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Student Recital: Joyce Bennett, double bass, and Abbey Bourdon, violin

Department of Music, University of Richmond

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Joyce Bennett, double bass
Abbey Bourdon, violin



Assisted by
Joanne Kong, piano
Elliott Bromley, accordion
Melissa Pacheco, piano

April 8, 2006 • 7:30 pm
Perkinson Recital Hall

Program

Sonata No. 4 in D Major, TWV 41:D3 Georg Philipp Telemann
(1681-1767)

II. Presto

Concerto for the Double Bass Antonio Capuzzi
(1753-1818)

I. Allegro moderato

II. Andante cantabile

Chanson Triste, Op. 2 Serge Koussevitzky
Valse Miniature, Op. 1 no. 2 (1874-1951)

Sonata, Op. 42 David Ellis
(b. 1933)

I. Andante

II. Vivace

~Intermission~

Sonata No. 1 in G Major, Op. 78 Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

I. Vivace ma non troppo

II. Adagio

III. Allegro molto moderato

Hungarian Dance, Op. 6 no. 2 Serge Rachmaninoff
(1873-1943)

Michelangelo '70 Astor Piazzolla
(1921-1992)

Program Notes

Sonata No. 4 in D Major, TWV 41:D3

Georg Philipp Telemann
(1681-1767)

Like many composers of the canon, Telemann showed considerable musical talent at a young age. He taught himself the recorder, violin, and zither, and by the time he was twelve he had composed arias, motets, instrumental pieces, and an opera. The opera, *Sigismundus*, was performed on a street using a makeshift stage, and Telemann himself sang the title role. Such noticeable talent made his mother fear he was headed for a career in music. To prevent this, she forbade any involvement in music and confiscated his instruments. However, Telemann was undaunted. He continued to compose in secret, and he practiced at night or in secluded places on borrowed instruments. Although Telemann decided to renounce music in 1701, intending to study law at Leipzig University, he finally embraced his musical talent and went on to become the most prolific composer of his time.

This sonata in D major was published in 1728 as a part of the *Sonate Methodiche* (Methodical Sonatas), a collection of six sonatas written for violin or transverse flute and basso continuo. The *Sonate Methodiche*, along with its continuation published in 1732, includes a total of twelve sonatas, each written in a different tonality. The "metodiche" label refers not only to this tonal variety, but also to certain slow movements which were written both in melodic outline and with Telemann's ornamentation.

Concerto for the Double Bass

Antonio Capuzzi
(1753-1818)

Born in Breno, Italy, on August 1, 1755, Capuzzi made his name as a violinist and composer. Studying violin under Nazari and composition under Bertoni, Capuzzi spent some time as a performer in Venice theatres. In 1796 he traveled to London and produced a popular ballet, *La villageoise enlevée*. Settling in Bergamo in 1805, he became highly regarded as both a performer and professor of violin. While the majority of his string works are regarded as "conventionally pleasing in melody but [suffering] from extreme simplicity of texture, the rarity of Classical pieces for double bass has

given Capuzzi's Concerto for violone a small place in the modern repertory."¹

Found in the British Museum, this concerto is dedicated to Kavalier Marcantonio Montenegro, who was most likely a bassist of Capuzzi's time. The concerto is a typical classical concerto. The first movement is in standard sonata form with an orchestral and solo exposition, development, recapitulation, and coda. The cadenza in the first movement is my own, roughly based on one written by Mark Morton. The second movement is a slow, beautiful song-like movement.

Chanson Triste
Valse Miniature

Serge Koussevitzky
(1874-1951)

Koussevitzky was born in Vishniy Volochek, Russia, on July 26, 1874. As a young boy he learned trumpet, but later switched to the double bass. Because Jews were not allowed to live in the city of Moscow, he was baptized at 14 in order to join the Musico-Dramatic Institute of the Moscow Philharmonic, where he began to study under bass player Rambusek. Koussevitzky eventually succeeded Rambusek as principal double bass of the orchestra and embarked upon a long solo career. His conducting debut came in 1908. In 1917, he managed to survive the revolution despite his wealth. In 1920, Koussevitzky left the USSR for Berlin and Paris as a conductor, and in 1924 he took over as conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra until his death in 1951. He became an American citizen in 1941. His two major legacies are the support of contemporary music and the Tanglewood Music Center, which he began in 1940 with Aaron Copland. Koussevitzky is known today as one of the greatest American conductors and composers of double bass solo music.

Koussevitzky wrote *Chanson Triste* and *Valse Miniature* in 1902 when he was the principal double bass of the Moscow Philharmonic and professor of the double bass at the Philharmonic Conservatory. His career as a solo double bassist was at its highest at this time. The pieces greatly enriched the double bass repertoire and have today become double bass standards. Both are written in traditional sonata form, with a repeated exposition, development, and recapitulation. The character of *Chanson Triste* is exactly as it sounds: "sad song." *Valse Miniature*, on the other hand, is a more cheerful piece based on a waltz.

¹ White, Chappell: "Capuzzi, Giuseppe Antonio", *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy (Accessed [18 March 2006]), <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>.

Born in Liverpool in 1933, David Ellis has studied composition, conducting, and organ at the Royal Manchester College of Music. Having worked for the BBC for many years, he is now Head of Music BBC North. He has written many works, including orchestral, a violin concerto, a cello and orchestra concertante, choral works, and chamber music.

Commissioned and published with funds from the Ralph Vaughan Williams Trust, *Sonata Op. 42* was the required work for the 1978 Isle of Man International Double Bass Competition. The piece employs a wide variety of techniques and characteristics, making it challenging both physically and expressively.

Sonata No. 1 in G Major, Op. 78

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Although Johannes Brahms' G major sonata is labeled "No. 1," it was actually the fourth violin sonata he wrote. The first, in A minor, was written in 1853 but was apparently lost by Franz Liszt and Hungarian violinist Ede Reményi. Two other sonatas followed, but neither met with his satisfaction and were subsequently destroyed. Thus when Op. 78 was published in 1879, it was the first of Brahms' violin sonatas to reach the public and became "No. 1."

This sonata, sometimes nicknamed "Regenlied" ("Rain-song") because the main theme of the third movement is based on Brahms' song of the same title, was a favorite of violinist Joseph Joachim. He performed it with Brahms on a concert tour in 1880, and it remained a staple of his repertoire. Clara Schumann was also deeply touched by this sonata, writing:

I must send a line to tell you how deeply excited I am over your sonata. It came today; of course I at once played it through, and at the end could not help bursting into tears of joy over it. After the first delicate charming movement and the second, you can imagine my rapture, when in the third I once more found my passionately loved melody with the delightful quaver rhythm.²

The words of the "passionately loved melody" (from "Regenlied," Op. 59, no. 3) may have contributed to Clara Schumann's emotional connection with this piece, and their quiet

² Henry S. Drinker, Jr., *The Chamber Music of Johannes Brahms* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1932), 50.

nostalgia may be felt throughout Brahms' G major sonata: "Awake my childhood dream again, O rain. . . . Arouse my old songs again."³

Hungarian Dance, Op. 6 no. 2

Serge Rachmaninoff
(1873-1943)

"Hungarian Dance" is the second piece in Rachmaninoff's Op. 6, written in 1893 (the first being "Romance"). Rachmaninoff was only 20 years old at the time and had recently graduated with the Great Gold Medal from the Moscow Conservatory. In the year since graduation he had already composed his piano prelude in C# minor and seen the premiere of his one-act opera *Aleko*. His success sparked a flurry of composition in the summer and fall of 1893, of which Op. 6 was a part. Even at such an early stage, many were excited about Rachmaninoff's future. His fans included Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky, one of the most influential figures for young Rachmaninoff.

Michelangelo '70

Astor Piazzolla
(1921-1992)

Born in Mar del Plata, Argentina, Piazzolla and his family moved to New York in 1924. There, he became a child prodigy on the *bandoneón*, an accordion-like instrument that is the quintessential tango instrument. In 1937, Piazzolla moved to Buenos Aires, and there began playing in bands and arranging tangos. In 1944, he began his own compositional career in which he developed a new kind of tango, known as "nuevo tango." Initially, his music was not accepted in his own country or in the US. Eventually, however, his music caught on in the US and in France, where he spent some years of his later life. By the 1980s, his music was generally accepted in Argentina, and he came to be seen as the savior of the tango since it began to decline in popularity in the 1950s.

Michelangelo '70 is typical of Piazzolla's "nuevo tango" style. It includes expanded instrumentation with a violin, piano, *bandoneón*, here replaced by its cousin, the accordion, bass, and guitar. The piece also includes chromaticism, extreme dissonance, some elements of jazz, and certain fugal techniques.

³ Ivor Keys, *Brahms Chamber Music* (London: BBC Publications, 1974), 52.