

JOHAN DALENE, violin
SAHUN SAM HONG, piano

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

Sonata No. 1 in A minor Op. 105

Mit leidenschaftlichem Ausdruck

Allegretto

Lebhaft

(approx. 18 minutes)

EINOJUHANI RAUTAVAARA (1928-2016)

Notturmo e danza

(approx. 7 minutes)

MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)

Tzigane

(approx. 10 minutes)

Intermission

WITOLD LUTOSŁAWSKI (1913-1994)

Partita for Violin and Piano

Allegro giusto - Ad libitum - Largo - Ad libitum - Presto

(approx. 17 minutes)

EDVARD GRIEG (1843-1907)

Sonata No. 2 in G major Op. 13

Lento doloroso - Allegro vivace

Allegretto tranquillo

Allegro animato

(approx. 22 minutes)

Robert Schumann
Sonata No. 1 in A minor Op. 105


Sonata form in the Classical era of Haydn and Mozart was predicated on presenting two contrasting themes, each with its own expressive character, in two distinct key areas. But by 1851 Robert Schumann had other ideas.

And so, in that year, he composed two virtually monothematic sonata-form outer movements that de-emphasize key relationships for his Violin Sonata No. 1 in A minor, Op. 105, to more closely represent his misty poetic ideals.

Organic unity through continuous evolution is Schumann's aesthetic goal in this sonata rather than balanced contrast and the resolution of large-scale tensions between key areas. His is an aesthetic of blending, and the two "sister" themes of this sonata's first movement provide a vivid example of the process.

The work opens with a darkly passionate but restless theme in the violin, heaving with two-note sigh motives and rippling with hemiola in its alternation of 6/8 and 3/4 measures.

Mit leidenschaftlichem Ausdruck (♩ = 68)



His second theme is identical in mood and is in the same rhythm. It sounds just like a continuation of the first theme, and it even shares some of the same keyboard texturing.



But themes are not the only object of Schumann's "blending" aesthetic. He also blends the timbres of his performing forces.

Note how low in the range the violin plays, especially at the opening, on the G string. Schumann makes the violin into an honorary viola, with the piano figuration doubling its melodic line to create a kind of single integrated piano-and-string instrument presenting the movement's themes.

The two instruments are like an old married couple that complete each other's sentences and echo each other's sentiments. All the more natural, then, are the passages in canonic imitation in the development section, which slides hand-in-glove into the recapitulation as if by magic. One moment you are hearing the opening melody in augmentation, i.e., stretched out in long notes, and the next you are hearing it at normal speed – and the recapitulation has already begun without your even noticing it.

The only note of real contrast in the movement comes in the brisk coda that suddenly looks at its watch, gathers its hat and coat and heads for the door in a sweeping gust of 16th notes.

* * *

Schumann composes neither a real slow movement nor a zippy scherzo for this sonata, but instead writes a kind of intermezzo at *Allegretto* tempo that combines the functions of both. With its short musing phrases and quizzical mood, it resembles the Intermezzo from Schumann's Piano Concerto.

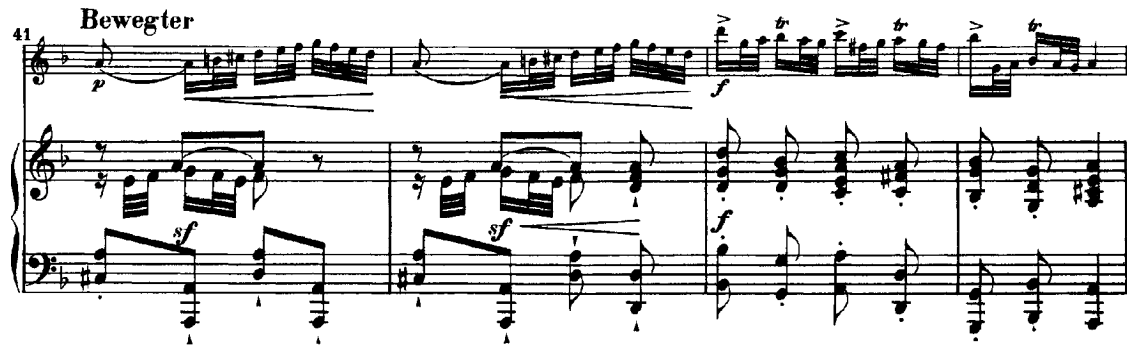
Structured in the form of a rondo, it opens in what seems to be mid-thought, childlike and curious as it reviews the notes of the F-major scale before indulging in one of the many thoughtful pauses that populate this movement.

Allegretto (♩ = 96) Im Tempo

Its first rondo episode is quite the opposite. It consists of one long, timid phrase in the minor mode that simply refuses to cadence at all, until returning to the opening refrain tune.

Im Tempo

The second episode, by contrast, will have none of it and kicks off its shoes to dance around the campfire with abandon.



But all dance parties must end sometime, and the movement concludes in the mood of mild amusement and curious questioning with which it began.

* * *

Schumann's sonata-form finale lives up to its billing. It is certainly *lebhaft* (lively), opening with an “ants-in-the-pants” moto perpetuo that features the violin and piano as a dynamic duo sharing equally in the excitement.

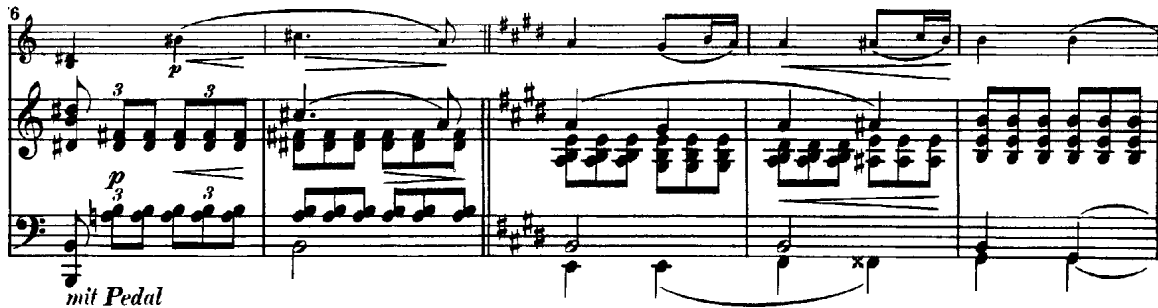


Lyrical impulses do break through, however, in a second theme in F major. But even here Schumann “blends” the two themes together with a reminder of the frantic opening.

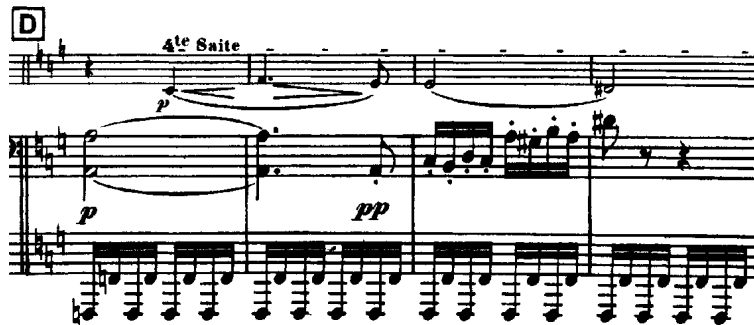


The real surprise of the movement, though, comes in the development section, which unexpectedly bursts into song with a completely new lyrical melody.

This melody is plumped up by loving, pillowy triplets from the keyboard.



But just like the “official” second theme, even this dreamy escapade is laced with references to the opening patter of 16ths, as is the sudden nostalgic recall of the sonata’s opening bars that initiates the coda.



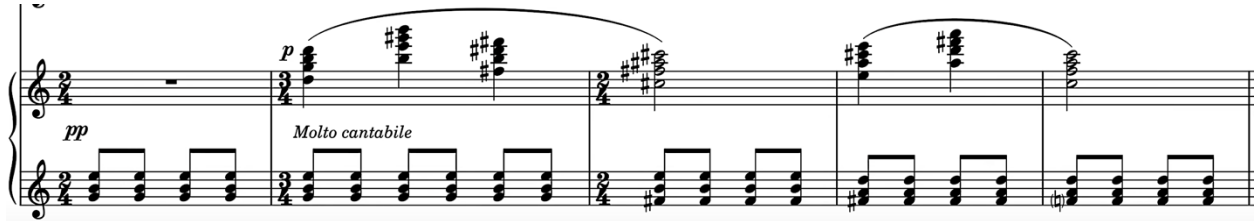
Those rascally 16ths are everywhere in this finale, but here, finally, we see where they come from. They are just a rapid-fire sequence of the little semitone sigh motives from the first movement’s opening theme (!), to which Schumann gives the last word in closing out this organically conceived, unusually unified sonata

Einojuhani Rautavaara Notturmo e danza

Einojuhani Rautavaara was a prolific Finnish composer, the author of eight symphonies, nine operas, 15 concertos and a scattering of chamber works. Early in his career he was recommended by Sibelius for a Koussevitzky Fellowship to Juilliard, where he studied with Vincent Persichetti and Roger Sessions, after which he undertook further studies at Tanglewood (under Aaron Copland), in Switzerland and in Cologne, Germany.

The result of this cosmopolitan education was a wide-ranging compositional aesthetic that ranged from 12-tone serialism to neo-Romanticism. In 1993 we catch him composing a brace of small pieces for violin and piano, *Notturmo e Danza*, written for a children’s chamber music competition sponsored by the Juvenalia Music Institute in Espoo, just outside of Helsinki.

The quality of “mysticism” that is often attributed to his work is evident from the long piano introduction at the opening of the *Notturmo*, with its strangely engaging ostinato of luminous bitonal chords pulsing in a constant 8th-note pattern, very Shostakovich-like in mood, but without the bleakness.



Into this pulsing pattern of chords the violin eventually interjects its wandering, but confident, melodic voice.



Despite the succession of gestures of melodic and harmonic motion in this piece, the overarching impression is one of mystic ... stillness.

* * *

The *Danza*, by contrast, is all glints and flickers, with a *moto perpetuo* piano accompaniment that “floats” atop the traditional tonal system, teasingly uncommitted to any one key.



The violin melody is folk-like in its simplicity, whether in furry tremolos or with straight *arco* bowing, and especially in the way it manages to make an 11/18 time signature almost sound regular.

Maurice Ravel Tzigane

Ravel was aesthetically attracted to “exotic” musical landscapes, and not just the imaginary fairytale lands of *Mother Goose* or the pastoral countryside of *Daphnis and Chloë*. Vienna’s waltz culture was captured in his *La Valse* and the sound of Spain’s castanets in his *Rapsodie Espagnole*.

In *Tzigane* (1924), composed for Hungarian female violinist Jelly d’Aranyi (1893-1966), Ravel attempts to evoke in a colourful way the performing ethos of the Romani fiddler (*tzigane* being the French word for a Romani person or “gypsy”).

Tone colour is an obvious preoccupation of the composer in this work, as he originally planned it to be performed with the accompaniment of the *luthéal*, an experimental hybrid piano of the time with register stops that could imitate the metallic strumming sound of the *cimbalom* or Hungarian dulcimer. And Ravel later sought out other tone colours in his version for orchestra.

Chiselled into the score are the unmistakable sounds of Hungarian-style fiddling in the solo violin and the sonic blur of the cimbalom’s clangorous buzzing in the piano accompaniment.

The work begins with a long solo cadenza for the violin, evocative of the capricious wandering melodies and improvisational performance style of the itinerant fiddler — but aggressively driven, like a dog biting your pantleg who will not let go.

The melodic gestures are full of the augmented 2nds characteristic of the so-called “Hungarian” minor scale.



When these motives are then attacked in octaves, it becomes apparent that Ravel is writing a virtuoso showpiece in the style of Liszt’s Hungarian Rhapsodies, but for violin.

And in so doing he exploits some of the most hair-raising difficulties that the instrument offers to the performing violinist.



Rapid-fire arpeggios, harmonics, and double-stops in 3rds and 6ths are all on display in this outrageously “flashy” introduction.

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It begins with a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) and features a series of rapid, ascending arpeggiated chords. The bottom staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. It starts with a measure marked with a box containing the number 3, followed by a dynamic marking of *espress.* (espressivo). The music consists of a series of chords and double-stops, primarily in thirds and sixths, with some chromatic movement.

The piano eventually joins in with its own cadenza-like wash of jangling cimbalom timbre — and the game is on.

The image shows a musical score for a piano entry. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It is labeled with a box containing the number 4 and the text "Quasi cadenza". The music begins with a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) and features a series of chords and double-stops, primarily in thirds and sixths, with some chromatic movement. The bottom staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. It is labeled "Piano" and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The music consists of a series of chords and double-stops, primarily in thirds and sixths, with some chromatic movement. The overall texture is dense and jangling, characteristic of a cimbalom.

What follows is a succession of display-oriented variations on the work’s fragmentary musical motives.

Many of these variations play on the overtone-rich timbre of the cimbalom’s characteristic open 5ths and the chromatic “brightness” of exotic-scale “crush” notes

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with many a plangent lament thrown into the mix.



This work shocked contemporary musicians at the time of its premiere for the audacious boldness of its display-oriented writing and the unapologetic “glitzy” of its surface appeal.

Witold Lutosławski Partita for Violin and Piano

Polish composer Witold Lutosławski’s *Partita for Violin and Piano* was commissioned by the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra for Pinchas Zukerman and Marc Neikrug in 1984 and was premiered by them the following year.

One of the techniques for which Lutosławski’s mature work is known is the use of *aleatoric* passages, i.e., parts of the score in which the details of performance are largely decided by the performer and will differ with each performance.

Of his *Partita* Lutosławski writes:

The work consists of five movements. Of these, the main movements are the first (*Allegro giusto*), the third (*Largo*) and the fifth (*Presto*).

The second and fourth are but short interludes to be played *ad libitum*. A short *ad libitum* section also appears before the end of the last movement.

The work is said to have been inspired by the example of eighteenth-century dance suites, the first movement a kind of *courante*, the third an *air* and the fifth a kind of *gigue*.

The harmonic idiom is harshly dissonant, but close listening will reveal an interesting play of motivic ideas in the first, third and fifth movements.

As for the 'ad lib' second and fourth movements, the composer gives this indication in his score:

The violin & piano parts should not be coordinated in any way.

that he will brook no complicity between the players as to how these movements should eventually sound.

Edvard Grieg

Sonata No. 2 in G major Op. 13

Grieg's *Second Violin Sonata* is a youthful work, composed in 1867 when the composer was in his early twenties. Fresh from his studies in Leipzig, he was eager to take up the cause of Norwegian musical nationalism. And most important of all, he was just married. As might be expected of a work composed during a honeymoon, Grieg's sonata is bursting with optimism and spontaneous outpourings of joyous contentment.

But the merriment about to be unleashed is delayed in its path to the listener's ear, cleverly set up to burst out of the gate after a slow introduction in the minor mode that begins the first movement.

The image shows a musical score for the first movement of Grieg's Sonata No. 2 in G major, Op. 13. The score is in 2/4 time and begins with the tempo marking "Lento doloroso". The violin part starts with a triplet figure in the minor mode, marked "ritard." and "strepitoso". The piano accompaniment features a drone tone in the bass, marked "p".

The triplet figures that begin the violin's cadenza-like entrance tantalizingly hint at these same triplet figures – but in the *major* mode – that initiate the dance-like first theme of this sonata-form movement.

The accompaniment is notable for its drone tone in the bass, typical of folk music.

The image shows a musical score for the first theme of the first movement of Grieg's Sonata No. 2 in G major, Op. 13. The score is in 2/4 time and begins with the tempo marking "Lento doloroso". The violin part starts with a triplet figure in the major mode, marked "p". The piano accompaniment features a drone tone in the bass, marked "p".

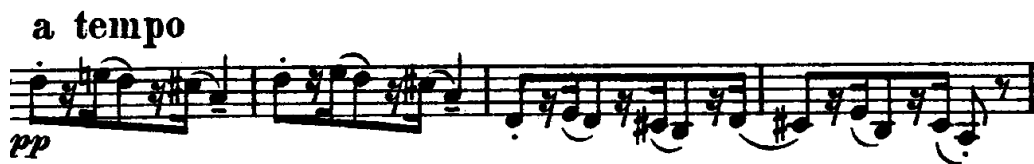
This theme and many other melodies in the sonata bear the distinctive characteristics of the *springar*, a Norwegian traditional couples' dance with irregular rhythms and plenty of fancy footwork.

Grieg's second theme in the minor mode is of an equally "folksy" stamp, but eminently singable.

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Grieg rounds out his exposition with more skippy-dippy dance music in his third theme.



While motivic development is not one of Grieg's strengths, he does a creditable job of putting the triplets of his first theme and the hummable chordal intervals of his second through their paces in the development section and provides a textbook example of proper recapitulation to tie a big bow around the movement as a whole.

The *Allegretto tranquillo* second movement begins and ends in E minor, but its wistful opening melody seems instinctively drawn to the major mode.



And to the swirling movements of uninhibited folk dancing.

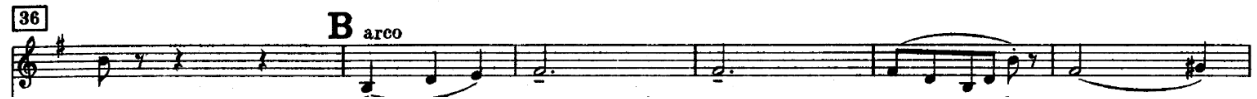


The movement is in a simple A-B-A form, with a more toned-down middle section in E major that, while not conducive to hopping and leaping, would be quite suitable for sashaying.

The extroverted peasant-dance mood of this sonata is even more pronounced in the stomping, drone-accompanied opening theme of the finale, appropriately marked *Allegro animato*.

Grieg's use of the piano is particularly engaging in this movement, especially in ear-tickling passages such as this:

The movement is a sonata rondo, with this lilting waltz as its first episode:



And this dreamy lullaby as its second.



The exuberance of this movement is crowned by a *Presto* coda that brings the sonata to an emphatic stomping-dance conclusion.

Donald G. Gíslason 2025