

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

Alina Ibragimova, *violin*

Cédric Tiberghien, *piano*

Friday, April 7 – 7:30 PM

Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center

PROGRAM

Violin Sonata in A Minor, Op. 105

Robert Schumann

Born: June 8, 1810, Zwickau, Germany

Died: July 29, 1856, Endenich, Germany

Composed: 1851

Duration: 17 minutes

Signs of Schumann's impending collapse are certainly evident in the A Minor Violin Sonata, but not through any deficiency of musical value; the work's dramatic and psychological complexities speak for themselves. In particular, the feeling of irresolution at the end of the sonata must be seen as Schumann's effort to honestly explore the depths of his own increasingly agitated and complex mind, regardless of whether or not the resulting product corresponded with pre-existing musical values.

Violin Sonata in F Minor, Op. 4

Felix Mendelssohn

Born: February 3, 1809, Hamburg, Germany

Died: November 4, 1847, Leipzig, Germany

Composed: 1823

Duration: 21 minutes

As early as 1823, Mendelssohn seems to have fallen under the spell of Beethoven. Thus the first movement begins with a questioning recitative for solo violin before the piano announces the principal theme. In this case the metrically free recitative and sigh-like drooping figurations of the piano possibly point to the first movement of Beethoven's 'Tempest' piano sonata as a creative source. The intimate poco adagio begins with a classically balanced theme that might be mistaken for one by Mozart; but in the interior of the slow movement Mendelssohn explores some chromatic regions that test the limits of the classical style, as do the unsettled, driving rhythms of the finale. And the final touch—

a clear allusion in the ultimate cadence to the recitative of the first movement—shows Mendelssohn applying a cyclical thematic technique derived from Beethoven as well.

Four Pieces, Op. 7

Anton Webern

Born: December 3, 1883, Vienna, Austria

Died: September 15, 1945, Mittersill, Austria

Composed: 1910

Duration: 5 minutes

"It is always all over before it starts," said Webern's father upon hearing the Four Pieces, Op. 7 for the first time. While brevity had always been a hallmark of Webern's style, the Four Pieces are truly extraordinary in their restraint: The shortest is only nine measures in length, the longest, 24. Apparently even Webern himself felt some uncertainty about the scale of these works. Some early manuscripts bear the designation Op. 7, No. 1, suggesting a possible future expansion of the set. Their brevity is especially striking in light of the grand proportions that were so much a part of the contemporaneous musical aesthetic. In 1910, the year in which Webern wrote the Four Pieces, Stravinsky completed *The Firebird*, Strauss completed *Der Rosenkavalier*, and Mahler's Symphony No. 8 received its first performance.

Violin Sonata in D Minor, Op. 121

Robert Schumann

Composed: 1851

Duration: 32 minutes

Schumann spent most of 1851 working on pieces in minor keys. In all of these, we sense an introspective, fatalistic character imbued with uncertainty and tension. The string parts have few pizzicato passages or flights of virtuosity, and in the sonatas the violin/viola spends most of its time in the middle register, never given a chance to soar. Schumann composed this, his second violin sonata, in less than a week, immediately after he composed his first. He declared the second superior, and modern critics tend to agree.