CHICAGO SYMPHONY PRESENTS

NINETY-SIXTH SEASON

Sunday, November 22, 2026, at 3:00

Nemanja Radulović Violin
Double Sens

BEETHOVEN — Violin Sonata No. 9 in A Major, Op. 47 *(Kreutzer)* (arr. Radulović)
Adagio sostenuto—Presto
Andante con variazioni
Finale: Presto

INTERMISSION

J.S. BACH — Chaconne from Partita No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1004

J.S. BACH — Concerto for Violin in D Minor, BWV 1052R
Allegro
Adagio
Allegro

Chicago Symphony acknowledges support from the Illinois Arts Council.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born December 16, 1770; Bonn, Germany
Died March 26, 1827; Vienna, Austria

Violin Sonata No. 9 in A Major, Op. 47 *(Kreutzer)*

(Arranged by Nemanja Radulović)



COMPOSED
1803

George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower was born in Biała, Poland, between 1778 and 1780; his mother was Polish or German, and his father was probably from the West Indies. Bridgetower proved to be a remarkable prodigy of the violin, and he was accepted into the musical establishment of the Prince of Wales at Brighton when he was just ten. The following year, he played in the violin section for the Haydn-Salomon concerts in London, and thereafter billed himself as "a student of Haydn." In 1803 Beethoven met the twenty-three-year-old Bridgetower in Dresden, and the two got along splendidly—the composer praised him as "a very capable virtuoso who has a complete command of his instrument." Beethoven proposed to write a new piece for Bridgetower's debut in the city on May 24 and to accompany him at the piano, and he set to work immediately on a large sonata in A major that would properly display the skills of the two musicians. The premiere was a success (the second movement had to be encored), and Bridgetower remained in Vienna until July, playing to considerable acclaim and spending many evenings with his new friend, Ludwig van Beethoven.

By all rights, this work, published as Beethoven's *Kreutzer* Sonata in 1805 by Simrock, should be called the "Bridgetower" Sonata, in honor of the performer for whom it was written. According to an interview Bridgetower granted when he visited Vienna in 1845, such was the composer's original intention, but he added that they had a quarrel "over a girl," and Beethoven denied him the dedication in recompense. Instead, the score was inscribed to the well-known French violinist and composer Rodolphe Kreutzer, whom Beethoven had met in 1798 in Vienna. Beethoven maintained an infrequent correspondence with Kreutzer thereafter, but apparently regarded him as a friend, calling him "a good, amiable man who during his stay here gave me much pleasure. His unaffectedness and natural manner are more to my taste than all *extérieur* or *intérieur* of most virtuosos." Beethoven justified the transfer of the dedication by telling Simrock, "As the sonata was written for a thoroughly capable violinist, the dedication to Kreutzer is all the more appropriate." In 1801, four years before the publication appeared, Kreutzer was appointed solo violin of the Paris Opera, and a year later, he was named chamber musician to Napoleon. Beethoven's

dedication seems to have been as much an attempt to insinuate his music with the leading violinist of France as a reward for any musical or personal empathy. Indeed, Kreutzer apparently had little liking for Beethoven's then-avant-garde creations, demonstratively stomping out of the Parisian premiere of the Second Symphony with his hands clapped over his ears, refusing to play in public the sonata dedicated to him, and accusing the music of being "utterly unintelligible." For Beethoven, who was shrewd about using dedications for his own professional and social advantage, Kreutzer's rejection of his sonata must have induced in him an almost wild frustration.

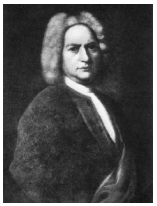
The *Kreutzer* Sonata was the ninth in a flurry of such works Beethoven produced in just a half-dozen years; he did not return to the genre again for a decade, composing his last work in the form, the Sonata in G major, op. 96, in 1813. The *Kreutzer* is the most brilliant and overtly virtuosic of the ten sonatas, written, according to the composer, "in the concertante style, almost like a concerto" (and makes it amenable to Nemanja Radulović's arrangement with string orchestra). The treatment of the violin in the work passes well beyond the sweetness and elegance of the waning classical manner to adopt an aggressive, fiery, declamatory style that characterizes Beethoven's most advanced and audacious works of the time. (The *Eroica* Symphony also dates from 1803.) So strongly did this spirit of emotional display affect Leo Tolstoy that he wrote his novel *The Kreutzer Sonata* in 1889 under its spell. In the book, the main character's mental instability, a condition Tolstoy attributes to hearing a performance of the sonata, leads him to murder his wife. "It seemed that entirely new impulses, new possibilities, were revealed to me in myself, such as I had not dreamed of before," says Tolstoy's tragic hero. "Such works should be played only in grave, significant conditions, and only then when certain deeds corresponding to such music are to be accomplished." Not all listeners are provoked to such extreme actions on listening to the compositions of Beethoven, though this music's expressive power and strength of utterance continue to move, delight, and rejuvenate all whom it touches.

The first movement of the *Kreutzer* Sonata is a formal curiosity, beginning with a slow introduction in the nominal key of A major as preface to a large sonata structure in the parallel minor mode. (The only precedent for this procedure that the immensely learned English musicologist Sir Donald Tovey could find in the classical literature was Mozart's Violin Sonata in G, K. 379.) The main theme, given by the violin to begin the quicker tempo, is a dashing staccato phrase with a vaguely Turkish tint. The choralelike subsidiary motif provides only a brief respite from the driving impetuosity of the music. The instruments engage in considerable developmental dialogue before the earlier themes are recapitulated. The Andante is a spacious set of variations on a long theme, presented alternately by the ensemble and violin. The flamboyant, tarantella-rhythm finale provides a suitably brilliant ending to one of the greatest of Beethoven's instrumental duets. *C*

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Born March 21, 1685; Eisenach, Germany
Died July 28, 1750; Leipzig, Germany

Chaconne from Partita No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1004



COMPOSED
around 1720

Bach composed the set of three sonatas and three partitas for unaccompanied violin before 1720, during his six-year tenure as director of music at the court of Anhalt-Cöthen, north of Leipzig. Though there is no 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 on the player indicate they were intended for a virtuoso performer: Johann Georg Pisendel, a student of Vivaldi, 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 with some of this music at that time. 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.

The wondrous chaconne that closes the Partita no. 2 in D minor is one of the most sublime pieces Bach ever created. The chaconne is an ancient variation form in which a short, repeated chord pattern is decorated with changing



figurations and elaborations. Bach subjected his eight-measure theme to sixty-four continuous variations, beginning and ending in D minor but modulating in the center section to the luminous key of D major. The noted Bach scholar Philipp Spitta wrote of the chaconne,

> From the grave majesty of the beginning to the thirty-second notes that rush up and down like the very demons; from the tremulous arpeggios that hang almost motionless like veiling clouds above a dark ravine . . . to the devotional beauty of the D major section, where the evening sun sets in a peaceful valley, the spirit of the master urges the instrument to incredible utterances. This chaconne is a triumph of spirit over matter such as even Bach never repeated in a more brilliant manner. *C*

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

Concerto for Violin in D Minor, BWV 1052R



COMPOSED
around 1720

At Bach's death, many of his important manuscripts were divided between his two oldest living sons, Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emanuel. Carl took loving care of his inheritance, but Wilhelm did not. Though Wilhelm received excellent training from his father as a boy and held some responsible positions as a young man, he never fulfilled his early promise. His presence of mind seems to have deserted him after his father's death, and he gave way in his later years to dissipation and pretty well made a mess of his life. The manuscripts from Sebastian's estate that came into his possession were lost or destroyed or perhaps sold for a pint of Asbach Uralt. At any rate, it is known that Wilhelm let at least three of his father's violin concertos slip through his unsteady fingers into oblivion. The three that remain were the ones passed on by Carl. Despite Wilhelm's profligacy, however, much of Bach's violin music has been recovered.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: Ludwig van Beethoven, portrait on ivory by Christian Horneman (1765–1844), 1803. Bodmer Collection, Beethoven-Haus Bonn, Germany | OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP: Johann Sebastian Bach, circa 1720, from the painting by Johann Jakob Ihle in the Bach Museum, Eisenach, Germany | Oil portrait of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen (1694–1728), Bach's employer during his years at Cöthen. Cöthen Castle Collection, Germany | THIS PAGE: Johann Sebastian Bach, holding a copy of the six-part canon, BWV 1076. Portrait in oil by Elias Gottlob Haussmann (1695–1774), 1748. Bach-Archiv, Leipzig, Germany

COMMENTS

When Johann Sebastian took over the direction of the Leipzig Collegium Musicum concerts in 1729, he expanded the ensemble's repertory by arranging several of his earlier wind and string concertos for one or more harpsichords. Since he apparently made few changes beyond some additional ornamentation and (usually) transposition down a tone, scholars have been able to recreate the original violin scores from the later harpsichord transcriptions with considerable confidence, as is the case with this D minor violin concerto.

The violin concertos were written as part of Bach's duties at the court of Anhalt-Cöthen, where he was court capellmeister and director of the princely chamber musicians. Since he was responsible for the secular rather than the sacred music at court, those years saw the production of much of his purely instrumental music. The *Brandenburg* Concertos, orchestral suites, numerous suites and sonatas for solo instruments and keyboard, the sonatas and suites for unaccompanied violin and cello, and much solo keyboard music, including the French Suites and the first book of *The Well-Tempered Clavier,* date from this time. Bach tried to present his noble employer with music that would be both of a high quality and in tune with the latest styles. For his concertos, Bach avidly studied the recent works of the Italian masters, most notably Vivaldi's *L'estro armonico,* which had been published in 1712. He transcribed several of those compositions as solos or concertos for keyboard for his own use and utilized their formal and technical components as the models for his original works in the genre. His idiomatic writing for strings grew not just from that study, however, but also from his own experience as a violinist. His son Carl wrote, "He played the violin cleanly and penetratingly. He understood to perfection the possibilities of the stringed instruments." These violin concertos, among the earliest works in the orchestral repertory, are outstanding examples of Bach's luxurious instrumental style. In the words of Edward Downes, "[This music's] rhythms dance, its melodic line soars, its harmonies branch and blossom with a richness and a sense of inevitable growth in which Bach has no equal."

The source of the Violin Concerto in D minor, derived from the Clavier Concerto no. 1 in the same key, continues to puzzle scholars. From stylistic evidence, it seems to have been based originally on a violin concerto by a composer other than Bach, perhaps, conjectured Adolf Aber, even Sebastian's son Carl Philipp Emanuel. Bach must have been fond of this work, since the harpsichord arrangement went through several careful revisions, and the music was used yet again in his cantatas no. 188 and no. 146. The structure of the opening movement follows the ritornello form customary for baroque concertos: a returning orchestral refrain separated by episodes for the soloist. This Allegro is music of grave countenance but vigorous rhythmic energy that embodies the baroque ideals of touching sentiment allied with physical stimulation. The somber Adagio is an elaborately decorated song spun by the soloist above affective harmonies in the orchestra. The finale returns the bracing vitality of the first

movement. Its dashing rhythmic motion is enriched by elaborate conversational interchanges between orchestra and soloist. This music of clearly etched, contrasting moods recalls the words of the distinguished conductor Sir Thomas Beecham concerning the art of making music: "For a fine performance only two things are absolutely necessary: the maximum of virility coupled with the maximum of delicacy." 𝒄

Richard E. Rodda, a former faculty member at Case Western Reserve University and the Cleveland Institute of Music, provides program notes for many American orchestras, concert series, and festivals.

PROFILES

Double Sens



Photo by Edouard Brane

Founded by violinist Nemanja Radulović in 2008, Double Sens is an ensemble that embodies musical dialogue, freedom, and cross-cultural exchange. Bringing together musicians from France and Serbia, the group reflects Radulović's artistic vision of breaking down boundaries between genres, traditions, and styles. The ensemble's sound moves fluidly between classical repertoire, eastern European folk influences, and contemporary expression, marked by rhythmic vitality, emotional intensity, and a strong sense of collective storytelling. Through its innovative programming and passionate performances, Double Sens redefines the classical concert experience, inviting listeners into a vibrant and shared musical journey.

For Radulović, Double Sens was born from questions of identity—his music, his friendships, his life between France and Serbia. He brought together Serbian and French musicians he knew personally, confident that their distinct personalities would form a cohesive group united by the joy of sharing music and the stage. From the first performance, there was a shared desire to continue. Even after many years of playing together, that feeling remains, and the anticipation of reuniting is as strong as ever.

Radulović and Double Sens have recorded eight albums together, including *5 Seasons* (Decca, 2011); *Journey East* (Deutsche Grammophon, 2015); *Bach* (2016); *Tchaikovsky: Violin Concerto/Rococo Variations* (2017); and *Baïka* (2018). Now recording exclusively with Warner Classics, the ensemble has released *Roots* (2022), *Beethoven* (2023), which earned Radulović an Opus Klassik Award, and *Bach* (2024).

The ensemble performs internationally at leading venues including the Philharmonie de Paris, Tokyo Opera City Concert Hall, Berlin Philharmonie, Vienna Konzerthaus, Munich's Prinzregententheater, and Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie. In 2026 Double Sens makes its U.S. debut with a coast-to-coast tour spanning ten states, including performances at Cleveland's Severance Hall, Baltimore's Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, and Boston's Jordan Hall.

Nemanja Radulović Violin



Serbian French violinist Nemanja Radulović champions the power of music to bring people together with his unique energy and candor, electrifying virtuosity, depth of expression, and adventurous programming. Winner of the 2024 Opus Klassik Award for Concerto Recording of the Year for *Beethoven: Violin Concerto and Violin Sonata No. 9* (Kreutzer), Radulović describes the concert stage as a "second home." His daring approach—marked by risk-taking and spontaneity—transforms each performance into a compelling blend of tradition and bold experimentation.

Radulović's 2026–27 season begins with a reunion with the New York Philharmonic and Santtu-Matias Rouvali at Bravo! Vail. He debuts with the Budapest Festival Orchestra and San Francisco Symphony, performing Barber's Violin Concerto with Marin Alsop. He makes further returns to ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, and Basel Chamber Orchestra; with the latter, he undertakes a tour including Aix, Lucerne, and Paris.

Recent highlights include engagements with Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Münchner Philharmoniker, Pittsburgh Symphony, Bamberger Symphoniker, Gothenburg Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, and Sydney Symphony, along with sold-out performances with Double Sens at La Folle Journée de Nantes and Chorégies d'Orange, Philharmonie de Paris, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, and Berlin Philharmonie. Radulović has been signed exclusively to Warner Classics since 2021. His 2026 album *Prokofiev* earned Le Choix de France Musique and Choc de Classica honors and is shortlisted for two 2026 Opus Klassik awards. This spirit of exploration also shapes his critically acclaimed *Roots* (2021), *Beethoven* (2023), and his second *J.S. Bach* album with Double Sens (2024).

ELECTRONIC DEVICES
Before the concert begins, mobile phones and other electronic devices must be turned off or set to silent mode. Please limit distractions and refrain from photography, audio and video recording, and using illuminated screens during the music.



Photo by Sever Zolak