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Presents

Distinguished Concerts Artist Series

Stevens Viola Duo

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I. Allegro espressivo
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Allesandro Rolla (1757–1841)

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V. Rumänische Melodie – Andante
III. Andante con moto
VI. Nachtgesang – Andante con moto

Max Bruch (1838–1920)

Rhapsody for Two Violas and Piano (World Premiere)

Christopher A. Schmitz (b. 1972)

INTERMISSION

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Notes on the Program

**DUO NO. 3 IN F MAJOR FOR TWO VIOLAS**  
ALESSANDRO ROLLA  
(1757–1841)

Italian composer Alessandro Rolla was born in Pavia, studied in Milan, and began playing viola in La Scala at age 21. He later conducted that orchestra from 1808 to 1833 while teaching violin and viola at the Milan Conservatory. His best known pupil there was Nicolo Paganini. Rolla was an excellent violist who developed many of the ingredients of technique—fast passages in thirds and sixths, ultra-fast scales, left hand pizzicato—that Paganini later adopted for his violin and viola works. He was an early champion of Beethoven, introducing his symphonic and choral works throughout Italy and playing his chamber works at his home after retiring.

Rolla wrote over 500 compositions: 15 viola concertos, 19 violin concertos, 12 symphonies, and many chamber works, such as the viola duo performed this evening.

**8 PIECES FOR TWO VIOLAS AND PIANO, OPUS 83**  
MAX BRUCH  
(1838–1920)

Bruch was born in Cologne where his father was a police official and his mother a singer. He began composing at age nine; at 14 he won a prize—a four–year scholarship for advanced musical studies—and from there spent his life teaching, conducting, and composing hundreds of works in many forms. He labored in the shadow of his towering contemporary, Brahms, whom he admired and emulated. He also revered Schumann and Mendelssohn, rejected the Wagner–Liszt school, and never changed his compositional style while Strauss, Mahler, Debussy, Schoenberg, and Stravinsky were radically altering the scene. A master of orchestration with a gift for creating melody, Bruch also loved to incorporate folk tunes into his compositions, as in the fifth movement of Opus 83.

At the age of 70, he began Opus 83 as a set of eight pieces for his son, a clarinetist. In October 1908 he wrote, “There are now five pieces for clarinet, viola, and piano, and three for the same instruments plus harp.” Perhaps because harpists were scarce, the harp part was abolished and blended into the piano part when Opus 83 was finally published in 1910. Also, Bruch provided alternative parts—violin for clarinet and cello for viola —“to increase accessibility.”

Tonight, a second viola takes over for the clarinet. This seems appropriate, since Bruch loved the viola, declaring that it “can sing a melody better than a piano, and melody is the soul of music.” (My apologies to Timothy Shook for reporting this indiscretion.) Bruch himself declared that he did not intend that all eight works should be performed at one session. As a concession to the composer, the artists have separated the works. The movements which Bruch originally wrote to include the harp will be performed in the first half of the program; the remaining movements will be presented after Intermission.

**Rhapsody for Two Violas and Piano**  
CHRISTOPHER A. SCHMITZ  
(b. 1972)

Schmitz has been an Assistant Professor of Music at Southwestern College of Kansas since 2003. His jazz and classical compositions have been featured in performances at academic institutions, regional and national music conferences, award competitions, and feature films. He was winner of the Sammy Nestico Competition in Washington D.C. (2007). He holds degrees from Arizona State University and the University of Northern Iowa and is currently completing a doctorate in music composition at the University of Texas in Austin, where he studies with Donald Grantham, Yevgeny Shkarat, and Bruce Pennycook.

The composer describes Rhapsody:

Conceived as a light and somewhat “quirky” show piece, the work combines a theme and variations structure with intermittent appearances of a contrasting yet thematically related lyrical statement. Both the tonal adherence to a central key (D minor) and a generally nineteenth century approach to harmonic language constitute something of a divergence from my usual, more contemporary idiom. The dramatic trajectory of this piece follows a gradual intensification with occasional interruptions toward its final gesture.

Rhapsody was commissioned by Daniel Stevens.

**Barcarolle for Two Violas and Piano**  
PIOTR BULAKHOV  
(Transcribed by Vadim Borisovsky, 1900–1972)  
(1822–1885)

Bukalhov and his brothers were prolific writers of songs in late nineteenth century Moscow, as Russian art songs began to reflect the music of Schubert and other European composers. Vadim Borisovsky was a Russian violist and a founder of the Beethoven Quartet, which graced Russian chamber music for 50 years and premiered nearly all of Shostakovich's string quartets. He transcribed 250 works for various viola combinations—a monumental contribution to viola literature.

**Prelude, Allegro, and Pastorale**  
REBECCA CLARKE  
(Transcribed by Permission**)  
(1886–1979)

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The performers would like to thank:

Southwestern College, Winfield, Kansas, for underwriting musician travel expense
Craig B. Leman of Corvallis, OR, for the program notes
R. J. Miller of Metro State College in Denver, CO, for his assistance with the transcription of the Bruch
K.C. Strings and Anton Krutz of Merriam, Kansas, for providing Daniel’s viola
Oxford Music Press and the Rebecca Clarke estate for permission to transcribe the Rebecca Clarke Duo*
Susan Dubois, Professor of Music, University of North Texas
Ascension Lutheran Church of Wichita, Kansas, for financial support
South Kansas Symphony Advisory Board and Friends, for financial support

* Prelude, Allegro, and Pastorale by Rebecca Clarke © Oxford University Press Inc. 2000 and 2009. This transcription produced by permission of Oxford University Press. All rights reserved.
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