

OF LONGING AND BELONGING

Sara Bashore

Master's Recital

Saturday, June 9, 2018 – 6:00 pm
University of California, Santa Barbara

Program

Sonatina in G Major for Violin and Piano, Op. 100
December 3, 1883

Antonín Leopold Dvořák
September 1841 – 1 May 1904

I. Allegro risoluto

II. Larghetto

III. Scherzo

IV. Allegro

Violin Concerto in D minor, Op. 47
19 October 1905

Jean Sibelius
8 December 1865 – 20 September 1957

I. Allegro moderato

Sara Bashore, Violin
Asher Severini, Piano

Violin Sonata No. 3 in C minor, Op. 45
January, 1887

Edvard Hagerup Grieg
15 June 1843 – 4 September 1907

I. Allegro molto ed appassionato

II. Allegretto espressivo alla Romanza

III. Allegro animato

Sara Bashore, Violin
Jared Eben, Piano

*I'm pleased to present my first UCSB Master's Recital, **Of Longing and Belonging**. This collection of Romantic Era pieces evokes the landscape of home. They were written by three very different composers, each of whom left his native country, and traveled to lands unlike his own in order to perfect his art. We hear their despair in this music, as well as their hope. We experience valleys and mountains, lakes and fjords, meadows and farmland, families, traditions, festivals, folk tales and native song.*

As the school year trundles along I often find myself longing for home - no more homework, my own bed and big closet, my backyard that looks down a little hill, and the dozens of varieties of birds enticed by my father with an amazing array of seeds. I miss the smell of rain on our patio, and being awakened way too early by my dogs who are waiting to go out. They aren't very smart dogs, but they know the words "Sara's coming home from college" when my mother says it, and they go into a frenzy when they hear it. So while I am so pleased to present my recital, I'm also really happy that the school year is nearly over. Longing is painful, but it reminds us of what belonging feels like, and belonging is precious.

I would like to thank Dr. Ambroise Aubrun, my coach, for his patience and sage advice, and to Asher Severini, and Jared Eben for accompanying me.

– Sara

Antonín Leopold Dvořák was a Czech composer of the Romantic era best known for integrating American and his native Bohemian folk melodies and rhythmic devices into his compositions. While in his early fifties, from 1892 until 1895, Dvorak lived in the United States filling a position as director of the national Conservatory of Music of America in New York City. His purpose in the United States was to understand American music, and as fate would have it, composer/arranger/baritone Harry T. Burleigh introduced him to African-American spirituals.

While here, he wrote his well-known ***New World Symphony***, and that same year, 1892, a Sonatina. Dvořák dedicated his Sonatina to two of his children, Ottilie and Toník, who premiered it in the family's New York apartment. It was written as an intermediate piece for advancing students, and is a shorter work which succinctly incorporates all of the elements of a sonata into an abbreviated form. The challenge of the piece is not in its fast finger work or extravagant bowing, but in the performer's effort to set aside personal drama while exploring themes of purity, simplicity, innocence, longing, and belonging.

The ***Allegro risoluto*** opens in an exploratory mood. Perhaps Dvorak imagines his children at play. He wrote the Sonatina for them, so it makes sense that they are in the forefront of his mind as he writes. He sees their sweet joy of discovery, and he tempers it with his bittersweet understanding that those discoveries may not always be benign. His syncopation emphasizes that life's rhythms are not steady beats, we are always falling into our next selves. The movement is a wonderfully danceable theme of life. As a side note, Midori Goto points out that the secondary melody in this movement strongly resembles the Moravian folk song, "The Valley Below Nove Zamky".

Dvorak's Notes for the ***Larghetto*** were jotted down on his shirt sleeve as he stood struck with the overwhelming beauty of Minnehaha Falls in Minnesota. His foray into Native American lands and ethos are said to inform the entire piece, yet nowhere in the Sonatina is the presence of H. T. Burleigh's spiritual composition style more imposingly felt.

The deep plaintive swells of the American South roll and tumble with the whitewater of Minnehaha Falls. A bright overlay of swirling Bohemian folk dance is the silver lining to this Russian dumkaesque cloud. Incidentally, Fritz Kreisler occasionally performed the Sonatina's ***Larghetto*** after the publisher repackaged and retitled the movement ***Indian Lament***, and then sold it without Dvořák's permission.

The Sonatina's **Scherzo** is very playful and patient, never racing with itself, never stumbling over its own notes. Again, it evokes children at play: first peekaboo, then hide-and-seek. It announces itself: See me! Here I am! Ostinato is a musical term meaning obstinate. Small passages of a short melodic phrase are repeated persistently, usually to provide a tapestry-like grounding for a simple melody. It's a common tool in the Dvorak rhythm tool chest, perhaps one way he carried snippets of his homeland with him.

The **Allegro**, like the other movements heavily uses the pentatonic scale, and it's what makes the Sonatina feel "American". It is an echo of our birdsongs, and of our harmony with nature. It is the azure of our skies, the clover of our meadows, and the fire of our sunsets. It is at peace, never fighting, never drowning in itself. The beauty of the new world is contrasted with the familiarity of the old as Dvorak's nostalgia for his homeland inserts itself near the finish.

Finnish composer **Johan Julius Christian Sibelius** was born in Hämeenlinna in the Grand Duchy of Finland, at that time a part of the Russian Empire ceded by Sweden in 1809. He attended the first Finnish speaking school, and was exposed to Finnish literature, including the Kalevala, a national mythical epic compiled by Elias Lönnrot in 1849. He abandoned law school for the Helsinki Music Institute, planning on a career as a violinist. He fell into composition, adopting the given name Jean in his professional work.

After extended studies in Vienna and Berlin, Sibelius returned to Finland, where he spent a decade bringing the folk history of Finland to life in the Romantic tradition. His drinking and spendthrift ways would have been his downfall had his family not moved to an artist's colony away from the temptations of Helsinki. Sibelius' Violin Concerto in D Minor was completed in 1904, but due to an unfavorable reception caused by what his wife, Aino, referred to as "an embarrassment of riches", he rewrote sections over the next year, creating a more concise and focused version. The concerto was fairly well received at its reintroduction, but was not made popular for another thirty years when Jascha Heifetz recorded it.

The first movement, **Allegro moderato**, begins in D minor as the soloist plays a gradually swelling wistful theme that is instantly recognized by every classic music aficionado on the planet. With an extended cadenza functioning as the development section, the first movement is almost as long as the second and third movements combined. It overflows with virtuosic challenges, tempo changes, and a full range of dynamics provides a dramatic conversation with the orchestra (or in our case the piano).

The stylized lyrical passages of the second movement, ***Adagio di molto*** in B-flat major, are pastoral and occasionally brooding. Sibelius evokes the steady support and patient love that has brought him to the point in his life where he can complete a work of this complexity. I like to think it is a thank-you note to his wife, slipped between the pages of his composition. The evoking of landscape grounds the concerto as a romantic work despite Impressionist and occasional Modern elements of the other two movements.

The final movement, ***Allegro, ma non tanto***, considered to be one of the most technically challenging in violin repertoire, begins with a polonaise that some refer to as a "polar bear polonaise", due to its stomping character. Sibelius was adamant that the virtuoso not play any faster than their skill level allows, probably because the original version was botched at premiere, contributing to its failed reception. The heroic efforts of the violinist in this movement echo the heroic persona of Romantic heroes in a new and edgy way that announces that everything that can be done in Romantic music, has, in fact, been done.

Edvard Grieg was a Norwegian composer and pianist from the town of Bergen, gateway to the fjords that jut into the southwest coast of Norway. Born into an upper class family of Scottish heritage that was politically and socially well-connected, he was sent to the Leipzig Conservatory by sheer chance and good fortune. He felt, however, that his work there was subpar.

Upon returning, he set to work mimicking the increasingly popular trends in Romantic music with lackluster results. When he began to explore nationalism in his music, the unique geography and post-colonial experience of Norway truly made itself apparent.

Grieg claimed, "The traditional way of life of the Norwegian people, together with Norway's legends, Norway's history, Norway's natural scenery, stamped itself on my creative imagination from my earliest years." Finished in January of 1887, Grieg's third sonata took several months to write, compared with the several weeks for previous pieces. The Sonata marked Grieg's turning point as a successful composer.

The first movement, ***Allegro molto ed appassionato***, opens in the key of Norse heroes, C minor. It is bold and impatient, hopeful, yet agitated, and impassioned throughout. Syncopation and sweeping dynamics holds us on edge throughout the movement.

The second movement, ***Allegretto espressivo alla Romanza***, begins tentatively with a brief pensive piano solo, and as the violin enters, we hear the longing that Grieg felt while away

from his beloved Norway. Soon enough, we've come home to a short folk song that develops into a charming accented dance, until we are reminded nothing is forever, except what we can carry in our hearts.

In the third movement, ***Allegro animato***, we hear Grieg's best efforts to spin up political nationalism in a quick, almost comedic march. But the nationalism of Norway is not one of military superiority, or dramatic defeat, it is the national pride of a people who love the brutal winters, treacherous waters, and staggering pines that roar in the winds. We hear the persistence and perseverance of a people who despite great hardship, dance, love, and live in Bergen's little row of cheerfully painted wooden houses that line the shore. The bright finish is almost an afterthought.

Grieg suffered from poor health due to lung disease in his early twenties, and died a few months after his sixty-fourth birthday. Fortunately, he was one of the first artists to record his work for the gramophone, and he even live-recorded piano works for the player piano.