

# **Golden Age of the Violin**

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Musical Arts  
(Music: Performance)  
in the University of Michigan  
2022

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## ABSTRACT

Enclosed are the programs and program notes from my three Doctoral recitals. The first program represents the performance last summer given by the Aspen Conducting Academy, where I was featured as the soloist playing Berg Concerto. The full program included other works, but I reduced it here for simplicity and relevance. This concert had been originally planned for 2021's summer program, a year after I placed in the DeLay competition there. Because of Covid's interference, I had two years to study Berg's violin concerto before the concert. This concerto is so thick, with so many quotes and references and uses of his 12-tone row, I needed those two years to understand even a piece of what Berg created. After diving so deeply into Berg's music, I fell in love with his deeply personal expressions of beauty. It is no wonder many violinists consider this the greatest violin concerto: it speaks to audience members and fellow musicians alike with depth and heartfelt sorrow.

The second program, in Stamps Auditorium this past January, is a subset of my favorite time period in music, what I have considered to be the "Golden Age of the Violin". My Golden Age, as I considered it, included Kreisler, Ysaye, and Joachim at the start, and included such great composers and violinists as Bartok, Prokofiev, Heifetz, and Menuhin. The violinist-composer is the ultimate symbol of this craft that I especially prize: the performer as chief artist, initiating a dialogue with the audience, using the language of the composer. I thought this craft was gradually lost over the last few decades, as our violinists ceased being composers and our composers seemed less interested in conversing with an audience.

The third program represents an expansion of my previously limited perspective. I had thought the celebration of the performer's creativity, and their connection to the audience, was limited to this "Golden Age" from the late 1800s to mid 1900s. When I assembled this program, and recognized the geniuses of communication around me in Joseph Gascho and Michael Daugherty, I realized the art of musical dialogue is thriving today. Professor Gascho showed me that Baroque repertoire is meant to be performed off-the-cuff, with little improvisations

everywhere and musicians feeding off each other's ideas. We also had fun talking about the goals of intonation, and my familiar Expressive Intonation was put on the back-burner in favor of Quarter-Comma Meantone, an excellent exercise for my ear and a study of the musical moment. Working with the composer Michael Daugherty this past year has been a beautiful experience. He employed me in woodshedding his violin parts for upcoming new works, and I got to witness his flexibility in changing anything that he felt didn't work, even if he had spent several hours writing it. Professor Daugherty is an audience-centered composer, writing music that is meant to be savored and enjoyed by concertgoers.

This process has led me to conclude that the "Golden Age of the Violin" stretches back much further than I had thought, and this celebration of dialogue in music continues today in the hearts of composers, performers, and improvisers.

# First Dissertation Recital Program

**Brian Allen, violin**

**Aspen Conducting Academy Orchestra**

*Monday, August 9th, 2021  
Benedict Music Tent  
4:00 pm*

**Violin Concerto**

Andante (Prelude) - Allegretto (Scherzo)

Allegro (Cadenza) - Adagio (Chorale Variations)

Alban Berg

(1885-1935)

re-orch. Faradsch Karaew

*Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Music*

## First Dissertation Recital Program Notes

Alban Berg, the famous student of Arnold Schoenberg, is well-renowned for his lyricism and musicmaking using the tools of 12-tone Serialism. Unlike his peer Webern, Berg looked for opportunities for melodies to shine through the page. Berg's most famous works include the operas *Wozzeck* and *Lulu*, in addition to his violin concerto, which was the last work he completed before his untimely death from an insect bite in 1935.

Being a member of Schoenberg's illustrious "Second Viennese School" was not without its pitfalls. In 1913, Schoenberg was conducting some of Berg's Altenberg Lieder when the audience, tired of an entire concert of 12-tone works, rioted. This concert has two popular names, *Skandalkonzert* and *Watschenkonzert* (slap-concert). Astute music historians might also recognize the year 1913 as that of the famous riot during Stravinsky's Rite of Spring premiere; Berg's *Skandalkonzert* was two months before. Another, more serious, side effect of association with Schoenberg was that Berg was ostracized from the musical community in Germany and his native Austria when the Nazis came to power.

The violin concerto was commissioned by Louis Krasner in 1935, and Berg took a respite from orchestrating his opera *Lulu*, which remained unfinished, to write the concerto in the summertime. At the start of the composition process it was just a violin concerto; but midway through, it became a memorial of Manon Gropius, the daughter of Alma Mahler who died tragically that summer at the age of 18. The first movement is a portrait of Manon's life, while the second is both an explosion of sadness at her death and an elegy for her.

Berg's use of 12-tone techniques are often tongue-in-cheek; the opening of the first movement is a perfect example of this, as Berg shows off his tone row with the open strings of the violin. This seems highly unlikely to be Serialist, but the composer is simply choosing every other note of his tone row to create these stacked fifths. The tone row itself, when it appears after the open-string-featuring introduction, is comprised of a series of stacked 3rds (which Berg uses effectively to simulate tonal chords throughout the piece) and, for its last four notes, a series of ascending whole tones. These whole tones will be significant in the second movement. In the meantime, the theme introduced in this introduction (with off-beat answering accompaniment)

provides a point of familiarity that we return to throughout the first movement. We might consider this Manon's theme. After the opening, the music becomes charming, before gradually descending to madness in a frenzy of chromatic notes. This eventually subsides into another statement of the theme, before we enter into a different kind of charm: a Viennese waltz! In the midst of 12-tone music! This second theme returns even more frequently than the first; we deviate from it for a new section, then return to the waltz with a different flavor or character. The movement finishes with a quote from a Carinthian folk tune known as "A Bird in the Plum Tree". This tune is hardly known today; most sources simply describe this moment as "a Carinthian folk tune".

The second movement, evoking the devastation of Manon Gropius's death, opens with a huge, bombastic violin cadenza, which is lightly accompanied in the orchestra with a complex rhythm in 3. The violin receives this rhythm later as it and the orchestra switch motivic roles (though the violin is still in their extended accompanied cadenza). The cadenza features left-hand pizzicato with a simultaneous bowed melody, a completely solo chordal cadenza in the style of Bach—but with Berg's tone row, and it finishes hugely with a call-and-response with the orchestra, before transforming into something completely different: an actual Bach chorale. This chorale, *It is finished! Father, into your hands I commend my spirit* from Bach's BWV 60, is a memorial to Manon's life and an image of her loved ones, including Berg, trying to come to terms with her death. Also significant in this Bach chorale is the first four notes, which are ascending whole tones. This is identical to the end of Berg's tone row, by design. We don't know which came first to Berg, the row or the chorale; all we know is that he wrote a letter to a friend asking for tons of Bach chorales. The piece ends softly, with a final utterance of the tone row from the first movement.



# Second Dissertation Recital Program

**Brian Allen, violin**

**Taylor Flowers, piano**

*Sunday, January 30th, 2022*

*Stamps Auditorium*

*8:00 pm*

**Three Preludes (6')**

Allegro ben ritmato e deciso  
Andante con moto e poco rubato  
Allegro ben ritmato e deciso (Agitato)

George Gershwin  
(1898-1937)  
transcr. Jascha Heifetz

**Sonata #1 for Violin and Piano (35')**

Allegro appassionato  
Adagio  
Allegro

Béla Bartók  
(1881-1945)

**Slavonic Dance Op. 46 #2 arr. Fritz Kreisler (3')**

**Berceuse (3')**

**Hungarian Dance #2 arr. Joseph Joachim (3')**

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)  
Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)  
Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

*Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Music*

## Second Dissertation Recital Program Notes

**George Gershwin's Three Preludes** were written originally for piano, and premiered by Gershwin at a recital where he was also collaborating with a singer on some American popular songs. The violin and piano version heard today was arranged by Jascha Heifetz in 1939, shortly after Gershwin's tragic early death from a brain tumor in 1937. Heifetz and Gershwin were longtime friends and collaborators, and Heifetz had hoped Gershwin might write a violin concerto for him; after Gershwin's death Heifetz made several arrangements of Gershwin's music, to honor him and perhaps also to fill the void.

The first prelude is snarky and high-energy. The main theme features a pivot between the normal tonic chord in Bb and the same with a lowered seventh, for a blues sound. The prelude then proceeds to cycle through half-baked ideas: we get no less than five themes, each ending with the same syncopated tag ("maybe the next one will work") until the main theme returns, but this time it means business. The return is in the jarring scale degree 3, D minor, and it heralds with octaves the beginning of the explosive tag.

The second prelude features the 12 bar blues. The phrases of the first section and its return are grouped in three sets of four bars, where the first set doesn't leave tonic, the second set ventures to the subdominant and returns, and the third set initially repeats the subdominant before touching the dominant, then returning. (I, IV-I, IV-V-I.) Musically, this prelude is in two sections. I imagine that the blues section paints a picture of two retirees lamenting how nothing is the same anymore. The middle, lighter, section seems to be a funny story one of them tells of bygone days, with the other one jumping in and remembering it too. They then sit back and again lament that such days are gone.

The third prelude fluctuates between Eb minor and the much more innocent Eb major throughout, before ending with a bang in Eb major. The closest it gets to darkness is in the jazzy middle section, where at one point it repeats four notes in a loop that don't belong anywhere near these keys. This tension resolves satisfyingly by launching into the finale of the prelude.

**Béla Bartók** is well known for his excursions into the Hungarian mountains during his 20s, recording on phonographs the local peoples' folk songs. He is also famous for being tragically unrecognized in the United States when he fled there during World War 2, during the

last years of his life: he did not live long enough to see the postwar resurgence in popularity of his music. Bartók is less known today for his “Expressionist period” of 1918-1922, his late 30s, when he was elevated by the ever-so-brief communist regime of post-WW1 Hungary, and himself wished to find greater equality amongst the pitches of music. Bartók turned to Schoenberg’s theory of Serialism, or 12-tone music, and juxtaposed it with his own enormous collection of Hungarian and Romanian folk tunes (his collection numbered some 10,000 songs). The **1st Violin Sonata**, composed in 1921 and premiered by Bartók and Jelly d’Arányi, is thick with Serialism, while also presenting Bartók’s signature folk flavors.

The premiering violinist and dedicatee, Jelly d’Arányi, has quite a colorful history. She is best known today for her infamous seance session in 1933, where she claimed to have communicated with Robert Schumann. In this seance he is to have revealed to her the existence of his quashed violin concerto and requested that she play it. She did give the British premiere of Schumann’s violin concerto in 1938, against Joseph Joachim’s express wishes that the concerto’s premiere be delayed 100 years due to Schumann’s present mental disorder during the work’s composition in 1853. Clara Schumann had felt that Robert’s illness had come through in the music, and wanted it to never be performed.

Arányi was famous during her time as the great-niece of Joachim, and a violinist of the highest caliber. (Joachim heard her at age 14 and pronounced that a violinist of her esteem was only born every 100 years.) It was Bartók’s distinct pleasure to be able to work with her, and when Ravel heard a performance they gave of Bartók’s 1st Violin Sonata, he was inspired to write his Tzigane and dedicate it to her.

The first movement of Bartók’s **Violin Sonata #1**, while deeply challenging to the ear, was written in Sonata form, with an initial theme that returns after thick development. Bartók assures us in interviews that the key here is C#, although the violinist’s first note is a prominent C natural. The second movement features extended periods of the violin singing alone. The third movement is much more familiar to followers of Bartók’s folk music, as it sounds like a peasant dance.

**Antonín Dvořák’s** original composition style was Wagnerian. He later called this his “mad period” and destroyed everything he could. Five years later, in 1878, Brahms wrote to his own publisher, Fritz Simrock, to recommend Dvořák. Simrock took Brahms’ recommendation to

heart and commissioned the first set of Slavonic Dances, as Dvořák had been studying Slavic folklore and was interested in becoming more nationalist in his compositions. Dvořák was certainly also inspired by Brahms' Hungarian Dances, written nine years earlier. This set, later labeled his Op. 46 (the second set is Op. 72), was written first for piano four hands, and soon orchestrated, to resounding success. The **Slavonic Dances Op. 46** launched Dvořák's career.

Although Dvořák himself apparently arranged the 2nd Dance for violin and piano, the version we know today was published by Fritz Kreisler in 1914, as the first of a set of three arrangements. Kreisler changed the original key to from E to G minor, and relabeled it “#1 in G minor”.

There are 3 themes present in this Dance: the initial melancholy theme in G minor; a second, more punchy but still rhythmically straight theme that only occurs once; and the large middle section theme, which transposes here to E minor, and features energetic, dancelike syncopation. After the dance returns to the home key of G minor, this syncopated theme returns in that key to end the piece.

**Gabriel Fauré's Berceuse** (pronounced “bear-suz” with the u like “soot”) is a lullaby, featuring an accompaniment that sounds like the rocking of a cradle. The recurring pattern of chords, I-IV-I-IV, also imitates this rocking. Fauré was in his mid-30s when he wrote this berceuse in 1880. He had finished his famous first violin sonata in 1877, and was that year engaged to be married; but his fiancée had backed out, citing that she only felt a mixture of affection and fear rather than love for him. Fauré embarked on a yearslong journey after that, networking with various artists and especially attending Wagner's opera productions throughout Europe. Fauré's Berceuse was so beloved by street musicians that it contributed heavily to his image as a “salon composer,” though this song's fame also secured him a reliable publisher for the remainder of his career.

**Johannes Brahms' Hungarian Dance No. 2** is part of a set of 21, composed for piano four hands (two performers on the same instrument) in 1869. These dances each feature traditional Hungarian folk tunes that Johannes Brahms likely learned while touring with the Hungarian violinist Ede Reményi in 1853. The first 10 Dances were immediately arranged by

Brahms' dear friend Joseph Joachim for violin and piano (completed by 1872), which is the version heard today. Three of these 21 dances, Nos. 1, 3, and 10, have famous orchestral arrangements that Brahms made in 1874. No. 2 is not as famous, perhaps, but the contrast between its two themes makes this Dance a powerful one.

The first theme, in D minor, is deathly serious, intense, and passionate, while the D major second theme is innocent and playful. The rhythms also form a neat contrast: the intense first theme features heavy syncopation and rapid chromatic neighbors outlining the relentless pull of the tonic, while the goofy second theme has simpler rhythms and an off-the-string joyous feeling, and the signature Hungarian rapid neighbors are more diatonic here, indicating the rapid deflating of intensity. Of course the dark seriousness cannot be held back forever, and the second theme is only a brief respite from the intensity of the Dance.

# Third Dissertation Recital Program

**Brian Allen, violin**

**Joseph Gascho, harpsichord**

**Taylor Flowers, piano**

*Saturday, April 2nd, 2022*

*Stamps Auditorium*

*8:00 pm*

**Sonata Prima “La Bernabea”**

Adagio  
Allegro  
Adagissimo  
Allegro

Giovanni Antonio Pandolfi Mealli  
(1624-1687)

Joseph Gascho, harpsichord

**Violin Sonata #1 in A Major, Op. 13**

Allegro Molto  
Andante  
Scherzo: Allegro Vivo  
Finale: Allegro quasi presto

Gabriel Fauré  
(1845-1924)

**from Fallingwater (2013)**

Prairie Psalm

Michael Daugherty  
(1954-)

**La Gitana**

**Liebesfreud**

**Liebesleid**

**Schön Rosmarin**

Fritz Kreisler  
(1875-1962)

Taylor Flowers, piano

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### Third Dissertation Recital Program Notes

Giovanni Antonio **Pandolfi Mealli** was an Italian violinist and composer, active in the court of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria in the mid-1600s. His few surviving works include 12 violin sonatas, separated into two groups of six, opera 3 and 4. The piece heard tonight is the first sonata from Op. 4.

**La Bernabea** is a dedication to D. Joseffo Bernabei, and by Mealli's dedication I surmise he was a dear friend: "To the very illustrious and reverent Sir, my most singular lord." Though I have separated the Sonata into four movements, there will be hardly any breaks between the movements, and one could argue there are far fewer or many more movements than listed, as the mood and tempo shifts almost every minute.

Professor Gascho and I will be playing at A440 tuning, rather than the expected A415; but for a taste of the period, we will be using a special tuning called **Quarter-comma meantone**. This tuning, the most popular harpsichord tuning during the Baroque period, achieves pure major thirds by strategically narrowing each perfect fifth by a quarter of the "syntonic comma," the difference between a pure major third and four stacked perfect fifths. This tuning can also be thought of as a more thoughtful version of Equal Temperament, the compromise tuning we use on our pianos today, as both tuning systems condense every fifth an equal amount from its pure form.

(For math and music nerds in the audience, the Pythagorean circle of fifths does not natively travel from C to C; rather, it travels clockwise from C to B# or counterclockwise from C to Dbb. Equal Temperament condenses these pure fifths from their pure form of ~702 cents each to its own native measurement of 700 cents. Quarter-comma meantone, not having as its goal a perfect C-C rotation but instead wanting pure thirds, further condenses the fifths to ~696.5 cents each, allowing the accumulation of four fifths to naturally equal the pure third of ~386 cents.  $3.5 \times 4 = 14$  down from 400 cents, or 386. C-G-D-A-E is an example of four fifths that create a major third. In Quarter-comma meantone, the third created blends perfectly as a pure third.)

**Gabriel Fauré** was a 31-year-old choirmaster and private teacher when his first **Violin Sonata** was premiered in January 1877. Later considered his first great masterpiece, it was received very well, launching him into greater fame as a composer. Still, Fauré continued to teach amateur students to pay the bills until in 1892 his friend Saint-Saëns encouraged him to apply to the Paris Conservatoire to teach composition. Though the head of the faculty denounced him as too modern, and blocked his appointment, he was able to get employment at the Conservatoire in another role, until another Professorship of composition opened up in 1896. After a scandal related to denying Ravel a famous composition prize, Fauré was named the head of the Conservatoire, and instituted a complete overhaul of the practices of the Conservatoire and its competitions, making them more fair and unbiased for all. All of this kept Fauré so busy that he had to escape to hotels in other countries during the summers to get some peaceful composing time.

Fauré's **Violin Sonata #1** is arranged into four movements with a standard format: a Sonata-form opening movement, a slow 2nd movement, a joyous Scherzo for the third, and a finale that evokes the first movement while celebrating the coming finish line.

The first movement opens with a gorgeous piano solo, which is not repeated but rather commented on by the violin's entrance. In fact, the violin doesn't get to play the first theme until the recap! The closest the violin comes before the recap is in the development after the repeat: a third theme arrives, which is a clever reinterpretation of the first theme's melody, featuring the same rhythm but different intervals and a more subdued character. When the development ends and everything returns, the violin playing the opening theme is a heroic moment. The second time the violin gets to play this theme is in the very last moments of the movement: after restating the entire first section in the home key, we get a coda that is stormy at the start, but after exploding, the theme returns softly in the violin to remember the past fondly before the exciting conclusion.

The D minor second movement is dark and passionate, but this passion is forcefully restrained for much of the movement, including the beginning. It breaks out in spurts, going to the relative F major and soaring before remembering its place and going back to the brooding of D minor. This happens once more, breaking into D major near the end, but this time when it restrains itself again it ends in a melancholic D major.



The third movement is full of wiry energy, keeping up its constant energy by the use of offbeat accents and odd meter groupings. While the phrases are initially organized into cells of three measures, this is later further complicated with two-measure cells alternating with the three-measure 'normal' cells. The second theme is in three, with the short 16th notes replaced by a frantic descending melody. The movement ends with bubbly pizzicato.

The fourth movement seems simple at first, with a forthright declaration in its opening theme. Fauré plays around with the building blocks of the meter, however, later shifting between base two and base three in the wandering middle section, before coming back home to a three-based meter in two (6/8).

Multiple GRAMMY Award-winning composer **Michael Daugherty** has achieved international recognition as one of the ten most performed American composers of concert music, according to the League of American Orchestras. His orchestral music, recorded by Naxos over the last two decades, has received six GRAMMY Awards, including Best Contemporary Classical Composition in 2011 for *Deus ex Machina* for piano and orchestra and in 2017 for *Tales of Hemingway* for cello and orchestra. Current commissions for 2020-22 include new orchestral works for the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and the Omaha Symphony and a concerto for violinist Anne Akiko Meyers who will give the world premiere with the National Symphony at the Kennedy Center in 2022.

Michael Daugherty was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in 1954 and is the son of a dance-band drummer and the oldest of five brothers, all professional musicians. As a young man, Daugherty studied composition with many of the preeminent composers of the 20th century including Pierre Boulez at IRCAM in Paris (1979), Jacob Druckman, Earle Brown, Bernard Rands and Roger Reynolds at Yale (1980-82), and György Ligeti in Hamburg (1982-84). Daugherty was also an assistant to jazz arranger Gil Evans in New York from 1980 to 1982. In 1991, Daugherty joined the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre and Dance as Professor of Composition, where he is a mentor to many of today's most talented young composers. He is also a frequent guest of professional orchestras, festivals, universities and conservatories around the world. Daugherty's music is published by Peermusic Classical/Faber Music, Boosey & Hawkes and Michael Daugherty Music. *(taken from Michael Daugherty's website)*

**Fallingwater** was originally written for violin and string orchestra, commissioned by Naja Salerno-Sonnenberg as a vehicle for her directorship of the New Century Chamber Orchestra. Fallingwater is inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's buildings; the movement heard today, *Prairie Psalm*, is (in Professor Daugherty's words) "based on the Unity Temple in Chicago, completed in 1909 when Wright was founding the Prairie School of architectural design. His architecture sought to unite people, buildings and nature in spatial and spiritual harmony. 'I believe in God, only I spell it Nature,' he wrote. In this movement, I compose a space for reflection and repose through gradual development of meditative melody and heavenly harmonies. I also reflect on a passage from Ralph Waldo Emerson, often quoted by Wright: 'Every spirit builds itself a house; and beyond its house, a world; and beyond its world, a heaven.' "

**Fritz Kreisler** graduated from the Paris Conservatoire with the "Premier Prix" degree at age 12, competing against 40 college-age violinists for the prize. After being later rejected from the Vienna Philharmonic (his home orchestra), he changed career paths to study medicine, and joined the army, before returning to the violin 10 years later. In 1910 Kreisler premiered the Elgar Violin Concerto, which he had commissioned. He served in the Austrian army at the start of World War 1, and after an honorable discharge due to injury moved to the US. Kreisler is famous today for his lush, old-world sound, and his infamous habit of claiming that his pieces were written by other composers, more famous and more deceased, to help speed their acceptance into the repertory. The set you will hear tonight is comprised of encore-style songs. The first is an imitation of a Spanish guitar, while the other three are Viennese waltzes. This particular set and order were recommended to me 5 years ago by my former teacher Jaime Laredo, who enjoyed playing them in his recitals. I have presented sets like this ever since, but this is my first time playing the exact set he recommended.