

November 16, 2015 at 7:00pm

Princeton University Chapel

Isabelle Faust, Violin

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

(1685-1750)

Sonata No. 1 in G Minor, BWV 1001

Adagio

Fuga

Siciliana

Presto

Partita No. 1 in B Minor, BWV 1002

Allemanda - Double

Corrente - Double

Sarabande - Double

Tempo di Borea - Double

Sonata No. 2 in A Minor, BWV 1003

Grave

Fuga

Andante

Allegro

— 30 MINUTE INTERMISSION —

Partita No. 3 in E Major, BWV 1006

Praeludio

Louré

Gavotte en Rondeau

Menuets I and II

Bourée

Gigue

Sonata No. 3 in C Major, BWV 1005

Adagio

Fuga

Largo

Allegro assai

Partita No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1004

Allemanda

Corrente

Sarabanda

Giga

Ciaccona

Please join us for refreshments served in the lobby of Chancellor Green during the extended intermission. Chancellor Green is located across the plaza from the Chapel. See an usher for directions to Chancellor Green.

About Isabelle Faust



Isabelle Faust captivates her listeners through her insightful and faithful interpretations, based on a thorough knowledge of the historical context of the works as well as her attention to current scholarship.

At an early age, Isabelle Faust won the prestigious Leopold Mozart and Paganini Competitions and was soon invited to appear with the world's leading orchestras, including the Berlin Philharmonic, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the NHK Symphony Orchestra Tokyo. She continues to be one of the most sought-after violinists in the world.

Isabelle Faust performs a wide-ranging repertoire, from J.S. Bach all the way through to contemporary composers such as Ligeti, Lachenmann and Widmann. Ever keen to explore new musical horizons, Faust is equally at home as a chamber musician and as a soloist with major orchestras or period ensembles. To highlight this versatility, in addition to her mastery of the great symphonic violin concertos, Isabelle Faust also performs works such as Kurtág's "Kafka Fragments" with the soprano Christine Schäfer, or Brahms' and Mozart's clarinet quintets on historical instruments.

Over the course of her career, Isabelle Faust has regularly performed or recorded with world-renowned conductors including Frans Brüggen, Mariss Jansons, Giovanni Antonini, Philippe Herreweghe, Daniel Harding and Bernard Haitink.

During recent years Isabelle Faust developed a close relationship with the late Claudio Abbado and performed and recorded under his baton. Their recording of Beethoven's and Berg's violin concertos with the Orchestra Mozart received a "Diapason d'Or" (France), "Echo Klassik" (Germany), "Gramophone Award 2012" (UK) as well as a "Record Academy Award" (Japan).

Faust has recorded many discs for Harmonia Mundi, including the Bach Solo Sonatas and Partitas that we will hear tonight in two discs. She has also recorded with her recital partner pianist Alexander Melnikov, who will make his Princeton University Concerts debut in March. These include their latest album with the Brahms sonatas for violin and piano, which was released in September. In addition, the second installment of the Schumann Trilogy — recorded with Alexander Melnikov, Jean-Guihen Queyras, the Freiburger Barockorchester and Pablo Heras-Casado, featuring the Piano Concerto and Piano Trio No. 2 Op. 63 -- was issued in August 2015. The third and final installment, with the Cello Concerto and Piano Trio No. 1, will be released in early 2016.

Isabelle Faust plays the 'Sleeping Beauty' Stradivarius (1704), kindly on loan by the L-Bank Baden-Württemberg.

About the Program

A Personal Statement by Isabelle Faust

Anyone who examines the manuscript of the six sonatas and partitas of Bach sees a world of calligraphic beauty and perfection opening up before him or her. The sweeping pen strokes lead us through a universe of pure aesthetics, a cathedral-like total work of art with its pillars, its decorations, its sublime architecture. Bach's handwriting radiates grandeur and resolution alongside pulsating vitality. What harmony and equilibrium are to be seen here!

“The sonatas and partitas have accompanied me ever since my first steps in music, and are the daily bedrock of my approach to the entire violin literature.
— Isabelle Faust”

And what a hard task it is to make those very features perceptible in performance! When they tackle this text, today's interpreters are faced with an enormous mass of questions which seem to grow even bigger with every attempt to answer them, so diverse and apparently insoluble are they, and so far distant is the goal: Bachian perfection, complexity and energy combined in absolute balance. Study of contemporary documents concerning Eighteenth-century performing practice and the valuable experience in this field acquired by many of our colleagues over several decades can help us today to make decisions about choice of instrument, pitch, or intonation within the key. It is indispensable to be familiar with the various styles that influenced Bach's music, the unmarked performance conventions of the time (such as ornaments added by the player), and the character and rhythmic execution of the dances. Musical rhetoric, articulation, and use of vibrato must be taken into consideration, not forgetting the internal structure of each movement and its function within the individual sonata or partita and the cycle as a whole. But above all it is vital to grasp the harmony and polyphony and make the listener hear them. On a

melody instrument like the violin this demands the greatest intellectual concentration from both performer and listener. (With four strings and four fingers one can often only imply the polyphony and harmony, leaving them to be developed mentally.)

The sonatas and partitas have accompanied me ever since my first steps in music, and are the daily bedrock of my approach to the entire violin literature. Their technical and intellectual requirements represent for me a basis and a license for tackling all later works written for the instrument.

All that is said in this program may perhaps give some idea of the thorough work and longstanding experience this music demands. But in the end its greatness cannot be comprehended through analytical formulas. Even after studying all these elements, the interpreter stands stunned and often also baffled before a masterpiece of this stature. It seems to me that here the journey is its own reward – the constant striving to get a step closer to the unattainable by tirelessly pressing onwards. This concert should be seen as a bow to the Master, a snapshot of the most intimate character, and may perhaps give some small glimpse of an ever-continuing process.

An Introduction

by Professor Wendy Heller, Chair of the Princeton University Department of Music

For those of us who have the great privilege of teaching music of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, Bach always presents a special challenge. In many historical surveys, Bach is studied toward the end of the semester; ideally, the students come to his music after a deep immersion in the remarkable works of his predecessors—Monteverdi, Frescobaldi, Schütz, Couperin, and Purcell—to name but a few of the composers whose music remains on my students’ playlists long after the semester is over. I always approach Bach with

“There is always the moment when we first enter Bach’s musical world when we are inevitably confronted with a revelation, a music that so completely transforms the expectations for that genre or the capabilities of the instrument in question that we begin to see everything anew.

— Professor Wendy Heller

caution, careful to contextualize rather than canonize him, resisting the temptation to cast him as a titanic hero whose shadow has so often diminished the accomplishments of other musicians of his age. But there is always the moment when we first enter Bach’s musical world; it scarcely matters with what we begin; it could be the Mass in B Minor, the *Goldberg Variations*, *Brandenburg Concertos*, *The Art of the Fugue* or the violin sonatas and partitas we are going to hear tonight—when we are inevitably confronted with a revelation, a music that so completely transforms the expectations for that genre or the capabilities of the instrument in question that we begin to see everything anew. As a historian, I may want my students to understand, for instance, Bach’s relationship to his contemporaries—such as Georg Philipp Telemann or the numerous other Lutheran musicians who toiled away in Northern Germany in the Eighteenth century—and to appreciate as well his human qualities as a father and husband. But there is something about the grandeur and scope of his music that has always made it so difficult to imagine that Bach could actually have belonged to this very ordinary world in which he apparently lived.

Tonight we have the rare opportunity to hear all six violin sonatas played by the incomparable Isabelle Faust, and I doubt that anyone will be able to resist the temptation to give ourselves over completely to Bach’s mastery. The two articles in this program underscore the remarkable nature of this set of violin sonatas and partitas that embrace so many techniques and styles of the Baroque, albeit in ways that few other composers imagined. It is a particular pleasure for me that my former professor Robert L. Marshall agreed to write for our program tonight. Marshall received both his M.F.A. and Ph.D from Princeton University; his brilliant writings on Bach have contributed immeasurably to our understanding of the man and his music, and we are proud to call him one of our own.

STUDENT VOICES

An important part of our mission is to engage and educate Princeton students. As part of our Creative Reactions Program, we have asked students to tell us their thoughts about the artists we are presenting. We will be sharing them with you throughout our programs this year.

An Overview

by Professor Peter Laki, Visiting Associate Professor of Music, Bard College

Johann Sebastian Bach was not the first composer to write unaccompanied works for violin. For example, Johann Paul von Westhoff (1656-1705) had composed a suite for *violon seul sans basse*, published in 1696. But no one ever gave the genre the same amount of attention that Bach lavished on it in the three sonatas and three partitas completed at Köthen around 1720. The six works were copied into one of the most beautiful Bach autograph manuscripts known today (there are several facsimile editions available). These compositions were so unusual in their own time that it took a long time for their exceptional richness to be fully appreciated. Yet for well over a hundred years now, they have been firmly established as the pinnacle of the violin repertoire and the body of work with which every violinist must grapple, often for an entire lifetime.

Although best known in his own day as a virtuoso organist, Bach was also a professional-level violin player. His first job—for a few months in 1703, when he was 18 years old—was as a violinist in Weimar (where he had a chance to meet Westhoff). Bach was intimately familiar with the technique of the instrument, and in his unaccompanied violin works he demonstrated that knowledge by offering a true encyclopedia of Baroque violin playing. The greatest challenge in writing for an unaccompanied violin is, of course, to accommodate both the melodic line and the supporting harmonies with only four strings, since polyphonic playing is possible on a string instrument only within certain well-defined limits.

The three sonatas follow the four-movement structure (slow-fast-slow-fast) of the Baroque *sonata da chiesa* (“church sonata”). The opening movements are essentially preludes, not unlike those in the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. The elaborate ornamentation of the preludes and their frequently modulating harmonies serve as introductions to the fugues that follow in each case. To write a fugue for unaccompanied violin represents a special virtuoso feat as the violin has to play all the voices and countersubjects at the same time. The third movements of the sonatas are lyrical statements (“Siciliana,” “Andante”): each is an instrumental aria in two sections. Finally, the last movements consist mainly of perpetual motion in rapid sixteenth-notes, serving as vehicles for harmonic and structural intricacies and requiring a very high level of virtuosity.

The three partitas are sets of dance movements, which are highly “stylized,” that is, meant for listening rather than for dancing; yet the character of the original dances is

clearly recognizable in each case. (Bach used the terms *suite* and *partita* interchangeably in his dance music; he actually spelled the latter *partia* in the autograph of the violin works.) Bach’s suites and partitas (including those for keyboard) are usually built around the standard sequence Allemande—Courante—Sarabande—Gigue; however, among the violin partitas, this sequence is found only in the D-Minor work, where the four dances are followed by the celebrated Chaconne. In the first partita (in B Minor), a Bourrée (another popular Baroque dance) is substituted for the final Gigue; this work has the added peculiarity that each dance is repeated in a richly ornamented version, called the *Double*. The third partita contains a *Louré*—a slow version of the Gigue which, in all of Bach’s works, is found only here and in the French Suite No. 5 for harpsichord, as well as the concerto-like *Gavotte en Rondeau*.

“ A pianist friend once told me, “Bach is the strongest proof that God exists.” Although I am a pragmatic, secular person, I believe Bach’s music is the closest mankind will ever get to a transcendental experience.

– Connie Zhu, Princeton Class of ’19

Each movement in the sonatas and partitas contains something special not found in the others. If we have to single out just one movement that stands apart from all the rest, it has to be the Chaconne at the end of the D-Minor partita. Some of the rhythmic features (as well as the multiple stops) of this movement are foreshadowed in the Sarabande from the same partita, yet the Chaconne as a whole is without parallel in Bach's entire output. Often performed by itself, it is Bach's single longest instrumental movement. The word *chaconne* refers to a set of variations over a descending bass line, a genre that was popular during the Baroque era though never developed on such a grandiose scale or with such a wide expressive range as here. The four-note descending line is repeated no fewer than 64 times. The variations are arranged in a large three-part structure with an extended major-key area as a contrasting middle section. Bach used a wide array of special violin techniques to individualize the variations, creating a composition of whose technical difficulties were unparalleled during the Baroque era. Passages of primarily rhythmical and primarily melodic interest alternate throughout; at the end of the piece, the eight-bar theme returns in its majestic original form.

About the Bach Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin

By Robert Marshall, Sachar Professor of Music Emeritus, Brandeis University

I

You are alone!

Sei Solo. The title page of Johann Sebastian Bach's autograph manuscript of the sonatas and partitas for unaccompanied violin – a masterpiece of musical calligraphy as unsurpassed in its beauty as the compositions that follow within – reads, in full, as follows:

Sei Solo à Violino senza Basso accompagnato. Libro Primo. da Joh: Seb: Bach. Ao. 1720.

The manuscript, to judge by its 1720 date, initiated the series of systematically organized collections of instrumental works that Bach set down in beautiful fair copies during the second half of his six-year sojourn (1717-23) at the small court of Prince Leopold at Köthen. The violin compositions were followed by the *Brandenburg Concertos* (1721), the preludes and fugues of the first book of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* (1722), and the two- and three-part *Inventions and Sinfonias* for keyboard (1723).

The first two words on the title pages of the violin works – *Sei Solo* – arouse curiosity. One's first thought is that Bach surely meant to write *Sei Soli* (Six Solos), referring to the six compositions contained in the manuscript. "His grasp of Italian must have been shaky." But could the composer in fact have known precisely what he was writing and deliberately alerting (or warning) the prospective player, by means of a *double entendre*: *sei solo*, "you are alone" – you and your violin - without the usual reassuring harmonic (and moral?) support of the ubiquitous *basso continuo*?

Bach's title presents other riddles as well. The elaborate title pages of the other collections explain the purpose, or origin, of the compositions, and indicate their intended recipient. The keyboard collections were intended for "the musical youth desirous to learn," or for the "pastime of those already skilled." The *Brandenburg Concertos* were intended for their dedicatee, the Margrave of Brandenburg. Their stated purpose: to demonstrate the composer's fitness for employment in the Margrave's service. Along with his name the composer in each instance

proudly provided his title and position: Kapellmeister to the Prince of Anhalt-Köthen.

The title page of the unaccompanied violin pieces lacks all of those elements. But it does contain one vital piece of information - that date: “a[nn]o 1720.” In March of 1720 Bach marked his thirty-fifth birthday. In May he set off with the princely entourage to the spa resort of Karlsbad in Bohemia (now Karlovy Vary in the Czech Republic). This was Bach’s second sojourn there - the only times he ever traveled beyond the borders of Germany. Upon returning home to Köthen in July Bach learned that his wife of thirteen years, Maria Barbara, had suddenly died and was buried on July 7, 1720, possibly just hours before his arrival.

These extraordinary compositions were almost certainly written over an extended period of time. Nothing is known for certain about their genesis. Nor is it known precisely when in the year 1720 Bach wrote out the fair copy: specifically, whether he had done so before or after Maria Barbara’s death. The manuscript is written on paper from a Czech mill found nowhere else in his oeuvre. Bach no doubt acquired it during his stay in Karlsbad, and may have spent his free time there copying these works. But he just as well could have written them out after returning to Köthen and learning of his wife’s death. In that case, the work’s heading “*sei solo*” would have had a most personal and poignant meaning, indeed.

The formidable difficulties of these pieces argue that the composer must have had an extraordinary performer in mind. Now Bach himself played the violin - quite respectably. If his son, Carl Philipp Emanuel, can be believed, his father “from his youth until the approach of old age played the violin with purity and strength of tone.” Since Sebastian Bach’s father, Johann Ambrosius, was a professional violinist, the instrument must have played a significant role in his earliest musical experience. Moreover, Bach’s own first professional position - admittedly a brief one, lasting just six months at Weimar in 1703, when he was eighteen - was in fact not as an organist but as a “court musician” whose main obligation, almost certainly, was to play the violin in the Duke’s chamber orchestra. In the summer of 1708 Bach returned to Weimar, remaining there for nine years, until 1717. His title at first was “Organist and Chamber Musician.” That is, in addition to the organ, he was expected to perform on other instruments - no doubt including the violin.

It is hard, nevertheless, to imagine that J. S. Bach himself could play the technically most challenging items among the six solos satisfactorily. Whom did he have in mind? Speculation has often centered on Johann Georg Pisendel (1687-1755), a great violinist and himself the composer of a demanding “Sonata à Violino solo senza Basso.” Bach and Pisendel had met as early as 1709 when Pisendel visited Weimar and most likely again in 1717 when Bach was in Dresden where Pisendel was a leading member of the Dresden court’s illustrious musical ensemble. But the fact that Bach’s manuscript not only mentions no dedicatee but also lacks the composer’s title as Köthen Kapellmeister strongly argues that the fair copy was prepared for local use and for a local performer. The most likely candidate would be Bach’s Köthen colleague, the court concertmaster Joseph Spiess (d. 1730). Spiess was the player evidently entrusted with

“ I first came across Faust in her recording of the Bartók Violin Concertos. What was remarkable about this CD was that she was so deeply engrossed in the meaning of the music that she apparently had read Bartók’s letters and researched the music in the archives in Budapest. Faust is someone who carves out the music that she is playing with a deep intellectual curiosity, and it is this curiosity that draws you in and comprises the soul of her playing. In playing the complete Sonatas and Partitas of Bach in the Princeton University Chapel, a larger-than-life yet intimate space, Faust will likely attain, with her marvelous simplicity, the “clarity and intimacy” that she loves in Bach’s music. And what a privilege it is for us to join her in this historical journey tonight.

— Lian Zhu, Princeton Graduate Student ”

the solo violin parts in Bach's Brandenburg concertos, violin concertos, and sonatas for violin and harpsichord - all apparently works dating from Bach's Köthen period.

Bach's title page contains one final riddle: the phrase *Libro Primo*. No second book of compositions for unaccompanied violin survives. Nor is there evidence that one ever existed. One view is that the six suites for unaccompanied cello, BWV 1007-12, constituted the second volume. Another possibility is that the second volume consisted of Bach's six sonatas for violin and obbligato harpsichord, BWV 1014-19.

II

Like Bach's other systematic collections, the six violin soli are encyclopedic in scope, drawing on stylistic and formal procedures associated with the fugue, concerto, theme and variations, binary and ternary sonata form, aria, dance, and etude. As their titles make clear, however, they primarily represent the two principal genres of Baroque chamber music: the four-movement *sonata da chiesa* ("church sonata") and the dance suite, or partita. In Bach's manuscript the first, third, and fifth compositions are sonatas; the second, fourth, and sixth are partitas. The headings for each work redundantly repeat the phrase "á Violino solo senza Basso."

The six compositions are in six different keys. As they appear in the manuscript the first four are in the minor mode (G Minor, B Minor, A Minor, D Minor), the last two in major (C Major, E Major). The tonic keys of four of the six - G, A, D, and E - exploit the resonance of the violin's open strings. There is no reason to assume that Bach expected all six pieces to be performed at a single session, or, if they were, that they had to be played in that sequence. They can certainly be presented, as here, so as to begin the second half of a program with the sparkling E-Major partita, a brilliant starter. Bach himself, in fact, later transcribed the opening "Preludio" for solo organ and an orchestra including trumpets and drums in order to open one of his ceremonial cantatas (Cantata 29) on a particularly festive note. And it makes eminent aesthetic sense to end a complete traversal with the collection's two most ambitious works: the Sonata in C Major Sonata, BWV 1005, and the Partita in D Minor BWV 1004, whose monumental chaconne is predestined to provide the last word.

“Experiencing Bach on a solo violin in the chapel is more than just listening to music filling up an echoing silent space; it is an experience that transcends physical space and time, and it is a sound that constantly discovers infinite depths. Faust in particular portrays this timelessness in her playing; it leaves you wondering—how is it possible that we have gotten a taste of eternity within the span of one note? When she hangs onto notes, it is as if time is suspended. Faust conveys a variety of textures that you would never guess come from a single violin and bow. She goes in one moment from playing a chord that is deeply and infinitely resonant to a figure that is suddenly floating and ethereal, and the transition is barely noticeable. Her Bach cannot be measured in the units of time and space with which we are so familiar - minutes and seconds, inches and feet. Even rhythm is a guideline and a springboard for discovery. Whether or not you are religious, Faust's Bach is evidence of worlds outside of what we know, or at least a contemplation that life is something far more complex and beautiful than what we can experience and imagine in the twenty-four hours of each day.”

—Stephanie Liu, Princeton Class of '15

JOIN US FOR ANOTHER IN-DEPTH EXPLORATION OF A GREAT MUSICAL MIND

ALEXANDER MELNIKOV, Piano

Shostakovich The Complete Preludes and Fugues, Op. 87

Sunday, March 6, 2016 at 2pm
Richardson Auditorium
in Alexander Hall



After Isabelle Faust's take on the Bach Sonatas and Partitas, pianist Alexander Melnikov will tackle a wildly different but equally tremendous cycle: Shostakovich's complete 24 Preludes and Fugues. Composed at the height of his popularity after the Second World War, these pieces are quintessential Shostakovich: sometimes sarcastic, sometimes wistful, and almost always politically charged. Russian-born Melnikov is one of the only pianists to commit this daunting cycle to recording, and did it in dazzling fashion: his 2010 recording was included in *BBC Music Magazine's* list of the "50 Greatest Recordings of All Time." Following this stunning critical reception, he makes a rare live appearance at Princeton focusing on these extraordinary pieces from Russia's most controversial composer.

princetonuniversityconcerts.org

And there's more....

INSIDE THE SHOSTAKOVICH PRELUDES & FUGUES with Professor Simon Morrison

a class offered through the Princeton Adult School

Wednesday, March 2, 2016

7-8:30 pm

Taplin Auditorium in Fine Hall

In the lead up to this extraordinary concert, Princeton Professor Simon Morrison, one of the world's leading experts on Russian and Soviet music, will untangle the mysteries of these pieces and illuminate their importance, giving class members an insider's knowledge of what to expect from the performance. To sign up, visit www.princetonadultschool.org or call 609-683-1101 after January 2016 to sign up.

Sonata No. 1 in G Minor, BWV 1001

Sonata No. 1 in G Minor, BWV 1001. The opening sonata may reflect the composer's desire to capture on a single unaccompanied violin the different relationships that can exist between the constituent parts, or "voices," of a Baroque instrumental composition. The slow opening movement, marked "adagio," with its florid, winding, and expressive figures strung between chordal pillars, suggests the scoring of a "solo sonata" in that a single melody is accompanied by a "basso continuo," but with the "continuo," of course, incorporated into the violin part. The second movement is a fugue whose emphatic measure-long theme (subject), beginning with four incisive repeated notes (a traditional gesture inherited from the early baroque *canzona* style), alternates throughout with expansive passagework. The third movement, labeled "*siciliana*" and accordingly pastoral in style, relaxed in tempo, and lilting in rhythm, alludes to the "trio sonata," loosely suggesting two melodic parts performing a duet over the accompanying "bass." The final movement is a vigorous, perpetual motion "etude" cast in the standard Baroque binary form consisting of two sections, each repeated. It is "monophonic" – with no double or multiple stops, other than the final chords at the ends of the two sections. Nonetheless, the implied harmonies and even contrapuntal "voices" embedded in the twisting contours of the rushing scales and arpeggios (here as in the other seemingly monophonic movements among the six compositions) provide harmonic richness and a compelling sense of tonal direction.

Partita No. 1 in B Minor, BWV 1002

The Partita No. 1 in B Minor, BWV 1002, a suite of stylized dances, again consists of four movements. Each is in typical binary form; and each is followed by a variation using the same underlying harmonies, which Bach calls a "*double*." Of the four dances that form the traditional core of a Baroque suite – *allemande*, *courante*, *sarabande*, and *gigue* – Bach has replaced the final *gigue* with a *bourrée*. The present *allemande* is typical of the genre: moderate tempo, quadruple meter, and beginning with a short upbeat. Notable here are the mixtures of the dotted rhythms of the traditional French dance with the more fashionable, *galant*, triplet rhythms. Its *double*, in contrast, unfolds in even sixteenth-note rhythms. The *courante* is a quick-paced dance in triple meter. Its associated *double*, even faster, replaces the eighth-note arpeggio figures of the main movement with scalar patterns in sixteenths. The slow, dignified *sarabande*, also in triple meter, is, again, representative of its genre; in the ensuing *double* flowing triplets replace the more sculpted, songlike melody of the main movement. The *bourrée*, finally, is a snappy duple meter dance with a characteristic quarter-note upbeat. Once again, the profiled rhythms of the main dance are dissolved into running figures in the following *double*.

“Listening to an artful interpretation of Bach is akin to sampling a multiple-layered pastry in that the palate experiences the vibrancy of all the flavors folded into the different textures of layers. The notes and fragrances that manage to poke out above the rest are never overpowering, and remain in contextual harmony with the remainder of the pastry. Above all, a relevant execution of Bach's partitas and sonatas speaks to the sentimentalities often hidden in the heart and sensibilities of the individual and succeeds in reminding us of the significance and shared quality of the human experience. – Mary Kim, Princeton Class of 2019”

Sonata No. 2 in A Minor, BWV 1003

Sonata No. 2 in A Minor, BWV 1003, like the first sonata, begins with a majestic slow movement here marked *grave*: intricate arches of expressive ornamental melody unfold between supporting and punctuating chords. The subject of the following fugue is as cogent as the fugal subject of the G-Minor sonata but this time more dancelike, owing to its snappy upbeat and octave leap. The movement itself, combining fugal and concerto-style procedures, is considerably longer than its counterpart in Sonata No. 1; its extensive “concertante” central section not only features energetic passage and motivic work evocative of the solo episodes of a concerto but also occasionally introduces the fugal subject in “inversion,” i.e., upside down. The following *andante*, in binary form, consists of a lyrical cantilena “sung” over a remarkably modest bass line of repeated notes. The final *allegro*, as in the first sonata, is a busy monophonic etude, once again in binary form, but with a surprising, quiet, ending.

Partita No. 3 in E Major, BWV 1006

Partita No. 3, in E Major, BWV 1006, concludes Bach’s manuscript, but it begins the second half of this program. The work belongs to the genre of the orchestral “overture-suite” and begins, accordingly, with an introductory movement marked *preludio*. It is a flamboyant *tour de force*, a virtually unbroken perpetual motion machine (after a characteristic opening gesture) with fireworks displays of *bariolage* (i.e., string crossing) and other concerto-like passagework. With the exception of the final *gigue*, the remainder of the work, again typical of the overture-suite genre, replaces the standard dances - *allemande*, *courante* and *sarabande* - with so-called *galanterien*, that is, optional, more fashionable dances. All, however - again with one exception - are in the standard binary form. The second movement, a *louré*, is a slow, stately dance in six-four time with pointed, mixed rhythms. After a suggestion of contrapuntal imitation at the beginning of each section, it offers an elegant melody over a discreet accompaniment. The *gavotte* is a cheerful, lively, dance in duple meter whose trademark feature is its half-measure upbeat. The present example begins like a normal binary dance with a brief, repeated opening section. After the repetition, however, the remainder of the movement is cast as a rondo (hence its designation, *gavotte en rondeau*): the opening theme, or refrain, alternating several times with secondary thematic ideas and passagework. The fourth movement is actually a double movement: a stately *Menuet I* encloses a rustic *Menuet II*, featuring a drone-like opening phrase. The work ends with two rapid movements. Racing passagework with striking echo-like dynamic contrasts alternating from phrase to phrase characterizes the *bourée*. An athletic, monophonic *gigue*, in the six-eight meter typical of the genre (but with irregularly spaced iterations of motivic ideas and passage work that keep the listener’s expectations delightedly off-balance) brings the partita to a close.

Sonata No. 3 in C Major, BWV 1005

The opening *adagio* of the Sonata No. 3 in C Major, BWV 1005, in marked contrast to the quasi-improvisational running passages that characterize the slow introductions of the previous sonatas, is obsessively motivic. The object of the obsession is an unlikely motivic cell consisting of just two neighboring notes that alternate repeatedly in an unbroken dotted rhythmic pattern. The motive begins alone but soon envelopes all four strings generating searing dissonances of almost unbearable harmonic intensity that crave resolution. The tension finally breaks toward the end in a cadenza-like passage in the florid rhapsodic style that informs the opening movements of the G-Minor and A-Minor sonatas. The second movement, truly gargantuan, has the distinction of being the longest fugue J. S. Bach ever wrote (354 measures). Its old-fashioned

subject, this time vocal rather than dance- or canzona-like in style, is almost identical to the melody of the Lutheran hymn, *Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herre Gott* (“Come, Holy Ghost, Lord God”). (Whether the similarity was meant to convey a theological message is unknowable.) It usually appears together with a descending chromatic countersubject. Once again incorporating concerto principles, the fugue alternates virtuosic passagework with thematic statements in various keys. In one such “exposition” the voices present the subject in *stretto*, that is, they enter in close succession, overlapping one another. The central exposition, explicitly marked *al riverso*, presents the subject and countersubject in inversion. The fugue is rounded off with a literal reprise, or *da capo*, of the opening exposition. The two brief concluding movements that follow provide welcome respite. The *largo* is a florid cantilena over a simple “bass” and ending with an expressive cadenza; the concluding *allegro assai* another virtuosic *perpetuum mobile* in binary form, its passagework evolving from the first five notes of the scale.

Partita No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1004

The final composition on the program, the Partita No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1004, occupies the center of Bach’s manuscript of the *sei solo* but undeniably constitutes the culmination of the cycle. The first four movements of the five-movement work present the complete quartet of the traditional Baroque dance suite: *allemande*, *courante*, *sarabande*, and *gigue*, all in traditional binary form. Their relative brevity, straightforward style, moderate emotional range, and limited technical demands clear the space for the concluding movement: the legendary, monumental, *chaconne*.

The *chaconne*, like the *doubles* in the B-Minor Partita, belongs to the genre of theme and variations. The basis of the variations here is a harmonic progression stated in the first four measures. The movement consists of 64 iterations of this underlying ground plan. They support as many different configurations of scales, arpeggios, motives, textural densities, in as many different rhythmic patterns as the composer can imagine, challenging the technical resources and musical sensibility of even the greatest violinists. The eight-bar melody at the outset of the movement actually spans two presentations of the harmonic ground plan. In many of the following variations, as well, a pattern presented in one is retained or developed further in succeeding ones, creating larger groupings of “paired” or “developing” variations.

The *chaconne* as a whole, organized into three large overarching sections, is an architectonic wonder. The sudden, unexpected appearance of the meditative, hymn-like, central section, in the major mode, after the accumulated excitement and virtuoso display of the preceding variations, is stunning. After gathering momentum and building to an almost ecstatic climax, this extended interlude is interrupted just as suddenly as it appeared, replaced by an abrupt return to the key of D minor and the mostly somber expressive world of the opening section. The final variations once again grow in animation and intensity. An obsessive reiteration on the pitch *a* – the dominant of the key – signals the imminent approach of the end, which is sealed by a literal reprise of the original theme.

The violinist Joshua Bell has called the *chaconne* “not just one of the greatest pieces of music ever written, but one of the greatest achievements of any man in history.” Johannes Brahms had this to say about it in a letter to Clara Schumann:

“ The Chaconne is for me one of the most wonderful, incomprehensible pieces of music. On one staff, for a small instrument, the man writes a whole world of the deepest thoughts and most powerful feelings. If I imagined that I could have created, even conceived, the piece, I am quite certain that the excess of excitement and earth-shattering experience would have driven me out of my mind. ”