MIDDLEBURY
PERFORMING ARTS SERIES

PRESENTS

Alina Ibragimova, Violin
Cédric Tiberghien, Piano

SUNDAY, APRIL 27, 2025

3:00 PM

MAHANEY ARTS CENTER, ROBISON HALL

Alina Ibragimova, Violin
Cédric Tiberghien, Piano

Program

Violin Sonata, JW VII/7 (1915) — **Leoš Janáček** (1854–1928)

Con moto
Ballada
Allegretto
Adagio

Violin Sonata No. 3 in A Minor, Op. 25 (1926) — **George Enescu** (1881–1955)

Moderato malinconico
Andante sostenuto e misterioso
Allegro con brio, ma non troppo mosso

Intermission

Triorchic Blues (1990) — **Gerald Barry** *b.* 1952

Sonata for Violin and Piano in A Major, Op. 47, No. 9 "Kreutzer" (1804) — **Ludwig Van Beethoven** (1770–1827)

Adagio sostenuto—Presto
Andante con variazioni
Finale. Presto

This concert is made possible thanks to the Paul Nelson Performance Endowment and the Rothrock Family Residency Fund.

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Program Notes

JANÁČEK Violin Sonata, JW VII/7

Program note courtesy of the LA Philharmonic

The term "sonata" supports only the most vague definition. It is probably a multi-movement work for one or more solo instruments—except when it is in a single movement, or for orchestra, or includes a vocal part. "Sonata form" is the structure of musical drama in which tonal centers (and often thematic groups) are presented in conflict, developed, and then reconciled; it is sometimes called "sonata-allegro form" or "first-movement form" (though it can be used for slow movements and finales).

Janáček was a nationalist who chafed under Austro-German cultural and political domination. Though he studied in Leipzig and Vienna, he had little use for the classically hallowed sonata in any sense. This Sonata is his only work in the genre that survives intact, and it cost him a great effort. (Two earlier violin sonatas are lost, as is a piano sonata. He destroyed the last movement of the piano sonata "From the Street, October 1, 1905"—and tried to eliminate the whole thing.)

"I wrote the Violin Sonata in 1914 at the beginning of the war when we were expecting the Russians in Moravia," the composer wrote in 1922. Like many of his compatriots, Janáček regarded the Russians as potential Slavic liberators, and he responded not only with this work, but also with the dramatic orchestral suite Taras Bulba. The sonata is built around its second movement, the Ballada, which he had composed earlier. Everything around it changed through at least three versions before the sonata received its premiere in 1922.

The music in the first movement, however, suggests the impressionistic Orientalisms of Debussy more than anything Russian, with pianism from Chopin. After an introductory cadenza for the violin, the exposition is repeated literally—usually a statement of pure sonata form intentions. But Janáček's non-traditional sense of tonal hierarchy and skittish motivic development make it a sonata form more implied than fulfilled.

The languid Ballada has the Sonata's most directed sense of a "tune," sounding in places like a folksong with strummed accompaniment. The following movement—basically a slow scherzo—is also folklike, though more dance than song. The finale is an impassioned Adagio that crests in a majestic chorale sung high on the violin's lowest string under tremolo chords from the piano.

ENESCU Violin Sonata No. 3 in A Minor, Op. 25

Program note courtesy of Hyperion Records

The Third Violin Sonata is in some ways a very untypical piece. No other mature work by Enescu has such a consistently, explicitly, and exotically folk-Romanian character. By the time he wrote this sonata in 1926, Enescu had written other works with a Romanian flavor to them: some of the dances in Act I of *Œdipe,* for example, or the mysterious last movement of the First Piano Sonata (1924), which he once described as a depiction of a moonlit Romanian landscape. But he had come to feel that the direct quotation of folk tunes (as in his early Romanian Rhapsodies) was a fruitless procedure. There was nothing he could do with such tunes, he said, other than state them, juxtapose them and repeat them; any attempt to subject them to proper musical

development would destroy their nature. In his increasingly organicist style, musical development and the exploration of complex inter-relationships was the very essence of composition. However, there were some techniques of Romanian folk music which seemed to offer new compositional possibilities—ways of enriching his own methods of musical development. One such technique has already been mentioned: the use of chromatic modes to break down the distinction between major and minor keys. Another technique was the use of quarter-tones, eroding the tonal scale itself. And a third, perhaps the most important of all, was the use of 'heterophony'—that is, the superimposition of differing versions of the same musical material, sometimes with a slight time-lag as well, but without creating any sense of counterpoint, canon, or fugue.

All these techniques are present in the Third Violin Sonata. The one thing that is not present is the direct quotation of folk themes. Instead, Enescu has invented an entire folk language of his own, in which the atmosphere and melodic coloring is deeply Romanian, but the themes (his creations) are incorporated from the start into his own individual processes of melodic and harmonic development. Enescu has here distilled, in a highly personal way, a sort of quintessence of Romanian folk music, with its modes, its rhythms (either the parlando rubato rhythm of the first movement, or the spiky dance rhythms of the last), and its opulent treasury of ornamentation. The subtitle of the work, "In the character of Romanian folk music," deliberately uses the word "character" rather than "style": in an interview in 1928 Enescu said "I don't use the word 'style' because that implies something made or artificial, whereas 'character' implies something given, existing from the beginning. […] In this way Romanian composers will be able to write valuable compositions whose character will be similar to that of folk music, but which will be achieved through different, absolutely personal means."

In his attempt to capture the spirit of Romanian folk music, Enescu developed what is virtually a new language of violin writing for this sonata. The music is full of extremely detailed instructions such as "flautato sulla tastiera colla punta del arco" ("flute-like, with the point of the bow, on the fingerboard"); the ornamentation is elaborately notated, and different degrees of vibrato are also specified. When this is combined with the frequent fluctations of rhythm, tempo, dynamic, and mood, the result is a score brimming with expressivity. Menuhin has written: "I know of no other work more painstakingly edited or planned. It is correct to say that it is quite sufficient to follow the score for one to interpret the work". What Enescu has done with this extraordinary degree of specification is, paradoxical though this sounds, to convey a spirit of improvisation.

Much of the violin technique used here is, of course, an imitation of the playing of Romanian folk-fiddlers—though the term 'imitation' here covers a whole spectrum, from the direct reproduction of techniques (such as using a slight upwards portamento to lean into the beginning of a note) to the much more elusive evocation of mood and spirit. The piano part is imitative too—most obviously, of cymbalom-playing, though there are other sorts of imitative effect as well. The strange, repeated notes at the start of the slow movement were, according to one pianist (Céliny Chailley-Richez), who played this work with Enescu, an imitation of the squeaking of toads on a summer evening. Alfred Cortot, who also discussed and played this work with the composer, described the slow movement as "an evocation in sound of the mysterious feeling of summer nights in Romania—below: the silent, endless, deserted plain; above: constellations leading off into infinity …" But whether the listener thinks of toads or galaxies is secondary. The music is primary.

BARRY *Triorchic Blues*
Program note courtesy Schott Music Publishing

Gerard Barry was born in Clarecastle, Ireland, and went to earn degrees from University College in Dublin and to study composition in Cologne with Stockhausen and Kagel. He first came to public attention in 1979 with his radical ensemble works '_____' and "Ø," and is particularly noted for his operas: *The Intelligence Park* (1990); *The Triumph of Beauty and Deceit* (1992), *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* (2004), *La Plus Forte* (2007), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (2010), *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* (2015), and *Salome* (2017).

Quotation and parody are favorite devices of Barry, particularly of material derived from Baroque sources. Handel, for example, provides the influence and model for both *The Intelligence Park* and *The Triumph of Beauty and Deceit*. "I often use found material of some kind, but never because I want to write pastiche. In fact, pastiche is exactly what I want to avoid. I want to make these familiar things seem absolutely unfamiliar."

Triorchic Blues began as a study for Barry's opera *The Triumph of Beauty and Deceit*, but the developed into this vivacious and rhythmically driven piece for solo piano, which explores the extreme registers of the instrument. The original version of *Triorchic Blues* for solo piano was commissioned for the 1991 GPA Dublin International Piano Competition with funds from the Irish Music Rights Organization. The work also exists in a version for solo violin.

BEETHOVEN Sonata for Violin and Piano in A Major, Op. 47, No. 9 "Kreutzer"
Program note courtesy of the LA Philharmonic

Composed in 1803, this sonata is one of the works initiating Beethoven's middle period of boldly heroic work. There was a new violinist in Vienna that spring, and Beethoven's patron Prince Lichnowsky put the two musicians together. Born in Poland as the son of a West Indian father and a European mother, George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower made his debut in Paris at the age of ten. He and his father then moved to England, where he became a celebrity prodigy, promoted as the "son of the African Prince."

In 1802, Bridgetower visited his mother in Dresden and his success there produced letters of introduction to Lichnowsky and others in Vienna. He and Beethoven quickly became friends and planned a concert together in May 1803. Beethoven already had the finale for a violin sonata in hand, and he had been sketching two other movements, which he proceeded to finish in great haste—Bridgetower ended up reading the second movement from the composer's manuscript during the performance, there having been no time to copy out the violin part.

Beethoven well understood how different this new sonata was from any that had come before, including his own eight. His title page describes it as a "Sonata for the pianoforte and violin obbligato, written in a very concertato style, almost like a concerto."

It begins with a slow introduction, something expected more in a symphony than a violin sonata, and the violin has the first notes, echoed by the piano. This chromatic introduction emphasizes the key of D minor, making it harmonically a bookend matching the coda of the finale. The main Presto is a vigorously driven—although

also often interrupted—dialog in A minor, whose passionate intensity later inspired Leo Tolstoy's short story "The Kreutzer Sonata."

The second movement is an expansive theme with four variations and a coda, rhythmically and harmonically off-kilter. It is in F major, an odd key for a piece in A major but one related to the prominent D-minor digressions in the framing movements. Not only that, the theme begins not in F, but with four bars on the dominant.

The spryly sprung finale, the only movement actually in A major, is in sonata form, though with its own odd metrical deviation near the end of the exposition, mirrored, of course, in the recapitulation.

Shortly after the concert, Beethoven and Bridgetower quarreled over a woman (according to Bridgetower's recollection years after Beethoven had died). Bridgetower returned to England and Beethoven dedicated this startling new work to the French violinist Rodolphe Kreutzer, who found it completely baffling and never performed it.

Duo Biography

Cédric Tiberghien and Alina Ibragimova first met as members of the BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists scheme in 2005. Immediately finding a rare musical and personal rapport, they performed together in a number of studio sessions and in concerts at the Wigmore Hall and at festivals around the UK. The unique partnership which developed between the two artists was picked up by *The Times* who concluded its review of Cédric and Alina's final recital as part of New Generation Artists at the 2007 Cheltenham Festival by commenting "Both of these players have the potential to conquer the world."

The pair have gone on to perform throughout Europe and in North America, appearing in venues including the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Theatre des Champs Elysées in Paris, Auditorio Nacional in Madrid, Carnegie Hall, and Lincoln Center in New York, at the Vancouver Recital Society and San Francisco Performances, as well as major tours of Australia and Asia. This season's North American tour includes concerts on the major series in St. Paul, Miami, Toronto, Orange County, San Francisco, North Carolina, and Vermont. The musicians are also regular guests of the Wigmore Hall in London, where they presented an acclaimed complete cycle of the Beethoven violin sonatas in the 2009/10 season. This was followed in 2015–16 by a series of five concerts as part of the Hall's 'The Mozart Odyssey' series, which saw them perform the complete sonatas for Violin and Piano by W. A. Mozart.

Cédric and Alina's Beethoven cycle was recorded for a three-volume release on the Wigmore Live label, attracting unanimous praise from the press. *International Record Review* gave each volume its IRR Outstanding Recording award, commenting that "In every way, it proves an extraordinary achievement." *The Times* was

equally enthusiastic: "Spontaneous, impulsive, young and fresh, the violinist Ibragimova and the pianist Tiberghien make an electrifying partnership." The duo's other recordings are all available on Hyperion: its first release on the label featured the complete works by Szymanowski (2009). and was followed by a disc with Ravel's complete works coupled with Lekeu's Violin Sonata (2011) and the complete works by Schubert (2013). Their most recent recordings are the first three volumes (of five) of the complete sonatas for violin and keyboard by Mozart, which have again proved hugely popular with critics and audiences alike.Volume 1 was selected as Editors' Choice in *Gramophone*: "it would be hard to imagine more persuasive performances than we have here from the ever-rewarding Tiberghien-Ibragimova duo."

Both Cédric and Alina enjoy flourishing careers as soloists, appearing with many of the world's leading orchestras and as solo recitalists in some the most distinguished venues and festivals on the circuit.

https://alinaibragimova.com/
https://www.cedrictiberghien.com/

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https://colbertartists.com/

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