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Graduate recital in violin

Hannah Rae Howland
University of Northern Iowa

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GRADUATE RECITAL IN VIOLIN

An Abstract of a Thesis

Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Music in Performance

Hannah Rae Howland

University of Northern Iowa

July 2017

This Study by: Hannah Rae Howland

Entitled: Graduate Recital in Violin

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the
Degree of Master of Music in Performance

Date _____ Dr. Julia Bullard, Chair, Thesis Committee

Date _____ Dr. Rebecca Burkhardt, Thesis Committee Member

Date _____ Dr. Alison Altstatt, Thesis Committee Member

Date _____ Dr. Ross Monroe Winter, Thesis Committee Member

Date _____ Dr. Kavita R. Dhanwada, Dean, Graduate College

This Recital Performance by: Hannah Rae Howland

Entitled: Graduate Recital in Violin

Date of Recital: March 23, 2017

has been approved as meeting the recital requirement for the
Degree of Master of Music in Performance

_____	_____
Date	Dr. Julia Bullard, Chair, Graduate Recital Committee
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Date	Dr. Rebecca Burkhardt, Graduate Recital Committee Member
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Date	Dr. Alison Altstatt, Graduate Recital Committee Member
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Date	Dr. Ross Monroe Winter, Thesis Committee Member
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Date	Dr. Kavita R. Dhanwada, Dean, Graduate College

ABSTRACT

Hannah Howland performed a graduate recital on March 23, 2017 in Graham Chamber Hall. She was assisted by pianist Polina Khatsko. The program included Sonata No. 3 in C major, BWV 1005 by Johann Sebastian Bach, Sonata No. 3, Op. 27, “Ballade,” by Eugène Ysayë, and Sonata No. 1 in A major, Op. 13 by Gabriel Fauré. These three pieces were selected for this performance because they are seminal works of the violin repertoire that represent three distinct styles and require a wide variety of technical and expressive elements for performance.

Johann Sebastian Bach - Sonata No. 3 in C major, BWV 1005

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) completed his *Six Sonatas for Solo Violin without Bass* in 1720 during his tenure as Kapellmeister in Cöthen, though he may have begun to compose them while he was still employed as a court musician in Weimar, where, in addition to being organist, he also held the position of concertmaster for some time between 1708 and 1717.¹ While at Cöthen, Bach’s assignment was not as organist or church musician, so he turned to composing instrumental music. It was in Cöthen that he completed the six suites for solo cello, the *Brandenburg* Concertos, the first volume of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*, and a number of other suites and sonatas for combinations of

¹ J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 9th ed. (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), 436.

stringed and keyboard instruments, in addition to his works for solo violin.² Bach's mastery of composition and violin technique are unmistakable in the sonatas and partitas. He understood exactly what the violin was capable of and composed these works to fit into that framework, while also demanding a high level of technical proficiency from the performer.

The C major sonata is arguably the most technically challenging of the sonatas and partitas. The variety of forms and styles, the complexity of the writing, and the sheer length of the work make it a monumental undertaking for the violinist.

The first movement, Adagio, is based on a single rhythmic motive of a dotted eighth note and a sixteenth note. The entire movement is based on the repetition and unfolding of all the possible settings of this single rhythm. The motive begins in the bass line (the G string) as an introspective, passing thought. The dotted rhythm gives the motive a hesitant feel, but as more voices enter (we will consider each string a separate voice, entering one by one, from low to high), it gains confidence and develops. The incessant repetition of this rhythmic motive give the movement an almost obsessive quality that becomes more and more bold throughout, and then retreats once more to the more timid character in which it began.

The fugue (Fuga) of the C major sonata can be described as majestic, confident, and imposing. Indeed, this fugue, at 354 measures, is the longest Bach composed for any

² Joel Lester, *Bach's Works for Solo Violin: Style, Structure, Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3-11.

instrument. The subject of the fugue comes from the beginning of a sequence written for Pentecost dating from the fifteenth century, which was later lengthened by Luther a century later.³ This subject is accompanied by a descending chromatic bass line, which can also be seen as a countersubject, as it appears with the main subject. The obsessive quality that was apparent in the first movement returns in this fugue. The subject repeats over and over again, at different pitch levels and in different voices, as if searching or moving through many different personalities - some more intense, some graceful, some lighthearted - but all blending and overlapping to create one cohesive character.

This movement may be considered to have a ritornello form, with soloistic episodes of moving single-line sixteenth-note runs and *tutti* sections where all voices join once again, in sections of more exclusively chordal writing. Of course, all the separate voices must be performed by a single player, with a single bow and four strings. This is where the challenge arises. Bach has given the performer a remarkable number of elements to balance. It is already challenging enough to simply perform the notes as written, yet from the multitude of chords the performer must also bring out both the main theme and the chromatic countersubject, making them clear enough for a listener to recognize, while still phrasing each musical line. The difficult task of balancing all of these elements joined with the lengthiness of this fugue make it one of the most challenging movements in all of Bach's writing for solo violin.

The Largo movement from this sonata consists of a lovely, lyrical melody,

³ Jaap Schröder, *Bach's Solo Violin Works - A Performer's guide*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 159.

accompanied by an almost plucked sounding bass line from the lower strings. The beautiful, intimate character of this movement and its simple, singing theme contrasts with the fugue in almost every way.

The final movement of the sonata, *Allegro assai*, is a quick show in virtuosity and endurance (considering the three previous movements), in the constant sixteenth note runs whirling up and down throughout. The movement is playful in character- seemingly joking in its quick harmonic detours to minor and immediately back to major, as it races to the close of the sonata.

Violin technique has developed significantly since the eighteenth century; the instruments themselves have evolved, as well as the music written for them and the level of technical skill and virtuosity that is required of the performer. Nonetheless, the sonatas and partitas have remained a constant part of nearly every violinist's training and repertory. These works are an unparalleled series, both in their educational and performance value, because they incorporate so many different techniques, require so much of the performer musically, and are simply incredible compositions to experience.

Eugène Ysayë- Sonata No. 3, Op. 27, "Ballade"

Eugène Ysayë was born in Liège, Belgium in July of 1858. His father, Nicolas, was a musician and Ysayë's first violin teacher until he went on to study at the Liège Conservatory with Désiré Heynberg, and later, Henri Vieuxtemps in Brussels and Henri Wieniawski in Paris. In the years between 1876 and 1886, Ysayë went on three long trips abroad, to Paris with Vieuxtemps, then to Berlin, where he served as concertmaster of the

Bilse Orchestra, and once again to Paris. These trips assisted in Ysayë in developing his style as a musician as well as generating many important connections with musicians throughout Europe, which culminated in his joining the circle of French composers and musicians associated with Saint-Saëns, Franck, and Fauré, with whom he maintained close ties. In 1886, Ysayë was appointed to teach the esteemed violin class at the Brussels Conservatory. During this time, he also performed regularly as both a chamber musician and a soloist, gaining fame in Europe and America for his great virtuosity, mastery of technique, and captivating interpretation. By 1893, Ysayë began to shift his focus to conducting and continued to enjoy a remarkable international career for the next twenty-five years, which included the founding of a symphonic society in Brussels in 1895-6. Ysayë was at the peak of his fame at the beginning of World War I, by which time his health began to decline. As a result, he turned almost exclusively to conducting. Ysayë led the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra from 1918-1922, and then after returning to Belgium, continued to conduct concerts and compose regularly until his death in 1931.

Ysayë composed his Six Sonatas for Violin Solo op. 27 during this last period of his life, in 1923-4 at his seaside home in Belgium. He was inspired by a recital of solo violin works by J. S. Bach performed by Jozef Szigeti and drew upon his own experiences of performing Bach's violin works to create a "modern-day response to Bach's music and a renewal of the message they contain. But they are also a response to everything that had changed in music and violin playing in the meantime - two contrasting aspects that nonetheless proved mutually compatible."⁴ Ysayë wrote each of

⁴ Michel Stockhem, *Preface- Ysayë- Sechs Sonaten für Violine solo Opus 27*, (G. Henle Verlag,

these six sonatas for a different younger virtuoso, with whom he had some connection, and sought to depict each violinist in the music he composed, through musical allusions portraying their personality characteristics or national origins, as well as references to the music they preferred to play. Ysayë composed Sonata no. 3 for Romanian violinist, composer, and teacher Georges Enescu.

Ysayë's third sonata, titled *Ballade*, is a single movement work separated by distinct sections of varying moods and techniques, through-composed in such a way that each section naturally develops into the next. This natural development of sections gives the piece an improvisatory feel, if performed successfully. The work itself is a masterpiece of idiomatic writing for the violin. At the same time lyrical and virtuosic, *Ballade* challenges the performer in technique as well as interpretation. Each phrase asks a new skill of the performer - sequential double-stop motives, quick-moving chromatic scalar and arpeggiating passages, themes disguised by other underlying motives occurring simultaneously, and many more. Yet, though Ysayë uses all of these virtuosic techniques throughout the work, they are not there simply as a show of skill. Michel Stockhem, in an article on Ysayë, describes this, stating, “[t]o Ysayë, virtuosity was indispensable (he admired Paganini and Vieuxtemps), but as a means to re-create the music, rather than mere exhibitionism.”⁵ In other words, the skills and techniques required are necessary to accomplish the phrases and effects he created in the music, not

2004), VII.

⁵ Michel Stockhem. "Ysayë, Eugène." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed March 19, 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/30732>.

to just show off what the performer was capable of. Also notable is the fact that while the work is very improvisatory in feel and leaves room for interpretation in timing of phrases, Ysayë was quite specific in his articulation markings, bowings, dynamics, and even fingerings. Ysayë explained his specific markings in the following quote, which he included in his first edition of the Op. 27 sonatas: “[w]ithout wishing to doubt that every player employs an individual technique, it may be stated with certainty that those artists who pay precise attention to the fingerings, bowing marks, nuances and other instructions from the composer will most quickly reach their goal.”⁶ These markings assist the performer by indicating the specific musical gestures Ysayë intended, as well as provide fingerings that help both to interpret the gestures and show the best way to play them on the instrument.

The piece opens with an introduction *In modo di recitativo*. This performance indication and the lack of barlines throughout the entire section suggest a very improvisational feel. Beginning from nothing, the opening lines grow in intensity and volume only to abruptly stop, and after a pause to relish in the silence, begin again from nothing.

The next section, measures two through eleven, is a transitional section that is full of sequential motives. The harmonies throughout this section are not important, rather, it is the trajectory of the ascending and descending phrases that are of interest and which assist in the “winding up” to the main theme of the piece.

⁶ Eugène Ysayë, “Notes on the Edition,” in *Ysayë- Sechs Sonaten für Violine solo Opus 27*, ed. Norbert Gertsch (G. Henle Verlag, 2004), VIII-IX.

The main theme- a descending and ascending four note chromatic motive- is introduced first in measure 13 and repeated in measure 14. This main motive appears in the double-stop thirds descending twice and ascending once by half step, and in most occurrences throughout the piece is repeated, so this four note figure is played twice. Throughout this section Ysayë expands and modifies this motive, with returns at various points to the motive exactly as it was first presented. As indicated in the tempo marking at the beginning of the section, *Allegro in tempo giusto e bravura*, it is to be played in more strict time than the preceding sections and has a more distinct rhythmic flow with its bold feel and snappy rhythms. The section ends with a return to the main theme and transitions into the next, which is indicated by *dolce* and *calmato* markings. This section, beginning at measure 44, contrasts with the preceding sections distinctly, with quiet, slithering, chromatic passagework, which augments to become more arpeggiated. The section culminates in a transformed return of the main motive, which appears over an oscillating “bass” line. This transformed theme is repeated in sequence, ascending each time into a final culminating chord, followed by a long descending flourish of alternating double stops which transition from this frenzied oscillating theme into a calmer mood, indicated by the marking *dolce con espressivo* in measure 69. Ysayë brings back the main theme in thirds in the top line here, playing around with a new way of setting this theme in a calmer character. Out of this calmer theme grows a section of graceful ascending and descending arpeggiated motion, which creates a wave-like rocking feel. This smooth arpeggiated section again transitions into chromatic scalar motion, taking us into another instance of the main motive, which through crescendo grows into a

screaming downward flurry. Out of this arrives the recapitulation of the piece, a slightly modified version of the main theme as it was first presented. The piece seems come to a close, however Ysayë prolongs the final cadence into a coda section, which briefly recalls various parts of earlier sections and presents the main motive one final time in short ascending sequential patterns, building in intensity and racing to the very end.

Because Ysayë was such an accomplished violinist, he was able to compose works that lie flawlessly on the instrument. He knew what was possible and how to push the limits of technique, which ultimately represents the developments in modern violin playing and composition, making his works an important part of the violin repertoire.

Gabriel Fauré - Sonata No. 1 in A major, Op. 13

Gabriel Fauré was born 1845 in Pamiers, France. Though he was not trained in music from a young age (no members of his immediate family were musicians), he spent much time during his childhood playing the harmonium at the chapel joined to the school where his father worked. A member of the assembly that heard young Fauré was impressed with his gift and advised his father to send Fauré to Paris to study music. Fauré's father eventually saw the merit in cultivating his son's musical talents and took him to Paris in 1854 to study with Louis Niedermeyer at his newly established school, the *Ecole Niedermeyer*, as it would later be called. His rigorous studies at the Niedermeyer school were mainly of church music and early polyphony, as all the pupils were training to become organists and choirmasters, which ultimately had an important influence on his style later in his life. Louis Niedermeyer died in 1861 and his position was filled by Camille Saint-Saëns. Saint-Saëns introduced the students to the "modern" music of

Schumann, Liszt, and Wagner, where the school repertoire previously had covered very little music composed after 1750. Fauré greatly admired Saint-Saëns as a modernist composer and developed a friendship while at the school that continued throughout their lives.

After school, Fauré took various positions throughout France as a church organist before he left to serve in the Franco-Prussian war. In 1871, Fauré returned to Paris once again and was appointed second organist to Charles-Marie Widor at Saint-Sulpice. During this time, Saint-Saëns helped to launch Fauré's musical career by introducing him into society, beginning with the Viardot family. Saint-Saëns and Fauré attended events hosted by the family in which all kinds of music were performed. Fauré wrote music dedicated to the daughters of the family (one of whom, Marianne, became his fiancée for a short time before breaking off the engagement). Saint-Saëns also introduced Fauré to Camille Clerc, a rich industrialist, and his family during this time. The Clercs also hosted soirées that Saint-Saëns and other composers and musicians frequented. Taking a liking to Fauré, the Clercs invited him to their summer residences. It was at their summer home in Normandy that he composed his first violin sonata in A major, which he dedicated to violinist Paul Viardot and which M. Clerc helped get published by Breitkopf und Hartel in 1877.

The violin sonata in A major is one of the most important works from Fauré's first compositional period, though it did not capture much interest initially. Saint-Saëns's critique of the work published in *Journal de musique* 1, no. 45 in April of 1877,

following its premiere, brought the composition more attention. As Saint-Saëns stated:

Soon there will be a repertoire of French instrumental music to rival the long-held hegemony of the German school in that field. The appearance of Mr Fauré's sonata proclaims for us a new defender, perhaps the most worthy of all, for he combines a profound musical technique with a great abundance of melody and an almost unconscious naïveté to an irresistible effect. Everything in this sonata seduces: the novelty of its forms, its tonal explorations and original sonorities, its use of completely unsuspected rhythm. And the entire work, capable of persuading a crowd of the most ordinary listeners that even its most striking audacities are completely natural. No stronger work has appeared in recent years in France or Germany. And indeed, no more charming work has either. Mr Fauré claims for himself a place among the masters. A few more works like this and he will have triumphed as one of the most important names in contemporary art.⁷

The “novelty of its forms,” that Saint-Saëns mentioned continued to be the subject of discussion, especially regarding his treatment of “sonata form” in this first violin sonata. For example, one can examine the first movement closely and find that the harmonic structure does not follow that of the “classical sonata form.” One can argue that there is no second theme, and therefore, the movement cannot be defined as sonata form because of this.⁸ However, if one considers the overarching structure and the themes rather than the harmonies, the movement is quite obviously based on the traditional sonata form structure. Fauré simply cared more about the harmonic interest of his music and the beauty of the melody. He favored organic musical development and did not limit his creativity to formal structures.

⁷ Camille Saint-Saëns, “Une Sonate,” *Journal de musique* 1, no. 45 (7 April 1877), 3, ed. by Michel Duchensneau in “The Triumph of a Genre: Fauré’s Chamber Music Through the Looking Glass of Music Criticism,” translated and ed. by Tom Gordon in *Regarding Fauré*, (Amsterdam: Overseas Publishers Association, Gordon and Breach Publishers, 1999), 45.

⁸ For a closer analysis of the form of first movement of the first violin sonata, see: Edward R. Phillips, “The Organic Nature of Sonata Form in Fauré.” In *Regarding Fauré*, ed. and trans. by Tom Gordon (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Publishers, 1999), 145-161.

The most important aspect of the sonata is the interplay between the violin and piano throughout. Themes are passed back and forth, switching voices and transforming between instruments. As discussed above, the form of the first movement is rather subjective, but can be viewed as sonata form when considering the treatment and development of themes therein. Overall, this opening movement is full of soaring, majestic melodies juxtaposed with contrasting bouts of harsher, interrupting themes.

The second movement, *Andante*, is beautiful and relaxed. The interest in this movement comes from the contrasting rhythmic motives presented in its alternating sections. The motive first presented is a short note, followed by a long note (usually an eighth note and then a quarter), and the second motive inverts this rhythm, placing the long note before the short one (quarter note, then eighth note). This slight rhythmic shift creates a complete character change. The first motive, short-long, is static and lazy, and creates a feeling of being suspended in time. The second (long-short), however, creates the exact opposite feeling. It moves and pushes forward, searching for the next phrase.

The third movement of the sonata, *Allegro vivo*, is a lively jaunt-- much less serious than the previous two movements. The piano and violin have a sprightly, energetic dialogue back and forth, which is interrupted by a contrasting, more subdued lyrical section in the middle before returning once again to the spirited material from the beginning.

The final movement, *Allegro quasi presto*, returns once again to beautiful long, lyrical lines. The piano is more important than ever in this movement, as it really carries the melodic material and the violin simply interjects responses, but Fauré weaves voices

of the violin and piano together in such a way that these interjections are seamless and simply create a new color when the violin enters. The contrast in this movement comes from the pervading duple against triple feel, which becomes especially apparent in the middle section beginning at measure 176. In the final section of the piece, the roles of the violin and piano switch. The violin takes over the moving triplet line that the piano had throughout the movement and the piano picks up the longer, lyrical line until the final phrase, where both instruments pick up the triplets in one final flourish into the end.

This sonata encapsulates Fauré's musical voice in this early period of his writing. His compositional evolution happened more in harmony than texture or form. The interest in his compositions arises from the way in which he said things rather than what he said. His first sonata is largely regular in form, but harmonically, it is unique. There are charming, lyrical melodies in each movement, each of a different character, some more static, some arcing forward, but all tasteful and full of expression.

CONCLUSION

Each of the three works performed on this recital represents important stylistic aspect of the eras in which they were composed, and the important technical and idiomatic elements of virtuosic violin playing in each period. They were also selected because of their pedagogical value, and because each requires a different focus for performance - for instance, the Bach requires the performer to execute difficult, contrapuntal writing with many chords, double stops, and linear counterpoint, whereas

the Fauré is less technically demanding but requires more focus on lyrical playing and color. This variety of stylistic and technical demands allowed the performer to demonstrate the breadth and depth of stylistic and performance practice understanding, as well as technical proficiency, through some of the greatest violin masterworks in the repertoire.

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School of Music
University of Northern Iowa

presents

Hannah Howland, Violin

Graduate Recital

assisted by:

Polina Khatsko

In partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the Masters degree in Violin Performance
From the Studio of Ross Monroe Winter

Sonata No. 3 in C major, BWV 1005

J.S. Bach

Adagio

(1685 – 1750)

Fuga

Largo

Allegro assai

Sonata No. 3 Opus 27, “Ballade”

Eugène Ysayë

(1858 – 1831)

Intermission

Violin Sonata No. 1 in A major, Opus 13

Gabriel Fauré

Allegro Molto

(1845 – 1924)

Andante

Allegro vivo

Allegro quasi presto

Graham Hall, at 6:00 P.M.

Thursday, March 23, 2017