

Luther Warren  
*viola*

Recital in partial fulfillment of the  
Doctor of Musical Arts degree, 2025  
Student of Kim Kashkashian

with  
Sahun Sam Hong, piano  
Evan Johanson, violin

Sunday, December 15, 2024  
8:00 p.m.  
Pierce Hall

PROGRAM

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**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**  
(1756–1791)

**Duo for Violin and Viola, K. 424**

Adagio – Allegro  
Andante cantabile  
Tema con variazioni

Evan Johanson, violin

**György Ligeti**  
(1923–2006)

**Viola Sonata**

Hora lungă  
Loop  
Facsar  
Prestissimo con sordino  
Lamento  
Chaconne chromatique

*Intermission*

**Johannes Brahms**  
(1833–1897)

**Viola Sonata No. 1 in F Minor, op. 120 no. 1**

Allegro appassionato  
Andante un poco adagio  
Allegretto grazioso  
Vivace

Sahun Sam Hong, piano

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's** *Duo for Violin and Viola in B-flat Major, K. 424* owes its existence to the misfortune of a friend. In the summer of 1783, Michael Haydn, the younger brother of the great composer Franz Joseph Haydn and a colleague of Mozart's from his former employment in the court of Archbishop Hieronymus von Colloredo, had been tasked by Colloredo with writing a set of six duos for violin and viola. Haydn, however, fell ill after writing the first four pieces and could not continue his work. Colloredo took little pity on the plight of his employee and threatened to fire him. Hearing of his friend's predicament, Mozart stepped in himself to write the two delinquent sonatas, the Duo in B-flat K. 424 along with its G Major sibling, K. 423. All six duos were presented under Haydn's name to Colloredo who did not guess at the origin of the final two.

Whether Mozart consciously attempted to impersonate Haydn's compositional style is open to opinion. Some have noted that the dominant role of the violin, especially in the first and second movements, bears a resemblance to Haydn's work. In any case, Mozart's own characteristically lyrical, operatic style is at least equally present, and an extraordinary range of melodic characters pervades the piece as a whole.

The duo's first movement begins with a grand, symphonic adagio overture. A rather florid cadence leads to the main body of the movement, a playful, triple-meter allegro reminiscent of a minuet. Theater abounds in playful dances, soaring melodies, rhetorical cadences, and an exciting fugato in the development. The second movement, Andante cantabile, weaves together an extraordinary aria texture with a lush violin melody accompanied by ongoing double stops in the viola. Cadences are repeatedly suspended, creating an endless melodic effect. The third movement features a lilting, andante grazioso theme in cut time. The melody is developed through a wide range of characters in six variations before transforming into a triple-meter allegro dance in the coda. Virtuosity runs rampant, with the two instruments constantly trading primary roles. The overall effect of the piece is one of remarkable compositional dexterity, a string quartet realized in two voices.

**György Ligeti** describes the sound of the viola as "uniquely acerbic, compact, somewhat hoarse, with the aftertaste of wood, earth, and tannic acid." His *Viola Sonata*, with its mixture of song and dance elements and unmistakable ties to folk music from Romanian, Hungarian, Balkan, Ivory Coast, and Melanesian cultures, embodies the full range of this evocative characterization. And yet, in its six-movement form beginning with a rather free, prelude-like first movement and concluding with a chaconne, the work is also strongly reminiscent of a baroque dance suite. Ligeti constantly balances these two worlds, one free and one learned, in a richly expressive and impeccably logical whole.

The first movement's title, "Hora lungă," translates literally to "slow dance" which Ligeti states in the Romanian tradition equates to a nostalgic, melancholic, and lusciously ornamented folk melody. The movement is entirely on the C string and employs a microtonal tuning system based on the natural harmonic sequence. The second movement, "Loop," repeats a strict series of 45 double stops with open strings

that leap around the viola. Each repetition escalates the movement's dangerously virtuosic rhythmic energy. The tempo is marked "with swing," and indeed Ligeti writes that the movement must "be played in the spirit of jazz: elegant and relaxed." The third movement's title, "Facsar," is a Hungarian word meaning "to wrestle" or "to distort." Ligeti describes the word as "associated with the bitter sensation felt in the nose when one is about to cry." "Facsar" combines elements of the preceding two movements and lies somewhere between a dance and a song, repeating its theme in a loop but with much of the first movement's freedom in its melodic line.

The fourth movement, "Presto con sordino," is a polyrhythmic, virtuosic perpetuum mobile with accented double-stops sharply punctuating a dynamically-suppressed texture to create wildly dancing melodic fragments. The fifth movement, "Lamento," contrasts two worlds, the first rough and brutal and the second ethereal in *sul tasto* harmonics. Finally, the sixth movement, "Chaconne chromatique" alludes more to the baroque dance in general than to Bach's famous "Chaconne" specifically. Ligeti describes it as "a wild exuberant dance in strongly accentuated three-four time with an ostinato bass line" creating a loop similar to other movements. Constant descending chromatic lines at every turn characterize the movement's progression.

The *Viola Sonata* was composed between 1991 and 1994 after Ligeti was inspired by a performance of Tabea Zimmerman. The second movement, "Loop," was written in 1991 as a birthday present for Ligeti's publisher, Alfred Schlee, and received its first performance that same year by Garth Knox. The third movement, "Facsar," was written in 1993 in remembrance of Ligeti's teacher Sándor Veress and premiered by Jürg Dähler. The rest of the sonata was written between 1993 and 1994 towards a premiere in 1994 by Tabea Zimmerman to whom the outer movements are dedicated. The fourth and fifth movements are dedicated to Ligeti's friends and colleagues Klaus Klein and Louise Duchesneau respectively.

**Johannes Brahms** wrote his *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano in F Minor, op. 120 no. 1* alongside its E-flat Major sibling, *Op. 120 No. 2*, in 1894 out of his continued admiration for the clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld of the Meiningen Hofkapelle. Mühlfeld's artistry had already prompted Brahms to come out of retirement in 1891 to produce two other late masterpieces, the *Clarinet Trio in A Minor, op. 114* and *Clarinet Quintet in B Minor, op. 115*. In the summer of 1894, Brahms invited Mühlfeld to visit him and revealed the two sonatas as a surprise. Brahms and Mühlfeld performed the works frequently in private performances during the remainder of the year leading up to their public Vienna premiere in January of 1895.

Reception of the sonata was positive, with early reviews recognizing the work's nostalgic and conservative sensibility near the turn of the 20th century. A critic for the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* wrote: "The music that the master gave us in his two sonatas eschews, probably intentionally, pleasing the masses; the sonatas will be all the more appreciated, however, by all those who understand their inner beauty and splendour; they are offered a wellspring of the purest joys."

Despite the work's origin in the clarinet, an arrangement for viola by Brahms already existed even before the piece was publicly premiered and was published

together with the clarinet version in June of 1895. Brahms later wrote a seldom-played arrangement for violin as well. Both string parts are reworked considerably to make them more instrumentally idiomatic, and the violin version also contains numerous changes to the piano part. The intention for these arrangements was likely driven at least in part by a desire for the work to have a wider audience. The clarinet and viola iterations became seminal works for the recital repertoire of their respective instruments and continue to be heard frequently today.

The sonata opens with a dark, brooding *allegro appassionato* first movement. True to Brahms' usual compositional style, the opening bars in the piano contain the seeds of the entire work, and the mastery of the composer's late period is clear through the extraordinary range of transformations undertaken by its thematic content. The first movement's weightiness at the sonata's outset is balanced at its conclusion by the levity of the *vivace finale*, a joyful, twinkling *grazioso* rondo only occasionally hinting at severity. Three repeated half notes sound in the piano at the movement's beginning, a bell-like motive which is woven throughout the movement.

The inner movements are a song and dance pair of ternary-form character pieces. The second movement, *Andante un poco Adagio*, is serenely contemplative with long descending melodic lines contrasting with a probing, fantasia-like middle section. The third movement, *Allegretto grazioso*, is a light and lilting *ländler* whose misty trio shrouds a grey foreshadowing of what will become the finale's joyful bells.

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