



June 18, 2022 Summer Passion

Clara Schumann (1819–1896)

Romance No. 1 for Violin and Piano, from op. 22 (1853)

Clara Schumann first toured the Three Romances with duo partner, and dedicatee of the work, Joseph Joachim. A collection of short duets, Schumann's Romances inhabit the same rich Romantic idiom as similar duo works by her husband, while speaking with their own distinct creative voice. The first of these pieces lilts dreamily – an unhurried piano accompaniment to underpin comments from the violin that quickly deepens into a sustained collaboration. The music moves along, subtly contrasting warm passages with more serious glances, while remaining careful not to break the piece's overall character. Schumann's skill as a musical miniaturist is evident in the way she masterfully balances its elements.

Kaija Sariaaho (1952–)

Nocturne for Solo Violin (1994)

Sariaaho's Nocturne for Solo Violin is a study in instrumental effect. After a spectral, quasi-improvisatory opening passage, the music wanders into a more vigorous, angular section that explores the rhythmic ambiguities of quintuplets and the shimmering hoarseness of the violin's harmonics. The latter half of the piece returns to its original fragmented, ethereal atmosphere and concludes quietly.

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

Sonata No. 3 in D Minor for Violin and Piano, op. 108 (1888)

Allegro

Adagio

Un poco presto e con sentimento

Presto agitato

The last of Brahms' great trio of violin sonatas, like so much of his late output, reflects the composer's master craftsmanship. More emotionally terse than its two earlier siblings, the world of the D Minor Violin Sonata is one of urgency and drama. Opening with dark, syncopated murmuring in the piano underneath a broad singing line in the violin, the unsettled character of the work is established from the outset. Following the first movement's sustained atmosphere of intense expressiveness, reprieve comes in the form of the gentle, swaying Adagio. Exquisite Brahmsian wistfulness is in full bloom throughout a

timid slow movement punctuated by moving climactic passages. Following a murmuring capriccio that sees the two instruments engaged in a brief, unsettled dialogue, the rollicking final movement erupts into a punchy tarantella permeated by Brahms' characteristic rhythmic intensity, propelling the work to its conclusion amid cascade of breathless tragedy.

Blake Pouliot, violin
Patricia Tao, piano

Intermission

Amy Beach (1867-1944)

Piano Quintet in F-sharp Minor, op. 67 (1905)

Adagio – Allegro moderato
Adagio expressive
Allegro agitato – Adagio coma primo – Presto

The murky introduction of Beach's F-sharp Minor quintet dwells in tonal ambiguity, recalling the hauntingly uncertain passage with which Brahms prefaced the finale of his own great piano quintet, a work that Beach herself had performed (as a pianist), and from which she drew inspiration for her own work. The ensuing Allegro moderato speaks an expanded harmonic language with the rich stylistic accent of Brahms and Schumann, while remaining tightly controlled – Beach was a careful worker and her economy in treating the material with which she works is impressive. The work's slow movement unfurls attractively and suggests a calm, nocturnal atmosphere that undeniably, again, takes after earlier Brahmsian models.

The finale, arguably a multi-movement work in itself, is where the composer steps into the fore; while still inhabiting an overwhelmingly late-Romantic tonal world, it also features passages that flirt with an Impressionistic harmonic palette. Its quasi-fantasia structure serves as an episodic canvas onto which Beach commits the best music of the entire work – her distinct compositional voice is clearest here; a style steeped in an appreciation and mastery of the Romantic idiom, while revealing a keen interest in the music of the future.

Blake Pouliot, violin
Gabrielle Després, violin
Laura Veeze, viola
Caroline Stinson, cello
Patricia Tao, piano

Program Notes by Morgan Luethe