



DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Friday, May 10, 2024 • 6:00 PM

SOPHIA SCHÖLCH

Graduate Recital

Murray and Michele Allen Recital Hall
2330 North Halsted Street • Chicago

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Allen Recital Hall

SOPHIA SCHÖLCH, VIOLA

Graduate Recital

SUMMER BAEK, PIANO

PROGRAM

Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

Viola Concerto, Op. posth. (ed. Serly) (1944-45)

I. Moderato - Lento

II. Adagio religioso - Allegretto

III. Allegro vivace

- Intermission -

Luise Adolpha Le Beau (1850-1927)

Three Pieces for Viola and Piano, Op. 26 (1881)

I. Nachtstück

II. Träumerei

III. Polonaise

Hans Sitt (1850-1922)

Konzertstück in G Minor, Op. 46 (1892)

Sophia Schölch is from the studio of Ann Marie Brink. This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the degree Master of Music.

As a courtesy to those around you, please silence all cell phones and other electronic devices. Flash photography is not permitted. Masks are recommended, but not required inside the Holtschneider Performance Center.

PROGRAM NOTES

Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

Viola Concerto, Op. posth. (ed. Serly) (1944-45)

Duration: 25 minutes

Bartók began to compose his Viola Concerto in the winter of 1944 when he was already in the terminal stages of leukemia, and alternately lived between a summer cabin in New York's Adirondack region and his apartment in Manhattan's Upper West Side. The Concerto was commissioned by William Primrose, who by then had gained a reputation as one of the greatest violists of the twentieth century. Primrose encouraged Bartók not to "feel proscribed in any way by the apparent technical limitations of the viola," and Bartók evidently took this to heart, as he admitted to Primrose in a letter on September 8, 1945 that "most probably some passages will prove to be uncomfortable or unplayable." By the time of his death, on September 26, 1945, Bartók had completed the draft of the Viola Concerto, missing only the final scoring of the orchestra, which he referred to as a "purely mechanical work."

The orchestra score was finished by his close friend Tibor Serly, who had last talked with him only five days before his death. Serly later recounted that he "virtually live[d] for over two years day and night with those thirteen mottled pages." Yet he also emphasized the authenticity of Bartók's authorship in clarifying that it was "a task of completing a major work already concluded, if one can use such a paradoxical expression." Four years after Bartók's death, on December 2, 1949, Primrose performed the concerto for the first time with the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra.

Bartók himself decided that the orchestration in the Viola Concerto would be "more transparent than in a violin concerto," perhaps so as to not cover up the solo viola, which by nature of its lower register projects less effectively. Another unique aspect of this concerto is that it is played continuously, with transitions between the movements.

The first movement begins with a melancholic melody characterized by one ascending fragment and followed by a responding descending fragment. The opening melody returns several times throughout the movement, most recognizable by the first interval of an ascending minor sixth. Moreover, the symmetry of ascending melodic fragments and their descending melodic counterparts extends throughout the entire movement, as if Bartók had inscribed some sort of primeval balance into his work, wherein upwards and downwards melodies must stabilize each other. The second movement is characterized by the stark contrast of an ethereal melody inscribed with the term "religioso" ("solemnly" or "religiously"), and a sudden turbulent interlude inscribed with the term "piangendo" ("crying out"). Finally,

the third movement resembles a lively folk dance that sometimes borders on frenzied, as if capturing the nature of dancing boisterously, on the verge of losing control.

In the decades following Primrose's first performance, Bartók's Viola Concerto quickly rose to prominence and became one of the most frequently performed viola pieces. According to Serly, it was "the first work that truly broke the barrier of prejudice most conductors had in the past against the viola as a full-fledged solo instrument."

Luise Adolpha Le Beau (1850-1927)

Three Pieces for Viola and Piano, Op. 26 (1881)

Duration: 10 minutes

Luise Adolpha Le Beau was an important German composer, pianist and music critic of the nineteenth century. Her music was influential in major European cities such as Berlin, Vienna, Leipzig, and Salzburg. At the height of her successful music career, Le Beau won a first prize in an international cello competition for her Cello Sonata in 1882, and her compositions were requested for the Columbia World Exhibition of 1893. At the turn of the century, she was considered one of the most significant composers in Germany.

The Three Pieces for Viola and Piano were composed in 1881, while Le Beau lived in Munich with her parents (as an unmarried woman she traveled exclusively with them until their deaths in 1896). Some time in 1880, Le Beau met the members of the Jean Becker Family Quartet, consisting of the renowned violinist Jean Becker and his two sons and daughter. Impressed by her music, they requested she compose a piece for each of them and their respective instruments. This Opus 26 was Le Beau's dedication to the violist of the quartet, Jean Becker's daughter.

Of particular significance in this little-known viola composition is Le Beau's variation of characters between each piece. The first piece, "Nachtstück," (literally translating from German to "Night Piece") evokes the character of peaceful night time and darkness primarily by emphasizing the lowest register and darkest timbres of the viola. In the second piece, "Träumerei" ("Dreaming"), it is mostly the repeated piano accompanimental pattern which lends it a dream-like quality while the viola plays a sweet lullaby-like melody. Finally, the third piece "Polonaise" is in the rhythm and tempo of the polonaise dance, but Le Beau's choice of a minor key gives it a darker, more turbulent character than the typical folk dance. All three pieces in the collection follow the general outline of a repeating main theme which encloses a contrasting middle section (A-B-A).

Hans Sitt (1850-1922)

Konzertstück in G Minor, Op. 46 (1892)

Duration: 15 minutes

Hans Sitt was a Bohemian violinist, violist and composer from Prague who taught violin at the Leipzig Conservatory for almost four decades, from 1884 to 1921. He played viola in the Brodsky Quartet of Leipzig for twelve years, from 1883 to 1895, with Hugo Becker (Jean Becker's son) and Adolph Brodsky. The Konzertstück for Viola was composed in 1892, while Sitt was still actively performing viola with the Brodsky quartet.

As both a performing violinist and violist, Sitt was naturally invested in composing equally for both instruments. Yet the viola had been neglected as a solo instrument for decades and was only beginning to emerge as such toward the end of the nineteenth century. Therefore, Sitt was quite progressive in composing virtuosic pieces for viola, and contributed to the instrument's revival.

To this day, the Konzertstück, Op. 46, is the most renowned and most frequently performed of Sitt's viola pieces. In 1899, it was chosen as the *morceau de concours* (competition piece) for the viola class of the Paris Conservatory. The piece showcases the range and variety of the viola's timbre by spanning all registers, and it alternates between technical passages including chromatic harmonies and double stops, and lyrical passages including expressive melodic lines. Therefore, because of the sheer extensive scope of techniques required of the performer, this piece solidifies the viola's place as a solo instrument.

Notes by Sophia Schölch

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