

Ali Friedman, Violin

Mary Price, Piano

Junior Recital
ASU Recital Hall | November 22, 2013

Sonata in E Minor, K. 304

- I. Allegro
- II. Tempo Di Menuetto

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

This sonata was composed in 1778 while Mozart was in Paris. Beloved for both its simplicity and emotional depth, this is the only sonata for piano and violin which is written in a minor key. Remarkably, the sonata begins with both the piano and violin in octaves and unison presenting a sobering opening theme based off of the e minor triad. This sorrowful theme is restated throughout the first movement of the sonata, continually evolving through variation in the accompanying harmony. The second movement opens with solo piano playing a graceful but fragile melody which the violin soon echoes. In the middle of this movement, the piece blossoms into a section written in E Major, providing a kind of oasis between the darker sections which surround it.

This sonata was written at the same time that Mozart's mother died. Though there is no evidence connecting the content of this composition and Mozart's emotional state at the time, the association does not seem unreasonable. For me personally, I find that the first movement has a strong element of regret within it. The main theme of this movement seems to carry both an acceptance of something inevitable as well as disbelief and resistance to this inevitability. The second movement naturally transitions into a feeling of wanting to hold on to something special. To me, the opening of the second movement sounds like a music box. Following that idea, for this movement I would encourage you to think of something special you have been given by someone you love that is no longer in your life, and all the memories that are contained within that simple object.

Sonata No. 1 in G Minor for Solo Violin

- I. Adagio
- II. Fuga
- III. Siciliana
- IV. Presto

J.S. Bach
(1685-1750)

Bach's set of Six Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin have come to be staples of the violin repertoire and exemplify Bach's masterful command of counterpoint. In these pieces, Bach pushed the contrapuntal capacities of the violin to extremes that had not yet been explored in his time. Like most of Bach's compositions, the Sonatas and Partitas were ignored after his death and have slowly found their way to the position of esteem they hold today. We know very little of Bach's motivation for writing these masterworks. At their time of completion in 1720, Bach was employed by Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen.

I think it is safe to say that every violinist ends up having a deep personal connection with these Sonatas and Partitas. For me, I have somewhat romantically come to view these pieces as Bach's personal diary that he unintentionally left behind for us. Every movement seems to demand respect and emotional commitment from the performer and through this devotion, we are given brief glances of what and individual who lived nearly 300 years ago considered to be valuable about life. To share such intimate music and be part of such a long standing dialogue is a truly raw and humbling experience.

Sonata No. 3, "Ballade" from Six Sonatas for Solo Violin Op. 27

Eugene Ysaye
(1858-1931)

Eugene Ysaye is considered to be one of the greatest violinists of the 20th century. A Belgian born violinist, Ysaye enjoyed a versatile career as a soloist, quartet player, conductor as well as composer. The Ballade is part of a collection of six sonatas completed in 1924. It is said that Ysaye was inspired to write these sonatas after hearing the great violinist Jozef Szigeti perform some of Bach's solo works on a recital. Each one of Ysaye's six sonatas is dedicated to a younger virtuoso of the time; Sonata No. 3 is dedicated to Georges Enesco. For both their extreme technical challenges as well as their emotional depth, these sonatas stand as true gems within the violin repertoire.

I would like to dedicate my performance of the ballade to Gene Gill who has proved to be a friend of the highest caliber through his willingness to let me practice this piece in front of him more times than any average human would be able tolerate.

Sonata No.1 in F Major Op. 8

Edvard Grieg

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Allegretto quasi andantino
- III. Allegro molto vivace

Edvard Grieg is a Norwegian composer and the Sonata in F Major is one of three sonatas for violin and piano which he composed. Composed in 1865 at the age of 22, Grieg's early interests in Norwegian folk traditions as well as the romantic influences of his studies are very apparent throughout this sonata. The first movement begins with two rather ominous chords from the piano before the violin comes in with a much lighter but still modest melody. From there, it seems that Grieg introduces an endless number of new characters throughout the movement which makes this music exciting and overwhelming all at once. The theme of the second movement is based on a dance theme, and here, the influence of folk traditions are very apparent. Finally, the third movement brings the sonata to a triumphant close with brilliance and energy.

I fell in love with this piece the first time I heard it, and have had a wonderful time working on it. To me, I think this sonata is best listened to and played as a story, more specifically, a fairytale. The rapid changes of character throughout the sonata lend themselves perfectly to creating a story line drenched with romance and adventure. I would encourage you to actively make up a story as you listen (even if it makes you feel silly); I truly believe it makes the music come alive. Here I will help you get started. Those ominous opening chords in the piano set the scene of some dark and enchanted woods in Norway. With the entrance of the violin, we are brought to the doorstep of a small but cheery and well lit home sitting just on the edge of town. Inside, there is at least one beautiful peasant girl who may or may not end up becoming a princess...

A special thanks to my remarkable teacher Dr. McLin who has taught me to play and love violin through a series of small victories.