

Bard College Conservatory of Music

presents

The Condo Concerts: Program One

with

Leila Josefowicz, *violin*

Friday, February 19, 2021, at 8:00 PM

La linea evocativa (2020)

A Drawing for Violin Solo

Dedicated to George Condo & Leila Josefowicz

Matthias Pintscher

(b. 1971)

Partita No.2 in D minor, BWV 1004

Allemanda

Corrente

Sarabanda

Giga

Ciaccona

Johann Sebastian Bach

(1685-1750)

THE CONDO CONCERTS is a series of four free concerts streamed from the Bard Conservatory with the generous support of artist George Condo. Featured musicians for the three upcoming concerts are the Fred Sherry String Quartet with violinists Leila Josefowicz and Jesse Mills; violist Hsin-Yun Huang; and cellist Fred Sherry on March 14 and April 18; and clarinetist Anthony McGill on May 2.

Donations from the audience will benefit the Conservatory Scholarship Fund, including new Inclusive Excellence in Music Scholarships. To donate, please go to:

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About the Artist

Leila Josefowicz's passionate advocacy of contemporary music for the violin is reflected in her diverse programs and enthusiasm for performing new works. In recognition of her outstanding achievement and excellence in music, she won the 2018 Avery Fisher Prize and was awarded a prestigious MacArthur Fellowship in 2008, joining prominent scientists, writers and musicians who have made unique contributions to contemporary life.

Highlights of Josefowicz's 2019/20 season included opening the London Symphony Orchestra's season with Sir Simon Rattle and returning to San Francisco Symphony with the incoming Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen to perform his Violin Concerto. Further engagements include concerts with Los Angeles Philharmonic, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the Cleveland and Philadelphia orchestras, where she will be working with conductors at the highest level, including Susanna Mälkki, Matthias Pintscher and John Adams.

A favourite of living composers, Josefowicz has premiered many concertos, including those by Colin Matthews, Steven Mackey and Esa-Pekka Salonen, all written specially for her. This season, she will perform the UK premiere of Helen Grime's Violin Concerto with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Dalia Stasevska. Other recent premieres include John Adams' Scheherazade.2 (Dramatic Symphony for Violin and Orchestra) in 2015 with the New York Philharmonic and Alan Gilbert, and Luca Francesconi's Duende – The Dark Notes in 2014 with Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Susanna Mälkki. Josefowicz enjoyed a close working relationship with the late Oliver Knussen, performing various concerti, including his violin concerto, together over 30 times.

Alongside pianist John Novacek, with whom she has enjoyed a close collaboration since 1985, Josefowicz has performed recitals at world-renowned venues such as New York's Zankel Hall, Washington DC's Kennedy Center and London's Wigmore Hall, as well as in Reykjavik, Chicago, San Francisco and Santa Barbara. This season, they appear together at Washington DC's Library of Congress, New York's Park Avenue Armory and Amherst College. She will also join Thomas Adès in recital to perform the world premiere of his new violin and piano work at Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris and the Japanese premiere at the Tokyo Opera City Cultural Foundation.

Recent highlights include engagements with the Berliner Philharmoniker, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Washington's National Symphony Orchestra, Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich and Boston and Finnish Radio symphony orchestras. In summer 2019, Josefowicz took part in a special collaboration between Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Royal Ballet, and Company Wayne McGregor featuring the music of composer-conductor Thomas Adès. Josefowicz has released several recordings, notably for Deutsche Grammophon, Philips/Universal and Warner Classics and was featured on Touch Press's acclaimed iPad app, The Orchestra. Her latest recording, released in 2019, features Bernd Alois Zimmermann's Violin Concerto with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Hannu Lintu. She has previously received nominations for Grammy Awards for her recordings of Scheherazade.2 with

the St Louis Symphony conducted by David Robertson, and Esa-Pekka Salonen's Violin Concerto with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by the composer.

Notes on the Program

La linea evocativa (2020)

Matthias Pintscher

(Born in Marl, [West] Germany in 1971)

Throughout her stellar career, Leila Josefowicz has been an enthusiastic champion of new music. Among the composers who have written concertos for her we find leading figures like John Adams and Esa-Pekka Salonen, to name but two. She has also enjoyed many other close collaborations with composers, including the late Oliver Knussen, whose final work for violin and piano she recorded with Peter Serkin here at Bard, as well as Matthias Pintscher who, having just turned 50, has been at the forefront of the contemporary-music scene for more than a quarter of a century. Her personal relationship with internationally acclaimed painter George Condo has led to the present meeting of three great artistic minds.

Pintscher and Josefowicz joined forces to honor Condo on the occasion of his recent exhibition "Internal Riot" at the Hauser & Wirth Gallery in New York City. The solo violin work *La linea evocativa* ("The Evocative Line"), which Pintscher called a *disegno* ("drawing"), was commissioned by Condo and premiered by Josefowicz at the gallery's 22nd Street location on November 20, 2020. According to the gallery's website, Condo's recent work, created during the pandemic, reflects "the unsettling experience of physical distance and the absence of human contact during this prolonged time of social isolation." In this new collection, Condo often represents abstract human faces, with outsized eyes and teeth, painted in vivid color, or drawn in ink and graphite on paper. The works have titles like "Human Rage," "Up Against the Wall," or "There Is No Business like No Business." One ink drawing, with multiple figures in close proximity yet at the same time strangely distant from one another (they are different sizes and looking in different directions, having no contact amongst themselves), is titled "A Drawing for Violin (Dedicated to Matthias Pintscher and Leila Josefowicz)."

In his musical "response," Pintscher starts from a forceful single note, equivalent to a single line, subsequently modified, expanded and distorted as it is gradually enveloped in a rich musical texture, eventually encompassing the entire range of the instrument and using a wide array of special playing techniques. The "line" "evokes" many emotions: the music, in turn, laughs, weeps, screams, erupts in sudden rage. Moments of great fear, hectic energy and introspective reflection alternate until the piece reaches its quiet conclusion in the violin's ethereal high register, returning to the purity of the single note/line.

Partita No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004 (c. 1720)

Johann Sebastian Bach

(Born in Eisenach, Germany, in 1685 – Died in Leipzig, Germany, in 1750)

Bach was not the first composer to write unaccompanied works for violin. For example, the now-forgotten Johann Paul von Westhoff (1656-1705) published a suite for *violon seul sans basse* in 1696, when Bach was only eleven years old. But no one ever lavished more attention on the medium than Bach did in the three sonatas and three partitas completed at Köthen around 1720. These compositions were so unusual in their own time that it took a long time for their exceptional richness to be fully appreciated. For well over a hundred years now, they have been firmly established as the pinnacle of the violin repertory and the body of work with which every violinist must grapple, often for an entire lifetime.

Although best known in his own day as a virtuoso organist, Bach was also a professional-level violin player. His first job—for a few months in 1703, when he was 18 years old—was as a violinist in Weimar (where he had a chance to meet Westhoff). Bach was intimately familiar with the technique of the instrument, and in his unaccompanied violin works he demonstrated that knowledge by offering a true encyclopedia of Baroque violin playing. The greatest challenge in writing for an unaccompanied violin is, of course, to accommodate both the melodic line and the supporting harmonies with only four strings, since polyphonic playing is possible on a string instrument only within certain limits.

The six works for solo violin survive in a beautiful manuscript in Bach's own hand, with the Italian inscription *Sei Solo*. Three of the works are sonatas, in the four-movement layout (slow-fast-slow-fast) of the Baroque *sonata da chiesa* (“church sonata”). The other three are partitas—sets of dance movements which are highly “stylized,” that is, meant for listening rather than for dancing. (Bach used the terms *suite* and *partita* interchangeably in his dance music; he actually spelled the latter *partia* in the autograph of the violin works.)

In the second of the partitas, in D minor, the standard four-movement sequence of Baroque suites (Allemande—Courante—Sarabande—Gigue) is followed by one of Bach's most extraordinary creations, the famous Chaconne. Each of the first four movements is cast in a large binary form, where each half is repeated, as convention dictates. In Bach's works, the “Allemande” (originally “German Dance”) is rather far removed from the traditional dance character; often, as in this case, it is a movement, proceeding at a dignified pace, mostly in even sixteenth-notes and covering a wide range in terms of instrumental registers and implied harmonies. In the “Courante,” the evenly flowing rhythms continue in triple meter instead of double. The double, triple and quadruple stops of the “Sarabande” are almost constantly present to make the harmonies not just implied but very real, while the Gigue, which moves faster than any of the previous movements, combines virtuosity with a very pronounced dance feel.

One may be forgiven for thinking, however, that these four movements only serve as introductions to the celebrated Chaconne. In Baroque music, a *chaconne* was a set of variations

on a descending bass line. Rhythmically, the Chaconne theme is reminiscent of a sarabande (and in this partita, it is audibly connected to the Sarabande we just heard), but here the dance character is overshadowed by the technical virtuosity and the incredible variety in the treatment of the theme.

Bach repeats his theme no fewer than sixty-four times in the course of this magnificent movement. The variations are arranged in a large three-part structure with an extended major-key area in the middle, contrasting with the D minor of the opening and concluding sections. In the course of the variations, the ground bass itself undergoes some changes: sometimes it is presented in its diatonic form and sometimes it is filled in with chromatic half-steps. A wide array of violin techniques (including multiple stops, fast scales and *arpeggios* or broken chords) is used to individualize the variations, and passages of primarily rhythmical and primarily melodic interest alternate throughout. At the end of the piece, the eight-bar theme returns in its original form.

--Peter Laki, *Visiting Associate Professor of Music*