

5-2023

Final Doctoral Recital

David Charles Shann
david.shann@stonybrook.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.library.stonybrook.edu/electronic-dissertations-theses>

Recommended Citation

Shann, David Charles, "Final Doctoral Recital" (2023). *Electronic Dissertations and Theses*. 3.
<https://commons.library.stonybrook.edu/electronic-dissertations-theses/3>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Electronic Dissertations and Theses at Academic Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of Academic Commons. For more information, please contact mona.ramonetti@stonybrook.edu, hu.wang.2@stonybrook.edu.

David Shann, Viola

with

Amber Scherer, Jeanette Ojala, and Calvin Hu

Saturday, April 29, 2023, 3:00 PM
Recital Hall | Staller Center for the Arts

Märchenbilder, Op. 113

R. Schumann (1810-1856)

- I. Nicht schnell
- II. Lebhaft
- III. Rasch
- IV. Langsam, mit melancholischem Ausdruck

Viola Sonata, Op. 11, No. 4

P. Hindemith (1895-1963)

- I. Fantasie
- II. Thema mit Variationen
- III. Finale (mit Variationen)

~ INTERMISSION ~

Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 147

D. Shostakovich (1906-1975)

- I. Moderato
- II. Allegretto
- III. Adagio

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the Doctor of Musical Arts degree.



Stony Brook University

Robert Schumann

(1810-1856)

Märchenbilder ("Fairytale Pictures") for Viola and Piano, Op. 113 (1851)

In 1850, Robert Schumann moved with his wife, Clara, to Düsseldorf, where he was appointed as music director despite his previous difficulties as a conductor. Schumann's mental health deteriorated after 1851, and he attempted suicide in 1854 before his eventual death in an asylum in Endenich. However, during 1850-51, Schumann was quite productive as a composer, creating several works, including his third symphony, cello concerto, third piano trio, and two sonatas for violin and piano. Although some of his works from that time are still popular today, the *Märchenbilder* has not gained as much popularity. Despite this, it is a sweet and charming piece, inspired by Schumann's love of traditional fairytales.

The opening movement of *Märchenbilder*, "Nicht schnell," features a sad and flowing viola melody, which is echoed by the piano. After the opening melodic motif, a second motif is introduced that incorporates faster rhythms and contour motion to the opening line. The rest of the movement explores the relationship of these two motifs as they interact in a variety of combinations. The second movement, "Lebhaft," has a lively and rhythmic character that evokes the feeling of a hunt. Schumann incorporates two lyrical episodes before bringing the rondo-like movement to a gentle close. The third movement, "Rasch," features a fast-paced melody that is propelled by the viola and accompanied by thrusting piano figures. After a brief moment of calm, the movement ends as it began. It is worth noting that the finale of *Märchenbilder* predates Brahms' first encounter with Schumann by two years. The viola's lyrical theme in the final movement is reminiscent of the Adagio in Brahms' third violin/piano sonata, which was composed in the same key, D major. Schumann appropriately titled the movement "Langsam, mit melancholischem Ausdruck" ("Slow, with a melancholy expression"), which characterizes

the warm and nostalgic theme. While the melody conveys a sense of longing, it also portrays a contentment that is reminiscent of a child, ending quietly and without tension.

Paul Hindemith

(1895-1963)

Viola Sonata, No. 4, Op. 11 (1917)

The Sonata for viola and piano, Op. 11 No. 4 was composed in 1919 and premiered on June 2, 1919, with Hindemith on viola and Emma Lübbecke-Job on piano. The concert featured additional Hindemith works, including Sonata for Violin and Piano Op. 11 No. 1 (also performed by Hindemith), String Quartet Op. 10, and an incomplete Piano Quintet in E \flat . The concert's success led to the publication of Hindemith's Op. 11 set, comprising of six works under one opus number: Op. 11 No. 1 and 2 (sonatas for violin and piano), No. 3 (sonata for cello and piano), No. 4 (sonata for viola and piano), No. 5 (sonata for solo viola), and No. 6 (sonata for solo violin). This decision to publish the set of six works under one opus number was a deliberate attempt to reference historically the works of the Baroque and Classical periods, revealing much about Hindemith's aesthetic at that time.

This sonata is the first of three that Hindemith composed for viola and piano. Brahms and Reger's influences are evident in the piece, along with Debussy's influence. During World War I, while serving in the military, Hindemith formed a string quartet that was playing Debussy's quartet when news of the composer's death was broadcast on the radio. Hindemith recalled the event, saying:

"We did not play to the end. It was as if our playing had been robbed of the breath of life. But we realized for the first time that music is more than style, technique, and the expression of powerful feelings. Music reached out beyond political boundaries, national hatred, and the horrors of war.

On no other occasion have I seen so clearly what direction music must take."

The sonata incorporates elements of Debussy's solo string sonatas and quartet, particularly in the opening movement. The first movement serves as a prelude to the last two movements, all of which are played continuously. The second movement is labeled as a theme and variations, with a melancholic folk-like theme stated at the outset, followed by four variations. The third movement is in sonata form but is linked to the second movement in that additional variations of the second movement's theme are stated during the third movement (variations five and six of the theme serve as a substitute for a development section in the third movement, and variation seven serves as the coda).

Dimitri Shostakovich

(1906-1975)

Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op. 147 (1975)

In Leningrad on October 29, 1966, Shostakovich suffered a severe heart attack, which affected his health for the rest of his life. This resulted in a shift in his music and thoughts, which became imbued with solemn tragedy and fatalism, leading him to create introspective, thoughtful compositions in his later years. In his memoirs, Shostakovich discusses how he tried to convince himself that he shouldn't fear death, but the writing of his works about death helped him accept it as an inevitable part of life. Despite his deteriorating health, he completed the Sonata for Viola and Piano in June 1975, just one day before another hospital stay. Shostakovich died on August 9th, 1975, from heart disease and lung cancer.

The first movement begins softly, and the second movement is a sardonic scherzo, while the finale is a meditation for the viola with sparse accompaniment and a somber mood, reminiscent of Beethoven's work. The three movements, each concluding with the directive *morendo* ("dying away"), derive from fluid formal processes rather than established

models, much like Beethoven's late quartets and sonatas. The opening movement commences nearly inaudibly, with the viola playing open-interval pizzicato notes that are joined by the piano's slow-moving melody of a twelve-tone row that is developed throughout the movement. These themes are gradually extended and intertwined with more animated motifs, allowing the music to build to two points of expressive intensity before receding to the pensive quiet of the opening. The second movement is a scherzo whose march and dance themes Shostakovich borrowed from his unfinished 1941 opera *The Gamblers*, which was based on a story by Gogol. The first 71 measures of the movement are a direct quotation from the unfinished opera while the rest of the movement is made of new material that develops the motifs and melodies from the opening. The finale is filled with allusions to the somber first movement of Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* (op. 27, no. 2). The movement is slow throughout, serving as a meditation for the viola, while the piano provides only a sparse, broken-chord accompaniment and long, bell-tone bass notes that are reminiscent of Beethoven's style. The mood is difficult to define, lacking anger or optimism, but not despondency either; it may be described as weary, resigned, or even consoling, as the sonata ends on a major chord. It is possible that in these final notes, which were to be his last, Shostakovich intended to communicate the calm acceptance of life's ultimate experience.