

Program

J.S. Bach
(1685–1750)

Suite No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1008

Prelude
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Minuet I/II
Gigue

Intermission

Paul Hindemith
(1896–1963)

Sonata in F, Op. 11, No. 4

1. Fantasie
2. Thema mit Variationen
3. Finale (mit Variationen)

Elliot Carter
(1908-2012)

Figment IV

PROGRAM NOTES

J.S. Bach
(1685–1750)

Suite No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1008

Perhaps the most contemplative, profound, and mournful of all of the Cello Suites: the second suite is notable for the rolling intensity of its prelude. The cathartic ache present in the theme, which resurfaces through the rest of the movement, ignites a resolute emotional fire that does not subside until the end of the suite. The fluidity of the Allemande and breathlessness of the Courante, lead to the funereal Sarabande. Sorrow and melancholy turn to fury in the first Minuet and Gigue. However, the true emotional core of this suite lies in the pastoral naïveté of the second Minuet – this simple exploration of D Major may be the true character of this work. Perhaps Bach was predated Proust, as it certainly seems like a melody of a memory and time long forgotten. Bach maintained a tight structural and thematic control over all of the movements of this suite: listen for how the most emotionally intense moments of the Prelude echo into the later movements of the suite.

Most scholars agree that the cello suites were composed between 1717 and 1723, while Bach was Kapellmeister in Köthen. This compositional period in Bach's life was relatively secular, as Prince Leopold was Calvinist, and did not use music in his worship. Some of Bach's most popular and powerful instrumental works come from this period: including the orchestral suites, the Sonatas and Partitas for solo Violin, and the Brandenburg Concerti.

Paul Hindemith
(1896–1963)

Sonata in F, Op. 11, No. 4

Considered the apotheosis of Hindemith's mastery of classical forms, this first viola sonata in F major is a triumphant work that firmly cemented Hindemith as one of the greatest composers for viola and piano. The movements of the work **are played without pause** – and contain multiple variations on a theme stated in the start of the second movement.

The first movement, titled "Fantasie," is the freest in form and moves through nearly 10 different keys in less than 50 measures. After the theme moves through viola and piano and the violist declaratively plays through two cadenzas in C-major, the viola and piano, in a style akin to Debussy, start passing the theme rapidly back and forth. As the viola quietly sustains an F-sharp, Hindemith enharmonically moves from A# to Bb, and states the main theme (a *Volkslied*, or folksong) in an alternating meter of 2 and 3, thus starting the second movement.

After the variations in the second movement, the masterful third movement begins. The third movement serves dual purpose, as a set of variations and a Sonata-Allegro form. As Hindemith blends and explores old and new tunes, the work gradually gains intensity and barrels into a rapid and ecstatic restatement of the folk tune, which leads to the end of the work.

This work is a champion of the viola repertoire for how it seamlessly blends rhythmic fervor and drive with rich melodicism – a combination well suited for the viola.

Elliot Carter
(1908-2012)

Figment IV

Composed for Samuel Rhodes, violist of the Juilliard Quartet, in 2007, this late work by Elliot Carter is a distillation of his compositional style. His love for the viola, shown by the prominent role that he assigns it in his masterful quartets, is shown through this short work. In it, Carter explores the vast dynamic range of the instrument, and explores timbral and registral contrast through rhythmic variation. This work is a love letter written by a master composer to an instrument that he fully knew how to utilize.

Starting with an efficient two-note motive, Carter moves through various inversions and explorations, and creates various points of musical tension and rapid, “skittish” release. The work ends triumphantly with an exploration of the all of the strings of the viola, and concludes with a restatement of the motive.

Suite No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1008

Bach, Johann Sebastian. *Cello Suites Nos. 1-6*. Anner Bylsma. Sony COLS2K484047, 1992, mp3.

Johann Sebastian Bach, *Cello Suites Nos. 1-6*, Anner Bylsma, Sony, 1992, mp3.

Sonata in F, Op. 11, No. 4

Hindemith, Paul. *Sonata for Viola and Piano in F Major, Op. 11, No. 4*. Antoine Tamestit. Naïve classique B07DCLK24B, 2016, mp3.

Paul Hindemith, *Sonata for Viola and Piano in F Major, Op. 11 No.4*, Antoine Tamestit, Naïve classique, 2016, mp3.

Figment IV

Carter, Elliott. *Figment IV (2007) for Solo Viola*. Richard O'Neill. Deutsche Grammophon 2019, mp3.

Elliott Carter, *Figment IV (2007) for Solo viola*, Richard O'Neill, Deutsche Grammophon, 2019, mp3.