

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: IN SEARCH OF A THEME: ALTERNATIVE
STRUCTURES FOR THE MODERN VIOLIN
RECITAL

Phillip Alexander Ducreay, Doctor of Musical
Arts, 2022

Dissertation directed by: Professor, Dr. James Stern, School of Music

It is the purpose of this dissertation, at its core, to ask and explore a central question: Can a successful and diverse recital program be curated not based on a pre-set historical or theoretical theme but rather on some type of narrative arc that runs throughout the program? By exploring how these programs work, I hope to find hidden connections that tie these pieces together and justify my programming in the order I have chosen. The curation I have proposed aims to change how audiences consume and engage with music by connecting them with new works and a well-ordered musical experience. Inspired by the flexibility of nineteenth and twentieth-century programs, modern programs can be crafted with a narrative approach in mind. Just as a composition can express an idea or feeling, the order and narrative of a program can be crafted to do the same in the manner I have put forth. The first recital described in this dissertation was performed in Gildenhorn Hall at the Clarice Smith Center on April 14th 2021 at 5pm with the pianist Alexei Ulitin. The second recital was performed in Ulrich Hall in the Tawes building at

UMD on December 9th 2021 with the pianist Leili Asanbekova. The recording submitted as part of this dissertation is of the second recital program, recorded in Nashville, TN at Laura Turner Hall in the Schermerhorn Symphony Center on Oct. 13th and 26th with pianist, Megan Gale.

IN SEARCH OF A THEME: ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURES FOR THE
MODERN VIOLIN RECITAL

by

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Dedication

I dedicate this paper to all the people that have supported and/or inspired me to pursue music. I have failed so many times, and it is only through the support of my friends and family that I have ultimately found some level of success in music. I also acknowledge the contributions of those who have doubted me. Having been underestimated makes this success all the sweeter.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge that I have a place and a voice in Classical Music. This is just the beginning.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Track Listing.....	v
Introduction.....	1
Chapter I: Recital I.....	12
Chapter II: Recital II.....	34
Conclusion.....	52
Bibliography.....	56

Track Listing

1. Fritz Kreisler - Marche Miniature Viennoise
2. Fritz Kreisler - La Gitana
3. Ahmed Al Abaca - Upon Meeting Errollyn Wallen Mvt. 1
4. Ahmed Al Abaca - Upon Meeting Errollyn Wallen Mvt. 2
5. Ahmed Al Abaca - Upon Meeting Errollyn Wallen Mvt. 3
6. Ariana Grande/Alexi Kenney - thank u, next
7. Samuel Coleridge-Taylor - African Dances Mvt. 1
8. Samuel Coleridge-Taylor - African Dances Mvt. 2
9. Samuel Coleridge-Taylor - African Dances Mvt. 3
10. Samuel Coleridge-Taylor - African Dances Mvt. 4
11. Nadia Boulanger - Trois Pieces Mvt. 1
12. Nadia Boulanger - Trois Pieces Mvt. 2
13. Nadia Boulanger - Trois Pieces Mvt. 3
14. Robert Schumann - Violin Sonata 1 in A minor Mvt. 1
15. Robert Schumann - Violin Sonata 1 in A minor Mvt. 2
16. Robert Schumann - Violin Sonata 1 in A minor Mvt. 3
17. Joni Mitchell/Alexi Kenney - Blue

Introduction

Since Franz Liszt (1811–1886) first referred to a solo performance as a recital in the middle of the nineteenth century and presented his *monologues-pianistiques*, the solo recital has changed a great deal.¹ On twenty-first century recitals, musicians seem to favor the programming of whole multi-movement works instead of a collection of smaller pieces. In addition, the recital in the twenty-first century favors a two-part form using the intermission as a midpoint. However, in the early days of the solo recital programming was a less regimented procedure. It was not uncommon in these times for musicians to perform single movements from multi-movement works in a concert program.² It was considered a daring feat to perform a whole multi-movement work in its entirety without pause.³ This type of fragmentation of whole works at the whim of the curator might even be called a norm from the mid-nineteenth century into the middle of the twentieth. Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849) took this fragmentation even further in 1830 by placing light pieces in between movements of his piano concerto.⁴ It is through the evolution of the recital that programming practices such as these have lost popularity. I argue that using short character works and movements to create multi-section recitals present a viable mode of programming for today's listener. A readoption of this aesthetic might strengthen the connection between listener and performer, especially as the curation of a concert program is concerned. To

¹ William Weber, *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concerto Programming from Haydn to Brahms* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 160.

² George Kehler, *The Piano in Concert*, 2 vols. (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1982), 57.

³ Rosy Ge, "The Art of Recital Programming: A History of the Development of Solo Piano Recitals with a Comparison of Golden Age and Modern-Day Concert Programs at Carnegie Hall" (Dissertation, Lawrence, University of Kansas, 2017),

<https://www.proquest.com/pqdtglobal/docview/2002273293/797EE8B3A9B94D0CPQ/6?accountid=14696>.

⁴ Ge, "Recital Programming", 8.

make recital programming more innovative and indicative of our own time, the reevaluation of modern practices and the inclusion of diverse works may be timely.

To explore how it might be possible to inform modern recital programming with the flexibility of its origins, it is helpful to look at its beginnings. Up until the term recital was used, concerts given by musicians were often a mix of vocal and instrumental with many musicians participating. These concerts were more for promoting a musician's colleagues than drawing attention to their individual prowess.⁵ However, in his concerts from 1837–1840, Franz Liszt drastically reduced the number of other performers on his programs. On June 9, 1840, Liszt refers to a concert he is giving in London as a 'recital', and from that time other musicians began to follow suit.⁶ As the recital began to catch on, there began to develop certain standards and aesthetics of programming. From about 1860, piano virtuosos favored the performance of the works of Classical masters with a few contemporary pieces placed on the end in recital.⁷ Ever the exception, Liszt primarily programmed his own piano works and those of closely aligned contemporaries.⁸

After the adoption of the recital by pianists, it came to popularity next with the violinists. In 1843, the great Norwegian violinist Ole Bull (1810–1880) remarked from Trondheim that he, “gave a concert without any assistance, playing nearly two hours without cessation. It was very fatiguing, but, at least, nothing was ruined by bad accompaniment and the audience was pleased”.⁹ By the 1870s, the recital was a standard form for performance and became a primary

⁵ William Weber, “Recital,” in *Grove Music Online*, 2001, <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000023018>.

⁶ Weber, *The Great Transformation*, 160.

⁷ Ge, “Recital Programming”, 7.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ William Weber, “Recital,” in *Grove Music Online*, 2001, <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000023018>.

vehicle for the assessment of instrumentalists. The great violin virtuosos of the latter part of the nineteenth century, such as Joseph Joachim (1831–1907), Carl Flesch (1873–1944), and Henri Vieuxtemps (1820–1881), gave recitals regularly consisting primarily of ‘classical works’ and their own original compositions.¹⁰ While these performers did still include chamber works on their programs, the focus was decidedly focused on their individual prowess as interpreters. By the turn of the twentieth century, the solo recital was a dominant form in musical life. This is largely a result of dedicated musical agents who both arranged concerts and promoted musicians to a level of fame only achieved previously by opera singers.¹¹

In the earliest part of the twentieth century, we see a great variety in recital programming including a greater number of original compositions and short works. One such violinist of note, Fritz Kreisler, took an approach which has distinctly influenced my own. Kreisler’s programming is of interest because he curated programs which combined his compositions, ‘classical’ works, and the works of other violinists. Kreisler used a combination of short works and multi-movement works in a particular order to create a sense of coherence throughout the program. One such recital, given by Kreisler on March 22, 1910, is a clear representation of this curation.

¹⁰ Weber, “Recital.”

¹¹ Ibid.

CHORAL UNION SERIES, 1909-1910

THIRTY-FIRST SEASON

FIFTH CONCERT

No. CCXXXV COMPLETE SERIES

VIOLIN RECITAL

UNIVERSITY HALL, TUESDAY, MARCH 22, 1910
AT EIGHT O'CLOCK

MR. FRITZ KREISLER

MRS. MARK A. STEVENS, Pianist

PROGRAM

I

- (a) SONATA, D major Händel
Andante; Allegro energico;
Larghetto; Allegro
(b) PRELUDE AND ALLEGRO G. Pugnani (1731-1796)

II

- CONCERTO, A minor Y. B. Viotti
Allegro moderato; Adagio;
Allegro con spirito

III

- (a) GRAVE Friedman Bach (1710-1784)
(b) CHANSON LOUIS XIII AND PAVANE Louis Couperin (1630-1665)
(c) ALLEGRETTO L. Boccherini (1743-1805)
(d) LARGHETTO, B flat major Weber
(e) RONDO, G major Mozart

IV

- POLONAISE, A major Wieniawski

STEINWAY PIANO USED.

THE NEXT CONCERT IN THE CHORAL UNION SERIES WILL BE THE

FIRST MAY FESTIVAL CONCERT

May 18, 1910

In this program, Kreisler displays his diverse taste in musical programming by including works from Viotti, Wieniawski, Händel, Couperin, Mozart, and his own original works in the style of other composers. The order of his programs is clearly very deliberate, illustrated by his clear delineation between sections marked with roman numerals. In the first section, he uses a Händel sonata and his *Prelude and Allegro* together to serve as an introduction. The second, is a presentation of a violin concerto by Viotti replacing the orchestra with piano. The third section is a collection of short pieces by a wide range of composers. For the finale, the violinist ends the

program with the Polonaise in A major by Polish virtuoso, Henri Wieniawski. The third section is particularly interesting in that Kreisler takes several short works that were not necessarily meant to be played together and programs them to form a musically coherent section. If these works had not been written by multiple composers, one could almost say they resemble a multi-movement work, such as a suite. It appears that Kreisler intended this recital program to be both diverse and representative of some type of poetic ordering based on his grouping. Other violinists around that time presented programs very similar to Kreisler's. One such recital, given by Jascha Heifetz (1901–1987) in 1917, suggests that there was indeed a style of programming and ordering that was popular at the beginning of the twentieth century.

JASCHA HEIFETZ

NEW RUSSIAN VIOLINIST



AMERICAN DEBUT

CARNEGIE HALL

57th Street & 7th Ave., N. Y. City

Saturday Afternoon

OCTOBER 27th

At 2:30 P. M.

...Programme...

I.

Chaconne.....Tomaso Vitti (1650)
Arrangements de Leopold Charlier
(With Organ Accompaniment)

II.

Concerto in D Minor.....Wieniawsky
Allegro moderato
Romanze: Andante non troppo
Finale: A la Zingari

III.

a. Ave Maria.....	Schubert
b. Menuetto.....	Mozart
c. Nocturne in D major.....	Chopin-Wilhelmj
d. Chorus of derwishes (Etude).....	Beethoven-Auer
e. Marche orientale (Scherzo).....	(From the Ruins of Athens)

IV.

a. Melodie.....	Tchaikowsky
b. Capriccio No. 24.....	Paganini-Auer

MR. ANDRE BENOIST at the Piano. MR. FRANK L. SEALY at the Organ.

Tickets: 75c., \$1.00, \$1.50, \$2.00 Boxes: \$15.00 & \$18.00

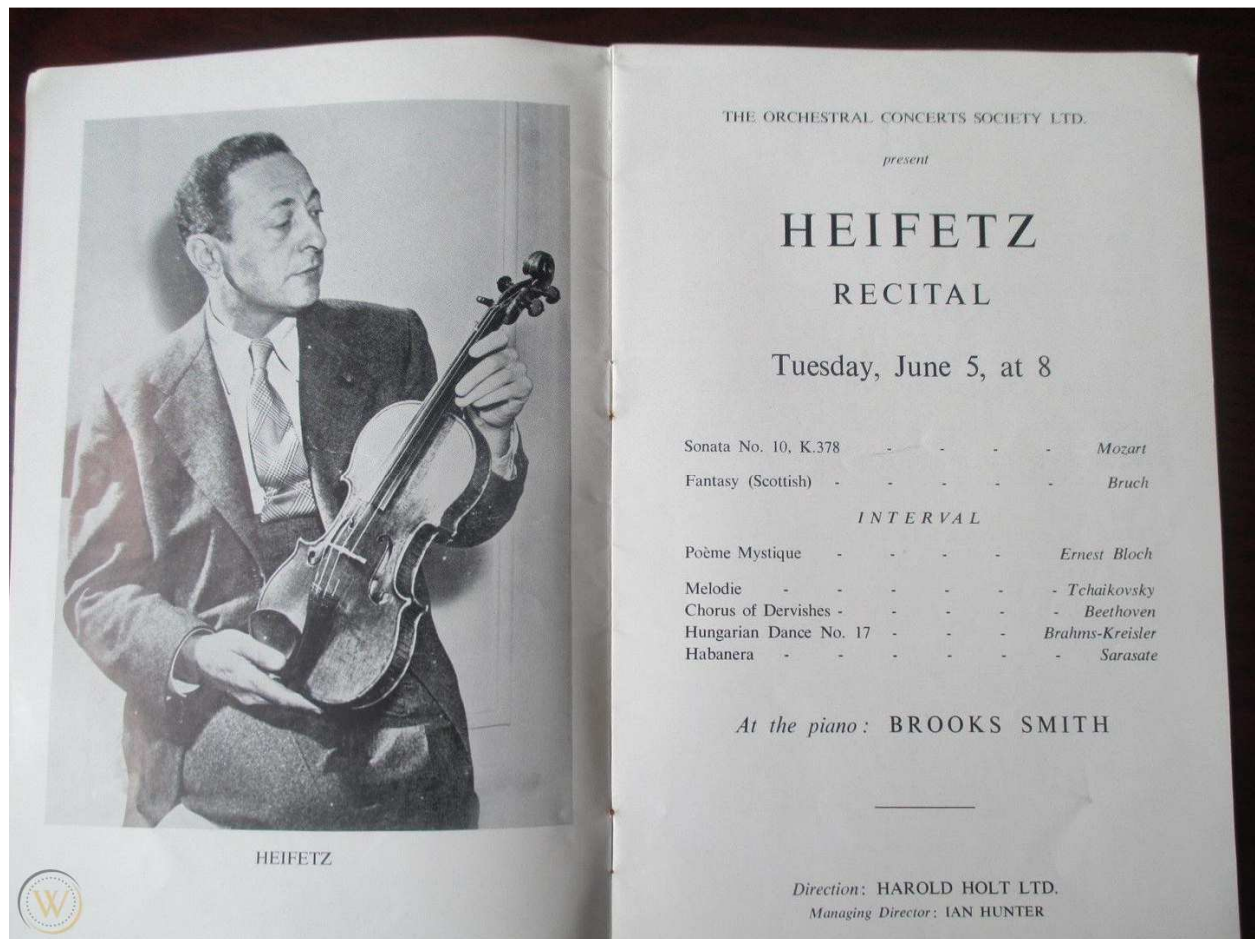
On Sale at Box Office.

Management: - WOLFSOHN MUSICAL BUREAU

STEINWAY PIANO USED

Heifetz's 1917 program follows the same ordering as Kreisler's and includes a somewhat diverse range of compositions. From a comparison of both programs, it seems as if there was a tradition of presenting recitals in multiple sections. Heifetz includes a clear introduction, a concerto, a 'suite' of short works, and a finale. As in the Kreisler's 1910 recital, the third section of Heifetz's program is a well-ordered group of short works. Similarly, the ordering of this third section is programmed in a way that gives this section a clear beginning and a clear end. These two programs illustrate some of the priorities that violinists of this time seem to have shared.

The recital program of the second half of the twentieth century seems to shift from the multi-section recital program to one in two parts interrupted in the middle by an intermission, notated in the program. A 1956 program, again by Jascha Heifetz, illustrates this reframing of the recital program into two parts rather than multiple sections.



While the order of the program is similar in form, this reframing into two parts will influence the programming of recitals later in the century and of those in the present day.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the recital program had moved away from the multi-part programming that was popular earlier in the century. It is here that we see the effects of the recital program being curated in halves rather as a multi-sectioned entity. Two of the most notable changes are the omission of a violin concerto and the disappearance of the composite ‘suite’ as seen in the Kreisler and Heifetz examples. In place of these sections, we see that modern recital programs rely heavily on violin sonatas. As a generalization, a violin recital might be comprised of a few violin sonatas, one or two short works, and a showpiece. The carefully curated order that was popular in the earlier half of the century seems to have been replaced. The ‘suite’ of short works was traded in favor of presenting whole multi-movement sonatas.

Given this brief overview of the recital as it has existed since the nineteenth century, it is clear that the form has changed a great deal. As the aesthetic has changed to become one that favors the presentation of multi-movement works, the ‘suite’ of small works has almost disappeared. If we consider what application Kreisler and Heifetz’s ‘suite’ sections of their recital might have for the modern performer in recital, we are presented with an exciting opportunity. By approaching recital ordering in the same way that these violinists approached their ‘suite’ sections, there is an opportunity to create a program which is poetically curated throughout. If programs like those presented by Heifetz and Kreisler were expanded upon and modernized with diverse works: What value might there be in expanding upon their formal schemes to create programs that are clearly organized in a narrative way?

It is the purpose of this dissertation, at its core, to ask and explore a central question: Can a successful and diverse recital program be curated not based on a pre-set historical or theoretical theme but rather on some type of narrative arc that runs throughout the program? It is my intention to explore why I have curated these two programs in the way and order that I have. I

have put this type of program curation into practice with several experimental projects to test this theory. In my first experiments, I have curated programs for the ensembles Arco Strings and Pastiche and, in my own recitals, appended to this document. In the first two programs I curated before my dissertation recitals, one with Pastiche and one with Arco Strings, I chose to start with one idea or concept that would drive the storyline of each program. This starting point was heavily inspired by the idea of the playlist or mixtape and my use of the music streaming service, Spotify. Using Spotify to assemble these playlists/programs allowed me to experience them as a listener and alter the narrative easily. The resulting programs turned out differently from one another in terms of expressed meaning and form. They took on their own life as the story of each was honed and recrafted.

The first program, curated for the group Arco Strings, was developed in tandem with another orchestra member. With the ensemble's commitment to diverse music, I felt this group would be perfect for testing my curation strategies. Metlife Insurance in Washington DC contracted the orchestra to present a concert for their staff in the spring of 2021. During the planning process, they mentioned their focus on sustainability. My co-curator and I used this idea as a springboard to influence this program. We each crafted several playlists influenced by sustainability which resulted in outgrowths into roots music, folk music, nature, and music tied to the concept of home. With those experimental playlists, we carefully curated one final program that would tell the story of sustainability in diverse ways. Ultimately, this method of programming was highly successful. In performance, we grouped this program into sections, and before each section, we introduced the works and explained where we were going next in the program. Not only did the audience love this experience, but it was perhaps most important that we were performing to people who did not necessarily listen to or prefer classical music in the

first place. Not only were we able to give the audience an outstanding performance, but we were able to send them on their way with a copy of the program, courtesy of Spotify and their sharing features. With my first experience generating playlists/programs, I proved that this type of curation was possible and could be very successful.

My second experiment in this type of programming was for a newly formed quartet called Pastiche which I started with several colleagues. This program was my first experience as a solo curator, and I found it much more challenging to finalize a program. As I was thinking about the nature of quartet playing and chamber music in general, I decided that I wanted to craft a musical narrative around the concept of dialogue. I was recently introduced to Florence Price's Five Folksongs in Counterpoint and was moved by the way the composer wove lines together into a unified work. I decided that I would program this work for Pastiche but with a twist: I would program it in dialogue with famous movements from the string quartet repertoire. With this program, I wanted to explore the concept of assembling fragments from different works into a new whole just as some nineteenth century composers have done.¹² So, I placed several movements from the canon of the string quartet literature within the form of the five songs. I did this primarily because I thought that Price's work was equal to these legendary pieces, and I wanted them to be presented together for comparison. Had I programmed the Price as its own entity, it may have tokenized the work amongst a program of established standards. This form of tokenism is unfortunately all too common in modern classical programming. Placing only one less standard piece, especially when written by a BIPOC composer, in a program with more established works within the canon seems like an inequitable way to promote diversity within a classical music program.

¹² Ge, "Recital Programming", 8.

The curation of both programs was an excellent case study for programming in the way I have described. While both programs were diverse and had a level of narrative arc, they were conceived differently and attempted to express different things. The first program was a curated playlist of music that represented our musical interpretation of sustainability. The other was an attempt to highlight a less standard work while contextualizing it with works within the canon. This programming aims to change the way audiences consume and engage with music by connecting them with new works and a well-ordered musical experience. Inspired by the flexibility of nineteenth and twentieth century programs, modern programs can be crafted with a narrative approach in mind. Just as a composition can express an idea or feeling, the order and narrative of a program can be crafted to do the same in the manner I have put forth.

Chapter I: Recital I

Program I Curation Summary

This first program was curated with the idea of creating a model for a recital that embodied high levels of diversity throughout while also maintaining a sense of narrative arc. In curating this program, I was heavily inspired by the idea of the song cycle and, more specifically, two collections from Franz Schubert (1797–1828), *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*. Specifically, I wanted to create a musical narrative that tells a story when the cycle is performed in its entirety. These song cycles are cornerstones of the classical repertoire and are representative of the type of narrative experience I wanted to create for my audience. It was challenging to attempt to curate an "instrumental" song cycle without text and containing works that were never meant to be together. To create a coherent program after this model, I decided to craft a program using the following sections as guidelines:

- Introduction
- The Journey
- The Climax
- The Falling Action/Finale

After deciding how to organize the recital, the rest of the program came together in an exciting way. I put the first piece into Spotify and put the rest of this program together piece by piece according to my two tenets, diversity and narrative. As I added works and placed them in

order, I asked myself at every step: What continues the story in a way no one would expect? It was in this way that works by Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962), Witold Lutoslawski (1913-1994), Claude Debussy (1862-1918), and Franz von Vecsey (1893-1935) came to be on a program together. I believe that the finished product is a very successful representation of musical diversity. This program highlights incredible works that have fallen out of favor or perhaps those that just never got their big break. For example, Franz von Vecsey's name is perhaps only recognized as the dedicatee of Sibelius's Violin Concerto, Op. 47, even though he was an exceptionally gifted musician. While Kreisler's works never entirely fell out of popularity, several of them, such as *Poupée Valsante* or *Dancing Dolls*, began to disappear from the concert hall as the old generation of violinists began to pass away. By pairing works such as these on the same program with a standard work such as Debussy's Violin Sonata, I hoped to highlight the quality of the lesser-known works.

Introduction

Sonate Seconda A Sopran Solo

I Allegra

Dario Castello

(1644–1704)

Sonata X, *Crucifixion*

I Praeludium

II Aria

III Variation

IV Adagio

Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber

(1770–1827)

The Journey

Valse Triste

Franz von Vecsey

(1893–1935)

Poupée Valsante (arr. Kreisler)

Ede Poldini

(1869–1957)

Subito

Witold Lutoslawski

(1913–1994)

Ford's Farm

Mason Bates

(1977)

The Climax

Lotus Land (arr. Kreisler)

Cyril Scott

(1879–1970)

Sonata in G minor

I Allegro vivo

II Intermède: Fantasque et léger

III Finale: Très Animé

Claude Debussy

The Falling Action/Finale

Romance, op. 23

Amy Beach

(1867–1944)

Section I: Introduction

The introductory part of this recital is comprised of the *Sonate Seconda A Sopran Solo* by Dario Castello (1602-1631) and Heinrich Ignaz Biber's (1644-1704) tenth sonata, *Crucifixion*, from his set of Mystery Sonatas depicting events from the lives of Christ and Mary. These pieces serve as an introduction to a perhaps lesser-known aspect of the Baroque period. I propose that these two works do not fall into the "standard" baroque typified by composers like Vivaldi, Corelli, and Bach. These works exist on the fringe of canonicity, if not entirely outside of it, and are not widely known or played outside of early music circles. Perhaps the most apparent reason for this is that Castello and Biber represent an older Baroque genre and are removed in time from the music of J. S. Bach (1685-1750). Suppose we concede, as is often the case, that Bach is indeed the popular focal point for how we perceive the music of the baroque in the canon. In that case, it comes as no surprise that Biber, forty-one years Bach's senior, might have a diminished reputation. Being even earlier than Biber, Castello represents a style that seems incongruent with Bach's music. In this recital, Castello and Biber find a new home by introducing the music of Kreisler, Vecsey, and Lutoslawski. The stylistic shift into the twentieth century is meant to make a pronounced statement. The most obvious change being the replacement of the harpsichord with the piano. The change of accompaniment instrument and the return to standard tuning, from Biber's sonata to *Valse Triste*, clearly delineates the transition to another section and removes us from the space of early music.

I found this pair particularly suitable because they were both revolutionary examples in the early Baroque style. Each work gives us a completely different picture of the musical epoch, and each was perhaps responsible for much of the music that would come afterward. The

Castello, a rich solo sonata for cornetto, violin, or other soprano instrument, is full of fantasy and, at points, harmonic progressions that seem ahead of their time. Biber's sonata, with its *scordatura* tuning, is a sonically different expression of the Baroque than we typically would find in the music of Corelli, Vivaldi, and Bach. It is also worth noting that while tuning was a much more flexible concept in Biber's time, such a set of sonatas using *scordatura* at this level was brilliant and exceptionally forward-thinking. This sonata requires much of the violinist with its alternate tuning and chords throughout, which is quite difficult. The violinist must respond to every change in string pitch while playing the work's chordal passages, which is rather challenging in a work with no clear pause. These two pieces in tandem complement each other exceptionally well. By placing the Castello first, I had hoped to make the leap in violin technique and a stylistic shift in priorities to the Biber apparent.

In presenting these baroque works, it is worth acknowledging that the music of this period had particular performance considerations that differ from the modern time. The study of, or at the very least an acknowledgment of, these historical performance practices helped inform my interpretation of both works. In Castello's and Biber's time, the violin would have looked and sounded much different than it does today. The Baroque equivalent employed gut strings, had a shorter neck, and was played using a much shorter and less standardized bow than modern players are used to. In addition, pitch level was far more flexible than today. While today we might see A=440-442 Hz as a tuning level, early music varied quite a lot. However, to simplify modern performance of Baroque works, we have averaged and standardized the tuning level A=415 Hz for the historically informed performance of Baroque music. While I could not present the performances in a historically informed manner with such a violin or at A=415 Hz, I did choose to use a baroque bow which hopefully allowed me to capture some of the nuances of

period playing. Along with my use of the baroque bow, I was also accompanied by a harpsichord, a stylistically appropriate instrument with which to present these two works. I hope that by employing the baroque bow and harpsichord at the very least, I could more closely express the articulations and nuances of the music in a way in which these composers might have been familiar.

Sonate Seconda A Sopran Solo by Dario Castello

Dario Domenico Castello (1602-1631) was an early Baroque composer who mainly worked in Venice. According to the title pages of his publications, he was the leader of an ensemble at San Marco's cathedral in Venice, where he held tenure until sometime before 1658.¹³ He is acknowledged as being one of the first to transform the instrumental canzona into the sonata, along with Biagio Marini (1594-1663). Their work was followed by composers Uccellini (1603-1680), G.A. Bertoli (1598-ca. 1645), and G.A. Leoni (ca 16th century-ca 1651).¹⁴ Castello composed two books of sonatas equating to twenty-nine works. These works are distinctly virtuosic; however, they are not so idiomatic for the violin and could be played just as easily by a soprano member of the wind family. Most, if not all of the sonatas, are composed in three- or four-part forms, this particular sonata falling into the latter category. This sonata is characterized by several quick shifts of tempo and mood to create a work full of fantasy and virtuosity.

¹³ Andrew Dell'Antonio, "Castello, Dario," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford Music Online, 2001), <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000005126>.

¹⁴ Sandra Mangsen, "Solo Sonata," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford Music Online, 2001), <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000026166>.

Sonata X, Crucifixion by Heinrich Biber

Karl Heinrich Biber von Bibern (1644-1704) was a renowned violin virtuoso and composer primarily known for his set of violin sonatas, the Rosary or Mystery Sonatas (approx. 1676). Rooted in Catholicism, this set of sonatas is unique in that they represent instrumental sacred music which is surprisingly rare in the music of this time.¹⁵ In Biber's manuscript, there are images that seem to be related to those from the Rosary Psalters:



Crucifixion

The Rosary Psalters were “published by rosary confraternities, groups of devout Catholics who assembled to reflect on the rosary and used such aids as prayers, quotations, and images to facilitate meditation.”¹⁶ Given this connection, it seems likely that these sonatas might serve as a type of meditation on these icons and events. Each of the sonatas in this set place the violin in a

¹⁵ E. Dann and J. Sehnal, “R. Biber, Heinrich Ignaz Franz Von,” in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford Music Online, 2001), <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000003037>.

¹⁶ B. Schwarm, “Mystery Sonatas,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, December 29, 2014, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Mystery-Sonatas>.

different tuning and key than the last. Biber's violin writing was truly innovative even compared to his peer, Jakob Walther (1650–1717), in its range and virtuosity in employing double-stops and polyphonic passages.¹⁷ Nearly a century after they had been written, Charles Burney wrote of the violinist: "Of all the violin players of the last century, Biber seems to have been the best, and his solos are the most difficult and most fanciful of any music I have seen of the same period."¹⁸ Burney's sentiment is certainly well supported by Biber's sheer sense of musical innovation and inspiration. In G minor, *Crucifixion*, Biber's tenth sonata begins with a jaunty *Praeludium* before moving into the *Aria* and *Adagio* sections with several distinct variations. For the violinist, this work is difficult not only for its virtuosity in technique but also for the extreme difficulty of playing *scordatura*. The alternate tuning can make the violin quite unstable, rendering the playing of chords a challenge for intonation. While this is a much different type of virtuosity than the Castello, there are several shared principles. First is the dancing sixteenth-note runs which run back and forth across the latitude of the fingerboard. Second is the inherent fantasy in the writing that almost begs for the implementation of rubato throughout. Finally, while these are indeed very flashy works, there are moments of profound beauty which rival many more famous works in the Baroque style.

Section II: The Journey

¹⁷ Dann and Sehnal, "Biber."

¹⁸ Dann and Sehnal.

For the journey portion of this program, I wanted to experiment with putting together a section containing four short pieces that were never intended to be played together. Each short work almost functions as a movement in this section, allowing me to choose the order and different musical flavors to be presented as curator-performer. Each work within this section is written in a different tradition and incorporates various musical influences. The *Valse Triste* is a melancholy waltz written in the nineteenth-century German Romantic tradition. *Poupée Valsante* is a contrasting waltz-like work written by a Hungarian composer, which seems a perfect partner to the *Valse Triste*. Lutoslawski's *Subito*, which follows, is a mischievous work written in a twenty-first-century style by a Polish composer. Finally, *Ford's Farm*, a work deeply influenced by the American musical genres of Jazz and Bluegrass, completes this section with a lighthearted intensity. This amuse-bouche of different national and compositional styles perfectly supports my intention of diversity. The listener is propelled through these seemingly disparate styles, which serve as a functional section in advancing the plotline of this program. This is where the song cycle's influence, specifically *Die schöne Müllerin*, is recalled. Each work is a different character, but it succeeds in expressing the concept of the journey.

Valse Triste by Franz von Vecsey

Franz von Vecsey (1893–1935) was a Hungarian violinist and an occasional composer of violin works. While he is most famous for being the dedicatee of the Sibelius Violin Concerto, he was an important figure in the lineage of the German school of violin playing as professed by Jenő Hubay (1858–1937) and Joseph Joachim (1831–1907). Vecsey's *Valse Triste* is a significantly underplayed and underappreciated work. This composition is just one example of the woefully neglected compositions of the violinists of the German romantic tradition. Violinists of this school, such as Hubay, Vecsey, Friedrich Herrmann (1828–1907), and Joachim, were gifted composers in their own right and were influenced by and in turn influenced Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Brahms. The short works of these composers, such as *Zephyr* by Hubay and *Romances* by Joachim and the Vecsey, are colorful and meaningful works that have suffered in popularity since the second half of the twentieth century. For this reason, they are a viable and vital alternative to the more famous works we see on concert stages today. Not only do they all sit remarkably well on the instrument, but they bear such a remarkable closeness to the styles of the "Great" German Romantic composers. Vecsey's waltz is written in a rounded binary form with a very small codetta marked *ad libitum*. While this piece is somewhat simple, Vecsey gives the violinist several ways to express their virtuosity and violinistic spirit. Through his use of the *ad libitum* marking, a virtuosic *ossia* in artificial harmonics, and a chromatic *glissando*, the composer invites the violinist to express their own individuality. This melancholy work in c minor, although small, expresses a haunting effect and, when played well, truly leaves an impression on the audience.

Poupée Valsante by Ede Poldini arr. Fritz Kreisler

Fritz Kreisler (1875–1962) is regarded as a violinist of great renown and a prolific composer and arranger. His original works, cadenzas, and transcriptions have a place at the heart of the violin repertoire. His works are relatively short and often serve as showpieces and encores in recital. Kreisler's *Poupée Valsante* or Dancing Doll is a cheerful and entertaining character piece. Dancing Dolls is not one of the composer's original works but instead the original work of Ede Poldini (1869–1957), primarily known as a Hungarian opera composer. *Poupée Valsante* is one of Kreisler's arrangements that, while frequently played at the beginning of the twentieth century, later fell into obscurity. Other than the lilting quality of the work, perhaps the most significant feature is the up-bow staccato markings. This technique contributes to the energetic feel of the movement and requires a certain virtuosity from the violinist. The short work shines like a light, fitting between Vecsey's melancholy waltz and Lutoslawski's tempestuous *Subito*. Its poise and warm second theme challenge the anxiety of the works that bookend it.

Subito by Witold Lutoslawski

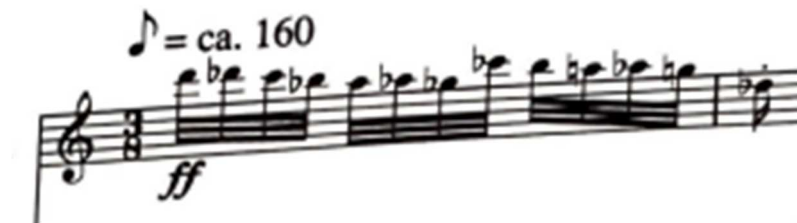
Lutoslawski's *Subito*, commissioned for the International Violin Competition of Indianapolis in 1994, is a turbulent work.¹⁹ *Subito*, meaning a sudden change in dynamic or mood, “is suggestive of the mood of changeability that results from the frequent, abrupt changes of rhythm, dynamic, and mode of attack.”²⁰ Within the constraints of the musical language,

¹⁹ Kevin Fitz-Gerald, “Subito,” *American Music Teacher* 46, no. 6 (1997): 89–90.

²⁰ Witold Lutoslawski, *Subito* (Sussex: Chester Music, 1998).

Lutoslawski exhibits his personal style while allowing the interpreter a degree of freedom.²¹ This is to say, *Subito* was written in a way that seems to invite the performer to embrace their own interpretative abilities. *Subito* is a work with frequent mood shifts which may provide insight into the composer's mental state, having just been diagnosed with cancer. This illness prevented him from composing a violin concerto for the violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter and undoubtedly other works.²²

At the most recognizable level, *Subito* is marked by a furious refrain in thirty-second notes played four times with varied episodes in between.



Each of these episodes becomes lengthier than the last and begins to consume each refrain's return. *Subito* frequently slides between different rhythmic, textural, and harmonic sections which highlights a level of instability. Just as Lutoslawski gives us a seemingly stable idea of what this piece means to say, we are just as soon proven wrong. Right before the conclusion of the work, we are presented with one final burst of energy in the form of a manic trill in the violin, sustained over several meter changes.

²¹ Fitz-Gerald, "Subito."

²² Lutoslawski.



Following this trill, the composer bring the piece to an end by first referencing an earlier motif and then closing the work out with a variation on the thirty-second note motif.

While difficult for both performers, *Subito* is noticeably more difficult for the violin. Technically, the large leaps, complex shifts, and challenging bowing sequences make this a particularly difficult challenge for the violinist at times. Musically, the frequent shifts in character and notation make it difficult for the violinist to create a coherent performance. However, this work serves as an impressive and virtuosic piece when interpreted well. In the scheme of this section, this piece represents a sudden move to anxiety and mania following the Kreisler.

Ford's Farm by Mason Bates

Mason Bates (1977) is noted as being “highly informed by his work as a DJ, his curatorial approach integrates adventurous music, ambient information, and social platforms in a fluid and immersive way.”²³ With his work, *Ford's Farm*, we see Bates as a “diverse artist exploring the ways classical music integrates into contemporary culture.”²⁴ This work, commissioned by Hilary Hahn for her collection of violin encores, portrays a picture of Henry Ford, a titan of industry and amateur violinist. In Bates's own words:

²³ Mason Bates, “About:Mason Bates” (Masonbates.com, 2021), <https://www.masonbates.com/about/>.

²⁴ Mason Bates.

Most people remain unaware that Henry Ford held a passion for automobiles and the fiddle (he grew up on a farm in Michigan). This short work, drawn from the virtuosic violin solos that open my 'energy symphony,' *Alternative Energy*," begins with gentle and unhurried tinkering. However, the vehicle soon jolts to life, sparks fly, and before long, we are racing down a country lane.²⁵

Ford's Farm prominently features musical Americana stylings fused with the virtuosic characteristics of a showpiece. In the last several decades, many composers have found it worthwhile to explore American music in their composition and infuse it into their works. Ford's Farm seems to follow the thread of pieces from composers like Marc O'Connor and Kenji Bunch, which take Bluegrass, Appalachian fiddle music, and Jazz elements and write music for the recital hall. The violinist is challenged to interpret the notated work in a quasi-improvisatory manner, beginning with bluegrass-inspired double stops alternating with sharp pizzicato. This section leads to a spirited secondary section that reprises the refrain below:



Following a speedy C section comprised of sixteenth notes and rapid string crossings, the work is brought to a close with a coda which quickly rises through the range of the violin until the work is brought to a close with a short gesture. Like *Subito*, this piece shifts meter and accent, often obscuring the metric pulse. Bates uses carefully placed accents in metrically weak places to invoke the spirit of fiddle music. Ford's Farm is far less anxious than *Subito* and energetically drives to the program's climax.

²⁵ Bates.

Section III: The Climax

For the climax of this recital program, I chose to go in a slightly divergent direction from what might typically be considered the point of most intensity. Compared to “The Journey” section of the recital, I decided to make “The Climax” decidedly French, or at least French-influenced. By combining Cyril Scott’s *Lotus Land* and Debussy’s Sonata in g minor into one section, it may seem to be somewhat anti-climactic. However, a definition of climax as, “a figure of speech in which a series of phrases or sentences is arranged in ascending order of rhetorical forcefulness”, supports my decision. By the time we reach the finale of the Debussy, we have arrived at the absolute peak. I believe that this ordering is climactic because it does arrange the parts of this section in such an order of increasing intensity. By beginning with *Lotus Land*, I constructed a place of meditation for the listener to reflect on the journey. This introduction to the Debussy Sonata is especially apt because of the harmonic transition between pieces. *Lotus Land* in Eb minor finds its peaceful rest on a tonic seventh chord which transitions meaningfully up a major third to the g minor chord that opens the Violin Sonata.

The choice to use the Debussy sonata in conjunction with *Lotus Land* for this section was sparked by the similarities I perceived in the works, both violinistically and musically. Given the influence of impressionism in both works, I interpreted both works in a violinistic style that is historically linked to the music of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century France. Often written about, the French Romantic style of violin playing is much softer and more subtle in sound concept than that of its German counterpart.²⁶ French violin works such as those of Cesar Franck (1822–1890) and Debussy demand a wide range of tonal colors ranging from *sur la touché* to the various off the string strokes accompanied by different descriptive expression

²⁶ Ji Young An, “In Search of a Style: French Violin Performance from Franck to Ravel” (Dissertation, Los Angeles, University of California, 2013) 51-57.

markings. Recorded evidence shows that performers familiar with this French Romantic style approached the performance of Debussy in a distinct way. The 1929 recording of Jacques Thibaud (1880–1953) and Albert Cortot (1877–1962) playing this sonata supports the claim that there was a distinct way to interpret the French music of this time.²⁷ While *Lotus Land* is not a French work per se, the style of writing, French influence, and the specificity of performing directions seem to call the violinist to employ the “French Style” in its interpretation.

Debussy and, to a lesser extent, Scott liberally use tempo modification markings. For example, in the first movement of the Debussy alone, he writes no fewer than 29 expression markings:

*En serrant [Stringendo] - a Tempo - Appassionato - L'istesso tempo très expressif - Ritardando - Meno mosso (Tempo rubato) - Tempo Io - Meno mosso (Tempo rubato) - Tempo Io - Poco meno - Ritardando - a Tempo - Io Tempo - En serrant - a Tempo - Poco a poco animando e crescendo - Appassionato - au Mouvement (Retenu) [to the Tempo, Tempo primo] - Poco ritardando - au Mouvement (Retenu) - Ritardando e smorzando - au Movement - Stretto - Cédez [Ritardando] - au Mouvement - En serrant - au Mouvement - Stretto - au Mouvement.*²⁸

While *Lotus Land* does not employ quite so many tempo modifications, over five minutes of music, we are treated to similar tempo adjustments, often in the form of *stringendo* and *A tempo* markings. Such enumerative fluctuations in tempo are characteristic of French music and indicative of a specific style of interpretation.

²⁷ Jacques Thibaud and Albert Cortot, *Thibaud & Cortot Play French Violin Sonatas*, CD (Obert-Thorn, 1927).

²⁸ An, “In Search of a Style,” 53.

Lotus Land by Cyril Scott arr. Fritz Kreisler

Lotus Land (1905) by Cyril Scott (1879-1970) and arranged for the violin by Kreisler is a meditative work deeply influenced by French Impressionism with a Jazz influenced twist. I wanted to evoke a place of respite from the rough and tumble energy of the Bates. Hailed by Claude Debussy as “one of the rarest artists of the present generation,” Scott was deeply interested in infusing various styles of music into his own.²⁹ This violin arrangement would quickly overshadow Scott’s original version for piano. Written in Eb minor, the name *Lotus Land* suggests “a state or an ideal marked by contentment often achieved through self-indulgence.”³⁰ *Lotus Land* is highly pentatonic and utilizes the whole-tone scale and enharmonic harmonization, suggesting the influence of eastern music.³¹ The composer also shows his mastery of harmonic language by employing seventh, ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth chords liberally throughout the work. *Lotus Land* ends peacefully on a tonic seventh chord returning us to rest.

Sonata in g minor by Claude Debussy

After reaching a resting point with Scott’s short work, the program resumes with Debussy’s Violin Sonata in g minor (1917). Originally intended to be part of a set of six sonatas for various instruments, the sonata was completed less than a year before Debussy’s death from

²⁹ Lisa Hardy, *The British Piano Sonata 1870-1945* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001), 59.

³⁰ “Lotus Land,” in *Merriam-Webster.Com*, accessed February 25, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/lotusland>.

³¹ Chieh Chien, “Beyond Debussy and Ravel: Impressionism in the Early Advanced Short Piano Works of Selected European and American Composers” (Dissertation, Tempe, Arizona, Arizona State University, 2011), 60.

cancer on March 25, 1918.³² Several surviving sources suggest that the composition of this work and, ultimately, the composer's feelings following its completion were less than favorable. In a letter to his friend Robert Godet on the seventh day of June 1917:

Your enthusiasm over the Violin Sonata will, I'm afraid, be abruptly dampened when you actually have it in your hands...much as the gods may approve your attitude, if you want to stick to it you would perhaps do better not to look through the score! I must admit I wrote this sonata only to get rid of it, and because I was spurred on by my dear publisher. ... This sonata will be interesting from a documentary point of view and as an example of what an invalid can write in time of war.³³

However the composer might have felt about this work, it has a solid footing in the pantheon of French violin sonatas. The distinction of this work as a "French" sonata must be made because of its apparent attempts to create distance from the German Romantic sonata model. Like Franck, Debussy embraced cyclic compositional procedures throughout. The return of the opening theme from the first movement in the finale opening is perhaps the most prominent example of such cyclicism. This thematic unity is perhaps why this work exists almost more practically as one entity than as three separate movements. Another such departure from the German style of the sonata is Debussy's tentative relationship with the tonic-dominant relationship in the first movement. The first movement, for example, "contains only one true dominant-tonic moment, at mm. 41-42, where the triple-stop in the violin and rare *sforzandos* in the piano comes off more as a caricature of German procedure."³⁴ The features that make this sonata distinctively French contribute to how a violinist might interpret the sonata. The thoughtful violinist will consider cadence strength and cyclic compositional events in forming their interpretational strategy.

³² An, "In Search of a Style," 21.

³³ François Lesure and Roger Nichols, eds., *Debussy Letters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 327.

³⁴ An, "In Search of a Style," 23.

Section IV: The Falling Action/Finale

In choosing a Finale for this program, I was given the option of either ending ecstatically with the Debussy or deescalating the program by adding a work that might serve to represent falling action. By choosing the *Romance* by Amy Beach, I chose to do the latter, continuing my emphasis on the diversity of this program. Moving from music inspired by France to this gem by an American woman, I chose a work that gave me the impression of a return home. Given this program's unique curation, I hope this final work will be a unique point of closure for the audience.

Romance, op. 23 by Amy Beach

Amy Beach's *Romance* op. 23 (1893) was her earliest composition for violin and piano and was dedicated to the violinist Maud Powell (1867–1920). This work, which precedes the composer's Sonata for Piano and Violin in A Minor, Op. 34 (1896), shows the influence of Beach's vocal writing in its expressive and expansive thematic material. The work is composed in a ternary form. After a four-bar introduction which introduces a fragment of the melody on the piano, a songlike A section marked *Andante espressivo* ensues. The piano accompaniment enhances the melodic material with syncopated material and the odd counter-melody throughout this first formal section. The B section, which begins *animato* at mm. 33 is marked by a shift to more chromatic harmonies. The lush melodic material and its frequent reprisal in this work is captivating. Where the Debussy sonata is a more restrained picture of the Romantic, Beach withholds little expressive energy in her *Romance*.

The dedicatee of the work, Maud Powell, had an acquaintance with Beach dating back to at least 1893 at the Women's Musical Congress which took place in Chicago on July 5–7, 1893.³⁵ On July 6, the *Romance*, Op. 23, written for this event specifically, was premiered by the two women.³⁶ All evidence suggests that the premiere was a wild success:

Those who heard the *Romance* played that day by the pianist with the large, smiling grey-blue eyes and blond hair and the violinist with the dark, curly hair and expressive face were never more convinced that “there is no sex in music.” The “beauty and grace” of the composition and the “faultless interpretation by the brilliant composer and artist” were proof enough for these listeners.³⁷

The work was so well received at the premiere that the duo had to give an encore of the work.³⁸ While it is not clear whether Powell played the piece in recital again, correspondence shows that the two maintained a friendship and a collegial relationship.

³⁵ Karen Shaffer, “Romance for Violin and Piano, Op. 23,” *Maudpowell.Org*, Maud Powell Favorites, Vol.25 (2009), <http://www.maudpowell.org/home/Portals/0/PDF%20Files/Beach%20Extract.pdf>.

³⁶ Shaffer, 1.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Chicago Times, July 7, 1893. Festival jubilate, Op. 17, a large choral work with orchestra conducted by Theodore Thomas.

Recital II

Program

Marche Miniature viennoise	Fritz Kreisler (1875–1962)
La Gitana	Fritz Kreisler
Upon Meeting Errollyn Wallen	Ahmed Al Abaca (1984)
I Welcome	
II Sweets	
III Genius Woman	
thank u, next (arr. Alexi Kenney)	Ariana Grande (1993)
African Dances op. 59	Samuel Coleridge–Taylor (1875–1912)
I No. 1 in G minor	
II No. 2 in F	
III No. 3 in A	
IV No. 4 in D minor	
3 Pieces for Cello and Piano (Arr. Viola and Piano)	Nadia Boulanger (1877–1979)
I Modéré	
II Sans vitesse et à l’aise	
III Vite e nerveusement rythmé	
Sonata no. 1 in A minor, op. 105	Robert Schumann (1810–1856)
I Mit leidenschaftlichem Ausdruck	
II Allegretto	
III Lebhaft	
Blue (Arr. Alexi Kenney)	Joni Mitchell (1943)

Chapter II: Recital II

Program II Curation Summary

For my second program in this series, I embraced a more flexible curation approach. I chose not to use the model I had employed in the first program. I wanted this program to be driven by musical diversity while still cultivating a narrative and poetic experience. In curating this project, I wanted each work to have some special connection with my artistry, history, and link to music. From Kreisler's *Marche Miniature Viennoise* to Joni Mitchell's *Blue*, I chose works I desperately wanted to play in a recital together. The order of the program was constructed in a way that made sense to me but, to others, might seem highly random. The only section that I intentionally chose to create was the introduction which consists of the two Kreisler works.

Marche Miniature Viennoise by Fritz Kreisler

Little Viennese March is characterized by its humorous theme and a march-inspired middle section which both sets the stage in turn of the century Vienna and gives the audience a treat with a bit of Viennese humor. Such humor is seen right from the beginning, where Kreisler alternates a flippant character with a military outburst calling the violinist to make very apparent the duality:



The march as a musical genre usually recalls military idioms. However, this is a more stylized example that was highly popular at the turn of the 20th century. Kreisler attempts to condense the whole military band into just the violin and piano, leaving the listener with a grander impression than one might imagine, given the instrumentation. The second strain of the march is relatively subdued yet witty providing an appropriate foil to the clang and bang of the first. The wit and charm of this composition serve to start this program off with verve. In programming this march as the first piece on the program, I wanted to start the program off with a familiar style but an unfamiliar piece. This is one of Kreisler's showpieces that is not so well known. When coupled with the slightly more popular *La Gitana*, it forms a complex introduction.

La Gitana by Fritz Kreisler

Serving as the second part of the introduction of this recital, *La Gitana* or "The Gypsy" begins and ends with quite striking ornate flourishes. These flourishes highlight the interval of the augmented 2nd in the violin line, which is meant to suggest an exotic quality along with the *cadenza ad libitum*.



Besides the title, Kreisler also subtitled the work "Arabo-Spanish Gypsy Song of the 18th Century". It is unlikely that any of this material is original to that tradition. It is more likely it is one of the works "in the style of" an obscure composer like those he attributes to Francoeur, Pugnani, and Porpora.³⁹ As a resident of Vienna, Kreisler would have been exposed to all of the Hungarian influences of the former capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.⁴⁰ Following the cadenza-inspired first section, the central material consists of a Section in D minor in common

³⁹ John Alistair Thomson, "The Gypsy in Violin Music: A Lecture Recital Featuring the Music of Kreisler, Ravel, and Sarasate; Together with Three Recitals of Music by Bartok, Beethoven, Chausson, Dvorak, Schoenberg, Schubert, Shostakovich, and Tchaikovsky" (Dissertation, Denton, University of North Texas, 1990), <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/gypsy-violin-music-lecture-recital-featuring/docview/303887971/se-2?accountid=14696>, 27-28.

⁴⁰ Michelle Michaelis, "Ignoble and Irresistible: The Gypsy Presence in Violin Music, 1865–1925" (Dissertation, New York, City University of New York, 2006), <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/ignoble-irresistible-gypsy-presence-violin-music/docview/305362196/se-2?accountid=14696>, 92.

time followed by one in D Major with a graceful 6/8 meter. This section illustrates both passion and a sense of levity in quick succession. Along with *Marche Miniature Viennoise*, *La Gitana* introduces a Janus face indicative of such a diverse recital.

Upon Meeting Errollyn Wallen by Ahmed Al Abaca

Upon Meeting Errollyn Wallen is a musical recounting of Ahmed Al Abaca's (1984) experience meeting with the composer, Errollyn Wallen (1958). The colorful experience of talking with Wallen and sharing candy (Vivace-As fast as possible- sugar high") and the resulting crash from too much sugar (Allegro-Crashing from the sugar high) takes us through the three movements entitled, Welcome, Sweets, and Genius Woman, respectively. Through our correspondence, the composer outlined several ways he went about paying homage to their meeting:

Each movement depicts her very cool, very layered personality. Genius Woman reflects how incredible she is as a person and a composer. I quote the last movement of her Concerto Grosso, an arpeggiated minor seventh chord, and also, I try to capture the energy of her last movement. Sweets reflects after we ate some candy during rehearsal and she is going from a sugar high to a sugar crash.⁴¹

With the alternation of pizzicato and arco swinging between 2/4 and 5/16, the first movement gives the opening section an exciting and jazzy feel. A slow B section recalls the warmth of the beginning of an encounter by punctuating the energy of the meeting. The second movement, "Sweets," displays a brief incipit followed by a manic sugar rush expressed through bubbling sixteenth-note passagework. The final Allegro of the movement, labeled "Allegro (crashing from the sugar high)," accomplishes that through a series of exhausted harmonies signifying the

⁴¹ Ahmed Al Abaca, "Upon Meeting Errollyn Wallen," October 13, 2021.

bottom of the rollercoaster. The third and final movement is a virtuosic steamroller of a piece that finds its structure in the return of a central one-measure theme in $\frac{7}{8}$.



This movement is the most taxing of all for the violinist, with several rather unviolinistic excerpts. However, what it lacks in ease, it makes up for in sheer energy and brilliance rhythmically and motivically.

This work fits several criteria of diversity that make it highly suitable to include in this recital. This work, written by a living African-American composer, found its onstage premiere in this program. Stylistically, it is quite modern, which provides an excellent foil to the two Kreisler pieces.

Thank u, next by Ariana Grande arr. Alexei Kenney

Ariana Grande's (1993) *thank u, next*, stylized in all lower-case letters, was a huge commercial success in 2018, having spent more than seven weeks in the number one spot on Billboard's Hot 100. An ode to failed relationships and the lessons learned thereafter, *thank u, next* remains a popular anthem even today. Alexei Kenney's (1994) virtuosic arrangement of this song for violin alone allows the worlds of art music and popular music to meet. I was delighted to program this work because of its popularity and the novelty I found in its arrangement for solo violin. By programming this arrangement, I knew that I would be presenting an easily recognizable song in

a format made for the concert stage. I would assert that no such concert arrangement of a popular song could draw as strong a reaction for audiences under forty years of age.

Alexei Kenney, an internationally recognized violinist, has released a set of violin arrangements of famous and historical works such as John Dowland's (1563–1626) *Flow My Tears*, Dua Lipa's (1995) *Don't Start Now*, and of *thank you, next*. His arrangements are highly virtuosic, and he explores the violin's full chordal and harmonic range. This type of writing calls to mind the Sonatas for violin from Bach's BWV 1001-1006. Kenney's arrangement begins just like the song with a brief three-bar introduction, the presentation of the first verse, and then the pre-chorus. However, instead of presenting the actual chorus, he gives the violinist a rhythmic abstraction of the chorus. Following this rhythmic figure, Kenney takes several liberties that change the song's form following this rhythmic figure. All the original sections of the song are present; however, Kenney adds verve and flair to the arrangement by adding violinistic idioms and rhythmic interest.



Introduction: mm. 1-3



Verse: mm. 4-12



Pre-chorus: mm. 12-20



Abstraction of Chorus: mm. 21-22 (excerpt)



Transition to chorus: mm. 52



Chorus: mm. 53-54

Ultimately, this arrangement of *thank u, next* reduces the work to a more intimate setting, just as Bach's sonatas seem to reduce several lines into music for a monophonic instrument. There is a long-established tradition of using popular music as source material for music for solo string instruments. One sees this in the popular lute and viol transcriptions of popular songs such as Flow my tears, in the virtuosic arrangement of God Save the Queen by Paganini, and the Grande Caprice on the *Erlekönig* by Ernst. This tradition is carried on here by Kenney in his arrangement, which reduces this fully realized studio work into music for a single violin.

African Dances, op. 59 by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's (1875–1912) *Four African Dances* (1904) is a suite of stylized dances rooted in the composer's relationship with the Pan-African movement.⁴² Coleridge-Taylor, an English composer of mixed-race birth, was born to an African father and English mother at the end of the nineteenth century. Just as black composer Joseph Bologne (1745–1799) before him was called "Black Mozart," Coleridge-Taylor was given the unscrupulous and patronizing moniker "Black Mahler."⁴³ Written for his collaborator, the violinist John Saunders in 1904, this work shows more of the influence of lyrical and virtuosic idioms en vogue at the time than any African influence. The only hint of any African material comes from the composer's vague note in the manuscript that the second and fourth pieces were based on African melodies. While it is interesting that no African influence has been found in this suite, it is perhaps his involvement in the Pan-African movement that inspires this title.

⁴² Leonardo Ottoni do Rosario, "KEEP ME FROM SINKING DOWN: A THEMATIC CATALOG OF THE VIOLIN WORKS BY SAMUEL COLERIDGE-TAYLOR" (Dissertation, Greensboro, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2018), 7.

⁴³ Charles Elford, *Black Mahler: The Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Story* (Grosvenor House Publishing, 2012).

African Dances allows the listener to hear the product of someone born of such heritage and composing in a predominantly European style.

The first movement begins in g minor with an introduction in which the violin introduces itself rather than the typical form of a four-bar piano introduction. This rhythmic figure which makes up the introductory material appears several times throughout the piece, punctuating the various sections.



Introduction: mms. 1-4

Following the introductory section, there is a modulation to the key of G major, which propels us into a waltz-like section. Following a return to g minor and several iterations of the central theme through several keys and octaves, we are driven to the end with a short and virtuosic codetta.

With its waltz-inspired rhythms and syncopations, it has been suggested that this is more lullaby than dance.⁴⁴

While the second movement is supposedly inspired by a traditional African melody, as indicated in the manuscript, there has never been any other supporting commentary or research

⁴⁴ Amyr Joyner, "BLACK COMPOSERS OF THE CLASSICAL MUSIC GENRE FROM THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY TO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY" (Dissertation, College Park, University of Maryland, n.d.), 25, accessed March 30, 2022.

to support that. The violinist is instructed to play this movement with a mute or *Con Sordino*, giving the movement a remarkable singing quality. The listener is often reminded of birdsong the way Coleridge-Taylor incorporates the muted violin, especially in the ending thematic material which the composer transforms to be the main theme of the third dance.



The third movement, *Allegro con brio*, set in 6/8 time, is an amiable movement in the key of A major. Throughout, we are presented with speedy sixteenth-note figures that propel the movement. While exhibiting some qualities of dance, this movement seems to be more of a showpiece. The dexterity required of the violinist and the frequent time-bending called for by the composer, who marks frequent *rallentandos*, would allow this work to stand on its own as a showpiece.

The final movement is perhaps one of the most gallant expressions of dance that I have ever heard. The composer requires the violinist, in the opening, to scale the lowest string to cultivate a sound that is pushed to its maximum intensity. Accompanied by rolled chords in the piano, the heroic thematic material that starts in the violin is later intensified when it is presented in unison with the violin and piano lines.⁴⁵ This movement fits in the suite rather well amongst its siblings in that it repeats the thematic material very frequently. A virtuosic statement of the second theme in double stops leads the movement to a final *da capo*.

⁴⁵ Joyner, 26.

Three Pieces for Cello and Piano (arr. Viola) by Nadia Boulanger

Three pieces for Cello and Piano (arr. Viola) serve both as a type of entr'acte for the program, and then with the last movement launches us into the second portion of the program. Like Kenney's arrangements, this work is not presented in its original form. I chose to program this set of short pieces because I believed it brings a considerable measure of diversity to the program. It may appear that the diversity is solely because Nadia Boulanger (1887–1979) was a woman. However, it holds a more significant meaning than just Boulanger's gender. I wanted to express my range as an artist by programming a work for viola for this violin recital. I began my musical life as a violist, and I felt that this set honors that uniquely. Boulanger was also such an important figure as a composer and pedagogue. Boulanger was an influential teacher of many composers such as Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, Philip Glass, Quincy Jones, and Astor Piazzolla.⁴⁶ It is an inspiring notion that Boulanger was able to teach all these composers and give them the tools to turn out so differently.

While the first two movements are initially for organ, this work is perhaps most heard in the form of a cello transcription of three works written in approximately 1914. Sometime after the version for cello was published, the pieces were arranged for the viola. The three pieces are another example of the different sound worlds a composition can inhabit when transcribed for different instruments. This post-impressionist work consists of three short vignettes.

⁴⁶ Caroline Potter, "Boulanger, (Juliette) Nadia," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford Music Online, 2001), <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000003705>.

The first in Eb Minor shows the influence of Debussy and Fauré. Boulanger presents a muted viola gliding over a twinkling yet somewhat static accompaniment from the piano. What some have called a fragile character might be construed instead as an escape from a type of malaise. Besides a passionate central section, this short piece maintains its poise throughout.

The second movement, in A minor, is a meditative prayer written in the *Aeolian* mode.⁴⁷ This piece is somewhat more optimistic than the first and allows the viola to explore its warmest sonic tones. Just as in the first piece, the second maintains its character except for a central section of heightened intensity before succumbing to a quiet finality.

In C sharp minor, the final piece is a whirling dervish of a piece and highlights the viola in its most energetic of characters. With its large leaps and frenetic *pizzicato*, the final movement completely removes us from the calm character Boulanger sets with the first two pieces. One of the most striking differences between the first two pieces and the last is the balance between viola and piano. The piano is given a much more active role in the duo in this final piece. Following a middle section in 5/4, the opening material returns, and the piece ends with vigor.

Violin Sonata in a minor, Op. 105 by Robert Schumann

In 1851, during a spurt of productivity, Schumann penned several works, including the Violin Sonata in A minor, op. 105. The key of A minor seems to have held a special significance for this composer.⁴⁸ The Violin Sonata shares its key with several of Schumann's other works sharing a similar mood, such as the Cello Concerto, op. 129, the String Quartet, op. 41/1, and the

⁴⁷ Rachel Watson, "Nadia Boulanger, Trois Pièces for Cello and Piano (1914)," Blog, *The Hensel Project* (blog), May 2016, <https://henselproject.wordpress.com/2016/05/16/nadia-boulanger-trois-pieces-for-cello-and-piano-1914/>.

⁴⁸ Peter H. Smith, "Schumann's A-Minor Mood: Late-Style Dialectics in the First Movement of the Cello Concerto," *Journal of Music Theory* Vol. 60, no. 1 (April 2016): 51.

Piano Concerto, op. 54.⁴⁹ Schumann sets the slow movements in F major in all four of these works, supporting this significance.⁵⁰ Despite a certain reticence following its initial reading by Clara Schumann who expressed doubts about the finale, the Violin Sonata in a minor, Op. 105 has not suffered much in popularity today. The first sonata was premiered on October 16, 1851 by Clara Schumann and Wilhelm Josef von Wasielewski.⁵¹ From the first reading: “We played it and felt...moved by the highly elegiac. First movement and the lovely second movement, only the third...more obstinate movement wasn’t quite ready to come off.”⁵² Following a later reading by the violinist Ferdinand David (1810–1873) in Leipzig, Frau Schumann would recant her previous statement about the finale movement, stating that, “only then did the distinctive character of the final movement become clear to her.”⁵³

I primarily chose to program this sonata because of my affinity for the work. From my first listening of this sonata, I found its passionate and chilling first theme to be one of the most affecting examples in the repertoire. Musically, this sonata makes sense as the pivotal event of this recital because it has a certain quality of instability that runs through the entirety of the work. Just as the dominant resolves to the tonic, I believe that such unresolved tension makes for an intense climax. I believe this sonata’s instability and incongruity are truly at home in such a diverse program.

⁴⁹ Smith, 72.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Wiltrud Haug-Freienstein, “Preface,” in *Violin Sonata No. 1 a-Moll Opus 105* (München: G. Henle Verlag, 1994), 3.

⁵² Berthold Litzmann, *Clara Schumann. Ein Künstlerleben: Mädchenjahre 1819–1840*, vol. Vol. 2 (Diplomica Verlag, 2019), 264.

⁵³ Litzmann, Vol. 2:267.



“*Mit leidenschaftlichem Ausdruck*” or with deep passion: this is the expression marking given by Schumann at the opening of the first movement. The first movement is often stormy and passionate, with outbursts of brilliance and extraordinary heroism. From the very start, Schumann places the violin in its deepest range against the piano, creating an issue of balance. The struggle to be heard over the piano is perhaps one feature that makes this work so expressive. The canonic treatment of the theme is one of the most present features of the primary movement. Schumann often tends to obfuscate the barline with syncopations and overlapping phrases.

The second movement is in an ABACA rondo form with codetta, with variations of tonal area, character, and tempo variations. Schumann’s use of dramatic pauses and the variety in which he suspends phrases give the impression of the German song form with which he was well acquainted. A noted admirer of the vocal works of Franz Schubert, Schumann pays homage to

the composer in writing such a Lied-inspired movement for a duo sonata. The variation and the shifting moods and characters recall some of his earlier piano writing, such as his *Carnaval*, Op. 9.

The final movement is like a furious machine, unstoppable but for the haunting return of the first movement's shadow. From the beginning, this perpetual motion movement bounces the theme back and forth between the violin and piano in free canonic imitation. The two instruments battle on until a singing theme in E major is introduced, only to be thwarted by the machine's return shortly after. Suggesting the end is near, Schumann then teases the listener with a move to the parallel major. This modulation hints at an exuberant ending only to rip us back into A minor with the return of the first movement's opening theme. Schumann recalls the sonata's opening theme, albeit against dashes of the perpetual 16th notes in the piano, which is exceptionally striking and unexpected, especially so late in the movement. The juxtaposition of the sixteenth-note material and this lyrical theme embodies the turmoil and instability of the work. Ultimately, the *moto perpetuo* material wins and drives the piece until its furious ending.



Blue by Joni Mitchell arr. Alexei Kenney

Joni Mitchell's (1943) song *Blue* (1971) is a beautiful expression of the singer-songwriter genre of the second half of the twentieth century from an album bearing the same name. As with the Grande, this song expresses heartache and the ending of a relationship in its original form. In this case, the heartache was not so much from losing a lover but from losing a daughter whom she gave up for adoption, hoping to give the child a better life.⁵⁴ In an ironic turn, Mitchell's fame skyrocketed after letting her daughter go, giving her both the means and ability to give this better life. It was from this turmoil, *Blue* was created.

As this program draws to its end, *Blue* provides an uneasy sense of closure to the Schumann's tumult. It was my hope that many people would be familiar with the music of Joni Mitchell, if not this specific song. Mitchell's writing of the song is pure poetry. As a huge fan of Mitchell's poetic songwriting, I could not pass up the opportunity to end this set of recitals with such a heartfelt work. Although short, this is not an encore piece. Instead, it is an expression of the poetry and depth of this program.

As Alexei Kenney has arranged, *Blue* is full of fantasy and presents a meaningful arrangement of the song for violin alone. As with *thank u, next*, Kenney takes a fully realized studio work and arranges it in a way that it can thrive on the concert stage. Kenney takes a different approach to this arrangement than he did with *thank u, next*. Instead of relying so heavily on the violin's ability to play more than one note simultaneously, he uses double-stops and chords as an embellishment. Given his rather strict adherence to Mitchell's original melody

⁵⁴ Brian D. Johnson, "Joni's Secret: Mother and Child Reunion," Personal Website, *Joni Mitchell: Articles* (blog), April 1997, <https://jonimitchell.com/library/view.cfm?id=91>; Ann Powers, "Her Kind of Blue: Joni Mitchell's Masterpiece at 50," *NPR Music* (blog), June 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/06/20/1008271419/joni-mitchell-masterpiece-at-50-her-kind-of-blue>.

and rhythm, it is fair to say that he wanted to preserve the clarity and craft of the original. Kenney also stayed relatively close to the form of the song as he crafted this arrangement.

Kenney's care to preserve Mitchell's original word and song-craft is striking in this arrangement, even though he does indeed craft some new material. Kenney keeps the very simple four-bar introduction, originally played by the piano, intact without adding idiomatic features to the violin. He then begins the first verse in the same way as the studio version, although he does add triple-stop grace notes, which adds to the expressive quality of the verse. So as not to be too repetitive, Kenney substitutes the recorded second verse with a variation. As we reach the chorus, the arranger enhances the vocal line tastefully by inserting several expressive double-stops for the violinist. The next significant section is a written improvisation of harmonies of the verse utilizing strings of sixteenth notes moving through several different meters. This fantasia launches us into one last reprise of the chorus before ending similarly to the original recorded work.



Introduction: mm. 1-4



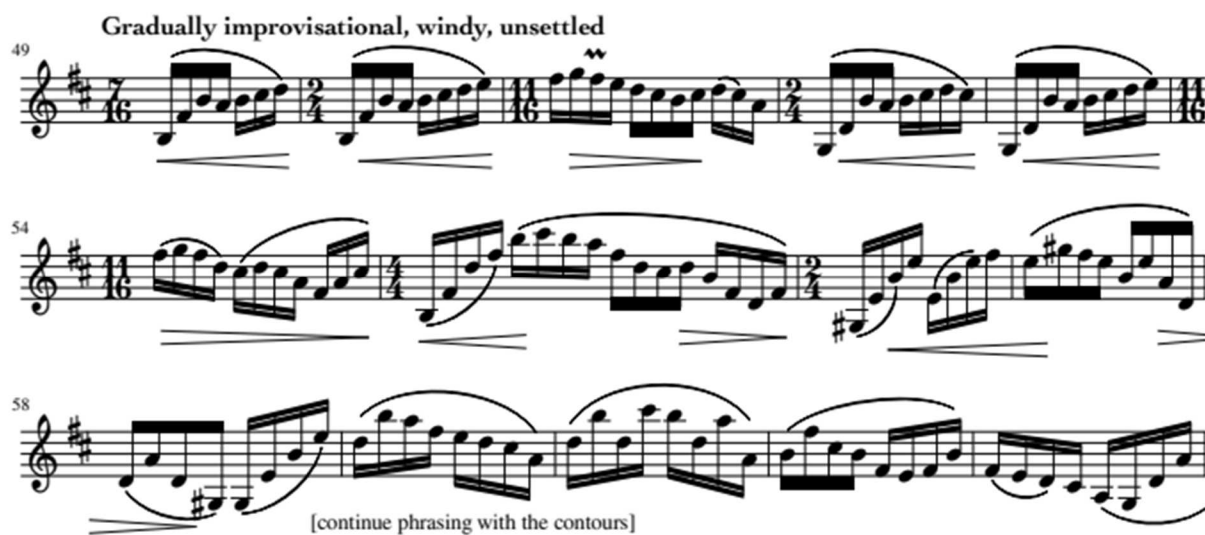
Verse I: mm. 5-9



Verse II Variation: mm. 15-18



Chorus: mm. 25-28



Variation: 49-62

Conclusion

These two recitals are dynamic experiments in musical programming that demonstrate that the violin recital can be curated to highlight the curator's responsibility to tell a well-rounded and complete narrative. My two pre-dissertation projects laid the foundation for curating both of these dissertation recitals. While both of these programs were crafted differently and express different concepts, they both focus on poetic ordering. Inspired by the German song cycle, the first recital makes an excellent case for using literary sections to bring the listener along for a journey. The second, a freer representation of musical ordering, presents the various ways a curator can demonstrate their mastery of the diverse body of violin repertoire. While different ideas inspired me throughout the crafting of these programs, I honestly had little idea of why I felt these works would work well together; I only knew that they did successfully fill the criteria of diversity and a type of musical storytelling.

Other than a few guidelines I set for myself when creating the order and choosing repertoire, I did not consider the musical connections that added a layer of meaning to these programs. I chose order and repertoire that said what I intended the program to express. It was only afterward that I examined those connections and the musical elements that made these pieces work so well. As I analyzed each work more closely, I was constantly confronted with layers of connection that I had not considered. The hidden meanings that exist from work to work are fascinating in that they support my claims of the recital's success. Each is constructed differently yet still tells a different and fully functional story.

The first recital primarily examines the integration of works that have fallen out of the standard repertoire or never existed there in the first place. By programming these somewhat

obscure works, I have constructed a program that uses familiar language yet, at the same time, presents works that are not exactly standard and are not programmed with any great frequency. Works by Kreisler are commonplace in the violin recital, yet Poupée Valsante and Lotus Land are not amongst the standard examples of his arrangements. Beautiful and colorful as they are, they present the listener with a different view of Kreisler's output. Similarly, Vecsey's *Valse Triste*, written around the time of the Kreisler arrangements, shares much of the same style. The two pieces by Castello and Biber are similar in that they are not mainstream concert works unless they happen to be programmed by musicians in the early music scene. They represent the precursors of the great J.S. Bach. Yet again, they are fringe examples of this genre of music. As for Lutoslawski's *Subito* and Mason Bates's *Ford's Farm*, we are presented with two distinct expressions of new music that are hardly programmed or recorded today. The drastically different musical styles of these works give the audience two stunning examples of how new works can propel the narrative of a recital. The Debussy sonata, perhaps the only standard work on the program, seems to compare the power of works within and outside of the classical music canon. After all of the unfamiliar works I have chosen to present on this first recital, this sonata is unexpected. However, I feel that it fits so perfectly into this program, especially when introduced by the impressionistic compositional influence that pervades *Lotus Land*. Finally, the *Beach Romance* represents the return home with its lush and, at times, gut-wrenchingly passionate composition. While somewhat obscure at the time of my programming, the *Romance* has since become a work that has quickly built-up a following amongst violinists in the last year. Inspired by the song cycle, this program shows the power of short works to work together as a cohesive unit. By embracing lesser-known works to accomplish this goal, I have curated a

program that does not simply present a showpiece and a few sonatas. Instead, it expresses the meaning of a journey through musical styles in a fresh and inventive way.

The second recital was initially programmed to be an expression of musical diversity, but it expressed a symbolic theme or meaning that I had never intended. After analyzing these works as they relate to each other, I discovered that this recital expressed much about human connection and relationships. The two Kreisler pieces that serve to introduce the program are two sides of the same coin. They present two of Kreisler's original works that complement each other by expressing the music of two different traditions. The first, *Marche Miniature Viennoise*, presents a stylized Viennese Marche, while *La Gitana* is heavily inspired by the music of the Romani tradition with its florid passages and rubato. *Upon Meeting Errollyn Wallen* was written as a musical expression of the relationship between composers and expresses several special moments between the two. Grande's *thank u, next*, one of the most popular songs of the last several years, speaks to failed and terminated relationships and the lessons learned along Grande's journey. African dances fit this theme in several ways. First, this expresses Coleridge-Taylor's relationship with his friend, the violinist John Saunders, who was the dedicatee of this work. It also speaks to the composer's heritage as an African and Englishman who participated heavily in the Pan-African Movement. This is expressed by Coleridge-Taylor's use of supposed African influence yet presented in the European style of the time. The Three Pieces of Boulanger, arranged for viola, shows the composer's stylistic relationships with French composers Poulenc, Debussy, Faure, and her sister, Lili Boulanger. The similarities between Nadia's first piece and Lili's *Nocturne* for Cello are particularly pronounced. Both works share strikingly similar textural and structural characteristics. Like my placement of the Debussy Sonata in the first program, Schumann's Violin Sonata No. 1, op. 105 is an example of a very

standard work that, for the audience, may be the only recognizable piece. Through surviving written evidence, the relationship between historical performers and the work changes from performance to performance. Finally, the program concludes unexpectedly by presenting Joni Mitchell's *Blue*. Although this arrangement is written for violin alone, anyone familiar with the original song may know that this work expresses the severed relationship between Mitchell and her daughter, whom she gave up for adoption. These works seem to tell such different perspectives on relationships which supports my perception of the theme.

This suggests that recital programs need no clear-cut theme to be successful. The audience may not even need to analyze each work and their relationships to mean something. I believe that just by creating a highly narrative program, each listener will come to their own conclusions and revel in the curated journey. However, for the musician, it is impressive how much connection there is to find in recital programs such as these. This is proof that a program rooted in narrative and diversity can capture an audience's attention and present them with new and exciting works.

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This article explores the first work for violin that Amy Beach ever composed. A detailed account of the first performance is included.

Smith, Peter H. "Harmonies Heard from Afar: Tonal Pairing, Formal Design, and Cyclical Integration in Schumann's A-Minor Violin Sonata, Op. 105." *Theory and Practice* Vol. 34 (2009): 47–86.

This article is a detailed analysis of Schumann's first violin sonata. Smith uses other works by Schumann to track stylistic connections between the composer's works. The author examines key relations and harmonic patterns at length to discuss how this work connects with others.

———. "Schumann's A-Minor Mood: Late-Style Dialectics in the First Movement of the Cello Concerto." *Journal of Music Theory* Vol. 60, no. 1 (April 2016): 51–88.

In this article, Smith charts harmonic and key relationships to discuss how Schumann used the key of A-minor. His revelations about the key give important context to consider when writing about the A minor violin sonata.

Thibaud, Jacques, and Albert Cortot. *Thibaud & Cortot Play French Violin Sonatas*. CD. Obert-Thorn, 1927.

These recordings present the French style of violin playing through the playing of Jacques Thibaud and A. Cortot. From these recordings, it is clear that there were specific performance practices around the performance of French music.

Thomson, John Alistair. "The Gypsy in Violin Music: A Lecture Recital Featuring the Music of Kreisler, Ravel, and Sarasate; Together with Three Recitals of Music by Bartok, Beethoven, Chausson, Dvorak, Schoenberg, Schubert, Shostakovich, and Tchaikovsky." Dissertation, University of North Texas, 1990. <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/gypsy-violin-music-lecture-recital-featuring/docview/303887971/se-2?accountid=14696>.

This dissertation explores the Romani influence of several 'Classical' works. Thomson explores how this style made its way into these works and how this 'exotic' sound might affect the listener.

Watson, Rachel. "Nadia Boulanger, Trois Pièces for Cello and Piano (1914)." Blog. *The Hensel Project* (blog), May 2016. <https://henselproject.wordpress.com/2016/05/16/nadia-boulanger-trois-pieces-for-cello-and-piano-1914/>.

This blog post explores Boulanger's Three Pièces for Cello and Piano and their significance in Boulanger's output. Watson makes important connections between Nadia Boulanger and other composers of the time.

Weber, William. "Recital." In *Grove Music Online*, 2001. <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000023018>.

This encyclopedia article explores the term recital and its evolution from the mid-nineteenth century. Of special interest, is Weber's writing about recital programming from its beginnings until today.

———. *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concerto Programming from Haydn to Brahms*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

This book examines how musical life in London, Leipzig, Vienna, Boston, and other cities went through a transformation in relationship with movements in European politics. Weber's use of thousands of programs make his book useful to exploring shifts in programming aesthetic from the mid-nineteenth century until the present.

Weiner, Natalie. "Billboard Woman of the Year Ariana Grande: 'There's Not Much I'm Afraid of Anymore.'" *Billboard*, December 5, 2018. <https://www.billboard.com/music/awards/ariana-grande-cover-story-billboard-women-in-music-2018-8487877/>.

This article from Billboard magazine, describes the context behind her hit-single, *thank u, next*. Grande's personal relationships are explored as a catalyst for this song.