

Jakin Chang Senior Recital

4th May 2021

Dimitri Shostakovich

Sonata for Viola and Piano Op.147

- I. Moderato
- II. Allegretto
- III. Adagio

Johannes Brahms

Viola Sonata in F Minor Op. 120 No.1

- I. Allegro appassionato
- II. Andante un poco Adagio
- III. Allegretto grazioso
- IV. Vivace

About the Performer

Jakin is a violist from Singapore. He obtained a full scholarship to study Viola Performance at the National University of Singapore, Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music to study under Ms. Zhang Manchun, principal violist of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra. He has since played in masterclasses with Huang Hsin-Yun, Csaba Erdelyi, Roger Tapping, Mazumi Tanamura, Shlomo Mintz and Charles Castleman, among others. In chamber music, he has studied under members from the T'ang Quartet, London Haydn Quartet and Kronos Quartet. Prior to COVID-19, Jakin regularly played in numerous orchestras around Singapore including Musicians Initiative, Orchestra of the Music Makers, International Festival Chorus, and Metropolitan Festival Orchestra.

Programme Notes

Brahms Viola Sonata in F Minor Op. 120 No.1

Viola Sonata in F Minor is the first of two sonatas originally written for the Clarinet by Johannes Brahms in 1894. The two sonatas were the final chamber pieces Brahms wrote before his death three years later.

The sonata begins with a brooding but lyrical movement in F minor, *Allegro appassionato*. The first four notes in the piano introduction set the tone for the movement, a mood of passionate longing and melancholy. Utilizing the dark sonority and low register of the viola, Brahms paints a picture full of sorrow and pain. The second movement, *Andante un poco Adagio*, is more in the spirit of calm reflection. The solo line in the viola sits above a thinly textured piano accompaniment, singing long lines that shimmer like a river under moonlight. There are only two bars of forte in this movement (apart from the poco forte in the opening), which is dominated by markings such as *piano*, *dolce*, *espressivo* and *pianissimo*. The next movement, *Allegretto grazioso*, opens in a graceful triple meter, almost like a waltz, and takes the quiet sentimentalism of the previous movement (also in the same Ab Major key) to a brighter, carefree place. And as a finale, *Vivace*, we are brought back to the key of F, but this time in a brighter Major, a positive transmutation of mood. The seriousness of the first movement's F minor is all but forgotten in the finale's joyous exuberance. Three bell-like repeated notes call out throughout the movement, and completes the sonata with feet on the ground on a solid F Major chord.

Shostakovich Sonata for Viola and Piano Op.147

Sonata for Viola and Piano was the last composition Shostakovich ever wrote and was completed weeks before his death in 1975. It is a bleak and expansive work with sharp edges, owing to the many dissonant double stops throughout.

The first movement, *Moderato*, begins with an unaccompanied pizzicato figure in the viola, with a simple descending piano line. A barren, war torn landscape comes to mind as this atmosphere continues to stretch almost endlessly. Sharp, dissonant chords strike suddenly, screams in the distance or despaired inner monologues? The second movement, *Allegretto*, flips the mood with sardonic wit. A scherzo that almost mocks the existential lamentations of the first movement, but quickly falls into a similar depressive spiral. The finale, *Adagio*, is a weary meditation. Sparse piano accompaniment litters the backdrop of the movement. The mood is consoling and sympathetic, regularly quoting the theme from Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata, as if it were a source of light in a sunken mental prison. This 17-minute long movement stretches and continues to stretch, giving the listener much time to reflect, reminisce, and regret.