

The Peoria Bach Festival presents:

Music for Solo Strings

12:05 p.m. Thursday June 9th, 2022 | TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH, PEORIA

Sonata No. 3 in C Major for Solo Violin (BWV 1005) J. S. Bach
Adagio
Fuga
Largo
Allegro assai

EmmaLee Holmes-Hicks, violin

Suite No. 6 in D Major for Solo Cello (BWV 1012) J. S. Bach
Prelude
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Gavotte I
Gavotte II
Gigue

Adriana LaRosa Ransom, cello

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Program Notes

Suite No. 6 in D major is the most challenging of the six cello suites since it was written for a special instrument with 5 strings, a high E string added to the usual four; adapting this suite to a normal cello involves a bit of wrist-twisting devilry. The opening Prelude is a tour-de-force involving alteration of open strings and fingered notes, slowly building up tension that is finally released in a flood of rapidly descending scales and broken chords. A quasi-improvisatory Allemande follows, the tune wandering through the entire practical range of the instrument. An accented, rhythmic Courante ensues, followed by a gentle Sarabande, a languorous melody with accompanying chords. Next come the well-known Gavottes I and II (the second including the drone of bagpipes), and the suite ends with a lively Gigue, tossing out fireworks in all directions before propelling itself to a blazing conclusion.

Bach's Sonatas and Partitas for Unaccompanied Violin occupy a place at the very pinnacle of the violin repertoire. It is difficult to believe that anyone in Bach's day would have possessed the technique to play these pieces as their technical difficulty far surpasses the typical violin music of his time. Most of the individual movements use the violin as both solo and accompanying instrument employing chords and even two and three simultaneous melodies or using broken chords in a manner that makes the violin sound like more than one instrument.

The C Major Sonata is one of the most challenging of the set. The first movement, Adagio, is a prelude with a theme seemingly hesitant to begin. Almost every beat is punctuated by full chords surrounding the smoothly moving principal melody. The second movement is a fiendishly complex fugue in which Bach exhausts almost every conceivable possibility for variation including perverse passages where he seems to write wrong notes in the chords to increase the tension. The third movement, Largo, is a meditative and intimate duet for the violin with itself. The last movement is a fiery Allegro assai in triple time, in which the violin fiddles frantically but gloriously as the sonata careens to its close.

Performer Biographies

An expansive musical career has taken **EmmaLee Holmes-Hicks**, violinist and concertmaster of the Peoria Bach Festival Orchestra across Europe, Japan, South America, Canada, and the United States and has included performances in New York's Carnegie Hall as well as in Giants Stadium and Madison Square Garden. EmmaLee is equally at home as a concertmaster and soloist on stage and as chamber musician in more intimate settings. With boundless energy, this young musician performs classical, baroque, and contemporary music, as well as traditional fiddle music. A firm believer that music can move people, quite literally, EmmaLee takes the lead in string bands across New England and in the Midwest, where her vibrant fiddle music drives spirited, old-time dancing. During her formative years EmmaLee studied with violinist and Peoria Symphony Orchestra concertmaster Marcia Henry Liebenow. She received her doctorate from SUNY Stony Brook where she worked with such renowned artists as Philip Setzer of the Emerson String Quartet, Pamela Frank, Ani Kavafian, and Gilbert Kalish. She is on faculty at University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth and the Birch Creek Summer Performance Center. She serves as principal second violin with the New Bedford Symphony and as co-director of the groundbreaking Newport String Project in Newport, Rhode Island.

Cellist Adriana La Rosa Ransom is interim director of the School of Music at Illinois State University where she previously served as professor of cello and director of the String Project and the Community School for the Arts. She earned a bachelor of music degree from the University of Missouri-Kansas City and master and doctorate degrees from the University of Minnesota. As a soloist she has recently appeared with the Peoria Symphony Orchestra, the Illinois State Wind Symphony, and the Illinois State Symphony Orchestra. She has also appeared as a guest artist on solo and chamber music recital series, including Chicago Cello Society concerts, the Peoria Bach Festival, and at universities throughout the Midwest. She is currently principal cellist of the Peoria Symphony Orchestra.

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