

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

February 26, 2024 6:00 p.m.

Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall



Jeremy Kienbaum, viola
Baron Fenwick, piano

Rhapsody No.2 for Solo Viola (2020)

Jessie Montgomery
(b. 1981)

Sonata for Viola Alone (1937)

Lebhafte Halbe

Langsame Viertel – Lebhaft – Wieder wie früher

Mäßig schnelle Viertel

Paul Hindemith
(1895–1963)

Sonata No.1 for Viola and Piano (1944)

Entrée

Française

Air

Final

Darius Milhaud
(1892–1974)

INTERMISSION

Sonata for Viola and Piano, Op.120 No.2 (1894)

Allegro amabile

Allegro appassionato

Andante con moto — Allegro

Johannes Brahms
(1833–97)

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the D.M.A. degree.
Please switch off your cell phones and refrain from taking flash pictures.

Notes on the Program

Jessie Montgomery is one of the leading composers of our time. She wrote her second rhapsody for solo violin in 2020 and transcribed it for viola shortly thereafter. This rhapsody begins with a sequence of fiery arpeggios and sequences, bursting rapidly out of silence with barely a moment to breathe. Montgomery writes that this work “is inspired in part by Bela Bartok,” possibly referring to the meditatively marked “very slow” interlude which occurs at the golden section of the piece. The rhapsody concludes with a restatement of the opening idea in a firework finale.

Paul Hindemith’s final sonata written for solo viola was ill received upon its premiere on April 21, 1937 at the Arts Club of Chicago. He wrote the work while traveling via train from New York to its premiere in Chicago, and only finished it just before he premiered it. Perhaps this work went over the heads of this premiere audience, who were not prepared to engage with Hindemith’s unique sound and harmonic style. The first movement, *Lebhafte Halbe* (*lively half [note]*), combines the rhythmic repetition of riding on a train with the swung melodies heard in New York and Chicago clubs, filtered through Hindemith’s Germanic compositional language. It is raucous, sometimes steady, but always unyielding as it drives to the end. The second movement, *Langsame Viertel – Lebhaft – Wieder wie früher* (*Slow quarter [note] – Lively – As before*), bookends a scherzo with an honest and heartfelt melody. The opening theme twists and turns as it explores different harmonies and double stops, gaining momentum before it all tumbles away into a calm and peaceful *rubig* ending. The middle scherzo recharges the air with a brisk tempo: played entirely *pizzicato* without the use of the bow, before unwinding into the opening theme, *Wieder wie früher* (again as before), but in a new key. The third and final movement of this sonata is a march, fitting for Hindemith and his extensive wind band catalogue, which finishes with an emphatic and lively climax at the end of the movement.

Milhaud wrote his first sonata for viola and piano in 1944, after he and his family were forced to leave Paris and move to the United States due to the war. Each of the four movements germinate from four anonymous and unpublished eighteenth-century themes (*themes inédits et anonymes du XVIII siècle*), perhaps serving as a reminder of a simpler time of peace in Europe. The first, *Entrée*, explores a pleasant descending theme in canon passed amicably between the viola and piano. The spritely *Française* follows, which feels like a light-hearted neo-baroque reference to the Bach Brandenburg concertos and is an absolute delight to perform. Milhaud perhaps surprisingly chooses an English *Air* as the slow movement in this sonata, and mutes the viola for the full duration of the movement, inspiring a floating, spiritual sound world to peacefully explore. The last movement, aptly titled “*Final*,” returns to a raucous temperament reminiscent of the second movement (perhaps also in homage to Bach’s chamber concertos). Halfway through, Milhaud interrupts the finale with a joyous surprise: a different folk song a new key and in two rather than three (a startling change for any dancer!). After enjoying this dance for a few rounds, the viola and piano slip back into the opening dance’s three-step merriment to neatly wrap up the sonata. The harmony, whim, and cheeky characters in this sonata exude Milhaud’s playfulness and diverse compositional approach.

As a personal note, this piece is particularly special to me because it was written for Germain Prevost, former violist of the Pro Arte Quartet. His teaching position at UW-Madison is currently occupied by my first viola teacher Sally Chisholm, who I am eternally grateful to for prodding me to study viola.

The two **Brahms** sonatas for viola and piano are staples of the literature. They represent the pinnacle of romantic chamber music— lush intertwining harmonies and counterpoint between the two collaborators. Written just a few years before his death, Brahms had retired from composing but was inspired by a close friend to write a few chamber music works featuring clarinet, including these sonatas. Brahms’ longtime violinist collaborator Schuppanzigh convinced the composer to arrange the two clarinet sonatas for viola. The second of these two sonatas comprises only three movements, harkening to the structure of the early Classical period and differing from the four-movement structure of the first. The E-flat Sonata begins with a familiar opening melody of the first movement, *Allegro amabile*, which cascades downward in the viola in increasingly larger intervals as it descends into the lower register of the instrument. As is typical in Brahms, the second melody is more heartfelt and inward-looking than the first. He navigates through a convincing false recapitulation of the melody (in the wrong key) before finally settling and finishing the first movement in a peaceful E-flat major meditation. The second movement, *Allegro appassionato*, begins with overflowing intensity in the minor mode, with passionate discourse between the piano and viola. Eventually, this unwinds into a spacious *sostenuto* in B major, seemingly a world away from the vigorous commotion of the opening. Not long to stay in this ethereal state, Brahms returns to the *appassionato* material to round out the movement with fire and fervor. The final movement of this sonata is a set of theme and variations that only Brahms could write, akin to his Variations on a Theme by Haydn or any number of his piano works. The *andante con moto* theme transforms from a flowing melody shared by the viola and piano into syncopated raindrops, *grazioso* waterfalls, storm surges, and flowing streams, before rushing towards an exclamatory hurricane-like finish.

About the Artists

American violist **Jeremy Kienbaum** has been lauded for his “eloquent strength” (Well-Tempered Ear) and sound that “refracted like shards of light” (New York Times). He has recently appeared with Love from Lincoln Center, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and at the Paax Festival GNP (Mexico) and the Lucerne Festival (Switzerland).

Committed to performing works by living composers, Mr. Kienbaum has premiered works by Aaron Jay Kernis, Augusta Read Thomas, and Georg Friedrich Haas and has worked with Thomas Ades, Fred Lerdahl, and Nina C. Young. In 2016, he gave the world premiere of “Tragedy No. 2,” a string quartet concerto by Theo Chandler, as a member of the New Juilliard Ensemble in Alice Tully Hall.

Mr. Kienbaum teaches at Hunter College, Manhattan School of Music, and Opportunity Music Project. He has given masterclasses and workshops at Boston University, Frostburg State University, Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, Davos Festival, and for students of the Central Conservatory in Beijing, China. He has been recognized internationally for his musical achievements as first prize winner in the Enkor International Chamber Music Competition, first prize in the National Federation of Music Clubs Student/Collegiate Competition, and second prize in the Vršac International Competition.

Originally from Wisconsin, Mr. Kienbaum received degrees from the University of Wisconsin, Juilliard, and is a doctoral candidate at the CUNY Graduate Center. He is grateful to have had the mentorship of his teachers David Perry, Sally Chisholm, Samuel Rhodes, and Mark Steinberg.

Pianist **Baron Fenwick** is active as a performing soloist, collaborative musician, composer, and teacher. He is currently pursuing his Doctorate of Musical Arts at The Juilliard School as a student of Robert McDonald, Veda Kaplinsky, and Matti Raekallio. Previously, he graduated with his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from Mannes School of Music, where he studied with Pavlina Dokovska and Vladimir Feltsman.

Baron performs a wide range of repertoire, from Bach to the Rachmaninoff as well as contemporary classical music and a little jazz. He has played works by dozens of living composers, including four world premiere piano concertos. Since receiving a career grant from the Salon de Virtuosi as well as the Silver Medal in 2019 Sendai International Music Competition, he has been a soloist with orchestras throughout the region and around the world, as well as broadcast on the radio and the internet. His live performances may be heard frequently in the New York area.

Originally from Boone, North Carolina, he now lives in New York City.