

Mirror/Lens

Vijay Gupta *with* Chester Englander

Thursday, March 2
Beehive & Luth Concert Hall
Prior Presents 2022–23

**MUSIC
WORCESTER**

PRIOR
Performing Arts Center

Welcome

Dear friends,

It gives us great pleasure to welcome you to this co-production between Music Worcester and The Prior Performing Arts Center at the College of the Holy Cross.

This evening marks an exciting opportunity for Music Worcester, one of Worcester's most beloved cultural institutions, and the Prior Performing Arts Center, Holy Cross' new addition to the city's vibrant arts landscape, to partner with one another in celebration of intrepid artists and audiences. It also marks the start of Gupta's year-long residency with Music Worcester.

As a physical structure, The Prior Performing Arts Center is designed to amplify continuities between onstage and offstage, between the arts and other disciplines, and between creative activities of a great many kinds. Directed with great care by Gupta, tonight's concert has very similar aims. Beginning in the Beehive and proceeding to the Luth Concert Hall—and featuring not only the interplay of violin and cymbalom but integration of spoken word—the evening offers all of us the chance to reflect on the pleasures and provocations of encountering art in community.

Warmly,

Adrien Finlay, Executive Director, Music Worcester
Kyle Frisina, Interim Director, Prior Performing Arts Center

Program

Act One: Beehive Atrium

JS Bach - Partita in E major BWV 1006 [1720]

Preludio

Loure

Gavotte en Rondeau

Menuet I, II

Bourrée

Gigue

György Kurtág - "Szálkák" (Splinters) Op.6 [1973]

Molto Agitato

Sostenuto

Vivo

Mesto (in memoriam Stefan Romascanu)

György Kurtág - Acht Duos [1960-1961]

Poco Sostenuto

(Agitato)

Risoluto

Lento

Allegretto

Vivo

Adagio

Vivo

Act Two: Luth Concert Hall

Kaija Saariaho - Nocturne for solo violin [1994]

Dedicated to the memory of Witold Lutoslawski

Arvo Pärt - "Spiegel im spiegel" (Mirror in mirror) [1978]

Reena Esmail - Darshan [2020]

Bihag

Program Notes

Mirror/Lens

300 years before the COVID 19 pandemic, Johann Sebastian Bach sat alone in a room, grieving. In 1720, returning from a triumphant which birthed the beloved Brandenburg Concertos and orchestral suites, he was greeted with muted mourning: his beloved wife, Maria Barbara—his teenage sweetheart—had passed away four months earlier. The title page of the beloved Sonatas and Partitas bears the inscription “Sei Solo,” which has been interpreted as “six solos,” but can also mean “you are alone.” Bach was alone, in a strange grief, one unsynchronized from the rest of his family, alone with his aloneness.

In aloneness, one encounters a dual edge between isolation and solitude: isolation narrows us. We have learned—and experienced—that isolation can be a mortal wound, leading to higher risks of physical and psychological malady. But solitude, that key to all creation, opens us to new life. Rilke wrote that “all works of art arise from an infinite aloneness”. The Sufi mystic Ibn Arabi sang ecstatically of embracing being ‘alone with the alone’. Solitude is communion with something bigger than ourselves—a kind of transcendence—a crossing over, within.

This is a program of two solitudes meeting each other. During the pandemic, Chester and I worked towards each other from our caverns of solitude, creating reflections of our creative practices. On a mirror in my garage studio (which also functioned as a gym, and at times, a “pandemic panic room”), I wrote a quote which Chester shared on one of our long phone calls: “I know who I am when I see what I do.”

The practice of creation—of making anything—shows us who we are. It’s a mirror, reflecting back to us a self, which we can also create in real time. But creation was also a lens. When I wasn’t brave enough to look into my creations, I would share them with Chester, and he with me: we saw into each other through the things we made, through the works we embraced, through the lives we practiced—suspending any hope that we would play for a live audience again.

The works on this program are works of transcendence—the communion across boundaries. Some are the boundaries of life and death, where, while we remain here in a physical world—we sense the presence of the one we loved on the other side of the veil: the last movement (*Mesto*) of Kurtág’s “Splinters” recalls a funereal tattoo, and Saariaho’s transcendent “Nocturne”—written as a memorial for her mentor, the Polish composer Witold Lutoslawski—creates whistling ghosts of extended sounds and trembling textures. She often marks “*senza tempo*” in the detailed score, meaning “without time.” Sounds emerge and fade from silence, and yet, somehow, a “music” continues.

Other works are reflections of ourselves, encouraging and invoking something divine: Pärt’s beloved work, “Spiegel im Spiegel” has been used in countless movies to create an atmosphere of suspension and timelessness - most notably in the 2013 film *Gravity* - but was one of the last works the composer wrote before his departure from his home of Estonia. Reena Esmail’s *Darshan*, which means “seeing, beholding” in Sanskrit, is based on the dual meaning of the word - which can also mean “glimpsing the Divine”. The work is set in the Hindustani raga “Bihag” which invokes the deep night - when darkness unveils the first light of stars.

Vijay Gupta - Altadena, CA (2023)

Biographies

Vijay Gupta

Vijay Gupta is a violinist, speaker and citizen-artist dedicated to creating spaces of wholeness and transformation through music. Hailed by *The New Yorker* as a “visionary violinist...one of the most radical thinkers in the unradical world of American classical music,” Vijay leads a protean career as a thought leader, performer, collaborator and communicator.

Vijay is the founder and Artistic Director of Street Symphony, which provides thousands of musical experiences for people in reentry from homelessness, addiction and incarceration in Los Angeles. A community of professional and community artists from a wide variety of genres, Street Symphony has presented thousands of musical workshops, performances and lessons in Los Angeles shelters, clinics, county jails and prisons, creating art for—and with—the largest homeless community in America. For his work in “bringing beauty, respite, and purpose to those all too often ignored by society,” Vijay was the recipient of a 2018 MacArthur Fellowship.

Vijay is the 2023 Artist in Residence of the Massachusetts-based organization Music Worcester, where he curates, collaborates, and performs in venues such as Mechanics Hall, as well as in educational and incarceration settings. Vijay's residency will present novel collaborations aimed to redefine the concert experience, ranging from programs with cimbalom artist Chester Englander, the works of JS Bach choreographed with Indian classical dancer Yamini Kalluri and new songs created by incarcerated people, a piano trio “mosaic program” with Darshan Trio, and collaborations with the Worcester Choir.

Vijay has performed as an international recitalist, soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral musician for over 20 years, playing his solo debut with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Zubin Mehta. Vijay served as a member of the first violin section of the Los Angeles Philharmonic for 12 years, and has collaborated with the Kronos Quartet, the Philharmonia Orchestra of London, Yo-Yo Ma, Rachel Podger, and appears regularly with the Strings Festival in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. In Los Angeles, Vijay is a founding member of Darshan Trio, and also appears regularly on baroque violin as a member of LA-based early music ensemble Tesseract. A dynamic recording artist, Vijay's critically acclaimed discography includes an array of chamber music and solo works. His solo violin albums *When the Violin* and *Transcendent Night* are available under his own label, Vidya Projects.

A riveting speaker, Vijay has shared his work with dozens of corporations, campuses, conferences and communities across America over the past 10 years, including The Richmond Forum, The Aspen Institute, Hallmark, Accenture, Mayo Clinic, US Psychiatric Congress, American Planning Association, and the League of American Orchestras, just to name a few.

Vijay holds a Bachelor's degree in Biology from Marist College, and a Master's in Music from the Yale School of Music. Vijay plays a 2010 violin made by Los Angeles-based luthier Eric Benning, and an 18th century baroque violin from Mittenwald, Germany. He can be found on Instagram @guptaviolin.

Chester Englander

Acclaimed for his “unnerving dexterity” (San Francisco Chronicle), his “boldly played” (Los Angeles Times), “vivid” (The New York Times), and “expert” (St. Louis Post-Dispatch) performances as the solo cymbalom of John Adams *Scheherazade.2*, and praised by the NYT for the brilliant clarity of his performance of the featured cymbalom part within Mr. Adams *The Gospel According to the Other Mary*, Chester Englander has a thriving career as a percussionist and cymbalom artist with orchestras throughout the country.

Chester has performed on percussion and/or cymbalom with the Atlanta Symphony, the Boston Symphony, the Buffalo Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony, the Cincinnati Symphony, The Cleveland Orchestra, the Iceland Symphony, the Israel Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the National Symphony, the New World Symphony, the New York Philharmonic, the Oregon Symphony, the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Rochester Philharmonic, the Saint Louis Symphony, the San Diego Symphony, the San Francisco Symphony, the Seattle Symphony, and the Toronto Symphony. He has taken part in multiple world and U.S. premiere performances of orchestral and chamber works by several composers including John Adams, Thomas Ades, Louis Andriessen, Unsuk Chin, Peter Eitner, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Dmitri Shostakovich, and Bernd Alois Zimmermann. Additionally, he directly collaborated with John Adams on the composition of the featured cymbalom parts for *The Gospel According to the Other Mary* and *Scheherazade.2*.

Chester can be heard on the Cantaloupe, Capcom, Deutsche Grammophon, DisneyNature, Interscope, Naxos, Nonesuch, Seattle Symphony Media, and Ubisoft labels. Chester is also Head of Percussion Studies at Cleveland State University. He and his lovely wife, violinist Rachel Englander, reside in Cleveland, OH and are proud parents to their adorable daughters Charlotte and Alice.

John Wayne Cormier Jr., narrator

John Wayne is not the actor who comes to mind, at least, not anymore. He decided to take the mask off January 11th, 2019. Sobriety revealed his love for classical music, poetic expression, and musical performance.

As an inmate at the Worcester County House of Corrections, he earned the privilege to attend a song writing class called the “OpporTUNEity” program. His impact on the program found its way into the local section of the Worcester T&G from behind bars. Post release, another part of his story was featured on the front page of the Worcester Magazine.

Today, he works for OppoTUNEity Music Connections at the same county jail as a Song Writing Instructor, helping inmates to uncover their songs and providing them with the power or example. He is an artist who can carve his heart out of musical performance, baring the scars of experience aesthetically.

Arts Transcending Borders

Initially funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Arts Transcending Borders is an initiative designed to enhance the role of the arts in every aspect of the Holy Cross experience by infusing the arts into students’ academic lives and creating new opportunities throughout the curriculum and the community to cross cultural, geographic, and disciplinary boundaries.

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