

Program subject to change

BACH

Partita No. 3 BWV. 1006 for solo violin

Preludio
Loure
Gavotte en Rondeau
Menuet I
Menuet II
Bourrée
Gigue

ECKHARDT-GRAMATTÉ

Caprice No. 1: "Die Kranke und die Uhr"

PROKOFIEV

Sonata in C Major for Two Violins, Op. 56 (with Laura Veeze)

Andante cantabile
Allegro
Commodo (quasi allegretto)
Allegro con brio

BRADEN

"The Raven Duo" (with Laura Veeze)

Partita No. 3 in E Major for Solo Violin, BWV 1006

Johann Sebastian Bach

(b. Eisenach, Saxony, 1685 / d. Leipzig, 1750)

So many of Bach's "sets" of works, the *Well-Tempered Klavier* books, *The Art of Fugue*, the six *Suites for Cello Solo* for example, explore every possible facet, musically and stylistically, of form and musical possibility of the art of his time. And so it is with the six *Partitas and Sonatas for Solo Violin*. Works for unaccompanied violin were still rare in the Baroque, yet Bach's works were not without precedent. Bach himself was an accomplished violinist – though it was as a keyboardist that he reigned supreme – and attracted enough attention to draw fine musicians to Leipzig. One of them, Georg Heinrich Schwanenberger, even requested copies of the six works, which Bach's wife Anna Magdalena copied for him.

The ordering of the pieces as published is interesting. The three sonatas are in the *da chiesa* form, four movements each in a slow-fast-slow-fast sequence of movements. Each sonata is succeeded in turn by a suite (labeled as "Partia" in German, which has come to us as Partita). The suite form, as employed by Bach and many of his contemporaries, was a French invention in which an introductory movement (a Prelude or an Overture) would be followed by a number of movements in French dance forms.

So *Partita No. 3* is the final work of the half dozen, with six dances following the Prelude. The Loure is a slow gigue form, this particular one in 6/8 time. The next movement features a Gavotte – a rustic French dance in 4/4 – in a Rondeau form, a musical form in which the main theme returns in between contrasting sections. Two Menuets follow, triple metre French court dances. A Bourrée is next, another court dance, and the Partita concludes with a lively Gigue – a favourite way for Bach to conclude his suites.

Caprice No. 1: "Die Kranke und die Uhr"

Sophie-Carmen Eckhardt-Gramatté

(b. Moscow, 1899 / d. Stuttgart, 1974)

Largely self-taught as a composer, the remarkable career of Sophie-Carmen Eckhardt-Gramatté began as a prodigious child (she was six when she wrote her first piece), and ultimately brought her to Winnipeg, where she became the first Canadian composer to receive the Diplôme d'honneur from the Canada Council. While born in Moscow and educated in several European centres, Eckhardt-Gramatté's contributions to Canadian music were regarded so highly that her name has been on one of Canada's most important festivals for the performance of Canadian contemporary music since 1976.

The ten caprices Eckhardt-Gramatté composed for solo violin were not written together – in fact, each piece is a character piece unto itself, as their separate subtitles indicate, and written between 1924 and 1934. The first of these, "Die Kranke und die Uhr" ("the patient and the clock") was written for a convalescent friend of the composer. It begins and ends with a measured melody played on double stops (two strings harmonizing with each other), while the central section is a tender, ruminative song for solo voice.

Sonata in C Major for Two Violins, Op. 56

Sergei Prokofiev

(b. Sontsovka, 1891 / d. Moscow, 1953)

The 1920s and early 30s were a period during which Prokofiev composed some of his most forward-thinking, modern works, so his *Sonata for Two Violins* is a bit of a departure. He wrote the work in 1932, supposedly after hearing what he felt to be an inferior composition of the same kind – so he determined to do a better one. Its official premiere took place at the Triton Festival on December 16, 1932, although it had received a first hearing in the Soviet Union the month before. In his memoir, Prokofiev good-naturedly writes of the Triton debut: "(The) Sonata was presented at the official opening of Triton, which chanced to coincide with the premiere of my ballet *On the Dnieper*. Fortunately the ballet began half an hour after the end of the concert, and so immediately after the Sonata we dashed over to the Grand Opéra – musicians, critics, composer all together."

Bach (see above) would have recognized the *sonata da chiesa* design of Prokofiev's work – four brief movements in a slow-fast-slow-fast template. The opening movement is dominated by

two languid themes, the first of which is reminiscent of the opening violin solo from his *First Violin Concerto*. The second movement leaps from both violins as if the first movement had held them back, weaving around each other in a hasty, delicate, though never frenzied balance. The third movement begins as a tender, muted-string lullaby – an A-B-A structure in which the secondary theme is not all that dissimilar to the main one, though it takes the first violin to its upper reaches at times. The final movement has a disarmingly Baroque-sounding flavour to it, and while it settles into a more modern idiom, the dialog between the two instruments is always convivial and playful, save for a more thoughtful central section that yields once more to the high spirits in time for a jaunty finish.

The Raven Duo **Carmen Braden**

(b. Whitehorse, Yukon, 1985)

In October 2020, at one of its public concerts presented under COVID restrictions, musicians of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra presented *The Raven Conspiracy*, a string quartet by Canadian composer Carmen Braden, which was warmly received by both the audience and its performers. Subsequent to that, the final movement of the work, titled “Something Shiny,” was transcribed by Ms. Braden into a work for two violins. “Robert (Uchida) and I had a quick conversation about what to call it,” Ms. Braden wrote, “and we came up with *Raven Duo* to be a bit less stodgy than ‘re-arrangement of the *Raven Conspiracy* Movement 3: Something Shiny’.”

Of the string quartet, Ms. Braden writes:

“Ravens hold special roles in Canada's north: trickster, companion, troublemaker... The word for a group of ravens is a conspiracy - quite fitting to their mischievous and intelligent nature and social behaviour. Since I was young, they have been one of my favourite animals to listen to and watch, and even talk with! This piece follows the Raven into its daily life, and also into its mysterious history.”

The Raven Duo: “Ravens are always the scavenger, always the opportunist. They are constantly searching for new, exciting distractions. Their calls are quirky yet operatic; their movements when hopping on the ground are jerky yet graceful. The only predictable thing about their behaviour is its unpredictability. They remind me of humans!”