
Schubertiade, Jiayan Sun, piano

Music: Faculty Performances

2-27-2020

Recital 6: Program

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Schubertiade VI

Jiayan Sun, piano
Joel Pitchon, violin
Volcy Pelletier, cello

A Benefit Concert
To Support People Fighting the Coronavirus
in Hubei Province, China

Thursday, February 27, 2020

8:00 PM

Sweeney Concert Hall, Sage Hall



SMITH COLLEGE

PROGRAM

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

Rondeau brillant, in B Minor for Violin and Piano, op. 70, D. 895 (1826)
Andante – Allegro

Joel Pitchon, Jiayan Sun

Four Impromptus, op. post. 142, D. 935 (1827)
Allegro moderato (F Minor)
Allegretto (A-flat Major)
Andante (B-flat Major)
Allegro scherzando (F Minor)

Jiayan Sun

Intermission

Piano Trio No. 1 in B-flat Major, op. 99, D. 898 (1827)
Allegro moderato
Andante un poco mosso
Scherzo. Allegro – Trio
Rondo. Allegro vivace

Joel Pitchon, Volcy Pelletier, Jiayan Sun

Josten Performing Arts Library has created a LibGuide to facilitate access to literature and resources on Schubert's life and work.

<http://libguides.smith.edu/schubertiade>

The recorded performances from
A Beethoven Cycle: The Complete Piano Sonatas and Schubertiade
are available on Smith ScholarWorks.

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Please silence all cell phones and other electronic devices before the performance.

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

The Schubert literature is not loquacious about the Rondo in B Minor, **D. 895**, and yet the piece, published by Simon Richault in Paris in 1827, is one of those responsible for igniting interest in the composer in France. After a portentous slow introduction, we hear a rondo-like structure, ABACA, whose dance-like rhythms and daring harmonic experimentations were presumably attuned by Schubert to the talents of the Czech violinist for whom he wrote it in 1826, Josef Slavic, arrived and settled in Vienna in that very year.

We heard the first set of four of four *Impromptus*, **D. 899**, from the year 1827, on Jiayan Sun's concert in September. This evening we hear the second set from that year, **D. 935**, before which Robert Schumann exclaimed: "how he charms, deceives, and then grips us," in a review published, in December 1838, in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, the magazine Schumann had founded with his future father-in-law, Friedrich Wieck, in 1834.

The *Impromptu* that opens the group is dark in hue, in the F-Minor first section, then light, with a modulation to the relative major, A-flat. A third section, with two repeated halves (written out), seems to be a gentle study *in flats*, namely A-flat Minor and C-flat Major (seven flats) and A-flat Major (only four); the disposition of the melodic figures here suggests a kind of dialogue, a veritable "song without words." The opening material returns, a coda brings back a condensed version of the "study in flats," and gives us a final reminiscence of the opening theme.

The form of the second *Impromptu* is more straightforward: a song-like section in A-flat Major, with two repeated halves; a trio, in D-flat Major, in a new more flowing texture of triplets; and a literal return to the opening section—with the addition of an elegantly-voiced four-bar coda. This is the shortest and simplest of the eight *Impromptus*. Even an oboe-player taking secondary piano lessons at a conservatory could manage its performance.

You might recognize the theme of the third *Impromptu*, in B-flat Major, here followed by five variations, because it has become almost synonymous with the composer's name and image. It comes from the fifth of the nine numbers that Schubert composed as incidental music for the play by Helmina von Chézy, *Rosamunde, Princess of Cyprus*, first performed at the Theater an der Wien in December 1823. Schubert used exactly the same theme—transposed from B-flat to C—in the second movement of the String Quartet in A Minor, **D. 804**, from early 1824, causing the work to become known as the "Rosamunde" Quartet. In the *Impromptu*, he returns the theme to its original key, but enlivens it by means of some short notes that give fizz to the piano. The first two variations obediently follow the lead of the theme (in form and harmonic underpinning) while delightfully varying the texture, first, with

flowing sixteenth-notes, second, with ornaments in the right hand and syncopations in the left. The third variation, in the minor mode, is still a true variation, with melodic structure and harmonic guideposts identical to those of the theme. The fourth variation, too, is real: it is in G-flat Major, harmonically “distant,” like the third, maintaining the same good-old phrases in units of eight bars each. In the fifth and final variation, the right hand twirls and spins like a ballerina. To bring the work to a close, Schubert returns to a more somber version of the opening of the opening theme.

The fourth *Impromptu*'s return to the opening key of F Minor suggests a larger cyclical construction; its dénouement sounds not like the ending of the single *Impromptu* but rather like the ending of all four. Indeed, for Alfred Einstein, following Robert Schumann, these four movements constitute not four separate pieces but four movements of one sonata.

The Piano Trio in B-flat Major, **D. 898**, like its companion piece in E-flat Major, which we heard on Jiayan Sun's second recital in September, is one of the great peaks in the range of Mount Schubert. It was written in late 1827 (but not published until 1836) and was Schubert's first work in this category since 1812. It was surely conceived for performance by the ensemble led by Beethoven's old friend, the violinist Ignaz Schuppanzig, the celebrated exponent of Beethoven's late quartets, and the dedicatee of Schubert's earlier A-Minor Quartet. Indeed, it has been suggested that Schubert conceived the B-flat Trio precisely in order to capture Beethoven's earlier Viennese public.

The most traditional elements of the exposition section of the first movement are the establishment of the home key, B-flat, and the subsequent modulation to the dominant, F. The surprising element is the phrase structure of the opening theme, which is an entity in two parts of five and seven measures. The glorious second theme, more regular (as four plus six), is announced by the cello in its mezzo-soprano range (oh, to be a cellist in this piece!). The closing theme, a reminiscence of the first, very cleverly turns both back, for the repeat, and forward, for the development. The latter gives us more of that “glorious” second theme, gently revised and reworked by the composer but with no lessening of its heart-breaking lyricism. We soon arrive at what sounds like a return presentation of the opening material: this is a “false” reprise because we are not in the “home” key of B-flat but four flats away in the “distant” key of G-flat. Only after another false start, in D-flat, do we arrive at the true beginning, in B-flat, of the true return.

In the second movement, Schubert the song composer gives us an impassioned love duet (or perhaps, with the piano, a *ménage à trois*). Exquisite harmonies, E-flat Major, ABA form, melodies beyond words. The trio of the

Scherzo that follows looks back to the love duet, but is otherwise a regular dance (so the heart throbs less). The finale, too, is a typical Schubert rondo, although two middle sections in 3/2 meter point literally to something that is elsewhere less explicit in this piece, and that is the composer's interest in irregular phrase structures, which, less obviously than his characteristically daring tonal excursions, add new colors to his compositional palette.

Unlike the E-flat Trio, the B-flat offers no return, in the finale, to the music of the opening. In his musical "portrait" of Schubert, the great musicologist Alfred Einstein, writing on the third floor of this very building, did not mention this small difference, but he did quote Robert Schumann's comparison of the B-flat Trio and the E-flat Trio we heard in September:

"One glance at Schubert's Trio [in B-flat]—and the troubles of our human existence disappear and all the world is fresh and bright again. Yet some ten years ago [Schumann is writing in 1837] a Trio by Schubert [in E-flat] passed across the face of the musical world like some angry portent in the sky. It was his hundredth opus and shortly afterwards, in November 1828, he died. This recently published Trio [in B-flat] seems to be the older of the two works. There is absolutely no evidence of any earlier period in its style and it may well have been written just before the familiar E-flat Trio. Yet the two works are essentially and fundamentally different. The first movement, which in the E-flat Trio is eloquent of extreme anger and passionate longing, is here a thing of grace, intimate and virginal; the Adagio, in the E-flat Trio, a sigh, rising to spiritual anguish, is here [in the B-flat Trio] a blissful dream-state, a pulsating flow of exquisitely human emotion. The Scherzos are very similar to each other; yet to my mind, that of the B-flat Trio is superior. I will not attempt to choose between the two last movements. To sum up, the Trio in E-flat is active, masculine, dramatic, while the B-flat is passive, feminine, lyrical."

Please note, dear reader, that I am *quoting* Robert Schumann, whose constellation of "passive, feminine, and lyrical," objectionable today, was common enough in the eighteen-thirties, in the nineteen-thirties, and remains common today in such enclaves as 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue... In fact Robert Schumann struggled long and hard to obtain the hand of the woman who finally became his wife in 1840, Clara Wieck Schumann, one of the most formidable pianist-composers of her generation. As for Franz Schubert's regard for women, we know very little. If we knew more, would it matter for our understanding of his music? This is one of the questions that the interested parties will debate forever.

—Peter Bloom

Grace Jarcho Ross 1933 Professor of Humanities, Emeritus

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Praised by the *New York Times* for his “revelatory” performances, and by the *Toronto Star* for his “technically flawless, poetically inspired and immensely assured playing,” pianist **Jiayan Sun** has performed with the Cleveland Orchestra, the Hallé Orchestra, the Chinese and RTÉ (Ireland) National Symphony Orchestras, the Fort Worth and Toledo Symphony Orchestras, the Toronto and Aspen Concert Orchestras, the Suwon Philharmonic Orchestra, and he has conducted from the keyboard the Meiningen Court Orchestra. His performances have been broadcast by the BBC, the RTÉ, China Central Television, and classical music radio stations in North America. He has performed at and participated in the Verbier Festival, the Gstaad Menuhin Festival, the Klavier-Festival Ruhr, the Aspen Music Festival, the Sarasota Music Festival, and PianoTexas. Under the mentorship of Sir Andrés Schiff, he was invited to give a number of solo recitals in Europe as part of Schiff’s “Building Bridges” project for the 2017–2018 season.

Jiayan Sun has been awarded prizes at many of the major international piano competitions, including third prize at the Leeds International Piano Competition, second prize at the Dublin International Piano Competition, fourth prize and the audience prize at the Cleveland International Piano Competition, first prize at the inaugural CCC Toronto International Piano Competition, and others. Playing early keyboard instruments and studying historical performance practice have played a significant role in his musical activities, with critically acclaimed appearances with the American Classical Orchestra in Alice Tully Hall.

Hailing from Yantai, China, he received Bachelor’s, Master’s and the Doctor of Musical Arts degrees from The Juilliard School under the tutelage of Yoheved Kaplinsky and Stephen Hough. His other mentors include pianists Malcolm Bilson, Richard Goode, Robert Levin, and harpsichordist Lionel Party. His devotion to the art of composition led him to study with the composer Philip Lasser. As the Iva Dee Hiatt Visiting Artist in Piano at Smith College, he presented Beethoven’s complete piano sonatas in chronological order in the 2018–2019 season.

Joel Pitchon, soloist, concertmaster, chamber music player, and Professor of Violin and Chamber Music at Smith College. Mr. Pitchon studied with Lewis Kaplan, Oscar Shumsky and Joseph Fuchs and received his degrees from The Juilliard School. He has served as the concertmaster for numerous orchestras, including the Orquestra Ciutat de Barcelona (Spain), the

New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, the Ottawa Symphony and the EOS Chamber Orchestra. As a soloist and collaborator, Mr. Pitchon has recently performed with the Berkshire Bach Society in their New Year's Bach Brandenburg celebration. The *New York Times* noted his playing in the EOS Orchestra's production of Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du Soldat* as "superb." He has recorded two CDs for the Gasparo label: *Four Sonatas* for violin and piano, with the composer Clifton J. Noble, Jr. and *New England Legacy*, works by Quincy Porter, Walter Piston, and Amy Beach with pianist Jonathan Bass. *Sun Threads*, the chamber music of Augusta Read Thomas, was made with the Walden Chamber Players for ARTCD. This fall, 2019, Mr. Pitchon anticipates the release of a new CD of piano trios, works by Piston, Bernstein and Perera, on the Bridge label. Mr. Pitchon is currently co-director of the Sage Chamber Music Society and chair of the Smith College Music Department.

Volcy Pelletier, cellist, is a native of Paris. She received the Premier Prix in Cello and Chamber Music from the Conservatoire National de Région de Boulogne-Billancourt, France, where she studied with Michel Strauss. Ms. Pelletier was a member of the Lyon Symphony at the age of 21, and won a Fulbright Scholarship to study with Bernard Greenhouse, cellist of the renowned Beaux Arts Trio, at the New England Conservatory. She has been the acting principal cellist of the Orquestra Ciutat de Barcelona in Spain. While living in London Ms. Pelletier frequently participated in concerts of the London Symphony Orchestra and was a member of the BBC Orchestra. She has been featured in chamber music concerts and given recitals on both sides of the Atlantic.

Pelletier was a founding member of the Concert Players String Trio in London, the Forster String Trio and the Kinor Quartet in New York City. She was also a member of the Laurentian String Quartet, which held a residency at Sarah Lawrence College in New York. She has performed at the Monadnock Music Festival in New Hampshire; the Light House Chamber Players in Cape Cod, Mass.; the Mohawk Trails Concerts; and the Manchester Music Festival in Vermont. Soon to be released on the Bridge label, Ms. Pelletier may be heard on a CD of piano trios by Piston, Perera and Bernstein. Recognized as a highly effective teacher, Pelletier is a Lecturer in Cello Performance at Smith College. She is currently a member of the Sage Chamber Music Society.

Thank You!

All proceeds from today's concert will go to Hubei Charity Federation, to support people fighting the coronavirus in the epicenter of the outbreak.

Jiayan Sun shall report the amount of donations in public at the next Schubertiade concert on March 5.

Donations can also be made directly to:
Hubei Charity Federation
Bank of China, Hubei Branch, Wuchang Sub-branch
Bank account number: 5599 7000 3549
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Schubertiade

Jiayan Sun, piano
Eight Recitals at 8 PM on Thursdays
Sweeney Concert Hall, Sage Hall
Free and open to the public

Next Concert:

V. March 5, 2020 (rescheduled from February 6)
The Schwanengesang Poets: Rellstab, Heine, and Seidl
with **William Hite**, tenor

VII. April 2, 2020
Piano Music for Two-Hands and
Four-Hands
with **Monica Jakuc Leverett**,
Graf Fortepiano

VIII. April 16, 2020
Piano Sonatas 3: F-sharp Minor,
D. 571; D Major, D. 850;
B-flat Major, D. 960

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