



CARTE BLANCHE CONCERT V:

# A Tribute to Fritz Kreisler

Benjamin Beilman, *violin*; Hyecheon Park, *piano*

## AUGUST 3

Thursday, August 3

7:30 p.m., Stent Family Hall, Menlo School

### SPECIAL THANKS

*Music@Menlo* dedicates this performance to Jerome Guillen and Jeremy Gallaher with gratitude for their generous support.

### FRITZ KREISLER (1875–1962)

*Praeludium and Allegro* (1910)

*Aucassin and Nicolette* (1921)

### JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

Prelude from Partita no. 3 in E Major, BWV 1006 (arr. Kreisler in 1910)

### ARCANGELO CORELLI (1653–1713)

Violin Sonata in d minor, op. 5, no. 12, *La folia* (arr. Kreisler in 1927)

### GIOVANNI BATTISTA VIOTTI (1755–1824)

Violin Concerto no. 22 in a minor (arr. Kreisler in 1901)

*Moderato*

*Adagio*

*Agitato assai*

INTERMISSION

### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The charismatic violinist Benjamin Beilman has long been a disciple of the incomparable art of the great Viennese master Fritz Kreisler. Beilman's extraordinary celebration of Kreisler's art features pianist Hyecheon Park and includes music that inspired Kreisler as both a performer and a composer as well as a host of Kreisler's most famous and beloved works.

### FRITZ KREISLER

*La gitana* (1919)

*Lotus Land* (after Cyril Scott's Opus 47 Number 1) (1922)

*Tambourin chinois*, op. 3 (1910)

### NIKOLAY RIMSKY-KORSAKOV (1844–1908)

*Hymn to the Sun* from *The Golden Cockerel* (arr. Kreisler in 1919)

### FRITZ KREISLER

*Viennese Rhapsodic Fantasetta* (1941–1942)

Benjamin Beilman, *violin*; Hyecheon Park, *piano*

# Program Notes: A Tribute to Fritz Kreisler

Notes on the program by Dr. Richard E. Rodda

## FRITZ KREISLER

(Born February 2, 1875, Vienna; died January 29, 1962, New York City)

On January 30, 1962, the day after Fritz Kreisler died, the critic Harold Schonberg wrote in the *New York Times*:

Among his colleagues he was unanimously considered the greatest violinist of the century...Kreisler was neither a fiery virtuoso nor a classicist, though he had plenty of technique and could play Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms with as much musicianship and knowledge as any classicist. Where he differed from all other violinists was in his charm, and in the sheer aristocracy of his conceptions...His tone was of unparalleled sweetness. Above all violinists, he had an infallible sense of rhythm and rubato. His interpretations were natural, unforced, and glowing...As a composer he wrote what might be described as transfigured salon music. If the test of music is longevity, Kreisler's music bids fair to be immortal. He would have been the last to claim that his *Liebesleid*, *Liebesfreud*, *Schön Rosmarin*, and *Caprice viennois* were tremendous intellectual contributions to music. But they are as good as anything written in that genre, they have given great pleasure to millions, and they will be played as long as there are violinists who can lift a bow.

Fritz Kreisler was the son of an eminent Viennese physician and enthusiastic amateur violinist who began the boy's musical instruction when he was four. Three years later, Kreisler was admitted to the Vienna Conservatory—the youngest student ever enrolled at the school at that time. There he studied violin with Joseph Hellmesberger Jr. and theory with Anton Bruckner, gave his first performance at nine, and won a gold medal when he was ten. Kreisler then transferred to the Paris Conservatoire, where his teachers included Lambert-Joseph Massart (violin) and Léo Delibes (composition); in 1887, at the age of twelve, he won the school's gold medal over forty other competitors, all of whom were at least ten years his senior. He had no further formal instruction on the violin after that time. In 1888–1889, he toured the United States with the pianist Moriz Rosenthal, successfully making his American debut on November 9, 1888, playing the Mendelssohn Concerto with the Boston Symphony. When he returned to Vienna, however, Kreisler virtually abandoned music, and for several years he studied medicine in Vienna and art in Rome and Paris; he also served for two years as an officer in the Austrian army. He again took up the violin in 1896 and failed to win an audition to become a member of the Vienna Philharmonic but quickly established himself as a soloist, making his formal reappearance on the concert platform in Berlin in March 1899. He returned to America in 1900 and gave his London debut in 1901, creating a sensation at every performance. In 1904, the London Philharmonic Society awarded him the Beethoven Medal, and in 1910, he gave the premiere of Edward Elgar's Violin Concerto, written for and dedicated to him.

At the outbreak of World War I, Kreisler rejoined his former regiment, but he was wounded soon thereafter and discharged from service. In November 1914, he moved to the United States, where he had been appearing regularly for a decade. (He had married Harriet Lies, an American, in 1902.) He gave concerts in the United States to raise funds for Austrian war relief, but anti-German sentiment ran so high after America's entry into the war that he had to temporarily withdraw from public life. He resumed his concert career in New York in October 1919 and then returned to Europe. In 1938, following the annexation of Austria by the Nazis, Kreisler accepted the French government's offer of citizenship, but with the opening of hostilities the following year, he settled in the United States for good; he became an American

citizen in 1943. Despite being injured in a traffic accident in 1941, he continued concertizing to immense acclaim through the 1949–1950 season. He died in New York in 1962.

In addition to being one of the twentieth century's undisputed masters of the violin, Fritz Kreisler was also the composer of a string quartet, a violin concerto, two operettas (*Apple Blossoms* and *Sissy*), and cadenzas for concerti by Brahms, Mozart, and Beethoven. (He owned the manuscript of the Brahms Concerto and donated it to the Library of Congress in 1949.) His most famous works, however, and some of the most beloved pieces in the string repertory, are his short compositions for solo violin. He wrote several dozen of these sparkling miniatures and made arrangements for violin of a large number of works by other composers, from Bach and Rameau to de Falla and Grainger, as material in a lighter vein for his own concerts. He stirred up a considerable furor in 1935 when he admitted that some of the pieces he had been passing off as transcriptions of older music by less-well-known composers were actually his own works. ("Regrettable," wailed Ernest Newman in London. "Mr. Kreisler has added to the gaiety of nations and the violinist's repertory," countered Olin Downes in New York.) The public accepted the hoax with good humor, however, and, if anything, the whole affair only enhanced Kreisler's already peerless reputation and glamour. Kreisler once remarked that the generating force behind his music was the love of beauty and the love of the violin itself: "Joy, fear, anger, gladness—all of these can be projected from one heart directly into another through the medium of music. This is possible, I believe, because music is the most direct and untrammelled exponent of human emotion."

## FRITZ KREISLER

### *Praeludium and Allegro*

**Composed:** 1910

**Published:** 1910

**Other works from this period:** *Tambourin chinois*, op. 3 (1910); Bach's Prelude from Partita no. 3 in E Major, BWV 1006 (arr. Kreisler in 1910); Romance for Violin and Piano, op. 4 (1910)

**Approximate duration:** 7 minutes

Among Kreisler's most delightful musical counterfeits is the 1910 *Praeludium and Allegro*, composed "in the style of Pugnani" (1731–1798), a Turin-born violinist and composer.

## FRITZ KREISLER

### *Aucassin and Nicolette*

**Composed:** 1921

**Published:** 1921

**Other works from this period:** *La gitana* (1919); String Quartet in a minor (1919); *Londonderry Air* (1922); *Midnight Bells* (after Richard Heuberger's *Midnight Bells* from *The Opera Ball*) (1923)

**Approximate duration:** 3 minutes

When Kreisler wrote his *Aucassin and Nicolette* in 1921, he subtitled it "Medieval Canzonetta" (the title was borrowed from a thirteenth-century French *chanteuble*, a combination of prose and verse) and attributed it to Couperin. The verdant lyricism and genial mood of Kreisler's *Aucassin and Nicolette* suggest the witty adventures and happy conclusion of the medieval love story.

\*Bolded terms are defined in the glossary, which begins on page 92.

## JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

(Born March 21, 1685, Eisenach, Germany; died July 28, 1750, Leipzig)

### Prelude from Partita no. 3 in E Major, BWV 1006 (arr. Kreisler)

**Composed:** Before 1720, arranged 1910

**Other works from this period:** *Die Zeit, die Tag und Jahre macht*, BWV 134a (secular cantata) (1719); *Six English Suites* for Solo Keyboard (before 1720); *Six Suites* for Solo Cello (ca. 1720); *Fifteen Inventions* for Solo Keyboard (ca. 1720, rev. 1723); *Prelude and Fugue* in d minor for Organ, BWV 539 (after 1720)

**Approximate duration:** 3 minutes

Bach composed the set of three sonatas and three partitas for unaccompanied violin before 1720, the date on the manuscript, while he was Director of Music at the court of Anhalt-Cöthen, north of Leipzig. 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 upon the player indicate that they were intended for a virtuoso performer: Johann Georg Pisendel, a student of Vivaldi's, 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 seventeenth 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. 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 Bach's three solo violin partitas vary in style, they are all examples of the *sonata da camera* ("chamber sonata") or suite of dances. (The three solo sonatas follow the precedent of the more serious "church sonata," the *sonata da chiesa*.) The Partita no. 3 in E Major opens with a brilliant *Preludio*, which Bach later arranged as the introductory *sinfonia* to his Cantata no. 29, *Wir danken dir, Gott*, of 1731.

## ARCANGELO CORELLI

(Born February 17, 1653, Fusignano, Italy; died January 8, 1713, Rome)

### Violin Sonata in d minor, op. 5, no. 12, *La folia* (arr. Kreisler)

**Composed:** 1700, arranged 1927

**Other works from this period:** Twelve Trio Sonatas, op. 4 (1694); *Sonata a quattro* in g minor (1699); *Sonata a quattro* in e minor (1699)

**Approximate duration:** 11 minutes

*La folia* was inspired by the Violin Sonata in d minor, op. 5, no. 12, of the eminent Roman violinist, composer, and teacher Arcangelo Corelli (1653–1713), whose works were seminal to both the development of the instrument's modern technique and the solidification of the harmonic practices upon which music ever since has been built. Corelli's one-movement composition is not a sonata in the traditional sense at all but rather a set of brilliant and contrasted variations on the old progression of modal harmonies known as *La folia di Spagna* (*The Spanish Folly*). *La folia* originated as the accompaniment to wild dances in Portugal and Spain in the fifteenth century, but it had been domesticated for more sedate musical purposes by Corelli's time and later also provided creative inspiration for J. S. and C. P. E. Bach, Cherubini, Liszt, Nielsen, Rachmaninov, and others. Kreisler's virtuosic *La folia* shares its title, mood, and repeating chord pattern with Corelli's piece but few of its notes.

## GIOVANNI BATTISTA VIOTTI

(Born May 12, 1755, Fontanetto da Po, Italy; died March 3, 1824, London)

### Violin Concerto no. 22 in a minor (arr. Kreisler)

**Composed:** ca. 1793, arranged 1901

**Other works from this period:** Six Violin Sonatas, Book Two (1792); Violin Concerto no. 23 in g minor (ca. 1793–1794); Violin Concerto no. 25 in a minor (ca. 1795–1796); Three String Trios (1796)

**Approximate duration:** 22 minutes

"Viotti, it is true, astonishes the hearer; but he does something infinitely better—he awakens emotion, gives a soul to sound, and holds the passions captive." Thus did the *London Morning Chronicle* of March 10, 1794, summarize the rapturous response to the violin playing of Giovanni Battista Viotti. Viotti was born on May 12, 1755, in Fontanetto da Po, midway between Turin and Milan, into the family of a local blacksmith. His father, a connoisseur of music, provided Giovanni with an undersized violin to learn the rudiments of the art, and the boy manifested such prodigious talent that in 1766 he became a protégé of Prince della Cisterna, a prominent patron of the arts in Turin, and was placed in the tutelage of the eminent Italian virtuoso Gaetano Pugnani. In 1775, Pugnani secured a spot for his student at the back of the first violins in the Royal Chapel Orchestra at Turin, and after five years on that job Viotti demonstrated such mastery of the violin that Pugnani took him on a joint concert tour through Switzerland, Germany, Poland, and Russia; Viotti's first published composition—the Violin Concerto no. 3 in A Major—appeared before the tour ended in Berlin late in 1781.

Viotti, now a seasoned professional as both an ensemble player and a soloist, made his way alone to Paris, where his debut at the Concert Spirituel on March 17, 1782, created a sensation. He immediately established himself as the premier violin virtuoso of the day, performing regularly to great acclaim for the next eighteen months. In September 1783, however, he abruptly retired from public performance for reasons never made clear (one rumor held that he was miffed because a newcomer's recital had outdrawn his), but he was plucked into royal service at the beginning of 1784 to entertain Marie Antoinette at Versailles; he simultaneously served as Concertmaster of the orchestra of Prince Rohan-Guéméné. In 1788, Viotti ventured into the hurly-burly world of the theater and founded a new opera house called the Théâtre de Monsieur (after July 1791, Théâtre Feydeau), which successfully introduced a number of ambitious French and Italian works, including operas by his friend, colleague, and countryman Luigi Cherubini. The French Revolution made the situation of the royalist-associated Viotti untenable in France, however, and in mid-1792, he decamped to London, where he set himself up as soloist at the popular Hanover Square Concerts of Johann Peter Salomon, vividly remembered as the sponsor of Haydn's London ventures. Viotti also performed with the orchestra of (and helped administer) the King's Theatre and frequently played in the homes of the wealthy, including that of the Prince of Wales, but his associations could not keep him from being deported from the country in 1798, when he was accused (wrongly, he maintained) of revolutionary sympathies. He settled in for the next year and a half with some English friends then living near Hamburg but returned to London in 1801, not, however, to resume his musical career but rather to run a wine business in which he had invested during his earlier residence in the city. Though devoted primarily to sating the city's oenophiles, he played occasionally for friends in both London and Paris, and they remarked that he had lost none of his former finesse. When his wine business failed in 1818, Viotti applied to an old patron, the Count of Provence—now Louis XVIII—to run the Paris Opera. He got the job, but administrative difficulties and bad luck—the Duke of Berry, the King's nephew, was assassinated on the steps of the opera soon after Viotti began his tenure—forced him to resign in November 1821. Still saddled with unpaid debts from the collapse of his wine business, Viotti retreated to the London home of his closest friends, Mr. and Mrs. William Chinnery, several months later; he died there on March 3, 1824.

Viotti is regarded as the most influential violinist between Tartini and Paganini. The *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* (*General Music Journal*) of Leipzig described the elements of his playing style: "A large, strong, full tone is the first; the combination of this with a powerful, penetrating, singing legato

is the second; as the third, variety, charm, shadow, and light must be brought into play through the greatest diversity of bowing.” His twenty-nine violin concerti show the use of mature sonata form and the symphonic argument and proportions that came to characterize such works during the encroaching Romantic era. No less a musical maven than Johannes Brahms praised Viotti highly when he told Clara Schumann of the Concerto no. 22, “It is my very special enthusiasm. It is a splendid work, of remarkable fineness of invention. Everything is thought out and worked out in masterly fashion and with imaginative power.”

Viotti composed his Concerto no. 22 in a minor for Salomon’s London concerts of 1793; he was soloist in the work’s premiere on February 14th, just a week after he had made his debut on the series. The piece is of a scale, style, and structure typical of such works of High Classicism: three movements arranged fast–slow–fast, lucid forms, virtuosic within the bounds of good taste, founded upon carefully shaped melodies of distinctive motives easily amenable to development, and emotionally reserved. The concerto follows the conventional concerto plan of an opening movement comprising an extended introduction which prefaces a sonata form based on contrasting themes (here, one broad and somber and the other lively and bright in emotion); a lyrical and expressive *Adagio*, an instrumental counterpart to a tender operatic scene; and a brilliant, rondo-form finale whose main theme returns, like a refrain, to anchor the structure.

## FRITZ KREISLER

### *La gitana*

**Composed:** 1919

**Published:** 1919

**Other works from this period:** *String Quartet in a minor* (1919); *Aucassin and Nicolette* (1921); *Londonderry Air* (1922); *Midnight Bells* (after Richard Heuberger’s *Midnight Bells from The Opera Ball*) (1923)

**Approximate duration:** 3 minutes

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The Viennese always found the exotic strains of Magyar music enticing, and Kreisler expressed its fiery character in *La gitana* (*The Gypsy*), composed in 1919, he said, “after an eighteenth-century Arabo-Spanish Gypsy song.”

## FRITZ KREISLER

### *Lotus Land* (after Cyril Scott’s Opus 47 Number 1)

**Composed:** 1905, arranged 1922

**Other works from this period:** *Londonderry Air* (1922); *Melody* (after Ignacy Jan Paderewski’s Opus 16 Number 2) (1923); *Marche miniature viennoise* (1924); *Song without Words* in F Major (after Tchaikovsky’s *Souvenir de Hapsal* for Solo Piano, op. 2, no. 3) (1924)

**Approximate duration:** 5 minutes

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Cyril Scott (1879–1970), one of Britain’s most daring and respected early twentieth-century composers, wrote symphonies, operas, concerti, oratorios, overtures, **tone poems**, chamber works, and songs, but one of his most popular pieces was the exotic Impressionistic piano miniature *Lotus Land*, op. 47, no. 1 (1905), which Kreisler arranged for violin in 1922.

## FRITZ KREISLER

### *Tambourin chinois*, op. 3

**Composed:** 1910

**Published:** 1910

**Other works from this period:** *Praeludium and Allegro* (1910); Bach’s Prelude from Partita no. 3 in E Major, BWV 1006 (arr. Kreisler in 1910); Romance for Violin and Piano, op. 4 (1910)

**Approximate duration:** 4 minutes

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The virtuosic *Tambourin chinois* (*Chinese Drum*) of 1910, with its pentatonic main theme and its lilting middle section that sounds like nothing so much as a Cuban tango, evokes a most pleasing exoticism.

## NIKOLAY RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

(Born March 6/18, 1844, Tikhvin, Russia; died June 8/21, 1908, Lubensk, near Luga [now Pskov district], Russia)

### *Hymn to the Sun from The Golden Cockerel* (arr. Kreisler)

**Composed:** 1907, arranged 1919

**Other works from this period:** *Dubinushka* (*The Little Oak Stick*), op. 62 (tone poem) (1905, rev. 1906 to include chorus); *Neapolitanskaya pesenka* (*Neapolitan Song*), op. 63 (tone poem) (1907); *Skazka o nevidimom grade Kitezhi i deve Fevronii* (*Tale of the Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden Fevroniya*) (opera) (ca. 1907)

**Approximate duration:** 4 minutes

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Kreisler derived the *Hymn to the Sun* in 1919 from themes in Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov’s 1907 opera *Le coq d’or* (*The Golden Cockerel*), a humorous and satirical fantasy about a king who receives from his astrologer such a bird, which the monarch is told will ensure peace in his land. When the king reneges on a promised reward to the astrologer, the cockerel exacts a fatal revenge on him with its golden beak.

## FRITZ KREISLER

### *Viennese Rhapsodic Fantasietta*

**Composed:** 1941–1942

**Approximate duration:** 9 minutes

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The *Viennese Rhapsodic Fantasietta* (1941–1942) evokes the sweetly melancholic as well as the joyous sides of Kreisler’s native city’s personality, qualities heard in abundance in his recording of December 1946, the last one he made, when he was seventy-two and Vienna was just beginning to recover from the devastation of World War II. (The filming of *The Third Man* was then still three years away.)