

Community Presbyterian Concert Series presents



Robert Chen

Concertmaster,

Chicago Symphony Orchestra

In Concert

with

Pianist

**Matthew
Hagle**



February 6, 2022, 3:00 pm

Community Presbyterian Church

39 N. Prospect Ave. Clarendon Hills, IL



THE CPC CONCERT SERIES
Enriching our community through music

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Community Presbyterian Church

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Robert Chen

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Matthew Hagle

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Sunday, February 6, 2022

3:00 PM

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Clarendon Hills, Illinois

Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano in G Minor

L. 148

Allegro vivo

Intermède. Fantasque et léger

Finale. Très animé

Claude Debussy

(1862–1918)

Sonata No. 2 for Solo Violin in A Minor

BWV 1003

Grave

Fuga

Andante

Allegro

J. S. Bach

(1685–1750)

Sonata No. 5 for Solo Violin in G Major (*Mathieu Crickboom*)

Opus 27

L'aurore (Dawn). Lento assai

Danse rustique. Allegro giocoso molto moderato

Eugène Ysaÿe

(1851–1931)

Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano in D Major

Opus 94bis

Moderato

Presto

Andante

Allegro con brio

Sergei Prokofiev

(1891–1953)

Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano in G Minor, L. 148

Claude Debussy

Debussy's Sonata for violin and piano, third in a projected series of six chamber sonatas, was the last work the composer completed before his death in 1918. Progress on the sonata caused Debussy a great deal of frustration; in the end, he felt that it never really came together the way he had originally intended. Nevertheless, the work remains a powerful, forward-looking effort that fuses elements of mainstream concert tradition with an affinity for gypsy violin playing.

The sonata unfolds in three movements: *Allegro vivo*, *Intermède (Fantasque et léger)*, and *Finale (Très animé)*. A broadly melodic flavor informs movement I, with extremely legato gestures, frequent hemiolas, and generally long note values that belie the movement's *Allegro vivo* indication. More active are the piano's arpeggio figurations as the music moves through several keys in preparation for the reprise of the opening material; but even these are marked *pianissimo*.

Of the three movements the *Intermède* is the most "fantastic," moving with ease between music marked *scherzando* and that of a more improvisatory nature. A chromatic melody marked "expressif et sans rigueur" enters midway through the movement and is repeated just before the return of the opening material recast in a fuller, less-rhapsodic fashion. A burst of energy from the violin is quickly extinguished as the movement dies away into nothingness.

Movement III begins with the opening theme of the first movement in the violin, accompanied by the piano in figuration recalling Debussy's *Les estampes* (1903). The finale proper begins with an explosion of unaccompanied activity in the violin. An almost incessant stream of sixteenth notes is suspended on only a few occasions, each marking vital structural points. Unusually for Debussy, the work ends with a staunch *fortissimo* affirmation of the home key of G major.

In his last few compositions Debussy moved away from the kind of pictorial, sensual music that had driven his work for the previous fifteen or twenty years. Indeed, the Sonata for violin and piano provides a glimpse of what purely abstract musical wonders the composer might have wrought had he not succumbed to cancer at the age of fifty-five.

—*Blair Johnston, Indiana University*

Sonata No. 2 for Solo Violin in A Minor, BWV 1003

J. S. Bach

According to the manuscripts of Bach's Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin, BWV 1001–06, the six pieces were completed in 1720 while the composer was employed at the Cöthen court, where he devoted himself primarily to the composition of instrumental music. This period saw the composition of the Brandenburg Concertos, the violin and keyboard concertos, the orchestral suites, and the first part of the Well-Tempered Clavier, among other works.

In the case of the Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin, Bach alternated three sonatas with three partitas. The partitas consist of between five and eight dance movements, while the sonatas are in four movements, none of which is a dance except the third movement of the first sonata, a *Siciliana* in G minor. Throughout these six works there is evidence of not only Bach's knowledge of the technical capabilities of the violin but also of his ability to create dense counterpoint and effective harmony with one stringed instrument. The solo violin sonatas were first published between 1817 and 1828.

A rhapsodic *Grave* opens Sonata No. 2 in A minor. At such a slow tempo, the highly ornamented melody seems to meander at will, navigating a course of highly contrasting rhythms and decorative flourishes that release the melodic potential of the minor mode. The overall "free" nature of the *Grave* makes it sound like a prelude to the ensuing movement. As in all three of the violin sonatas, the second movement is a fugue, the central point of the piece. Daunting in both size and complexity, the music pushes forward relentlessly, creating a dense contrapuntal web. Bach sets the third movement apart from the others through both an *Andante* tempo and contrasting key. The writing is more homophonic here, with a calm melody that provides a needed foil to the harsh energy of the preceding Fugue. A lively, lighthearted *Allegro*, rich with rhythmic and melodic variations, returns to A minor and closes the piece.

—*John Palmer, Canadian composer*

Sonata No. 5 for Solo Violin in G Major (*Mathieu Crickboom*), Opus 27

Eugène Ysaÿe

Eugene Ysaÿe ranks as a giant in the history of the violin. He was a key figure in the transition from the flamboyance of the Romantic era to a more austere, Modernist attitude about music-making. Ysaÿe's sensitive, controlled use of the lush vibrato of an earlier era became a signature of his style. The Belgian violinist enjoyed a brilliant career as a soloist, but he also helped shape generations of influential players through his teaching.

When declining health prevented Ysaÿe from performing, he turned increasingly to composition, and his six sonatas for unaccompanied violin are the composer's best-known works. He wrote them in a single burst of inspiration in the summer of 1923 after hearing a performance of J.S. Bach's works for unaccompanied violin given by Hungarian violinist Joseph Szigeti.

Ysaÿe was an admired Bach interpreter, and he turned to the German composer's gold-standard set of sonatas and partitas (three of each, gathered into a characteristically Bachian collection of six) as a model for his own six solo violin sonatas published in 1924. Each of the six sonatas is dedicated to a particular violinist (including Szigeti himself in No. 1), while Bach is paid tribute through direct quotation in No. 2 and in other allusions elsewhere in the set. For each sonata Ysaÿe devises a specific form instead of repeating the standard format developed in the Classical and Romantic eras.

Sonata No. 5 in G major gives a nod to fellow Belgian Mathieu Crickboom (1871–1947), one of Ysaÿe's favorite students, who later became an important pedagogue in his own right. Cast in two movements, this sonata conveys something of the quality of a tone poem in its evocation of sunrise in the first movement (subtitled "L'Aurore," or "Sunrise"). Ysaÿe makes fascinating use of difficult violin techniques—such as pizzicato with the left hand—to summon his soundscape. The music gradually builds up a sense of motion, suggesting awakening and increasing illumination.

The two-movement pattern of the Fifth Sonata mimics that of the old Baroque sonata da chiesa ("church sonata")—a slow introductory movement followed by a fast one. Subtitled "Danse rustique" ("Rustic Dance"), movement II turns to vivid rhythms that frame a central lyrical section. Ysaÿe used to enjoy picnics on occasion with students, and some commentators suggest an evocation of these memories lies behind this music.

—*calperformances.org, University of California, Berkeley*

Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano in D Major, Op. 94bis

Sergei Prokofiev

Originally conceived for flute and piano (1943), this work immediately became more popular in its violin version. Even today it is still more commonly encountered in concert and on recordings than its sibling, not least because violinists outnumber flutists. Cast in four movements, this sonata transcription betrays little of its grim wartime origins, mixing Prokofiev's lyrical warmth with his playful mischief.

Movement I is marked *Moderato* and opens with a lovely melody on violin that seems to float lazily amid the clouds. The music springs to life in a jovial bridge passage leading to the alternate theme, also a lyrical, bright melody, but one that seems to hopscotch about. A reprise and lovely coda close out the movement.

The ensuing Scherzo, marked *Presto*, features that typical Prokofievian drive and mischievous abandon, the piano often seeming to propel the violin along. There are two themes in the outer sections, the first busy and impish, the second carefree and a bit less breathless. The brief trio is calmer and quite lovely in its subdued lyricism.

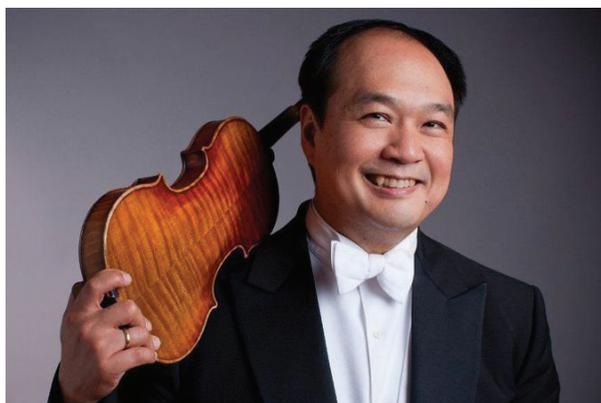
The Andante third movement features, in the outer sections, a lovely soaring theme on violin, which is just as beautiful when taken up by the piano. But it is the deliciously exotic middle section that seduces the ear: the violin's somewhat jazzy lilting theme receives a beguiling, almost Gershwinian response from the piano's upper register, forging a truly memorable melodic creation.

The finale, marked *Allegro con brio*, opens with a chipper melody whose festive character seems to turn to chuckles with the appearance of a bouncy second theme. An angular third melody soon appears, and there follows some imaginative development of the material and a reprise. The coda is ecstatic in its joy and wild abandon.

—*Robert Cummings, allmusic.com*



Robert Chen



Robert Chen has been concertmaster of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra since 1999. During that time, he has been featured as soloist with conductors including Riccardo Muti, Daniel Barenboim, Pierre Boulez, Bernard Haitink, Christoph Eschenbach, Charles Dutoit, Ton Koopman, Osmo Vänskä, Vasily Petrenko, Nicholas Kraemer and James Conlon. He gave the CSO premiere of György Ligeti's Violin Concerto, Elliott Carter's Violin Concerto and Witold Lutosławski's Chain Two, as well as the world premiere of Augusta Read Thomas's Astral Canticle.

In addition to his duties as concertmaster, Chen enjoys a solo career that includes performances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, New Japan Philharmonic, NDR Orchestra of Hanover, Asia Philharmonic Orchestra and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra in collaborations with such conductors as Myung-Whun Chung, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Manfred Honeck, Pavel Kogan and Andreas Delfs.

An avid chamber musician, Chen has performed with Daniel Barenboim, Itzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zukerman, Yo-Yo Ma, Lang Lang, Christoph Eschenbach, Myung-Whun Chung, Emanuel Ax, Mitsuko Uchida, Lynn Harrell and János Starker. Also a frequent participant at numerous music festivals including Aspen, Santa Fe, La Jolla and Schloss Moritzburg in Germany, he has toured extensively with Musicians from Marlboro and is a founding member of the Johannes Quartet.

Prior to joining the CSO, Robert Chen won first prize in the Hanover International Violin Competition. As part of that prize, he recorded Tchaikovsky's works for violin for the Berlin Classics label.

A native of Taiwan, Robert Chen began violin studies at the age of seven and continued with Robert Lipsett when he and his family moved to Los Angeles in 1979. While in Los Angeles, he participated in Jascha Heifetz's master classes. Chen received both bachelor's and master's degrees from the Juilliard School, where he was a student of Dorothy DeLay and Masao Kawasaki.

In his free time, he enjoys relaxing at home with his wife Laura and children Beatrice and Noah.



Matthew Hagle



Pianist **Matthew Hagle** has been heard in concert halls throughout the United States, including the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C., Symphony Space in New York, and in concert at the United States Supreme Court. Outside of the U.S., he has performed at venues in England, Canada, Brazil, Australia, and Japan. A resident of the Chicago area, Hagle performs frequently at local spaces including the Ravinia Festival, Symphony Center, and the Chicago Cultural Center.

Mr. Hagle can often be heard on radio station WFMT in Chicago, and has also been heard on NPR's *Performance Today* and Minnesota Public Radio's *St. Paul Sunday Morning*. Among others, the *New York Times* has described him as "a sensitive pianist"; *Clavier* magazine praised the "rare clarity and sweetness" of his playing; and the Springfield (MA.) *Republican* remarked that he "played with unaffected brilliance and profound understanding." Pianist Michael Kieran Harvey, covering the 2000 Sydney International Piano Competition for Australian national radio, commented favorably on Mr. Hagle's performance of Elliott Carter's Piano Sonata.

Mr. Hagle is a dedicated teacher of piano, music theory, and composition, whose students have won high honors in local and national competitions and gone on to study music at the Juilliard School, New England Conservatory, and Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. He is currently on the faculty of the Music Institute of Chicago, where he is director of the Musicianship program in addition to his teaching duties. Previously, he taught at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, at Elmhurst College, and at the International Institute for Young Musicians at the Universities of Kansas and California at Santa Barbara.

His own studies were with Robert Weirich and Donald Currier at the Peabody Conservatory, with Claude Frank at the Yale School of Music (where he received the DMA), and with Maria Curcio Diamand in London as a Fulbright Scholar. A comfortable speaker on diverse musical subjects, Mr. Hagle likes to use this ability to draw connections between very new and older music, or between music and other art forms. In his spare time, he likes to read on a variety of subjects, to fail to learn Japanese, and to spend time with his two children.

—mattbagle.com

Sponsor Acknowledgements

Special thanks go to Jim Trcbka and Blake Trcbka of Perfect Show Productions (<https://www.perfectshow.net>) for producing today's concert on site and online via live-streaming.

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March 20, 2022 • 3:00 PM



*Who controls the narrative? What stories are we missing?
What would happen in a world where those stories were told?*

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Artemisia Vocal Trio



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