

MUSIC at

2018 2019

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CATHERINE MACGREGOR, VIOLIN
SENIOR HONORS RECITAL

SHARON BERENSON, PIANO

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3, 2019, 8:00 P.M.

**EMERSON CONCERT HALL
SCHWARTZ CENTER FOR PERFORMING ARTS**

PROGRAM NOTES

Violin Sonata No. 2 in A Minor, BWV 1003

The six sonatas and partitas for solo violin by Johann Sebastian Bach are commonly regarded as the cornerstone of violin repertoire. Their technical demands and harmonic complexity challenge the performer in terms of execution, coordination, and phrasing. However, these solo works for the violin have not always been so popular among performers. Recognizing the sheer genius of Bach, Felix Mendelssohn used his status as a prominent conductor and composer to reintroduce the obscure, unfamiliar works of Bach back into the public eye and into the concert hall in the 19th century. Continuing Mendelssohn's quest to celebrate Bach's masterful works, the violin virtuoso Joseph Joachim began to champion and perform the solo sonatas and partitas. As a result, these works reached new fame and familiarity with audiences. They continue to be used both as pedagogical studies of harmony and violin technique today and as standard performance repertoire.

Of this collection, the second sonata in A Minor is a favorite among many violinists, as it displays an emotional depth that performers and listeners find compelling. The two final movements featured on this recital contrast in tempo and tone. The *Andante* is a somber harmonization of two distinct voices throughout the movement—one driving the melodic line and the other serving as an ostinato-like accompaniment. The fourth and final movement, an energetic *Allegro*, is unusual as it is one of very few movements in which Bach explicitly indicates dynamics. The movement begins with an *arpeggio* figure marked in the original manuscript as *forte*. Next, the same notes repeat but are marked *piano*. The movement continues in this energetic echo-like pattern and swiftly drives the haunting sonata to a close.

Violin Sonata No. 21 in E Minor, K. 304

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's sonatas and concertos are highlights of the Classical violin repertoire. The Mozart Violin Sonata in E Minor was chosen to represent the Classical period of music on this program, but this particular work is unlike other violin sonatas of the time. Mozart composed his Violin Sonata in E Minor in 1778 in the wake of personal tragedy. In that year Mozart was on tour in Paris with his mother when she suddenly became ill and died. This event was unexpected and traumatic for the 21-year-old composer. In a letter to his friend, Abbè Bullinger, Mozart wrote, "This has been the saddest day of my life . . . my dear mother is no more!" While it is not known if this sonata was written as a direct response to his mother's passing, it was written while Mozart was still in Paris, and it is distinct from his other violin sonatas. First, Mozart uses the key of E minor—his only violin sonata written in a minor mode. In addition, Mozart incorporates profoundly emotive lyricism and a wide melodic range throughout the two-movement work. The opening phrase of this sonata is presented plainly with the violin and piano playing in unison without any additional harmonization. Sudden dynamic shifts, articulation changes, and chromaticism add drama to this emotional first movement. The following movement, *Tempo di Menuetto* has the lightness of a dance but features a melody with a somber and longing quality. The piano and the violin trade off the mournful phrases, but end with a strong and final statement.

Caprice No. 13 in B-flat Major, op. 1

Niccolò Paganini was an Italian virtuoso violinist who gained popularity and notoriety for his unparalleled skill and mesmerizing stage presence. The subject of many stories and rumors, Paganini earned the nickname the “devil’s violinist” and used his reputation as a way to further his fame and attract audiences. Paganini’s 24 Caprices represent an important shift into modern violin technique. In each of these playful works, Paganini explores different and dazzling technique on the violin. The 13th Caprice earned the nickname “devil’s laughter” as it opens with a sweeping harmony followed by a series of descending thirds that mimic the sound and rhythm of laughter. It then shifts into a fast and intense section with quick string crossings and double-stop octaves. Such displays of Paganini’s brilliant ingenuity inspired violinists and composers to push the boundaries of violin music and to learn new ways of playing that make these innovative techniques possible.

Violin Sonata No. 2 in A Major, op. 100

Balancing technical challenges and lyrical expressiveness, Johannes Brahms’s Sonata No. 2 maintains a warm and joyful mood through all three movements. This sonata, written during summer 1886 while Brahms was vacationing in Thun, Switzerland, is sometimes called the “Thun” Sonata. This summer in Switzerland provided an inspiring and joyful time in the composer’s life. Brahms himself described his surroundings to be “so full of melodies that one has to be careful not to step on any,” and this sonata embodies the joy and beauty that Brahms experienced. The first movement, *Allegro amabile*, begins with a piano introduction of the melody that the violin echoes. This pattern continues for the first few measures creating a feeling of dialogue—the piano makes a statement and the violin chimes in to reply. The polite conversation continues until the violin suddenly breaks the melody with a series of declamatory octaves and sets the passionate movement into motion. The second movement alternates between calm sections of singing melody and more rhythmically driven and angular *vivace* sections. The use of *pizzicato* in this *vivace* shows playful energy that contrasts so well with long and tranquil melodies of the other sections. The sonata closes with a warm and flowing final movement. Its graceful theme grows in intensity with each repetition but ends with the same feeling of joy that permeates the entire sonata. Of the composer’s three violin sonatas, this work expresses Brahms’s lyricism and passion most eloquently and encapsulates key emotional characteristics of the Romantic period.

Navarra, op. 33

Navarra by Pablo de Sarasate is a flashy showpiece for two violins written in 1889. Sarasate, a Spanish virtuoso violinist, amazed the world with his technical mastery of the violin. He was so beloved during his lifetime that Romantic composers including Wieniawski, Lalo, and Saint Saëns dedicated violin compositions to him. Like many of Sarasate’s compositions, *Navarra* demands technical facility and mastery of the violin. Both violinists play passages that include right and left hand *pizzicato*, harmonics, trills, and racing *arpeggios*. In addition to the thrilling techniques of this piece, the duet displays Romantic melodies and Spanish dances.

I included this duet on my honors recital to have the chance to perform with my friend, Patricia Lin. We have been playing in youth orchestras together since the ninth grade and this duet is a way to honor both our friendship and our violin teacher, Jay Christy. I am grateful to both Patricia and Jay for their great musical support and instruction.

PERFORMER BIOGRAPHIES

Catherine MacGregor is a music major with concentrations in violin performance and arts management. Born in Marietta, Georgia, MacGregor began studying the violin at age six with Benjamin Baxter. In 2012 she became a student of her current teacher, Jay Christy of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. MacGregor was a member of the Buckhead Youth Orchestra and Emory Youth Symphony Orchestra and her summer activities have included Brevard Music Center, Bowdoin International Music Festival, and Meadowmount School of Music. In addition to her instruction with Christy, MacGregor has studied violin under Sergiu Schwartz, Michael Heald, Benjamin Sung, Gerardo Ribeiro, and Stephen Majeske. Now in her senior year at Emory, MacGregor serves as Edward G. Scruggs Principal Second Violinist in the Emory University Symphony Orchestra (EUSO) and is a member of the AGEV quartet through the Emory Chamber Music Program. Additionally, MacGregor works as a student librarian and manager of the EUSO and the Atlanta Junior Chamber Orchestra. She represents Emory's Department of Music as the 2019 STIPE Music Scholar and the Department string students as a member of the music advisory board. For the past two years, MacGregor has served as research assistant to Kristin Wendland for her project on Yehudi Menuhin and his integration of yoga and violin practice, and she pursued archival study on this topic at the Foyle Menuhin Archives at the Royal Academy of Music in London in March 2018. After graduation, MacGregor plans to pursue a master of music degree in violin performance.

Sharon Berenson is a violinist with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO). In addition to playing violin, she is also a professional pianist. She frequently plays keyboard on the ASO's Concerts for Young People, Pops, and Family Concerts. She often accompanies her colleagues and she works with many young musicians as an accompanist and coach. She regularly performs as a recital pianist for teaching studios in Atlanta.

In 1999 Berenson was a staff accompanist for the National Flute Association National Convention held in Atlanta. She has also been the pianist for the ASO's Talent Development Program since it started in 1993.

A native of Wisconsin, she has a bachelor of music degree from the University of Illinois and a master of music degree from Indiana University.



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