



Dana van Leeuwen Decra

23|24 SEASON

 UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

presents

HILARY HAHN, violin

THURS, SEPT 21, 7:30 pm

Hodgson Concert Hall

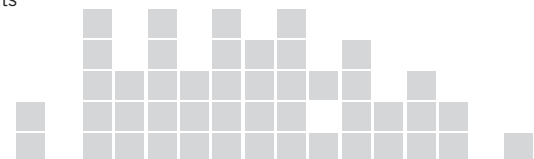
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PROGRAM

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Violin Sonata No. 2 in A minor, BWV 1003 [26:00]

Johann Sebastian Bach

Partita No. 3 in E Major for Violin, BWV 1006 [22:00]

INTERMISSION

Johann Sebastian Bach

Violin Sonata No. 3 in C Major, BWV 1005 [26:00]

Program is subject to change.

PROGRAM NOTES

By Laurie Shulman ©2023

More than 300 years after Johann Sebastian Bach composed his unaccompanied violin sonatas and partitas, they remain the *sine qua non* by which violinists gauge themselves. Technically and musically, they explore the instrument's possibilities with inexhaustible imagination, color, expressiveness, and verve. Although Bach adhered in general terms to the two principal categories of Baroque chamber music—Italian sonata and French suite—he was not constrained by any formal requirements. To the contrary, he achieved remarkable variety. Each sonata and partita has its own personality and distinguishing features.

The violin is essentially a monophonic instrument; that is, it generally produces a single pitch at a time, as opposed to the piano, which can produce many pitches simultaneously. Unlike the human voice, however, the violin and other stringed instruments can produce a second tone by means of a technique called double-stopping. This entails fingering (or “stopping”) the strings so that two pitches sound when the bow is drawn across them. More rare, but still possible, are triple or even quadruple stops, which create the effect of three or four pitches sounded simultaneously. Collectively, these techniques are called multiple stopping. When executed by an accomplished player, they create the aural illusion of polyphonic (or many-voiced) music.

Music theorists and violinists first wrote about the new technique in the mid-16th century. In the capable hands of J.S. Bach, multiple-stopping reached a new level of virtuosity in the sonatas and partitas for solo violin (BWV 1001-1006) and the six unaccompanied cello suites (BWV 1007-1012). All twelve works date from 1720, during the time that Bach was employed by Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen. They are approximately contemporary with the six Brandenburg Concerti, as well as with many of Bach's other instrumental compositions.

Bach's previous works for violin had been either concerti or trio sonatas. The idea of a solo violin piece, while not unprecedented, was fairly new, largely because as a single-voiced instrument, violin had obvious textural limitations in establishing harmonic context. Bach was himself a fine violinist. Although he almost certainly composed the partitas and sonatas for performance by one of the excellent players in the Prince's court orchestra, it is likely that he also played these pieces himself. Technically, they are more demanding than his cello suites. The most remarkable aspect of the solo sonatas and partitas is their success in spinning complex counterpoint without supporting accompaniment from another instrument.

Little solo violin tradition preceded them, although there is an abundance of literature for violin with continuo accompaniment. The most significant precedents are the solo works of Heinrich Biber, but Bach's pieces are the branch from which the unaccompanied literature has sprung.

While his three partitas vary slightly in movement names and forms, the three sonatas are consistent. All of them conform to the Baroque concept of *sonata da*

chiesa (church sonata). As the Italian term implies, they were probably intended for performance in church; further, they avoided the dance movements that are central to the *partitas*. Church sonatas consist of four movements arranged slow-fast-slow-fast. The second movement is always a fugue. The third movement is the only one that departs from the home tonality.

The sonatas present musical challenges unique to the unaccompanied literature. The violinist must provide her own accompaniment by means of occasional double and triple stops. This technique is particularly important during the two slow movements, where the melody unfolds at a relaxed pace, increasing the listener's need for the harmonic context provided by the second and third (and occasionally fourth) pitches.

Sonata No. 2 in A minor, BWV 1003 for unaccompanied violin

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Like the other two unaccompanied sonatas, BWV 1003 in A minor consists of four movements arranged slow-fast-slow-fast. He makes use of extensive multiple stops in the two slow movements, in order to establish the harmonic basis for the elaborate melody line. In effect, the violin accompanies itself, belying the theoretical limitations of a monophonic player. Bach's technical demands are even greater in the second and fourth movements.

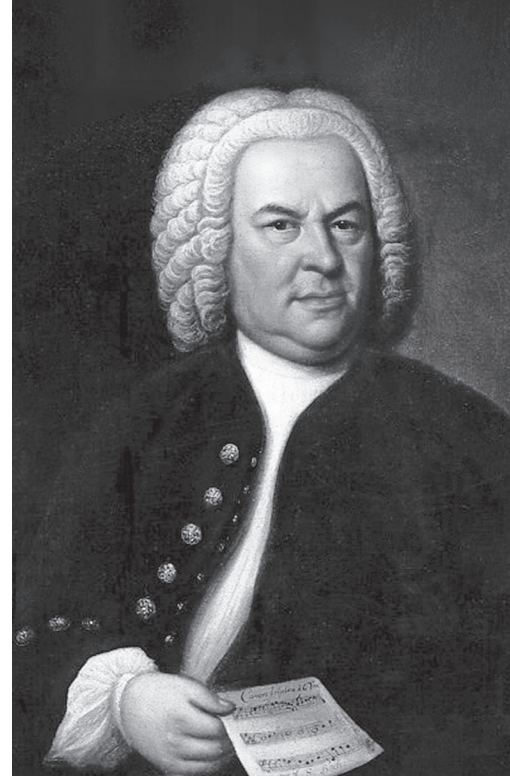
The opening *Grave* is followed by a vigorous fugue that celebrates the violin's capabilities. In the concluding *Allegro*, Bach breaks up his chords into arpeggios in order to establish his harmonies. This finale is distinguished by imaginative use of echo effects, creating a contrast between piano and forte that musicians call "terraced dynamics." The basic distinction between soft and loud is an analogue to the double manual harpsichord's capabilities. A violin is capable of more subtle gradations in dynamics. Bach's score is relatively free of such interpretive guidance, allowing the performer some latitude in decisions with regard to *crescendo*, accents,

and nuances of tempo. Such musical decisions are a considerable part of the challenge in performing Bach's solo violin pieces, which also celebrate virtuosity for its own sake.

Partita No. 3 in E major for unaccompanied violin, BWV 1006 Johann Sebastian Bach

During the 18th century, the term *Partia* (pl. *Partien*) denoted a suite in German speaking lands; the corresponding Italian term is *Partita*. Bach used Italian terminology for movement titles throughout his autograph manuscript, which has survived; however, the three unaccompanied violin *partitas* each consists of a series of dance movements associated more closely with France. The Third *Partita* is unusual in that Bach includes only one of the "standard" dances, the Gigue; there is no Allemande, Courante, or Sarabande.

His splendid opening Preludio is one of the great Baroque showpieces. Bach employs *bariolage* (a special effect that entails rapid alternation between two or more strings), echo effects, and brilliant passagework. Bach obviously valued this movement, for he re-cast the music for organ and orchestra in two of his church cantatas.



The second movement is a rare example of a Bach *Loure*, a sort of slow-motion Gigue in stately 6/4 meter, usually with dotted rhythms and a singular eighth note-quarter note upbeat. Bach's liberal use of double and triple stops give the aural impression of multiple voices. Next is a *Gavotte en rondeau*, which means that Bach interpolates episodes between statements of the basic dance.

He completes the *Partita* with a pair of minuetts, a lively Bourrée, and a surprisingly understated and graceful Gigue that recalls the figuration of the opening Preludio.

Sonata No. 3 in C major, BWV 1005 Johann Sebastian Bach

The dotted rhythm—LONG-short-LONG-short—that dominates the opening Adagio of this sonata relates it to the Baroque French overture.

Bach uses the rhythmic repetition to build tension as he fills out the texture and harmonies with double and triple stopping. Violin closes the movement with a cadenza flourish before one final iteration of the dotted rhythm motive.

Bach's second movement Fugue is a colossus of more than 350 bars that nearly rivals the mighty D minor Chaconne from the Second *Partita*. A monumental 12 minutes long, it will have you shaking your head in disbelief that a single player can elicit so many "voices" from the violin. The principal subject is borrowed from the Pentecost Antiphon *Veni Sancte Spiritus* (Come Holy Ghost; in German it is known as *Komm heiliger Geist*). It is easy to identify in its subsequent entrances, and helps the listener to discern the architecture of this enormous musical structure. Bach's contrapuntal genius and gift for melody are at their pinnacle in this splendid Fugue.

It is followed by a gentle Largo in F major—the sole departure from the home tonality of C major—that allows us to exhale after the expanse and intensity of the Fugue. Bach's coda is exquisitely embroidered. The Sonata concludes with an exuberant, dance-like Allegro assai in a binary dance form. This finale emphasizes passage work rather than multiple stops, and is dazzling in its brilliance.

The C major sonata contains music that Bach used elsewhere, a relatively common practice for him. The opening Adagio exists in his arrangements for keyboard, BWV 964 and 968. Bach repurposed the fugue subject in at least five other compositions. It surfaces in two of his organ chorales, two of his cantatas, and one of the motets.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

HILARY HAHN

Three-time Grammy Award-winning violinist Hilary Hahn melds expressive musicality and technical expertise with a diverse repertoire guided by artistic curiosity. Her barrier-breaking attitude towards classical music and her commitment to sharing her experiences with a global community have made her a fan favorite. Hahn is a prolific recording artist and commissioner of new works, and her 22 feature recordings have received every critical prize in the international press. Her Instagram-based practice initiative, #100daysofpractice, has helped to transform practicing into a community-oriented celebration of artistic development. Since creating the hashtag in 2017, Hahn has completed the project four times under her handle, @violincase; fellow performers and students have contributed nearly 800,000 posts under the hashtag. She is currently artist-in-residence at both the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and London's Wigmore Hall, and is co-founder and VP of artistic partnerships of the AI-music initiative Deepmusic.AI.

This season, Hahn appears as soloist on concertos by Brahms, Sibelius, Dvořák, Tchaikovsky, and Prokofiev, as well as Pablo de Sarasate's *Carmen* Fantasy and Einojuhani Rautavaara's *Deux Sérénades*, which appears in its U.S. premiere. Hahn also performs several solo recitals this season. In addition to recitals of works by Lera Auerbach and Sergei Prokofiev in London and Berlin, she performs the Bach repertoire that made her a household name in solo recitals in London, New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Chicago.



A strong advocate for new music, Hahn has championed and commissioned works by a diverse array of contemporary composers. Her 2021 recording Paris features the world premiere recording of Einojuhani Rautavaara's *Deux Sérénades*, a piece written for Hahn and completed posthumously by Kalevi Aho, which Hahn premiered in 2019. Other recent commissions include Michael Abels's *Isolation Variation*—Hahn's recording of which has been nominated for a Grammy Award in the Best Classical Instrumental Solo category—Barbara Assiginaak's *Sphinx Moth*, Lera Auerbach's Sonata No. 4: *Fractured Dreams*, and 6 Partitas by Antón García Abril, a recording of which was released in 2019. García Abril, Auerbach, and Rautavaara were contributing composers for *In 27 Pieces: the Hilary Hahn Encores*, Hahn's Grammy Award-winning multi-year commissioning project to revitalize the duo encore genre.

Hahn is a prolific and celebrated recording artist whose 22 feature albums on Decca, Deutsche Grammophon, and Sony have all opened in the top ten of the Billboard charts. Her most recent recording, 2022's *Eclipse*, celebrates Hahn's return to the stage and studio after two seasons away with three pieces by Dvořák, Ginastera, and Sarasate. Three of Hahn's albums—her 2003 Brahms and Stravinsky concerto disc, a 2008 pairing of the Schoenberg and Sibelius concerti, and her 2013 recording of *In 27 Pieces: the Hilary Hahn Encores*—have been awarded Grammys.

Hahn has related to her fans naturally from the very beginning of her career. She has held signings after nearly every concert and maintains and shares a collection of the fan art she has received over the course of 20 years. Her “Bring Your Own Baby” concerts create opportunities for parents of infants to share their enjoyment of live classical music with their children in a nurturing, welcoming environment. Hahn's commitment to her fans extends to a long history of educational initiatives. A former Suzuki student, she released new recordings of the first three books of the Suzuki Violin School in 2020, in partnership with the International Suzuki Association and Alfred Music.

Hahn is the recipient of numerous awards and recognitions. She was awarded the eleventh Annual Glasshütte Original Music Festival Award, which she donated to the Philadelphia-based music education nonprofit Project 440. She received the Herbert von Karajan award in 2021, and delivered the keynote speech of the Second Annual Women in Classical Music Symposium in the same year. In 2023, she was named Musical America's artist of the year. Hahn was the 2022 Chubb Fellow at Yale University's Timothy Dwight College; she also holds honorary doctorates from Middlebury College—where she spent four summers in the total-immersion German, French, and Japanese language programs—and Ball State University, where there are three scholarships in her name.