

Date du récital/Date of recital: *Thursday, March 23rd, 2023*

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These program notes are written by the student performing, and are presented by the student in partial fulfillment of the requirements of their course. Ces notes de programme sont écrites par l'étudiant-interprète et sont présentées en tant que réalisation partielle des critères de leur cours.

### **Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)**

#### **Sonata No.1 in G Minor, BWV 1001 (excerpts)**

#### **III. Siciliana**

#### **IV. Presto**

The Violin Sonata No. 1 in G minor is part of Johann Sebastian Bach's masterpiece, *Three Sonatas and Three Partitas for Solo Violin*, which he composed in 1720. The whole set was initially published by Nikolaus Simrock in the city of Bonn in 1802. The first recording of the complete set was performed by the American-born British violinist Yehudi Menuhin in 1936 and subsequently by his mentor, the Romanian violinist George Enescu, in 1940. Today, this set of compositions is widely recognized as a standard repertoire for professional violinists.

All three sonatas follow the *Sonata da Chiesa* (church sonata) form - slow-fast-slow-fast. The last two movements of the first sonata in G minor also follow this slow-fast structure as a *Siciliana* and *Presto*. Specifically, the *Siciliana* is a Baroque musical genre that Italian Baroque composer Alessandro Scarlatti established back in the 17th century. The characteristics of *Siciliana*, such as compound meters in 6/8 or 12/8, moderato tempo, and dotted lifting rhythms, are often associated with the Baroque pastorale. In J.S. Bach's *Siciliana*, the violin consistently brings out the opening motif - a half-measure motif presented in a combination of dotted rhythms and sixteenth notes, in different keys and modulations throughout the movement. The motif is often followed by a contrasting response appearing in a higher or lower register. The constant recurrence of the relaxed dotted figures sets a sense of simplicity and elegance for this movement, which helps transition smoothly from the demanding second movement *Fugue* to the fiery last movement *Presto*.

In contrast to the polyphonic writing in the previous three movements, where the different voices are simultaneously written out on the score, Bach chose to write a monophonic texture in the final *Presto* movement. However, he still carried out the bass continuo line by placing them on the important beat one or beat three in 3/8 meter. The combination of straightforward, non-stop

sixteenth notes in 3/8 meter with the fast Presto tempo ultimately ends the entire first sonata in ornamented and virtuosic gestures.

### **Edvard Grieg (1843-1907)**

#### **Sonata No. 2 in G Major, Op. 13**

##### **I. Lento doloroso — Poco allegro — Allegro vivace — Presto**

##### **II. Allegretto tranquillo**

##### **III. Allegro animato**

Edvard Grieg (1843-1907) is widely regarded as one of the foremost composers of the Romantic era, renowned for his contributions to bringing the music of Norway to the realm of classical music. Grieg is particularly noted for his skillful incorporation of Norwegian folk music elements into his compositions. Between 1865-1887, he composed in total three violin sonatas, each of which can be representative of his musical fusion of Norwegian folk songs and classical music. Among them, the second violin sonata in G Major, a piece dedicated to Norwegian violinist Johan Svendsen, presents Grieg's nationalistic musical style.

The violin states the first movement with an expressive "recitative-like" opening phrase, then the piano introduces the main Norwegian dance theme at the beginning of the *Allegro Vivace* section, then intertwines the dance theme with the violin in different rhythmic fragments, dynamics, and modulations throughout the first movement. Continuing with the dance meter of 3/4 from the first movement, the second movement consists of two parts - a gravitated swing and peaceful storytelling. Although the movement starts and ends with a sorrowful and intimate character in the key of E minor, the uplifting feeling of folk songs is not lost in either of the two large sections. More obviously, the third movement *Allegro animato* illustrates even more chill and playful swing as more and more sweeping rhythmic figures and sparkling characters join in this final carnival. Ultimately, the entire sonata ends with a bold and passionate melodic theme followed by a series of sweeping and rapid rhythmic figures on the piano and repeated heavy G major chords on the violin.

### **Chen Yi (n. en / b. 1953)**

#### **Memory for Solo Violin**

After graduating from Columbia University with a Doctorate in Composition and later joining the faculty at the Peabody Institute in Baltimore, Maryland, Chen Yi has become one of the most prominent Chinese-American contemporary classical music composers. Her extensive body of work includes numerous orchestral pieces, chamber music, choral works, and solo compositions, frequently incorporating musical elements drawn from Chinese traditional arts and folk songs.

The solo piece for violin, *Memory*, was composed in 2011 alongside two other versions for solo flute and solo cello. As a memorial to her teacher, Professor Lin Yaoji, this work reflects the composer's deep sense of sorrow and yet optimistic remembrance through her masterful use of dramatic writing in dynamics, intervals, and phrases. The incorporation of instrumental techniques, such as slides and trills in certain passages further infuses the composition with a distinctive oriental character. In the program notes Chen Yi wrote: "Dear Professor Lin: I wish you could hear the tune in MEMORY, which sounds like my painful cry out of your name in our Cantonese dialect. I expressed my deep sorrow in the music, to remember your fatherly mentorship. Your meaningful smile will always be with us encouragingly."<sup>1</sup>

### **César Franck (1822-1890)**

#### **Sonata in A Major for Violin and Piano**

##### **I. Allegretto ben moderato**

##### **II. Allegro**

##### **III. Recitativo-Fantasia. Ben moderato — Molto lento**

##### **IV. Allegretto poco mosso**

The Sonata in A major is one of the most well-known pieces composed by the French romantic composer César Franck. The piece was dedicated as a wedding gift to the Belgian virtuoso violinist and composer Eugène Ysaÿe. The first performance was given to the guests at Ysaÿe's wedding in Arlon in 1886. Later, in December of the same year, the piece was performed again by Ysaÿe and pianist Léontine Bordes-Pène for the general public at the Musée Moderne de Peinture (Museum of Modern Painting) in Brussels.<sup>2</sup>

The sonata consists of four movements, alternating between slow and fast tempos. The first movement, *Allegretto ben moderato*, conveys a peaceful and sweet narrative. The violin first introduces the main theme after the piano sets up the tone, then both instruments blend together, accompanied by sweetly rippling passages on the piano. The second movement immediately changes the character of the first movement from the very opening of the piano solo as if there are waves of ocean riffling, which builds up the emotion towards the end and leads to the beginning of the third movement, *Recitativo-Fantasia*. The third movement overall presents a dreamy character, leaving more freedom for the performer to interpret each phrase. In contrast, the final movement demands precise rhythms and pulses from both performers as the main theme

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<sup>1</sup> Chen Yi, "Memory: for Flute," *Shining a light: 21st Century Music from Underrepresented Composers*,

<https://exhibits.library.umkc.edu/s/shining-a-light/item/1778>.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Judd, "Franck's Violin Sonata in A Major: An Enduring Wedding Gift, "Con Amore", " *The Listener's Club*,

<https://thelistenersclub.com/2021/01/13/francks-violin-sonata-in-a-major-an-enduring-wedding-gift-con-amore/>.

is written in canons. The intertwining melodic lines elegantly flow through the alternations of both instruments. Ultimately, this exciting and uplifting character persists until the final chord, led by the piano's virtuosic swift patterns.

## Bibliography

Yi, Chen. "Memory: for Flute." Shining a light: 21st Century Music from Underrepresented Composers. Accessed March 15, 2023.

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