

Elena Ruiz Gonzalez Master's Recital

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

**Sonata No. 1 in G minor, BWV. 1001**

*Duration: 16 minutes*

J. S. Bach was a member of a remarkable family of musicians and while he was best known as a keyboard virtuoso, he was also a highly skilled violinist. Most of his life was dedicated to composing music for the church. He composed the 6 Sonatas and Partitas in 1720 while employed as Capellmeister at the court of the Prince of Anhalt, in Cöthen, Germany. However, these pieces are considered more secular and innovative.

Bach's sonatas and partitas for violin solo are the perfect portrayal of his advanced technique of composition. He brings the instrument to its physical limit by stretching the capacity for polyphony of a single violin. Despite being secular, you can see the influence of religion in the music. The first sonata, in fact, follows the pattern of the Baroque *sonata da chiesa* (church sonata) which has a slow-fast-slow-fast pattern.

The first movement is highly ornamented with chords that turn quickly into sweeping runs with improvisational character. The following fugue evokes Bach's organ music. As a matter of fact, this fugue was reworked for organ as part of the prelude and fugue in D minor. The third movement is a Siciliana, a slow dance that emphasizes the dotted rhythms. Finally, the last movement; a presto in binary form that maintains a consistent sixteenth-note rhythm in  $\frac{3}{8}$  time.

John Adams (b.1947)

**Road Movies (1995)**

*Duration: 17 minutes*

John Adams is an American composer whose works are among the most performed of contemporary classical music. His early compositions were in an academic style, but soon he would include much broader influences, including jazz, pop, electronic music and minimalism. Adam's music is usually categorized as minimalist for his use of repeated patterns and a steady pulse that defines and controls the music. However, he considers his music part of a "post-style" era at the end of the 20th Century that includes expressive, even neo-Romantic, elements.

The title of this piece, Road Movies, was suggested by the "groove" in the piano part, that implies a swing mode by playing the 2nd and 4th notes slightly late. Each movement is described by Adams as a different kind of Road trip: The first movement brings to mind a relaxed drive on a familiar road. The patterns recirculate in a sequence of recalls that suggest a rondo form. The second movement is slow and meditative, defined by the composer as a solitary figure in an empty desert highway. The use of scordatura on the G string gives the lower register a languid sound color. Finally, the last movement is a perpetual motion. It's very fast, like Adams said: Movement III is for four wheel drive only.

Niccolo Paganini (1782-1840)

**Caprice No. 20 in D Major, Op.1**

*Duration: 4 minutes*

Paganini is one of the foremost representatives of instrumental virtuosity in the 19th Century. He was such a gifted violinist that people thought he had sold his soul to the devil. His undeniable talent for the violin in addition to the extraordinary length of his fingers, helped him develop a technique that made him the preeminent violist of the period. He composed many works as a way to flaunt his technical skills; At the time, nobody else was able to perform these pieces.

The 24 Caprices are a collection of short pieces. Each one of them explores various different technicalities in violin playing, such as bow bounces, *spiccato*, left hand *pizzicato*, harmonics... and each caprice was dedicated to a specific musician. The Caprice No. 20 was ascribed to Carlo Gignami and it is known for the continuous use of the D string evoking the style of a bagpipe while playing a lyrical melody on the A string.

Joseph Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

**Sonata No. 2 in G Major, Op.77 (1923-27)**

*Duration: 17 minutes*

Ravel's second sonata for violin and piano had a four-year gestation, probably the longest of any of his works. Ravel's music came to be characterized by its adventurous harmonic style and inventive exploration of instrumental timbres. When he

started working on this piece in 1923, he found himself intrigued by the different characteristics of the violin and the piano. Rather than blending the two instruments, in this piece they are separated but equal, reacting to each other while maintaining their individual identities. The instrumental style clearly displays the independence of the parts.

Ravel himself played the piano part at the first performance of the sonata in 1927, along with a fellow former student of Faure, violinist Georges Enescu. The French composer found inspiration in the American musical genres of Jazz and Blues. The second movement of this piece uses jazzy rhythms and pizzicatos as well as a blues singing style. The sonata's integration of jazz into European culture was pioneering and innovative. Yet, despite this sonata's strong American influence, it remains French at its core; the sound quality, extreme textures and colors throughout the piece are truly representatives of French music.