

# Bard College Conservatory of Music

*presents*

## A Degree Recital: **Gigi Hsueh, *violin***

**Friday, April 16, 2021, at 7:00 PM**

View the concert on: [Bard Conservatory YouTube](#).

**Violin Sonata No. 3 in D minor, Op. 27 (“*Ballade*”)**

**Eugène Ysaÿe  
(1858-1931)**

**Road Movies for Violin & Piano**

**Relaxed Groove**

**Meditative**

**40% Swing**

**John Adams  
(b.1947)**

*with*

**Bethany Pietroniro, *piano***

**Intermission**

***Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas* (“*The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*”)**

**Primavera Porteña**

**Verano Porteño**

**Otoño Porteño**

**Invierno Porteño**

**Astor Piazzolla  
(1921-92)**

*with*

**Nathan Matsubara, *cello***

**Ryan McCullough, *piano***

**Passacaglia for Violin & Viola**

**from the Suite in G minor, HWV 432**

**by George Friedrich Handel**

**Johan Halvorsen  
(1864-1935)**

*with*

**Javen Lara, *viola***

## **Program Notes**

### **Violin Sonata No. 3 in D minor, Op. 27 No. 3 (“*Ballade*”) by Eugène Ysaÿe**

Known as one of the greatest violinists of his time, Belgian Eugène Ysaÿe had an enormous impact in the early 20th century. His works pushed the technique of the violin to new heights while keeping the full originality in the structure and their harmonic idiom. Six Sonatas for Solo Violin, Op. 27, was written in 1923. Each sonata was dedicated to a different violin virtuoso of the time. ‘Ballade’ was written for Romanian violinist and composer George Enescu, who later taught Yehudi Menuhin. This one-movement work opens with an emotional recitative-like slow passage and continues to grow in intensity moving into triple meter, with dotted rhythms built out of double and triple stops. There is an astonishing complexity and virtuosity within each voice, all developing as the tempo, rhythms, and passions of the violinists accelerate from the slow beginning to a bold allegro and onward towards a fiery conclusion.

### **“Road Movies” for Violin & Piano by John Adams**

“Road Movies” was commissioned by the Library of Congress and premiered in the Kennedy Center in 1995. Adams is mostly known for his ‘minimalist’ style, but many of his works also suggest movement, direction-oriented, and are sometimes even a bit romantic. As the title indicates, this is ‘travel’ music. Movement I is a relaxed drive down a not unfamiliar road. Material is recirculated in a sequence of recalls that suggest a rondo form. Movement II is a simple meditation of several small motives. A solitary figure in an empty desert landscape. The violin’s G string is tuned down a whole step which suggests abnormality and an uncomfortable setting. Movement III is for four-wheel drive vehicles only, a big perpetual motion machine called “40% Swing.” The 40% provides a giddy, bouncy ride that is very difficult for violin and piano to maintain over the seven-minute stretch.

### ***Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas* for Piano Trio by Astor Piazzolla**

Also known as “The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires,” this piece was composed for Piazzolla’s own quintet of violin/viola, piano, electric guitar, double bass and bandoneón. This arrangement for piano trio was made by José Bragato, who was the cellist in many of Piazzolla’s Nuevo Tango ensembles. The word porteño in the title refers to the natives of Buenos Aires and the piece suggests the four seasons of an energetic city and its passionate people. Astor Piazzolla was a major Latin American composer of the 20th century, and is widely recognized as the greatest composer of tango music. He was born in Argentina in 1921 but spent much of his childhood in NYC, where he was exposed to both jazz and classical music.

### **Passacaglia for Violin & Viola by Johan Halvorsen**

Arranged by Johan Halvorsen, a Norwegian composer, conductor, and violinist. The theme is from the final movement of Handel’s Harpsichord Suite in G minor. Few of Halvorsen’s compositions have managed to endure over time, but this Passacaglia has remained one of the most widely-performed string duos. With a total of 12 variations, this passacaglia is a dance-inspired piece with a fixed melody and variations on the bass line. Halvorsen uses several colorful timbral effects, such as pizzicato to imitate the sound of a guitar, ponticello to create scratchy sounds, flautando over the fingerboard, and ricochet to enhance the lighthearted and dynamic interaction of the players.

## Artist Biographies

**Gigi Hsueh** is a fifth-year violinist in the Bard Conservatory of Music double degree program majoring in computer science and music performance. She has had the honor to study with Daniel Phillips for four years, a violinist whom she considers as one of her greatest mentors in life. At Bard, she also had the privilege to study with Gil Shaham and Yi-Wen Jiang, and to be coached by Peter Serkin, Luis García-Renart, Robert Martin, Raman Ramakrishnan, Melissa Reardon, Blair McMillen, Marka Gustavsson, and Ira Weller in chamber music.

Gigi began studying violin at the age of six in Taiwan. She graduated from LaGuardia High School of Music and the Manhattan School of Music Pre-College Program, where she studied with Krzysztof Kuznik. She has served as concertmaster and principal of Bard Conservatory Orchestra, LaGuardia Symphony Orchestra, NSO Institute Orchestra, Kinhaven Symphony Orchestra, and CYCNY Youth Orchestra. In 2009, she made her solo debut in Merkin Concert Hall. She has also performed in Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, and around the world on various orchestra tours. In 2012, she was invited to perform at First Lady Michelle Obama's luncheon at the United Nations General Assembly. In 2013 and 2014, She won the Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society Young Musicians' Competition with her chamber group.

In addition to her violin career, Gigi also plays the piano and was a winner of the Steinbach Taiwan Piano Competition and Baroque Piano Music Competition. In May, she will be performing Bach's Keyboard Concerto in A Major with the Bard Community Orchestra.

Outside of the Conservatory, Gigi is a Bard College residence advisor and an athlete on the college swim team. She also enjoys yoga and hiking around the Hudson Valley.

**Javen Lara**, from New York City, is a fifth-year student at the Bard Conservatory and studies viola with Honggang Li, of the Shanghai Quartet. In addition to a degree in viola performance, Lara will complete a second major in Italian studies, with a thesis focus on Dante's *Inferno*.

She began studying violin at the age of three and switched to the viola seven years later. Lara attended Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School and was principal violist of the symphony orchestra. She joined the Face the Music ensemble, a group of young artists playing music exclusively by living composers. As part of the ensemble, and a founding member of the Pannonia String Quartet and the Face the Music Quartet, Lara took part in a mentorship program with the Kronos Quartet.

She has performed at multiple venues in New York City including Lincoln Center, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Le Poisson Rouge, The Brooklyn Lyceum, and Carnegie Hall. Lara studied at the Kaufman Music Center with Suzanne Wagor, receiving the Van Lier Scholarship from 2012 to 2015 as part of the Young Artist Program, as well as receiving third prize at the 2016 VIVO International Competition. She won the 2016 Fiorello LaGuardia Concerto Competition. Lara was a three time winner of the Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society Competition in 2014, 2015, and 2016. She was the assistant principal violist for the New York Youth Symphony's 2016-2017 season. She holds the Conservatory's George Martin/Hans Thatcher Clarke Scholarship. In May 2021, Lara will be one of two of the first African-American graduates of Bard College Conservatory.

**Nathan Matsubara** began taking cello lessons with Margit Šístková at 11 years of age, and continued his studies in musical performance with Tomáš Jamník and Martin Škampa in Prague, Czech Republic. He has participated in masterclasses with many exceptional masters of the cello, including Wolfgang Böttcher, Wen-Sinn Yang, Reinhard Latzko, Michaela Fukačová, Michal Kaňka and Silvija Sondeckienė. In the Czech Republic, he has participated in national competitions where he received 1st and 2nd prizes. In 2015, he received 2nd Prize in the International Competition of Bohdan Warchal ‘Talents for Europe’ in Slovakia. In 2019, he was invited by Mladá Praha (Young Prague) International Music Festival to perform Haydn’s first cello concerto with Praga Camerata in Wallenstein Palace. In the following year, he joined Mladá Praha International Music Festival’s tour in Japan to perform in such places as the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Tokyo. He has given concerts in many countries including the Czech Republic, Germany, Lithuania, Japan, South Korea, and the United States.

Nathan is a fifth year student at the Bard College Conservatory of Music, where he studies with Peter Wiley. He also studied with Luis Garcia-Renart and Raman Ramakrishnan. He will be completing bachelor's degrees in both music performance and mathematics this spring. He will begin graduate studies at Indiana University’s Jacobs School of Music with Professor Peter Stumpf in Fall 2021.

Born in Boston and raised behind the “Redwood Curtain” of northern California, pianist **Ryan MacEvoy McCullough** has developed a diverse career as soloist, vocal and instrumental collaborator, composer, recording artist, and pedagogue. Ryan’s music-making encompasses work with historical keyboards, electro-acoustic tools and instruments, and close collaborations with some of today’s foremost composers. His long standing collaborative (and life) partnership with soprano Lucy Fitz Gibbon has yielded a substantial crop of new art song repertoire, as well as his work in contemporary ensemble and commissioning project *HereNowHear*, 2017 recipient of a Fromm Foundation award.

Ryan’s growing discography features many world premiere recordings, including solo piano works of Milosz Magin (*Acte Prealable*), Andrew McPherson (*Secrets of Antikythera*, Innova), John Liberatore (*Line Drawings*, Albany), Nicholas Vines (*Hipster Zombies from Mars*, Navona), art song and solo piano music of John Harbison and James Primosch with Ms. Fitz Gibbon (*Descent/Return*, Albany), and forthcoming albums of art song by Sheila Silver (Albany, also with Ms. Fitz Gibbon) and electroacoustic music by Christopher Stark (New Focus). He has also appeared on PBS’s Great Performances (*Now Hear This*, “The Schubert Generation”) and is an alumnus of NPR’s *From the Top*.

Ryan has been featured as concerto soloist with major orchestras including the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Toronto Symphony, and has appeared at major festivals and concert halls around the world. He holds his Bachelor of Music from Humboldt State University (studying with Deborah Clasquin), Artist Diplomas from the Colburn Conservatory and the Glenn Gould School at the Royal Conservatory in Toronto (John Perry and David Louie), a Masters in Music from University of Southern California (John Perry), and Master of Fine Arts and Doctor of Musical Arts from Cornell University (Xak Bjerken). He currently lives in Kingston, NY, and is a collaborative piano fellow in the Bard College-Conservatory of Music, and visiting lecturer at Cornell University. For additional information and curios, visit [www.RyanMMcCullough.com](http://www.RyanMMcCullough.com).

Pianist **Bethany Pietroniro** centers her musical work in an eclectic variety of vocal and instrumental repertoire, nurturing musical partnerships in the process. As a chamber musician and keyboardist in larger ensembles, she has appeared at venues including Alice Tully Hall, the Morgan Library, and the Baltimore War Memorial, and has been a guest recitalist at James Madison University, Pennsylvania State University, and Utah State University. Bethany has performed on numerous occasions as an orchestral keyboardist with The Orchestra Now, and has served as rehearsal pianist for opera productions including Korngold's *Das Wunder der Heliane* and Anton Rubinstein's *The Demon* at the Fisher Center for the Performing Arts during its 2018 and 2019 summer seasons.

From 2015 to 2017, Bethany was a collaborative piano fellow at Bard College Conservatory of Music. She participated in the 2020 Bach Institute at Emmanuel Music in Boston, MA, and will be a Vocal Piano Fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center in 2022 (postponed from summer 2020). Recent projects include the premiere of a song cycle of texts by author Michael Fried, set by composer Julio Friedmann, and presented in a virtual recital with mezzo-soprano Hailey McAvoy '20.

In addition to her work as a freelance pianist, Bethany currently serves as pianist and organist at the Old Dutch Church in Kingston, New York, and a staff member at Art of Problem Solving, an online community devoted to mathematics education, and creative, interdisciplinary problem solving.