Undergraduate Student Recital
Noelle Barr, violin
Erik Lawrence, piano
May 21, 2021 | 6 pm PDT | Virtual Event

Partita No. 1 in B minor, for solo violin, BWV 1002
   Allemande - Double
   Sarabande - Double

Johann Sebastian Bach
(German, 1685-1750)

Sonata No. 1 in D Major, for violin and piano, Op. 12
   Allegro con brio
   Tema con variazioni: Andante con moto
   Rondo: Allegro

Ludwig van Beethoven
(German, 1770-1827)

Concerto in D Major, for violin, Op. 35
   Allegro moderato

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
(Russian, 1840-1893)

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Noelle Barr is a student of UC Santa Barbara Lecturer Ertan Torgul
About the Artist

Noelle started playing the violin at the age of 9 in a public school program. After participating in the local community orchestra throughout elementary and middle school, she became a member of the Claremont Young Musicians Orchestra (CYMO), where she was exposed to an expansive list of symphonic repertoire, coachings led by musicians of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and a rehearsal with Gustavo Dudamel in 2015. Since continuing her violin studies as a double major in Music Studies and the History of Art and Architecture at UCSB, she has participated in the music department’s chamber ensembles as a student of Ertan Torgul. Receiving masterclasses from the Danish String Quartet in 2019 and Sheryl Staples of the NY Philharmonic in 2020, she extends her gratitude to the UCSB string faculty and musicologists, her parents, and friends. Noelle will graduate from UCSB with a double-major in Music and the History of Art in June of 2021 and will pursue an M.A. at New York University’s Institute of Fine Arts in the Fall.

Program Notes
Recital Program and Notes by Noelle Barr (2020-2021)

Partita No. 1 in B minor, for solo violin, BWV 1002
Allemande

Johann Sebastian Bach (b. 1685-1750) wrote his Partita for Violin No. 1 before 1720 as one of six pieces comprising his Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin. Musicians have a tendency of being musically informed by Bach’s original title of the set, Sei Solo, as it grammatically excites a “spiritual double-entendre.” Rather than having written “Sei Soli” or “Six Solos,” Bach’s writing can be interpreted as a translation of “You are alone,” which has been assumed to imply the composer dedicated this work to his late wife, who died the year Bach notated his autographed manuscript. Overlooked by publishers until the early nineteenth-century, the sonatas and partitas had not become staples of the violin repertoire until the Hungarian violinist Joseph Joachim introduced the set into regular violin performance and pedagogical importance.

Now arguably canonical recital pieces that are essential to a violinist’s technical and musical development, Bach’s sonatas and partitas served as structural motifs for later violin solos, including the compositions of Eugène Ysaïe. Historical records only provide speculative information on who was potentially the first to premiere Bach’s work, if they were even played in his lifetime; however, it is suggested there were members of the Dresden court, family friends, and even the composer himself, though these candidates remain conjectured.

The Allemande from Bach’s Partita No. 1 in B minor originates from a duple-meter German dance, possessing qualities of stability and a moderate tempo. However, by the seventeenth-century composers experimented with quadruple meter and slower tempos, as represented in Bach’s Allemanda. The dance opens on the dominant pitch as an up beat to dotted-rhythms, marked by bass chords, establishing a dependency on counterpoint. Bach presents a complex amalgamation of opportunities for rhythmic, stylistic, and melodic emphasis, concisely framed within a deliberately structured use of time. This passage concludes with a developmental section, where the rhythmic structure from the first half is explored in F sharp major, followed by a variation of the first movement’s melody or a double.

A sarabande is a dance that spread from Spain into French courts. This dance is steady and given emphasis on the second beat. Bach’s composition explores the melodic expressivity of the key of B minor by implementing rolling chords and gradual ascending and descending harmonies. This movement is followed by a double in compound triple meter.

Sonata No. 1 in D Major, for violin and piano, Op. 12
Allegro con brio
Tema con variazioni: Andante con moto
Rondo: Allegro

Written before 1798 for violin and piano, Ludwig van Beethoven (b. 1770-1827) dedicated his sonata to the Italian composer Antonio Salieri. The German composer has been historically compared to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart as the human equivalent of musical genius, whereas Mozart was seen as a direct descendent of Apollo the god of music. However, Beethoven’s radical contributions to classical music and his expressive legacy have yet to tire the curiosities of scholars and musicians. Writing for the upper echelons of Viennese music society, Beethoven’s Op. 12 sonatas, numbers 1 through 3, operate in a cultural history of Hausmusik that served the performance affairs of skilled amateurs.

The Allegro con brio opens with a bright D major chord followed by a homophonic passage played in unison by the violin and piano. This assertive opening gives way to a lyrical line by the violin countered by the melodic eighth notes centered in the piano’s bass clef. This melody is then transferred to and embraced by the violin, while the piano adapts its accompaniment to a chordal progression from the dominant (A) to the fourth (G) and ending on tonic (D) embellished with descended triplets. The piano serves as a melodic and rhythmic foundation to the violin, which Beethoven allows to lead and explore the sonata’s musical trajectory through the use of unified sixteenth runs, triplets, and a deliberately extensive range of contrasting dynamics. The exposition is further developed following a repeat in a section Beethoven wrote in F major, where the two voices engage in a transaction of musical form, ultimately resolving the movement in D major with a recapitulation of the beginning.

Beethoven returns to the transferral of musical ideas in the following two movements, where the piano sets up the rhythmic and harmonic structure for the violin to claim as its own melody. Ultimately, Beethoven illustrates the collaborative relationship between the violin and piano, while demonstrating his composition’s range of expressivity by taking a basic accompanimental passage and turning it into the main melody, only to be further expanded upon. The Tema con variazioni: Andante con moto opens with an A major melody, followed by ensuing variations, one in A minor, before returning to A major in the fourth and final variation that acts as a mellow, transitory passage anticipating the light, jovial Rondo: Allegro. Written in a 6/8 time signature, this lively, dance-like movement returns to the home key of D major. The violin and piano trade a series of rhythmic phrases amidst dotted triplets, storzandi, and abundant runs before introducing the second, rich melody in F major in the violin part, providing the piano with the musical liberty of playing triplets, turns, and trills. Once again returning to the recapitulation in D major, exaggerated crescendos and dynamics tease out a long-awaited resolution concluding with an echo of the homophonic unity found in the opening of the sonata.

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Concerto in D Major, for violin, Op. 35

Allegro moderato

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (b. 1840-93) wrote his only violin concerto in 1878 following the end of his failed marriage in October 1877. A target of myth, it was easy for Tchaikovsky to slip into the Western music canon of genius, as biographers often open with an anecdote on Tchaikovsky's governess finding the young boy in distress claiming the music would not stop playing in his head. Depression, angst, and romanticism plague Tchaikovsky's history, propagating the suffering artist narrative with his sexuality and untimely death as points of reference, and his violin concerto was no different in exacerbating these ideas.

Now a standard piece of the violin repertoire, this monumental concerto consists of an extended first movement, canzonetta, and final movement illustrating the composer's Russian lineage. Tchaikovsky's composition is written in D major, following precedents set by Lalo's Symphonie Espagnole, which he admired, and Beethoven's violin concerto in D, while Brahms wrote his Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 77 nearly contemporaneously. Known for having frivolously executed his draft of the concerto within two weeks, the concerto was initially dedicated to his pupil and confidant Josef Kotek who assisted Tchaikovsky's process regarding violin performance. However, concerns of homophobic rumors lead Tchaikovsky to re-dedicate the piece to the violin professor at the Moscow Conservatory, Hungarian violinist Leopold Auer and eventual teacher to Jascha Heifetz. Quoted to be an “unplayable” concerto, Auer edited sections of the piece that are now replicated in modern performance. Eventually, Tchaikovsky's concerto found acceptance in its Viennese début by Adolph Brodsky on December 04, 1881.

The taxing first movement of Tchaikovsky's violin concerto opens with an orchestral introduction, unique to the listener's eventual solo experience, that modestly prepares for the solo violin entrance. Starting on the dominant, the violin plays an elongated cadenza-like prelude before leading the orchestra into accompaniment of Tchaikovsky's infamous, and extended, exposition. After developing the first melody through exploring the major third (F#) in the upper octave and a variety of technical and rhythmic moves, the composer introduces his second melody in A major, which is further fleshed out from lowering the melody's register to transitioning into A minor on the E string. Once again Tchaikovsky uses performative techniques to build compositional tension, including thirty-second-note and chromatic runs, off-beat triplets, spiccato and trills before landing on the leading tone (C#). Before the development, Tchaikovsky writes a healthy tutti for the orchestra that recites the primary melody, before descending into the solo violin's variation on the main melody. Tchaikovsky wrote embellishments including double-stops, dotted-bowings, and anecdotal runs, that enhance the musical progression of this section, which is then repeated and sometimes played an octave higher. This section is trailed by a similar rhythmic structure that is harmonically complicated with the addition of accidentals, essentially written to cultivate anticipation before the cadenza.

Marked by A major chords, the cadenza artistically explores the concerto's virtuosic potentials through the use of demanding shifts, artificial harmonics, chromaticism, and rhythmic expression. The cadenza is then resolved by a recap of the first half of the movement, though sections including the eight and sixteenth-note Ben sostenuto and the second melody begin on different harmonic foundations. Tchaikovsky's compositional idiosyncrasies, including an affinity for sensual, romantic phrases, and individual musicality are expressed and constantly innovated throughout the journey of this concerto. The composer's refreshing taste for experimentation, often manifesting as an amalgam of melodic Western music and rhythmic Russian themes, is well represented in the conclusion of the concerto at the Allegro giusto. Revisiting and thoroughly developing each melody, the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto in D major presents a technically and emotionally arduous project for violinists, as well as an endurance test for its audience. Nonetheless, Tchaikovsky's concerto remains a beloved piece for solo violin, enchanting the passions of romantic musicians and listeners.
