

The Ph.D./D.M.A. Programs in Music

December 15, 2023 6:00 p.m.

Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall



Pala Garcia, violin Peter Kramer, piano

Violin Sonata No. 1 in G minor, BWV 1001

Adagio

Fuga

Siciliana

Presto

Johann Sebastian Bach

(1685–1750)

Perspectives for solo violin (1986)

Toshio Ichiyanagi

(1933–2022)

Procession Fragments (2020)

Fallen Through (quasi-chorale)

Ikonen (dolente, very free)

Chorale Prelude (andante, con moto)

Ashes (slowly, song-like, with most deeply felt expression)

Eclogue (allegretto assai)

Torso (quarter = 60)

Tempest (andante animato)

Peter Kramer

(b. 1989)

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the D.M.A. degree.
Please switch off your cell phones and refrain from taking flash pictures.

Notes on the Program

J.S. Bach (1685-1750), BWV 1001

The longevity of Bach's solo violin music is such that the works themselves have become a way to mark time. This quality is counterbalanced by a feeling of timelessness: with no fixed date of origination nor record of performance during Bach's lifetime, their genesis and early years remain unknowable, ephemeral. We measure time from Bach's completed autograph, anno 1720: three hundred and three years, four to six human lifespans, twelve to fifteen human generations. For its first nine decades, they remained in a state of dormancy, with no record of performance nor published edition (*sei solo*). Thereafter, the interpretive approach of each generation of player becomes a measure of time: an era, movement, or moment. This temporality of practice asks us to locate ourselves within history and the work's life-narrative, and to participate in the lineages of practice that we hope to perpetuate.

Bach temporality marks the progress of our lives, too. In the versions of these works we create are versions of ourselves: the way we were shaped by the world at a certain point in time. The Sonata in G minor BWV 1001 was the first such work by Bach I ever learned, at eleven. I find myself answering the questions of this piece differently over time: matters of notation, like the single-flat key signature for G minor, or the unexpected $\frac{3}{8}$ mensuration of the *Presto* and metric shapeshifting that it suggests; or larger questions, such as the ambiguity and possibility in both marked bowings and implied phrasing, and the way they might be used to sculpt this work's inner world, and my own.

Toshio Ichiyanagi (1933-2022), *Perspectives*

Like many other avant-garde Japanese musicians and artists of his generation, Toshio Ichiyanagi became deeply involved in the New York avant-garde scene and the early "proto-Fluxus" movement of the late 50's (to which he was first introduced by his then wife Yoko Ono). This constituted a branching away (albeit temporarily) from his traditional classical music upbringing in a family of classical instrumentalists, as well as his educational background as a Juilliard composition student under the guidance of Vincent Persichetti. By his own account, Ichiyanagi was deeply influenced by his encounters with John Cage's work and practice, and engaged in a decade-long period of creating (and sometimes performing) aleatoric music with theatrical elements, chance operations, graphic notation, and combinations of both western and Japanese instruments, both in New York's Fluxus community and later in Tokyo's avant-garde scene, during his return to Japan thereafter.

Though Ichiyanagi ultimately arrived at a compositional aesthetic that later incorporated tonal structure, traditional notation and self-expression (in contrast to the values of pure experience of Fluxus practice) he continued to engage with atypical form and structures, and concepts of performative energy and physicality that seem in dialogue with both his traditional classical roots and earlier Fluxus practice. *Perspectives* sits squarely in this latter period, and features a surprisingly understated, lyrical expressionism that is woven into a dodecaphonic language that, without Ichiyanagi's direction (a surprising number of mezzo dynamics, a performance indication of "elegantly") might otherwise carry a potential for a less nuanced, more relentless kind of severity. (Interestingly, Ichiyanagi mentioned once having an interest in composing twelve-tone music while at Juilliard, but that "there was no teacher interested in teaching twelve-tone music.") Together with the

work's astute sense of performed physical gestures and natural energy shifts—the experiential aspect of the performed moment—*Perspectives* stays in dialogue with Ichiyanagi's past musical lives.

Peter Kramer (b. 1989), *Procession Fragments*

This is excerpted from a companion text to an album, *Object Permanence*, which will feature this piece along with two other works by Peter: “Children’s Toccata” and “there was new snow after this.” The album project explores the concept of the instrument as a form of memory; it begins with my history with my instrument, which was left to me by my former teacher who passed away young from cancer and played the instrument until the end of her life. This project is the subject of my dissertation.

Composer’s Epigraph (excerpt)

*I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough
Gleams that untraveled world whose margin fades
Forever and forever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rush unburnished, not to shine in use!
As though to breathe were life!* - Alfred Tennyson, *Ulysses*

I. Fallen Through (quasi-chorale)

CONSTRUCTION: four-string, deluxe hourglass shape. Made from spruce and selected hardwoods. Matte finish, natural-finish top, brown-stained back and sides. Four tuning pegs. -Sears Roebuck & Co., Wishbook for the 1977 Christmas Season

In an hourglass, both past and future are in full view. Inside each dome is a quiet airless desert where timeflow is as simple as gravity. A downward current falls straight through the aperture of the present, draining into a small pile of finitude.

A violin is an opaque hourglass with holes and asymmetries. Its aperture of the present hovers above its waist: a sounding point that disperses time in waves. Its timeflow is elastic, relative to the body. It permeates the body and is unbound by gravity.

Sound has negative mass. As it disperses into the air, it falls upward, slightly.

II. Ikonen (dolente, very free)

Can an object have agency? Or as they put it in the trailer's voiceover: How do you kill something that can't possibly be alive? Do objects have power? In witchcraft you move them around to make things happen, you believe. Do objects have feelings? When you throw them out do they weep? - Dodie Bellamy, *Bee Reaved*

A violin is deceptively strong. It needs our care, but its capacity to endure exceeds our own. It was created to last, and to outlast us.

In its resting state, sixty pounds press into its spruce top plate.[11] Twenty pounds sink into its impossibly slender maple bridge, its upper edge barely wider than a millimeter. Like Atlas, the violin is charged with sustaining this burden indefinitely.

The soundpost holds the depth of the instrument's cavity, wedged between front and back plates. It compresses and resists as currents of sound flow through it. Once the violin is brought to this acute state, it then withstands more: the force of limbs and gravity. Dead matter, responding: if not resurrected, then transfigured.

III. Chorale Prelude (andante con moto)

They took away the old timbers from time to time, and put new and sound ones in their places, so that the vessel became a standing illustration for the philosophers in the mooted question of growth, some declaring that it remained the same, others that it was not the same vessel. - Plutarch, Vita Thesei 22-23

Playing the instrument is a necessary risk. The traumas that inevitably result are typically minor: just a scratch, a hairline crack, or a dulled patch. But eventually, something serious happens: a part will have an accident, a fatal flaw, or simply reach the end of its natural life. What then?

Any given part can be reconstructed, replaced, or restored: the skills exist to make it so. Can't an instrument always be saved, then? If it's perpetually renewed, can it retain anything beyond its name? Bodies heal and regenerate, on their own or through drastic interventions—but surely an original self endures, does it not? What kind of mutual agreement—what shared beliefs or suspension of disbelief—does it take to make this instrument immortal?

Of all the self-deceptions necessary to survive our awareness of our own mortality, this is one of the more inconsistent ones. The lie runs on different economies of desire. It may appear especially poignant or cynical, depending on whether you are playing the violin or selling it. Either way, the violin and its mythologies require special organological classification, writes the musicologist Emily Dolan: they are a mendacious technology. “They pretend to be old and unchanging; they pretend to be perfect, even when tests suggest otherwise; they continue to harbor secrets even when scientific explanations have been offered.” By virtue of its mendacity, Dolan writes, the violin “continually animates other times.” The instrument grants us passage to lifetimes beyond our own, temporalities outside our own. We made the lie, though it's no longer ours alone. We still allow it, because what it has already given us is too precious.

IV. Ashes (song-like, with most deeply felt expression)

The shattered urn lies on the floor.

Wrong: it lies in the past. The urn

has been made whole with no seams.

Pieces are dis-remembered. Angelo Mao - “On Ai Weiwei's ‘Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn’”

A violin is so delicate and vulnerable – so exquisitely breakable! Its varnish is too soft, its seams are easily opened, its face is utterly defenseless. It would crush effortlessly. If you're not careful, it can and will chip, crack, split, warp, fall apart, crumble, and be ravaged by mites and mold. The barrier between it and annihilation is nothing at all: just the easy violence of neglect or irreverence. The unthinkable or the unforgivable.

No—the thing should be handled tenderly, protected at all costs. It's the precious creation of countless hours of labor, so little and fragile. It can't heal itself: it needs us to survive.

The rare multi-centenarians exist among us as minor gods. They're virtually untouchable, but utterly dependent and helpless. They will always need our anxious reverence to make them whole, over and over.

V. Eclogue (allegretto assai)

The tree is a being that memorizes its form in its structure. It is the perfect sculpture. Every year of its growth is present within it.

The memory of its existence is conserved in its substance. - Giuseppe Penone

A twig has a twenty-four hour pulse.[16] At night, it swells with water drawn upward from its roots, and in the daylight, it contracts to hydrate its leaves. The vascular network that powers this pulse makes sounds beyond human hearing. But, aided by a sensor pressed into a tree trunk, we might hear a faint gurgle of water in transpiration, or the crackling of drying xylem: wood's original resonance.

In spring, the twig grows bigger. Under the bark, a new ring of soft, slimy tissue forms, inchoate and vulnerable. Once this transforms into a wide, light-colored earlywood ring, it begins saving energy, slowing growth, contracting into denser, darker latewood. An annual pulse, one oscillation in a centuries-long vibration:[17] the thrum of arboreal time.

Even after they are cut down, sawn, dried, aged, carved, planed, sanded, glued, varnished, polished, and hardened into the lacquered shell of a violin, the fibers of the tree continue to stir, animated by climate, pressure, vibration. No longer respirating oxygen, but resonance.

VI. Torso

...he then inserted the negative of Kiki into the negative-holder of his enlarger and made a second exposure on the same print. Once developed, the image of Kiki's back magically fused with the f-holes that had already been light-burned into the photographic paper.

-Francis M. Nauman, "Le Violin d'Ingres, 1924," Lot Essay for Christie's Live Auction 21472.

As each f burns away into negative space, the muse in the photo becomes a hollow torso, an unfinished instrument. Man, Kiki, Ingres: their shared fantasies merge into this turbaned, lute-playing odalisque who still holds you in her peripheral vision.

We feel our gaze returned. We recognize ourselves there, in the instrument's shape: camber of chest and back, contour of shoulders and hips. A morphology after our own, evolved for warmth and breath.

Centuries ago, the sweeping path of the bow carved out its waist. Its empty belly still carries the memory of a single piece of solid wood: the pear-shaped torso of the rubab, the favorite of Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī, who desired to become similarly resonant,[19] sweetly empty, senses tautened by the divine power of fasting.

Under gleaming skin, its dark cavity is beautifully empty and clear. It moves air to cochlea, nerves, viscera: our own desperately ungovernable insides. Amplitudes of desire, reverberating body in body.

VII. Tempest (andante animato)

I remembered my life

the way an ax handle, mid-swing, remembers the tree.

♫ I was free. - Ocean Vuong, "Woodworking at the End of the World"

Heartwood, the innermost core of a tree, is actually dead. As transpiring sapwood loses its vitality, the liquid in its veins transforms into resins and minerals and extractives. Its flesh gradually solidifies into a column of support, steeling the tree body against storms and windsnap. A very young tree has no heartwood: it is all life. But year by year, it dies within, accumulating strength.

The best heartwood of *Picea abies* is creamy and pale. To form the ideally proportioned, even rings of resonance wood, alpine spruce needs seasonal consistency through its spring and summer growth phases. A tree that has lived more than one hundred and fifty such annual cycles may contain resonance wood. Some trees have even rarer qualities: subtle waves of indentations caused by a hormonal response to cambial wounds, a patterning that enhances its three-dimensional resilience. To expect to have such choice requires enormous abundance. It is a declaration of dependence on the generosity of forests and equanimity of climate. As with all gifts, it is contingent on reciprocity.

On Tupí land, in small pockets within the Mata Atlântica, *ibirapitanga* grows slowly, over decades. It takes a full human lifetime for the tree to grow the dense heartwood that made Tupí arrows and boats, and later, the violin bow's preternatural resilience and spirited responsiveness. Like ebony, its dense heartwood sinks in water; like rosewood, the tree bleeds bright red resin when cut. As *pau brasil*, it gave an entire colonial empire its name: a tree with red ember under its bark that ignited imperialist battles for power over indigenous communities—human and forest. In the storm of insatiable imperial desire, heartwood is the tree's greatest vulnerability.

How has this hide-glued, hybrid body metabolized the memory of its own origins? How has it kept its record of relations between species, peoples, bioregions, cosmologies? Its history is quieted by the loud, bright presence of violin, but an intensity persists. It haunts its customs and practices, finds its way into sounds and bodies. But we continue to seek beauty in it, and offer ourselves to it.

About the Artists

Pala Garcia (she/they) is a critically acclaimed violinist, balancing performing, commissioning and recording with her work as an educator and advocate of socially conscious artistry. She was recently featured in the Washington Post's "23 for '23: Composers and Performers to Watch this Year," and has also earned accolades from other notable publications as a contemporary music specialist and co-founder of Longleash, an "expert young trio" (Strad Magazine) with two highly acclaimed releases in its discography: a debut album, *Passage*, that earned them Sequenza 21's Best New Recording Artist of 2017, and a work on the album *Soft Aberration*, named a Notable Recording of 2017 by The New Yorker. She was recently named a 2023-2024 Artist Fellow with the National Arts Club.

Her work in new music has been recognized and supported by Chamber Music America, the Alice K. Ditson Fund of Columbia University, The Amphion Foundation, the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, the Puffin Foundation, the Atherton Family Foundation, and Innovation and Entrepreneurship Grants from the Music Academy of the West.

Pala has performed as a featured artist throughout Asia, Europe and North America, and has also performed as a regular guest in some of the world's most respected ensembles, including the the International Contemporary Ensemble, Orchestra of St. Luke's, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra. Additionally, her longstanding involvement with Carnegie Hall's social impact programs has led to meaningful artistic collaborations with New Yorkers from all walks of life, making music, celebrating creativity and building community in prisons, shelters and hospitals.

A debut solo album featuring the music of Peter Kramer will forthcoming this season on New Focus Recordings, with support from the Aaron Copland Fund for Music.

Pala serves on the violin faculties of the Juilliard School's Preparatory Division and Hunter College, and was a Senior Teaching Fellow at the CUNY Graduate Center. As co-artistic director of Longleash's Loretto Project, Pala also leads its Pathways Initiative, a high-school composition workshop invested in addressing issues of gender justice and representation. She received undergraduate and graduate degrees from the Juilliard School, was an academy fellow with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, and is currently a doctoral candidate at the CUNY Graduate Center, where she was also recently granted a certificate in Women's Studies.

Peter Kramer was recently awarded the Kanter Prize (2020) by the Mivos Quartet for his work *Three Fragments*, and is also the recipient of the Walter E. Aschaffenburg Prize in Composition, the Earl L. Russel Award in Historical Performance, and the Shansi Prize for his choral composition *AMA* from Oberlin Conservatory. He was invited to join the Loretto Project as a composer fellow in its 2017 cohort, and has also spent time at the Banff Center as an artist in residence. His compositions have been performed by ensembles and performing artists such as Longleash, TAK, Uusinta, Oberlin CME, Nouveau Classical Project, and Play, *Second Species*, *Wolf-tone*, JACK Quartet, Mivos Quartet, the Emissary Quartet, Lucy Dhegrae, Pala Garcia, Issei Herr, Ben Roidl-Ward, William Overcash, and Zachary Good. Peter has taught music courses at Baruch College, Born Star Training Program NYC, The Hoffman Center for The Arts, and at Circle Circle Arts.

Peter is the featured composer and performer, alongside violinist Pala Garcia, on a forthcoming portrait album of violin and piano works projected for release on New Focus Recordings in Spring 2022. Their project is the recipient of a 2021 recording grant from the Aaron Copland Fund for Music. His music was recently featured on National Sawdust's FERUS Festival 2020. He was selected as a composer participant for the 2016 June In Buffalo festival, where he worked with composers Hans Abrahamsen and Chinariy Ung. He has also participated in composition master classes with Rodger Reynolds, Jason Eckardt, Phillip Cashian, George Lewis, and Mark Barden, as well as harpsichord master classes with Mitzi Meyerson, Charles Metz, Ton Koopman, Jacques Ogg and Michael Sponseller. As a composer, Peter has attended the New Music on the Point, SICPP, and Nief-Norf festivals, and has participated in the Vancouver Early Music Festival, Baroque Performance Institute, Accademia d'Amore opera workshop as a harpsichordist.

Peter was born in Portland, Oregon where he studied composition, piano and violin with Dr. Marshall Tuttle at Mount Hood Community College. He graduated from the Oberlin Conservatory with a double major in Composition and Harpsichord Performance, and recently graduated from the at the CUNY Graduate Center with a PhD in Music Composition. His principal teachers include Lewis Nielson, Jason Eckardt, Suzanne Farrin and Webb William Wiggins. Additionally, Peter has been mentored by composers Eric Wubbels, Josh Levine, and Daniel Tacke.