

Hopkins Center for the Arts

at Dartmouth

presents

Sally Pinkas, piano

Musical Couples: The Schumanns and the Oliveiras

Tuesday, January 23, 8 pm

Rollins Chapel • Dartmouth College • 2024

Funded in part by the William B. Hart Memorial Fund, the Kenneth 1952 & Ellen Roman, the Frank L. Harrington 1924 Fund No. 3 and the Sidney Stoneman 1933 Fund.

We thank Mrs. Selma Bornstein for her generous donation of the Petrof Concert Grand Piano, given in loving memory of her husband Dr. Murray Bornstein and used for tonight's concert.

Program

Approximate duration: 75 minutes

Romance, Op. 11, No. 2 (1840)
Andante—Allegro passionato

Clara Schumann (1819–1896)

Widmeriana (1990)

Alda Oliveira (b. 1945)

Variações Variadas (Varied Variations, 1980)

Jamary Oliveira (1944–2020)

Three Romances, Op. 21 (1855)
Andante
Allegretto. Sehr zart zu spielen
Agitato

Clara Schumann

Autumn in Boston (2022)

Alda Oliveira

World premiere
Prelude
Moderato

Oito peças para piano (Eight Pieces for Piano, 1966)

Jamary Oliveira

- I. Cancrizans (Crab Canon)
- II. Irracional (Irrational)
- III. Staccato
- IV. Tempo livre (Free Time)
- V. Contraponto (Counterpoint)
- VI. Marcial (Martial)
- VII. Cântone per arsin et thesin (Canon for Arsin and Thesin)
- VIII. Harmônicos (Harmonics)

Noveletten, Op. 21 (1838)

Robert Schumann (1810–1856)

- I. Markiert und kräftig (Marked and strong)
- IV. Ballmässig. Sehr munter (Ball-like. Very cheerful)
- III. Leicht und mit Humor (Light and with humor)
- II. Äußerst rasch und mit Bravour (Extremely fast and with bravura)

Program Notes

Two Musical Couples: An Incidental Portrait

These are musical snapshots of four musicians: Clara and Robert Schumann of 19th-century Germany, and Alda and Jamary Oliveira of 20th- and 21st-century Brazil. For artists, sharing a life is a challenge as well as a privilege. Forging one's own artistic voice while resonating with a partner's creativity requires patience, perseverance and trust. Passion may have to give way to pragmatism, while ideas could be fondly shared or drastically diverge. Whatever the case may be, a relationship's complexity can only be surmised by an observer. Here it is anecdotally glimpsed through the music the four created.

Romance, Op. 11, No. 2, by Clara Schumann

The year 1839 found the young pianist Clara Wieck in Paris, embarking on her first independent concert tour in defiance of her father, and preparing for her much-anticipated marriage to the unknown composer Robert Schumann, nine years her senior. A child-prodigy, Clara also composed. In Paris she penned the *Trois Romances* Op. 11, of which the second (initially titled *Andante* and *Allegro*) gained Robert's praise. He described its middle section as sounding "like Beethoven, very heartfelt and full of passion" and published it in his *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* that same year. Critics noted stylistic similarities between Clara's *Romance* and Robert's concurrent music. He strove to be intimately connected to Clara's inner life, though a touchy exchange is found in their correspondence about this work: too many suggestions by the groom-to-be elicit a polite but firm retort from his betrothed.

Widmeriana, by Alda Oliveira

In 1990, already a celebrated pianist, composer and educator in Salvador, Bahia, Alda Oliveira composed *Widmeriana* in homage to recently-deceased composer and mentor Ernst Widmer (1927–1990). She writes: "Widmer taught my husband Jamary theory and composition at the School of Music of the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA); Jamary was like a son to him. Widmer was also my professor of music literature and structure, though I did not study composition with

him. Whenever he composed a piano work, he asked me to sight-read it. I premiered his *Estudos Polirítmicos* which I liked a lot. Thus, in my piece *Widmeriana* connect the polyrhythms Widmer explores with a Brazilian folk song *Minha Sabiá, Minha Zabelê*, so as to express my musical and personal connection with him."

Alda's *Widmeriana* is written in a mostly tonal idiom, to which an improvisatory flair is gradually added. A funeral-march melody taken from the last study in Widmer's *Estudos Polirítmicos* is used as a *cantus firmus* (fixed melody, a European compositional technique); the Brazilian folk song appears at the center of the work and is then re-combined with the initial melody. The convergence of the European with the Brazilian embodies, indeed, the spirit of Swiss-Brazilian Widmer, who had a decisive role in the creation of the notable 'Group of Composers from Bahia' (GCB) in 1966. Jamary and Alda Oliveira were members of this group, whose succinct manifesto reads, "We are mainly against all and every asserted principle." The GCB became the focus of intense artistic activity within Bahia, as its composers strove to connect with the rich traditions of Salvador's popular music, as well as with a wider Brazilian new music milieu.

Variações Variadas (Varied Variations), by Jamary Oliveira

Born in the interior of Bahia, young Jamary Oliveira studied viola, flute and tuba, and received his undergraduate degree in composition in 1969, just as his Bahia Composers Group was starting to flourish. Having completed his MA in Composition at Brandeis University in 1979, Oliveira wrote the two brief movements of his *Variações Variadas* back in Salvador in 1980. Perhaps a reflection of his Brandeis sojourn, the work is motivically and rhythmically tightly controlled, in a post-Webern idiom (Brandeis faculty was heavily tilted towards a 12-tone aesthetic at the time).

Program Notes *continued*

Musicologist Celso Loureiro Chaves suggests that “everything [in the work] originates from three basic tonal elements based in short sequences of fourths and fifths. From these three elements, variety is obtained through technical procedures. According to the composer, the three elements work together, each obscuring the personality of the other, redistributing pitches and rhythmic complexities and extending the duration of each temporal fragment via repetition, always repetition.”

To the listener, the repetition and intensification is perhaps the most obvious quality of the first movement, while the second movement is sparse and cryptic. The work is permeated by deep lyricism, and its brevity encourages repeated hearings. Jamarly went on to become a beloved Professor of Literature and Music Theory and Composition at UFBA, and a pioneer in the research of musical software, which became his main pursuit. In 1994 he was elected a member of the Brazilian Academy of Music.

Three Romances, Op. 21, by Clara Schumann

1850 found the Schumann family relocating from Dresden to Düsseldorf, where Robert found employment as Music Director. A move to a new apartment in 1852 finally gave Clara, by then a mother of five, a private space in which she was able to compose. The works she wrote there in 1853, among which are the 2nd and 3rd Romances of Op. 21, were to be among her last. Robert’s illness surfaced during this period: he was hospitalized in 1854. The work which became the 1st Romance of Op. 21 was written in 1855 on a day that Brahms came to visit Robert in the hospital (in her diary entry that day she writes of “feeling so sad”). She was not allowed to visit her husband at his hospital for two years. After his death in 1856 she abandoned composition altogether, dedicating herself to supporting her family via her concert tours, and to championing Robert’s legacy.

The central work in the set, the 1st Romance is indeed poignantly melancholic. The 2nd, an *Allegretto* brings to mind the music of Mendelssohn (whom she knew well), and the *Agitato* 3rd is beautifully inventive in a Chopinesque manner. It is not uncommon for composers to be influenced by their peers. However, Clara’s music has a flavor of its own—always well crafted, with direct expression and nuanced harmonic progressions, and requiring considerable pianistic elegance. The Romances Op 21 were published in 1855 and dedicated ‘with friendship’ to Brahms, who remained Clara’s life-long musical and personal soulmate.

Autumn in Boston (2022), by Alda Oliveira

Sadness is similarly reflected in Alda Oliveira’s *Autumn in Boston*. She writes: “After my husband’s death in March 2022, I experienced a very strong period of loneliness and sadness; it was a time of grief. The pandemic arrived, and with it, an immense lack of company, of trustworthy friendships, of attendance at live cultural experiences. Stimulated by my son, I travelled to Boston, starting a new friendship circle, and new cultural experiences. It was the beginning of autumn, a season which always dazzles me with its falling leaves of different nuances of colors, shapes and maturation. These permeated my imagination and thoughts. Traveling around Boston with a friend made me see again how wonderful Nature is, showing us how to adapt to changes imposed by life. I felt like a tree inside, adapting to a new climate, to a new time.

After a long period of very low musical productivity, it seemed that the grief and sadness were beginning to leave me. By observing and feeling, by experiencing the Boston autumn I could feel Nature freeing my soul, allowing me to once again live my life fully. Stimulated by the falling leaves, the beauty of exchanging thoughts about life experiences, sharing deep feelings with friends, going to concerts, my head

filled with musical ideas. I started to compose Autumn in Boston. I felt life again connected with nature and people.

The piece attempts to describe my impressions of falling leaves of autumn, so I include lots of improvisation. The performer needs to think that the movement of the wind on the trees is the input and stimulus for notes to fall from his/her fingers as if leaves were drifting and falling to the ground. I could have written all the notes in the score, but I chose to imitate the characteristics of the season, including randomness based on environmental and interpersonal influences. The notes chosen as motive for the Prelude are F and D, as if I were calling my friend. The second part, Moderato, expresses the deep feelings of a romantic person expressing love and tenderness towards nature, people and humanity.”

***Oito peças para piano (Eight Pieces for Piano),* by Jamary Oliveira**

While Alda’s work shows her improvisational prowess as a piano virtuosa, Jamary’s music is careful and deliberate, the result of a pain-staking intellectual process. Written in the late 60s, *Oito peças para piano* by the 22-year-old Jamary is one of his earliest works. It already shows his interest in aphoristic and abstract expression. In keeping with the plurality of the nascent composers’ group, no single musical language is used. Each of the eight miniatures is a soundscape of a single idea; while *Cancrians* or *Irracional* can only be understood through careful analysis of the score, others such as *Staccato* or *Marcial* are aurally true to form. It has been suggested that the sardonic and aggressive *Marcial* is meant to offer commentary on the brutality of Brazil’s concurrent military dictatorship. *Contraponto* and *Cânone* deftly use traditional European compositional techniques.

Alda premiered many of Jamary’s piano works, as Clara premiered Robert’s. Similarly, following Jamary’s untimely death, Alda has been actively involved in preserving his legacy, while rediscovering her own creativity and tending to their children and grandchildren.

Novelletten, Op. 21, by Robert Schumann

Throughout 1838 (preceding Clara’s Parisian tour) her father’s opposition to her union with Robert showed no signs of abating. Young Schumann’s *Novelletten* Op. 21 were composed in Leipzig during this time. Unlike his other works which were built on an identifiable formalistic or cyclical idea, the works in this set seem to be an incidental group of entities characterized by mercurial mood changes. Robert himself once stated that “this work is a series of longish tales of adventure, intimately connected and written with passionate joy—cheerful and flighty, but somewhere I also hit rock bottom.” Schumann heard Liszt play the *Novelletten* in Leipzig in 1840 and reported to Clara that “the 2nd *Novellette* gave me great joy; you can scarcely believe what an effect it makes” (it is the most virtuosic of the set).

As a whole, the *Novelletten* form what is at once the largest and the least known among Schumann’s major piano cycles, though the composer still regarded it among his most successful works. As he wrote to Clara: “I have composed a frightful amount for you in the last three weeks: light-hearted things, Egmont stories, family scenes with fathers, a wedding—in short, the most amiable things; and have named the whole work ‘*Novelletten*’, because you are called Clara and ‘*Wiecketten*’ doesn’t have a good enough ring to it.” One hears the exuberance of Schumann’s artistic vision, offered to his beloved with admiration and fervent hopes for a joined future.

Sally Pinkas

About the Artist

Following her London debut at Wigmore Hall, Israeli-born pianist **Sally Pinkas** has garnered universal praise as an eloquent and ardent performer. Pinkas shares her wide-ranging repertoire through her travel with enthusiastic audiences and young pianists. Equally at home in a recording studio, Sally's discography features works by Mozart, Schumann, Fauré, Debussy, Gaubert, Martinů, Rochberg, Shapiro, Pinkham and Wolff, released on the MSR, Centaur, Naxos, Toccata Classics and Mode labels. Her 2022 MSR release of Sonatas by Shostakovich and Bridge was hailed as "...A mandatory purchase for all pianophiles: two major works, in performances of utter power... ideal melding of strength and emotional pliancy..." by *Fanfare Magazine*. A CD featuring Piano

Quintets by Miguel del Aguila (with Cuarteto Latinoamericano), including Tamboreño, a Hop commission, has just been released by Urtext Digital Classics. Pinkas tours regularly as a member of Ensemble Schumann and the Hirsch-Pinkas Duo (with her husband pianist Evan Hirsch), and collaborates with the Adaskin String Trio, the Apple Hill String Quartet and Cuarteto Latinoamericano. Pinkas holds performance degrees from Indiana University and the New England Conservatory of Music, and a PhD in Composition from Brandeis University. Pianist-in-residence at the Hopkins Center at Dartmouth College, she is Professor of Music at Dartmouth's Music Department.

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