

Sonatina in g minor, D. 408

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

- I Allegro giusto
- II Andante
- III Menuetto and trio
- IV Allegro moderato

Although Schubert wrote his three sonatas for violin and piano in 1816, they were only published eight years after his death, when the publisher chose to call them sonatinas, perhaps with an eye towards making them more attractive to the amateur market. The violin does not use the upper registers of the instrument in these works, as it does in Schubert's later chamber music. The first movement opens with a four-bar dramatic flourish that is immediately transmuted into a gentle first theme. After giving way to a second theme consisting a chain of appoggiaturas, the opening is developed as a closing theme; in all, this makes for a cleverly organized 52 bars! The second movement, again in the sonata-allegro form, is barely Schubertian in its first material and quite Mozartian in its second theme. The Menuetto and Trio brings the sun of a healthy outdoor stroll with piano and violin bouncing along in perfect balance. In the last movement, we revel in the young composer's gift of melodic invention. The first 'tune' is definitely of a Bohemian bent. A heraldic transition then introduces another tune for the closing section – a cheerful, sunny and happy inspiration that one can imagine the composer whistling on his way to meet his circle of friends.

Homage (1994)

Christopher Marshall (b.1956)

Christopher Marshall is Composer in Residence at the University of Central Florida and Adjunct Professor of Composition. *Homage* is all that remains of a sonata for piano and violin composed in the early 1970s. It was originally sandwiched between two intense outer movements, however in 1994 the composer resuscitated and revised this movement. The title reflects the fact that the musical language represents an amalgam of features from the work of two of the composer's heroes, Brahms and Tchaikovsky. *Homage* is featured on the recent CD by *La Belle Alliance, Release - The Mozart Fellowship*, and was the first of the composer's violin and piano works to be recorded.

Sonata in d minor for Violin and Piano in d minor, Op 108, (1888)

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

- I Allegro
- II Adagio
- III Un poco presto e con sentiment
- IV Presto agitato

Of the three Brahms sonatas for violin and piano, the d minor sonata stands out for its granitic strength and emotional power. The wealth of original ideas evident in the

construction of this masterpiece demonstrate the confidence of the sure-handed craftsman at the height of his powers. The opening bars of the first movement are subtle, comprising a pure violin melody, with its motivic interval of a fourth supported in an undulating fashion by the piano – the two instruments in satisfying counterpoint – music pared down to its essence. Immediately ahead is an expansive Adagio in D Major, the key that ends the first movement. The violin sings out a fervent melody in its lower register on its lowest string. The interval of a fourth with which the violin began the first movement is now present in the piano's accompaniment figure of the violin's tune in the opening of the second movement. This thread of fourths will continue to tie the whole together and open the stormy last movement – when they appear in descending fashion.

The third movement provides a welcomed contrast to the intensity of the second, starting with a hesitant tune which the violin accompanies in the surprising key of f#minor. There is some drama when this wistful opening is obliterated by a slip into F major! (Listen for the heraldic horn fourths!)

The fourth movement of this sonata, gets its energy and conviction from a driving 6/8 rhythm, handed back and forth between an earthy violin accompaniment and bouncing chords in the piano, bringing to life a peasant-like dance of Brahms in his Hungarian mode.

Interval

Suite for Violin and Piano, Op. 6

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)

Introduction

I March

II Moto Perpetuo

III Lullaby

IV Waltz

Born 100 years ago, in 1913, English composer Benjamin Britten is being celebrated around the world this year in festivals and concerts that feature his rich and diverse range of compositions. Britten was already composing from the age of 5, had studied with Frank Bridge from the age of 13 to 17, when he entered the Royal College of Music to study piano and composition in 1930. In spite of the College's, (and the English public's) more conservative leanings when it came to musical style, Britten's early instrumental works display his interest in the European influence on compositional technique at the time, in particular that of Arnold Schoenberg and the Second Viennese School. The Violin Suite was written in Vienna in 1936 and premiered at the International Society for Contemporary Music Festival in Barcelona by his friend, expatriate Spanish violinist Antonio Brosa. It shows Britten experimenting with these "modern" ideas, alongside organising the movements into the more traditional idea of a Suite.

Rhapsodie hongroise XII, S379a (1850s)

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

This piece is a rethinking by Liszt of the Twelfth Hungarian Rhapsody for piano. These popular pieces were fashioned by Liszt out of tunes that he believed were folk-melodies.

Loosely fashioned in form after the improvisations familiar from Gypsy music, Liszt used two elements of that music, the slow “lassan” and quick “friss”. As so often with Liszt, this work is more than a transcription. The joie de vivre of the original is expanded in this new form by the thorough exploitation of the virtuosic potential of both the violin and the piano.

La Belle Alliance

Featuring New Zealand violinist Tessa Petersen and American pianist John Van Buskirk. ‘La Belle Alliance’ is a small, intimate concert hall in Curaçao where the couple has concertised many times. They adopted this name for their duo because it signifies the special spirit of collaborative communication between the two of them and between musicians and audience. Their CD of works for solo violin and violin/piano by New Zealand composers, was released by Ode records in June 2012.

Tessa Petersen studied at the University of Otago and led the New Zealand Youth Orchestra before continuing her studies in London at the Royal College of Music on a British Commonwealth Scholarship. She went on to play and tour with leading chamber orchestras in the UK and Europe. Moving to the USA in 1993, Tessa established a career on the East Coast as an orchestral and chamber player, concertmaster, recitalist, adjudicator and teacher. She has participated in the Aldeburgh Music Festival in the UK, as well as The Waterloo, Wolfboro, Mohawk Trail, Marlboro and Monadnock music festivals in the USA. Tessa is currently Executant Lecturer in Violin at the University of Otago.

John Van Buskirk, a versatile pianist referred to by the NY Times as “sensitive and assertive”, has a broad experience of music as an academic and as a practical discipline. He has played from Los Angeles and New York to Budapest, Prince Edward Island and the Netherland Antilles as a recitalist, chamber music player and recital partner to singers and instrumentalists. A graduate from the Eastman School of Music and the Juilliard School, he completed post-graduate study at the Liszt Academy in Budapest. He has performed in Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center and Wigmore Hall. John’s recordings include those made as a member of The New York Chamber Symphony and the Harmonie Ensemble. His solo recordings include *Music of Robert Schumann*, *The Art of the Fortepiano*, and *Songs of Robert Schumann*, with Jane Bryden, plus a recording of Allen Shawn’s *Messages* (Albany CD). Since relocating to New Zealand, John has adjudicated several IRMT competitions, lectured and tutored at the University of Otago and become an examiner for the New Zealand Music Examinations Board.