

Jen Grubbs

Senior Viola Recital
Recital Hall | Saturday, April 8th, 2017 | 12:00 PM

Program

Suite No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1008 for solo viola
Prelude
Gigue

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Märchenbilder (Fairy-Tale Pictures) for Piano and Viola, Op. 113
I. Nicht Schnell
II. Lebhaft
III. Rasch
IV. Langsam, mit melancholischem Ausdruck

Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)

Elégie for Viola and Piano, Op. 30

Henri Vieuxtemps
(1820-1881)

Karen Nguyen, piano

ASU Herberger Institute
FOR DESIGN AND THE ARTS
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

School of Music

Program Notes

When **Johann Sebastian Bach** died in 1750, his music was considered old-fashioned, and he was mostly remembered as a keyboard virtuoso. His compositions, including the *Suites for Unaccompanied Cello*, remained obscure and forgotten. In 1889, a thirteen-year-old cello prodigy named Pablo Casals (1876-1973) found a copy of the suites in a used music store. He wrote later that he was so excited by his discovery that he “hugged his treasures all the way home.” Because of his efforts, this set of Suites is now an important part of the solo cello repertoire. The suites have since been transcribed to 19 different instruments, including the viola. Casals' one-word characterization of Suite No. 2 in D minor was “tragic.” From the first three notes of the intensely emotional *Prelude*, we feel immersed in a dramatically dark d minor world. The *Prelude* has an improvisatory feeling, moving up and down the notes of the chords rather than melodically. The *Gigue* is a lively, driving, and uplifting movement, characterized by a sort of rocking motion.

German composer **Robert Schumann** is widely regarded as one of the greatest composers of the Romantic Era. He was committed to the idea of music being composed to register the feelings, thoughts, and impressions garnered by a sensitive spirit on its journey through life. Unfortunately, Schumann suffered throughout his life from depression, hallucinations, insomnia, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder. In 1852, he lapsed into insanity, and was placed in an asylum after attempting suicide. He remained there for 2.5 years until his death at age 46. *Marchenbilder for Viola and Piano* was composed one year before Schumann's mental collapse. The first movement, marked "Nicht schnell" (not fast) begins with a melancholy melody in the viola followed by a more rhythmic second idea beginning in the piano. Both ideas constantly recur throughout the movement in various guises. The second movement, “Lebhaft” (lively), seems a gallop through fairy woods, beginning with a fanfare-like idea. The third, “Rasch” (swiftly/wild), is a rush of slightly menacing triplets. The final movement, “Langsam, mit melancholischem Ausdruck” (Slowly, with melancholic expression) vividly invokes the dreamlike world of the tortured artist.

One of the great violin virtuosos of the 19th century, **Henri Vieuxtemps** was also an accomplished composer. While most of his compositional output is for the violin (seven violin concertos, a violin sonata, and numerous short pieces for the violin), Vieuxtemps also played the viola and composed a number of beautiful, highly-regarded works for that instrument as well. The *Elégie* for viola and piano, written in 1854, is one of Vieuxtemps' earliest pieces for viola and shows off the composer's knowledge of the instrument's deep, rich timbre. Seldom has the viola been written for so brilliantly, excitingly, and effectively.

My sincere thanks to my viola professor Nancy Buck, the ASU Viola Studio, my pianist Karen Nguyen, and all who are here to support me.



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