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Claire Roesler

April 8, 2019

Senior Honors Recital

by

Claire Roesler

Dr. Patricia Dinkins-Matthews
Adviser

Music Department

Dr. Patricia Dinkins-Matthews
Adviser

Dr. Elena Cholakova
Committee Member

Jessica Wu
Committee Member

Dr. Axel Presas
Committee Member

2019

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By

Claire Roesler

Dr. Patricia Dinkins-Matthews

Adviser

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Abstract

Senior Honors Recital

By Claire Roesler

Claire Roesler performed her Senior Honors Recital on March 24, 2019 at 5:00 pm in the Emerson Concert Hall. Roesler was accompanied by pianist Dr. Elena Cholakova. The recital included pieces by J. S. Bach, Giuseppe Tartini, Dmitri Shostakovich, and Edvard Grieg.

The recital was performed on the 1687 Grancino violin, which was donated to the Emory University Symphony Orchestra by Dr. Joel Felner. Roesler received highest honors for her performance.

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with Haley Roesler, cello

—INTERMISSION—

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Program Notes

Violin Partita No. 3 in E Major

Although typically pictured as an organist and composer, Johann Sebastian Bach was also an accomplished violinist. His mastery and understanding of the instrument transpires through his compositions for it—the most noteworthy being his Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin. The third Partita is the most famous of the six solo works. The first movement is the *Prelude*, which opens with bright, resonant notes in the high register of the violin. The piece then dives into a flurry of notes that sound as if they are being effortlessly improvised, leaving no question why this energetic and virtuosic piece is an audience favorite.

Violin Sonata in G Minor, op. 10, “Didone Abbandonata”

Giuseppe Tartini was a Baroque violinist and composer. Born in 1692 in the Republic of Venice, Tartini was tutored to become a friar and therefore received basic musical training as a child. He chose instead to attend law school. After hearing a performance by Francesco Maria Veracini, an accomplished violinist, Tartini was dissatisfied with his own violin skills and locked himself away to practice. A few years later in 1721, Tartini was named *primo violino e capo di concerto*, or concertmaster, at the Basilica di Saint Antonio in Northern Italy. This appointment is just one example of Tartini’s mastery of the violin. Around 1727, Tartini began his violin school which was soon referred to as “the school of the nations.” Receiving students from all over Europe, Tartini’s violin school was the first to receive such a high level of fame. Tartini’s ideology stressed the importance of bow technique; he even designed his own bows so that he could obtain the exact tone he desired. Besides violin, Tartini also taught composition, although nearly all of his compositions were written for solo violin either in the form of a concerto or a sonata.

One of Tartini’s most famous works is the Violin Sonata in G Minor, op. 10, which is commonly referred to as “Didone Abbandonata,” or “Dido the Forsaken.” Dido, the mythical queen of Carthage, was abandoned by her true love Aeneas, the leader of the Trojans. The gods called for Aeneas to leave Carthage to found the city of Rome, and he chose to obey them instead of remaining by Dido’s side. Tartini’s piece clearly depicts the emotions experienced by Dido when Aeneas left her, and he uses his skills as a violinist to do so. The first movement begins with a solemn melody full of Dido’s longings for what could have been. Tartini’s mastery of the bow is quite evident in this movement; the clear sound at the beginning can only be achieved by his smooth and even “cantabile” bowing. The next movement is a surge of notes conveying Dido’s anger and rage towards Aeneas and the gods. Tartini’s use of quick trills demonstrates his virtuosity on the instrument once again. While the final movement is upbeat, giving it a sense of joy, the minor key suggests anything but elation. Dido may seem content,

but this is only because she has found a way to stop her pain and suffering for good. The piece ends with dramatic chords as Dido takes her own life.

Five Pieces for Two Violins and Piano

Dmitri Shostakovich was a Russian composer known for his dark, melancholy tone and his resistance against Joseph Stalin's communism. Shostakovich is often considered one of the greatest symphonists of the mid-1900s, but he also composed string quartets, film scores, concertos, and even ballets that are just as renowned as his symphonies. His pieces are admired by many due to their emotional depth, such his String Quartet No. 8 which was "dedicated to the victims of fascism and war," and the third movement of his Fifth Symphony, which caused people in the audience to weep during its premiere. For that reason, it may be hard at first to believe that these very cheery pieces are by Shostakovich. Lev Atovmyan, a student, friend, and assistant of Shostakovich, collected and arranged the pieces from various works with the composer's approval.

The first piece, *Prelude*, was taken from Shostakovich's suite, *The Gadfly*. The piece opens with a haunting melody in B minor, a key that instills a sense of calm and acceptance of what will come. The rich harmonic language between the voices imparts a heaviness to the piece. An optimistic dance emerges suddenly in the relative key of D major, but it is cut short by chords dragging it back to B minor for the return of the opening melody.

The next two pieces were taken from the third Ballet Suite. The suite was composed in 1953, five years after Stalin reprimanded Shostakovich and demanded that he write "beautiful" music that was suitable for the Russian people. The *Gavotte* is set in a higher register of the violin and in the key of A major, making this piece feel much lighter than the one preceding it. However, the harmonic chromaticism sprinkled throughout the piece causes the delicate melody to shift in character. This causes tension and discomfort to the listener, suggesting that the preceding lightness was all a façade to please Stalin. The following piece is the *Elegy*. With its simple theme and rich counterpoint between the string voices, it may be one of Shostakovich's most beautiful melodies.

The fourth piece, *Waltz*, is believed to be taken from *The Tale of the Priest and his Servant Balda*, which was a children's cartoon. Although the show was cancelled and the music was never finalized, Shostakovich enjoyed the music he had written and created a suite from some of his sketches.

The *Polka* is a bright and energetic finale that comes from Shostakovich's first Ballet Suite. Set in the key of D major, this piece feels like a celebration. The sudden modulation to D minor a few measures from the end of the piece once again temporarily unmask Shostakovich's darker side that was hidden with "beauty" for Stalin's approval.

Sonata No. 3 for Piano and Violin in C Minor, op. 45

Edvard Grieg was born in 1843 in the Norwegian city of Bergen. He grew up in a musical household with both piano and composition classes. In 1858, Ole Bull—a renowned Norwegian violinist—visited Grieg’s family. After hearing the young Grieg play piano, Bull saw potential in him and convinced his parents to send him to the Leipzig Conservatory in Germany. Grieg soon began his studies at Europe’s leading conservatory. Upon graduating, Grieg traveled to the cultural capital of Scandinavia: Copenhagen. During his three years there, he was exposed to Norwegian folk music and met leading Norwegian musicians including Rikard Nordraak. He soon developed a strong love for folk music, which inspired many of his melodies and allowed him to develop a unique harmonic language.

This third and final sonata for piano and violin was completed in 1887 and was one of Grieg’s favorite compositions. The first movement begins suddenly with a bold and heroic theme in C minor. This theme is restated numerous times throughout the movement, though sometimes it appears as subtle variations with altered time, pitch, and inversions. The second movement is in stark contrast to the first. It begins with a beautiful, singing piano solo that is then echoed by the violin. The harmonic language throughout this lyrical section is in a very late-Romantic style because the key of E major is not always clearly stated in the melody; rather, it is implied. An upbeat section cuts the lyrical one short. This tune is derived from a folk dance called the Morris Dance. This style of dancing was typical during ceremonies and dates back to the 16th century. A characteristic of this dance for violinists is a short, bubbling bowing, which can be seen throughout this movement of Grieg’s sonata. The movement closes with a dramatic restatement of the lyrical theme. The final movement is truly the definition of a grand finale. Folk music elements such as the *anacruses* (“pickup” notes), syncopation, and the use of off-beats keep the tempo lively and bouncy. The energy builds up throughout the movement and finally explodes, bringing the whole sonata to an epic conclusion.

Performer Biographies

Claire Roesler is a senior at Emory majoring in chemistry and music with a concentration in performance. She began violin lessons with the Suzuki method at age five. She grew up playing violin and cello duets with her younger sister, Hayley. In middle school, Roesler joined the Allegro String Performance Ensemble which set choreography to the repertoire. The group exposed her to playing various styles of music including fiddle, pop, and swing. Roesler continued to play in numerous ensembles throughout high school, including the Chicago Consort and the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra. The groups toured China, Peru, France, Italy, and Greece. Roesler also placed twice in her high school's concerto competition.

Roesler is the concertmaster of the Emory University Symphony Orchestra, a member of a string quartet, and takes private lessons with Jessica Wu of the Vega String Quartet. Outside of the music department, Roesler is a lab TA for analytical chemistry, a math tutor at a local high school, and performs research in a biochemical lab. After graduation, Roesler aspires to attend medical school, but she also plans to keep music in her life by either joining an orchestra or establishing a quartet.

Bulgarian pianist Elena Cholakova has appeared as a soloist and chamber musician in Europe, South America, and the United States. She performs with members of the New York Philharmonic and Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and she has appeared in the International Chamber Music Festival in San Miguel de Allende and the International Days of Music Festival in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. She is a lecturer in collaborative piano at Emory.