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Mostly Music: Feb. 9, 2023

Mostly Music Staff

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Mostly Music at NEIU
presents

Florence Schwartz
violin

Robert Swan
viola

Jelena Dirks
piano

February 9, 2003 4:00 pm
Home of Marion Meyerson
1516 N. State Parkway
Chicago

Program

Duet in G Major, No. 1 for violin and viola Mozart

Allegro

Adagio

Rondo

Sonata in F Major, No. 5, Op. 24 "Spring"

Beethoven

Allegro

Adagio Molto Espressivo

Scherzo

Rondo

Intermission

Sonata in G Major, No. 1, Op. 78

Brahms

Vivace ma non troppo

Adagio

Allegro Molto Moderato

About the Artists

Florence Schwartz, joined the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1989 and began her musical studies at the age of five with Margaret Randall at the Cleveland Institute of Music, where she later studied with David Cerone. She received a bachelor's degree from the Eastman School of Music as a student of Felix Galimir. Her other teachers include Angel Reyes, Arnold Steinhardt, and David Arben.

She has won numerous competitions and awards. She has performed as soloist with several orchestras, including the World Youth and University orchestras at the National Music Camp, the Aspen Sinfonia, the Cleveland Philharmonic, the Mannes Orchestra, and the Rochester Philharmonic. Florence has performed chamber music with the Bronx Arts Ensemble and as a member of the Marlboro Music Festival. She has appeared as soloist at Bach Week in Evanston and with the Kenosha Symphony with fellow orchestra member Catherine Brubaker. She also performs on the CSO chamber music series.

California native, **Jelena Dirks**, is the third generation of professional women musicians in her family. She began study of the piano at age four, and began playing ensemble music with her mother (a violist and violinist) at age ten. A two-time winner of the Musical Merit Foundation Scholarship Competition, Ms. Dirks has performed on both the piano and the oboe in chamber music concerts and in orchestras from California across the country to New Hampshire. She has two Bachelors degrees from St. Olaf College, and two Masters Degrees from the University of Michigan: one of each in oboe performance and piano performance. Jelena was a member of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago for three years, and has now moved on to a professional career playing the oboe. On piano, she spends her time playing chamber music throughout the country including recitals with her mother, CSO violist Karen Dirks, and other prominent Chicago musicians.

Robert Swan was appointed to the viola section of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra by Sir Georg Solti in September 1972. A native of Connecticut, Bob studied viola with David Dawson at Indiana University, where he earned both bachelor's and master's degrees as well as a performer's certificate. While at Indiana, he studied chamber music with William Primrose, Josef Gingold, Gyorgy Sebok, and Menahem Pressler.

Bob is principal viola of Chicago's Music of the Baroque and a founding member of the Evanston Chamber Ensemble. He has appeared as guest artist with the Fine Arts Quartet, the Vermeer Quartet, the Chicago Chamber Musicians, and the Rembrandt Chamber Players. From 1972 until 1980, he was professor of viola at Northwestern University and he also served as violist of the Eckstein String Quartet. His interests outside of music include cooking and then eating too much, golf, fly-fishing, red wine, and chess. Bob's daughter, Jessica, recently moved to Portland, Oregon, after graduating from the University of Iowa; his son, Christopher, is completing his first year at Indiana.

About the Music

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)

Sonata No. 5 in F Major for Violin and Piano, Op. 24 "Spring" (1801)

Of the ten sonatas for violin and piano composed by Beethoven, No. 9 "Kreutzer" and No. 5 "Spring" remain the perennial favorites. While No. 9 is dramatic, passionate and grand, No. 5 is just plain SWEET. From start to finish, it is Ludwig van at his most charming. As the prolific (*not to mention modest*) writer David Ewen published in his book *Ewen's Musical Masterworks – the Encyclopedia of Musical Masterpieces*: "Spring Sonata in F major, Op. 24 is a work requiring little comment..." (*He should have left it at that.*) So, don't waste the time reading these notes. Just sit back and enjoy fully this lovely work - with the added enjoyment of knowing that despite the fact that the power may go out (yet if it did, the music could continue), you are in a place where in December the world's already abloom.

However, for those who insist: take notice how in the first movement Allegro, at the very beginning of the opening theme Beethoven uses what might be perceived as merely an ornamental figure as a building block of the movement. Incidentally, this figure also makes an appearance in the beautiful slow movement. The third movement scherzo is striking in its brevity, barely over a minute long. Those familiar with Robert Schumann's *Album for the Young Op.68*, will notice that in the second piece of the collection, *The Soldier's March (Soldatenmarsch)* Schumann has appropriated the tune, without the humorous offbeat rhythm. The finale is a tuneful Rondo. For what it's worth, the work was dedicated to Count Moritz von Fries, and the appellation "Spring" was not the composer's.

*Program Notes by Joseph Way
Sierra Chamber Music Society*

Sonata in G Major, No. 1, Op. 78

In his first sonata for violin, Brahms had no wish to swamp the violin's expressive voice with the kind of brawny piano writing he often indulged in. Instead the violin is treated as a singer, and the piano is primarily given delicate accompaniment work. And there is, in fact, a strong link in this Sonata (and the Second Violin Sonata as well) with Brahms' songs, specifically two "rain" songs from his opus 59 of 1873: *Regenlied* and *Nachklang*. Their shared opening melody becomes the principal theme of the Sonata's lovely finale.

The dotted rhythm that opens that melody probably inspired the thrifty Brahms' adoption of it as a seed motive germinating most of the work's thematic material. In the first movement, the violin's halting, wistful principal theme opens with two dotted rhythms and then continues its hesitant song with a chain of them. This is one of Brahms' most curiously understated themes, though the violin eventually opens out into passionate expression. The dotted rhythm also gives birth to the violin's second theme; it is one of Brahms' most lyrically ardent melodies. A strange transitional passage follows, with eerie violin commentary, before the piano finally appropriates the hesitant first theme, accompanied by delicately plucked violin chords. An impassioned working out of both themes roams restlessly through many harmonic lands until the violin finally tumbles onto its tonal doorstep for the recapitulation. Beginning with the eerie transition music, the expansive coda intensifies the Brahmsian mood of yearning.

Yearning touches on tragedy as the piano opens the slow movement in the warm key of E-flat major. And soon the mood darkens into minor with the piano tolling a dirge in thick chords and with the omnipresent dotted rhythms, now hardened and grim. The dirge music returns, more gently, for the coda with the violin soaring heartbreakingly above. There may be an extra-musical dimension to this superb music. Clara Schumann's youngest child, Felix, had died of tuberculosis a few months earlier; on a copy of the slow movement he sent her, Brahms wrote that he composed it "to tell you, perhaps more clearly than I otherwise could myself, how sincerely I think of you and Felix."

A gentler sadness also permeates the rondo-form finale, based on the two rain songs of opus 59. The texts by Brahms' friend Klaus Groth use rain imagery to represent a yearning for lost childhood innocence, a persistent theme in Brahms' creative work. The violin adopts the songs' opening melody as a recurring rondo theme while the piano mimics the pattering of rain throughout. Because the songs are in the minor, Brahms clings to G minor, rather than the home key of G major, until nearly the very end. And promoting formal integration for the work as a whole, he bases the impressive central episode on the slow movement's plangent melody, even returning to its key of E-flat. In the beautifully elegiac coda, the violin reprises it again over the piano's steady raindrops, then hints at the first movement's hesitant opening as Brahms completes his circle.

Notes by Janet E. Bedell

Mostly Music at NEIU

Upcoming Concerts:

March 23, 2003 at 4:00 pm

Meredith Barber, soprano and Dana Brown, piano

An Afternoon of Art Songs

Location: North Side Residence

Thursday April 10, 2003 at 7:30 pm

Johannes String Quartet

The University Club of Chicago - Michigan Room

76 E. Monroe

April 27, 2003 at 4:00 pm

Carl Turner Young Award Winners' Concert - Award Winners

from Area Competitions

Attacca Woodwind Quintet

Location: North Side Residence

For more information call 773-442-4978 or

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