

Yi-En Ian Hsu
violin

Recital in partial fulfillment of the
Bachelor of Music degree, 2023
Student of Nicholas Kitchen

with
Yuki Yoshimi, piano

Sunday, March 12, 2023
8:00 p.m.
Brown Hall

PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770–1827)

**Sonata for Piano and Violin No. 1 in D Major,
op. 12 no. 1**
Allegro con brio
Tema con variazioni: Andante con moto
Rondo: Allegro

Johannes Brahms
(1833–1897)

**Sonata for Piano and Violin No. 1 in G Major,
op. 78 “Regensonate”**
Vivace ma non troppo
Adagio
Allegro molto moderato

Richard Strauss
(1864–1949)

**Sonata for Violin and Piano in E-flat Major,
op. 18**
Allegro, ma non troppo
Improvisation: Andante cantabile
Finale: Andante – Allegro

*I thank all my friends
for your wonderful love, support, and music-making
and my mentors, Robyn Bollinger, Soovin Kim, and Nicholas Kitchen
– with the deepest sincerity –
for your guidance, love, care, and support along the path.*

In November of 1792, the young **Ludwig van Beethoven** traveled to Vienna, Europe's musical capital, to study with the composer Joseph Haydn. Unfortunately, to Beethoven's dismay, Haydn's busy schedule as Vienna's preeminent composer precluded him from spending any thorough time tutoring Beethoven. After a year of frustration, Beethoven and Haydn parted ways, and Beethoven began studying with Johann Georg Albrechtsberger and Antonio Salieri, two of Vienna's most noted compositional pedagogues at that time. During his studies, Beethoven began to establish his name within Vienna's aristocratic circles, both as a composer and as a pianist. By 1797, Beethoven's career was in full swing; having made a successful trip to Prague, he wrote to his brother: "I am well, very well. My art is winning me friends and respect, and what more do I want?" In 1797, Beethoven began composing his Opus 12 violin sonatas, works that demonstrate his full compositional maturity. Though the exact genesis of Beethoven's First Violin Sonata is unknown, the impetus for its composition could lie in Beethoven's close friendship with Karl Amenda, a violinist and student of theology who arrived in Vienna from Courland in 1798. Amenda was employed as a musical tutor to Prince Lobkowitz's children, and he and Beethoven soon became inseparable. Beethoven biographer Maynard Solomon described Beethoven's friendship with Amenda:

He quickly made Beethoven's acquaintance and soon, and in the words of a contemporary document, "captured Beethoven's heart." They became such inseparable companions that when one was seen alone people would call out, "where is the other one?"

Written between 1797 and 1798, Beethoven's First Violin Sonata is a remarkable musical statement, different from the violin sonatas of Beethoven's predecessors in that the two instruments are treated as equal partners. The Allegro con brio begins with a bold and stately passage, with the piano and violin in rhythmic unison, making way for a lyrical melody passed between the two voices. The movement proceeds through varying characters and developmental passages, demonstrating Beethoven's remarkable ability to weave melodic material seamlessly through unconventional key areas, far removed from the home key of D major. The second movement is a traditional theme and variations with the theme in A major first presented in the piano. Interestingly and rather unconventionally, the first variation features the piano in the primary role with the violin accompanying it. The mood of the movement changes drastically in the third variation, where Beethoven introduces a stormy a minor variation, before the movement returns to the sweet buoyancy of its opening character. The final movement is a lively and playful rondo, full of subtle syncopation and offbeat sforzandos, hinting at the rhythmic complexity and rustic humor of Beethoven's later works.

— *from Music@Menlo 2012*

Brahms' three violin sonatas are all extraordinary masterpieces that occupy their own rarefied world of elegant construction, romantic sweep and exquisite beauty. The designation of "Sonata for Piano and Violin" significantly expresses the equal partnership of both instruments in this chamber music for two. While the violin often sings first and foremost, Brahms frequently switches the parts giving theme and accompaniment a deeper sounding through new sonorities and "inverted" textures. The two parts generally imitate, echo and intertwine for a balanced chamber unity with ample lyricism and virtuosity for both players. Brahms published his first sonata for piano and violin in 1879 at the relatively advanced age of 46, though, typical of his history, it seems that he may have consigned at least three previous sonatas to the fire of unremitting self-criticism. The Sonata in G Major, op. 78 thus emerges as an astonishing "first" sonata by any standard; it is a magical work full of graceful tenderness, nobility, bursting intensity and sacred repose with a wealth of cyclic interconnections. It is a romantic sonata in the truest sense: there are literary and musical allusions to rain throughout and the prevailing serenity often gives rise to poignant reflection and nostalgia. It is revealing to touch upon each of its movements backwards, starting with the finale. The title "Regensonate" ("Rain Sonata") refers to the fact that Brahms reused one his own art songs titled *Regenlied* ("Rain Song") to create the third movement finale. The swiftly running Allegro moderato opens with the exact melody and accompaniment of the lied, a wistful song sung to the steady patter of rainfall. The song text by Klaus Groth traces the path from rain to childhood dreams as nature and reverie turn inward towards a longing for the simplicity and magic of youth:

Pour, rain, pour down,
Awaken again in me those dreams
That I dreamt in childhood,
When the wetness foamed in the sand!
When the dull summer sultriness
Struggled casually against the fresh coolness,
And the pale leaves dripped with dew,
And the crops were dyed a deeper blue.

The long, sinuous melody stretches broadly across the steady animation of flowing water with distinctive falling gestures running ever downward in both instruments. Melvin Berger points to the prominent "trochaic" rhythmic figure, a short motif of three notes in a long – short – long pattern that frequently punctuates the line. Like three rain drops, each falling sooner, this rhythmic signature saturates all three movements of the sonata arising, as it were, from the song of the finale.

The central adagio is a deep, tender song that rises like a hymn in the piano with the simple nobility of open chords in basic cadences with smooth part-writing in thirds and sixths creating that signature Brahms grandeur. It seems certain, though rarely mentioned, that this introduction was also inspired by the very same *Regenlied*, a

middle section of the song accompanying this portion of text:

Like the flowers' chalices, which trickle there,
The soul breathes openly,
Like the flowers, drunk with fragrance,
Drowning in the dew of the Heavens.
Every trembling drop cooled
Deep down to the heart's very beating,
And creation's holy web
Pierced into my hidden life.

But this is just the beginning for the slow movement. Following this luxuriant opening, the violin joins with a long, languid and chromatic melody of bewitching beauty that coalesces into a more flowing reiteration of the opening melody. The music starts to bloom. A third idea arises: strong chords stride in a dark but majestic march launching the fiddle into urgent pleas and a pinnacle of brief anguish. A flush of passion, the shadow passes and the opening melody returns yet again ("the soul breathes openly"), an effulgent, exotic blossom with flowing chords and generous double-stops in the violin. The music magically combines the hymn, the languid chromatic melody and a fleeting, nostalgic café waltz for an inexpressible complex of charming, euphoric melancholy. Brahms further deepens the impact through one more departure, a coda that slips back into chromatic mystery, flairs into passion yet again before settling into a final repose, "the cooling tremble of the heart's very beating."

The "Regensonate" begins like spring with a lilting song. So gently, the violin is waltzing with the piano. As the ranging melody spreads farther and faster it crests and falls and softly, it starts raining. Brahms unmistakably evokes the rainy textures and lilting trochaic meter of the finale, and, by association, the *Regenlied* from the very start of this magnificent sonata. The first movement provides at least two broad and lyrical themes and a stormy blast of intense development for a substantial sonata that is by far the longest movement of the entire work. The scoring is as rich as the music is mellifluous with the violin and piano exchanging roles in a gracious partnership. The range of emotion is surprising with more than a suggestion of sudden rainstorms and the potency power of inner emotions. This opening movement aptly serves as the likely object of the *Regenlied*'s nostalgia:

Pour, rain, pour down,
Awaken the old songs,
That we used to sing in the doorway
When the raindrops pattered outside!
I would like to listen to it again,
That sweet, moist rushing,

My soul gently bedewed
With holy, childlike awe.

As in more than one of Brahms' great works, the end recalls the beginning, nearly wrapping around in a full circle to start the whole work again. Like the *Regenlied's* backward-looking nostalgia for youth, the finale recalls musical elements from both the first and second movements in a masterful use of subtle suggestion with a miraculous affect. Inspired and mirrored by the finale, the beginning only makes full sense at the end.
— from Kai Christiansen

Richard Strauss had a remarkably prolific musical career, both as a composer and as a conductor, spanning nearly eight decades. Primarily remembered as a composer of large-scale symphonic works, Strauss spent much of his early career composing music for solo piano and small chamber ensembles under the strict tutelage of his father, Franz Strauss, the Principal Horn Player in Munich's Court Orchestra. Under his father's watchful eye, Richard Strauss spent his childhood engrossed in the works of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert. In 1882, Strauss experienced an intellectual awakening upon entering the University of Munich. There, he immersed himself in literature, art history, and philosophy, influences that would manifest themselves in many of his later works. Also around the time he entered the university, Strauss became acquainted with the influential German conductor Hans von Bülow. Bülow would serve as an important mentor figure for Strauss and would eventually give him his first opportunities to conduct.

By 1888, Richard Strauss had firmly established himself as one of the most promising young musicians of his generation. Having returned to Munich to become a conductor with the Munich Hofoper two years earlier, Strauss began to familiarize himself with the symphonic poems of Franz Liszt. After a journey to Italy in 1887, the same year Strauss completed his Violin Sonata, he wrote his first large-scale symphonic fantasy, *Aus Italien*. The following year, he would compose his first symphonic tone poem, *Don Juan*. The Violin Sonata would prove to be the composer's last substantial instrumental chamber music work before he fully delved into symphonic writing.

Full of youthful energy, the Violin Sonata demonstrates the Classical influences of Strauss's musical upbringing, in addition to foreshadowing the forward-looking and boundary-defying musical language that would become a hallmark of his later works. Throughout the sonata, the intricacies and interweaving of the violin and piano voices evoke symphonic textures. The first movement begins with a brief and heroic piano fanfare, answered quietly by the violin with a gentle melody. Out of these two contrasting ideas, Strauss builds a movement of tremendous variety, from virtuosic passages for both instruments to gorgeous lyrical melodies.

The Improvisation, marked *Andante cantabile*, is a beautifully rendered song, emblematic of the lieder that Strauss wrote from an early age. It is possible that Strauss drew inspiration for this movement from a relationship he cultivated around this time with a young singer named Pauline de Ahna, who would eventually become his wife. The movement, in its tender lovingness, demonstrates Strauss's ability to compose music of remarkable intimacy and subtlety. The final movement begins with an ominous piano introduction before launching into an energetic and heroic *Allegro*. The symphonic thrust of the music is highlighted by a series of virtuosic ascending sixteenth-note passages in both the violin and the piano. Elements of the extended melodies and lyricism of the first movement return, before the work closes with bristling and boundless energy.

— *from Isaac Thompson, Music@Menlo 2012*

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