Chad Hoopes, violin
Anne-Marie McDermott, piano

VIOLIN SONATA IN G MAJOR, K. 301 (1778)
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–91)
Allegro con spirito
Allegro

VIOLIN SONATA NO. 1, IN A MAJOR, OP. 13 (1875–6)
Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924)
Allegro molto
Andante
Allegro vivo
Allegro quasi presto

:: INTERMISSION ::

VIOLIN SONATA NO. 9, IN A MAJOR, OP. 47 \(\text{KREUTZER}\) (1802–3)
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
Adagio sostenuto - Presto
Andante con variazioni
Finale (Presto)

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Mozart's credentials as a string player were strong. In 1761, aged just 13, he was appointed third concertmaster to the Salzburg court. He wrote his first violin concerto before writing his first piano concerto. "You yourself do not know how well you play the violin," Leopold Mozart wrote to his son when the 21-year-old composer was travelling to Munich. Leopold Mozart was one of the leading authorities on violin technique and his statement carries some weight.

"I played as though I were the finest fiddler in all Europe," Mozart wrote back of his performance for a private gathering in Munich. One month later, in November 1777, he played two violin concertos in Augsburg. "Everyone praised my beautiful, pure tone," he wrote proudly to his father.

Mozart continued to play both violin and viola throughout his life and wrote over two dozen sonatas for keyboard and violin, with the earliest being for keyboard with optional accompaniment of violin. Taken together, the violin sonatas reflect the importance that string instruments had in his development as a musician.

From October 30, 1777 through to spring 1778, Mozart and his mother were in Mannheim, on their way to Paris. Here, in a city with an orchestra that composer and violinist Carl Stamitz had developed into what Leopold Mozart described as "unquestionably the best in Europe," Mozart was hoping to find employment at the court. No position was offered, however, although he performed at court and had the support of several leading musicians. Instead, Mozart found pupils to teach, commissions to fulfill, and private music-making to help widen his networks. He also found love... with his future wife's sister, soprano Aloysia Weber, much to his father's consternation. Among the compositions Mozart wrote in Mannheim was a collection of six accompanied keyboard sonatas dedicated to Maria Elisabeth, Electress Palatine, whose enormous 18th century palace dominated the city (and now houses the University of Mannheim). The G major sonata is the first of these Palatine sonatas, begun as a sonata for keyboard with flute, subsequently devised for either violin or flute. In common with four of the other sonatas in the set, it has two movements. The opening movement, bright and cheerful throughout, is bound together by a recurring refrain as much as by thematic development. The main theme of the second movement is related to that of the first. It has a folk-like lilt, and the movement falls into three sections, with a contrasting middle section in the minor key.

VIOLIN SONATA NO. 1, IN A MAJOR, OP. 13
Gabriel Fauré (b. Pamiers, Ariège, France, May 12, 1845; d. Paris, November 4, 1924) Composed 1875-6; 24 minutes

Fauré wrote two fine violin sonatas, while an attempt at a violin concerto was never published. Since his triumphant première, the First Violin Sonata, his earliest chamber work, has remained among his most popular pieces. By the time he came to write it in the 1870s, the 30-year-old Fauré was familiar with the latest musical styles of his day. He had met Franz Liszt and made pilgrimages to Bayreuth to hear the music of Richard Wagner. But, unlike many of his colleagues, Fauré seemed able to hear what was new in Wagner, digest it and take what he wanted to develop and enrich his own musical palate.

The controlled passion and elegant restraint of his early music can be heard at the outset of this sonata, in the unusually long and sustained first phrase. This is constantly surging music, gracefully written for both violin and piano, often growing through interconnected musical sequences. The restless ebbing and flowing slow movement continues the hand-in-glove dialogue between the two instruments. The scampering third movement has all the grace and charm of a scherzo by Mendelssohn. It is one of Fauré’s loveliest movements and was encored at its first performance. Fauré continues to avoid all trace of the rhetorical and the four-square through to the exultant, dazzling end of the finale.

VIOLIN SONATA NO. 9, IN A MAJOR, OP. 47 (KREUTZER) (1802-3)
Ludwig von Beethoven (b. Bonn, Germany, December 15 or 16, 1770; d. Vienna, Austria, March 26, 1827) Composed (1802-3); 38 minutes

The Kreutzer sonata very nearly came down to us as the ‘Bridgetower’. A handsome 24-year-old English violin virtuoso, George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower (1778-1840), of West Indian and Polish descent, gave the first performance of the work in his Vienna début. Beethoven himself played piano at this public concert in 1803, in a hall in the Vienna Augarten. The two musicians had met at the house of Prince Lichnowsky and Beethoven praised the English-bred violinist as "a very skilled virtuoso, entirely the master of his instrument." Both Bridgetower and Beethoven were known for their volatile temperament and when they became enamored of the same woman, they inevitably had a falling out. Bridgetower proved more the romantically successful, but the price he had to pay was the withdrawal of the dedication of the sonata. Not long afterwards, Rodolphe Kreutzer, Napoleon’s chief violinist, accepted the dedication of the sonata, but never played it. Berlioz (who thought the work “one of the most sublime of all violin sonatas”) reported that Kreutzer viewed the music as “monstrously unintelligible.” But Beethoven’s most brilliant violin sonata was to manage well enough on its own merits, without its dedicatee’s advocacy.

After flagging the “highly concerto-like style” of the work on the printed score, Beethoven further indicates the brilliance of the music by marking both outer movements Presto. At the outset, an imposing four-bar introduction for the violin alone is rich in musical ideas. A feature of a rising half-step slurs is drawn out as the piano has its own imposing reply and both instruments further explore its possibilities, building up a feeling of anticipation for what is to come. This half-step motif and frequent pauses become prominent elements of the finale, and Ivic’s Presto that follows. Its momentum is only held back by a broad, chorale-like second theme with its thematic echoes of the introduction. For the rest, we have Beethoven’s most driven movement since the finale of the Moonlight sonata. This was music that, for Tolstoy, in his novella The Kreutzer Sonata, could generate the power to arouse erotic feelings and generate sexual jealousy enough to lead to murder.

After the grand scale and virtuosity of the opening movement, the central slow movement is a set of four elaborate variations of increasing ornamentation on a richly resonant melody. The finale is a whirling tarantella, a movement that came ready-made, as the finale Beethoven had put aside from an earlier sonata. Its brilliance and virtuosity are wholly in keeping with the resonant, heroic and virtuoso character of the Kreutzer. While Beethoven had been acutely aware of the challenges of balancing the sonorities of the violin, an upper register instrument, with the full-range piano in all his recent violin sonatas and other duo sonatas, the Kreutzer in particular cries out for performance in the concert hall rather than the private salon – the traditional venue for the accompanied keyboard sonata. That’s why it has been said that the Kreutzer did for the violin sonata what Beethoven’s Razumovsky quartets did for the string quartet and the Waldstein and Appassionante sonatas did for the piano sonata.

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