

Recital Program

Cello Suite No. 4 in E flat Major, BWV 1010

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

- I. Prelude
- II. Allemande
- III. Courante
- IV. Sarabande
- V. Bourrée I & II
- VI. Gigue

Duet mit zwei obligaten Augengläsern, WoO 32

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

- I. Allegro
- II. Minuet; Trio

Chris Fox, *cello*

~Intermission~

Viola Sonata No. 2, Op. 120 No. 2

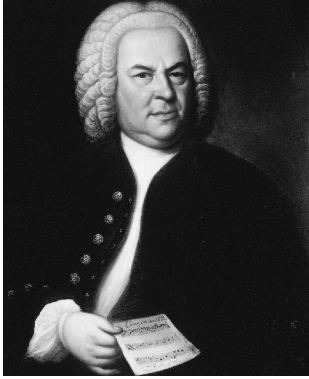
Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

- I. Allegro amabile
- II. Allegro appassionato
- III. Andante con moto

Lauren Cain, *piano*

“The Wise Maid”

Sally Beamish
(1956-)
arr. Jenny Wilkinson



Cello Suite No. 4 in E flat major, BWV 1010 Johann Sebastian Bach

Johann Sebastian Bach's (1685-1750) Six Cello Suites for unaccompanied cello are perhaps one of his most familiar works. Although familiar, audiences may be surprised to learn that what they hear is best described as an assemblage of different editions of the manuscript. It is believed that the lost original manuscript of the Cello Suites was written sometime around 1720. Bach married Anna Magdalena, the notable copyist for the Cello Suites, during this time. Prevailing scholarship agrees that her manuscript contains errors, but it is accepted as an appropriate starting point for uncovering Bach's musical intentions. While originally intended for cello, the Suites express a distinctly different character through the viola and has become a

staple of its repertoire.

The Prélude begins with a descending arpeggiated pattern with numerous variations. These gradually build into a sharply contrasting development section, including quick chromatic improvisation with occasional returns to the beginning pattern before finally resolving into a recapitulation of the opening theme. The Allemande, literally translating to "German" in French, is in two and exhibits an orderly character with consistent sixteenth note patterns interspersed with ascending eighth notes. The development features two separate cadential phrases and ultimately concludes with a grounding triple-stop chord. The Courante, or "running" in French, is in triple meter and maintains consistent musical movement through repeating eighth or sixteenth notes. It contains numerous cadences separating short phrases with step-wise triplets and sixteenth note runs propelling the movement forward. The Sarabande adopts a slower pace with a particular emphasis on beat two and is characterized by its numerous suspensions. The three primary quarter notes followed by dotted eighth sixteenth notes remain the recurring pattern with sixteenth notes leading to the development and cadences. The Bourrée I is easily distinguished by the pattern of repeating ascending sixteenth and eighth notes and descending quarter notes. Bourrée II contrasts the first in length, only 12 measures long. The primary and secondary lines through the double stops carry a distinctly more contemplative character than Bourrée I. The Gigue, derived from the British jig, is a French court dance that adopts a lighthearted and witty character. It features predominantly triplet eighth notes to carry the main melody and hardly deviates from this established rhythmic pattern. It concludes gloriously and boldly on a lone E flat, an understated yet powerful conclusion to the entire dance sequence.



Duet mit zwei obligaten Augengläsern, WoO 32 **Ludwig van Beethoven**

Court musician Franz Georg Rovantini and music director Franz Ries taught viola to the young Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) during his years in Bonn. Beethoven, most notably known as a composer and pianist, was also a skilled violist. At the time of writing the “Duet with Two Eyeglasses Obligato” in 1796, Beethoven had just moved to Vienna four years prior to begin building his musical career. Beethoven was aspiring to become a professional court musician and had a long way to go before his eventual status as a musical pioneer. Beethoven composed this piece to be performed by close friend Nikolaus Zmeskall von Domanovecz on cello and himself on the viola.

This unique title is commonly understood to refer to Beethoven’s clever jab at the visual impairments of the two performers. Both he and Zmeskall needed glasses to see the music. His friend, Zmeskall, was an amateur cellist and an official in the Royal Hungarian Chancellery. The two shared a close relationship and surviving letters between the two attest to their closeness and shared passion for chamber music.

This piece employs a traditional sonata form in the first movement with a second Minuet and Trio. The first movement’s opening chords from the viola mark its bold statement of the melody. Meanwhile, the cello’s consistent eighth notes later develop into a response with the same line. The two instruments are consistently in conversation, passing back harmonies and melodies with each other as their distinct voices intertwine into a lively and impassioned dialogue. The sonata form and the pattern of a single melody with accompaniment textures further emphasize this style from Beethoven’s earlier compositional period. The significantly shorter Minuet movement represents a dramatic shift in character from the grandeur of the first movement. A more lighthearted and endearing melody, the minuet maintains a steady $\frac{3}{4}$ meter throughout. The melody in this minuet has a distinct politeness, evoking the atmosphere of a typical Vienna evening parlor.



Viola Sonata No. 2, Op. 120 No. 2 **Johannes Brahms**

Unlike many other composers, Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) enjoyed having his works understood and accepted by public audiences during his lifetime. Today, Brahms is frequently championed as a composer for the viola. Having written several chamber works for viola, his heavy romanticism has captured the affections of violists worldwide.

Brahms' second viola sonata was originally composed for clarinet and piano in 1894. He was deeply inspired by the performances of the Meiningen court orchestra clarinetist, Richard Mühlfeld, and was consequently coaxed out of a self-inflicted retirement. As a result, he then composed a multitude of chamber works for the instrument, including the Op. 120 sonatas. In 1895, he transcribed them for

the viola.

The first *Allegro amabile* movement opens with a luscious and passionate melody. The viola passes the melody on to the piano, with the two engaging deeply with one another. The complex tonality and heavy chords from the piano are especially emblematic of Romanticism and both parts frequently switch keys throughout the movement. Brahms also employs the "developing variation" in both parts where there are drawn-out variations from a limited foundation of thematic material. The second *Allegro appassionato* is an intense and driving melody in E flat minor. It is briefly interrupted by a dramatic *sostenuto* section in the middle of the piece. Evoking a chorale-like hymn, the viola and piano trade off on a slower melody. It suddenly returns with the dramatic first melody as it retreats back to a lone E flat. The third *Andante con moto* begins with another exchange between the two with a lyrical moving line of dotted sixteenth and eighth notes. There is a feeling of searching within this movement before transitioning into a sweet but increasingly passionate *grazioso* section. The latter part of the movement begins to increasingly bend the meter and manipulate rhythmic stress before reaching a dramatic climax as the movement ends victoriously on the dominant E flat.



“The Wise Maid” **Sally Beamish, arr. Jenny Wilkinson**

“The Wise Maid” is a traditional Irish reel reimagined into a solo cello arrangement by English composer and violist, Sally Beamish (1956-). It was commissioned by Gerry Mattock and first performed by Robert Irvine in 2000. Later, the viola version was arranged and debuted by Jenny Wilkinson at the Royal Academy of Music in 2011.

This reel is a swift departure from the European classical tradition and is one of the most well-known tunes in Irish folk music. The simple melody is transformed by Beamish into a hyper-virtuosic and technically demanding arrangement. It employs shifting double stops and numerous harmonic notes throughout the variations. It also features numerous ornamentations like mordents, open string triple stops, and is largely shaped by an improvisatory character.

The different iterations that “The Wise Maid” has gone through by various musicians speaks to the character of traditional Irish folk tunes, kept alive and carried on by diverse interpretations and instruments rather than on the establishment of the written note. At its core, “The Wise Maid” is a dance tune celebrating a timeless nature of culture and unity and in this arrangement, is carried on by the unmistakable character of the viola.