



COLLEGE OF MUSIC

University of North Texas  
College of Music

Master's Recital | Saturday, February 21, 2026 | 8:00 p.m. | Recital Hall

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**Margot Elder, viola**

**Jingyi Zhang, piano**

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Märchenbilder, "Fairy-tale Pictures," Op. 113 (1851) ..... Robert Schumann  
I. Nicht schnell (Not fast) (1810–1856)  
II. Lebhaft (Lively)  
III. Rasch (Quickly)  
IV. Langsam, mit melancholischen Ausdruck  
(Slowly, with melancholy expression)

Phantasy Quartet, Op. 2 (1932) ..... Benjamin Britten  
(1913–1976)

Olivia Corporon, violin  
Maddy Dykhouse, cello  
Madeline Lee Aranki, oboe

-INTERMISSION-

Viola Sonata, Op. 147 (1975) ..... Dmitri Shostakovich  
I. Moderato (1906–1975)  
II. Allegretto  
III. Adagio

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**Program three hundred twelve of the 2025–2026 season**  
**Photography and videography are prohibited**

## Program Notes

### Märchenbilder, "Fairy-tale Pictures," Op. 133 | Robert Schumann (1810–1856)

Robert Schumann composed his Märchenbilder, or "Fairy-tale Pictures," over just a few days in the beginning of March 1851. The piece is a collection of four character pieces featuring Schumann's characteristic romantic style and instill a sense of fantasy and childlike wonder in the listener. They belong to the genre of Kleinkunst, or "small art," a genre defined by small-scale works and lighthearted tone.

Though it has been speculated that each movement is based on its own fairy-tale, it is more probable that the piece was inspired by a letter Schumann received from the French poet Louis du Rieux, sent just two weeks before Schumann started work on the piece. Inside the letter, Rieux praised Schumann's musical genius, writing:

"I have long wished to put my feelings of reverence into words, and with pleasure I grasp the opportunity [to do so] by sending you a few stanzas, which have earned the approval of my friends...I thought of the poetry as a theme for a sonata and 1 as Allegro, 2 Adagio, 3 Scherzo, 4 Trio, Finale Allegro...I believe that the poem could well function as a stimulus for a musical creation..."

Rieux included the following poem entitled "Märchenbilder:"

1.  
During childhood, magical fairy tales  
Explain to us the actions of spirits  
And we cheer or wail,  
When we listen to their deeds.  
Then within ourselves resound  
Laments, as yet unrecognized by us;  
But our early-spoiled  
Ear cannot express the inner sound.

2.  
Until a picture, like the red glow of dawn,  
Has arisen out of the night of pain—  
Beloved, calls the weary warrior,  
Your gazes release the bonds  
That are woven around my eyes and mind;  
Resting on your breast, I recover  
My strength, in your words [I find] gentle, beautiful fairy-tale songs!

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Leave the sweet words of love  
Vibrating in my arms,  
To find there a solid bond;  
Pain must bind us together,  
This our love shall tell us:  
Two spirits tightly entwined,  
While storms rage about them,  
As fairy tales sing of it!

3.

But with a shudder, he seizes her,  
[And] wrenches her into the dance of life;  
Anxiously she reaches for the garland  
On her head; but in vain—  
Fluttering, its blossoms fall—  
And as in the old fairy tales,  
The wild delight of the dancers intensifies—  
They themselves are a fairy tale to each other.

4.

And as life was sleeping  
That evening in the arm of peace,  
He hurries to the distant house,  
That is surrounded by tangled grape-vines  
In front of the high steps. Beloved,  
Let all of love's raptures flutter  
About you in your dream,  
May it be spun like fairy tales!—

Finale

But pale he came to this place  
After only a few days,  
To say farewell lamentingly  
To love's sweet spell:  
Already the bloody flame of dawn  
Must consecrate itself to grave battle;  
Our meaningful sensible life of love  
Will be my final fairy tale

Though Schumann did not implement the movement designations de Rieux suggested, the similarities between the poetry and the piece are striking. While the first movement, *Nicht schnell* (Not fast), instills the sense of wonder from the first stanza, the second and third movements, *Lebhaft* (Lively) and *Rasch* (Quickly), echo the depiction of the whirlwind love from the middle sections of the poem. Perhaps most convincingly, the final movement, *Langsam, mit melancholischen Ausdruck* (Slowly, with melancholy expression) mirrors the poem's final musings on unrequited love.

## **Phantasy Quartet, Op. 2 | Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)**

Benjamin Britten composed his Phantasy Quartet, Op. 2 for strings and oboe in 1932 at the age of just 19. A virtuoso, Britten had already begun his collegiate studies at the Royal College of Music two years prior, to which he had received a composition scholarship.

The work was written for a competition created by the Walter Wilson Cobbett, an English industrialist and musician who sought compositions that melded old English musical traditions with modern English chamber music. Composers were tasked each year to write a single-movement chamber piece in the tradition of the English string fantasias of the 16th and 17th centuries. Britten's title "Phantasy Quartet," refers to the fantasias of the Elizabethan and Jacobean era that were being revived by a number of English composers at this time. Peter Evans, an English musicologist and leading scholar on Britten's works, describes the piece as "a synthesis of the great English fantasia tradition and the sonata experiments of the Romantic era."

The piece, though written in one movement, contains several movement-like sections that elide into each other. The work is a mirror image of itself—it ends how it began, with material returning in the reverse order of which it was presented in the first section. Positioned in between these mirrored sections, a gorgeous lyrical segment lead by the string voices.

The piece certainly lives up to its designation as a fantasy; transporting the listener into an otherworldly realm, Britten masterfully combines the voices to produce varied textures, timbres, and colors that are unique to the ensemble. He builds the piece upon several contrasting motifs, including a march figure, lyrical oboe melody, and a mysterious surging motive first introduced in the violin. Each section develops quickly into the next, taking the listener on a whirlwind adventure into the soundscape. The work is itself an embodiment of Britten's youthful exploration of his creative limits, demonstrating remarkable clarity of expression and creativity from a young age.

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## Viola Sonata, Op. 147 | Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975)

When Shostakovich's Viola Sonata was premiered in October of 1975, the performance drew a crowd so large to the Glinka Hall that both foyers were opened to allow the crowd to listen. A single spot sat empty—Dmitri Shostakovich's usual seat. Fyodor Druzhinin, the violist premiering the piece, offered this account of night's events:

"The sonata had an almost hypnotically powerful effect on the listeners. Not far from the only empty seat in the house—Dmitri's seat, now laden with flowers—sat Evgeny Alexandrovich Mravinsky, beside my wife. She told me he cried without restraint, like a child, and towards the end of the sonata he was shaking with sobs. To speak of the success of the sonata would just be inappropriate. What was happening on the stage and in the hearts of the listeners was more than music. When we finished playing, I raised the sheets of the sonata high above my head, directing all the public's applause to its creator."

Shostakovich's Viola Sonata, Op. 147, was the final piece Shostakovich composed before his death in 1975. He passed a little over a month after its composition, and mere days after the score was received by violist Fyodor Druzhinin, a member of the Beethoven quartet, whom Shostakovich had worked closely with, and to whom the Sonata was dedicated. According to Druzhinin's memoirs, Shostakovich informed Druzhinin over the phone of the designations he had in mind for each movement:

"The first part is a **novella**, the second is a **scherzo**, the finale is an **adagio in memory of Beethoven**. You mustn't mix them up: each section is distinct . . . distinct."

Though it is not certain that the viola sonata was intended as his final work, Shostakovich, with his long failing health, certainly knew that he was dying. It is for this reason that the piece is an intensely autobiographical work, much like his String Quartet No. 8. The sonata contains various quotations and allusions both to Shostakovich's work and to other composers. The melodic motif created by converting his signature (DSCH) to musical notation (D-Eb-C-B) is alluded to many times, and quotes from all fifteen of his symphonies are strung together at one point, though this is nearly, if not, imperceptible to the listener.

The first movement, **novella**, contains allusions to his Eighth String Quartet, as well as his famous monogram. Scholars have also pointed possible connections to Alban Berg's violin concerto in the opening, and to Beethoven's famous "fate" motif from his fifth symphony.

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In the second movement, designated **Scherzo**, Shostakovich quotes extensively from his own unfinished opera, *The Gamblers*, reducing the opera's instrumentation to just viola and piano. This is also where he introduces a heartbreakingly painful theme composed of descending fourths, originally from his Prelude to the Suite for Two Pianos in F-Sharp Minor, Op. 6, a piece written when he was 16 years old in memory of his father.

Perhaps most notably, the third movement, **adagio in memory of Beethoven**, features an extended allusion to Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata, which permeates the entirety of the movement. Shostakovich greatly admired Beethoven and his work, and it is striking that he would choose, at the end of his own life, to honor the long passed composer in this way.

Though the piece contains many fearful, painful, and hauntingly beautiful moments characteristic of Shostakovich's work, the composer emphasized to Druzhinin that the piece was *not* a funeral march. Instead, he insisted that the music was "bright." One kind of brightness can be seen in the satirical caricatures that Shostakovich portrays in the second movement, but perhaps the most striking sense of brightness comes from the ever-pervasive presence of Beethoven in the third movement. It is as if Beethoven is there, walking alongside Shostakovich, accompanying him into his final compositional moments.