

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

Joseph Lin, *violin*
Sunday, November 15 – 3:00 PM

PREVIEW
NOTES

PROGRAM

Sonata in C Major, BWV 1005

Johann Sebastian Bach

Born: March 31, 1685, Eisenach, Germany

Died: July 28, 1750, Leipzig, Germany

Composed: 1720

Duration: 23 minutes

The first two sonatas and the three partitas of J.S. Bach's six sonatas and partitas for solo violin make considerable demands on performers. However, the Sonata for solo violin No. 3 in C Major, BWV 1005, is in a class by itself; it is so challenging a piece on every front that even the usually unflappable Jascha Heifetz used to break out in a cold sweat and suffer nervous bow-shakes when playing it, and it is a work of such consummate mastery, so perfectly planned and balanced, that any flaw in the performance sticks out like a sore thumb. In all fairness, Bach has gone beyond the bounds of reason in this grand Sonata—the violinist is asked to play music that might give a harpsichordist a headache—but the music is so rewarding that all the toil is worth it in the end.

Partita in B Minor, BWV 1002

Johann Sebastian Bach

Composed: 1720

Duration: 27 minutes

Of Bach's three partitas for solo violin, the first is the most old-fashioned in its choice of dance movements. The work is structurally unusual among Bach's sonatas and partitas for solo instruments in that it consists of four pairs of movements, the second of each pair offering a variation on the first. Another nod to older forms is the overall layout of the movements; the pairs fall into the slow-fast-slow-fast pattern of the church sonata or *sonata da chiesa*. To complicate matters, each double is much faster than the movement it varies. The work is technically challenging, generally more difficult than the third partita but not as tough as the second, the famous *Chaconne* of which is clotted with double and triple stops.

Sonata in G Minor, BWV 1001

Johann Sebastian Bach

Composed: 1720

Duration: 18 minutes

The solemn opening *Adagio* is replete with spread chords, multiple-stoppings and trills. This leads to the first fugue of the collection—a fugue being a complex musical structure literally meaning “flight” or “escape” in which the different voices enter successively, each giving chase to the previous one. Of course, that we are in reality hearing just one voice make this and the other fugues in the Sonatas quite remarkable examples of a form over which Bach had total mastery. After the busy activity of the fugue, the *Siciliana* brings lyrical repose to proceedings, this form being a gentle dance of Sicilian origin. In the 18th century, the dance form was frequently included in operas and ballets to accompany idealised pastoral scenes. The sonata concludes with a high-speed *Presto*. Here, gone is the polyphonic trickery of the earlier movements, Bach simply revelling in the monodic (single voice) qualities of the violin as he races towards the finishing line.