Junior Recital

Li Hao, violin · Ge Xiaozhe, piano
Wednesday, 25 November 2026, 4:10pm · YST Concert Hall

Programme

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)	Violin Sonata No. 2 in A minor, BWV 1003 I. Grave	c. 4'
Georg Philipp Telemann (1681–1767)	Fantasia No. 3 in F minor, TWV 40:16 Adagio – Presto – Grave – Vivace	c. 7'
Niccolò Paganini (1782–1840)	Caprice in B minor, Op. 1 No. 2	c. 3'
Niccolò Paganini (1782–1840)	Caprice in A minor, Op. 1 No. 5	c. 3'
Gabriel Dupont (1878–1914)	*Journée de printemps*, for violin and piano (1901) I. Au matin II. Au soir with Ge Xiaozhe, piano	c. 10'

Total duration approximately 27 minutes, without intermission.

Programme Notes

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Violin Sonata No. 2 in A minor, BWV 1003 — I. Grave

The Sonata in A minor is the second of Bach's six works for unaccompanied violin, three sonatas and three partitas, which he collected under the title *Sei Solo a Violino senza Basso accompagnato* ("Six solos for violin without bass accompaniment"). The fair-copy manuscript is dated 1720, when Bach was Kapellmeister at the court of Prince Leopold in Köthen. At this court Bach had little church music to write, and many of his most important instrumental works date from these years. For centuries the solo violin works have been regarded as a summit of the instrument's repertoire: in them a single melodic instrument is made to carry melody, harmony and counterpoint at the same time.

The three sonatas follow the four-movement plan of the Italian *sonata da chiesa* ("church sonata"): slow, fast, slow, fast. The Grave is the slow introduction to the A minor sonata and prepares the long fugue that follows. Bach begins with a full chord and then spins out a richly decorated melody over a slowly moving bass. Unusually for the time, he wrote out every ornament in exact notes instead of leaving them to the player, so the line moves in flowing runs of short notes. The result sounds free, almost like an improvisation, while being fully controlled underneath.

When listening, follow the bass notes and chords that appear at the beginning of each beat: they outline a clear harmonic path that the decorated melody keeps returning to. Notice too how the movement ends not with a full stop but on a chord that leaves the music open, waiting for the fugue. Heard on its own, as in this recital, the Grave becomes a short, intense meditation.

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681–1767)

Fantasia No. 3 in F minor, TWV 40:16 — Adagio · Presto · Grave · Vivace

Telemann was one of the most prolific and celebrated composers of the eighteenth century; in his lifetime he was better known in Germany than Bach. From 1721 he was music director of the five main churches of Hamburg, and he was also a shrewd businessman who published and sold much of his own music. His *Twelve Fantasias for Violin without Bass* (TWV 40:14–25) were published in this way in Hamburg in 1735. Telemann described the set as containing six fantasias "with fugues" and six "galanteries", that is, pieces in the lighter, more fashionable style of the day. The Fantasia in F minor belongs to the first, more serious group.

Like Bach, Telemann has to suggest a full texture with only four strings, but his fantasias are shorter and freer, moving quickly from one idea to the next. This one opens with a grave, expressive Adagio built on chords and sighing figures. The Presto that follows is fugal: a short subject is passed between an upper and a lower voice, with double-stops (two notes played at once) making both voices audible. A brief Grave returns to the darker mood before a light, dance-like Vivace closes the piece.

The title "fantasia" suggests freedom and surprise, and the pleasure of this piece lies in its sudden changes of character. Listen for the contrast between the singing, slow sections and the busy, imitative writing of the Presto, and for how much harmony a single violin can imply.

Niccolò Paganini (1782–1840)

24 Caprices for Solo Violin, Op. 1 — No. 2 in B minor and No. 5 in A minor

Paganini, born in Genoa, was the most famous violinist of the nineteenth century. His technique was so astonishing that rumours spread that he had sold his soul to the devil, and his concerts across Europe inspired a generation of composers, including Liszt and Schumann. The *24 Caprices* were written between 1802 and 1817 and published by Ricordi in Milan in 1820 as his Opus 1, with the dedication "alli artisti", "to the artists". Each caprice explores one particular technical problem, but they are also full of character, and they remain both a test for every serious violinist and popular concert pieces.

Caprice No. 2 in B minor (Moderato) is a study for the bowing arm. The bow must cross constantly between strings that are not next to each other, often jumping over a string to reach a repeated low or high "pedal" note, while the left hand covers wide distances on the fingerboard. Underneath these leaps there is an elegant, singing melody; the challenge is to make the jumps sound effortless so that the line is never broken.

Caprice No. 5 in A minor (Agitato) is one of the most dramatic of the set. It opens with powerful rising arpeggios and falling scales that sweep across the whole range of the violin, almost like a cadenza. The main section is a fast, continuous stream of notes played with a bouncing bow (*ricochet*), which requires perfect coordination between the two hands. The opening flourishes return at the end, framing the piece. Listen for the clarity of every note at high speed, and for the restless energy that the marking *Agitato* asks for.

Gabriel Dupont (1878–1914)

Journée de printemps (A Spring Day), for violin and piano (1901) — I. Au matin · II. Au soir

Gabriel Dupont was born in Caen and studied at the Paris Conservatoire with Massenet and Widor. In 1901 he won second place in the Prix de Rome, the most important French composition prize, finishing ahead of Maurice Ravel. Much of his short life was marked by tuberculosis, and he died in 1914 at the age of 36, never hearing his opera *Antar*, which was staged in Paris only in 1921. Works such as the piano cycles *Les Heures dolentes* and *La Maison dans les dunes* show a refined composer close to the world of Debussy and Fauré, and his music is now being rediscovered.

Journée de printemps was written while Dupont was still a student, at the same time as his symphonic poem *Jour d'été* (A Summer Day), and was published by Leduc in 1901. Dupont gave it the subtitle "little poem for violin and piano", a tribute to Ernest Chausson, who had recently died and whose *Poème* for violin and orchestra was already famous. Rather than telling a story, the two pieces paint the moods of a single spring day, in the rich harmonic language of French music around 1900. This work is also a set piece for the first round of the 2027 Stuttgart International Violin Competition.

Au matin (In the Morning) is bright and lively, full of the freshness of early light. **Au soir** (In the Evening) is calmer and more reflective, with long, warm phrases and softer colours as the day fades. Here the two instruments are true partners: listen to how the piano's rippling textures create the atmosphere while the violin sings above them, and how the harmony shifts gently from one colour to another.

Notes by Li Hao.