uite nspiration Jonathan Swartz Violin

JOHANN GEORG PISENDEL
SONATA IN A MINOR

Johann Sebastian Bach Partita No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1004

KIEREN MACMILLAN

SUITE NO. 1

AND

CHACONNE







JOHANN GEORG PISENDEL (1687-1755)

SONATA IN A MINOR

- 1 LARGO (3:28)
- 2 ALLEGRO (5:49)
- 3 GIGA; VARIATIONEN (10:01)

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

Partita No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1004

- 4 ALLEMANDA (5:42)
- 5 CORRENTE (2:32)
- 6 SARABANDA (4:35)
- 7 GIGA (4:26)
- 8 CIACCONA (16:04)

KIEREN MACMILLAN (B. 1969)

SUITE NO. 1

- 9 INTRODUCTION (2:50)
- 10 WALTZ (1:32)
- 11 LOURE (3:34)
- 12 FOLK DANCE (1:47)
- 13 EXIT MUSIC (2:30)

14 CHACONNE (10:01)

Suite Inspiration...

How curious is the genesis of creativity, the inspiration from which a work of art is born. Was it a person, place or thing that planted the seed, a performer or perhaps another work of art?

Many have wondered about Bach's inspiration to write his *Sonatas and Partitas for unaccompanied violin, BWV 1001-1006.* Some have thought that they were written as studies for the violin, while others find it hard to believe these inspired works were conceived for such a pragmatic purpose. There are no definitive sources to answer this question, although one of the most plausible accounts points to the great German violinist of Bach's time, Johann Georg Pisendel. Bach and Pisendel crossed paths in Dresden, in 1717, and it is believed that Pisendel presented his *Sonata in A Minor for unaccompanied violin* to Bach at that time. This may have provided Bach the incentive, as well as the performer for his unaccompanied violin works.

A deeper look at both Bach's and Pisendel's compositions lends credence to their possible connection. Pisendel's final movement is a *Giga* and *Variationen*, certainly a precursor if not a direct model for Bach to emulate. Bach wrote dance movements and variations in his *Partita No. 1 in B Minor*, each dance paired with a *Double* that embellished the same harmonic progression. A *Giga* and *Variationen* could also be seen as inspiration for Bach's *Chaconne*, a dance with a repeated harmonic progression serving as the basis for a set of variations.

The inspiration for Kieren MacMillan's *Chaconne* and *Suite No. 1* has an unmistakable origin. Commissioned by me in 2000 and 2003 respectively, they clearly were influenced by Bach and, in particular, his *Partita No. 2*. They also seem as though they could have found inspiration in Pisendel too, although Pisendel's compositions were not known to either of us at the time.

My decision to commission Kieren over other composers rests in part from having witnessed firsthand the manner in which he appreciated and adored great works of the past, and how these influences manifested themselves in his unique compositional voice. He is an artist whose creativity needs to be celebrated. I am pleased to present his new works alongside such historical masterpieces.

Jonathan Swartz

PISENDEL SONATA IN A MINOR

Johann Georg Pisendel was admired in his day, having compositions dedicated to him by Georg Philipp Telemann, Tomaso Albinoni, and Antonio Vivaldi. His mastery of the violin can be traced to Italian influences, having studied at different times with Guiseppe Toreli and Vivaldi. This influence is evident in his *Sonata in A Minor*, which contains great technical demands.

This sonata begins with a slow movement, reflecting the rhetorical style characteristic of the Baroque. One can imagine a narrative punctuated with dissonances that pose questions. The second movement is lively and seems to confidently examine the "questions" of the previous movement, balancing the initial movement in the way a fugue might balance a prelude. The final movement, *Giga* and *Variationen*, completes the sonata with a dance and an ornamented disguise. This substantial movement can be seen as a precursor to Bach's *Chaconne*, and serves similarly to add meaning to the sonata as a whole.

BACH PARTITA NO. 2 IN D MINOR

Bach's *Sonatas and Partitas for unaccompanied violin* were composed ca. 1720 while Bach was serving as Kapellmeister at the court of Prince Leopold of Cöthen, a period from which most of his secular instrumental works originate.

The Partita No. 2 has become a benchmark in violin study and performance today, largely because of its final movement, an undisputed masterpiece, the Chacome. All of the movements in this partita are dances. The Allemande begins the partita in a processional manner, and it is followed immediately, as instructed by Bach ("Segue a la Corrente"), with the running-paced Corrente. The Sarabande follows in a calming manner, serving as an emotional center for the entire partita. This is followed by the Giga, with galloping energy to balance the Sarabande. It is no coincidence that the final movement, Chaconne, shares its dance rhythm and pacing with the Sarabande, bringing back this emotional center for deeper contemplation and a grandeur that has made this movement one of the most identifiable works in all of the Baroque.

Performers today are presented with many considerations of how to approach this music. One can argue that it transcends time and can be performed and appreciated regardless of historical correctness. Others will posit that it is only appropriate to perform it as Bach must have heard it, with stylistic and period considerations that include using period instruments and tuning. The choice here was to present this music informed by historical stylistic considerations, but with our modern instrument, tuning, and concept of sound. It is hard to imagine that Bach would not choose to take advantage of the sound and potential of our modern instruments if he lived today. Violinists might note that many of my choices were made to honor Bach's manuscript, in particular the groupings of slurs, which I believe are indicated by both his handwriting and harmonic implications.

MACMILIAN CHACONNE

As a musical form, the chaconne has been around for at least five centuries. Chaconnes have been written for everything from solo instruments to full orchestra, by composers from John Blow to John Adams. An entire Balanchine ballet found its inspiration in a chaconne from a Gluck opera. What is it about this form that has proven so compelling, so timeless, so fertile a creative soil?

First, it is an inherently interesting musical structure: it guarantees unity through the repetition of a single harmonic progression, while ensuring diversity through continuous variation and embellishment. Like a good Cubist painting, a chaconne unveils its subject gradually, each new perspective revealing previously unknown and surprising views of increasingly familiar material.

But perhaps more importantly, the chaconne is a rigorous and well-defined structure. As Stravinsky observed, the more restrictions one puts in place, the freer one can become in the creative details. Having chosen to write a chaconne, the composer, unencumbered by concerns about form, is free to fill that old bottle with whatever new wine he wishes.

My *Chaconne* consists of a series of thirteen embellishments over a basic harmonic progression, framed by twin statements of the principal material. The piece owes a great deal to the example set by Bach's famous *Chaconne in D Minor*: each variation presents a double statement of the harmonic progression; a sarabande rhythm, stressing the second part of each measure, features prominently; and the progression undergoes a modal adjustment midway through the piece. The musical language I used is, however, somewhat different from Bach's, mine being infused with the jazz and film score harmonies that formed much of the soundtrack of my life.

MACMILIAN SUITE NO. 1

About two years after the premiere of the *Chaconne*, Jonathan commissioned a second unaccompanied violin piece. (I considered it very high praise at the time, and still do to this day.)

We decided that a suite of short dance movements in a neo-Baroque style would be a good companion for the *Chaconne*. To provide some contrast, I avoided the multiply-stopped chords and highly contrapuntal texture that characterized the *Chaconne*, and wrote instead in a more linear and florid melodic style. This decision is evident from the very beginning of the *Introduction*, which opens with an arching, rolling gesture outlining the harmonic progression on which each movement is built. With very few exceptions — primarily at cadences, or as special effects — this more lyrical approach remains dominant throughout the piece.

The *Suite* was influenced by Bach's solo violin and cello works, which I knew and loved. However, it was also profoundly informed by my own experiences playing dance suites as a pianist: the inclusion of a *Loure*, for example, is a nod to my piano teacher, Brian Connelly, with whom I had the pleasure of studying Bach's *fifth French Suite*.

KIEREN MACMILLAN composer



Kieren MacMillan (b. 1969), is regularly commissioned by artists and organizations throughout North America. His catalog includes chamber music, pieces for solo instruments, vocal and choral works, spoken word compositions, film and theater scores, musicals, chamber operas, and multidisciplinary works. In addition to being included on regular programs worldwide, Mr. MacMillan's compositions and arrangements have been featured at choral conventions, international music festivals, professional sporting events, and on national, regional, and internet radio broadcasts.

As well as being perennial audience favorites, Mr. MacMillan's works have garnered significant critical acclaim. *Just Out of Reach*, co-created in 2008 with Kevin Noe, was hailed as "brilliant" (Mark Kanny, *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*) and a "new kind of musical theater [...] smart and moving" (Andy Druckenbrod, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*). It was ultimately selected as one of Pittsburgh's top ten concerts of 2008,

and went on to receive seventeen performances at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Recordings of several of Mr. MacMillan's works are available on compact disc and as digital downloads, including *Wither's Carol* (Clarion), *Drunken Moon* (Lime Green Productions), *Fairy Tale Ending* (Role Your Own Theatre), and *Groteske* (Soundset Recordings).

When not writing music, Mr. MacMillan is also in demand as a performer, singer, lecturer, and musical director, often involved in more than a hundred performances and lectures per year. Highlights include music directing *West Side Story* for the Young Company at Toronto's Randolph Academy of Performing Arts, and being the inaugural Keynote Speaker at the University of Colorado's Entrepreneurship Center for Music.

Mr. MacMillan received his Master of Music in Composition from the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, where he studied with Paul Cooper and Samuel Jones. He now lives in Toronto, Canada, with his wife Lada Darewych, their daughter Marianna, and their cat (who has five Ukrainian names).

For further information, visit kierenmacmillan.com

JONATHAN SWARTZ violinist



A native of Toronto, violinist Jonathan Swartz has distinguished himself throughout North America both as a performer and pedagogue. He serves on the faculties at Arizona State University, the Innsbrook Institute, Madeline Island Music Camp, Round Top Festival Institute, and the Domaine Forget Academy, while maintaining a prolific performing career. He collaborates often with his sister Jennifer Swartz, principal harpist of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, and his wife, American pianist Wendy Chen.

Swartz has appeared at the Smithsonian Chamber Music Society, Colorado's Strings in the Mountains Chamber Festival, the Ottawa International Chamber Music Festival, the Mooredale Concert Series, and the Artists Series at Roy Thompson Hall, in addition to several venues under the auspices of Les Jeunesses Musicales du Canada. He is also a member of the Iris Orchestra under conductor Michael Stern, an ensemble that regularly performs with the world's leading artists.

Sought after as a master clinician, and frequent presenter at the American String Teachers' Association National Conferences, Swartz was interviewed by STRINGS magazine for an article in the October 2006 issue regarding his approach to bow technique. He has given master classes throughout North America, and has previously served on the faculties at the University of Texas at El Paso, the Interlochen Arts Camp, and the Rocky Mountain Summer Conservatory.

Swartz is the founder and Artistic Director of the Visiting Quartet Residency Program at Arizona State University, a chamber music program that integrates visiting resident artists with a comprehensive chamber music curriculum. Quartets in this residency have included the St. Lawrence, Juilliard, Brentano, Tokyo, and Orion String Quartets. Swartz is also co-founder of the Violinists' Seminar at Le Domaine Forget in Quebec, Canada – an intensive team-taught training program for advanced violinists.

Swartz earned a Bachelor of Music cum laude from Rice University, a Master of Music from the Mannes College of Music, and a Doctor of Musical Arts from Rice University. His doctoral thesis is titled Perspectives of Violin Pedagogy: A Study of the Treatises of Francesco Geminiani, Pierre Baillot, and Ivan Galamian, and a Working Manual by Jonathan Swartz.

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Recording, mixing and editing CLARKE RIGSBY, TEMPEST RECORDING

Mastering
DAVE SHIRK, SONOROUS MASTERING

Graphic Art LEANNE KOONCE

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Program Notes

Sonata in A Minor and Partita No. 2 by Jonathan Swartz Chaconne and Suite No. 1 by Kieren MacMillan

MacMillan works recorded November 24, 2004 Gammage Auditorium Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona

Pisendel and Bach works recorded June 27 & 28, 2011 Tempest Recording Studio, Tempe, Arizona



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