

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

Alexi Kenney, violin

Amy Yang, pianoforte

Tuesday, November 26 – 7:30 PM

Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center

PROGRAM

Violin Sonata No 3 in A minor, WoO27

Robert Schumann

Born: June 8, 1810

Died: July 29, 1856

Composed: 1853

Duration: 25 minutes

Robert Schumann's *Violin Sonata in A Minor*, WoO 27, also known as the "F.A.E. Sonata," is a fascinating collaboration between three composers—Schumann, Johannes Brahms, and Albert Dietrich. Written as a gift for the great violinist Joseph Joachim, the work reflects a spirit of camaraderie and artistic admiration. The initials *F.A.E.* represent Joachim's personal motto, "Frei, aber einsam" ("Free, but lonely"), and each composer contributed a movement in homage to him. Schumann composed the second and fourth movements, Brahms the third, and Dietrich the first. Schumann's contributions highlight his characteristically expressive Romantic language. His Intermezzo (second movement) evokes a lyrical intimacy, while the Finale bursts with vibrant energy and drama. This sonata is a unique piece not only because of its collaborative nature but also due to its historical significance, symbolizing the friendship between some of the greatest musical minds of the 19th century. Though it remained unpublished during Schumann's lifetime, the *F.A.E. Sonata* offers listeners a glimpse into the artistic circles of its era, blending the distinct voices of three composers with Joachim's musical legacy at its heart.

Violin Sonata in A Minor, Op. 105

Robert Schumann

Born: June 8, 1810

Died: July 29, 1856

Composed: 1851

Duration: Approx. 18 minutes

Schumann's *Violin Sonata in A Minor*, Op. 105 is an intensely lyrical and emotionally charged work, written during one of the most turbulent periods of the composer's life. Structured in three movements, the sonata balances brooding passion with moments of delicate beauty and intricate dialogue between the violin and piano. This work is a prime example of Schumann's ability to fuse Romantic intensity with formal sophistication, creating a piece that is both deeply personal and technically demanding for the performers. Schumann, known for his intricate and expressive piano writing, would have composed for a pianoforte that had the tonal capacity to match the rich emotional palette of his music. The instrument of his time could support both the intimate, lyrical lines and the dramatic, stormy passages characteristic of his work. Schumann himself was a pianist and understood the instrument's potential, using it to convey deep emotions and subtleties in his chamber and solo works.

The violin of the mid-19th century had also reached a state of technical refinement that made it ideal for the expressiveness and virtuosity required in Romantic music. By this period, the violin's construction had been standardized with a longer neck, higher string tension, and a more angled fingerboard, all of which enhanced the instrument's volume, projection, and range of dynamics. The bow, now based on François Tourte's design, allowed for greater control, enabling violinists to play with a wider range of articulation and tone colors. His *Op. 105* sonata exploits the tonal possibilities of both instruments. He was

highly attentive to the balance between the piano and violin, creating a partnership where each instrument plays a significant, complementary role. The piano is not merely an accompaniment but shares the melodic material and rhythmic drive. The violin's singing lines and the piano's rich harmonies intertwine, showcasing the technological advancements of both instruments.

Three Romances, Op. 22

Clara Schumann

Born: September 13, 1819

Died: May 20, 1896

Composed: 1853

Duration: 12 minutes

Clara Schumann's *Three Romances* are among her most cherished works, showcasing her lyrical elegance and refined compositional voice. Dedicated to the celebrated violinist Joseph Joachim, these pieces capture Clara's intimate, poetic style, blending warmth and subtle emotional depth. Each of the three movements possesses its own character: the first, *Andante molto*, unfolds with tender lyricism; the second, *Allegretto*, offers a playful contrast with its dance-like rhythms; and the third, *Leidenschaftlich schnell*, surges with passionate energy, featuring sweeping violin lines and a dramatic conclusion.

By 1853, Clara and Robert's marriage was both a source of strength and strain. Clara, a brilliant pianist and composer in her own right, was not only Schumann's closest confidante but also his emotional anchor during his struggles. However, the pressures of managing Schumann's fragile health, along with her own career as a concert pianist and mother to their growing family, weighed heavily on her. Despite these challenges, Clara still managed to demonstrate her distinctive musical identity and compositional skill, earning her way into the hearts of audiences of the past and present.

Violin Sonata in D Minor, Op. 121

Robert Schumann

Born: June 8, 1810

Died: July 29, 1856

Composed: 1851

Duration: 35 minutes

Robert Schumann's *Violin Sonata in D Minor, Op. 121*, is one of his most profound and ambitious works for violin and piano. Written shortly after his first violin sonata (Op. 105), this second sonata is notably larger in scale and more complex in both structure and emotional depth. Dedicated to the celebrated violinist Ferdinand David, the work exemplifies Schumann's late style, marked by a deep intensity and introspective character. The heart of the work lies in the third movement, *Leise, einfach*, a lyrical theme with variations that showcase Schumann's gift for intimate expression and delicate nuance. Schumann's deteriorating mental health by this point was manifesting in mood swings, periods of intense creativity followed by deep depression, and auditory hallucinations, which he often described as "angelic" or "demonic" voices. These struggles would eventually lead to his attempted suicide in 1854 and his subsequent admission to a mental institution in Edenich, where he would spend his final years.