

Huang Wanxinyi

Viola Senior Recital

Apr 26th / 3:00pm



26 April 2022 | TUESDAY

Huang Wanxinyi Viola Recital

Liu Jia, *piano*

Programme

BRAHMS

Two Songs for Alt, Viola and Piano

2 Gesänge, Op. 91

1. Gestillte Sehnsucht (F. Rückert)

2. Geistliches Wiegenlied (E. Geibel/de Vega)

BRUCH

Romanze for viola and piano, Op. 85

– Intermission 10 mins –

BRAHMS

Viola Sonata No . 1 in F minor, Op. 120

I. Allegro appassionato

II. Andante un poco Adagio

III. Allegretto grazioso

IV. Vivace

Programme Notes

Johannes Brahms: 2 Gesänge

Two Songs for Voice, Viola and Piano, Op. 91, were composed by Johannes Brahms for his friends Joseph Joachim and his wife Amalie. The full title is *Zwei Gesänge für eine Altstimme mit Bratsche und Klavier* (Two songs for an alto voice with viola and piano). The text of the first song, "Gestillte Sehnsucht" (Longing at rest), is a poem by Friedrich Rückert, composed in 1884. The text of the second, "Geistliches Wiegenlied" (Sacred lullaby) was written by Emanuel Geibel after Lope de Vega, and set to music in 1863. They were published together in 1884.

1. Gestillte Sehnsucht (F. Rückert)

The first song, composed much later than the second, is a setting of three stanzas from Rückert's poem of the same name in four stanzas, published first in 1816 in *Jugendlieder* (Youth Songs) in the second volume of his works. The poem begins "In gold'nen Abendschein getaucht, wie feierlich die

Wälder stehn!" ("Immersed in golden evening glow, how solemnly the woods stand.") Each stanza is in six lines, with rhyme scheme ABABCC. The first stanza remains a description of a peaceful evening, asking what the winds and the birds whisper, and giving the answer: they whisper the world into slumber. The second stanza mentions wishes and longing, and asks the wind and the birds to make them slumber as well. The third stanza, not set by Brahms, alludes in more images from nature to the longing. In the final stanza, the speaker admits that it is his (or her) personal longing ("mein Geist", my spirit) which will end only when life ends: "Dann lispeln die Winde, die Vögelein mit meinem Sehnen mein Leben ein." ("Then the winds, the birds will whisper to an end, with my longing, my life.") Rückert's poem about nature and yearning was appealing to Brahms, who returned to Baroque practices for the setting, not only the obbligato instrument, but also a da capo form, with a contrasting middle section. It illustrates the restless desires ("sonder Rast und Ruh") in an excited minor section. The third stanza is a recapitulation of the first.

2. Geistliches Wiegenlied(E.Geibel/de Vega)

The second song, composed first, is a cradle song or lullaby, setting a poem "Die ihr schwebet" ("Ye who float") which Emanuel Geibel paraphrased after a song by Lope de Vega from his *Cantarcillo de la Virgen*. Geibel's poem appeared first, without a title, in his *Spanisches Liederbuch* (Spanish song book), in the first section *Geistliche Lieder* (Sacred songs) as number 4. The poem begins with a woman addressing the holy angels ("heil'gen Engel") hovering around palms in night and wind, to silence the trees because her child is sleeping. It becomes evident that the speaker is Mary, the mother of Jesus. The first stanza has six lines, while three following stanzas have eight lines each. The second stanza describes the angry wind and palms, the third the burden of the suffering of the world, tiring the child, and the fourth threatening cold, but all four are resolved in the same last line, "Es schlummert mein Kind." ("There slumbers my child."). The viola begins the setting alone with the tune of the medieval Christmas carol "Joseph, lieber Joseph mein", a song in which Mary asks Joseph to help her to rock her baby.

In the music, Brahms added the text to the tune, thus mentioning Joachim's given name. The voice enters with a different melody. The middle stanzas are set in a different metre and in minor, portraying restlessness and pain. In the end, the viola returns to the carol tune.

Translation:

Assuaged longing

Bathed in golden evening light,
How solemnly the forests stand!
The evening winds mingle softly
With the soft voices of the birds.
What do the winds, the birds whisper?
They whisper the world to sleep.
But you, my desires, ever stirring
In my heart without respite!
You, my longing, that agitates my breast –
When will you rest, when will you sleep?
The winds and the birds whisper,
But when will you, yearning desires, slumber?
Ah! when my spirit no longer hastens
On wings of dreams into golden distances,
When my eyes no longer dwell yearningly
On eternally remote stars;
Then shall the winds, the birds whisper
My life – and my longing – to sleep.
Translations by Richard Stokes, author of *The Book of Lieder* (Faber, 2005)

A sacred cradle-song

You who hover
Around these palms
In night and wind,
You holy angels,
Silence the tree-tops!
My child is sleeping.
You palms of Bethlehem
In the raging wind,
Why do you bluster
So angrily today!
O roar not so!
Be still, lean
Calmly and gently over us;
Silence the tree-tops!
My child is sleeping.
The heavenly babe
Suffers distress,
Oh, how weary He has grown
With the sorrows of this world.
Ah, now that in sleep
His pains
Are gently eased,
Silence the treetops!
My child is sleeping.
Fierce cold
Blows down on us,
With what shall I cover
My little child's limbs?
O all you angels,
Who wing your way
On the winds,
Silence the tree-tops!
My child is sleeping.
Translations by Richard Stokes, author of *The Book of Lieder* (Faber, 2005)

Max Bruch: Romanze

Bruch started work on what he had planned to be his second violin concerto while preparing to conduct his choral work *Odysseus: Szenen aus der Odyssee*, Op. 41 in Cologne, by the 11th of February he had completed the first

movement and indicated to friends that he had beginnings of the projected second and third movements. However, perhaps due to personal issues, most notably a relationship with Amalie Heydweiller, which Christopher Fitfield speculates may have been the inspiration for the completed movement, Bruch found himself unable to complete the remaining movements. His decision to publish the work as a single movement concert piece, was based in part on the positive reception of his friends to the completed movement.

Johannes Brahms Viola sonata No. 1, Op. 120

The Sonatas, Op. 120, Nos. 1 and 2, are a pair of works originally written for clarinet and piano by the Romantic composer Johannes Brahms. They were written in 1894 and are dedicated to the clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld. The sonatas stem from a period late in Brahms's life where he “discovered” the beauty of the sound and tonal colour of the clarinet.[1] The form of the clarinet sonata was largely undeveloped until after the completion of these sonatas, after which the combination of clarinet and piano

was more readily used in composers' new works.[2] These were the last chamber pieces Brahms wrote before his death and are considered two of the great masterpieces in the clarinet repertoire. Brahms also produced a frequently performed transcription these works for viola with alterations to better suit the instrument.

This piece is through the correspondence with Joachim that we discover the background to the viola version. Brahms to Joachim (14 October 1894): 'Should you be coming to Frankfurt... please let me know. I would come too, and either invite Mühlfeld or bring a viola part for two clarinet sonatas which I should very much like Frau Schumann to hear. Our cosiness would not be disturbed by these unassuming pieces - but it would be nice!' Joachim replied by return: 'I will be in Frankfurt on 9 November... Please write soon whether I may really look forward to it. It is quite splendid that Mühlfeld has inspired you to further chamber music.'

Richard Mühlfeld was a clarinettist whom Brahms first heard in Meiningen in 1891.

Having vowed to write nothing more after the G major String Quintet op.111, Brahms was moved to break his self-imposed retirement with a series of magnificent chamber music works featuring the clarinet - a trio, a quintet and finally these two sonatas. The sonatas are just as much a gift for viola players however, and many insist that the radiant warmth of the viola is even more appropriate to the music than the 'cool , liquid timbre of the clarinet.' Unfortunately, this opinion was not shared by Brahms, as we learn from his reply to Joachim (17 October 1894): 'That's excellent... I hope Mühlfeld will be able to come — for I fear that the two pieces are very clumsy and ungratifying [sehr ungeschickt und unerfreulich] as viola sonatas'.

Allegro appassionato

F minor

Piano introduction to the first movement. The first movement is in sonata form. It begins with a solo piano introduction in three parallel octaves, outlining a recurring motif throughout the movement. The clarinet then enters with the slurred first theme. The piano takes over

the theme, with the clarinet playing more of an embellishing role. It was normal in clarinet music before the sonatas for the soloist to play mostly, if not always, the melody. Brahms did not reduce the scope of the piano part to accommodate for the clarinet, but created a more equal and harmonious relationship between soloist and accompanist.[6] The quiet transition between the two themes is in D \flat major and features staggered entrances between the hands of the piano. The second theme introduces dotted rhythms and is marked marcato, contrasting with the first theme. It passes through many key areas quickly before finally resting on C minor. The development begins by expanding on ideas heard in the introduction and transition. The piano plays with staggered hand entrances and joins the clarinet in recalling the second bar of the introduction. The music makes a false movement towards A \flat major, instead landing on E major. The introduction material takes over and winds down to pp. A subito forte evokes the second theme combined with staggered entrances from both piano hands and clarinet. The second theme is finally presented and leads to the recapitulation. The

introduction is restated forte in the key of C# minor. Brahms brings the key back around to F minor and the first theme, transition, and second theme are heard again. Tonally, this section does not stray far from F although the music goes through major and minor sections. A final statement of the first theme leads into the coda, marked *Sostenuto ed espressivo*. The coda is slower in tempo and based on material from the introduction. The movement ends quietly in F major.

II. Andante un poco adagio

A \flat major

The material from the introduction is seen many times throughout the first movement. The descending theme in the clarinet at the opening of the second movement. The second movement is in ternary form. The clarinet introduces a simple descending theme decorated with turns. The piano writing is sparse in the first theme area. This A section is repeated twice, once ending on a half cadence and the other with a perfect authentic cadence on the home key of A \flat major. The B section is characterized by faster rhythmic and harmonic

motion. The piano plays sixteenth notes outlining the harmonies while the clarinet continues playing a slurred melody. The harmony descends in an imitation of the A section melody through the keys D \flat major, C \flat major, and A major. The clarinet gets a chance to play the sixteenth notes that the piano had before the modulation to E major. The A melody returns in the piano in the “wrong” key of E major, moves to C major, and finally back to the A \flat major. The A section is then restated in its entirety with a more active piano accompaniment. A short interlude of sixteenth notes in the piano alludes to the B section and a final iteration of the melody ends the movement.

III. Allegretto grazioso

A \flat major

The third movement is also in ternary form. The A section consists of an eight bar melody played by the clarinet, and then traded off to the piano with the clarinet lending supporting lines. A forte repeated section inverts the melody and the second ending leads to the B section. The piano takes up a descending line syncopated

between the two hands while the clarinet adds a low supporting line confined within the space of a minor third. Another repeated section lets the clarinet play the descending melody. After the repeat, the melody from the A section returns and ends the movement.

IV. Vivace

F major

The three accented Fs from the introduction are used as a sort of calling card for the first theme. There are usually heard in conjunction with or anticipating the theme. Introduction to the last movement of the sonata. The fourth movement is in an altered rondo form that can be described as A–B–A'–C–B'–A". The movement begins with three accented Fs in a piano introduction serving as a sort of call to identify the first theme. The A theme is marked *leggero* in the clarinet and is mostly eighth notes in stepwise motion. The contrasting B theme is made up of quarter note triplets and is more slurred and leisurely. After a bombastic return to A', the quiet C theme is played in the piano and then handed off to the clarinet. The clarinet then plays the "call" from the

introduction while the piano states the B theme again. Finally, the final A" section ends with a coda and the sonata is finished in F major.

Programme notes by Huang Wanxinyi.