

Kuo Fang-Chen Programme Notes

J. S. Bach Partita No.2 in D minor, BWV 1004

II. Courante

III. Sarabande

IV. Gigue

All movements of this partita are cast in a minor key, creating a sound world of introspection and subdued intensity. The manuscript dates from 1720, the year Johann Sebastian Bach returned from a journey to the unexpected news that his wife, Maria Barbara Bach, had died and already been buried. Although the work may have been composed prior to this loss, it is not difficult to imagine that, in its aftermath, the music came to hold a profoundly different and more personal resonance for the composer.

Niccolò Paganini's Caprice No. 20 in D Major

This work is part of the 24 Caprices for Solo Violin (Op. 1), composed between 1802 and 1817, which completely redefined violin technique and musical possibilities for solo instruments.

Caprice No. 20 in D Major (Allegretto), Op. 1, is a technical showpiece blending a pastoral melody with demanding left-hand techniques. It features a, often rustic, tune on higher strings, frequently accompanied by a persistent low drone note, showcasing shifting, expansive hand stretches, and precise double-stop phrasing.

Beethoven Violin Sonata No.8 in G major, Op.30, No.3

I. Allegro assai

II. Tempo di Minuetto

III. Allegro vivace

Beethoven Violin Sonata No. 8 in G major, Op. 30 No. 3 is often called the “charmer” for its bright, carefree mood, inspired by his time in Heiligenstadt.

The first movement follows sonata form with contrasting themes, development, and recapitulation. The middle movement, at a minuet tempo, presents gentle variations of one theme with elegant, rococo charm. The final rondo is lively and cheerful, with a rustic, bagpipe-like bass.

Hindemith Sonata for Violin Solo No.1 Op.31, I. Sehr lebhaft Achtel

Hindemith Sonata for Solo Violin, Op. 31, No. 1 (1924) is a technically demanding, five movement work exploring polyphony on a single instrument, showcasing bold, early-20th-century Germanic neoclassicism.

Elgar Violin Sonata, Op. 82

I. Allegro. Risoluto

II. Romance. Andante

III. Allegro non troppo

Elgar Violin Sonata in E minor, Op. 82 was written in 1918 at the end of the Great War, marking his final major creative phase. Dedicated to his friend Marie Joshua (who died shortly after), the work carries deep emotional weight.

The first movement is turbulent and intense, contrasting anger with a calmer, lyrical theme. The slow “Romance” offers bittersweet nostalgia, shifting between light, playful moments and deep sorrow. The final movement turns toward warmth and hope, ending in E major, with a touching tribute to Marie.