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BACH and BEYOND

Tim Fain, guest violin soloist

September 13, 2026, 4:00 p.m. | UM School of Music Recital Hall

PROGRAM

Three Pieces in Baroque Style (1963)

Krzysztof Penderecki
(1933–2020)

Menuetto I

Aria

Menuetto II

Tabula rasa (1977)

For Two Solo Violins, Prepared Piano, and Stings

Arvo Pärt
(b. 1935)

I. Ludus

II. Silentium

Tim Fain, solo violin 1

Maria Larionoff, solo violin 2

INTERMISSION

Violin Concerto no. 1 in A Minor, BWV 1041 (c. 1717–30)

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685–1750)

Allegro

Andante

Allegro assai

Tim Fain, violin soloist

Souvenir de Florence in D Minor, op.70 (1890)
(arr. Barry Lieberman)

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
(1840–1893)

Finale: Allegro con brio e vivace

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GUEST ARTIST

With his adventuresome spirit and vast musical gifts, violinist Tim Fain has emerged as a mesmerizing new presence on the music scene. The “charismatic young violinist with a matinee idol profile, strong musical instincts, and first-rate chops” (*Boston Globe*) was most recently seen on screen and heard on the soundtrack of the film *Black Swan* and heard as the sound of Richard Gere’s violin in the feature film *Bee Season*. Selected as one of *Symphony* and *The Strad* magazines’ “Up-and-Coming Musicians,” Fain captured the Avery Fisher Career Grant and a Young Concert Artists International Award. A dynamic and compelling performer in traditional works, he is also a fervent champion of 20th- and 21st-century composers, with a repertoire ranging widely from Beethoven and Tchaikovsky to Aaron Jay Kernis and John Corigliano; as the *Los Angeles Times* recently noted, his career “is based, in part, on new music and new ways of thinking about classical music.” He has collaborated with such luminaries as Pinchas Zukerman, Richard Goode, Jean-Yves Thibaudet, and Jonathan Biss; has appeared with the Mark Morris Dance Group, Seán Curran Company, and Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company; and has appeared onstage with the New York City Ballet, performing alongside the dancers in the acclaimed premiere of Benjamin Millepied’s “Double Aria.” A sought-after chamber musician, Fain has performed at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, New York’s Bargemusic, and Chamber Music Northwest and at the Spoleto (Italy), Bridgehampton, Santa Fe, Caramoor, Bard, Lucerne (Switzerland), “Bravo” Vail Valley, Moab, and Martha’s Vineyard Festivals. He has toured nationally with Musicians from Marlboro and was first violinist of the Rossetti String Quartet. A native of Santa Monica, California, Tim Fain is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied with Victor Danchenko, and The Juilliard School, where he worked with Robert Mann. He performs on a violin made by Francesco Gobetti, Venice 1717, the “Moller,” on extended loan from Clement and Karen Arrison through the generous efforts of the Stradivari Society of Chicago.



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PROGRAM NOTES

BY DR. JOEL SCHNACKEL

Krzysztof Penderecki (1933–2020): *Three Pieces in Baroque Style* (1963)

Undoubtedly the greatest Polish avant-garde composer of the twentieth century was Krzysztof Penderecki. Not only was he an accomplished conductor and composer, but he was a three-time Grammy Award winner. Probably his most famous composition is *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima* (1961), a work in which the string orchestra makes percussive noises on their instruments, high aleatoric glissandos, and other harsh experimental sounds to achieve the effect of fighter planes dropping the atomic bomb. His work *Three Pieces in Baroque Style*, however, is in stark contrast to *Threnody*. It offers a more straightforward, almost neoclassical approach with a focus on melody and form, reflecting a calmness and serenity. It is in three movements consisting of an aria and two minuets.

Penderecki wrote the *Three Pieces* as part of the experimental score for the 1965 film *The Saragossa Manuscript*, directed by Wojciech Has. Overall, the score is notable for its avant-garde qualities, which complement the film's surreal and complex narrative. In the 1990s, Martin Scorsese helped to locate, restore, and subtitle the film. In 2011, the film was digitally restored in part by the Polish Film Institute, and today it is regarded as one of Poland's greatest films of all time.

Arvo Pärt (b. 1935): *Tabula rasa* for Two Solo Violins, Prepared Piano, and Strings (1977)

From 1958 to 1968, Estonian composer Arvo Pärt was becoming known as one of the leading figures of the Soviet avant-garde, but, in the late 1960s, he was becoming completely dissatisfied with his style. Pärt recalls, "I had lost my inner compass, and I didn't know anymore, what an interval or a key meant." For the next several years the composer immersed himself in Gregorian chant, bells, and Renaissance polyphony.

When Pärt reemerged, he had developed a new style of composition called tintinnabuli, "little bells." In tintinnabuli, the music is spiritual and hypnotic; it contains slow tempos, stillness, and sustained resonance. It can be characterized as minimalist and transparent—stripping away all musical elements to a simplified core of diatonic scales, triads, and arpeggios. It was originally based on a two-voice texture in which the melody voice moved stepwise and the other moved in arpeggios. Early examples of this style can be found in Pärt's works *Für Alina* (1976) and *Spiegel im Spiegel* (1978).

In 1977, Arvo Pärt expanded the style, composing a work in two movements titled *Tabula rasa*, "erased slate," for two violins, string orchestra, and prepared piano. It was the first time the composer incorporated the tintinnabuli style into a large-scale composition. The first movement, *Ludus*, "game," contains eight variations with a forceful violin cadenza. The prepared piano plays an intense role with low, pounding drones and bell-like sounds. In the second movement, *Silentium*, "silence," the tintinnabuli style is most evident. All the voices move at different rhythmic speeds: the violin line moves the most slowly while the lower voices move faster. The overall tempo is extremely slow and hypnotic. The entire work closes with a low, prodding double bass solo.

While rehearsing for the premier of *Tabula rasa*, the soloists Gidon Kremer, Tatiana Grindenko, and Eri Klas were baffled. They were used to playing virtuosic and complex music; they had not yet experienced Pärt's tintinnabuli. At first, they were unsure how to interpret the simple stepwise and arpeggio-like music. They eventually learned they had to approach the work from a different psychological perspective, an almost spiritual view. Kremer later said the work "changed his life." He describes *Tabula rasa* as a "declaration of silence, a manifesto of concentrating on important things."

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750): Violin Concerto no. 1 in A Minor, BWV 1041 (c. 1717–30)

Johann Sebastian Bach's Violin Concerto no. 1 in A Minor is striking for being one of only two of his concertos known to have been written for *solo* violin. The other is his Violin Concerto in E Major, BWV 1042. While he composed other violin pieces—six unaccompanied Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin, BWV 1001–1006, and his Concerto for Two Violins in D Minor, BWV 1043—his Violin Concerto no. 1 in A Minor stands out as a remarkable solo violin work.

The Violin Concerto no. 1 in A Minor also stands out for having an uncertain composition date and location. Christoph Wolff suggests that the concerto was written in 1730 for the collegium concerts when Bach was working at the University in Leipzig. Other scholars agree that the work was written sometime after 1717 when Bach was *Kapellmeister* at Köthen.

Regardless of such uncertainties, these years were happy and productive times for Bach, as he was finally out of the grip of his former employer Prince Wilhelm Ernst of Weimar, who had him thrown in jail for attempting to resign. In Köthen Bach worked for a music-loving patron, Prince Leopold, who was also a violinist. The prince had a world-class orchestra with virtuosos from Prussia. This period marked a significant output of instrumental chamber music for Bach, with the composition of his Brandenburg Concertos, Cello Suites, and Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin.

The Violin Concerto no. 1 in A Minor was inspired by the Italian concerto style. While the solo violin is reminiscent of a Vivaldi concerto, Bach retains much of the Germanic harmonic motion in the bass and accompaniment. The first Allegro moderato is in ritornello form with the solo violin melody returning in different presentations of the theme. The second movement Andante con moto is more lyrical and expressive, and the final movement is a spirited rondo with a lively violin solo.

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893): *Souvenir de Florence* in D Minor, op. 70 (1890), arranged by Barry Lieberman

We are drawn to the lyrical melodies found in Tchaikovsky's music. Few composers compare with him when it comes to manifesting emotions through their music, whether it is with the opening violins in his Piano Concerto no. 1 or the love theme in *Romeo and Juliet*. One would think that this type of inspiration would come naturally to a composer of such caliber, yet even Superman had a weak spot; for Tchaikovsky, his kryptonite was composing for six instruments.

In 1886, Tchaikovsky was awarded an honorary membership in the Saint Petersburg Chamber Society, and, in turn, he agreed to compose and dedicate a new chamber work. He began to jot down ideas for a sextet; however, he found that writing for six independent instruments was “frightfully difficult.” Daunted by his struggles with the new genre, he put the project on hold.

Then, in the summer of 1890, while in Florence, Italy, Tchaikovsky decided to pick the project back up. Inspired by the moment, a melody came to him that would later become the backbone of the second movement referred to as the “*Souvenir de Florence* theme.” Working around the melody, he trudged ahead, still baffled by the complexity of the task. He wrote to his colleague Alexander Siloti, “I am essentially composing for the orchestra, and then only arranging it for six voices.” It would take several months and many revisions for Tchaikovsky to complete the work, but, when he was done, the composer titled the work after the city he loved. And after all the difficulty, the composer wrote to his patroness Nadezhda von Meck, “I have written it with extreme enthusiasm and pleasure, without the slightest effort.” He then presented the work to the Saint Petersburg Chamber Society, who awarded him their prestigious Medal of Merit.

FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



Dear friends,

Welcome to the opening concert of our 42nd season! We are happy to welcome violinist Tim Fain to our concert stage and look forward to making music together.

Today's program is entitled "Bach and Beyond," and at first glance the pieces may not seem to have any particular connection to one another. Interestingly, the Bach and *Tabula rasa* are very similar in that they are both in their own way minimalistic works, one from the Baroque era and one from the contemporary period. Each is a sort of musical conversation—

one between the two violin soloists and one between the solo violin and the orchestra. The Tchaikovsky *Souvenir de Florence* is like a rich and decadent dessert—maybe a big piece of chocolate cake covered with frosting? Musicians call it musical comfort food! It is a favorite of audiences and performers alike and will be a welcome emotional release after the meditative intensity of *Tabula rasa*.

We are thrilled, as always, to see you all in our audience and look forward to an afternoon of great musical adventures!

Your musical friend,
Maria Larionoff
Artistic Director, String Orchestra of the Rockies

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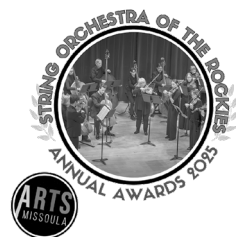
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