



UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

presents

ITAMAR ZORMAN, violin
Music of the Spheres

WED NOV 4, 2020, 7:30 PM

THURS-FRI NOV 5-6, 6:30 PM & 8:00 PM

Hodgson Concert Hall

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PROGRAM

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Partita No. 3 in E major for solo violin, BWV 1006.1

Gavotte en Rondeau

Eugène Ysaÿe (1858-1931)

Sonata No. 5 in G major

“L’Aurore” (“Northern Lights”)

Philip Glass (b. 1937)

Einstein on the Beach

Knee Play 2

Kaija Saariaho (b. 1952)

Nocturne*

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Partita in D minor for solo violin, BWV 1004

Ciaccona

*Excluded from livestreamed/on-demand performance.

Program is subject to change.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

This solo violin program explores the connections between music and space. Throughout the ages, the connection between music and space has sparked the curiosity of humans. The ancient Greeks celebrated the concept of music of the spheres, regarding the harmonic movement of celestial bodies as a form of music. Music and astronomy were both included in the medieval quadrivium of liberal arts, and Johannes Kepler’s 1619 book, *Harmonices Mundi*, discusses a celestial choir of planets.

This special program explores various angles of this connection, from music by Bach, whose works were included on the *Voyager* spacecraft, to music by Ysaÿe depicting the northern lights phenomenon in sound, and *Einstein on the Beach* by Philip Glass.

PROGRAM NOTES

By Luke Howard

“Gavotte en Rondeau” from Partita No. 3 for unaccompanied violin, BWV 1006

“Ciaccona” from Partita No. 2 for unaccompanied violin, BWV1004

J. S. Bach (1685-1750)

In his sonatas and partitas for violin, BWV 1001-1006, J. S. Bach extracted more intricate polyphony from a solo string instrument, with more artistry and greater technical proficiency, than any other composer before or since. Bach’s sonatas and partitas stand today as masterpieces of baroque musical literature, universally acknowledged as pinnacles of the solo string repertory.

These sonatas and partitas are experimental works in that they attempt to create the illusion of harmony and counterpoint using an instrument fashioned primarily for melody. But they are not *merely* experiments. Although these works push the limits of violin technique, they are extraordinarily well-suited

to the instrument. And Bach directs the technical difficulties in them toward ultimately musical purposes.

Bach’s manuscript copy of the unaccompanied violin suites dates from 1720. They may have been composed some years earlier, but they are stylistically consistent with the music he wrote as court composer in Cöthen, a position he assumed in 1717. It was during this period that Bach also produced some of his other great masterworks of instrumental composition, including the six “Brandenburg” concertos and the two volumes of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*.

The Partita No. 3 in E major (BWV 1006) is perhaps the most “modern” and cheerful of the cycle. The partitas in general resemble dance suites as much as anything else, but Bach was willing to mix genres and expectations rather freely. The third-movement “Gavotte en Rondeau,” for example—one of the better-known movements from this set—keeps the leaping figures of the traditional gavotte, but presents the ideas “*en rondeau*” or in the form of a rondo.

The Partita No. 2 in D minor (BWV 1004) is similarly structured as a dance suite, but here the dances are simply preludes to the celebrated “Ciaccona” that follows. More serious and dramatic than the preceding dances, it is as long as the other four movements combined, making it a somewhat incongruous finale to the dance suite. But it is an extraordinary musical jewel, distinct in form and style from the music that surrounds it.

“L’Aurore” (“Northern Lights”), from Sonata no. 5 for unaccompanied violin

Eugène Ysaÿe (1858-1931)

Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe first took violin lessons with his father, and before long had won a scholarship that allowed him to study with famed violinists Henryk Wieniawski in Brussels and Henri Vieuxtemps in Paris. After graduation and an orchestra stint in Berlin, Ysaÿe returned to Belgium, taught at the Brussels Conservatoire, and toured widely. He was hailed as the “king of the violin,” with peerless technique and matchless tone—the first “modern” violinist.

Ysaÿe respected tremendously the playing of many of his violin colleagues. In 1923, he published six sonatas for unaccompanied violin as his Op. 27, each dedicated to (and written somewhat in the style of) a violinist whom he admired. They are technically demanding works, and incorporate features of both contemporary composition and modern virtuoso violin techniques. He dedicated his Sonata No. 5 to the Belgian violinist Mathieu Crickboom, Ysaÿe’s most important student.

“L’Aurore” is the first movement in this two-movement sonata. An evocation of dawn, the movement opens with stillness, followed by gentle shimmers

that build toward a grand pinnacle of full sunlight.

“Knee Play 2” from *Einstein on the Beach*

Philip Glass (b. 1937)

Philip Glass was one of the leading pioneers in the nascent minimalist movement of the 1960s. But while each of the early minimalist composers—Glass, Steve Reich, Terry Riley, and LaMonte Young—might now bristle at the label of “Minimalist,” their music continues to explore most of that movement’s defining features: regular pulse, repetition, slow rates of change, and mostly triadic harmony. Of these composers, it is Glass whose reputation in the public sphere remains most prominent.

Glass’s greatest successes have been in dramatic contexts, both in opera and movie soundtracks (for which he has earned three Oscar nominations and a Golden Globe award). His breakout opera, *Einstein on the Beach* (1976) was crucial in shifting early minimalism’s reputation as a “fringe” movement towards more popular and critical acceptance.

With *Einstein*, Glass felt that music should not represent or illustrate the drama, but rather accompany it as a simultaneous though relatively independent stream. There is no narrative structure to the opera, and while the action (such as it is) and music are concurrent, they are not obviously related. One of the galvanizing features of *Einstein* that holds it together structurally is the constant presence, onstage, of the character of Albert Einstein, who in real life was an enthusiastic amateur violinist as well as a brilliant scientist. This “on-stage” Einstein plays all the solo violin music in the opera.

Interspersed among the four acts of *Einstein on the Beach* are “knee plays,” or relatively short interludes. (Glass explains that the “knee” in “knee play” refers to their function as joints between the larger “limbs” of the opera’s scenes.) In the opera, “Knee Play 2” is scored for solo violin with layered spoken texts recited over the music. With Glass’s imprimatur, and without the voices, this lively selection is also often performed as a solo violin work on its own.

“Nocturne” for solo violin

Kaija Saariaho (b. 1952)

As a child, Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho recalled hearing music in her head “that didn’t come from a radio,” and used to imagine that this interior music actually came from her pillow. Her mother explained that sometimes when Kaija couldn’t sleep at night, she would ask her to “turn off the pillow.” It was perhaps inevitable that the music in Saariaho’s head would eventually want to come out. Saariaho

studied piano, violin, and composition at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki—not always easy for a female student in the 1970s. Upon graduation, and after flirting with serialism, post-serialism, and the New Complexity, Saariaho found her voice in music with an almost classical restraint, transparency of structure, and rational organization: “reduce, reduce, and then find the essential,” she observes.

As Saariaho was working on her 1995 violin concerto *Graal Théâtre*, written for Gidon Kremer, she heard of the death of Polish composer Witold Lutosławski. Some of the early ideas she had been exploring for the concerto made their way into a *Nocturne* for solo violin, composed in early 1994 and dedicated to Lutosławski’s memory. Haunting and sparse on the edges, it plays with distant memories of dance and melody in the central section, while demonstrating Saariaho’s characteristic explorations of instrumental timbre.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

ITAMAR ZORMAN, violin

Itamar Zorman is one of the most soulful, evocative artists of his generation, distinguished by his emotionally gripping performances and gift for musical storytelling. Since his emergence with the top prize at the 2011 International Tchaikovsky Competition, he has wowed audiences all over the world with breathtaking style, causing one critic to declare him a “young badass who’s not afraid of anything.” His youthful intensity and achingly beautiful sound shine through in every performance, earning him the title of the “virtuoso of emotions.”

In the 2019-20 season, Itamar Zorman made his Atlanta Symphony debut performing the Berg Violin Concerto with Karina Canellakis conducting. He also returned to Classical Tahoe and the Ann Arbor Symphony.

The 2018-19 season featured concerto performances with Michael Tilson Thomas and the New World Symphony, the IRIS Orchestra and Michael Stern, and the Bach Festival Society of Winter Park Orchestra, among others. In recital and chamber music, he appeared at Peoples' Symphony Concerts and Merkin Hall in New York, at the Bach Festival Society of Winter Park, and on tours with the Lysander Trio and Israeli Chamber Project.

He recently released *Evocation*, an album of Paul Ben-Haim's works for violin and orchestra, with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and Philippe Bach on BIS Records to great critical acclaim. His first solo recording, *Portrait*, features works by Messiaen, Schubert, Chausson, Hindemith, and Brahms and was released by Profil - Editions Günther Hänssler.

In recent years, Itamar Zorman has appeared with major orchestras across four continents - USA, Europe, Asia and South America - including the American Symphony Orchestra, the Tokyo Symphony, the KBS Symphony, the Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, RTE National Symphony Orchestra (Dublin), Het Gelders Orkest, Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Israel Philharmonic, and the St. Petersburg Philharmonic. He has given recitals at Carnegie Hall in the 'Distinctive Debuts' series, the Louvre Recital Series in Paris, Tokyo's Suntory Hall, the Laeiszhalle Hamburg, Muziekgebouw Frits Philips in Eindhoven, the HR-Sendesaal Frankfurt and the Kolarac Hall in Belgrade; and at festivals including Marlboro, Classical Tahoe, Chamberfest Cleveland, Kronberg Academy, Rheingau, and the Copenhagen Summer Festival. He has also collaborated with a number of legendary artists such as Richard Goode (including performances at Carnegie Hall and Library of Congress) and Mitsuko Uchida.

He is the recipient of an Avery Fisher Career Grant and a Borletti-Buitoni Trust award, and, in addition to receiving top prize at the 2011 International Tchaikovsky Competition, other successes include first prize at the 2010 International Violin Competition of Freiburg and at the 2011 Juilliard Berg Concerto Competition.

Described as a "poet of the violin", Itamar Zorman is also a committed chamber player. He is a founding member of the Israeli Chamber Project and a member of the Lysander Piano Trio, with which he won the 2012 Concert Artists Guild Competition, the Grand Prize in the 2011 Coleman Chamber Music Competition, 1st prize in the 2011 Arriaga Competition, and a bronze medal in the 2010 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition.

A committed and passionate educator, Itamar Zorman was appointed associate professor of violin at the Eastman School of Music for the 2019-20 academic year.

Born in Tel-Aviv in 1985 to a family of musicians, Itamar Zorman began his violin studies at the age of six with Saly Bockel at the Israeli Conservatory of Music in Tel-Aviv. He graduated in 2003 and continued his studies with Professor David Chen and Nava Milo. He received his Bachelor of Music from the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance as a student of Hagai Shaham, and his Master of Music from The Juilliard School in 2009, where he studied with Robert Mann and



Sylvia Rosenberg. He then went on to receive an Artist Diploma from Manhattan School of Music in 2010 and an Artist Diploma from Juilliard in 2012 under the tutelage of Sylvia Rosenberg, and he is an alumnus of the Kronberg Academy where he studied with Christian Tetzlaff and Mauricio Fuks. He is also the recipient of scholarships from the America-Israel Cultural Foundation and has taken part in numerous master classes around the world, working with Itzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zukerman, Shlomo Mintz, Ida Haendel, and Ivry Gitlis.

He plays on a 1734 Guarneri del Gesù, from the collection of Yehuda Zisapel.

Itamar Zorman's recordings are available on the BIS Records and Profil - Editions Günther Hänssler labels. Please visit Mr. Zorman on line at itamarzorman.com and on Facebook (@itamarzorman) for additional information about touring, recordings, and special projects.



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