



The Musical Leipzig

Sookkyung Cho, Artistic Director

Program #1

Monday, October 16th | 7:30 PM
Sherman Van Solkema Recital Hall,
Grand Valley State University

Monday, October 23rd | 7:00 PM
Mayflower Congregational Church
(6:15 Pre-Concert Conversation)

Sunday, November 19th | 3:00 PM
First Reformed Church, Holland



Program

Grace Kim, violin
Olga Ziabrikova, viola
Andrew Laven, cello
Sookkyung Cho, piano

2 Pieces, Op. 87
I. Albumblatt

Max Reger
(1873-1916)

Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 17
I. Allegro moderato
II. Scherzo: Tempo di minuetto – Trio
III. Andante
IV. Allegretto

Clara Schumann
(1819-1896)

Piano Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 47 Robert Schumann
I. Sostenuto assai – allegro ma non troppo (1810-1856)
II. Scherzo: Molto vivace
III. Andante cantabile
IV. Finale: Vivace

Program Notes

2 Pieces, Op. 87

Max Reger spent most of his life in places other than Leipzig. He was born and raised in Bavaria, and his main musical studies were with the music theorist Hugo Riemann in the city of Wiesbaden. He returned to Bavaria in 1901, working as a composer in Munich, and then in 1907 was appointed as a professor of composition at the Leipzig Conservatory, where he remained until 1911. He then lived elsewhere for the next few years—but as it happened, he suffered a fatal heart attack while visiting friends in Leipzig in 1916. Leipzig was thus the city of his most successful work as a teacher, some of his important compositions, and also his death.

His two pieces for violin and piano, Op. 87, are titled *Albumblatt* (Page in an Album) and *Romanze* (Romance). They were published in 1905, while he still lived in Munich. The two are notably different in length and style: the *Albumblatt* is short and harmonically simple, while the *Romanze* is about twelve minutes long and includes much more of the chromatic writing for which Reger was known. As Helmut Wirth states, "By extending the possibilities of tonality without discarding its framework, Reger molded an individual idiom which brought him much hostility, as well as widespread recognition and imitation." These qualities are less evident in the *Albumblatt*, however. Within a short timespan, it alternates between two styles: a recurring theme that is legato, lyrical, and evocative occurs three times, and is twice interrupted by quicker, more energetic passages that allow the violinist to show off quick figurations and double stops. The quick sections also feature changing meters. After each quick passage, the lyrical section returns to calm the troubled waters with its elegant yearning.

Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 17

The concert today features music by both Clara and Robert Schumann, who both had connections to Leipzig. Clara grew up there, the daughter of two significant musicians. Her father, Friedrich Wieck, was a well-known piano teacher and raised her to be a prodigy: her first public recital took place in the Leipzig Gewandhaus in 1830 when she was eleven, and her

first concert tour, to Paris, in 1832. Meanwhile, Robert Schumann, nine years older than young Clara, had moved to Leipzig in 1828, planning to study law at the university despite his passions for music and literature. He began taking piano lessons with Friedrich Wieck. Within two years, he had finally persuaded his mother to allow him to study music as his primary field, and in March 1830 he moved into the Wieck household. This lasted only a few months, as he was not happy with Wieck's teaching, but his connection with the family continued even as he moved on to other teachers and lodgings. He also suffered a finger injury, which encouraged him to emphasize composition rather than piano performance. As is well known, he and Clara eventually fell in love, but their marriage was opposed by her father. After a lengthy court battle against her father's objections, the couple were married in September 1840 on the day before Clara's twenty-first birthday.

Clara Schumann continued her musical career even as she bore and cared for eight children and eventually dealt with her husband's severe mental illness. She performed extensively, and taught lessons privately and at the Leipzig Conservatory. Long outliving Robert, she was a world-class pianist who continued to perform until 1891, when she was in her early seventies. Throughout her life, Clara developed many strong friendships, many of them with other musicians, writers, and intellectuals, including the opera singer and composer Pauline Viardot-Garcia. Clara was noted for her performances of works by her husband and by their good friend Johannes Brahms, whom they met when he was a young man, and who remained a faithful friend to Clara during her widowhood. She dedicated much energy to the legacy of her husband, both through performances and by publishing editions of his music.

Clara composed many works in her youth and during her marriage, including two piano concertos and numerous solo piano works and songs. She stopped composing after Robert's death. Her Piano Trio, composed in 1846, is particularly esteemed. It is remarkably coherent and well-organized for a relatively early work and shows her boldness as a composer. Her themes are assertive and expressive. She uses all three instruments effectively, giving each player opportunities to stand

out. She confidently employs musical sounds and structures that were considered more masculine than feminine, such as contrapuntal writing, chromaticism, and dissonance.

The first movement, in G minor, is constructed in clear sonata form with distinct, interesting musical themes. The second movement follows the typical scherzo-trio form, with the playful scherzo in B-flat major and the more wistful trio in E-flat major, with hints of G minor. Listen for the short-long "Scotch snap" rhythms in the opening theme, which set a light, elegant mood. The Andante opens with a G major cantabile section whose yearning theme is passed among the instruments. A more dramatic and tragic section, marked "più animato," leads to G minor. The A section returns with the opening theme played by the cello as the piano plays swooping upward arpeggios. The fourth movement shows Clara's mastery of the chamber music style—even featuring a fugato section in the "learned style." Its energy, weight, and substance bring the piece to a satisfying conclusion.

Piano Quartet in E-flat major, Op. 47

Robert Schumann spent a significant part of his life in Leipzig: after studying law there in 1828-29, he moved away for a year, but returned in 1830 and remained in the city until he and Clara moved to Dresden in 1844. During his Leipzig years, he studied music intensively, wrote many of his important compositions, and worked as a music critic. He hoped to be appointed director of the Gewandhaus concerts, but this wish never came true. His work as a writer on music was extremely significant, though. Schumann founded and edited a new music journal, the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, that became a model for other music periodicals. Schumann's musical criticism was imaginative and literary, frequently taking the form of dialogues among various characters who were given symbolic names. These characters represented two sides of his own personality (Florestan and Eusebius), Friedrich Wieck (Meister Raro), and other commentators, creating what John Daverio and Eric Sams describe as "a multi-layered perspectival technique." Schumann sold the journal in 1844, and it continued publication under

various editors; it is presently published by Schott Music in Mainz, Germany.

Schumann frequently focused his attention on one genre at a time; for example, 1840 is widely known as his "song year." In 1842 and 1843, his main emphasis was chamber music. Along with three string quartets, he composed his Piano Quintet Op. 44 (scheduled for Program 4) and Piano Quartet Op. 47. The quartet, in E-flat major, is characterized by a strong emphasis on recurring motives and sequences, a somewhat unusual tonal plan, and various levels of rhythmic and metric displacement.

The first movement opens with a slow introduction before moving into the Allegro. Less typically, the slow section returns before the development section, and another slow section occurs slightly before the end—very much like the first movement of Beethoven's "Pathétique" Sonata. As in Clara's piano trio, the scherzo movement comes second; it is in G minor. While most scherzos follow an ABA form (scherzo - trio - scherzo), Schumann again follows a model from Beethoven by writing two trio sections to create the form ABACA—but here too, he allows earlier material to interrupt. The A section consists of running staccato eighth notes, creating a rather comically hectic atmosphere. The B section brings a more languid and lyrical melody and the C section a calm succession of block chords—but both B and C are periodically interrupted by quotations from the busy and unavoidable scherzo.

The slow movement, in B-flat major, introduces a gorgeous long-breathed theme, first played by the cello. It features upward leaps of sevenths in each of its four phrases. There is a middle section, also slow and languid, in the unexpected key of G-flat major (flat VI). The A section then returns, even more ornamented. For example, we may hear the theme in the piano, with the violin adding a filigree of sixteenth-note decorations. This movement gives Schumann opportunities for artful rhythmic displacements that gently go against the strong beat, one of his characteristic compositional fingerprints. The finale, in E-flat major, opens with a fugato section. There is a middle section in the subdominant (A-flat major), featuring chromatic passages and confusing rhythms. The A section returns with elaborate four-part counterpoint. Towards the end, at times

the three-beat theme is extended to four, overriding the triple meter. This final movement brings the grandeur and intensity we expect from an ending, along with some questions about how to organize what we have just heard.

The City and its History

For each program of the series, the notes will explore one aspect of Leipzig and its culture. To begin, this program offers an overview of the city's history. Leipzig is in the region of Germany called Saxony; before the unification of Germany in 1870, it was a separate realm with its own ruler and government. Dresden is the capital of Saxony, and Leipzig is its largest city. Other important cities in the region include Freiberg, Halle, and Chemnitz. Through its location in northeastern Germany, Saxony borders Slavic lands (Poland and Bohemia) and cultures. One of its most renowned leaders, Augustus II "the Strong" served simultaneously as the Elector of Saxony, King of Poland, and Grand Duke of Lithuania, symbolizing the strong links between Germans and Slavs in the region.

Leipzig was founded in the seventh to ninth centuries CE by a Slavic people called the Sorbs whose descendants still live in Saxony. This culture worshipped the linden tree and named the town after this tree, calling it Lipzk, which means "the place by the linden trees." In 1015, a German source identified the town as "Urbs Libzi." Leipzig became a city strongly identified with commerce, publishing, and radical thought.

The town's location made it a natural trading center for German and Slavic communities and also people from both Northern and Southern regions. Beginning in 1190, two markets were held each year: one at Easter in the spring, the other at Michaelmas in the fall. In 1497, the Holy Roman Empire granted them the rank of imperial trade fairs. The importance of commerce and exchange meant that Leipzig residents were constantly exposed to new commodities and ideas.

Along with trade fairs, mining was important in Leipzig. After the invention of the printing press, the city became a center for book publishing, surpassing Frankfurt by 1700, and Leipzig book fairs joined the broader trade fairs that took place twice a year. During the nineteenth century, there were about 1500

publishers in the city, and the industry employed one tenth of the population. The importance of publishing in the city went along with a tendency to be more progressive. It was good business to publish controversial writings, and the Saxon government supported the publishing industry through a much looser approach to censorship than found elsewhere. For example, books criticizing the social order were published in Leipzig during the French Revolution, when many German realms were cracking down on all forms of dissent.

Even before that, the city was open to new religious ideas. In 1519, during the Protestant Reformation, an important disputation took place at Pleissenburg Castle in the south of the city, where Martin Luther debated theologian Johann Eck. Two decades later in 1539, the city chose Lutheranism as its official religion, and Luther himself preached at the Thomaskirche in honor of the occasion. The city's strong intellectual tradition was supported by the University of Leipzig, founded in 1409. There are also numerous libraries and museums, and Felix Mendelssohn founded the Leipzig Conservatory in 1843.

Leipzig had an active musical life and heritage, shaped by the presence of Johann Sebastian Bach, who spent the last twenty-seven years of his life living and working in the city, where he was the music director for both sacred and secular music. Other musical leaders in the eighteenth century included Georg Philipp Telemann and Johann Adam Hiller. Opera performances took place in the Comödienhaus and instrumental performances in the Gewandhaus, originally a building for the cloth industry at trade fairs. Given the strong role of music and the presence of a publishing industry, it is not surprising that music publishing also came to Leipzig. By the end of the nineteenth century Leipzig housed more than sixty music publishers, with the most notable being Breitkopf (now Breitkopf & Härtel) and C. F. Peters.

Due to its central location, Leipzig has suffered in wartime. There were three battles in or near the city during the Thirty Years' War; in 1813, the massive Battle of Leipzig was one of the bloodiest and most decisive engagements of the Napoleonic Wars. Much of the city was destroyed during World War II and then rebuilt by the East German government. In 1989,

a huge demonstration against Communist rule took place in Leipzig. The conductor of the Gewandhaus Orchestra, Kurt Masur—called in one article "the conductor who brought down a country"—intervened, using his prominence to prevent violence and encourage dialogue. This is a good example of how the city of Leipzig has continued to combine a love of music and progressive ideas for the benefit of its people.

For Further Reading:

<https://www.leipziginfo.de/stadtinformationen/geschichte/>

<https://www.augustustours.de/en/newsletter-articles/history-of-leipzig.html>

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/blog/articles/kurt-masur-conductor-brought-down-east-germany>

Encyclopedia Britannica, "Leipzig"

(<https://www.britannica.com/place/Leipzig-Germany>)

John Daverio and Eric Sams, "Schumann, Robert" in *Oxford Music Online*.

Nancy B. Reich, rev'd Natasha Loges, "Schumann (née Wieck), Clara (Josephine)" in *Oxford Music Online*.

George B. Stauffer, "Leipzig" in *Oxford Music Online*.

John Williamson, "Reger, (Johann Baptist Joseph) Max(imilian)" in *Oxford Music Online*.

Helmut Wirth, "Reger, (Johann Baptist Joseph) Max(imilian)" in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1980).

Program notes by Lisa Feurzeig

Artist Bios

Grace Kim started serving as assistant concertmaster in the Grand Rapids Symphony in 2017. She started her violin studies at the age of 10, when her family immigrated from South Korea to Yakima, WA. Her performances as a soloist, chamber, and orchestra musician include a debut at the Kimmel Center with Philadelphia all city orchestra concerto competition winner, Medomak Conductors retreat musician in-residence, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Ann Arbor Symphony, Spoleto Festival Orchestra(Charleston), Amalfi Coast Music Festival. Grace completed her graduate studies at the University of Michigan in May of 2017, a Specialist's degree with David Halen, M.M in violin performance and chamber music with Aaron Berofsky. With a growing dedication to urban music teaching, she was an assistant teaching artist with the Sphinx Organization-Overture in the Detroit public elementary schools. Grace plays on a Caressa & Francais of Paris, France dated 1906, generously on loan from the Virtu Foundation.

A native of Moscow, Russia, **Olga Ziabrikova** began her music studies at age 6 on violin and piano. Her father, Yuri, was a singer who cultivated the love of music and art in his children. After hearing one of her father's musician friends play viola, she fell in love with the sound and switched to viola at the age of 14. Olga got her first professional job as principal violist of the "Vivaldi-Orchestra" of Moscow at the age of 18 shortly after graduating from the Academic Music College at the Moscow Conservatory. She performed and traveled extensively with that orchestral group for five years, including two lengthy tours of the United States. In 1996, Olga immigrated to the United States where she received a master's degree in music performance from Western Michigan University. She is currently a member of the Grand Rapids Symphony and plays in the Santa Fe Opera orchestra.

Andrew Laven was appointed Assistant Principal Cellist of the Grand Rapids Symphony in 2019. He received his Master's degree from Rice University under Desmond Hoebig and Bachelor's degree from the Eastman School of Music under Steven Doane. An interest in historical performance led Andrew to study baroque cello with Phoebe Carrai and in 2021 he was a finalist at the Lillian and Maurice Barbash J.S. Bach Competition. An enthusiast for chamber music, Andrew has collaborated with Ying Quartet first violinist Robin Scott, violist Roberto Diaz, and pianist Jon Kimura Parker. Other festivals include the Grand Teton Music Festival, Tanglewood Music Center, Bowdoin International Music Festival, Karl Flesch Akademie, Avaloch Farm Music Institute, and Spoleto Festival USA.

Director of the GV Piano Chamber Series, **Sookkyung Cho** is Associate Professor of Piano at Grand Valley State University. As a soloist and chamber musician, she has appeared in venues such as Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Chicago Cultural Center, Sarasota Opera House, Conservatoire d'art dramatique de Montréal in Canada, Château de Fontainebleau in France, Bilkent Piano Festival in Turkey, and Xi'an Conservatory in China. Dr. Cho received a bachelor's degree from Juilliard, where she was honored with the John Erskine Graduation Prize, and earned a master's degree at Peabody and a doctorate at Juilliard as a C.V. Starr fellow. Her debut CD, Schubert's 1817 Sonatas, was released on Centaur to critical acclaim in April 2021. She is proud to be an adopted Michigander!

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