



Jiyang Chen



Sunday, September 29, 2024, 3pm  
Hertz Hall

**Njioma Chinyere Grevious, *violin***  
**Andrew Goodridge, *piano***

*Influences*

Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson (1932–2004) *Blue/s Forms for Solo Violin* (1979)  
Plain Blue/s  
Just Blue/s  
Jettin’ Blue/s

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) *Violin Sonata No. 21 in E minor, K. 304* (1778)  
Allegro  
Tempo di Menuetto

*INTERMISSION*

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) *Violin Sonata No. 9 in A major, Op. 47, Kreutzer*  
Adagio sostenuto – Presto  
Andante con variazioni  
Presto

*Njioma Grevious is a winner of the Concert Artists Guild International Competition and is represented by Concert Artists Guild, 224 W 35th Street, Suite 500 #2149, New York, NY 10001. — [www.concertartists.org](http://www.concertartists.org) —*

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***Blue/s Forms for Solo Violin***  
**Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson**

One can almost say that Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson was destined to be a musician at birth. His mother—a busy pianist, organist, and teacher in the Bronx—named him after biracial British composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875–1912), whose late-Romantic music was popular in late-Victorian and Edwardian England and much admired by Sir Edward Elgar. The elder Coleridge-Taylor made several acclaimed tours to the United States and was received at the White House by President Theodore Roosevelt. His celebrity made him a cult figure among early 20th-century African-American musicians, who named choral societies for him in major cities across the land.

A precociously gifted pianist and composer, Perkinson lived up to his illustrious name by being accepted into New York's High School of Music and Arts; there he won the High School Music and Art Choral Competition with his *And Behold*, as well as the City's coveted LaGuardia Prize for Music. He went on to study at the Manhattan School of Music, earning bachelor's and master's degrees in composition. Summers were spent studying conducting at the renowned Tanglewood Music Center in Massachusetts.

Despite all these degrees and honors, however, Perkinson initially had to struggle to make a career. "The fact was that I did not or could not make headway in the United States," he recalled, "and when opportunities did come my way and they discovered that I was Black, those opportunities were withdrawn or modified." The worlds of jazz and film, however, were less prejudiced than the classical music establishment. Fascinated by jazz and the blues tradition, Perkinson became a sought-after composer and arranger for stars like Harry Belafonte, Lou Rawls, and Marvin Gaye. He also composed many film scores, including Sydney Poitier's *A Warm December* (1973), and dance scores

for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and the Dance Theatre of Harlem.

Classical music was not slighted, either. In 1965, Perkinson co-founded and conducted the Symphony of the New World, the first racially integrated symphony orchestra in America. From his chamber works, we will hear his *Blue/s Forms for Solo Violin* (1979), which he dedicated to Sanford Allen, the first African-American violinist to play in the New York Philharmonic. Inspired by the solo-violin works of Bach and the virtuoso showpieces of Paganini, *Blue/s Forms* emphasizes the "blue notes" of jazz: the flattened third and seventh degrees of the scale. "Plain Blue/s" slips and slides around these intervals in well-conceived double stops. Played with a mute, "Just Blue/s" explores the melancholy moods linked to traditional blues music with wailing glissandos. Finally, "Jettin' Blue/s" is an exuberant mashup of Paganini-style virtuosity with American country fiddlin'.

**Violin Sonata No. 21 in E minor, K. 304**  
**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

In the fall of 1777, Mozart, impatient with the limited opportunities at Archbishop Colloredo's court in Salzburg, embarked on a 16-month-long journey to Paris and the musical centers of Germany to find a court position worthy of his talent. Although he was now an adult, his mother traveled with him; his father, Leopold, did not trust his son to keep his mind on business without a chaperone. And, as matters turned out, Leopold had good reason. After an unsuccessful search in Munich, Mozart arrived in Mannheim, seat of the Elector Karl Theodor of the Rhine Palatinate, and, in the words of a contemporary observer, "a paradise of musicians." Although Mannheim with its superb orchestra would have been an excellent spot for Mozart, the only job the Elector had for the young genius was teaching the clavier to his two illegitimate children.

Yet long after he knew he should move on to Paris, Mozart hung back at Mannheim. The reason: he had fallen madly in love with Aloysia Weber, a lovely and talented soprano and the older sister of the woman he would eventually marry, Constanze. Nevertheless, while paying court to Aloysia, Mozart managed to write quite a lot of music in Mannheim, including the first three and a half of an innovative set of six sonatas for violin and piano, which became known as the *Palatine* Sonatas. The remainder were composed after he finally moved on to Paris in March 1778, where his job search was also fruitless. Inspired by violin sonatas by Joseph Schuster, court musician at Dresden, they represented a giant advance over the 26 little violin sonatas he'd written as a child under his father's tutelage. Those early works had followed the convention of the day that made the piano the senior partner of the duo, with the violin reinforcing or echoing the right-hand part. The *Palatine* Sonatas represented a move toward a new ideal, in which violin and piano became equal partners.

Considered by many as the finest of these works is No. 4 in E minor, the only one in the minor mode. Mozart composed its assertive first movement while still in Mannheim, then added its bittersweet second movement in Paris. The opening Allegro movement is a battle between the serenely lyrical principal theme, introduced by the violin, and the aggressive unison notes, accented with staccato accents, that immediately assault it. More drama is added later by hammering repeated notes.

Very different is the remarkable *Tempo di menuetto* second movement, a poignant rondo also in E minor. Aided by a descending Baroque-style bass pattern and lingering accents on the third beat of the measure, the mood here is gently melancholy—suggesting the young composer's yearning for the girl he left behind. Though the central trio section moves to E major, the mood

doesn't brighten. Here a transformed version of the first movement's repeated-note motive brings tears, which spill over in the fragmented, anguished coda that returns to E minor.

**Violin Sonata No. 9 in A major,  
Op. 47, Kreutzer**

**Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)**

In April 1803, Ludwig van Beethoven was introduced to a brilliant 24-year-old violinist, newly arrived in Vienna, by the composer's patron Prince Karl Lichnowsky: George Polgreen Bridgetower. Bridgetower was an extroverted and exotic personality of mixed racial origins (his father was from the West Indies, his mother European). And he was a fiery virtuoso—a protégé of the Franco-Italian master violinist Giovanni Battista Viotti, who had developed a new, more powerful French school of violin playing that utilized the revolutionary "Viotti" bow.

Beethoven was captivated by Bridgetower as both a musician and a man. The two frequented taverns together, and soon Bridgetower convinced the composer to write a violin sonata for them to perform together. However, their proposed concert date was looming fast. Fortunately, Beethoven had an orphan finale for a violin sonata he had composed in 1802, but then had replaced, deciding it was not a good match for that work. Its wildly virtuosic style would be ideal for Bridgetower if he could only write two other movements quickly enough to go with it. And so at breakneck speed, he composed the new movements and added them to his existing finale to make this extraordinary work that by rights should be called the *Bridgetower* Sonata but instead is known today as the *Kreutzer* Sonata. It was a sensational success for both musicians at its Vienna debut on May 24, 1803. However, a subsequent quarrel with Bridgetower (reportedly over a woman both were interested in) caused Beethoven to change the ded-

ication to another violinist, the Frenchman Rodolphe Kreutzer, who, ironically, disliked the piece and never played it.

Despite the speed of its composition, the *Kreutzer* is one of the most impressive and innovative works Beethoven created for any instrument. He described it as written more in the virtuosic style of a concerto than a traditional sonata, and it vastly expanded the demands placed on the violinist to match those Beethoven had already achieved for his own instrument, the piano. In his superb biography of the composer, Jan Swafford calls it “an exercise in sustained intensity”: a work of high drama and bold expressiveness that corresponded to such piano sonatas as the *Appassionata* and *Waldstein* Beethoven was writing about this time. Leo Tolstoy used it as inspiration for one of his greatest short stories, “The Kreutzer Sonata,” about music’s ability to arouse dangerous erotic passions.

Though the first movement is in a turbulent, fast-tempo A minor, it opens with a slow, pensive introduction in A major. This arresting opening features the violinist playing big multi-stopped chords, as full-bodied as the pianist’s. A little sighing motive swinging up by a half step becomes increasingly prominent and eventually culminates in the violin rising to a dissonant F-natural.

That idea then launches the virile principal theme of the *Presto* sonata form, the violin completing it with slashing chords. The fiery momentum cools briefly for a lyrically sustained second theme. And Beethoven creates yet a third theme, introduced by the piano: a dashing ascending melody

in gypsy style, with strong, thwacking accents plucked by the violinist.

Beethoven then conjures up an adventurous development section from these themes, which wanders all over the harmonic universe while constantly challenging both players to more ambitious feats. A special moment in the movement’s concluding dash is an interruption by a slow, meditative passage musing on the usually bold principal theme.

The second movement, a set of four variations on a gentle song-like theme, gives the two perspiring players a chance to recover before the exertions of the finale. The dissonant note of F that appeared at the sonata’s beginning now finds its goal as the movement’s F-major home key. Particularly fine are the third variation—a mysterious and moody treatment in F minor—and the ethereal and fantastic fourth, overflowing with trills. The movement culminates in an exquisite reverie of a coda.

In A major, the finale is a white-hot *Presto* in the whirlwind rhythm of a Neapolitan *tarantella* dance. The exuberantly playful theme generates a battle of virtuosity between the two players, which—as in the first movement—is briefly and cleverly slowed by a beautiful, unexpected passage of reminiscence.

—Janet E. Bedell © 2024

*Janet E. Bedell is a program annotator and feature writer who writes for Carnegie Hall, the Metropolitan Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Caramoor Festival of the Arts, and other musical organizations.*

Described as “superb” by the *Chicago Classical Review*, violinist **Njioma Chinyere Grevious** is a passionate and versatile solo, chamber, and orchestral musician and performer. A graduate of the Juilliard School and a winner of its John Erskine Prize for scholastic and artistic achievement, Grevious won the 2023 Grand Prize in the Concert Artists Guild (CAG) and Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT) CAG Elmaleh Competition; the Robert F. Smith First Prize and the Audience Choice awards in the Senior Division of the Sphinx Competition; and First Prizes for Performance and Interpretation in the 2018 Prix Ravel in Fontainebleau. In 2022, she was the winner of concerto competitions at the University of Delaware and the Newark Symphony Orchestra. Today’s recital marks her Cal Performances debut.

As a soloist, Njioma has appeared with the Chicago Philharmonic, the Western Michigan Symphony, and the Newark Symphony Orchestra. A founding member of the Abeo Quartet, Grevious recently completed studies with Ryan Meehan and the Calidore String Quartet at the University of Delaware, where she was also a fellow in the inaugural Graduate String Quartet in Residence Program. In 2022, the Abeo won First Prize and the Audience Favorite Prize at the Yellow Springs Chamber Music Competition and was invited to participate in the Banff International String Quartet Competition. At Juilliard, the quartet studied under the tutelage of the Juilliard String Quartet; it has also been coached by members of the Alban Berg, Ebène, Takács, Artemis, Brentano, Miró, and Emerson quartets.

Grevious performs frequently on chamber music series and has appeared in festivals including Music@Menlo, Perlman Chamber Music Workshop, Juilliard String Quartet Seminar, Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, Music Academy of the West, Montreal International String Quartet Academy,

Meadowmount, Fontainebleau Schools, and the Boston University Tanglewood Institute. For many years, she was a scholarship recipient through Boston’s Project STEP string training program for Black and Latino youth, and at the time also earned summer study scholarship assistance through Winsor Music.

Grevious began studying the violin at the age of four; her principal teachers include Ronald Copes, James Buswell, Mariana Green-Hill, and Farhoud Moshfegh. As a Juilliard Gluck Fellow she performed regularly for the medically vulnerable, retirees, and children. Grevious loves teaching composition and collaboration to New York City elementary and middle school students from underrepresented communities through the Opportunity Music Project.

**Andrew Goodridge** has performed with many leading artists, including James Buswell, Roman Totenberg, and members of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, and Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Goodridge runs a private piano studio in Woburn, MA, and is on the faculty at the New England Conservatory Preparatory School. He has taught piano accompanying at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, music appreciation at the Cambridge Center for Adult Education, music history at the New England Conservatory School of Continuing Education, class piano at Concord Academy, and music theory for Project STEP.

Goodridge studied with the legendary collaborative pianist Artur Balsam while attending the Kneisel Hall Chamber Music Festival. He majored in English literature at Harvard University and worked with Patricia Zander at the New England Conservatory, where he received degrees in solo and collaborative piano.