

His Russian counterpart Igor Stravinsky's *Elegie* was originally composed not for solo violin but for solo viola. It was commissioned by the founding violist of the Pro Arte Quartet Germain Prevost in honor of the memory of his colleague and the founding leader of the same quartet Alphonse Onnou. In contrast to Prokofiev's neoclassicism, Stravinsky's *Elegie* is neo-Baroque. "Two manuscripts preserved in the Library of Congress show how clearly and rationally Stravinsky went about constructing this work. The first version was written over two staves and gives the impression that it is intended for two instruments. The second version, however, consists of exactly the same notes as the solo version- the other version was undoubtedly written out by the composer as a visual aid for the complex polyphony, especially the middle section. This work is written in a simple ABA form in which the first A section consists of a quiet funeral hymn with a simple accompaniment characteristic of his primitivist style. The B section is a two-part fugal section. Due to the numerous voice crossings and distance between the voices, the construction of each of the two lines is often obscured. As one listens to the pungent dissonances created by the two lines, one quickly perceives that Stravinsky's intention is to convey the intense and natural expression rather than the articulate artifices of his musical craft... The entire work is played with mute - creating an eerie, mysterious color." [from program note by Kenneth Martinson]

In contrast to Prokofiev and Stravinsky, Polish composer's Grazyna Bacewicz's *Caprices* for solo violin are so idiomatic that they could not have been conceived on any other instrument. A virtuoso violinist and pedagogue, she wrote numerous violin works including concertos, sonatas (for unaccompanied violin and also with piano), string quartets and three sets of caprices for solo violin. Each caprice, in just a few minutes, is a microcosm of Bacewicz's distinctly personal harmonic language that could have been derived at only by using the "geography of the violin fingerboard" as the primary tool of composition. As with many of her contemporaries, she was intensely nationalistic, often incorporating folk elements into her works, which are most reminiscent of Szymanowski and Bartok. Rather than presenting her most popular Polish Caprice of 1949 consisting of a folk song and dance, I have chosen for tonight the 2nd Caprice of 1952 that is filled with considerably more technical pirouettes such as double-stopped trills and harmonics and ricocheted chords, all combined in a folk-inspired soundscape that has remained unique to Bacewicz. Just as the solo violin sonatas of Reger, Hindemith, Ysaye, Bartok and Ben-Haim reflect their lineage to Bach, Bacewicz's *Caprices* follow the example set by another violinist virtuoso and composer Fritz Kreisler with his *Recitativo* and *Scherzo-Caprice* (c. 1910).

Another highly individualistic composer is Joaquin Rodrigo whose *Capriccio* for solo violin sounds unmistakably like Spanish guitar works of his own such as the famous *Concierto de Aranjuez*. Like his compatriot mentor Manuel de Falla, Rodrigo "cultivated a style far removed from the major currents of European musical development and, as with Falla, his music needs to be judged in the context of Spain's classical and traditional music, art and literature." [from Grove Music online] His violin works could be extremely awkward technically and arguably unsound structurally if approached from a classical violinist's vantage point but wonderfully effective if reminiscent of a Spanish guitarist-singer on the street strumming wildly and wailing lamentably.

The farthest point of our journey is the remote and ancient lands of Tasmania, an island state on the southeastern edge of Australia where Peter Sculthorpe was born. While on postgraduate studies in Oxford, England, he "discovered his true identity, becoming the first composer to make a music distinctively Australian... He has always lived in cities, but his affirmation is wrung from a machine civilization's impotence in the face of the Australian emptiness." [from the writings of Wilfrid Mellers] By the composer's own acknowledgement, *Irkanda I* is his earliest work that he considers significant. The native word *Irkanda* means a remote and lonely place, and Sculthorpe's is "a music of the individual alone in space and time." [Mellers] While the techniques of string writing such as natural and artificial harmonics, quarter-tones, glissandi and a variety of pizzicati are not new in themselves, Sculthorpe uses them in unique combinations and innovative ways to evoke an eerily remote Australian landscape with birdcalls, Aboriginal chants and other images that I will leave to your imagination. These trademark characteristic sounds now associated with Sculthorpe were further explored in *Irkanda II* for string quartet, *Irkanda III* for piano trio and his finest *Irkanda IV* for violin, strings and percussion.

Kia-Hui Tan, April 2009

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CENTER FOR NEW MUSIC

David Gompper, *director*

Thursday, April 2, 2009, 8:00 p.m.

First Congregational United Church of Christ

43rd Season, Concert V

The First Concert in the
Festival of Contemporary Music

Kia-Hui Tan, *violin*

Featuring works by

Bacewicz
Ben-Haim
Rodrigo
Prokofiev
Sculthorpe
Stravinsky

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA DIVISION OF PERFORMING ARTS
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES

CENTER FOR NEW MUSIC

Kia-Hui Tan, *violin*

April 2, 2009, 8 p.m. First Congregational United Church of Christ

PROGRAM

- Sonata Op. 115 (1947)** Sergei PROKOFIEV
Moderato
Andante dolce
Con brio
(1891–1953)
- Irkanda I (1955)** Peter SCULTHORPE
(b. 1929)
- Capriccio (1944)** Joaquin RODRIGO
(1901–1999)

INTERMISSION

- II Kaprys (1952)** Grazyna BACEWICZ
(1909–1969)
- Elegie (1944)** Igor STRAVINSKY
(1882–1971)
- Sonata in G (1951)** Paul BEN-HAIM
Allegro energico
Lento e sotto voce
Molto allegro
(1897–1984)

BIOGRAPHY



VIOLINIST KIA-HUI TAN has performed as concerto soloist, recitalist and chamber musician on five continents, including at London's Barbican Hall and New York's Carnegie Weill Recital Hall. Described in *The Strad* as a "violinist whose virtuosity was astonishing," she has broadcast live on radio, television and the internet, recorded soundtracks for film and theater, and freelanced with many orchestras in the U.K. and U.S.A., often as concertmaster. A keen advocate of contemporary music, she has performed music of more than 40 living composers and premiered over two dozen solo and chamber works, and is continually expanding her solo repertoire of approximately 200 works with new or unjustly neglected masterpieces. She has been a member of various new music ensembles and is frequently invited to perform solo and chamber music at contemporary music festivals and conferences. Her current research and performing interests include the complete works of Eugene Ysaie and the vastly unexplored repertoire for unaccompanied solo violin.

Tan studied piano, violin, music theory and composition from an early age in her native country Singapore and earned the Licentiate of the Royal Schools of Music (U.K.) diploma at age fourteen. She was awarded scholarships to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama (London, U.K.) and The Cleveland Institute of Music, where she was conferred the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in 2001. She has won numerous prizes for violin, chamber music, new music and academic scholarship, and attended various summer camps in the USA (Encore, Meadowmount and Norfolk), U.K. (Britten-Pears/Aldeburgh and IMS/Prussia Cove) and Japan (Pacific Music Festival). Her principal teachers include David Takeno, David Updegraff and Stephen Shipps.

Prior to her appointment as assistant professor of violin at The Ohio State University in 2005, Tan had been faculty at Cornell University, University of Toledo, The Cleveland Institute of Music, Cleveland Music School Settlement, and the International Summer Music Festival and School in Colombia. She regularly accepts invitations to present master classes, adjudicate competitions/auditions, and guest conduct youth/college orchestras. She serves on the board of trustees for Chamber Music Columbus and on the resource panel for the School of the Arts Singapore. Engagements in 2008-9 include states of California, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Louisville Maryland, New Mexico and Ohio as well as the College Music Society International Conference in Croatia in summer 2009. She won the Bronze Medalist at the New Tang Dynasty Television (NTDTV) 1st Chinese International Violin Competition at New York's Town Hall in July 2008.

PROGRAM NOTES

Welcome on my musical journey "Around The World in 80 Minutes" — a solo violinist's venture outside the major American and European musical centers in the mid-20th century. That decade (1944–1955) brought about a sudden flurry of compositions for unaccompanied violin, quite remarkable considering that following the German Baroque composers Biber, Westhoff and Pisendel's historic works in the genre culminating in J.S. Bach's monumental 6 Solo Sonatas and Partitas of 1720, there was a fallow period of almost two centuries during which no significant composer attempted to work in that medium except violinist-composers such as Paganini, Vieuxtemps, Wieniawski and Ernst who wrote etudes for pedagogical purposes or to demonstrate their own prowess. Only from the early 20th century did other mainstream composers reconsider the solo violin sonata genre, beginning with German composers Reger (who composed a dozen solo violin sonatas including a prelude and fugue between 1900 and 1905) and Hindemith (with two violin sonatas in 1917 and 1924). Belgium violinist-composer Ysaie brought the genre to its second zenith with his 6 Solo Sonatas of 1924.

Many would give the crown of the premier solo violin sonata of the 20th century to Bartok's Solo Sonata of 1944 that was premiered in New York City — a major musical center, thus this already well-known sonata is not included on this program. Instead, I present to you another gem, more rarely heard, that was also premiered by Yehudi Menuhin in New York City, eight years later in 1952. "Paul Ben-Haim's *Solo Sonata*, composed in Tel-Aviv in the autumn of 1951 and dedicated to Yehudi Menuhin, counts with this Israeli composer's most personal and forceful works. Its three movements are simple in form and poignant in content, with the *Allegro energico* combining the form of a prelude with the drive of a toccata; the *Lento e sotto voce*, played *con sordino* throughout, is an expressive fantasy of "Mediterranean music" and, though the composer asks it to be played "without colour", it produces a strangely attractive instrumental colouring by employing grace notes, trills, and echo effects; the *Molto allegro* returns with the drive and force of the opening movement, with hora rhythms faintly discernible in the rhythmic texture." [© 1952, 1964 by Israeli Music Publications Limited]

Sergei Prokofiev's *Sonata for Solo Violin* was intended not to be played by a solo violinist but soli by a group of violinists in unison such as a class of violin students at the Moscow Conservatory. "The texture of this solo sonata is bare and uncluttered, spun thinly in the neoclassical manner, but it breaks now and again into a brilliance born of clarity. The second movement is in variation form; the theme, and likewise the short variations, are lyrical and introspective for the most part, and as such characteristic of Prokofiev's later style as a whole. The outer movements, and especially the mazurka-like finale, are marked by typical elements of 'scherzo' lines. As befits a work in this genre, the faster movements contains their fair share of violinistic challenges - witness the double-stops of the finale." [from program note by Matti Raekallio]

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