Gore Recital Hall
3 p.m. on October 15, 2023

Concert for Violin and Piano

Dr. Kristin Ditlow, Guest-Artist, Piano
Guillaume Combet, Associate Professor, Violin

Program

Poème for Violin and Piano, Op.25
Ernest Chausson
(1855-1899)

Suite for Violin and Piano, Op.3
Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
(1875-1912)

I. Pastorale
II. Cavatina
III. Barcarolle
IV. Contemplation

Intermission

Sonata for Violin and Piano in A Major
César Franck
(1822-1890)

I. Allegretto ben moderato
II. Allegro
III. Ben moderato: Recitativo-Fantasia
IV. Allegretto poco mosso
Program Notes

Poème: Poème was written in response to a request from Eugène Ysaïe for a violin concerto. Chausson felt unequal to the task of a concerto, writing to Ysaïe: "I hardly know where to begin with a concerto, which is a huge undertaking, the devil's own task. But I can cope with a shorter work. It will be in very free form with several passages in which the violin plays alone."
It was commenced in April 1896 and finished on 29 June, and was written while Chausson was holidaying in Florence, Italy. He wrote three different versions of Poème: with orchestra; with piano accompaniment (later rewritten by other hands); and a recently discovered version for violin, string quartet and piano, a companion to his Concert in D for piano, violin and string quartet, Op. 21 (1892). The solo violin parts of these versions are identical except for one minor detail. The work is notionally in the key of E-flat and lasts about 16 minutes. It was dedicated to Ysaïe, who gave its early performances.

Suite: “The Suite contains four gentle pieces: 'Pastorale', 'Cavatina', 'Barcarolle' and 'Contemplation'. Evidently a compound time feel was very much in mind for the 17-year-old Coleridge-Taylor as he wrote the pieces – the 'Pastorale' and 'Barcarolle' lilting along as you would expect, and 'Contemplation' somewhat uneasily trying to marry compound and simple time, with the different voices often simultaneously in 3/4 and 6/8. There is a lovely balance between repetition and contrast, and a little light chromaticism which only hints at the language Coleridge-Taylor would later develop.” Helena Ruinard review of Coleridge-Taylor's Suite de Pièces, published by Schott Music.

Sonata: The Violin Sonata in A was written in 1886, when César Franck was 63, as a wedding present for the 28-year-old violinist Eugène Ysaïe. The piece is further notable for the difficulty of its piano part, when compared with most of the chamber repertoire. Its technical problems include frequent extreme extended figures—the composer himself having possessed huge hands—and virtuoso runs and leaps, particularly in the second movement. The work is cyclic in nature, all the movements sharing common thematic threads. Themes from one movement reappear in subsequent movements, but usually transformed. Franck had adapted this technique from Franz Liszt—his friend, and Cosima von Bülow's father. Vincent d'Indy described the Sonata as "the first and purest model of the cyclical use of themes in sonata form" and referred to it as "this true musical monument".