

# Senior Recital

MUS500



Hannah Rubin '23

*piano*

Phillips Exeter Academy  
Forrestal-Bowld Music Center

“the Bowld”

Sunday, May 14, 2023

4:00 pm

# Program

*Kinderszenen*, Op. 15

Robert Schumann  
(1810 -1856)

- i. *Von fremden Ländern und Menschen* (Of Foreign Lands and Peoples)
- ii. *Curiose Geschichte* (A Curious Story)
- iii. *Hasche-Mann* (Blind Man's Bluff)
- iv. *Bittendes Kind* (Pleading Child)
- v. *Glückes genug* (Happy Enough)
- vi. *Wichtige Begebenheit* (An Important Event)
- vii. *Träumerei* (Dreaming)
- viii. *Am Camin* (At the Fireside)
- ix. *Ritter vom Steckenpferd* (Knight of the Hobbyhorse)
- x. *Fast zu Ernst* (Almost Too Serious)
- xi. *Fürchtenmachen* (Frightening)
- xii. *Kind im Einschlummern* (Child Falling Asleep)
- xiii. *Der Dichter spricht* (The Poet Speaks)

Sonata in E-flat Major, XVI: 52

Franz Joseph Haydn  
(1732 - 1809)

- i. Allegro
- ii. Adagio
- iii. Presto (Finale)

Sonata No. 3 in A Minor, Op. 28

Sergei Prokofiev  
(1891 – 1953)

## Program Notes

### *Kinderszenen, Op. 15*

Schumann's *Kinderszenen* (Scenes from Childhood) was composed in 1838. He wrote thirty movements for this work but chose only thirteen to publish as Op. 15. Heard in each movement is a falling four-note motif (G F# E D in movements one through four); this same motif appears in several movements from Schumann's later work, *Album for the Young, Op. 68*.

At the time *Kinderszenen* was composed, Schumann had been courting his future wife, pianist Clara Wieck, for three years. "Perhaps it was an echo of what you once said to me, that 'sometimes I seemed like a child...'" Schumann wrote to Clara regarding the *Kinderszenen*. "You will enjoy them – though you will have to forget you are a virtuoso."

As the editor and founder of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (New Periodical for Music), Schumann wrote articles critiquing composers. Many of those articles featured his imagined characters and critics Florestan and Eusebius. Florestan was passionate and impulsive, whereas Eusebius was more thoughtful and reflective. Schumann wrote a poem for Clara describing his two 'best friends':

*Eusebius's mildness, Florestan's ire –  
I can give thee, at will, my tears or my fire,*

*For my soul by turns two spirits possess –  
The spirits of joy and of bitterness.*

*Kinderszenen* reflects those “two spirits” and more. The character of the music often changes completely within a single movement, not to mention from one piece to the next. One might be tempted to label a movement as joyful, or another as bitter – they may indeed seem so. However, beneath the surface, Schumann’s music contains a wealth of emotional complexities; Florestan and Eusebius are not mutually exclusive. From a poet’s perspective, they are one and the same.

A comment on the piece’s title, *Kinderszenen*: Scenes from Childhood. Child and adult worlds infuse one another. Young and old, old and young. Past memories intertwine with the here and now.

### **Sonata in E-flat Major, XVI: 52**

Haydn composed his *Sonata in E-flat Major* in London in 1794. His last piano sonata, this work was dedicated to the keyboard virtuoso Therese Jansen Bartolozzi along with his piano sonatas No. 60 and No. 61. Haydn’s last three sonatas were composed for the English fortepiano (an older relative of the modern grand piano) which had a powerful sound and wide range relative to the Viennese pianos he was used to.

*Sonata in E-flat Major* contains three movements in a fast-slow-fast arrangement. Marked *Allegro*, the first movement is in sonata form. The opening chords of the piece are joyful and welcoming, emotions which characterize much of the movement. The second movement, *Adagio*, is in E Major – a far stretch from the familiar Eb Major of movements one and three. Like Schumann's *Der Dichter Spricht*, this movement says many things despite its brevity. The third movement is marked *Presto* and is full of cheery, playful energy.

As a composer Haydn is sometimes characterized by his sense of musical humor. Indeed, the presence of unexpected rests, unusual harmonies, and sudden character changes in the first and third movements of *Sonata in E-flat Major*, exemplify that quality. There is no loud humor, no uproarious laughter; in this piece, Haydn's humor is more subtle and refined.

### **Sonata No. 3 in A Minor, Op. 28**

Prokofiev's *Sonata No. 3* was composed in 1917, based on earlier sketches from 1907. It contains only one movement in sonata-allegro form and is the shortest of Prokofiev's nine piano sonatas. Two fast, turbulent outer sections enclose a slower, lyrical middle section. Throughout the piece, various figurations and melodies appear and reappear, often transforming themselves and interacting with one another in novel ways. The outer sections are characterized by a relentless, irrepressible force, but at the same time, the wandering, seeking melody of the slow section is often hidden beneath the surface.

1917 marks the divide between Prokofiev's Russian and Foreign periods, as it was during this year that he fled Russia to escape the Bolshevik Revolution. Prokofiev grew up witnessing the brewing social unrest of his native country; for instance, the 1905 revolution occurred when he was just 14.

Long before the revolution, Russian authors such as Fyodor Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy (both of whose texts Prokofiev set to music) had been exploring the notion of a "Russian Soul." They sought to describe an innate quality that, despite the relative backwardness of their country, distinguished Russians from other Europeans. Dostoevsky wrote of the uniquely Russian ability to take an irrational leap of faith and believe in miracles as well as the desire to achieve religious salvation through suffering and reunification with the people, especially the enigmatic peasantry he so admired. Unconsciously or not, perhaps Prokofiev integrated this sentiment into his work.

*Sonata No. 3* combines the harshness and cruelty of revolution with a sense of wistful, existential longing. What is it to search for the soul of a society crumbling at the edges, then brutally torn from its foundations?

## Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my piano teacher since eighth grade, Ms. Lee. There is no doubt that my musical and individual development over the last five years has been fundamentally shaped by her wisdom. I used to be a pianist whose primary goal was (I quote my sixth grade self) to play “really really hard” pieces. While my ambition certainly remains, I learned from Ms. Lee that the transcendental quality of music lies not in virtuosity but in expression. I know I can count on Ms. Lee to provide very honest and detailed feedback about my playing. Through our sincere discussions about music, performance and life, I have learned to value all the day-to-day experiences and choices that make music a lifelong passion.

I would also like to thank both Ms. Lee and Dr. Sakata for their inspiring piano four-hands performances and discussions with Coda Club over the past two years. The chance for musicians my age to explore music with such insightful (not only in the realm of music but also film, philosophy, architecture, and more!) pianists and mentors is a blessing.

Next, I would like to thank all of the music department faculty and staff, particularly: Ms. Darby for her welcoming demeanor and invaluable logistical support; Mr. Johnson for his cheerful “Hello friends!”, leading MUS500, and encouraging me to practice my atrocious German pronunciation (*der Dichhhhter sprichhht*); Ms. Grube for several terms of chamber music coaching; Mr. Sinclair for

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