfred Schnittke's String Trio (1985), were written shortly before their respective composers died or were on the precipice of death, and I believe both pieces evoke the way these composers confronted their own mortality. The continuity between the two composers' musical language is apparent in this program, governed by a bleak and somber character pierced with luminous and elusive moments of hope. The performance involved collaboration with violinist Arianna Dotto, cellist Nathaniel Pierce, and pianist Ji-Hyang Gwak.

FIRST DISSERTATION RECITAL

# JOACHIM ANGSTER, VIOLA

**ARIANNA DOTTO, VIOLIN**

*Wednesday, October 2, 2019*  
*Walgreen Drama Center, Stamps Auditorium*  
*8:00 PM*

**Duo for Violin and Viola no. 1 in G Major,**

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

**K. 423** (1783)

(1756–1791)

Allegro

Adagio

Rondeau. Allegro

Arianna Dotto, violin

**Divertimento, op. 37, no. 2** (1925)

Ernst Toch

Vivace Molto

(1887–1964)

Adagio, Espressivo Molto

Flott und Lustig

Arianna Dotto, violin

*Intermission*

**Duet for Violin and Viola in E Minor, op. 13** (1808)

Louis Spohr

Allegro Moderato

(1784–1859)

Adagio

Tempo di Minuetto

Arianna Dotto, violin

**Duo no. 1 for Violin and Viola (“Three Madrigals”),**

Bohuslav Martinů

**H. 313** (1947)

(1890–1959)

Poco Allegro

Poco Andante

Allegro

Arianna Dotto, violin

## FIRST DISSERTATION RECITAL: PROGRAM NOTES

### DUO FOR VIOLIN AND VIOLA NO.1, K.423 (1783) – W. A. MOZART (1756–1791)

Between 1750 and 1825, many composers including Carl Stamitz (1745-1801), Ignatz Pleyel (1757-1831), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Franz Anton Hoffmeister (1754-1812), and Louis Spohr (1784-1859) composed violin and viola duos.<sup>1</sup> During this period, the popularity of the violin, as well as the development of the viola, led to an increase in the demand for repertoire. In fact, the viola made significant progress as a solo instrument with contributions from such composers of the Galant and Classical styles as Alessandro Rolla and Carl and Anton Stamitz. David M. Bynog notes that the former “composed more than twenty concertante works for the viola.”<sup>2</sup> Important sonatas and concertos were also written by Dittersdorf, Vanhal, Druschetsky, Hoffstetter, and Hoffmeister among others. Their reputations, however, were “overshadowed by the superior genius of Haydn and Mozart; consequently, their works fell into neglect and were forgotten during the 19th century.”<sup>3</sup> Mozart was a violist himself and largely contributed to the development of the viola repertoire. Haydn had already popularized the instrument by including it in the new genre of the string quartet, but Mozart used the viola not only as an accompaniment for filling the harmony but also for its particular color and technical possibilities.<sup>4</sup> In his string quartets, the viola parts became increasingly independent, technically challenging, and musically interesting. With the *Symphonie Concertante* for violin, viola, and orchestra, composed in 1779, Mozart treats the viola as the equal of the violin, creating a constant dialogue between both instruments. The virtuosic and leading quality of the viola part represents a significant step in the development of the instrument, requiring the player to overcome unprecedented technical challenges, like for instance reaching the seventh position.<sup>5</sup> In Mozart’s late chamber music from the years 1783 to 1791, especially the Piano Quartets (K. 478 and K. 493), the “Kegelstatt” Trios for Clarinet, Viola, and



Piano (K. 498), and the String Quintets with two violas (K. 515, K. 516, K. 593, and K. 614), his “fondness for the middle voiced instrument is most evident.”<sup>6</sup> The two duos for violin and viola from 1783 (K. 423 and K. 424), of which you will hear the first, were also composed in this period, eight years before the composer’s death.

In the summer of 1783, Mozart traveled to Salzburg so that he might introduce his new wife Constanze to his father. This was his first return to Salzburg since he had definitively broken free of his exclusive and draconian contract with the Archbishop of Salzburg Hieronymus Colloredo two years earlier and moved to Vienna. Wolfgang and his father Leopold had both had longstanding troubles with their employer Colloredo due to his difficult personality, his reforms in Salzburg which were detrimental to court-music and university theatre, and their conditions of employment.<sup>7</sup> After multiple attempts to find employment elsewhere in Europe, Mozart had a final and stormy interview with Colloredo which ended with his dismissal and a “kick in the behind...by order of our worthy Prince Archbishop,” as he wrote to his father.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Mozart had expressed his fear of being arrested by the archbishop upon his return.

During his visit, Mozart met with Michael Haydn, Joseph Haydn’s younger brother and Colloredo’s court music director. A student of Michael Haydn later told the story that his teacher had fallen ill and, unable to finish a set of six duos for violin and viola commissioned by the archbishop, he risked not receiving his salary. Mozart supposedly went home to compose the outstanding two duos, giving them to Michael Haydn two days later for him to present as his own.<sup>9</sup> As the story goes, the archbishop did not notice the ruse and particularly praised the pieces Mozart had written. This account has however been challenged by scholars for several reasons, the principal one being that it would have been unlikely for the archbishop to demand consignment of the completed duos by a strict deadline.<sup>10</sup>

While a skillful player of both the violin and the viola, Mozart preferred the latter (having participated in a number of "quartet parties" during his early Vienna years with none other than Vanhal, Dittersdorf, and Joseph Haydn), which is particularly apparent in the way he wrote the G major Duo. Unlike the Sinfonia Concertante written four years later, where the orchestra functions as an accompaniment for the two soloists, the instruments in these duos need to perform both roles. The composer achieved this by treating them equally, the viola answering each of the violin's interventions in a seamless exchange and participating in the musical discourse instead of merely accompanying the main themes.<sup>11</sup>

The first movement, which features a continuous, sparkling and lively sixteenth-note interplay between the instruments, is characteristic of Mozart's recent innovations in his treatment of sonata form, such as the introduction of completely new material at the beginning of the development. The dialogue between violin and viola often resembles a duel or, as Spieth put it, "a cheeky game of cat and mouse."<sup>12</sup> The "amoroso" character of the second movement evokes a lyrical aria, while the Rondo displays virtuosity and humor, interrupted by a darker minor counterpoint. Mozart had just finished his opera *The Abduction from the Seraglio* at this time, which explains the particularly operatic quality of this G major Duo. Also noteworthy is the highly inventive variety of the accompaniments in the second movement, in different paces and rhythms, as well as its dynamic shifts and sforzandi.

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<sup>1</sup> Potur also cites “Michael Haydn (1737-1806), Antonio Bartolomeo Bruni, Giuseppe Maria Cambini (1746-1825), Pietro Nardini (1722-1793), Alessandro Rolla (1757-1841), Giovanni Battista Viotti (1755-1824), and many others.” According to Franz Zeyringer’s 1985 “Literatur für Viola,” 41% of existing duos for violin and violas were written during this period by more than seventy composers. Oana Vasilica Potur, “The History and Pedagogy of Viola Duos from the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries” (PhD Diss., The Florida State University, 2015), 6.

<sup>2</sup> David M. Bynog, “THE VIOLA IN AMERICA: TWO CENTURIES OF PROGRESS,” Notes - *Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* 68, no. 4 (June 2012): 729-750.

<sup>3</sup> Maurice W. Riley, *The History of the Viola* (Ann Arbor: Braun-Brumfield, 1980), 128.

<sup>4</sup> Alison Elaine Spieth, “A Matter of Taste: Duos for Violin and Viola by Joseph Haydn, Michael Haydn, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart” (DMA Diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2012), 6.

<sup>5</sup> David D. Boyden and Ann M. Woodward, “Viola,” *Grove Music Online*, 2001, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Potur, “The History and Pedagogy,” 8.

<sup>7</sup> Cliff Eisen and Stanley Sadie, “Mozart, (Johann Chrysostom) Wolfgang Amadeus,” *Grove Music Online*, 2001, 10.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from June 9th, 1781 to his father. Eisen and Sadie, “Mozart,” 15.

<sup>9</sup> “In the summer of 1783 Mozart was visiting in Salzburg when Michael Haydn was prevented by illness from completing a series of six duos apparently ordered by Colloredo- only four had been finished. The invalid gave his condition as an excuse, but the Archbishop, who did not like excuses, immediately ordered Haydn’s salary to be withheld, as the surest means of hastening the convalescence of a man who had only his salary with which to pay the doctor and chemist. Mozart who visited the sick man every day, found him much disturbed and, upon inquiring, was told of the Archbishop’s decree. He was not in the habit of taking refuge in consoling words when there was anything he could do to help. Without saying a word to his poor friend, he went home and two days later brought him the Duets fully written out in a fair copy. Nothing more was needed, except the name of Michael Haydn on the first page, for them to be delivered to the Archbishop.” Alfred Einstein, *Mozart*, trans. Arthur Mendel and Nathan Broder (London: Cassel & Company Ltd, 1966), 185–186.

<sup>10</sup> Alison Elaine Spieth, “A Matter of Taste,” 16.

<sup>11</sup> Alison Elaine Spieth, “A Matter of Taste,” 7.

<sup>12</sup> Alison Elaine Spieth, “A Matter of Taste,” 26.

## DIVERTIMENTO FOR VIOLIN AND VIOLA, OP. 37 NO. 2 (1925) - ERNST TOCH (1887–1964)

Ernst Toch was a Viennese composer who began his career as a virtuoso pianist. Toch moved to Frankfurt to study composition and piano after receiving the Mozart Prize in 1909, and four years later became a teacher at the Mannheim Hochschule für Musik. He served in World War I in the Austrian army, which experience greatly influenced his style. Originally inspired by Mozart and Brahms in his early compositions, he began experimenting with polyphonic modern overtones and extended tonalities in his Quartet No. 9 (Op. 26, composed in 1919) and his more radical works that followed, becoming part of the musical avant-garde. During the 1920s Toch enjoyed a successful career, producing three operas (Op. 43 from 1927, Op. 46 from 1928, and Op. 51 from 1930) and a cello concerto Op. 35 (1925), which resulted in a publishing contract with Schott, and the “Bunte Suite” for orchestra Op. 48 (1928). Having secured a sufficient income from composing, Toch then stopped teaching and toured America in 1932, performing his Piano Concerto Op. 38.

Following the rise of Hitler in 1933, Toch left his home in Mannheim as a Jewish émigré, seeking exile in Paris and then London, where he wrote the scores for three movies in 1934. He then accepted an invitation from the New School of Social Research and moved to New York City in 1935. From there he moved to California, where he attempted to establish himself as a successful cinema composer in Hollywood. Finding it impossible, however, to express his modernist musical ideas in Hollywood film music as he had hoped, Toch grew dissatisfied with his work, all the more so with the disappointing realization that his “serious” concert music, too modern for the American tastes, was largely ignored by the public as well. Nonetheless, three of his sixteen original movie scores received Academy Award nominations, and he composed seven symphonies in the spirit of his earlier, late-Romantic style, among which the third (Op. 54, 1954) won the 1956 Pulitzer Prize. He taught at the

University of Southern California and gave a series of lectures at Harvard in 1944, which would become the basis of a volume of music analysis, *The Shaping Forces in Music*, first published in 1948.<sup>13</sup> Toch obtained American citizenship in 1940.

This Divertimento was composed in 1926, some seven years before the composer left Mannheim for Paris. Both pieces of the Op. 37, no. 1 and 2, were dedicated to the Vienna String Quartet and were intended to be played together as part of a string quartet concert program. In fact, the first one was scored for violin and cello, and the second for violin and cello, so that each member could be featured on stage. Op. 37 no. 2 is historically important as it is the first piece for violin and viola written for professional players. Although now part of the concert repertoire, pieces for this particular formation, including Mozart's K. 423 and 424 duos, were only destined for amateur players.<sup>14</sup> While the first duo of Op. 37 won the Schott prize for chamber music, the violin and viola duo is much more virtuosic, becoming one of the most important works for this formation and setting the trend for violin and viola duos in the twentieth century. Like works by other twentieth-century composers such as Bohuslav Martinů or Heitor Villa-Lobos, its structure is Neo-Classical, following traditional forms. Bruderer observes that in fact most of the twentieth-century repertoire for violin and viola duo is written in the Neo-Classical style and suggests that perhaps this originates in "the classical origins of the genre itself."<sup>15</sup>

The first movement displays expressive dissonance and frenetic energy and is constructed as a fast mono-thematic prelude in perpetual motion. The main theme is repeated and varied and appears in different keys, often simultaneously. Toch used bitonality as well as chromaticism throughout the work and especially in the second movement where the viola is centered around C while the violin evolves around F. This lyrical and meditative movement, built in an arch form, rhythmically evokes a remnant

of a Viennese waltz. The finale is a dissonant and satirical March structured as a traditional rondo (A-A-B-A-C-A). The abrupt changes of harmony, pervasive presence of bitonality, and extensive use of the whole tone scale all contribute to the tonal uncertainty in the movement. Both instruments share positions of equal responsibility in this movement in particular, due to the elaborate counterpoint. The many canons and imitations would seem to suggest a duel between the two voices, similar to the first movement.

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<sup>13</sup> Anja Oechsler, "Toch, Ernst," *Grove Music Online*, 2001, 2.

<sup>14</sup> Conrad David Bruderer, "A Study of Twentieth-Century Violin and Viola Duos, Including Critical Reviews and Analyses of Selected Works" (PhD Dissertation, University of California, San Diego, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1/1/1998), 13.

<sup>15</sup> Bruderer, "A Study," 33.

## DUO FOR VIOLIN AND VIOLA IN E MINOR, OP. 13 (1808) – LOUIS SPOHR (1784–1859)

Louis Spohr was a German virtuoso violinist and one of the most important composers and pedagogues of the early nineteenth century. He was a younger contemporary of Weber and Beethoven, with whom he became friends, and his works reflect an early stage of German Romanticism, still strongly rooted in the Classical style. He is widely known for his chamber music, symphonies, operas, oratorios, and tone poems, and for inventing the violin chinrest and introducing rehearsal numbers in scores. A highly respected violinist, teacher, and composer, Spohr toured Italy with Niccolò Paganini, and his contemporaries placed his works on the same level as those of Beethoven, even considering him as Beethoven's heir. As Olivia Dussek Buckley's noted in 1843 in her book *Musical Truths*, Beethoven's "works were too scientific to be understood by all, but he was the adoration of many, and re-exists now in the sublime Spohr."<sup>16</sup> Similarly, J. W. Davison wrote that same year that "his writings take their station among the master-pieces of Bach, Handel, Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber and Cherubini" and described Spohr as the "founder of a new feeling, if not of a new school in music."<sup>17</sup> Composers such as Weber or Brahms were influenced by his writing and declared their admiration for his works (as would Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss later on). Spohr disliked Beethoven's late works and Weber's operas and was not considered a particularly forward-looking composer. However, he admired the lyricism of Richard Wagner's music and conducted both *Tannhäuser* and *The Flying Dutchman* several times. Spohr's works can best be described as following the formal Classical tradition, but with an eye to the Romantic experimentations of the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup>

Spohr's early style in the 1790s was strongly influenced by southern German composers such as Dittersdorf, Weigl, Hiller, Kalkbrenner, and, of course, Mozart, with whom he became more familiar

with while in Brunswick when hearing and playing his operas. As the founder of the German School of violin, Spohr was also familiar with the music of such violin masters as Viotti, Rode, and Kreutzer. His approach to violin playing, which aimed at improving violin techniques inherited from Mozart's time, defined the instrument's technical possibilities for the entire Romantic period with the invention and general use of "broken octaves, double-stops and the exploitation of eight or more positions,"<sup>19</sup> leading to the virtuosic achievements of Paganini. This School and the compositions of these composers, however, were still rooted in the form and aesthetics of the Classical style. Spohr's style is also very much indebted to Cherubini, especially with regard to harmony. In fact, he became interested in Cherubini's bold and abrupt modulations and his new harmonic language, particularly the transitions to the flat-submediant.<sup>20</sup> Besides frequent modulations, Spohr's harmonic style is also characterized by the use of intense chromaticism reminiscent of Mozart's late works, pedal points, major-minor successions, sequences, and suspensions, creating tonal uncertainty. Finally, the great majority of his works are set in the minor mode, which often gives his music a melancholic feeling.<sup>21</sup> In addition to Cherubini and the French repertoire, Beethoven became a significant source of inspiration for Spohr, as well. In his duos for two violins Op. 3, Spohr imitated Beethoven's early quartets Op. 18, which he had championed in north Germany.<sup>22</sup> Later, Spohr would often conduct Beethoven's symphonies and piano concertos.

In 1805 Spohr was appointed as Konzertmeister in Gotha, and the following year he married the harpist Dorothea Scheidler with whom he frequently performed in duo. During his years in Gotha, Spohr developed his individual style as a composer as well as a violinist.<sup>23</sup> He had already composed three duos for two violins as his Op. 3 in 1803, which, as noted by Gretchen Madson Sherrell, were perhaps the most interesting pieces for string duos since Mozart's duos for violin and viola.<sup>24</sup> Spohr's equal treatment of both parts is clear in these pieces, perhaps because he had composed the duos to play



together with his friend Remy, a talented young French violinist in the Saint Petersburg Imperial Orchestra. Between 1806 and 1808, Spohr continued this work with the two violin duos Op. 9, which he wrote for his pupils;<sup>25</sup> in fact, it is during this period that the composer became sought after as a renowned pedagogue. The duo for violin and viola Op. 13 was composed in 1808, shortly after the Op. 9 duos, and in many ways is the outcome of the process that had started with the Op. 3 five years before. The use of double-stops allowed him to imitate string quartet writing with the viola's wider range, as well as its different timbre. According to Clive Brown, the composer adapted sonata form successfully for the instrumentation and worked towards motivic cohesion within movements.<sup>26</sup>

Much like Mozart's duos, this early work is operatic in nature. The opening Allegro of this early duo is heroic and suave, whereas the central Adagio has a serene and simple contrasting character, with its hymn-like melody accompanied by moving sixteenth notes. The final minuet has a melancholic character with the sparkle of an energetic episode. This duo reflects its composer's idiosyncratic technique, with intricate passages that seem to have been conceived as technical challenges for the performers. Spohr's thematic treatment is particularly noteworthy, concentrating on the exhaustive development of a single idea throughout each movement. As a result, his writing sometimes becomes so detailed that it can become difficult for the listener to grasp the movement's overall logic.<sup>27</sup>

During his lifetime Spohr was criticized for his compositional mannerisms, lack of originality, and self-repetition.<sup>28</sup> These charges, as well as developments at the end of the nineteenth century such as the widespread popularity of Wagner and the rise of nationalist music, led to a rapid decline of interest in Spohr's music.<sup>29</sup> His duos, however, remain prime examples of his skill and creativity and demonstrate a deep and nuanced understanding of the violin and the viola. The Op. 13 duo for violin

and viola is particularly effective for its instrumental parity, providing a “perfect blend of technical bravura and musical substance”.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Clive Brown, *Louis Spohr: A Critical Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 1, as cited by Marie Sumner Lott, in “Louis Spohr - Duo Concertant in G Minor Op. 95 Duo Concertant in F Major Op. 96 (‘Nachklänge Einer Reise ...’) Duo Concertant in E Major Op. 112 6 Duettinen Op. 127 (‘Elegisch Und Humoristisch’) - Francesco Parrino Vn, Michele Fedrigotti Pf Stradivarius 33933 (2 CDs: 124 Minutes), \$27,” *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 13, no. 2 (2016): 355.

<sup>17</sup> Clive Brown, “Spohr, Louis,” *Grove Music Online*, 2001, 6–7.

<sup>18</sup> Brown, “Spohr, Louis,” 1.

<sup>19</sup> Gretchen Madson Sherrell, “The Violin Duets of Louis Spohr” (PhD Diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 1996), 178.

<sup>20</sup> Sherrell, “The violin duets of Louis Spohr,” 88.

<sup>21</sup> Sherrell, “The violin duets of Louis Spohr,” 41-42.

<sup>22</sup> Brown, “Spohr, Louis,” 7.

<sup>23</sup> Sherrell, “The violin duets of Louis Spohr,” 87.

<sup>24</sup> Sherrell, “The violin duets of Louis Spohr,” 86.

<sup>25</sup> Sherrell notes that these duos were dedicated to five of his pupils - Wizemann, Hildebrand, Franz, Lampert and Krall. She adds that “the contemporaneous concertante for two violins and orchestra, Op. 48, was inspired by the talent and ability of Hildebrand as well.” Sherrell, “The violin duets of Louis Spohr,” 88.

<sup>26</sup> Clive Brown, *Louis Spohr: A Critical Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 50, as cited by Sherrell, “The violin duets of Louis Spohr,” 89.

<sup>27</sup> Clive Brown, *Louis Spohr: A Critical Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 50, as cited by Sherrell, “The violin duets of Louis Spohr,” 89.

<sup>28</sup> Examples of mannerisms apparent in his work (and to some extent, in this duo), are “an extreme use of chromaticism, an unnecessarily complicated harmony (over-use of diminished sevenths, for example) and occasionally a certain lack of strength and vitality, and weak rhythmic structure. Furthermore, Spohr had particular difficulties in developing a theme or motive, with the result that he resorts to repeating his themes too often.” Sherrell, “The violin duets of Louis Spohr,” 182.

<sup>29</sup> Brown, “Spohr, Louis,” 15.

<sup>30</sup> Sherrell, “The violin duets of Louis Spohr,” 181.

DUO NO. 1 FOR VIOLIN AND VIOLA “THREE MADRIGALS,” H. 313 (1947) - BOHUSLAV  
MARTINŮ (1890–1959)

During the twentieth century, composers became increasingly aware of the inherent expressive potential of the violin and viola duo. Bruderer observes that 440 works for this formation were written by more than 360 composers, approximately two hundred of which were published or are available as manuscripts.<sup>31</sup> Bohuslav Martinů’s “Three Madrigals” (1947) and his Duo No. 2 (1950), both for violin and viola, were therefore part of this renewed interest in the genre. These works were inspired by a performance of Mozart’s two duos, K. 423 and 424, by Joseph and Lillian Fuchs at the inaugural concert of the recently established Musician’s Guild, a chamber music organization, in Times Hall on 20 January 1947.<sup>32</sup> Martinů, in attendance to hear his String Sextet on the same program, was impressed and inspired by their performance, especially of K. 424 and the composer’s “use of double stopping and arpeggiation,”<sup>33</sup> and he sent the manuscript of “Three Madrigals” to Joseph Fuchs a few weeks later with a dedication to him together with his sister Lillian. Since its premiere that November on a Musician’s Guild concert by the Fuchs duo, who championed the work through many subsequent performances, the “Three Madrigals” went on to become one of the most performed and recorded works for violin and viola alongside Mozart’s duos. The reason resides both in Martinů’s well-established reputation and in the quality of the work itself, composed in the Neo-Classical style, or “Neo-Baroque with hints of a Czech influence,”<sup>34</sup> that was in vogue at the time. In fact, unlike Toch’s Divertimento for Violin and Viola, which was also cast in Neo-Classical terms, Martinů favored Baroque textures in his first and third madrigals in particular.<sup>35</sup> His ability to establish a convincing balance between emotion and intellect, combined with an extensive knowledge of both instruments (from having first approached the violin at the age of seven and studied at the Prague Conservatory from 1906–1910),<sup>36</sup> make this piece one of his most accomplished chamber works. His second duo,

although not as well-known as the “Three Madrigals,” is in a similar style, featuring the same rhythmic, motivic, and harmonic richness with perhaps more dissonant passages.<sup>37</sup>

Born in the present-day Czech Republic, Martinů was part of the avant-garde music scene in ‘20s Prague and ‘30s Paris, where he was particularly influenced by the Surrealist movement. He is considered to be “the most substantial Czech composer of the 20th century,”<sup>38</sup> along with Janáček. While studying under Roussel in Paris, he abandoned the Romantic style of his earlier compositions and began to explore Expressionism and Constructivism, before finally adopting the Neo-Classical principles developed by Igor Stravinsky. He notably incorporated central-European Bohemian and Moravian folk melodies in his works, similar to Prokofiev and Bartók, and between 1925 and the early 1930s he drew inspiration from jazz.<sup>39</sup> In March 1939, Martinů helped many Czech artists coming to Paris as refugees after the Nazi occupation and subsequent establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>40</sup> However, as the German army approached Paris he was forced to flee to the United States, where ultimately developed a successful career in New York as a teacher, orchestra musician, and composer, becoming a sought-after presence at Tanglewood and other prestigious festivals. After a serious fall in 1946, which left him suffering from “tinnitus, headaches, and depression for a number of years,” Martinů turned away from writing symphonic works to focus more on chamber music.<sup>41</sup> His last works became structurally more flexible and spontaneous, with a greater presence of rhapsodic gestures. Although Martinů drew inspiration from multiple and diverse sources throughout his career, his stylistic signature remained invariably distinctive and personal, particularly in those works written after 1935.<sup>42</sup> Characteristic components of his compositional vocabulary include the development of very short musical ideas (“amounting to little more than three- or four-note figures rotating around a central pitch”)<sup>43</sup>, syncopated rhythms, and idiosyncratic harmonic devices including specific chord progressions, important cadences (the most notable of which is called the “Moravian”

cadence),<sup>44</sup> thematic elaboration in parallel sixths and thirds, and the use of inverted chords with a tonic function.

The title “Three Madrigals” is a reference to Martinů’s admiration for the 16th-century Elizabethan madrigal and more generally his growing obsession with historic polyphonic forms, which he had begun to explore as early as 1922. In the 1930s, he cultivated considerable interest in the concerti grossi of Bach, Corelli, and Vivaldi, followed by the Notre Dame school of polyphony (12th and 13th centuries) in the late 1940s, and by Monteverdi’s music in the 1950s.<sup>45</sup> The term madrigal originally indicated a polyphonic secular vocal work in the 16th and 17th centuries, which gradually came to be used for instrumental works as well. Martinů adopted the term as the title of more than twenty pieces throughout his career. The three virtuosic movements are based on traditional Czech music, “characterized by short motives which return periodically.”<sup>46</sup> The trills and modal melodies heard in the second movement are typical features of Czech songs, and the rhythmic vitality of the first and last movements evokes the composer’s Bohemian-Moravian roots. The sonorities and textures in the second movement also betray the influence of Debussy, while the small motivic fragments in the first and third movements are decidedly reminiscent of Mozart’s duos K. 423 and 424. Indeed, the formal organization of the three movements is itself imitative of the traditional Classical sonata,<sup>47</sup> with both the first and the last movements in standard sonata form at a lively tempo and a central slower movement written as a set of variations. Bruderer further notes that the thick overall texture of the work brings Brahms’ string quartets to mind.<sup>48</sup> Martinů’s structural approach does not, however, strictly respect Classical rules, and he often took substantial liberty with the use of thematic repetition or key progressions.<sup>49</sup> As observed by Bruderer, this may have resulted from the composer’s micro-construction of movements from short and simple ideas.<sup>50</sup>

The first movement is a “moto perpetuo,” where the two instruments seem to chase one another. After a short introduction, the initial theme, played first by the violin and then by the viola, is of a heroic character and consists of a descending scale and arpeggios in B-flat minor with a constant sixteenth-note accompaniment. The second theme, a “harmonically stable, rhythmically reiterative arpeggiation,”<sup>51</sup> is the first time the instruments are not answering or accompanying each other, but rather both play the homorhythmic theme. The *Poco andante* second movement unfolds as a rhapsodic meditation in G minor, where the composer explores the special colors of muted trills in double-stops, tremolos, and sliding chromatics, with an improvisational and almost symphonic quality. One can sense the influence of Debussy’s music in the way melodic themes are hidden in the texture and replaced by different successive figurations and variations. The finale is a lively and humorous dance with a slower episode marked *Moderato*. Like the first movement, it is also constructed in sonata form, but the first theme resembles the beginning of a fugue without a countersubject. In the transition, Martinů references the character of the second movement with double-stop tremolos in both instruments. After a development that largely consists of repetitions and motivic exchanges, the *Moderato* suddenly introduces a contrapuntal section hinting at canonic imitations, where the madrigal inspiration is most evident. A violin cadenza then leads to the recapitulation, which is shorter than the exposition, and after another brief violin cadenza repeated by the viola, a faster majestic coda concludes the work in G major. As noted by Bruderer, the performance of this piece demands “quick reflexes and a high degree of ensemble awareness to properly execute the ever-present motivic imitations,” as both the character and texture of the work rely on “the coordinated combination of musical fragments.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Bruderer, “A Study,” 2.

<sup>32</sup> Steven Kruse and Penny Thompson Kruse, “Remembering Joseph and Lillian Fuchs,” *American String Teacher* 53, no. 4 (November 2003): 61.

<sup>33</sup> Steven Kruse and Penny Thompson Kruse, “Remembering Joseph and Lillian Fuchs,” 61.

<sup>34</sup> Bruderer, “A Study,” 31–32.

<sup>35</sup> Bruderer, “A Study,” 235.

<sup>36</sup> Jan Smaczny and Michael Crump, “Martinů, Bohuslav,” *Grove Music Online*, 2001, 1.

<sup>37</sup> Bruderer, “A Study,” 118.

<sup>38</sup> Smaczny and Crump, “Martinů, Bohuslav,” 1.

<sup>39</sup> Smaczny and Crump, “Martinů, Bohuslav,” 4.

<sup>40</sup> Smaczny and Crump, “Martinů, Bohuslav,” 2.

<sup>41</sup> Smaczny and Crump, “Martinů, Bohuslav,” 3.

<sup>42</sup> Brian Large, *Martinu* (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd., 1975), 143.

<sup>43</sup> Smaczny and Crump, “Martinů, Bohuslav,” 5.

<sup>44</sup> “a modified plagal cadence formed by a chord of the dominant thirteenth (e.g. with its bass on G) resolving on to the major chord a 4th lower (bass on D).” Smaczny and Crump, “Martinů, Bohuslav,” 5.

<sup>45</sup> Smaczny and Crump, “Martinů, Bohuslav,” 4.

<sup>46</sup> Jacket notes by Rita H. Mead, in Eliot Chapo, violin and Barbara Hustis, viola, “Martinu, Bohuslav, Three Madrigals for Violin and Viola (1947),” *Dohnanvi/Martinu: Chamber Music*, An die Musik, Musical Heritage Society, Inc. MHS Stereo 4451, compact disc, 1981.

<sup>47</sup> Jacket notes by Kenneth Dommett, in The Dartington Ensemble with Oliver Butterworth, violin and Patrick Ireland, viola, *Martinu*, Hyperion Records, Ltd. A66I3, compact disc, 1984.

<sup>48</sup> Bruderer, “A Study,” 259.

<sup>49</sup> Large, *Martinu*, 88.

<sup>50</sup> Bruderer, “A Study,” 252.

<sup>51</sup> Bruderer, “A Study,” 255.

<sup>52</sup> Bruderer, “A Study,” 259.

SECOND DISSERTATION RECITAL

**JOACHIM ANGSTER, VIOLA**

**MERIDIAN PRALL, ALTO**  
**TAYLOR FLOWERS, PIANO**

*Monday, January 20, 2020*  
*Moore Building, Britton Recital Hall*  
*7:30 PM*

**Viola Sonata, op. 120, no. 1 (1894)**

Allegro appassionato  
Andante un poco Adagio  
Allegretto grazioso  
Vivace

Johannes Brahms  
(1833–1897)

Taylor Flowers, piano

**Zwei Gesänge, op. 91 (1884)**

Gestillte Sehnsucht  
Geistliches Wiegenlied

Johannes Brahms

Meridian Prall, alto  
Taylor Flowers, piano

*Intermission*

**Viola Sonata, op. 120, no. 2 (1894)**

Allegro amabile  
Appassionato, ma non troppo Allegro  
Andante con moto; Allegro

Johannes Brahms

Taylor Flowers, piano



## SECOND DISSERTATION RECITAL: PROGRAM NOTES

### VIOLA SONATAS OP. 120, NO. 1 AND 2 (1894) - JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)

In 1890, after writing his second String Quintet Op. 111, the fifty-seven-year-old Brahms retired from composing and wrote to his publisher Simrock, ordering that any manuscripts left after his death be burned. A perfectionist, Brahms had already destroyed numerous manuscripts during his career. His creative inspiration returned to him, however, after hearing a performance of the clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld, soloist of the Meiningen court orchestra, of Carl Maria von Weber's Concerto and Mozart's Clarinet Quintet. As a result, Brahms wrote his Clarinet Trio and the Clarinet Quintet in 1891, and later the two Clarinet Sonatas Op. 120 no. 1 and 2 in 1894, all dedicated to this talented musician who would premiere and perform these works throughout Germany and Europe in the subsequent years. The clarinetist initially performed the sonatas in 1895 in private settings in Germany (Berchtesgarden for Duke Georg and Frankfurt in the presence of Clara Schumann), with Brahms at the piano, before the official premiere in Vienna.<sup>53</sup> Brahms then wrote different versions of the sonatas, adapting them for the viola. It was not uncommon to associate the viola with the clarinet: Mozart's "Kegelstatt" Trio K. 498 was written for clarinet, viola, and piano, Schumann wrote his "Märchenerzählungen" Op. 132 for the same formation, and Bruch composed a concerto for clarinet and viola (Op. 88).<sup>54</sup> The darker tone of the viola appealed to Romantic composers for its nostalgic and elegiac colors, which fit the character of the Op. 120 sonatas particularly well.

Indeed, the year 1894 was one of dramatic personal loss for Brahms, with the death of three of his close friends (the conductor Hans von Bülow, the surgeon Theodor Billroth, and the Bach scholar Philipp Spitta) in rapid succession. Furthermore, his sister Elise and his Viennese pupil and friend

Elisabeth von Herzogenberg had died two years earlier, as had Tchaikovsky the year before at the age of only fifty-three.<sup>55</sup> Now himself an older man at the age of sixty-one, he began to worry about his own health as well.<sup>56</sup> Unsurprisingly, therefore, the two sonatas composed in 1894 have a melancholic and meditative character, interrupted only occasionally by heroic moments and dance interludes heard as memories of youthful insouciance. These pieces, the last instrumental works Brahms composed, have, along with the “Four Serious Songs” Op. 121 (1896), a valedictory quality, seeming to reflect Brahms’ inner world at the twilight of his life.

Both sonatas are thoroughly constructed and show detailed thematic work. Conrad Wilson observes that Brahms was resolving “some of the problems that had beset him in his earlier chamber music, especially in terms of clarity of texture.”<sup>57</sup> He further observed that the Op. 120 Sonatas are “the most unified of all his paired composition,”<sup>58</sup> with the second sonata in Eb major as a warm counterpart to the dark and stormy first one in F minor. The Geiringers also praised the “splendid perfection of form in all the movements” and how Brahms managed to make the movements highly individual while nonetheless closely related to one another.<sup>59</sup>

The first sonata begins with an *Allegro appassionato* in F minor in 3/4, a *Valse mélancolique*, as put by Wilson. After a twenty-four measure long introductory theme, the exposition presents six different themes successively. A short development, only using the introductory motive, leads to the recapitulation, where all six themes are presented again, in the same order as in the exposition. A concluding coda briefly alludes to a new motive, before using the introductory theme to bring the movement to a close.<sup>60</sup> The second movement, an *Andante un poco adagio* in Ab major, follows an A-B-A structure with a short developmental episode in the middle section. The slow and pensive themes rely on the viola’s held notes connected by elegant turns, paced by the piano in a regular and slow

rhythm. The third movement, *Allegretto grazioso* in Ab major is structured as a scherzo in 3/4. The characteristic lilt in the melody, emphasized by *diminuendi* written on each bar, evokes a dance with a pastoral feeling, or a “sad waltz,” where the composer remembers happier times.<sup>61</sup> The last movement switches to F major in a rondo-like *Vivace*, with six different episodes following each other in a rhapsodic construction of hesitant, soft passages recalling the regret and nostalgia of the previous movements followed by heroic and enthusiastic moments.

The second sonata’s first movement, *Allegro amabile* in Eb major, is, like the first movement of the previous one, structured in sonata form. According to Rostand, the exposition uses three themes associated with “six secondary ideas.”<sup>62</sup> The development, built on these three last secondary ideas in the exposition, leads to a recapitulation which is symmetrical to the first part. Again, like in the first sonata, the movement ends with a slower coda. The second movement is an *Allegro appassionato* in Eb minor, and the “only impetuous movement of these two sonatas.”<sup>63</sup> François-Sappey has identified the symbolic significance of the key of Eb minor, with which Brahms began his composing career in his “Scherzo” Op. 4, and which is the key of the central movement—also a Scherzo—of his last instrumental piece. The final movement, *Andante con moto* in 6/8 returns to Eb major. As noted by the Geiringers, it seems natural that for his last chamber music movement Brahms would return to the form of a theme and variations, a form which had been his predilection throughout his career.<sup>64</sup> In the absence of a slow movement, the third one begins in a tranquil atmosphere, calmly introducing one variation after the other with few thematic alterations among them until the fourth variation, where Brahms explores new colors in a contemplative, somber counterpoint between the viola and the piano with the superimposition of different chords, creating an eerie atmosphere from another world. The subsequent and last variation in Eb minor, the tonality of the second movement, suddenly switches to a

2/4 *Allegro*, exploiting the theme with more freedom and leading to a cadential episode which brings the sonata to a majestic conclusion on a coda.

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<sup>53</sup> Conrad Wilson, *Notes on Brahms* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2005), 105.

<sup>54</sup> Brigitte François-Sappey, *Johannes Brahms: chemins vers l'absolu* (Paris: Fayard, 2018), 326.

<sup>55</sup> Wilson, *Notes on Brahms*, 104.

<sup>56</sup> Kevin Karnes and Walter Frisch, *Brahms and His World: Revised Edition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), "Part III: Memoirs."

<sup>57</sup> Wilson, *Notes on Brahms*, 106.

<sup>58</sup> Wilson, *Notes on Brahms*, 105.

<sup>59</sup> Karl and Irene Geiringer, *Brahms: His Life and Works* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1982), 245.

<sup>60</sup> Claude Rostand, *Brahms* (Paris: Fayard, 1978), 707.

<sup>61</sup> Wilson, *Notes on Brahms*, 107.

<sup>62</sup> Rostand, *Brahms*, 708.

<sup>63</sup> Rostand, *Brahms*, 708.

<sup>64</sup> Geiringer, *Brahms*, 246.

## ZWEI GESÄNGE, OP. 91 - JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)

In the spring of 1884, Brahms traveled across northern Italy with Rudolf von Der Leyen, an excellent amateur pianist whom he met in Krefeld. After staying at the *Villa Carlotta* on Lake Como, at the invitation of the duke of Saxe-Meiningen, he chose the quiet and peaceful Mürzzuschlag in Styria to pass the summer. Except for the visits of a few friends, Brahms remained solitary and incognito, enjoying nature, tranquillity and a break from social life. During this period, Brahms wrote the numerous Lieder of the Op. 91 and Opp. 94-97, the six Lieder and Romanzen for mixed a cappella voices Op. 93a, and the *Tafellied* Op. 93b.<sup>65</sup>

The *Zwei Gesänge* Op. 91 are in the vein of the *Alt-Rhapsodie* Op. 53, and the presence of the viola evokes Lieder composed by Louis Spohr.<sup>66</sup> The only works by Brahms for this formation, which perfectly conveys his typical penchant for melancholy, these pieces were written in the form of duets for an alto voice and an “alto” instrument<sup>67</sup> with a piano accompaniment, rather than a voice supported by two instruments.<sup>68</sup> Although both songs were published together in 1884, they were composed twenty years apart: “Gestillte Sehnsucht” in 1884 and “Geistliches Wiegenlied” in 1864. The latter was sent as a present to Joseph and Amalia Joachim on the occasion of their newborn son’s baptism. Brahms, the godfather, had to stay in Baden-Baden and could not be at the event, but he had intended to perform it together with his two friends, as Joachim was a famous violinist who also played the viola, and his wife Amalia sang in the alto register.

### *Gestillte Sehnsucht* (Op. 91 no. 1)

The text of the first song, “Gestillte Sehnsucht” (Assuaged Longing), was written by the poet Friedrich Rückert (1788–1866). Brahms deeply admired this poet, whom he had met in 1861, and

described him as “a great virtuoso of style.”<sup>69</sup> He was particularly attracted by Rückert’s extensive knowledge of Oriental languages. Rückert was very popular among musicians due to his aphoristic and metrically disciplined style. More than five hundred of his poems were set to music in more than two thousand settings, including those by such composers as Carl Reinecke or Robert Radecke, who set several of his poems as solo songs. Approximately thirty of his texts were anonymously published in schoolbooks, popular song collections and choral arrangements for male voices, thus entering the broader folk poetry repertoire.<sup>70</sup> Brahms set many of Rückert’s texts to music (sometimes in different versions) in a wide range of genres including solo songs, canons for female voices, and choral works. Eight unset poems were also found in his poetry notebook, and his library contained a heavily annotated copy of Rückert’s collected works. He even quoted one of his poems to describe his Op. 117 piano pieces as “Wiegenlieder meiner Schmerzen” (Lullabies of My Sorrow).

Structured as a standard aria da capo (A-B-A), “Gestillte Sehnsucht” begins with a melodic theme played by the viola and accompanied by the piano. The voice then enters in dialogue with the viola, over a soft accompaniment of arpeggios on the piano. This polyrhythmic conversation between the voice and the viola, sustained and enriched by the piano’s subtle participation, represents one of Brahms’ most beautifully poignant pages, replete with expressive imagery representing his love of nature. One can hear the wind blowing in the middle *agitato* part for instance, when the viola plays a series of ascending arpeggiated figures.

#### Geistliches Wiegenlied (Op. 91 no. 2)

“Geistliches Wiegenlied” (Spiritual Lullaby) is an *Andante con moto* in 6/8 meter, contrasting with the first song written in 2/4 meter and marked *Adagio espressivo*. In this song, two texts and two melodies are intertwined. One of the texts is silent, written only in the score beneath the opening

melodic line. This soft and balanced melody, played by the viola, comes from an old sixteenth-century Christmas canticle, “Josef, lieber Josef mein,” that Brahms had discovered and addressed to his friend Joachim a year before composing the song in April 1863.<sup>71</sup> This musical quote, along with the song’s joyful tonal disposition in F major, evoke the nativity—an appropriate reference for this musical present to the Joachims on the occasion of their newborn son’s baptism.

The second text is a poem by Lope de Vega, translated into German by Emanuel Geibel (1815-1884). While Brahms left us with just a few settings of texts by Geibel, he wrote to a friend in 1878 that he had composed many pieces on Geibel’s poems in his youth but had later burned them all. It is easy to understand why this poet appealed to the young Brahms: the length and meter of his verses, full of evocative images, are ideal for musical settings, as Geibel often even imagined them himself. Composers like Clara and Robert Schumann, or Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn also found them fertile ground for inspiration. In that same letter from 1878, Brahms described Geibel as a “decorous poet,” whose texts offered “genuine joy and refreshment.”<sup>72</sup>

The poem used in “Geistliches Wiegenlied” comes from Geibel’s *Spanisches Liederbuch* (1852), which the eighteen-year-old Brahms had already used for his solo song “Spanisches Lied” Op. 6 no.1. Brahms was attracted to “Spanishness” throughout his career (he admired Bizet’s *Carmen* for instance). However, the authenticity of original material in this collection of translated Spanish songs is not entirely sustainable, similar to many other translations of the nineteenth century, as Geibel included some of his own poems in the book under the pseudonym Don Manuel Del Río.<sup>73</sup>

Each of the two texts appearing in “Geistliches Wiegenlied” corresponds to a different theme, respectively played by the viola and sung by the voice. The two melodies are interlaced in a simple and

ingenious counterpoint, realizing “the fusion of the sacred, secular and popular song - an ideal Brahms aspired to attain.”<sup>74</sup> Like the first song, this Lied is an aria da capo with a more dramatic middle section, where the viola’s chromatic murmurs represent the fatigue expressed in the text. As best observed by the Geiringers, this song is especially significant “not only for its peculiar color effect, but even more for its profound emotional content and the imaginative use of the canto firmo technique.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Rostand, *Brahms*, 634.

<sup>66</sup> François-Sappey, *Johannes Brahms*, 272-273.

<sup>67</sup> The viola, according to the Geiringers, was Brahms’ favorite string instrument. Geiringer, *Brahms*, 285.

<sup>68</sup> Rostand, *Brahms*, 634.

<sup>69</sup> Natasha Loges, *Brahms And His Poets: A Handbook* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2017), 337.

<sup>70</sup> Loges, *Brahms And His Poets*, 341.

<sup>71</sup> François-Sappey, *Johannes Brahms*, 273.

<sup>72</sup> Loges, *Brahms And His Poets*, 131.

<sup>73</sup> Loges, *Brahms And His Poets*, 127.

<sup>74</sup> François-Sappey, *Johannes Brahms*, 273.

<sup>75</sup> Geiringer, *Brahms*, 285.



THIRD DISSERTATION RECITAL

**JOACHIM ANGSTER, VIOLA**

**ARIANNA DOTTO, VIOLIN**  
**NATHANIEL PIERCE, CELLO**  
**JI-HYANG GWAK, PIANO**

*Monday, March 9, 2020*  
*Moore Building, Britton Recital Hall*  
*7:30 PM*

**String Trio (1985)**  
Moderato  
Adagio

Alfred Schnittke  
(1934–1998)

Arianna Dotto, violin  
Nathaniel Pierce, cello

*Intermission*

**Sonata for Viola and Piano, op. 147 (1975)**  
Moderato  
Allegretto  
Adagio

Dmitri Shostakovich  
(1906–1975)

Ji-Hyang Gwak, piano

### THIRD DISSERTATION RECITAL: PROGRAM NOTES

#### STRING TRIO (1985) - ALFRED SCHNITTKE (1934–1998)

Schnittke was one of the most important Russian composers of the late twentieth century and often considered to be Shostakovich's musical heir. He pursued the same path established by Shostakovich, not only musically but also socially and spiritually, retaining and developing his aesthetic and technical characteristics, and most noticeably his “sense of irony and alienation.”<sup>76</sup> His approach to composition was marked by his use of polystylism<sup>77</sup> and his Christian faith. Schnittke began his musical studies privately in Vienna from 1946 to 1948. This early introduction to Austro-German cultural traditions would influence his writing throughout his life, shaping the form and style of his compositions.<sup>78</sup> Evidence of this influence can be heard, for instance, in the Piano Quintet (1976), which later became the orchestral piece *In memoriam*, or in the Andantino section of the first movement of the String Trio, where atonal passages are juxtaposed or imbedded with evocations of a Viennese waltz, creating a nostalgic feeling of loss and deprivation.<sup>79</sup> Schnittke then moved back to Russia and studied at the Moscow Conservatory from 1953 to 1961 with Yevgeny Golubev and Nikolay Rakov, after which he became a teacher at the same school and started working as a composer. Like Shostakovich, Schnittke also distinguished himself by writing film and theatre music in addition to concert works. In the decade following his graduation from the Conservatory, he created the music for more than sixty films. Both his First Symphony and Second Violin Sonata, which were initially conceived as film scores, reflect the curiously blurred boundaries between these two genres. Moreover, his works, like those of Shostakovich, are often very theatrical and sometimes even call for specific extra-musical effects during their execution, often with supplemental stage directions. In his First

Symphony, for instance, performers enter and exit the stage one after the other several times at the beginning and the end in a reference to Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony No. 45.<sup>80</sup>

Schnittke's early style is characterized by the influence of Shostakovich and the continuation of the Russian nineteenth-century musical tradition. As he came to focus increasingly on the symphonic and concerto genres, this influence grew ever more apparent. Both composers, inspired by Mahler's output, altered the traditional form of their symphonies in the same way.<sup>81</sup> In their concertos, they both symbolically represented the conflict between individuality and collectivity, which often ended tragically for the individual, as in Schnittke's Viola Concerto (1985).<sup>82</sup> However, the younger generation of Russian composers, including Alfred Schnittke, Sofiya Gubaidulina, Edison Denisov, and Nikolai Karetnikov, often felt ambivalent towards the older composer. Although Shostakovich was revered and admired, he had also become an academic model marking the "approved limit"<sup>83</sup> of musical language. These young musicians had all begun their careers following what Wilson called the "'Shostakovich' tradition," which was taught in the Conservatoire as "the 'positive' side of socialist realism."<sup>84</sup> As they discovered western musical styles in the post-Stalinist years and started experimenting with new compositional techniques, they also increasingly rejected Shostakovich's music and tried to find their own voices. For Schnittke, the decline of interest among his generation became apparent when he reported that the Small Hall of the Moscow Conservatory was half-full for the 1975 premiere of one of Shostakovich's last works *Four Verses of Captain Lebyadkin*, contradicting official statements and the composer's own accounts.<sup>85</sup> Another reason for the disinterest in Shostakovich was his loss of moral authority for these composers due to his "all-too-public compromises in the official sphere and his inability to stake out and defend his own moral boundaries, a fearful legacy of the Stalin years."<sup>86</sup> Although Shostakovich distanced himself from official statements, he continued to publicly profess his loyalty to the Party and to take an active administrative

part in the actions of the Union of Composers, which under the leadership of Khrennikov, “had continued the long-standing ‘struggle against modernism.’”<sup>87</sup> For the younger generation, Shostakovich, therefore, represented the political and musical official establishment.

One of the most striking links between Schnittke and Shostakovich, however, resides in the use of quotations and monograms (musical spellings of names represented by different pitches). Shostakovich quoted other composers, as well as numerous folk and revolutionary songs and marches, in many of his works.<sup>88</sup> In his late period he also frequently quoted himself, notably in his Fifteenth Symphony (1971). Among the most famous of Shostakovich's quotations is the characteristic material from Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata*, upon which he largely based the third movement of his Viola Sonata (1975), and he often made significant use of the monogram of his own name in various other compositions. By way of comparison, Schnittke exploited Berg's and Bach's monograms throughout his String Trio (1985), and he quoted passages from Beethoven, Haydn, Chopin, Tchaikovsky, Grieg, and Strauss, as well as jazz idioms, in his First Symphony. Moreover, his second string quartet, for instance, is entirely based on Russian sacred music from the Middle Ages.<sup>89</sup> The BACH monogram was for him a “magical formula”<sup>90</sup> that he used in almost all of his works in various forms, most evidently in his First Cello Sonata. It was not only a musical reference to Bach, but a meaningful symbol representing his faith (playing the BACH monogram draws the symbol of a cross on a keyboard) and structuring “both the world and individual consciousness.”<sup>91</sup> Schnittke and Shostakovich also shared a common disposition for irony and humor through the juxtaposition of styles and abrupt transitions. Schnittke’s works from 1968, the Violin Sonata (‘Quasi una sonata’) and the *Serenade*, both feature innovative technical instructions intended to create comical and witty effects. For both composers, irony, “expressed through confrontations between the banal and the elevated,”<sup>92</sup> represented a way to desacralize the “socially and state-endorsed privileged status of classical music.”<sup>93</sup>

Schnittke had a difficult relationship with the Soviet regime, managing to travel abroad only twice before the 1980s. During the late 1950s, however, thanks to the period of cultural liberalization of the arts initiated by Krushchev, he was able to discover and study works by Western composers such as Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, Stockhausen, Nono, and Ligeti.<sup>94</sup> This proved to be a critical turning point in his adoption of new compositional techniques. After experimenting with serialism for a few years, as in the First Violin Sonata (1963) and the Violin Concerto (1966), Schnittke abandoned it to turn to polystylism, combining and juxtaposing eclectic historical and contemporary styles in an attempt to “unify serious music and light music,” in his own words.<sup>95</sup> This new technique became a prominent feature of his film work, as well as his First Symphony (1969–1972) and First Concerto Grosso (1977), for instance. Although his oratorio *Nagasaki* was censured by the Union of Composers in 1958, Schnittke subsequently returned to favor with the Union and even received commissions from the State. Yet this did not last long, and soon after a harassment campaign began with attacks in official journals. In 1974, his First Symphony was banned by Khrennikov, no less than the head of the Union of Composers himself.<sup>96</sup> Yet Schnittke, along with such “unofficial composers” of his generation as Denisov, Silvestrov, and Gubaidulina, were nonetheless gradually gaining ground with the general public, supported by the performances of their music and their successes abroad.<sup>97</sup> It was only when Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary of the Communist Party on 11 March 1985 that artists began to experience a gradual relaxation of travel restrictions and creative censure. In July of that same year, however, Schnittke suffered a serious stroke that left him partially paralyzed and prevented him from attending public events or concerts. This proved to be another pivotal moment for Schnittke’s style, as the composer would shift from polystylism to a more homogeneous and rigorous rhetoric and vocabulary, with increasing support from his religious convictions for inspiration. Most of Schnittke’s late works, including the String Trio, deal with matters of good and evil, heaven and earth, and

quotations from spiritual music conveyed in an elegiac and almost ascetic style.<sup>98</sup> After suffering two further strokes in subsequent years (1991 and 1994), Schnittke died in 1998 in Hamburg.

The two pieces in tonight's program were written shortly before their respective composers died or were on the precipice of death, and I believe both pieces pertain to the way these composers confronted their own mortality. Schnittke's biographer and friend Alexander Ivashkin even stated that the sad and fragile quality of the String Trio, composed in 1985, was prophetic and revealed that the composer foreboded the nearly fatal strokes.<sup>99</sup> The piece was written for a commission by the Alban Berg Foundation for the centennial commemoration of Berg's birth. Kenneth Woods notes that Theodor Adorno wrote of the String Trio's dedicatee, Alban Berg, that "his entire oeuvre was directed toward [...] reshaping music as a metaphor of vanishing [...] music to say adieu to life."<sup>100</sup> On June 2 of the same year, Oleh Krysa, Fyodor Druzhinin, and Valentin Feigin premiered the piece at the Moscow Conservatory. This would be the last time the composer would be able to attend a public concert, just before his first stroke on July 19 that would handicap him thereafter.<sup>101</sup> In 1987, Gidon Kremer, a friend of Schnittke who championed his music throughout his career, arranged the String Trio for string orchestra as a Trio Sonata. Schnittke transcribed it in 1992 for piano trio (violin, cello, and piano) and dedicated it to the doctor who had prevented a second stroke from claiming his life the year before.

Schnittke's description of his creative process corresponds perfectly to the language used in the String Trio: "I set down a beautiful chord on paper—and suddenly it rusts."<sup>102</sup> Kenneth Woods observes that the Trio references the music of Mahler and late Schubert, as Schnittke immersed himself in the Viennese musical vocabulary, perhaps to evoke Berg's cultural tradition.<sup>103</sup> The opening material, derived from the Happy Birthday song, is one of the key themes of the Trio. The dotted rhythm at the beginning will be a characteristic feature throughout the work. It is interesting to note that the same

rhythm had been used extensively in the third movement of Shostakovich's Viola Sonata ten years before. The slow dotted rhythm, evocative of a funeral march, is perhaps best suited to evoke mortality. The first two anguished dissonant chords that one hears in the beginning come as a surprise as the rest of the music seems tonal, adding to the impression of displacement. The first movement (Moderato) is Neoclassical and structured in sonata form, with a tonal center of G minor. Schnittke uses only a few musical ideas, preferring instead to develop the principal themes.

A second melodic theme is introduced by the viola and consists of wide intervals in slow-moving triplet figures played legato. The initial lamenting character is then continued and transformed into an even more dissonant cry by the violin. The third characteristic motive is played by the violin and the cello, slowly and mournfully moving in dotted rhythm and quarter notes. Themes follow each other in an apparently disconnected manner, merely juxtaposed to one another, creating striking outbursts suddenly falling into very soft passages. Schnittke's writing in this piece is marked by the use of polytonality. In fact, the composer utilizes mediant harmonic relationships in every possible way throughout the trio. Two chords that share the same third enharmonically, such as G minor (G-Bb-D) and F# major (F#-A#-C#) can be heard simultaneously or following each other. One example can be found in the *fortissimo* passages consisting of descending chords, which are related by their mediant. Schnittke also often re-harmonized the same melodic material following this harmonic relationship, giving a very Mahler-like impression with the major/minor chord successions. Finally, although the Moderato is very theatrical and full of surprising outbursts, dialogues, dance-like motives, and expressive dissonances, there are also moments of great calm and devotion that are even more present in the second movement Adagio.

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<sup>76</sup> Ivan Moody, “The Music of Alfred Schnittke,” *Tempo*, no. 168 (1989): 4.

<sup>77</sup> Schnittke adopted what he called the “polystylistic method,” which he described as “the interaction of musical material in different styles,” and which relied on techniques such as collages, quotations, and monograms to create a symbolic meaning. He was inspired by such twentieth century composers as Gustav Mahler and Charles Ives as well as by his own work for the cinema. Alexander Ivashkin and J. D Goodliffe, *A Schnittke Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 17.

<sup>78</sup> Alexander Ivashkin and Ivan Moody, “Schnittke [Shnitke], Alfred,” *Grove Music Online*, 2001, 1.

<sup>79</sup> Moody, “The Music of Alfred Schnittke,” 4.

<sup>80</sup> Ivashkin and Moody, “Schnittke [Shnitke], Alfred,” 4.

<sup>81</sup> Gavin Dixon, ed., *Schnittke Studies* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), xxii.

<sup>82</sup> Jean T. Chang, “The Role of Alfred Schnittke's Viola Concerto in the Development of the Twentieth Century Viola Concerto” (PhD Diss., The University of Arizona, 2007), 49.

<sup>83</sup> Laurel E. Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 283.

<sup>84</sup> Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (London; Boston: Faber & Faber, 1994), 299.

<sup>85</sup> Fay, *Shostakovich*, 283.

<sup>86</sup> Fay, *Shostakovich*, 284.

<sup>87</sup> Wilson, *Shostakovich*, 380.

<sup>88</sup> Dixon, ed., *Schnittke Studies*, xxii.

<sup>89</sup> Moody, “The Music of Alfred Schnittke,” 5.

<sup>90</sup> Alexander Ivashkin, “The Schnittke code,” in *Schnittke Studies*, ed. Dixon, 202

<sup>91</sup> Ivashkin, “The Schnittke code,” 202

<sup>92</sup> Dixon, ed., *Schnittke Studies*, 161 (n2).

<sup>93</sup> Victoria Adamenko, “Faith Through Scepticism,” in *Schnittke Studies*, ed. Dixon, 162.

<sup>94</sup> Ivashkin and Moody, “Schnittke [Shnitke], Alfred,” 1.

<sup>95</sup> Ivashkin and Goodliffe, *A Schnittke Reader*, xiv.

<sup>96</sup> Ivashkin and Moody, “Schnittke [Shnitke], Alfred,” 1.

<sup>97</sup> Wilson, *Shostakovich*, 380.

<sup>98</sup> Dixon, ed., *Schnittke Studies*, xxv.

<sup>99</sup> Ivashkin, “The Schnittke code,” 201.

<sup>100</sup> Kenneth Woods, “Explore the Score- The Schnittke String Trio,” accessed April 12, 2020, <https://kennethwoods.net/blog/2014/10/25/explore-the-score-schnittke-string-trio/>.

<sup>101</sup> Alexander Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke* (London: Phaidon Press, 1996), 189.



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<sup>102</sup> Woods, “Explore the Score- The Schnittke String Trio.”

<sup>103</sup> Woods, “Explore the Score- The Schnittke String Trio.”

## VIOLA SONATA, OP. 147 (1975) - DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906–1975)

This piece is the last of Shostakovich's works. His final works reveal his awareness of the imminence of death, as, for instance in his Fourteenth Symphony (1969), in the tenth movement of which the composer set Rilke's poem "Death of the Poet."<sup>104</sup> In late June 1975, suffering from the last stages of lung cancer, the composer contacted violist Fyodor Druzhinin by phone to inform him of his plan to compose a sonata for viola and piano (the same violist would premiere Schnittke's String Trio ten years later). A few days later, Shostakovich heard from his doctors that nothing more could be done and that death was inevitable.<sup>105</sup> As noted by Sollertinsky, this work, however, "shows no sign of horror, despair, or fear in the face of impending Fate; it is humane, pure, and wise."<sup>106</sup>

The archivist Manachir Yabukov has recently found early manuscripts of the sonata that show that the composer initially had written the viola line in bass clef. He therefore suggests that the sonata might have been destined for the cellist Rostropovich, but that Shostakovich changed his mind because of that performer's difficulties imposed by the Soviet regime. According to scholar Michael Mishra, it would also explain a comment Shostakovich had made to Rostropovich before the latter left the Soviet Union in 1974: "If you receive an anonymous packet when you are abroad, don't throw it out; who knows, it might have an interesting composition inside."<sup>107</sup> Although Fyodor Druzhinin was indeed a better option, given that the violist, whom Shostakovich much admired, was widely respected by the authorities, this hypothesis lacks evidence to support such a claim. It might, therefore, be possible that Shostakovich simply found it more convenient to write in bass clef.

Shostakovich queried Druzhinin regarding viola technique, specifically whether it was possible to play rapid scales in double stops at an interval of a fourth.<sup>108</sup> Druzhinin cleverly answered that it

was, and that even if it proved very challenging, interpreters would find the means to realize the composer's intentions. Clearly, the violist thought that the composer's creative process should not be constrained by technical concerns. During their conversations, Shostakovich described his new piece in detail: the first movement was to be a “novella,” the second a scherzo, and the third a slow *adagio* that he described as “radiant music”<sup>109</sup> conceived in homage to Beethoven, adding: “but don’t that inhibit you. The music is bright, bright and clear.”<sup>110</sup> Shostakovich finished the sonata in less than three weeks, just before being admitted to the hospital. He managed to send the score to the copyist, thereafter making revisions in close communication with Druzhinin. When Druzhinin received the completed score on 6 August, he discovered that Shostakovich had dedicated what would be his last work to him. He then began intensive rehearsals with the pianist Mikhaíl Muntyan in the hope of being able to play it for the composer as soon as possible, but fate intervened and Shostakovich died three days later. The sonata would be first performed in Shostakovich's apartment on 25 September for a group of friends, followed by the official premiere in the Small Hall of the Leningrad Philharmonic on 1 October as part of a program including Shostakovich’s violin and cello sonatas, as per the composer’s wish, ending in a fervently emotional ovation.<sup>111</sup>

The first movement is characterized by the simplicity of its material, and by its dark and austere atmosphere. The opening of the piece is striking, with the viola’s plucked open strings joined by the piano’s eery and unadorned melodic line. The use of the *sul ponticello* ghostly timbre (created by playing with the bow close to the bridge of the viola) is noteworthy, as Shostakovich, unlike other Russian composers such as Prokofiev, seldom employed this technique. When he did, as in his String Quartet No. 10, it was always for a very specific effect.<sup>112</sup> The center of the movement is marked by an energetic episode in triplets, where the instruments play rigid and implacable chords before the movement finally vanishes with fragmented motives from the beginning. The second movement,

*Allegretto*, is a sardonic dance where the composer plays with such rhythmic irregularities as syncopations and off-beat figures. The ending of the movement is particularly effective, the piano continuing the rhythmical pattern before abruptly stopping with the end of the viola's held note.

It is well known that Shostakovich often quoted works by other composers as a musical tribute or as a way of acknowledging their influence on his own music. In his opera Op. 29 from 1932, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, for instance, he quoted Mussorgsky's opera *Boris Godunov*; other examples include quotations from Berg's Violin Concerto in his Violin Sonata, or Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* in his Tenth Symphony and his Fifth String Quartet. Shostakovich also famously and frequently used his own monogram (DSCH), such as its multiple appearances here in the first movement of the Viola Sonata, truncated with the notes D, E-flat, C, and he recycled the music from his 1942 unfinished opera *The Gamblers* as the basis for the second movement of the sonata. While Beethoven represented a major influence for Shostakovich, there is scarcely a reference to him in his music, except for a fragment of the *Kreutzer* Sonata in his song cycle *Satires*. In the final movement of the Viola Sonata, however, Shostakovich would "repay the debt properly"<sup>113</sup> by basing it on the first movement of Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata. Mishra observes that the "funeral-march rhythms and intonations and [...] that particular harmonic luminescence"<sup>114</sup> lent themselves particularly well to Shostakovich's last work. The most evident features of the quotation are the eighth-note accompaniment that returns periodically in the movement, and the characteristic dotted rhythm of the melodic line, "creating a particularly haunting mixture of late-Shostakovichian gloom and late-classical luminescence."<sup>115</sup> The "Moonlight" Sonata is not the only work quoted in the final movement: a few notes of each of Shostakovich's own symphonies (mainly from the opening themes and with the exception of the Eleventh) can be found in just five bars near the middle of the movement as if the composer wished to rapidly recall his life's work. The quotation was so well embedded into the musical

fabric that it went unnoticed until 2006. Finally, Shostakovich quoted Strauss' tone poem *Don Quixote* just before the end of the moment, using the passage when the hero's soul leaves his body. The Viola Sonata, and perhaps more specifically its final movement, was truly conceived as a musical testament. Rarely does music express this valedictory quality with such extraordinary intensity, as reflected by a critic's comment after its premiere: "It is like the catharsis in tragedy; life, struggle, overcoming, purification by light, exit into immortality."<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Christopher Norris, *Shostakovich, the Man and His Music* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1982), 160.

<sup>105</sup> Dmitri and Ludmilla Sollertinsky, *Pages from the Life of Dmitri Shostakovich* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), 232.

<sup>106</sup> Dmitri and Ludmilla Sollertinsky, *Pages from the Life of Dmitri Shostakovich*, 233.

<sup>107</sup> Michael Mishra, *A Shostakovich Companion* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2008), 311.

<sup>108</sup> Fay, *Shostakovich*, 284.

<sup>109</sup> Fay, *Shostakovich*, 284.

<sup>110</sup> Wilson, *Shostakovich*, 470. Wilson reports Druzhinin's whole account of the Viola Sonata's creation in pages 469–472.

<sup>111</sup> Fay, *Shostakovich*, 286.

<sup>112</sup> Norris, *Shostakovich*, 32.

<sup>113</sup> Mishra, *A Shostakovich Companion*, 312.

<sup>114</sup> Mishra, *A Shostakovich Companion*, 312.

<sup>115</sup> Mishra, *A Shostakovich Companion*, 312.

<sup>116</sup> A. Medvedev, "Muzika bol'shogo serdtsa," *Izvestiya*, 16 October 1975, 5, as cited by Laurel E. Fay, *Shostakovich*, 286.

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