

2008

Senior viola recital

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Senior viola recital

Degree Type

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Department

Music and Dance

Subject Categories

Music

Senior Viola Recital

Johannah Fenton, viola
John Bogdan, piano

Sunday, November 23, 2008
7:30 pm
Alexander Recital Hall

Cello Suite No. 4 in E-flat Major

J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

- I. Prelude
- II. Allemande
- III. Courante
- IV. Sarabande
- V. Bourrée I / Bourrée II
- VI. Gigue

Adagio for Viola and Piano

Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967)

INTERMISSION

Arrival Platform Humlet

Percy Grainger (1882-1961)

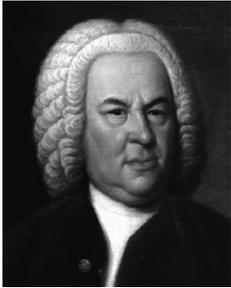
Sonate for Viola and Piano in F Major, Op. 11, No. 4

Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)

- I. Fantasie
- II. Theme and Variations
- III. Finale

Played without pause.

This recital is given in fulfillment of an Honors Thesis for a Bachelor of Science degree in Applied Music (Viola).



Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was born in Eisenach, Germany on March 21, 1685. Easily the most well known of the talented Bach family, Johann Sebastian was a prolific composer whose many works are still recognized and appreciated today.

When his parents died in 1695, Bach was sent to live with his older brother in Ohrdruf.

Since his brother was the church organist, Bach learned to play both the organ and the clavier. While in Ohrdruf, the young Bach also taught himself to compose by copying out the works of other composers. He attended the Michaelisschule in Lüneburg for a time on scholarship, singing in the choir and continuing his organ instruction.

Beginning in 1703, Bach traveled around Germany, accepting different posts as organist, choirmaster, and court musician. His duties included playing for church services, entertaining Dukes and Princes, and composing as much music as he was able. Often he was required to write a new cantata every week, to be performed at the Sunday service by the choir. During his stints at court, he was encouraged to write secular music instead. This music would be performed by court musicians or by the musically inclined monarchs.

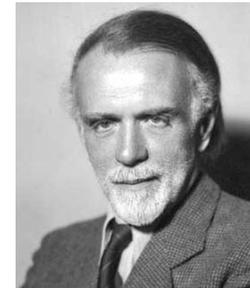
During his lifetime, Bach was known mainly for his virtuosic organ playing. His compositions were simply regarded as part of his contractual obligations. Today, however, Bach is much better known as a composer than a performer, thanks in part to the large quantity of his compositions still in existence. He is also known to have advanced the technique of polyphony, a musical texture consisting of two melodic lines rather than a melody accompanied by chords. The influence of Bach's music is evident in the works of many composers. Bach died in Leipzig, Germany on July 28, 1750 and was buried with honor, forever to be remembered as one of the greatest composers to ever live.

Bach wrote six suites for solo violoncello, each consisting of a combination of six different dance movements. These suites,

believed to be written in 1720-21, have been transposed up an octave for viola and are now considered standard viola repertoire. The fourth suite in E-flat Major is thought to be one of the more technically demanding suites due to its difficult key and arpeggiated Prelude. In this suite, as in the other five, Bach flawlessly blends many different dance styles, including German (Allemande), Italian (Courante), Spanish (Sarabande), French (Bourrée), and English (Gigue).

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Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967) was born in Kecskemét, Hungary on December 16, 1882. While in school at Archiepiscopal Grammar School in Nagyszombat, Kodály learned to play piano, violin, viola, and cello. He also sang in the church choir and began composing. The earliest surviving manuscripts of Kodály's music are dated 1897, although it is believed that some of the

music may have been written down as early as 1887, when Kodály would have been merely four years old.

A contemporary of Béla Bartók, Kodály was involved in the project of creating truly Hungarian music using the many folksongs that were painstakingly gathered from the countryside and written down by the two composers. Kodály was able to skillfully weave the folksongs into his music, and he did so in a gentler, more romantic way than did Bartók.

Kodály studied at Budapest University and at Eötvös College, earning degrees in composition and teaching as well as a PhD in ethnomusicology. His music reflects his educational background, combining influences from all periods of music. Styles of Debussy, Mozart, Bach, and Palestrina, can be seen mixed in with Hungarian folksong. Melody and form were of the utmost importance to Kodály, and this is evident in his music.

Adagio for Viola and Piano, written in 1905, is expressive, slow and lyrical. Kodály makes use of the full range of the viola, starting on the very lowest note available and allowing the melody to range to a note almost four octaves higher.

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Percy Grainger (1882-1961) was born in Brighton, Victoria, Australia on July 8, 1882. Although his given name was George Percy Grainger, he performed and composed under the name Percy Aldridge Grainger.

Grainger learned his love of the arts from his mother, Rose, but received only occasional piano lessons when he was young. When his talent was realized, funds were raised and he and his mother moved to Germany so that Grainger could study piano, composition, and theory at the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt.

Grainger immigrated to London in 1901 and to the United States in 1914, both times promoting himself as a concert pianist. His compositional aptitude had not yet been noticed by the musical world, mainly due to his desire to establish himself as a performer first. As he published more music, though, Grainger became recognized for his compositions.

Part of Grainger's fame as a composer comes from his settings of English folksongs. During his time in London, Grainger collected over 500 tunes and used them in his musical experiments. He is known for his short pieces; only one piece nears the twenty-minute mark.

Grainger enjoyed composing for unusual instrument combinations, a preference that was aided by his frequent use of "elastic scoring." Elastic scoring was a technique developed by Grainger himself that allowed for almost any instrument to play a piece, assuming that balance and an ability to blend properly were considered.

Arrival Platform Humlet was written during the years 1908, 1910, and 1912. Grainger wrote a short directive to the performer at the top, explaining the meaning and character of the piece:

Awaiting arrival of belated train bringing one's sweetheart from foreign parts; great fun! The sort of thing one hums to oneself as an accompaniment to one's tramping feet as one happily, excitedly, paces up and down the arrival platform.

True to Grainger's style, the piece is only slightly longer than two minutes and has a short note at the top explaining that although it was intended for a single middle-fiddle (that is, solo viola), it could conceivably be played by any instrument or group of instruments.

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Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) was born in Hanau, Germany on November 16, 1895. He was immersed in music from an early age, taking violin lessons and performing with his two siblings in the Frankfurt Children's Trio. At age 12, Hindemith earned a scholarship to study violin and composition at the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt.

Hindemith's first compositions would be considered late Romantic as he adapted influences from the styles of such composers as Tchaikovsky, Brahms, and Mahler. By 1919, however, Hindemith cast aside his earlier works and focused on creating a new musical style: expressionism. Throughout the twenties, he experimented with new sounds, exploring dissonance and trying new textures. He became well known as both a promising young composer and a virtuosic violist (he switched permanently from violin after returning from WWI in about 1919).

In the late 1920s, Hindemith moved to Berlin after accepting a teaching post at the Berlin Musikhochschule. While there he continued to write complicated music for professionals, but he also composed simpler, more chromatic pieces to be played by children and amateurs. With the rise of the Nazi party in 1933, Hindemith reacted through his music, composing melancholy, emotional pieces and writing a politically charged opera. In October of 1936, the government banned all performances of Hindemith's works.

Hindemith immigrated to Switzerland in 1938, and then to the United States in February of 1940. During this time he began to experiment with the idea of serial composition and wrote two theory books explaining his ideas. He became quite well known in the US, as he had been in Germany, and his music was in high demand. He visited Europe periodically after WWII and returned to Switzerland permanently in 1953. His later compositions focused on still more experimentation with atonality and dissonance.

By the time of his death in Frankfurt, Germany on December 28, 1963, Hindemith had contributed a great volume of works, including orchestral music, concertos, chamber music, a Mass, several operas, three ballets, and several compositional textbooks.

Sonata in F was written in 1919, during Hindemith's expressionist period. Dissonance is prevalent, although individual sections still sound very lyrical and tonal. The abrupt changes of character and juxtaposition of piano with viola allow the listener a glimpse into the life of a rebellious young composer in post-WWI Germany. The piece is divided into three separate movements, but they are played without pause and actually blend together quite seamlessly.

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