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Graduate recital in viola

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GRADUATE RECITAL IN VIOLA

An Abstract of a Thesis

Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Music in Performance

Isaak Walter Sund

University of Northern Iowa

July 2017

This Study by: Isaak Sund

Entitled: Graduate Recital in Viola

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the
Degree of Master of Music in Performance

Date _____ Dr. Julia Bullard, Chair, Thesis Committee

Date _____ Dr. Rebecca Burkhardt, Thesis Committee Member

Date _____ Dr. Alison Altstatt, Thesis Committee Member

Date _____ Dr. Kavita R. Dhanwada, Dean, Graduate College

This Recital Performance by: Isaak Sund

Entitled: Graduate Recital in Viola

Date of Recital: March 29, 2017

has been approved as meeting the recital requirement for the
Degree of Master of Music in Performance

Date

Dr. Julia Bullard, Chair, Graduate Recital Committee

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Dr. Rebecca Burkhardt, Graduate Recital Committee Member

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Dr. Alison Altstatt, Graduate Recital Committee Member

Date

Dr. Kavita R. Dhanwada, Dean, Graduate College

ABSTRACT

Isaak Walter Sund performed his Master of Music Recital in viola on March 29th, 2017, at 8:00 pm in the Gallagher-Bluedorn Performing Arts Center's Davis Hall. He was assisted by pianist Serena Hou. The program selected included Cello Suite No. 5 in C Minor BWV 1011 by Johann Sebastian Bach, Sonata op. 120 for Clarinet and Piano (Version for Viola) by Johannes Brahms, and Viola Concerto by William Walton. This program's repertoire was chosen for the variety of different styles and to explore the subtleties between characters, stylistic elements and core technical development of the viola.

Johann Sebastian Bach - Cello Suite No. 5 in C Minor, BWV 1011

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) has been regarded as one of the most prolific composers of his generation, and even as a pinnacle among composers in all of music history. From an early age, Bach displayed virtuosity in keyboard music, and within his compositional style, it was remarked that his music was "...distinctive and extraordinarily varied, drawing together and surmounting the techniques, the styles and the general achievements of his own and earlier generations and leading on to new perspectives which later ages have received and understood in a great variety of ways."¹

¹ Christoph Wolff, et al, "Bach."
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40023pg10> (February 15th 2017).

ANALYSIS

The Suite in C Minor begins with a prelude in two parts: a slow, organ-like introduction, and a faster fugal section. The slow section of the movement begins with a C minor chord, and expands to introduce the key area to the listener. This section of the movement features some dotted or tied rhythms, as would be typical of a French overture, and Bach uses linear counterpoint to create harmonic tension and shifts through harmonic sequences. The texture is almost organ-like in its use of various sustained pedal points. As the end of the prelude approaches, Bach uses a brief cadenza-like passage to strongly tonicize the dominant (G minor). The opening of the fugue is harmonically ambiguous: it begins on the dominant, moving initially toward E-flat as Bach introduces the fugal subject, a rising three note motif, and finally settles (briefly) back into c minor. The brilliant element of this fugue is in its construction which uses primarily linear counterpoint to imply the various voices of the fugue, on an instrument that has limited capacity for performing multiple voices simultaneously. The movement reaches a majestic conclusion on a C major tonic chord.

The second movement of the suite is an Allemande, a stylized version of a rather formal German dance from the Baroque period, characterized by upbeats and strong first and third beats in each rhythmic gesture. The movement itself is in a rounded binary form. Each section has related motivic material, which is again treated with linear counterpoint and frequently accompanied by double and triple stops. This Allemande is unique among those in the Cello Suites as it does not fall into a standard two-bar/four-bar

unit in terms of thematic material.² Winold points out that this particular Allemande uses what he refers to as “bifocal tonality,”³ this movement can have a rapid shift between the minor key of the movement and the relative major key area.

The third movement of this suite is a Courante, another staple of the dance suite and translates to “running” from the French. While there are two different major types of courantes in the Baroque period (French *courante*, and Italian *corrente*), the Fifth Suite’s Courante is in the French-style. Winold explains that the French style uses a triple meter with rather frequent hemiolas.⁴ The two sections of this movement are both divided into twelve-bar phrases, but Winold points out that these phrases do not share the same distribution in terms of phrase structure.

The fourth movement of the Suite, the Sarabande, is one of the most unique movements of all of the Bach Cello Suites, as it is the only movement to never use a double stopped note. The effect of this single-line compositional style is that the harmonic tension is created through intervallic gestures, and a sparse texture which creates a unique, almost cold or barren, color. The rhythm is quite repetitive and the intervallic structure emphasizes half steps, creating tension on the second beats in almost every measure, which corresponds to the traditional second-beat emphasis of the sarabande. The movement is in simple binary form, as the first section is an eight-bar repeated phrase, and the second section is a twelve-bar repeated phrase. Winold points

² Winold, Allen. *Bach's Cello Suites Analysis and Explorations*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 42-43.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

out that the harmonic ambiguity and the unusual intervals that Bach wrote into this movement creates an emotional effect of 'sadness'.⁵

The fifth movement of the Suite is a Gavotte, which is a French country dance that uses a moderately fast tempo, a duple meter, and a bass drone to support the melodic material.⁶ The Fifth Suite's Gavotte is unique as it has a twelve bar first section, and a twenty-four bar second section. In addition the Gavotte is divided into two sections (Gavotte I and Gavotte II), which are in the same key but contrast in character and internal rhythmic structure. The first Gavotte features a strong double-anacrusis, and double stops to accentuate many of the down beats. The frequency of double and triple stops is a technical challenge in performance of this movement. The second Gavotte, like the Sarabande, is almost entirely monophonic and mono-rhythmic, with repetitive triplet eighth notes, creating a more lyrical style in contrast with the emphatic, rhythmic Gavotte I.

The final movement of the suite is a Gigue, or a jig: an active dance from Ireland in compound meter, and a rather fast tempo. This particular movement is in binary form, with an irregular internal phrase structure marked by hemiola, which creates unexpected shifts in the rhythmic structure. Bach, throughout this Suite, has provided a great deal of material to be analyzed, in exploration of his compositional prowess.

⁵ Winold, Allen. *Bach's Cello Suites Analysis and Explorations*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 64-65.

⁶ *Ibid*, 74-75.

William Walton – Concerto for Viola and Orchestra

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Sir William Walton (1902-1983) was the son of a choir master and a singer, and was influenced greatly by working with his father in the local church choir at a young age. He had a desire for musical perfection from his father's stern lessons, which included his being hit on the knuckles for each incorrect note that he produced during a performance as a choirboy.⁷ These harsh lessons led to a strong sense of perfectionism in his composing. In 1912, Walton received a scholarship to become a chorister at Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford, where he remained performing for six years.⁸ While he was a chorister, he studied voice, piano and violin. He began composing during his time at Christ Church Cathedral, and it was remarked that his style was surprisingly mature even at a young age. During his time at Christ Church, Walton attracted the attention of Thomas Strong, the dean of the Cathedral, who not only provided encouragement but also financial support to the young composer.⁹

In 1918, with the support of Strong, Walton entered Oxford University at the age of sixteen, where he continued his musical studies. During his studies, Walton became friends with Osbert and Edith Sitwell who provided him a home and the freedom to focus his efforts on composition. During his time with the Sitwells, Walton had the opportunity

⁷Byron Adams. "Walton, William."

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40016> (February 20, 2017)

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

to attend the Russian ballet, and encounter Stravinsky and Gershwin.¹⁰ In 1920, Walton took his first trip to Italy, where he devoured the musical culture and history to find influences for his work *Façade* (1926-7).¹¹ *Façade*, an orchestral accompaniment to poems by Edith Sitwell, was his first major work.

In 1928, Walton began work on his *Concerto for Viola and Orchestra*, which Byron Adams deems as the most important development for Walton's style as a composer.¹² Adams points out that Walton's influence from composers such as Hindemith, Prokofiev and Ravel are quite clear in this particular work. The work itself is, as Adams states, a marvel of orchestral poise, in that the orchestra never impinges on the soloist's voice.¹³

The Concerto itself has been compared to Elgar's Cello Concerto as it also has a slow first movement, and the second and third movements carry more of the weight of the composition. Stylistically, Stewart Craggs comments that Walton's hallmarks of style are all evident within this concerto; some examples of this include melodic exploitation of conjunct motion and wide intervals (this includes the extensive double stop section in the first movement), and added-note diatonic harmonies.¹⁴ One example of this occurs at

¹⁰ Byron Adams. "Walton, William."

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40016> (February 20, 2017)

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Stewart R. Craggs, Michael Kennedy, *William Walton: a Thematic Catalogue of his Musical Works*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1977.

the end of the final cadenza, where the orchestra restates the final, rising theme as the violist plays scalar rising/descending patterns.

The premiere of the work itself has a rather interesting story behind it, as the violist Lionel Tertis was originally supposed to be the soloist for its first performance. Tertis commented that the first time he looked at the concerto, he was still unable to find an appreciation for Walton's style.¹⁵ He said that he truly regretted having given up that opportunity after he heard the premiere, which was performed by Paul Hindemith. Tertis said the following about Hindemith's performance:

“The notes, certainly, were all there, but the tone was cold and unpleasing and the instrument he played did not deserve to be called a viola, it was far too small.”¹⁶

ANALYSIS

Walton's exposure to the rich tradition of Anglican church music greatly influenced his compositional style. He also grew up with the idea that the music he performed needed to be perfect, a thought that was reinforced by his father's strict attitude toward his performance as a chorister. During Walton's early life, anthems used in the Anglican services had advanced to the point of utilizing almost orchestral accompaniments in terms of the complexity of the organ parts.¹⁷ Walton's knowledge of

¹⁵Lionel, Tertis *My Viola and I*. (London: Kahn & Averill, 1974), 36.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ John Harper, et al., "Anthem." <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/00998> (April 10, 2017)

orchestration and his perfectionism are both evident in the highly detailed writing for both the soloist and the orchestra in the Concerto for Viola and Orchestra.

The exposition of the first movement of the concerto begins with a soft, lyrical line presented by the lower strings, leading to the entrance of the soloist with the first theme. This theme is explored multiple times by the wind sections, especially the oboe and English horn. The primary theme is an excellent example of English romantic music in general, as it uses singable (perhaps even anthem-like) melodies and lush, evocative harmonies. As the exposition goes on, the intensity and speed at which the viola plays becomes even more demanding, as the harmonic and melodic rhythms begin to increase in rapidity. After a short, cadenza-like section, the orchestra almost immediately leads into the development section. In the development, the primary theme is fragmented and then augmented by both the soloist and the orchestra. Walton then brings back the lyrical ideas of the exposition. The key area shifts into a modal section which changes every few measures, creating an area of uncertainty for the listener.

Early in the development, the tempo shifts to a faster pace and there are rapid, sudden shifts in the harmony and texture in both the viola and the orchestra's parts. As this expands into the development, the soloist takes up an accompaniment role as the orchestra restates the primary theme. The contrast between this rapid, agitated style against the lyrical melody creates a fascinating contrast for the listener. After a small interlude, the soloist takes up an augmented form of the primary theme with a long chain of double stopped notes, leading into another cadenza-like section. After a brief re-introduction of the rapid motive from the development, the orchestra begins the

recapitulation. This leads into the third and longest cadenza, over a rumbling low orchestral pedal point. The orchestra restates the primary theme, as the soloist accompanies them with a rapid *obbligato* passage, leading into a final, extended restatement of the first cadenza material. The movement ends as it began, softly and mysteriously. Walton used his understanding of sacred English music, as well as the characteristics of composers such as Gershwin and Debussy, to craft a lush, and lyrical piece.

Johannes Brahms - Sonata op. 120 for Clarinet and Piano (Version for Viola)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) was born in Hamburg, Germany to Johanna Heinrika Christiane Nissen and Johann Jakob Brahms. His mother was a talented seamstress while his father was a musician with some skill in the violin, double bass, flute, and horn. Johannes was sent to a good elementary and middle school, where he received a well-rounded education and developed a voracious appetite for reading. At a young age, he began lessons on piano, cello, and the horn, and one of his later teachers sparked within him a love for Bach and Viennese Classical composers.¹⁸ Brahms's first known performance was at a small concert in 1843 where he performed chamber works by both Bach and Beethoven, showing that he was already immersed in the ideas of German composers who had come before him. In order to help make ends meet for his

¹⁸ George S. Bozarth, Walter Frisch, "Brahms, Johannes."
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51879pg1> (February 23, 2017)

family, he began teaching piano lessons from their home and working both as a piano performer and arranger for brass ensembles and piano duets. From his early compositions, Brahms drew heavily from folk and popular music in his own compositions.¹⁹ During his early performing years, Brahms was exposed to the *style hongrois* (Hungarian style), which would later influence several of his pieces.²⁰ As his life continued, Brahms continued to compose in almost every important genre of the day, including concertos, piano solo music, sonatas, and symphonies (but notably, no operas). Toward the end of his life, he began to work on his Op. 120, the two Sonatas for Clarinet and Piano, which he finished in 1890, and 1894 for the clarinetist Robert Mühlfeld.²¹

It was common practice of the time for composers to arrange their own works for different instrumental combinations, and the viola version of the sonatas was such a case. However, Jeffery Pulver discusses how Brahms himself preferred having them performed on the clarinet.²² Brahms performed both of the Sonatas as well as other small chamber works with Mühlfeld in 1894, as well as performing them for Clara Schumann. In 1895, Brahms continued to perform the works with Mühlfeld, and during that same year, he conducted his final performance at the Gewandhaus.²³

¹⁹ George S. Bozarth, Walter Frisch, "Brahms, Johannes."
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51879pg1> (February 23, 2017)

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Richard Specht, *Johannes Brahms* (London and Toronto, New York: J.M. Dent and Sons.,; E.P. Dutton &, 1930).

²² Jeffrey Pulver, *Johannes Brahms. Masters of Music* (New York: Harper, 1926), 267.

²³ Ibid, 277.

ANALYSIS

The first movement of the F-minor sonata, *Allegro appassionato*, is in the standard sonata-allegro form. The exposition begins in F minor, with the development moving to A-flat major. A new theme is presented in the development section, which finally leads into the recapitulation. The recapitulation stays within the confines of the main key area, but there are moments where Brahms has the duo move into C-sharp minor, especially towards the beginning of the first and second themes being in F major. The coda is slower than the rest of the movement, but it creates an interesting variation to the previous material.

The second movement, *Andante un poco Adagio*, is in the relative major key, A-flat major. This movement has lush and lyrical material in both parts of the duo, which is rather soothing after the passionate first movement. The movement itself is in ternary form, with the viola introducing the melody first. The piano introduces the second melody in the B section, in D-flat major, and the harmonic rhythm accelerates during this section. Increased chromaticism and use of chromatic modulations lead to the key area of B major, before a meandering chromatic passage in the piano brings us back to A-flat, with the viola resuming the melodic role for the return of the A section.

The third movement, *Allegretto grazioso*, is also in ternary form. The first A section has an eight-bar phrase as the melody, which is first played by the viola, and then restated by the piano. The A section is repeated once before entering the B section, which has an entirely different color created by the cascading notes of the piano. The viola is the

accompanimental voice in this area of the movement, and takes over the melodic material during the final statement of the A section, similar to the second movement.

The final movement, *Vivace*, is in a slightly altered rondo form, and in the much brighter key of F Major. There are three different sections of this rondo, with each section (except the C section) being repeated once. The piano enters the movement with a fanfare-like three-note rhythmic motive before beginning a descending line that leads into the melodic introduction of the A section. This section is marked *leggiero*, and uses mostly step-wise motion in eighth-note patterns. The B section of the rondo is more relaxed than the A section, as the soloist is playing lines of slower triplet quarter notes. The A section is repeated once again, leading into the C section which moves to the relative minor and features more lyrical melodic material with longer note values. The violist finally restates the opening three note statement originally made by the piano, heralding the final return of the A section. Brahms' diligent and precise compositional skills tie this four movement sonata together, by challenging both the soloist and the pianist.

CONCLUSION

This graduate recital included three significant works from the viola repertoire that presented a variety of challenges. The program required a definitive understanding of each work and the technical and historic background of both the viola and the composers who created each of these pieces. The past two years of graduate studies have significantly contributed to the personal understanding of performance practices, stylistic,

and analytical techniques of these pieces, which informed the performance of these works.

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School of Music
University of Northern Iowa

presents

Isaak Sund, Viola
Graduate Recital

assisted by:
Serena Hou, piano

In partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the Master of Music degree in Performance
From the Studio of Dr. Julia Bullard

Suite No. 5 in C minor, BWV 1011

Prelude
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Gavotte I & II
Gigue

J.S. Bach
(1685-1750)

Intermission

Concerto for Viola and Orchestra
Andante comodo

William Walton
(1902-1983)

Sonata for Viola and Piano in F minor, Op.120 No. 1
Allegro appassionato
Andante un poco Adagio
Allegretto grazioso
Vivace

Johannes Brahms
(1883-1897)