

Brandeis

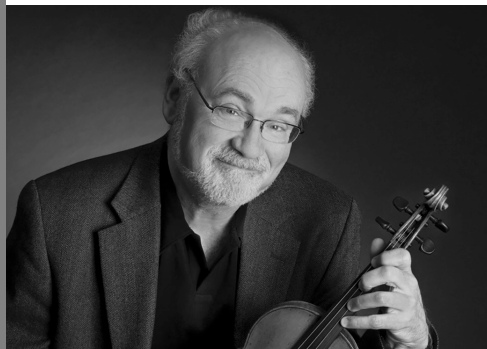
SPRING 2022

CONCERT SERIES

Slosberg Music Center

*Unaccompanied
Bach Workshop
Benefit Concert*

presented by **Aston Magna** | featuring:



*Daniel
Stepner
violin*

*Peter
Takács
piano*



Sunday, February 27, 2022 | 3 p.m.

Slosberg Music Center | Brandeis University

*A Benefit Concert for Scholarships
for the 14th Annual Aston Magna*

Unaccompanied Bach Workshop

with

Daniel Stepner, violin Peter Takács, piano

Sunday, February 27, 2022 | 3 p.m.

Slosberg Recital Hall

PROGRAM

Johann Sebastian Bach

Fantasy (after BWV 903) and Fugue in G Minor (from BWV 1001)

Mark Berger

Fugue on the name of Daniel Stepner (2016)

Josef Haydn

Variations in F Minor (Hob. XVII/6)

Wolfgang Amadée Mozart

Variations on *Hélas, j'ai perdu mon amant* (K.360)

~ INTERMISSION ~

Ludwig van Beethoven

Sonata in D Major, Op. 10, No. 3

Presto - Largo e mesto - Menuetto: Allegro -- Rondo

Beethoven

Sonata in A Major, Op. 47 ("Kreutzer")

Adagio sostenuto/Presto - Andante con variazioni - Presto

All proceeds from this concert go to the scholarship fund for Aston Magna's annual **Unaccompanied Bach Workshop**, hosted by Daniel Stepner at Brandeis (summer 2022). Additional, tax-deductible contributions can be made by check, payable to **Aston Magna**, earmarked "for the Bach Workshop" and sent to:

ASTON MAGNA, P.O. BOX 28, GREAT BARRINGTON MA 01230

Thank you for any contribution, big or small!

PROGRAM NOTES

Johann Sebastian Bach's Fantasy and Fuge in G Minor

Bach's audacious "Chromatic Fantasy" has always fascinated me. I first heard it on piano, later on the harpsichord, for which it was written. Its harmonic daring and willfully jarring modulations appealed to my teenage rebelliousness. Sometime later, I realized it seemed in some of its aspects like a Gypsy violin rhapsody, and I thought I might try my hand at transcribing it for violin. A computer notation program made it easy to set down and then manipulate to make it more violinistic. It also made transposing it to different keys -- more friendly to violin tuning -- very simple. Originally in D Minor, it sits wonderfully in G Minor on the violin, partly because of the configuration of open strings, and partly because it mitigates the difference in the compass of the violin and harpsichord (a ratio of about 1:2).

The fugue most often coupled with the Fantasy was probably not intended by Bach as its partner, but was logically a possible "solution" to the "problem" of the Fantasy. The subject of the fugue is quite chromatic, but it doesn't meander to distant keys as does the Fantasy. I have performed and recorded that fugue along with the Fantasy, but it has seemed to me that the G Minor Fugue from Bach's first Sonata for solo violin is a better complement. That fugue is lighter, and certainly more violinistic.

It may seem blasphemous to present the G Minor Fugue for violin outside of its context in the four-movement Sonata, let alone without its

original prelude (an Adagio). But I would point out that Bach did that very thing with the G Minor Fugue, transcribing it for organ (BWV 539) and composing a completely new prelude for it. There is also a transcription, possibly by Bach himself, for lute (BWV 1000). And so I claim my right to improvise by transcribing, excerpting and transposing. The music is all Bach. The arrangement and juxtaposition mine.

Mark Berger's Fugue for Solo Violin

When I left the Lydian String Quartet six years ago after a very gratifying twenty-nine years, Mark Berger (violinist and composer) wrote an unaccompanied, neo-baroque fugue based on the letters of my name – at least those which were transposable into musical pitches (D-A-S-T-E-E-R). Having composed fugues in my wayward youth, I know that it is no easy task to write a convincing one, and I was very touched at his offering. This is its first public outing.

Haydn's and Mozart's Variations

Sets of themes and variations were staples of the baroque and classical period. Mozart and Beethoven were both known for their improvised variations in performance, as well as their published sets; and we know that Haydn improvised variations daily in his studio in the morning, writing down what he found usable later in the day, after a nap! Many other composers published variations, and the basic form was very popular in the 19th century among lesser composers who left us many sets based on popular operatic melodies.

Usually the themes are in a major key and one or more of the variations are cast in the parallel minor, as is true of the variations which constitute the second movement of the “Kreutzer” Sonata. The Haydn and Mozart we offer on this program deviate from this norm.

Peter Takács writes:

“Haydn’s Variations in F minor, Hob. XVII:6, written in 1793, one of his most-performed works, may have been meant as the first movement of a larger work. The original title, “Sonata (Un piccolo divertimento)”, doesn’t quite capture the drama of the chiaroscuro alternation of minor and major keys, reminiscent of the great C minor-major Andante movement from the “Drumroll” Symphony No. 93. The minor theme and variations, with their processional dotted rhythm, suggest a somber march, while the major ones provide radiant relief. The finale, after a

partial reprise of the minor theme, builds to a dramatic climax before concluding in quiet resignation.”

The Mozart variations on the song “Alas, I have lost my lover” is appropriately in a minor key, with one detour into the major. The six variations explore a world of possibilities suggested by the simple theme.

Beethoven’s Op. 10, No. 3

In the book that accompanies Peter Takács’s recording of the complete Beethoven Piano Sonatas, he writes: “Op. 10, No. 3 is perhaps the greatest of the early sonatas and was one of Beethoven’s favorites. The opening Presto starts with yet another rocket theme, made more exciting by the lack of crescendo, topped by a trumpet-like sforzando. The second movement in D Minor, marked Largo e mesto, is an elegy of profound sorrow, with a vision of hope in the F major middle section. One of the outstanding features of this sonata is a magnificent sense of psychological continuity between its four movements. For example, listen to the inspired contrast between the end of the second movement (D Minor) and the D Major beginning of the Menuetto, a potent representation of night followed by sunrise and hope. My nickname for the Rondo finale is “cat-and-mouse,” given the skittish, start and stop, playful nature of the main theme.”

Beethoven’s “Kreutzer” Sonata

One of the most egregious misnomers in the realm of classical music is [wrong] name that has been attached to Beethoven’s Sonata, Op 47. It was indeed Beethoven who perpetrated this unfortunate fact, when he changed the dedication -- from the violinist who had partially inspired and first played the work with him -- to Rodolphe Kreutzer, a well-known French violinist and composer.

Beethoven had already sketched part of the first two movements and actually finished the finale (intended originally for an earlier sonata) when he met George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower, a British violinist traveling on the continent in 1803. Bridgetower had been born in Poland to an African father from the West Indies, and a Polish Mother. He grew up in England and was a prodigy on the violin, performing publicly at the age of ten, and soon winning the patronage of the Prince of Wales. He toured in Europe as a teen played to great acclaim in Paris, where Thomas Jefferson heard him. A decade later he was on the continent

again and stopped for a while in Vienna, where Prince Lichnowsky, one of Beethoven's patrons, introduced him to the composer.

Though Beethoven had begun to sketch the sonata, hearing Bridgetower clearly inspired feverish work on it, which turned to be a radical departure in style, length and instrumental challenge for both instruments. The scheduled performance of the "Grande Sonate" was delayed several days because Beethoven hadn't finished the work, and when it was finally presented publicly, Bridgetower was sight-reading at least part of the piece, looking over Beethoven's shoulder at the piano score. On the surviving fragmentary manuscript is Beethoven's jocular dedication: "Sonata mulattica composta per il mulatto Brischdauer, gran pazzo e compositore mulattico" (Mulatto Sonata composed for the mulatto Brischdauer, great madman and mulatto composer).

Though Bridgetower was eight years younger than the 33-year-old Beethoven, they became close friends for a while. Apparently, however, they quarreled over a young woman. Beethoven ended the friendship and eventually changed the dedication to Kreutzer, whom he had met briefly five years earlier. Its full title of the published version translates as "Sonata for Pianoforte and an obligato violin, written in a very concertante style, rather like a concerto."

Later in the year of the sonata's composition, Beethoven worked on his Third Symphony, inspired partly by Napoleon Bonaparte's rise from humble beginnings and his early republican, anti-monarchical ideals. The following year Napoleon declared himself Emperor, and the disillusioned Beethoven famously scratched out "Bonaparte" on the symphony's title page. The more abstract title "Eroica" (Heroic) was added two years later when the work was first published.

There has been speculation that Beethoven meant to curry favor in France, possibly in the hopes of moving there. Perhaps his profound disappointment with Napoleon quashed that prospect. As for the Kreutzer - another illustrious Frenchman -- there was to be another disappointment. The violinist/composer apparently never played Op. 47, and in fact considered it (according to Hector Berlioz) "outrageously incomprehensible."

Beethoven's earlier violin/piano sonatas have some wonderful instrumental challenges and they already stretch the scope of chamber

sonatas. Some have four movements instead of the customary three, giving them a symphonic aspect. And they often have virtuoso flourishes, particularly in the keyboard part. But the “Kreutzer” is a leap ahead in terms of the gauntlet it lays down for both instruments, as well as in its length and internal development. The sonata became well-known for its imposing qualities and inspired – among other works of art – Tolstoy’s novella “The Kreutzer Sonata,” a tale of jealousy and murder.

The galloping finale of the Sonata, composed before Beethoven met Bridgetower, was intended originally as the last movement of his A Major Sonata, Op. 30, No. 1. But Beethoven seems to have thought the movement too showy for that earlier work and replaced it with a sedate set of variations. But then Bridgetower’s brilliant playing inspired its inclusion in the later sonata, as well as prompting the composition of the other two movements. Perhaps, in the daring passage-work of Op. 47’s first movement and last movements, and in the slow movement’s soaring lyricism, we can hear some of Bridgetower’s personal qualities.

~ Daniel Stepner

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Violinist **DANIEL STEPNER** is currently Artistic Director of the Aston Magna Festival and Foundation, a position he has held since 1991. Between 1987 and 2016, he was first violinist of the Lydian String Quartet at Brandeis, where he is Professor Emeritus and still leads an annual workshop in the solo works of J.S. Bach. For 24 years he was concertmaster of the Handel and Haydn Society Orchestra, and was also a founding member of the Boston Museum Trio, in residence at the Museum of Fine Arts. He was concertmaster of the Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra for its first six biennial festivals, and in the 1980s was assistant concertmaster and frequent soloist with Frans Brüggen’s Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century, based in Holland. For 20 years, he was a Preceptor in Music at Harvard University where, with Robert Levin, he team-taught a course in Chamber Music in Performance and Analysis.

Mr. Stepner has performed and recorded solo and chamber music from the early baroque through early 21st century, and can be heard

on numerous commercial CDs playing music of Marais, Buxtehude, Rameau, J.S. Bach (including the Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin), Vivaldi, Handel, Telemann, Haydn, Schubert, Brahms, as well as Bartok, Charles Ives (the complete Violin Sonatas with John Kirkpatrick and the String Quartets with the Lydian String Quartet), Paul Hindemith, Irving Fine, Vincent Persichetti, Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson, Lee Hyla, Peter Child, John Harbison, Thomas Oboe Lee, Martin Boykan, Eugène Ysaÿe. He has also recorded the complete works for violin and piano by Yehudi Wyner (with Mr. Wyner at the piano) as well as a number of his chamber works. A recording of the complete violin/piano works of Gabriel Fauré (with pianist Judith Gordon) is due out soon.

Mr. Stepner studied at Northwestern University with violinist Steven Staryk and composers Alan Stout and James Hopkins. He studied in France with Nadia Boulanger, and with violinist Broadus Erle at Yale, where he earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree. He has taught at the New England Conservatory, the Eastman School, the Longy School, Oberlin College, at Brandeis and Harvard Universities, and in Boston's STEP program.

More information and audio can be found at <danielstepner.com>.

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Hailed by the New York Times as "a marvelous pianist," **PETER TAKÁCS** has performed widely, receiving critical and audience acclaim for his penetrating and communicative musical interpretations.

Mr. Takács was born in Bucuresti, Romania and started his musical studies before his fourth birthday. After his debut recital at age seven, he was a frequent recitalist in his native city until his parents' request for emigration to the West, at which point all his studies and performances were banned. He continued studying clandestinely with his piano teacher until his family was finally allowed to emigrate to France, where, at age fourteen, he was admitted to the Conservatoire National de Paris.

Upon his arrival in the United States, his outstanding musical talents continued to be recognized with full scholarships to Northwestern University and the University of Illinois, and a three-year fellowship for

doctoral studies at the Peabody Conservatory, where he completed his artistic training with renowned pianist Leon Fleisher.

Mr. Takács has received numerous prizes and awards, including First Prize in the William Kapell International Competition, the C.D. Jackson Award for Excellence in Chamber Music at the Tanglewood Music Center, and a Solo Recitalist Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. His performances have been hailed by audiences and the press for their penetrating intellectual insight as well as for emotional urgency and communication.

Mr. Takács has performed as guest soloist with major orchestras in the U.S. and abroad, as well as at important summer festivals such as Tanglewood, Music Mountain, Chautauqua Institution, ARIA International, Schlern Music Festival in the Italian Alps, Tel Hai International Master Classes in Israel, Sweden's Helsingborg Festival, Musicfest Perugia, and the Beijing International Music Festival. Since 2008, he has been a member of the faculty at the Montecito Summer Music Festival in Riverside, CA. He has performed and recorded the complete cycle of Beethoven Piano Sonatas, which was released on the CAMBRIA label in July 2011. In 2015, he was selected to inaugurate a new series in Weill Hall at Carnegie Hall entitled "Key Pianists", presenting three recitals of Beethoven solo and chamber music to critical acclaim.

Mr. Takács' success as a teacher is attested to by his students' accomplishments, who have won top prizes in competitions in the United States, Canada, Europe, and South Africa. They have been accepted at major graduate schools such as the Curtis Institute, Juilliard School, Peabody Conservatory, and the Mozarteum in Salzburg, among many others. Mr. Takács has given master classes in the U.S., Europe and Asia, and has been a jury member at prestigious national and international competitions such as San Antonio International Keyboard Competition, Canadian National Competition, Cleveland International Piano Competition, and Hilton Head International Piano Competition. In 2020, a generous donor established a fund for a Takács/Beethoven Piano Sonata Prize to be awarded to a student excelling in Beethoven interpretation. Mr. Takács is Professor of Piano at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, where he has been teaching since 1976.

The Aston Magna Festival and Foundation is pleased to announce

The 14th annual
Unaccompanied Bach Workshop
for violinists and violists

July 3-8, 2022

With **Daniel Stepner**,
baroque and modern violin

ABOUT THE WORKSHOP

6-8 players are selected each year for the workshop, a 6-day intensive lab for students, serious amateurs and professionals. Mornings are taken up with private practice and daily private coaching. After a communal lunch, the afternoons feature daily master classes and occasional lecture-demos. A class concert concludes the week. Financial aid is available.

All activities take place in the Slosberg Music Center, Brandeis University's air-conditioned music building. There is an informal Friday morning concert for the participants, who are also given free entry to the Aston Magna professional concerts on Thursday evenings in June and July.

(see <astonmagna.org>)



WHAT STUDENTS HAVE SAID:

"Dan Stepner's Solo Bach workshop at Brandeis University is a wonderful and essential resource for violinists and violists who are studying and performing these cornerstones of our repertoire. Practicing, equipment, history, phrasing and performing are some of the subjects we covered during the daily lessons, master classes and lunches together. Dan is a superb violinist and teacher, and a week spent working with him on Bach is an opportunity not to be missed." -- *Danielle Maddon, professional violinist, Concertmaster, New England Philharmonic*

"Dan addressed every one of my extensive questions about articulation, fingering, opposing interpretations of a phrase and proposed myriad solutions that pushed my thinking further than I could have imagined."
-- *Julie Leven, professional violinist and founder of Shelter Music Boston*

"It was a very special treat to have intense one-on-one lessons with Prof. Stepner... I studied everything from the dynamics of voicing, the drama of harmonic phrasing, and chromatic fingerings especially helpful in solo Bach - to bowings and small technical points that can make a performance stylistically convincing. I highly recommend this course to anyone wishing to improve his/her understanding and performance of Bach's solo music." -- *Lisa Park, professional violinist*

"The intimate setting and personal interactions with Mr. Stepner and the other violinists fostered trust and openness to explore ideas and thoughts on Bach's compositions. Not only is Mr. Stepner an insightful artist and expert in Bach, but also a teacher that brings out the best in every player." -- *Susan Kim, professional violinist and teacher*

"It was a great learning experience. Mr. Stepner is a gifted and inspiring teacher and Brandeis has excellent facilities for music making." -- *Kurt Mundstadt, violinist and recording engineer*

"The intensity of a coaching session every day and the follow-through/consistency that this allowed was a very special opportunity. Discussions over lunch, ranging from Russian literature, politics, music, stories of concerts near and far - these all completed the experience. Thank you for a terrific week! -- *Georgia Luikens, violinist and musicologist*

"A musician's atmosphere which provides great focus and a common goal among the violinists... daily advice from Professor Stepner, in a variety of different contexts ... comfortable performance experiences. I would very much like to participate in the program again next year!" -- *Kevin Powell, student violinist*

Workshop fee: \$500.

Financial aid available, including full scholarships!

To apply for the workshop, please contact Daniel Stepner at **stepner@brandeis.edu**

Video of Mr. Stepner playing Bach's Chaconne at **<https://youtu.be/xN5R838xl8g>**

ABOUT THE SLOSBERG MUSIC CENTER

Welcome to the Slosberg Music Center at Brandeis University, home to the Brandeis Concert Series and Department of Music. Please take a moment to review the information below, and feel free to ask our concert staff members for assistance at any time. Enjoy the show!

RECITAL HALL GUIDELINES

Videotaping, audio recording, and photography (including cell phones) are not permitted without specific permission from the management. Please turn off all electronic devices before the performance begins. No food or drinks are permitted in the Recital Hall.

LATE SEATING

Latecomers will be seated at the discretion of the management, per the performer's request.

STAY IN TOUCH

Go to brandeis.edu/concerts or find the **Slosberg Music Center** on **Facebook** for the latest concert updates. To join our e-mail list for Brandeis arts news and discount ticket offers, visit brandeis.edu/arts.

RESERVATIONS

For all concerts, advance reservations are currently required and available at brandeis.edu/concerts, which also includes the latest concert guidelines and regulations. If you cannot join us in person, watch our live stream at brandeis.edu/streaming/music.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS

Patrons in wheelchairs should email slosberg@brandeis.edu or call 781-736-4867 before you arrive so we can guarantee you an appropriate seat location.

RESTROOMS

Restrooms in the Slosberg Music Center are located on the lower level of the building. An accessible restroom is available on the main level behind the lobby.

ABOUT THE BRANDEIS CONCERT SERIES

Each year, the Brandeis Department of Music presents 60+ concerts, including:

MARQUEE CONCERTS*: An exceptional series of professional concerts that feature faculty and visiting artists, including the *Lydian String Quartet*.

STUDENT CONCERTS: Outstanding student ensembles and music majors perform music ranging from the Renaissance to improvisational jazz and more.

MUSIC AT MANDEL: The Department of Music and the Mandel Center for the Humanities present 7 FREE noontime concerts throughout the year.

BRAND NEW MUSIC: Professional and student performers showcase the work of Brandeis student, faculty, and alumni composers.

* Select Marquee Concerts are ticketed (\$5-\$35). All other concerts are FREE!