

Concerts from the Library of Congress 2011-2012

*The Carolyn Royall Just Fund*

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Roberto Díaz, *viola*  
Kwan Yi, *piano*

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The Franz Liszt Bicentenary Project

*Saturday, November 5, 2011*

*Coolidge Auditorium*

*Library of Congress, Thomas Jefferson Building*

THE CAROLYN ROYALL JUST FUND

The audio-visual equipment in the Coolidge Auditorium was endowed in part by the Ira and Leonore S. Gershwin Fund in the Library of Congress.

Please request ASL and ADA accommodations five days in advance of the concert at 202-707-6362 or ADA@loc.gov.

Latecomers will be seated at a time determined by the artists for each concert.

Children must be at least seven years old for admittance to the concerts. Other events are open to all ages.

Reserved tickets not claimed by five minutes before the beginning of the event will be distributed to stand-by patrons.

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NOISE-MAKING OBJECTS THAT WOULD DISRUPT THE PERFORMANCE.

Thank you.

*The Library of Congress*

Coolidge Auditorium

Saturday, November 5, 2011 – 2:00 pm

**ROBERTO DÍAZ, *viola***

**KWAN YI, *piano***

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PROGRAM

Romance oubliée, S. 132, *for viola and piano*

Franz LISZT  
(1811-1886)

Sonata no. 1, in F minor, op. 120, no. 1, *for viola and piano*

Johannes BRAHMS  
(1833-1897)

*Allegretto*

*Valse*

*Polonaise. Allegro ma non troppo*

Intermission

Suite no. 1, in G Major, BWV 1007, *for cello solo; arranged for viola solo*

Johann Sebastian BACH  
(1685-1750)

*Preludio*

*Allemande*

*Courante*

*Sarabanda*

*Minueto I, II*

*Giga*

Sonata no. 2, in E-flat Major, op. 120, no. 2, *for viola and piano*

Johannes BRAHMS

*Allegretto*

*Valse*

*Polonaise. Allegro ma non troppo*

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Franz LISZT : *Romance oubliée* for viola and piano, S. 132 (1880)

Franz Liszt composed approximately forty chamber works (mostly all of which involve strings and piano), but like his songs, are rarely performed, undoubtedly being overshadowed by his hundreds of works for solo piano. Although not as numerous as his works in other musical formats, Liszt apparently held an affinity with chamber works, as he composed them throughout his life – from the *Zwei Walzer* for violin and piano, composed at the age of twelve, to his arrangement of his own *La lugubre gondola* (originally for piano solo, 1882) for violin, viola or cello and piano, completed in about 1885, the year before his death. In addition to the practical advantages offered by chamber works in disseminating Liszt's compositions to a wider audience, his cultivation of this genre may have been motivated by more personal reasons as well: his beloved father, Adám, had been an enthusiastic amateur violinist, cellist, guitarist and pianist before his untimely death, from which the then-fifteen-year old Liszt took years to recover.

While attending the first complete performance of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at Bayreuth in 1876, Liszt heard the violist Hermann Ritter playing his newly-developed instrument, the five-string "viola alta" (a smaller version of today's standard viola), which Wagner had included in his orchestra. Liszt was sufficiently impressed by the instrument to arrange a version of his *Romance* for piano solo (S. 169, 1848 – itself an arrangement of the previously composed song *Oh, pourquoi donc*, from about 1844) for viola and piano. (Versions of this song for piano with violin or violoncello were also subsequently prepared.) Titled *Romance oubliée* ("forgotten romance"), the work was completed in 1880 and dedicated to Ritter himself.

The work begins with a rhapsodic passage for unaccompanied viola before being joined by the piano after nine measures; a brief cadenza-like section introduces the work's second section, featuring arpeggiated figures in the viola which recall similar passages in the second movement of Berlioz's *Harold in Italy*, a work that features a solo viola *obligato* part. Liszt was familiar with his friend Berlioz's work, having prepared not one, but two transcriptions of *Harold* between 1836 and the early 1850s, both of which were scored for viola and piano.

Johannes BRAHMS : *Sonata* for viola and piano, in F minor, op. 120, no. 1 (1894) ;  
*Sonata* for viola and piano, in E-flat Major, op. 120, no. 2 (1894)

By all appearances, Johannes Brahms had, by 1891, begun to bid farewell both to musical composition and to life. He had drawn up his will, settled his affairs, and confined his creative activities to the production of small scale musical works. During a visit to the ducal court of Meiningen, however, he happened to hear the clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld, whose artistry so impressed Brahms that he was inspired to undertake, in the three years to follow, the composition of his last four chamber works, all of which involved the clarinet, an instrument which he had never previously used in a soloistic capacity. Although the last of these works, Brahms's set of his op. 120 *Sonatas*, were originally conceived for clarinet and piano, their composer simultaneously produced versions for viola and piano, and even violin and piano, apparently wishing the works to achieve the widest possible audience. While the violin version has not been adopted by performers as readily as have the other

versions (perhaps due to the established riches of the violin repertoire), the viola version, like its counterpart for clarinet, holds an important place in the relatively slight repertoire for these instruments. Like the clarinet, moreover, the darker tone of the viola more appropriately reflects the tranquility, melancholy, and autumnal lyricism of Brahms's later compositional style.

The two *Sonatas*, composed in the summer of 1894 at the resort town of Bad Ischl, share a predominance of slower *tempi*, a more subdued range of dynamics (only infrequently rising from *piano* to *forte*), and a strongly lyric expression. Despite being constructed upon a taut network of continually developing musical motives, these works appear almost improvisatory in their freedom and understated finesse. Their nostalgic intimacy and aching beauty seem to belie a profound pathos generated from their composer's sense of imminent mortality.

The two *Sonatas* nevertheless represent very different approaches on the part of their composer: no. 1, in F minor, is more traditional in its contrasting four-movement construction, and more closely resembles the emotional turbulence of many of Brahms's other works; no. 2, in E-flat major, is freer in its three-movement design, none of which are especially slow. Both, however, are characterized by what scholar Malcolm MacDonald calls their "kaleidoscopic range of color and emotion, [and] propensity for mercurial shifts of texture and harmony..." In their simultaneous economy and richness, Brahms's final statements in the chamber music genre represent the highest evolution of his language: austere, reduced to its essence, and anticipating the musical expression of the twentieth century.

Johann Sebastian BACH : *Suite no. 1* in G Major, BWV 1007, for solo cello (after 1717);  
arranged for solo viola

The tremendous musical substance and sheer volume of Johann Sebastian Bach's sacred choral works overshadows his essays in other genres, and no more so than his few chamber works. Although limited in number – and many more are thought to have been lost – Bach's chamber works are nevertheless highly valued among musicians and listeners alike. It is difficult to imagine that only a century ago, Bach's *Suites* for solo violoncello, like the *Sonatas and Partitas* for solo violin (which are believed to have been composed soon after the *Suites*), were relatively unknown and even misunderstood: nineteenth-century composer Robert Schumann even attempted to compose a piano accompaniment to the *Suites*! It was only after eminent cellist Pablo Casals rediscovered the works and reintroduced them to twentieth-century audiences that the *Suites* have gained a wide and extraordinary fame. Since that time, the *Suites* have been eagerly adapted for a wide variety of instruments, and have continued to provide rich rewards for those lucky enough to experience the sheer joy of performing them, and of hearing them performed.

The set of six *Suites* were composed sometime after Bach accepted an appointment as *Kapellmeister* to the royal court at Cöthen in 1717. The genesis of the *Suites* was likely inspired by a set of works for solo violin – the earliest known for unaccompanied violin – composed in about 1696 by the virtuoso violinist Johann Paul Westhoff, with whom Bach was acquainted at the ducal court at Weimar. The works' carefully crafted structures of contrasting movements, primarily comprised of historical dance forms, have led scholars to comment that the *Suites* were conceived by Bach as a unified whole, or cycle; even the late,

renowned cellist Mstislav Rostropovich has called these works “a symphony for solo cello.” Noted Bach scholar Christoph Wolff has commented that the *Suites* “not only demonstrate Bach’s intimate knowledge of the typical idioms and performing techniques of [the] instrument, but also show his ability, even without an accompanying bass part, to bring into effective play dense counterpoint and refined harmony coupled with distinctive rhythms.” Within the inherent limitations of a solo instrument, Bach has managed to create works of a broad emotional expression, harmonic richness, technical finesse, and unprecedented intimacy.

#### ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Described by Philadelphia Orchestra music director Christoph Eschenbach as “one of the greatest violists in the world, if not the greatest,” **Roberto Díaz** has received enthusiastic accolades for his outstanding musicianship, demonstrated in performances throughout the world as a recitalist and chamber music player, as well as soloist in collaboration with the world’s major orchestras and with renowned contemporary composers. Mr. Díaz has also enjoyed a decade-long tenure as principal violist with the Philadelphia Orchestra, previous to which he had served as principal violist with the National Symphony Orchestra under Mstislav Rostropovich.

In addition to his extensive performing activities, Mr. Díaz is renowned as an outstanding educator; he had been a professor of viola at the prestigious Curtis Institute of Music until his recent appointment as President and CEO of that institution, reaffirming his commitment to nurturing the talent of the next generation of musicians. Mr. Díaz has recorded several CDs on the Naxos and New World Records labels, one of which (transcriptions of works for viola and piano by British violist William Primrose, with pianist Robert Koenig) was nominated for a 2006 Grammy Award.

A native of South Korea, pianist **Kwan Yi** has received numerous honors from performers’ competitions throughout the world, such as the Sendai International Music Competition (Japan) and the Trio di Trieste International Chamber Music Competition (Italy), the National Foundation in the Advancement in the Arts Award, and the ASCAP Foundation’s Ira Gershwin Award for Outstanding Musicianship. Mr. Yi received his Bachelor of Music degree from the Curtis Institute and his Master of Music degree from the Juilliard School, and is currently pursuing studies with Leon Fleischer at the Peabody Institute in Baltimore in order to obtain his Artist Diploma. Mr. Yi has appeared as a recitalist and soloist with several American orchestras. In addition to his current concert tour of the United States, Japan and Italy with violist Roberto Díaz, Mr. Yi’s upcoming performances also include a solo appearance with the Russian National Orchestra in Philadelphia.

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## The Tuscan-Medici Viola

The Tuscan-Medici viola, made by Antonio Stradivari in 1690 in Cremona, Italy, was originally commissioned by the Grand Duke Cosimo III and presented to Prince Ferdinand, son of the Grand Duke of Tuscany.

In 1957, Cameron Baird purchased the Tuscan viola. Professor Baird, founder and chairman of the Music Department at the University of Buffalo, was an amateur violist who played the Tuscan viola until his death in 1960. Professor Baird and his wife Jane were close friends of the members of the Budapest String Quartet during its long tenure as Quartet-in Residence at the Library, prompting the loan of the Tuscan viola to the Library of Congress in 1977, where it has been featured in performances ever since.

It was first played that year in a Library-sponsored concert by the Juilliard Quartet's Samuel Rhodes, who remarked last year that the Tuscan is "one of the finest in existence of any maker." Also in 2010, the Tuscan was part of a string quartet that accompanied Sir Paul McCartney when he performed on the stage of the Coolidge Auditorium to receive the Library of Congress Gershwin prize for Popular Song. In October 2010, Professor Baird's daughter, Dr. Bridget Baird, was a special guest during the James Madison Council's special evening at Jim Kimsey's home, where Roberto Díaz played this treasured instrument.

The tone of the Tuscan viola has been described as "unsurpassable." The viola itself, in outstanding condition and state of preservation, was created during a period in Stradivari's lifetime when he had attained an unprecedented mastery of his craft.

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## CONCERTS FROM THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The Coolidge Auditorium, constructed in 1925 through a generous bequest by **Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge**, has been the venue for countless world-class performers and performances. Another Washingtonian *grande dame*, **Gertrude Clarke Whittall**, presented to the Library a gift of five Stradivari instruments which were first heard here during a concert on January 10, 1936. These parallel but separate donations serve as the pillars that now support a full season of concerts made possible by gift trusts and foundations that followed those established by Mrs. Coolidge and Mrs. Whittall.

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Raymond A. White

#### *PROGRAM NOTES*

Kevin LaVine



UPCOMING CONCERTS AT THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS :

Saturday December 17, 2011 - 8 p.m.

BORROMEO STRING QUARTET  
*with SEYMOUR LIPKIN, piano*

Performing works of Schuller, Beethoven and Schubert

Saturday, January 28, 2012 - 2 p.m.

PAOLO PANDOLFO, *viola da gamba*

Performing works of J.S. Bach and C.F. Abel

Friday, February 3, 2012 - 8 p.m.

CYGNUS ENSEMBLE  
*with MIRANDA CUCKSON, violin,*  
DANIEL PANNER, *viola, and* BLAIR MCMILLEN, *piano*

Performing works of Kreisler and Meltzer

KEEP THE CONCERTS FREE!

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programs at no-cost to the public!  
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Please contact  
Solomon HaileSelassie at [shai@loc.gov](mailto:shai@loc.gov)  
for more information.

**As a volunteer, you can ensure that the concerts can continue for  
years to come.**