Senior Recital:  
May Loh Qiao Qian, Viola

STAMITZ, Carl Philipp
Viola Concerto in D Major, Op. 1

I. Allegro

II. Andante Moderato

III. Rondeaux

FUJIKURA, Dai
Engraving for Viola

Section 1: Elements A B C D

Section 2

Section 3: Elements E F G

BRAHMS, Johannes
Viola Sonata in Eb Major, Op. 120 No. 2

I. Allegro amabile

II. Allegro appassionato

III. Andante con moto
**PROGRAMME NOTES**

*Carl Philipp Stamitz* (1745-1801) was a Czech-German composer and virtuoso player of the violin, viola and viola d’amore. One of the most prolific composers from Mannheim, Stamitz wrote over 50 symphonies and 60 concertos. His years in Paris and London influenced compositional styles, such as his pervasive lyricism and natural melodic flow, to be of a more cosmopolitan style than traditional Mannheim music of the time.

The viola concerto was written in 1774 and has become a staple in the repertoire for viola today. The first movement opens with a statement of the theme by the orchestra and is followed by a lengthy tutti section. The solo viola then reiterates the theme and develops ideas through virtuosic passages of double stops and arpeggios. Embellishments propel the music through numerous keys before returning to its home key of D major. A cadenza is featured and the soloist is given space to further display his abilities on the viola before the final entrance of the orchestra puts a resounding end to this lively movement.

The second movement ‘Andante Moderato’ begins in darkness but continues as an exploration of the rich and warm sonority of the lower registers of the viola, as well as the sweet singing sound of its upper registers.

The final movement of this concerto is an energetic rondo. Consisting of alternating sections between the solo viola and the orchestra, the rondo theme is introduced right away by the solo viola before being immediately repeated by the orchestra. The final section of the movement contains sweeping arpeggios and running passages into till-then-unexplored registers of the viola, before the final reiteration of the rondo theme serves as a brilliant conclusion to this work.

*Dai Fujikura’s* (1977-) Engraving was commissioned by the 3rd Tokyo International Viola Competition in 2014. Intended to help each musician differentiate himself, Fujikura was inspired to compose a piece that gave the musician the creative freedom to restructure the music and make each performance unique.

‘The piece is structured in three macro sections:

Section 1 has 4 elements: A, B, C, D

Section 2 has just 1 element

Section 3 has 3 elements: E, F, G

In Section 1, the FOUR elements (A, B, C, D) can be played in any order. All elements must be used, but cannot be repeated.

Similarly, in Section 3, the THREE elements (E, F, G) can be played in any order. All elements must be used, but cannot be repeated.
Once the performer has chosen an order, all elements and sections should be played attacca and must be played as one piece of music, as if it were written out exactly from beginning to an end in traditional fashion.

Within the scope of these restrictions there are 144 possible permutations for the performer.’

Written by Dai Fujikura (edited by Miranda Jackson)

The viola sonatas Op.120 No. 1 and 2 by Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), originally written for clarinet and piano, was inspired by clarinettist Richard Mühlfeld’s playing. Written in the 1890s, they were some of Brahms’ last pieces of chamber music, composed after Brahms had decided to retire from composition. The viola version of the sonata was a request by publisher Simrock and Brahms had requested the help of violinist Joseph Joachim as he found the “two works quite awkward and unpleasant as viola sonatas”.

Today’s performance will be the 2nd of the Op. 120 set. Unlike the 1st sonata of the set, Op. 120 No. 2 consists of three rather than four movements. Opening with the direction Allegro amabile, the gentle, song-like character creates a mood of peace and serenity. This develops into passionate moments of longing and occasionally, unease. However, all sense of discomfort fades quickly with the return of the opening theme. As Brahms skilfully plays with harmonies, a variety of colours create a journey through different emotions. This journey ends peacefully and unassumingly with the tranquillo coda quenching the fire from before, giving no hints of former moments of radiance and passion.

The second movement takes the form of a Scherzo rather than a typical slow movement. Dark and impassioned, the Eb minor opening serves as a contrast with its B major middle section, that is more poised and processional in nature.

The final movement is in theme and variations form, which Brahms adored. The gentle and graceful theme is subjected to five different variations. It develops rhythmically in the first three variations – firstly through syncopations, then triplets and finally 32nd notes. The fourth movement serves as a transition, as the movement in the music is brought to a halt. The simplicity of this variation suspends and purifies the music before the next Allegro variation interrupts with storm and excitement. The music surges forward breathlessly, receding only for a short moment in a chromatic descent. Excitement then propels the music into its glorious conclusion.