

Tuesday, February 12, 2013, 8pm  
First Congregational Church

## Christian Tetzlaff, *violin*

### PROGRAM

Eugène Ysaÿe (1858–1931) Sonata No. 1 for Unaccompanied Violin  
in G minor, Op. 27, No. 1 (1924)

Grave: Lento assai  
Fugato: Molto moderato  
Allegretto poco scherzando: Amabile  
Finale con brio: Allegro fermo

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) Sonata No. 3 for Unaccompanied Violin  
in C major, BWV 1005 (bef. 1720)

Adagio  
Fuga  
Largo  
Allegro assai

*INTERMISSION*

György Kurtág (b. 1926) Selections from *Signs, Games and Messages*  
for Unaccompanied Violin (1987–2005)

Hommage à J.S.B.  
In memoriam Tamás Blum  
Vivo  
The Carezza Jig  
Doloroso Garzulyéknak  
Zank-Kromatisch

Béla Bartók (1881–1945) Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin (1944)

Tempo di ciaccona  
Fuga: Risoluto, non troppo vivo  
Melodia: Adagio  
Presto

*Funded by the Koret Foundation, this performance is part of Cal Performances' 2012–2013  
Koret Recital Series, which brings world-class artists to our community.*

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**Eugène Ysaÿe (1858–1931)**  
**Sonata No. 1 for Unaccompanied Violin in**  
**G minor, Op. 27, No. 1**

*Composed in 1924.*

Eugène Ysaÿe (ee-sy-eh) was one of the most beloved musicians in the decades surrounding the turn of the 20th century, a violinist revered by his peers and lionized by audiences, a teacher of immense influence, a conductor of international repute, and a composer of excellent skill. His father was a theater conductor and violinist in his native Liège, Belgium, and it was with him that Eugène began his study of the instrument at the age of four. Three years later, the boy was admitted to the Liège Conservatory and there won a prize for his playing, but he had a falling out with his teacher, Désiré Heynberg, and quit the school. In 1872, Ysaÿe was back at the Conservatory as a pupil of Rodolphe Massart, under whose tutelage he flourished sufficiently to receive a scholarship for study with Henryk Wieniawski at the Brussels Conservatory from 1874 to 1876. In 1876, Ysaÿe learned that Henri Vieuxtemps had recovered sufficiently from a recent stroke to accept a few students, and he moved to Paris to receive that virtuoso's instruction for the next three years. Ysaÿe toured Germany in 1879, winning praise from the great Joseph Joachim and being named concertmaster of Benjamin Bilse's orchestra, the predecessor of the Berlin Philharmonic. After concertizing in Scandinavia and Russia with pianist Anton Rubinstein, Ysaÿe settled from 1883 to 1886 in Paris, where he formed close ties with Franck, Chausson, d'Indy, Saint-Saëns, Debussy, and other of the city's leading musicians: Franck's Violin Sonata was a wedding gift for him (Ysaÿe first played the piece at the ceremony on September 28, 1886, and gave its public premiere three months later in Brussels); Chausson's *Poème* and *Concert* for Violin, Piano, and String Quartet were dedicated to him; Debussy composed his String Quartet for Ysaÿe and originally conceived the *Nocturnes* as a solo vehicle for him. From 1886 to 1898, Ysaÿe

served as professor of violin at the conservatory in Brussels, where he also established the Ysaÿe String Quartet (for which ensemble Saint-Saëns wrote his Quartet No. 1) and founded the orchestral Concerts Ysaÿe, both of which were principally dedicated to promoting new French and Belgian music. Increasing commitments for tours as violinist and conductor required him to leave the Conservatory in 1898, though he continued to live in Brussels until the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Following his debut in the United States in 1894, Ysaÿe's American prestige equaled that which he enjoyed in Europe, and he was named music director of the Cincinnati Symphony in 1918; he conducted that ensemble for four years before being succeeded by Fritz Reiner. In 1922, he returned to Europe to revive the Concerts Ysaÿe and resume his tours. Declining health caused by diabetes and an affliction of his bowing arm began to limit his activities in his later years, however, and in 1929, he was forced to have a foot amputated. He was able to conduct a few more programs the following year (his last appearance as a conductor was on November 13, 1930, with cellist Pablo Casals as soloist), but he was unable to lead the premiere of his only opera, *Pièce li houïeu* (to his own libretto in the Walloon dialect), on March 4, 1931, in Liège. He died in Brussels two months later. In 1937, Queen Elisabeth of Belgium, a long-time violin student of his, inaugurated an annual violin competition in Brussels—the Prix International Eugène Ysaÿe (rechristened the Queen Elisabeth Competition after World War II)—in his honor.

Though he was famed internationally as a supreme master of the violin (in his book *The Art of Violin Playing*, the noted scholar and performer Carl Flesch called him “the most outstanding and individual violinist I have ever heard in my life”), Ysaÿe also composed a sizeable number of original works, most of them for his own instrument. He was never formally trained in the discipline, but he had a natural talent for composition that manifested itself in a Romantic virtuoso style in his early works (notably eight violin concertos which were never published and

are virtually unknown) and in the utilization of progressive techniques in his later creations. His single composition for the stage, the opera *Pièce li houïeu* (“Peter the Miner”), remains in manuscript, though about a dozen works for violin and orchestra have enjoyed a number of performances and recordings. His smaller pieces for violin and piano are regular recital items, but his most admired compositions are the six Sonatas for Unaccompanied Violin (Op. 27), which he was inspired to compose after hearing Joseph Szigeti play a Bach solo sonata in 1924. These Sonatas are in an advanced stylistic idiom influenced by the modern music of France, and call for feats of technical mastery that rival those required by the *Solo Caprices* of Paganini.

The Sonata No. 1 in G minor, dedicated to Szigeti, is modeled on Bach's three such works for unaccompanied violin. It opens with a deeply expressive *Grave* whose mood of stern solemnity is heightened by considerable chromaticism and harmonic piquancy. The three-voice *Fugato* that follows is a virtuoso feat of both composition and execution. The dance-like third movement serves as a stylistic and expressive foil to the Sonata's otherwise stern countenance. The finale borrows its propulsive triple rhythms from the gigue and its technical requirements from the furthest reaches of the instrument's capabilities.

**Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)**  
**Sonata No. 3 for Unaccompanied Violin in**  
**C major, BWV 1005**

*Composed before 1720.*

From 1717 to 1723, Bach was director of music at the court of Anhalt-Cöthen, north of Leipzig. He liked his job. His employer, Prince Leopold, was a well-educated man, 24 years old at the time he engaged Bach. (Bach was 32.) Leopold was fond of travel and books and paintings, but his real passion was music. He was an accomplished musician who not only played violin, viola da gamba, and harpsichord well enough to join with the professionals in his house orchestra,

but he also had an exceptional bass voice. He started the court musical establishment in 1707 with three players (his puritanical father had no use for music), and by the time of Bach's appointment it had grown to nearly 20 performers equipped with a fine set of instruments. It was for this group that Bach wrote many of his outstanding instrumental works, including the Brandenburg Concertos, Orchestral Suites, Violin Concertos, and much of his chamber music. Leopold appreciated Bach's genius (his annual salary as Court Conductor was 400 thalers, equal to that of the Court Marshal, Leopold's second highest official), and Bach returned the compliment when he said of his Prince, “He loved music, he was well acquainted with it, he understood it.”

Bach composed the set of three sonatas and three partitas for unaccompanied violin before 1720, the date on the manuscript, probably while serving at the court of Anhalt-Cöthen. Though there is not a letter, preface, contemporary account or shred of any other documentary evidence extant to shed light on the genesis and purpose of these pieces, the technical demands that they impose on the player indicate that they were intended for a virtuoso performer: Johann Georg Pisendel, a student of Vivaldi; Jean Baptiste Volumier, leader of the Dresden court orchestra; and Joseph Spiess, concertmaster of the Cöthen orchestra, have been advanced as possible candidates. After the introduction of the basso continuo early in the 17th century, it had been the seldom-broken custom to supply a work for solo instrument with keyboard accompaniment, so the tradition behind Bach's solo violin sonatas and partitas is slight. Johann Paul von Westhoff, a violinist at Weimar when Bach played in the orchestra there in 1703, published a set of six unaccompanied partitas in 1696, and Heinrich Biber, Johann Jakob Walther, and Pisendel all composed similar works. All of these composers were active in and around Dresden. Bach visited Dresden shortly before assuming his post at Cöthen, and he may well have become familiar at that time with most of this music. (Bach's reputation as a peerless keyboard

virtuoso preceded him on his visit to Dresden in 1717: the French organist and clavecin player Louis Marchand fled town rather than be beaten in a contest arranged by a local nobleman.) Though Bach may have found models and inspiration in the music of his predecessors, his works for unaccompanied violin far surpass any others in technique and musical quality.

Though the three violin partitas, examples of the *sonata da camera* (“chamber sonata”) or suite of dances, vary in style and structure, the three solo sonatas uniformly adopt the precedent of the more serious “church sonata,” the *sonata di chiesa*, deriving their mood and makeup from the works of the influential Roman master Arcangelo Corelli. The sonatas follow the standard four-movement disposition of the *sonata da chiesa*—slow—fast—slow—fast—though Bach replaced the first quick movements with elaborate fugues and suggested a certain dance-like buoyancy in the finales. The opening *Adagio* of the Sonata No. 3 in C major, whose somber mood and dotted-rhythm tread recall the style of the French Overture, serves as a broad preface to the stupendous *Fugue* that follows. Bach borrowed the theme for this elaborate and precisely planned movement (his audacity at composing a fugue for just the four strings of a solo violin is justified by the superbly satisfying result that he achieved) from the Pentecost antiphon *Veni Sancte Spiritus* (“Come Holy Ghost”), a favorite melody of his which also appears in two Chorale Preludes (BWV 651 and 652), the Cantatas Nos. 59 and 175, and the motet *Der Geist hilft unsrer Schwachheit auf* (BWV 226). The touching *Largo*, modest in its expression and dimensions, provides a foil for the grandeur of the preceding *Fugue*. The closing *Allegro assai*, in two-part dance form, eschews double-stopping in favor of a *moto perpetuo* unfolding of briskly moving melodic material.

**György Kurtág (b. 1926)**  
**Selections from *Signs, Games and Messages***  
**for Solo Violin**

*Composed 1987–2005.*

György Kurtág was born on February 19, 1926, in Lugoj, a town whose territory had been ceded to Romania by Hungary following World War I. Kurtág took piano and composition lessons in Timisoara before entering the Budapest Academy of Music in 1946, where he earned diplomas in composition (his teachers included Sándor Veress and Ferenc Farkas), piano (Pál Kadosa), and chamber music (Leo Weiner). He became a Hungarian citizen in 1948. In 1957–1958, Kurtág went to Paris to study with Messiaen and Milhaud, but an equally important influence on him at that time were his sessions with the psychologist Marianne Stein, whose deep understanding of the artistic temperament helped to unlock his creativity. He composed his Op. 1, the String Quartet No. 1, upon his return to Hungary and dedicated the score to her. From 1958 to 1963, Kurtág worked as a coach and tutor at the Bartók Secondary School of Music in Budapest, and occupied a similar position with the National Philharmonic from 1960 to 1968, helping to train such outstanding Hungarian musicians as Zoltán Kocsis, András Schiff, and the first Takács String Quartet. In 1967, Kurtág was appointed to the faculty of the Budapest Academy of Music, where he taught piano and chamber music until his retirement in 1986; in 1993 he moved to southwestern France to be near his son’s family. He has served as Composer-in-Residence with the Berlin Philharmonic (1993–1995) and the Vienna Konzerthaus (1995–1996), and has been recognized with the Erkel Prize (1954, 1956, 1969), Kossuth Prize (1973), Order of the Star with the Golden Wreath from the Hungarian Government (1986), Monaco’s Prix de Composition Musicale (1993), Austria’s State Award for European Composers (1994), Kossuth Prize for Life’s Work (1996), Munich’s Siemens Music Award (1998), membership in the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts (1987) and West Berlin’s Academy of Art (1987), and

the prestigious Grawemeyer Award from the University of Louisville (2006).

The influence of Bartók and Kodály was strong in Kurtág’s early works, but beginning with the String Quartet No. 1 of 1959 following his exposure to Webern’s serialism during his two years in Paris, he adopted a more ascetic idiom, small in scale and meticulous in gesture but highly concentrated in expressive content. Kurtág said that the aim of his music is “to achieve such concision that every moment is fundamental and significant, and that together they fill out the form, without sacrificing the balance between too little and too much. Above all, everything superfluous should be omitted, i.e., the maximum of expression and content should be formulated with the fewest notes.” He worked slowly and issued few compositions during the following two decades, most of those comprising sets of jewel-like instrumental micro-movements, but beginning with *Messages of the Late Miss R. V. Troussova* for Soprano and Orchestra (1981), Kurtág turned to larger-scale though still austere pieces, including impressive settings of texts by Kafka, Beckett, and the 16th-century Hungarian clergyman Péter Bornemisza.

*Signs, Games and Messages (Jelek, Játékok és Üzenetek* in Hungarian) is a collection of several dozen greatly varied musical aphorisms for string duo and trio and solo violin, viola, cello, double bass, clarinet, bassoon, oboe, and flute composed between 1987 and 2005 that includes style studies, technical etudes, character pieces, homages to friends, colleagues, and other composers, and random musical thoughts. The Armenian violinist Movses Pogossian, a friend of Kurtág who has recorded many of the *Signs, Games and Messages*, noted that these miniatures encompass a “unique world of naked nerves, meticulous detail and symphonies that may last under one minute.” The *Hommage à J.S.B.* [Johann Sebastian Bach] (1998) implies within its widely spaced *cantabile* melody the multiple voices for which Bach’s solo violin partitas and sonatas provided the model and inspiration. In *memoriam Tamás Blum*, written upon the death of that Hungarian conductor in 1992, moves with the sad, steady tread of a funeral procession that

rises to a shrill cry before ending with an attenuated but deeply expressive lament. The pointilistic *Vivo* was composed for solo cello in 1961 and arranged for violin in 1992. *The Carezza Jig*, modeled on the lively dance that is a staple of traditional Irish and Scottish music, was named for the young daughter of a family Kurtág visited in Cornwall, England in 1989. *Doloroso Garzulyéknak* (“Sad Song for the Garzulyes”) (1992) was written in honor of the physician Ferenc Garzuly, a prominent music patron in Budapest and for years the director of the city’s annual Bartók Festival, and his wife, the noted Hungarian ceramist Maria Geszler-Garzuly. *Zank-Kromatisch* (“Chromatic Quarrel”) (1987) draws remarkable contention both harmonically and melodically from a single instrument.

**Béla Bartók (1881–1945)**  
**Sonata for Unaccompanied Violin**

*Composed in 1944. Premiered on November 26, 1944, in New York City by Yehudi Menuhin.*

Béla Bartók came to America in April 1940, sick of body and afflicted of spirit. He had been frail all his life, and the leukemia that was to take his life five years later had already begun to erode his health. Adding to the trial of his medical condition was the War raging in Europe, a painful torment to one of Bartók’s ardent Hungarian patriotism. Upon leaving his homeland, he not only relinquished the native country so dear to him, but also forfeited the secure financial and professional positions that he had earned in Budapest. Compromise in the face of Hitler’s brutality, however, was never a possibility for a man of Bartók’s uncompromising convictions. “He who stays on when he could leave may be said to acquiesce tacitly in everything that is happening here,” he wrote on the eve of his departure. “This journey [to America] is like plunging into the unknown from what is known, but unbearable.” Filled with apprehension, he made the difficult overland trip to Lisbon, then sailed to New York.

Sad to say, Bartók's misgivings were justified in one of the unhappiest chapters in American music. His financial support from Hungary was, of course, cut off, and money worries aggravated his delicate physical condition. He held a modest post as a folk music researcher at Columbia University for several months, but that ended when funding from a grant ran out. His health declined enough to make public appearances impossible after 1943. His chief disappointment, however, was the almost total neglect of his compositions by the musical community. At the end of 1942, he lamented, "The quasi boycott of my works by the leading orchestras continues; no performances either of old works or new ones. It is a shame—not for me, of course." It is to the credit of ASCAP (the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers) that they provided money for the health care that enabled Bartók to continue composing to the very end of his life.

During the last months of Bartók's life, there were a few signs that his fortunes were improving. Performances of his works, which had been woefully infrequent since his arrival in America in 1940, were occurring with more regularity, and in early 1943, he received a commission for an important composition—the *Concerto for Orchestra*—from Serge Koussevitzky, music director of the Boston Symphony. An ASCAP-sponsored stay at a sanatorium at Saranac Lake in upper New York State fortified Bartók's strength enough so that he could work on the new orchestral piece, over which he labored doggedly until the score was finished on October 8th. Later that month, back in New York City, he was able to attend a well-received concert by the brilliant Yehudi Menuhin at Carnegie Hall that included his Violin Concerto and Violin Sonata No. 1. Shortly thereafter, Menuhin, long a champion of Bartók's music, proposed to the composer a commission for an unaccompanied violin sonata. Bartók was concerned that his health would make writing the piece difficult, but when ASCAP arranged for him to take a rest cure that winter at Asheville, in the mountains of western North Carolina, he accepted Menuhin's offer.

On January 30, 1944, Bartók wrote to his old friend the violinist Joseph Szigeti, "At present, I feel in the best of health, no fever; my strength has returned. I take fine walks in the woods and mountains; actually, I climb the mountain (of course, only with due caution). Last March, my weight was 87 pounds; now it is 105. I grow fat. I bulge. I explode. You will not recognize me." The salubrious surroundings allowed Bartók to finish the Sonata by March 14th. When the work was premiered at Menuhin's Carnegie Hall recital on November 26, 1944, in the presence of the composer, the audience applauded it, the critics carped, and Bartók allowed, "It was a wonderful performance. The Sonata has four movements and lasts about twenty minutes. I was afraid it was too long, but it was quite all right, at least for me." Koussevitzky's premiere of the *Concerto for Orchestra* in Boston the following week (which the composer was too weak to attend) greatly helped to fuel the momentum of Bartók's growing acclaim. The Solo Violin Sonata was the last work that Bartók completed before his death in New York on September 26, 1945. His final two compositions, the Third Piano Concerto and the Viola Concerto, were put into their finished forms by his friend and disciple Tibor Serly.

Rather than using the easily accessible idioms of his other American works, Bartók revived the advanced melodic and harmonic techniques of the Quartets Nos. 3 and 4 and the two Violin and Piano Sonatas for this piece, though here the formal architecture places the most difficult matters in the opening movement and passes on to easier things as the work unfolds. The first movement is a formal hybrid, taking as its main subject a craggy *chaconne* (a set of continuous variations on the theme's harmonic skeleton—the most famous movement of Bach's unaccompanied violin compositions follows this procedure) placed into a full sonata structure. A lyrical melody in swaying rhythms provides contrast as the second theme; the development section is a free continuation of the *chaconne* variations. The movement achieves formal closure with the altered versions of the main and

second themes that occupy the recapitulation. The second movement is a fugue on a chromatic subject, a *tour de force* for both composer and performer, in which the single voice of the violin is made to imply four intertwining polyphonic lines through double-stops, quick shifts of register, and subtle gradations of melodic emphasis. *Melodia* traces an arching, melancholy song in its outer sections, while the hushed central passage, verdant with rustling trills and whispered high notes, is the kind of twittering "night music" that Bartók favored for many of his slow movements. The closing *Presto*, in the form of a rondo, uses as its main theme a murmuring, *moto perpetuo* strain which is interrupted by two extended episodes of folkish character, the first syncopated and dance-like, the second lyrical and nostalgic. All three themes are tumbled together in the energetic coda.

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FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS, violinist Christian Tetzlaff has enjoyed a fulfilled concert life with 100 concerts per year.

In the 2012–2013 season, he will give ten concerts in London: at the Proms, with the London Philharmonic and Osmo Vänskä; with the London Symphony and Daniel Harding; and a residency at the Wigmore Hall. Mr. Tetzlaff is also Artist in Residence with the Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich, where he opened the season in August 2012 with Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto under David Zinman. He will also perform there under Christoph von Dohnányi, and with a chamber music project, a duo recital with Leif Ove Andsnes, and his string quartet.

In addition, Mr. Tetzlaff makes return visits to such orchestras as the Swedish Radio Symphony (Mr. Harding), Bavarian Radio Symphony (Yannick Nézet-Seguin), Berlin Philharmonic (Andris Nelsons), Gewandhausorchester Leipzig (Manfred Honeck), New York Philharmonic (Mr. Nelsons), Pittsburgh Symphony (Michael Francis), Montreal Symphony (Kent Nagano), and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra (John Storgårds). At the end of the season, he will appear with the Berlin Philharmonic in the Waldbühne, the orchestra's famed open-air arena, under Sir Simon Rattle.

In recital, Mr. Tetzlaff appears in several major cities with Mr. Andsnes. In spring 2013, he embarks on an extensive tour with his string quartet, with concerts in Oslo, Cologne, London, Zurich, Freiburg, Berlin, and Paris. At the Konzerthaus in Vienna and the Wigmore Hall in London, he can be heard in a Bach solo program.

Mr. Tetzlaff's discography for Virgin Classics and other labels includes the major concerto repertoire, Bartók sonatas with Mr. Andsnes, and the Brahms sonatas with Lars Vogt. Mr. Tetzlaff has received several awards for his recordings: two Diapasons d'Or, the Edison Prize, the Midem Classical Award, the ECHO Klassik, and several nominations for the Grammy Award.



Georgia Bertuzzi

During the season, Mr. Tetzlaff releases four new CDs, three of them with the Finnish label Ondine: The Mozart sonatas with Mr. Vogt was released in October 2012, which will be followed by the Schumann sonatas in spring 2013. His recording of Jörg Widmann's Violin Concerto with the Swedish Radio Symphony and Mr. Harding and a recording of Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Mambo Blues* and *Tarantella* with the London Philharmonic and Vladimir Jurowski will appear on the LPO label.

Mr. Tetzlaff plays a violin by German violin-maker Peter Greiner and teaches regularly at the Kronberg Academy near Frankfurt.

Together with Mr. Vogt, Christian Tetzlaff supports the initiative Rhapsody in School, "Musiker zum Anfassen."