

# The Ph.D./D.M.A. Programs in Music

December 17th, 2021 1:00 p.m.

*Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall*



## Legacies

Jessica Oddie, violin  
Dr. Jessica Xylina Osborne, piano

Violin Sonata No. 10 in G Major, Op. 96 (1812)

*Allegro moderato*

*Adagio espressivo*

*Scherzo: Allegro - Trio*

*Poco Allegretto*

Ludwig van Beethoven  
(1770–1827)

*Legacy* for Violin and Piano (rev. 2003)

Jennifer Higdon  
(b. 1962)

### INTERMISSION

Violin Sonata No. 3 in D Minor, Op. 108 (1888)

*Allegro*

*Adagio*

*Un poco presto e con sentimento*

*Presto agitato*

Johannes Brahms  
(1833–97)

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the D.M.A. degree.

## Notes on the Program

**Ludwig van Beethoven** composed his first nine violin sonatas within a compact period of six years, from 1797 to 1803. It was then not until 1812, the same year that he wrote his Eighth Symphony, that Beethoven wrote his tenth and final **Violin Sonata in G Major, Op. 96**. After his near decade-long hiatus from the violin sonata genre, in which he composed monumental works including his violin concerto in 1806, Beethoven returned to the violin sonata genre with a different compositional approach. His last sonata explores a radically different character from the stormy ninth sonata, known as the “Kreutzer,” and indeed many musicians see Op. 96 as a departure from all of the previous violin sonatas. According to the famed violinist Joseph Szigeti, Op. 96 features “an intimacy of dialogue we have not yet encountered, an understatement in conveying the message.”

The first movement, “Allegro moderato,” begins, like the Kreutzer Sonata, with solo violin. This in itself is a radical move. Opening with the unaccompanied violin in each of these two last sonatas represents a fundamental shift in the violin sonata genre, from compositions that were largely piano-oriented and accompanied by a violin obbligato, to works with more equal participation from both voices, or as Szigeti notes, a “dialogue.” But the broad and stately stability of the Kreutzer’s opening is in great contrast to the opening of Op. 96, which begins on an upbeat, with a searching trill. This utterance from the violin is far from a complete phrase; rather, it is a fragment of an idea. Such a fragmentary beginning gestures towards Beethoven’s late style, which he would embrace in the coming years and is exemplified in his late quartets, where he explores the notion of beginnings, middles, and ends (a trill generally comes at the end of a phrase, rather than at the opening of a piece).

For musicologist Maynard Solomon, who views Op. 96 as exploring different shades of the pastoral in each of its four movements, this opening figure, imitated immediately by the piano, evokes the call of a bird. He describes the “Allegro moderato” as “unabashedly an idyll, replete with bird calls, alpine horn arpeggios, drone basses, and figures that simulate the rustling, murmuring, and busy profusion of nature’s sounds.” Calls and responses between the instruments feature throughout the movement, creating a continuous dialogue between piano and violin.

The tender second movement, “Adagio espressivo,” opens with a simple, hymn-like theme in the piano. The movement’s form is aria-like, following an ABA structure, with a transcendent middle section in which the violin soars above the piano, replete with melismas that are spun out of something heavenly, before returning to the violin’s hushed rendition of the hymn in *mezza voce*. Solomon, speaking again to the presence of the pastoral in the sonata, describes this second movement as harnessing “the eloquent language of pastoral’s most pleasant language, the Elegy.”

“Scherzo: Allegro - Trio” follows *attacca*, emerging from what appears to be the resolution and resting place of the second movement, which then seamlessly transforms into an augmented sixth chord, as Beethoven once again elides the boundary between beginnings and endings. This final, tension-filled chord of the “Adagio espressivo” launches into a menacing and energetic Scherzo, with many Beethovenian sforzandos in both instruments. The trio section features a canon between instruments, celebratory and abundant in contrast to the movement’s opening.

The finale, “Poco allegretto,” is a theme and variations, featuring a main theme that evokes a folk melody in its simplicity and playfulness. Through its six variations, the violin and piano take this folk-like melody far from its origin, both in character and in tonality. But the conversational element, so prevalent in the first movement, is never lost.

**Jennifer Higdon** is a Pulitzer Prize-winning composer whose compelling works have found receptive audiences all over the world. Fanfare Magazine describes her work as having "the distinction of being at once complex, sophisticated but readily accessible emotionally." Higdon came to classical music later than many other classical musicians, learning the flute first at 15, and beginning her composing career - with a piece written for flute - at the age of 21. Perhaps her unique journey to becoming a composer plays a role in her accessible writing. Higdon mentions in an interview, "When I started college I didn't even know the symphonies of Beethoven. Some of my influences had to come from the Beatles; Peter, Paul and Mary; Simon and Garfunkel."

Higdon's work "**Legacy**" has its origin as a work for flute, first commissioned in 1999 by Laurel Ann Maurer. Its premiere was in 2000, in Maurer's album, "Legacy of the American Woman Composer." In 2003, Higdon transformed the work to this version for violin and piano.

"Legacy" features many staples of the Higdon sound world: she often writes sweeping melodies with large leaps upwards and complex rhythmic divisions which evoke at once a sense of searching and improvisation. Later violin works include the violin concerto for which Higdon was awarded the Pulitzer, premiered in 2008 by Hilary Hahn, in which we also hear these distinctive lyrical characteristics of soaring melodies and complex rhythmic play.

On "Legacy" itself, Higdon writes the following:

*Legacy ponders the questions...*

*where does mourning begin and end?*

*when do we cross over the lines of pain and abuse?*

*does the sadness begin somewhere deep within leading us to that place?*

*when we remember, do we remember the pain or the sadness?*

*how are we marked for such a destiny and how are we marked after passing?*

*through that door?*

*what leads to this path?*

*Legacy represents life's wholeness, the good and the bad, and all of the learning and experiencing that goes with living. One's life is a song, continuous, complex, ever-eventful. We share and we love and we lose, but we gain in the process. Everyone leaves a legacy.*

Like Beethoven, **Johannes Brahms** took a long hiatus from writing violin sonatas: after he composed his first violin sonata, he waited almost a decade before returning to the genre. Violin Sonata No. 1, Op. 78, was premiered in 1879, in close proximity to the Violin Concerto, Op. 77, which was completed in 1878. Brahms began work on the second and third sonatas, which he wrote in close succession, while summering at a lake in Switzerland in 1886. The second Violin Sonata, Op. 100, was published later that same year.

In 1888, two years after beginning work on **Violin Sonata No. 3 in D minor, Op. 108**, Brahms finally sent a draft of the score to two friends to look over. The pianist Elisabeth von Herzogenberg and her violinist friend Amanda Röntgen read through the sonata together, and responded so positively to Brahms that he then gained the courage to write to Clara Schumann: "I sent the violin sonata I mentioned the other day to the Herzogenbergs and have received such an unexpectedly kind letter about it that I am now wondering whether it might not also please you." Op. 108 did indeed please Clara,

and she wrote back effusively, “How wonderfully beautiful it is, what warmth, what depth of feeling, how thoroughly interesting.”

Brahms’ third and final violin sonata was premiered in Budapest in 1888, with Jenő Hubay on violin and Brahms himself on piano. The famed music critic Eduard Hanslick wrote of the sonata that it “may be numbered among the most perfect pieces of chamber music this master has created. In every bar Brahms’ characteristics are unmistakable, and yet this violin sonata once again has an entirely different profile from its two predecessors.”

The first movement, “Allegro,” begins with a quiet and searching first theme, with the expressive marking “*sotto voce ma espressivo*,” which is an unusual way to open such a large sonata. Clara Schumann commented to Brahms on another curious aspect of the movement, occurring in the development: “such a marvellous Organ point in the first movement - magnificent - and how beautifully it recurs at the end, how everything is interwoven, like fragrant tendrils of the vine!” The “Organ point” she refers to is a pulsing, quarter-note figure in the left hand of the piano, which returns throughout the piece, interwoven with a rather haunting bariolage figure in the violin, contributing to the movement’s uneasy, yearning character.

The “Adagio” that follows is a simple and deeply intimate song. That the work was premiered in Budapest by Jenő Hubay, a Hungarian violinist, is appropriate: the movement’s most passionate articulations have a distinct Hungarian flavor to them, recalling Brahms’ Hungarian Dances.

The third movement, “Un poco presto e con sentimento,” was the favorite of many audience members and critics. Hanslick called the delicate movement “one of Brahms’ most inspired pieces.” Clara Schumann wrote to Brahms, “I find the third movement very lovely (but what did I not find very lovely?), it is like a beautiful girl sweetly frolicking with her lover, then in the middle comes a flash of deep passion, only to make way for sweet dalliance once more, although a melancholy atmosphere pervades it all!”

The finale, “Presto agitato,” recalls a tarantella with its stormy opening in 6/8 time. Its energy drives the sonata to its climactic finish, with Clara Schumann exclaiming in her letter to Brahms, “The last movement is glorious, so passionate, one can really revel in it!” Indeed, it is in this last movement of the sonata that Hanslick’s assessment of the entire work comes to fruition: “The new violin sonata is bigger, more passionate, richer than the first two; I would add that it more powerfully evokes the virtuosity of the two players, and is therefore more effective as a brilliant concert piece.”

## About the Artists

Violinist **Jessica Oddie** has recently returned to New York City after working as the Assistant Concertmaster of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. Active as a chamber musician and soloist as well as orchestral leader, she has performed recitals internationally at Teatro La Fenice (Venice), Le Poisson Rouge, Lincoln Center, Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris, the Sydney Opera House, and the Melbourne Recital Centre.

Following an acclaimed performance of Sibelius’ Violin Concerto with the Colorado Symphony Orchestra, Jessica recorded two albums of chamber music for the Naxos and Tactus recording labels, including the premiere recording of 20th-century Italian composer Gino Gorini’s chamber works. She

is committed to playing the works of contemporary composers, performing solo and chamber music recitals at Lo Spirito della Musica di Venezia, one of Italy's premiere contemporary music festivals, which runs parallel to the Biennale. In 2015, Jessica was concertmaster for the Lachenmann Perspektiven in Stuttgart, Germany, a festival celebrating Helmut Lachenmann's 80th Birthday, in which she worked closely with the composer to perform his orchestral works.

In Europe, Jessica's performances have been described as "brilliantly convincing" (Schwäbische Zeitung), while Polish music magazine Muzyka21 has called her playing "revelatory" for her "energy, commitment, and artistry."

In Australia, Jessica has performed as concertmaster for Victorian Opera (Melbourne), and works regularly with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Victoria, the Australian Romantic and Classical Orchestra, and as a core violinist of the Invention Ensemble. In 2022, she will take up a permanent position as one of the principal second violins of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

Jessica received with her Master of Music from Yale School of Music in 2015, and her Bachelor of Arts with distinction from Yale University in 2013, where she was concertmaster of the Yale Symphony Orchestra. She has also studied at the Juilliard School. She completed further postgraduate studies in Germany, where she was sponsored by a German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) grant. Jessica has been incredibly fortunate to study with Mark Steinberg and Danny Phillips at the Graduate Center, Gerhard Schulz and Christian Sikorski in Germany, and Syoko Aki and Wendy Sharp at Yale.

**Jessica Xylina Osborne**, a native of San Antonio, Texas, has been playing the piano since she was four years old. She has enjoyed an illustrious and diverse career in music, pursuing ambitious projects that reflect creativity in programming with the goal of bringing attention to works composed by historically neglected composers.

Jessica has regularly performed with some of the classical music world's biggest stars, including Hilary Hahn, Ani Kavafian, and Timothy Eddy, among many others, and has performed at some of the world's top concert halls, including Carnegie Hall, the Seoul Arts Center, and the Kennedy Center.

Jessica is an experienced and enthusiastic pedagogue. She is currently on the piano faculty at the Lindeblad School of Music, Musart Music School, and Third Street Music Settlement.

Jessica received her Bachelor of Music degree in piano performance from the Juilliard School and Indiana University Jacobs School of Music; her Master of Music degree from Rice University; and her Doctorate of Musical Arts from Yale University.