

PROGRAM NOTES BY KEN MELTZER

DANIEL HOPE & SEBASTIAN KNAUER: HOMAGE TO YEHUDI MENUHIN

Friday, April 12 at 6 pm
Trinity United Methodist Church

GEORGE ENESCU (1881–1955)
Impromptu concertant, for Violin and Piano (1903)

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH
(1685–1750)

Sonata for Violin and Harpsichord No. 4 in C minor, BWV 1017 (ca. 1717–23)

- I. *Siciliano. Largo*
- II. *Allegro*
- III. *Adagio*
- IV. *Allegro*

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847)
Sonata for Violin and Piano in F Major (1838) (ed. Menuhin)

- I. *Allegro vivace*
- II. *Adagio*
- III. *Assai vivace*

INTERMISSION

BÉLA BARTÓK (1881–1945)
Romanian Folk Dances (1915)

MAURICE RAVEL (1875–1937)
Kaddisch, from *Two Hebrew Melodies* (1914)

WILLIAM WALTON (1902–1983)
Sonata for Violin and Piano (1949)


- I. *Allegro tranquillo*
- II. *Variazioni*
Tema. Andante
- i) *a tempo poco più mosso*
- ii) *a tempo quasi improvvisando*
- iii) *Alla marcia molto vivace*
- iv) *Allegro molto*
- v) *Allegretto con moto*
- vi) *Scherzando*
- vii) *Andante tranquillo*
- Coda. *Molto vivace—Presto*

Daniel Hope, violin
Sebastian Knauer, piano

Impromptu concertant, for Violin and Piano (1903)

George Enescu was born in Liveni Virnav (now George Enescu), Rumania, on August 19, 1881, and died in Paris, France on May 1955.

 Approximate performance time is 6 minutes.

 SMF performance history: SMF premiere

George Enescu remains the most prominent of Rumanian musicians. He was born in the province of Moldavia. At an early age, Enescu pursued music studies at the Vienna Conservatory. He then traveled to Paris, and studied at the National Conservatory, where his teachers included the distinguished French composers Jules Massenet and Gabriel Fauré. In addition to his studies in music theory and composition, Enescu learned to play the violin, and soon established himself as a virtuoso of the first order.


Most of Enescu's artistic life was centered in Paris, where he was influential as a composer, teacher, and performer. Among his pupils were several eminent violinists, including Arthur Grumiaux and Yehudi Menuhin. Menuhin began studies with Enescu in Paris during the American-born prodigy's second decade. Menuhin described his teacher, mentor, and friend as: "the Absolute by which I judge all others... the most extraordinary human being, the greatest musician and the most formative influence I have ever experienced."

George Enescu was a versatile composer whose works include several chamber pieces, shorter orchestral works (the *Rumanian Rhapsodies*, Opus 11, being the best known), symphonies, and the lyric tragedy, *Oedipe*. Enescu's beautiful work for violin and piano, *Impromptu concertant*, composed in 1903, was first published in 1958.

Sonata for Violin and Harpsichord No. 4 in C minor, BWV 1017 (ca. 1717–1723)

Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Eisenach, Germany, on March 21, 1685, and died in Leipzig, Germany, on July 28, 1750.

 Approximate performance time is 17 minutes.

 SMF performance history: SMF premiere

In 1717, Johann Sebastian Bach began his seven-year tenure as Kappellmeister to Prince Leopold in the German town of Cöthen, located some sixty miles north of Weimar. Prince Leopold was a talented musician (Bach described him as "a gracious prince, a lover and connoisseur of music"). The Prince hoped to duplicate in Cöthen the superb court music establishments he encountered during his studies throughout Europe. Thanks to the patronage of Prince Leopold, Bach was able to compose for several of Europe's finest instrumentalists.

As Prince Leopold's court was Calvinist, Bach's duties did not include the composition of liturgical music. Instead, Bach's Cöthen years resulted in an extraordinary outpouring of instrumental works. Solo compositions during this remarkable Cöthen period include the *Orgelbüchlein*, the first book of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, the *Two and Three-Part Inventions*, and the *English and French Suites* (all for solo harpsichord), the *Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin*, and the *Suites for Solo Cello*. During his Cöthen tenure, Bach also composed stunning ensemble works, including his *Four Orchestral Suites* and the *Six Brandenburg Concertos*.

The *Six Sonatas for Violin and Harpsichord*, BWV 1014–19, also belong to Bach's Cöthen period. Sonatas 1–5 (BWV 1014–18) adhere to the *Sonata da chiesa* (Church Sonata) form popular at the time; i.e., four movements alternately cast in slow and quick tempos. But in a notable departure from convention, Bach provides, instead of figured bass accompaniment, fully transcribed writing for the keyboard performer's left and right hand. Bach's inventive and eloquent writing for both the violin and keyboard make these Sonatas among the most cherished of the Baroque master's chamber works.

I. *Siciliano. Largo*—The Sonata No. 4 in C minor, BWV 1017, opens with a *Siciliano*, a slow-tempo dance in 6/8 meter. The violin's haunting melody has inspired numerous instrumental transcriptions, both solo and ensemble.

II. *Allegro*—The keyboard launches the quick-tempo second movement, featuring brilliant contrapuntal voicing.

III. *Adagio*—The third-movement *Adagio* is a breathtaking synthesis of the keyboard's wide-ranging music, and interjections by the violin that spotlight that instrument's rich lower register.

IV. *Allegro*—The intense multi-voiced writing of the second movement returns in the finale, once again begun by the keyboard.

Sonata for Violin and Piano in F Major (1838) (ed. Menuhin)

Felix Mendelssohn was born in Hamburg, Germany, on February 3, 1809, and died in Leipzig, Germany, on November 4, 1847.

🕒 *Approximate performance time is 24 minutes.*

📅 *SMF performance history: SMF premiere*

On July 30, 1838, Felix Mendelssohn wrote to his dear friend, Ferdinand David (1810–1873). David, an eminent violinist, was then concertmaster of Mendelssohn's Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig. Mendelssohn informed David:

I am planning to begin writing out my symphony in the next few days and to finish it in a short time, probably before leaving here. I would also like to write you a violin concerto for next winter as well; I have one in E minor in my head, the opening leaves me no peace...I feel that with every piece I get further toward being able to write what is really in my heart, and in fact that is the only rule of conduct I have. If I am not destined for popularity I do not want to study or struggle to win it; or if you think that is not the way to speak, let us say I cannot study to win it. For I really cannot, and I don't want to be able to. Whatever comes from the heart makes me happy, in its outward effects as well...

Here, Mendelssohn referred to the work that would become one of the most beloved of all concertos for violin and orchestra, the Violin Concerto in E minor, Opus 64 (1844). David was the soloist in the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto's March 13, 1845 world premiere.

A month before his 1838 letter, Mendelssohn had completed a Sonata for Violin and Piano in F Major, also intended for David. But Mendelssohn, an intensely self-critical composer, was dissatisfied with an opening movement he viewed as too lengthy. In 1839, Mendelssohn attempted to revise the Sonata's first movement, but finally set the project aside. The F Major Sonata remained unfinished and unpublished at Mendelssohn's death.

It was not until 1953 that Mendelssohn's 1838 F Major Sonata was published, in an edition created by Yehudi Menuhin. Menuhin was also the driving force behind the publication and performance of Mendelssohn's early (1822) D minor Violin Concerto. Menuhin used Mendelssohn's various sketches to create a performing version of the Sonata's first movement. Thanks to Menuhin's efforts, we are able to experience Mendelssohn's F Major Sonata, a work created at the height of the composer's maturity and powers.

I. *Allegro vivace*—The opening movement, in sonata form, begins with the piano's bold statement of the vaulting first principal theme, soon repeated by the violin. A lyrical variant of the theme leads to the second principal melody, calm and flowing. Versions of the opening theme predominate the remainder of the exposition. The extended development section opens in hushed, mysterious fashion, but journeys inexorably to the *fortissimo* start of the recapitulation. The *Allegro vivace* concludes with a brilliant ascending passage, capped by a pair of emphatic chords.

II. *Adagio*—The slow-tempo second movement is very much in the spirit of Mendelssohn's numerous *Songs Without Words*. The piano introduces the *Adagio*'s noble principal melody, once again repeated by the violin. The remainder of the *Adagio* is a lyrical outpouring, often in the context of tender exchanges between the two instruments. The violin's gossamer passage resolves to a trio of *pianissimo* chords.

III. *Assai vivace*—The brief finale is a rondo, based upon a *perpetuum mobile* figure, immediately played by the violin. The figure alternates with other episodes in a movement notable for its irrepressible high spirits throughout. The violin and piano join forces for the Sonata's brilliant sprint to the finish.

Romanian Folk Dances (1915)

Béla Bartók was born in Sönnikolau Mare, Hungary, on March 25, 1881, and died in New York City on September 26, 1945.

🕒 *Approximate performance time is 5 minutes.*

📅 *SMF performance history: 4/11/19*

Béla Bartók maintained a lifelong affection for the folk music of his native Hungary. As a young man, Bartók made the first of many journeys to the Hungarian countryside. On several of these trips, Bartók was joined by his friend, contemporary and fellow Hungarian composer, Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967). Bartók and Kodály used manuscript paper and a phonograph recorder to document thousands of Hungarian folk melodies. Bartók and Kodály believed these melodies were important not only in the context of ethnomusicology, but as the basis for concert works.

Bartók's use of folk music in his own compositions encompassed other nationalities as well. In 1915, Bartók composed the *Romanian Folk Dances*, a brief work for solo piano. Two years later, Bartók arranged the *Romanian Folk Dances* for small orchestra. There have been several other arrangements for various combinations of instruments.

The dances, played without pause, are:

I. *Joc cu bâta* (*Stick Dance*); *Allegro moderato*

II. *Brâul* (*Sash Dance*); *Allegro*

III. *Pe loc* (*In One Spot*); *Andante*

IV. *Buciumeana* (*Horn Dance*); *Moderato*

V. *Poargă românească* (*Rumanian Polka*); *Allegro*

VI. *Măruntel* (*Fast Dance*); *Allegro*

Kaddisch, from Two Hebrew Melodies (1914)

Maurice Ravel was born in Ciboure, Basses-Pyrénées, France, on March 7, 1875, and died in Paris, France, on December 28, 1937.

🕒 *Approximate performance time is 5 minutes.*

📅 *SMF performance history: 4/08/18, 3/29/04*


Kaddisch (*Kaddish*) is the first of *Two Hebrew*

Melodies composed in 1914 by Maurice Ravel. The French composer wrote these works, originally scored for voice and piano, at the request of Alvin Alvi, a soprano with the St. Petersburg opera. Alvi, with Ravel at the piano, gave the premiere of the songs in June of 1914. Ravel's rapt and beautiful setting of the Aramaic prayer ("May His great name be exalted and sanctified") has been arranged for numerous instrumental combinations as well.

Sonata for Violin and Piano (1949)

William Walton was born in Oldham, England, on March 29, 1902, and died in Ischia, Italy, on March 8, 1983.

 *Approximate performance time is 26 minutes.*

 *SMF performance history: SMF premiere*

William Walton's Violin Sonata was commissioned by Yehudi Menuhin. In an essay celebrating the opening of "La Mortella," a study center for young musicians based in Walton's home in Ischia, Italy, Menuhin described the circumstances of the work's commission and creation (the principals in Menuhin's narrative, in addition to Walton, are the violinist's wife, Diana Menuhin, pianist Louis Kentner, and his wife Griselda, who was also Diana's sister):

It was very shortly after the war when in Lucerne on a lovely summer day he, Alice Wimborne (the most important person in Walton's life before his wife Susana), Diana, Griselda, Louis, and I were walking together. I had thought that for a few minutes I had cornered his attention away from the ladies to discover that what he really wanted to ask me was whether I could lend him some of those extraordinarily effective Swiss francs, at that time unavailable to the English. I made a very stringent condition: I could indeed do so in chunky bits if he set about composing a sonata. The deal was agreed and to ensure there would be no delay in fulfilling my condition, we directed our steps to the music store Hug to buy staved music paper.

At the time Menuhin approached Walton with this project, Alice Wimborne had been diagnosed with cancer, and was resting in a nursing home in Lausanne. As a result, Walton was in dire need of the Sonata's commission funds. Walton

composed the Sonata over a period spanning 1947–9. Walton recalled: "Between the beginning and the end of working at it, a great deal happened and work was very sporadic. Alice died and I went to Buenos Aires and married Sue, and completed it in London on our return, so it's surprising that the piece has any continuity at all." Surprising, perhaps, but the continuity, beauty, and engaging momentum of the Walton Violin Sonata are qualities evident in abundance.

Yehudi Menuhin and Louis Kentner premiered the Walton Violin Sonata in Zürich on September 30, 1949. Walton further revised the score, again performed by Menuhin and Kentner on February 5, 1950, at London's Theater Royal, Drury Lane. The artists made a commercial recording of the work (Menuhin also recorded Walton's Violin and Viola Concertos, with the composer conducting).

The Walton Violin Sonata is in two movements of approximately equal length. The first (*Allegro tranquillo*) is in sonata form, with the introduction, development, and restatement of contrasting themes, all capped by an extended coda. The second movement (*Variazioni*) is a series of diverse variations, based upon the theme introduced at the start.

I. *Allegro tranquillo*

II. *Variazioni*

Tema. Andante

- i) *a tempo poco più mosso*
 - ii) *a tempo quasi improvvisando*
 - iii) *Alla marcia molto vivace*
 - iv) *Allegro molto*
 - v) *Allegretto con moto*
 - vi) *Scherzando*
 - vii) *Andante tranquillo*
- Coda. Molto vivace—Presto*