

JOELLE HSU

Junior Recital



Bax Viola Sonata

accompanist Liu Jia

25
nov

11.50
am

concert
hall



Programme

Arnold Bax (1883-1953)

Viola Sonata

I. *Molto moderato - Allegro*

II. *Allegro energico, ma non troppo presto*

III. *Molto lento*

Joelle Hsu, viola
Liu Jia, piano

About the Performer

Despite starting her musical journey on the piano at the tender age of five and later picking up the violin at eight, Joelle decided to continue her musical journey with the viola upon resonating with the deep and soulful voice of the instrument. She is currently a student of the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music (YST), under the tutelage of Associate Professor Zhang Manchin.

Over the years, Joelle has developed as a soloist, debuting alongside the Singapore National Youth Orchestra (SNYO) in 2018. She most recently won the Second Place in YST's Concerto Competition (Lower Strings). She has also attended various masterclasses conducted by renown musicians such as Huang Hsin-Yun, Paul Coletti and Nobuko Imai.

As an orchestra member, Joelle has played with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, Sichuan Symphony Orchestra, Metropolitan Festival Orchestra and the Orchestra of the Music Makers. She has also had the opportunity to serve as Principal in the SNYO.

Joelle feels privileged to be able to share her music with all and would like to take this opportunity to express her gratitude to her teachers who have guided her throughout her musical journey. She would also like to thank her family and friends for their unwavering support and encouragement.

Programme Notes

Sir Arnold Edward Trevor Bax was an English composer, poet and author. Despite being most known for his orchestral music as the leading British symphonist of his time, he also wrote many songs, choral music, chamber pieces and solo piano works. Having lived in Ireland before World War I, many of Bax's early works and literary writings were based off Ireland and Celtic influence. After the war ended, Bax found himself to be drawn to Norwegian poems and Icelandic tales, shifting his composition style to be more of Nordic influence towards the end of his career.

The Viola Sonata was dedicated to violist Lionel Tetris who premiered the work. Being completed just a few years after the war ended, the piece was still largely Irish-inspired with Nordic elements. I see this inspiration in the many colours and timbres within the work, such as playing with the mute on at various parts of the work and brings listeners to different beautiful landscapes.

Molto moderato begins with a twinkling opening by the piano, which is later joined by the warm melody in the viola – as if depicting a sunrise on an early spring day. As the music develops, it becomes livelier and introduces flowing melodies. There are moments of agitation at the climax, before the music dies down, ending off with the first theme.

The second movement, ***Allegro energico, ma non troppo presto*** is uneasy and distressed. There are also moments of Irish influence, with folk-like tunes illustrating wild Irish dancing. This leads to the last movement, ***Molto lento*** which is dark and somber. The beginning feels rather spoken and thoughtful. There are many moments of questioning, reflection and distress with irregular rhythms and rubato used throughout. Lastly, the opening theme from the first movement re-enters, ending the piece in tranquility.

The sonata is picturesque and allows one to imagine the sights and emotions depicted through Bax's writing – from the calm spring day to the rustic scene of Irish men dancing. I hope that you will be transported to these different places and sights as we explore this piece together.