Upcoming Events of the Seventy-Fourth Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin Concerts

Washington Toho Koto Society
Traditional Japanese music
Presented in conjunction with the National Cherry Blossom Festival
April 3, Sunday, 3:30
West Building, West Garden Court

Rose Ensemble
American Roots: A Journey through Our Country's Folk, Old-Time, and Gospel Traditions. Presented in honor of Three Centuries of American Prints from the National Gallery of Art
April 10, Sunday, 3:30
West Building, West Garden Court

Tamagawa University Taiko Group
Japanese Taiko drum and dance
In honor of the National Cherry Blossom Festival
April 15, Friday, 11:00
East Building Atrium

PostClassical Ensemble
Music by Bernard Herrmann. Presented in honor of Three Centuries of American Prints from the National Gallery of Art
April 17, Sunday, 3:30
West Building, West Garden Court

Inscape
Music by Asian composers
April 24, Sunday, 3:30
West Building, West Garden Court

General Information
Admission to the National Gallery of Art and all of its programs is free of charge, except as noted.
The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed. Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

Concerts are made possible in part through the generosity of donors to the National Gallery of Art through The Circle. Reserved seating is available in recognition of their support. Please contact the development office at (202) 842-6450 or circle@nga.gov for more information.

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West Building, West Garden Court
Rachel Barton Pine, violin

2:00
Six Sonatas and Partitas
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750)

Sonata no. 1 in G Minor, BWV 1001
Adagio
Fuga (Allegro)
Siciliana
Presto

Partita no. 1 in B Minor, BWV 1002
Allemanda — Double
Corrente — Double (Presto)
Sarabande — Double
Tempo di Borea — Double

Sonata no. 2 in A Minor, BWV 1003
Grave
Fuga
Andante
Allegro

3:30
Six Sonatas and Partitas
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750)

Partita no. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1004
Allemanda
Corrente
Sarabanda
Giga
Ciaccona

Sonata no. 3 in C Major, BWV 1005
Adagio
Fuga
Largo
Allegro assai

Partita no. 3 in E Major, BWV 1006
Preludio
Loure
Gavotte en Rondeau
Menuet I
Menuet II
Bourrée
Gigue
Heralded as a leading interpreter of the great classical masterworks, international concert
violinist Rachel Barton Pine thrills audiences with her dazzling technique, lustrous tone, and
emotional honesty. With an infectious joy in music-making and a passion for connecting
historical research to performance, Pine transforms audiences’ experiences of classical
music. During the 2015–2016 season, Pine will perform concertos by Beethoven, Brahms,
Bruch, and Vivaldi, with orchestras including the Santa Rosa Symphony, the New Mexico
Philharmonic, and the Flagstaff, Windsor, and Gainesville Symphony Orchestras.

Pine recently celebrated the release of her debut album on Avie Records: Mozart:
Complete Violin Concertos, Sinfonia Concertante, with conductor Sir Neville Marriner and
the Academy of St Martin in the Fields. In September 2015, Cedille Records released her
recording of Vivaldi: The Complete Viola D’Amore Concertos, with Ars Antigua. Pine has
appeared as soloist with many of the world’s most prestigious ensembles, including
the Chicago Symphony; the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Royal Philharmonic; and
the Netherlands Radio Kamer Filharmonie. Her past festival appearances have included
Marlboro, Wolf Trap, Vail, Ravinia, Davos, and Salzburg. She has worked with such
renowned conductors as Charles Dutoit, Zubin Mehta, and Marin Alsop, and with such
leading artists as Daniel Barenboim, Christopher O’Riley, and Mark O’Connor. She has
collaborated with many contemporary composers including Augusta Read Thomas, John
Corigliano, José Serebrier, and Mohammed Fairouz.

Pine has a prolific discography of thirty CDs on the Avie, Cedille, Warner Classics,
and Dorian labels. She began an exploration of beloved violin concertos and the concertos
that inspired them with Brahms and Joachim Violin Concertos, recorded with the Chicago
Symphony Orchestra. Her Beethoven & Clement Violin Concertos, recorded with the Royal
Philharmonic, offered the world premiere recording of Clement’s Violin Concerto in D Major.
She writes her own cadenzas to many of the works she performs, including for the Beetho-
ven and Mozart concertos. In 2009, Carl Fischer published The Rachel Barton Pine Collection
that includes original compositions, arrangements, cadenzas, and editions penned or
arranged by Pine, making her the only living artist and first woman to join great musicians
like Fritz Kreisler and Jascha Heifetz in Carl Fischer’s Masters Collection series.

“You must practice Bach. It is the music of Gott!” Thus I was regularly instructed by the
elderly German ladies at St. Paul’s Church in Chicago, the church of my youth and my
earliest years as a violinist.

I was fortunate to grow up at St. Paul’s, a church with a deep dedication to music
and a spiritual home to a number of opera singers and members of the Chicago Symphony
Orchestra. Oratorios, cantatas, and other choral works of the great classical composers
are often performed as part of the service, and the music of Bach is celebrated above all
others. The sanctuary itself features a stained glass window of Bach. I have vivid memories
of spending Sunday mornings surrounded by the glorious sound of Bach’s toccatas and
fugues on the organ.

My relationship with Bach’s music began and matured within St. Paul’s sanctuary.
A work of Bach was the first piece I played, at the age of four, for a worship service. I
regularly shared portions of the Six Sonatas and Partitas for prelude or offertory, sat in an
orchestra of professional musicians for full-scale Bach masses, and played obbligato lines
for Bach’s vocal works. A particularly special memory was joining, as an eleven-year-old,
with fellow church members, Chicago Symphony’s principal oboist Ray Still and principal
bassist Joe Guastafeste, for Bach’s oboe and violin concerto.

The Sonatas and Partitas are among the greatest human achievements, and I have
always viewed them with the deepest reverence. However, remembering Bach’s essential
humility prevents these masterpieces from becoming overwhelming in their significance.
Instead, each time I play them, I feel as though I am conversing with the very best of friends.

The Sonatas and Partitas are full of technical challenges that must be overcome in
order to bring out the harmonies and polyphonies. They require a highly refined technique
of both the left and right hands. Clearly Bach was not only a genius composer and master
keyboard player, but also a violin virtuoso of the first rank. The violin was most likely the
first instrument he studied with his violinist father, Johann Ambrosius. His first professional
jobs in Lüneberg and Weimar included significant duties as a violin player, and he continued
to play the instrument throughout his life. Perhaps his esteem for the violin is reflected in
the fact that the longest fugue he ever wrote was not for organ, harpsichord, or ensemble,
but for unaccompanied violin (the Fuga of BWV 1005).

The Six Sonatas and Partitas are the culmination of an almost century-old tradition
of multiple-voice writing for unaccompanied violin in Germany. Works by Thomas Baltzar,
Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber, Johann Paul von Westhoff, and Georg Pisendel serve as
significant examples of this improvisatory and compositional practice with which Bach
was intimately familiar.

Bach’s autograph manuscript from Köthen is dated 1720, though some scholars
believe Bach may have begun writing the Sonatas and Partitas as early as 1717. The title page
includes the designation “Part 1,” with Part 2 being the Six Suites for unaccompanied cello.
The internal symmetry of the six violin works points to the composer’s conception of them
as a cycle, rather than a mere collection.
Each Fuga is increasingly longer and more complex. In contrast, the third movements of the Sonatas become ever sparer, dropping from three voices to two to primarily one. The Partitas increase in size from four movements to five to six. Their stylistic language follows a forward path, from the proto-seventeenth century’s B minor to the High Baroque Italian of the D minor to the modern French style of the E major.

Bach’s three sonatas are in sonata da chiesa (church sonata) form: slow-fast-slow-fast. Each pair of opening movements is an adagio and fugue, joined by an unresolved chord in the A minor and C major. The first movements of the G minor and A minor are covered in highly elaborate ornaments. The simpler ABA form of the G-minor Adagio gives us a wonderful opportunity to compare the different ornaments of the parallel first and last sections. The C-major Adagio is an entirely different concept, almost not a movement in its own right but rather an extended introduction, with a beginning that opens like a sunrise followed by a gradual unfolding of the music.

The subjects of the G-minor and A-minor Fugas are equally brief, but the G minor is much more compact in structure. This movement was my first insight into hearing beyond the violin in Bach’s solo violin works; to my ears the organ with its variety of stops is often present, particularly in the pedal points of the coda. The more complex A-minor Fuga features a countersubject in a descending chromatic line and both themes in inversion. The C-major Fuga is a stunning masterpiece. The subject is taken from the chorale tune “Komm, Heiliger Geist, Herr Gott“ (Come, Holy Ghost, Lord and God). Bach’s inventive treatment of this theme includes major and minor, double fugue, stretto, inversion, and even burying the theme in single-voice eighth notes. The density of his polyphony uses as many as four voices, one per string. This is an unparalleled academic achievement, yet the result is a feeling of transcendence and ecstasy.

Each third movement is in a key that contrasts with the rest of the sonata. The lilting Siciliana conjures up a trio sonata, with a melodic bass line and two treble voices in duet. The two voices of the Andante have distinct roles, melody and accompaniment. The delicate Largo includes only the barest addition of a few harmony notes here and there. All of the last movements are single-voiced and in binary form, though with complex multi-voiced writing buried within, and numerous cross-rhythms. The A-minor Allegro has the most frequent use of written dynamics in Bach’s cycle, with various echoes and a subito piano near the end. The brilliance of the C-major Allegro assai seems to suggest the E-major Prelude that follows.

The Partitas are suites of dance movements. Bach follows the standard Italianate sequence of Allemande, Corrente, Sarabande, and Gigue in his D-minor Partita, but deviates from it in the last movement of the B minor, substituting an intriguingly titled Tempo di Borea. (Perhaps this was a nod to Pisendel, whose earlier sonata had concluded with a Giga and Variation.) Despite the fact that none of these dances were meant to accompany actual dancing, Bach is often meticulous in his adherence to form, such as the tags at the end of each half of the Allemandes where the dancers would bow to each other.

Across the Partitas, Bach uses different spellings of the same movement titles to suggest stylistic differences. The B minor has the feel of an older aesthetic. Seventeenth-century influences include a Sarabande, which is flowing rather than lingering, and a variation of each movement in “division” style. Particularly in the outer movements, the affect is theatrical, evoking an orchestra accompanying dancers onstage rather than chamber music.

In contrast, the D-minor Partita has the more intimate feel of a single fiddler, or a few of them. The first four movements could form a suite of their own, but it turns out that they are leading up to one of the pinnacles of all music. Much has been written about the Ciaconna as a monumental showpiece, or a journey through the deepest emotions. The theory that Bach wrote it as a memorial to his first wife has been convincingly debunked, but we still continue to hope that perhaps it has some hidden, poignant extramusical meaning such as the crucifixion. Yet, the music need not justify itself beyond its notes and the emotions they portray. These thirty-four imaginative variations in three sections are grand, playful, peaceful, uncertain, triumphant, and tragic. Yet, somehow, Bach never loses the spirit of the dance.

The feeling that I always get from the E-major Partita is one of sheer happiness, capturing the delight of the fashionable French style without the fussiness. The Gavotte, often played as a stand-alone like the Prelude, is a rare instance of a Rondo movement in Bach’s output. The elegant Loure and the first Minuet contrast with the rustic flavor of the Bourée and the musette-like second Minuet. Having lived and breathed the written-out ornaments of Couperin and Marais for many years, it felt natural to sprinkle some of these characteristic decorations onto Bach’s pseudo-French dances. How wonderful that he concludes his entire cycle not with an emphatic statement but with a cute little Gigue that smiles and waves as it makes its lighthearted exit.

A note about the instrument: I began playing these works with a baroque bow at age fourteen, and since age eighteen, I have never played them with anything else. Whether paired with a baroque violin or with my primary concert violin in modern set-up, a modernized 1742 Guarneri del Gesù, the articulations and colors of the baroque bow enable me to more easily and effectively achieve my vision for Bach’s music. I offer this performance to you in the spirit of Bach: Soli Deo Gloria.

Program notes by Rachel Barton Pine