# Foo Yue Ning

# Violin Senior Recital

with Dr Cherie Khor, piano

**2 May 2024, 7:30pm**
**YST Conservatory of Music Concert Hall**

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**Programme:**

**Johann Sebastian Bach** (1685-1750)

Sonata No. 1 for Solo Violin in G minor BWV 1001

I. Adagio
II. Fuga
III. Siciliano
IV. Presto

**Eugène Ysaÿe** (1858 - 1931)

Violin Sonata No. 6 in E Major, Op. 27, No. 6, “Manuel Quiroga”

- *Intermission: 10 minutes* -

**Ludwig van Beethoven** (1770 – 1827)

Violin Sonata No. 3 in E flat major, Op. 12, No. 3

I. Allegro con spirito
II. Adagio con molta espressione
III. Rondo. Allegro Molto

**Maurice Ravel** (1875 - 1937)

Tzigane, M.76

# **Johann Sebastian Bach** (1685-1750)

### Sonata No. 1 for Solo Violin in G minor BWV 1001

**V. Adagio**
**VI. Fuga**
**VII. Siciliano**
**VIII. Presto**

Bach's *sonatas* for solo violin are structured in the four-movement slow-fast-slow-fast format of the Baroque "church" sonata. More serious in tone than the dance-oriented partita, the *sonata da chiesa* featured a slow introduction, a movement in fugal style, a lyrical expressive slow movement and a lively finale. Bach adds a degree of tonal variety to this structure by putting the third movement of his sonatas in this set in the relative key of B flat major.

Bach's first sonata for solo violin is a work of serious but not grave character, featuring as it does in its fast movements, a degree of rhythmic vitality that might easily be taken for merriment. Its sonic grandeur is enhanced by Bach's choice of key, G minor, which benefits from the resonating warmth emanating from the violin's two lowest strings, G and D. These two open strings are often used to great effect as pedal tones to anchor the work's harmonic textures. They also serve as the foundational acoustic elements of the arresting quadruple-stop G minor chord that both opens the work as the first sound that strikes the ear in bar 1, and ends it as the concluding sonority of the final movement. And this same quadruple-stop chord also links its internal movements together as the final exclamation point of its first and second movements as well.

The first two movements form a familiar pair in Baroque music: a prelude and fugue.

The opening *Adagio* prelude is freely improvisatory in character and richly ornamented, with a host of written-out embellishments decorating its wide-ranging wanderings through the harmonic terrain of G minor and its neighbouring tonalities.

The *Allegro* three-voice fugue that follows is a punchy little affair with a persistent shoulder- poking pattern of repeated notes that defines its rhythmic pacing throughout. Mid-stride through this fugue Bach exploits the violin's open

D string to create a sound-swelling pedal point *and* an augmentation of the fugue subject's principal repeated-note motive – at the same time.

The gently swaying *Siciliana* third movement brings a bit of major-mode relief from all the preceding minor-mode drama. Its principal melody, marked by the *siciliana*'s characteristic dotted rhythm, occupies the lowest register while increasingly plaintive sigh-filled responses up above add a wistful note of sadness to the innocent demeanour of this dance.

The *Presto* final movement lightens the texture even more with its continuous single line of *moto perpetuo* 16ths that alternate between chordal arpeggios and scalar runs.Set in binary form like a dance movement it shows the influence of the gigue in the way its second half reverses the direction of motion of its opening volley of figuration. Teasingly ambiguous for the ear throughout is whether the figures imply two beats to the bar, or three.

# **Eugène Ysaÿe** (1858 - 1931)

### Violin Sonata No. 6 in E Major, Op. 27, No. 6, "Manuel Quiroga"

In July of 1923, Belgian violinist and composer Eugène Ysaÿe wrote six sonatas for the solo violin, one for each of six famous violinists of the time. The first was dedicated to Hungarian musician Joseph Szigeti, and the second to Jacques Thibaud, 43, of France. The remaining four, in order, were composed for George Enescu, of Romania; Austrian-American Fritz Kreisler; Belgian Mathieu Crickboom; and Manuel Quiroga, of Spain. The sextet of compositions was intended, in part, to capture that moment in the evolution of violin playing and expertly incorporated elements of each player's style.

A child prodigy, Szigeti became renowned for his unaccompanied performances of Bach's solo pieces, one of which was attended by Ysaÿe, who was so moved by the experience he was inspired to write this cycle of solo pieces similar to Bach's Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin. It makes sense that the first of his own sonatas would be dedicated to Szigeti. With clear but subtle references to Bach's work, Ysaÿe brings listeners on a journey of rediscovery and intrigue as he ventures into original territory. Akin to the work of inspiration, Ysaÿe's six sonatas evoke a rich spectrum of drama, vulnerability, tension, and beauty.

These pieces are the epitome of superb violinistic writing—even if the difficulty of these sonatas is incredible, there is a feeling of inevitability in the way the fingers lie that fits the violin like a glove. As a greatly accomplished violinist himself, Ysaÿe was able to make use of the ins and outs of the instrument, giving the impression that the violin is just as comfortable in a polyphonic role as a purely melodic one.

Ysaÿe, perhaps imagining performances of the sonatas as a programme, made sure the last would be a fit finale concluding in a grand fashion. At one point entitled 'Fantaisie', the sixth sonata might be described as a cadenza with habanera. This work was dedicated to Manuel Quiroga, considered at the time to be Spain's greatest violinist, and fittingly exhibits a bright and flashy character with Hispanic flair.

# **Ludwig van Beethoven** (1770 – 1827)

**Violin Sonata No. 3 in E flat major, Op. 12, No. 3**

**IV. Allegro con spirito**
**V. Adagio con molta espressione**
**VI. Rondo. Allegro Molto**

Beethoven wrote his first violin sonatas, a set of three (Op. 12) in 1797 - 1798. Already, these pieces show Beethoven straining at the reins that in his early years still tied him to the genteel world of eighteenth-century classicism.

Although we refer to these ten works as “violin sonatas,” in the original scores the music is invariably identified as being “for the fortepiano and a violin”. Such was usually the case with eighteenth-century works of this type, but it was hardly true with Beethoven, where we can see in even the first sonata the nearly equal partnership of the two instruments. In these ten sonatas, Beethoven explores the ways and means of combining two voices of unequal sound mass into a dramatic partnership and coherent unity

Beethoven was renowned in Vienna for his prowess as a pianist, but he was also intimately familiar with the violin. He had taken lessons as a youth in Bonn, and later, at the age of 24, he sought further study with Ignaz Schupannzigh in Vienna. Hence, Beethoven was in an ideal position to explore the expressive potentialities and technical challenges of the violin as well as of the piano. Violins were undergoing changes in construction during Beethoven’s lifetime (longer neck, fingerboard and strings; higher bridge; greater tension on the strings), resulting in greater range and volume of tone. These did not go unnoticed by Beethoven, who made steadily increasing technical demands on the instrument.

The third sonata features a sense of grandeur, power and majesty found in few other works of Beethoven’s early years. In addition, the piano writing is often of near-heroic proportions, by far the most substantial in the first three sonatas. The second movement constitutes the emotional centre of gravity in this sonata. This is the first adagio we encounter in the traversal of these sonatas; the music embodies a timeless tranquillity, with graciousness of melody and luxuriant embellishments. The finale is a rollicking, joyous rondo with a catchy if hardly distinctive main theme. Frequent contrasts of dynamics and register are a constant feature of the movement.

# **Maurice Ravel** (1875 - 1937)

## Tzigane, M.76

By the early 1920s Maurice Ravel was a well-established composer, associated with musical impressionism and more particularly with his compatriot and sometime rival, Claude Debussy. But Ravel's compositional style was much broader than just impressionism, encompassing influences from jazz and blues to Bach and Mozart, from French baroque to Spanish folk tunes.

Hungarian music was added to the mix when the composer met the Hungarian violinist, Jelly d'Aryáni, who performed Béla Bartók's First Violin Sonata with the composer at the piano in a private recital while Ravel was on tour in 1922 England. Intrigued by both piece and performer, Ravel asked d'Arányi to play Gypsy pieces for him, which she did well into the wee hours of the morning.

It took almost two years, but from this meeting came Tzigane, which Ravel completed only a few days before d'Arányi premiered it in London on April 26, 1924, to great acclaim.

An illustrious musician, Jelly d'Arányi was a grand-niece of the great 19th-century violinist Joseph Joachim. She was the chamber partner of cellist Pablo Casals and composer/pianist Béla Bartók, who dedicated both of his violin sonatas to her.

The piece is a rhapsody–a one-movement work encompassing several contrasted moods–and was originally written for just violin and piano or luthéal, a piano-like instrument that had several tone registers controlled with stops, producing sounds remarkably like the Hungarian cimbalom. Later that summer Ravel created a version for violin with orchestra, heard in today's concert.

In the case of Tzigane, "gypsy" should be understood as a sort of popular generic exoticism rather than anything specifically ethnological. The piece does not quote any authentic Roma or folk melodies, though it does exploit traditional modes and rhythms. Though it can be described as an evocation of virtuoso gypsy salon pieces from Liszt, Joachim, Hubay, and the like, Tzigane is spikier in harmony and rhythm. Shifting speed impetuously and brilliantly coloured with harmonics and plucked passages, it whirls to a perpetual-motion close.