



## SONNETS & SONATAS

Saturday, March 1 at 5pm  
Good Shepherd–Faith Presbyterian Church, New York City







# PROGRAM

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Tonight's musical program will be interwoven with selected sonnets. We encourage you to let yourself be surprised by these fleeting poems as they come and go. After the concert, texts of each sonnet will be available on the concert webpage.



## JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

(1685–1750)

### Sonata no. 4 in C minor

BWV 1017 (Köthen or Weimar, before 1725)

*Sechs Sonaten für Cembalo concert: und Violino*

$\frac{6}{8}$  Largo [or Siciliano, in some sources]

$\text{C}$  Allegro

$\frac{3}{4}$  Adagio

$\frac{2}{4}$  Allegro

### Sonata no. 6 in G major

BWV 1019 (probably Köthen, c. 1720, rev. 1739/40)

*Sechs Sonaten für Cembalo concert: und Violino*

$\text{C}$  Allegro [Molto Allegro]

$\frac{3}{4}$  Largo

$\text{C}$  Cembalo solo. Allegro

$\text{C}$  Adagio

$\frac{6}{8}$  Allegro [Allegro assai]

### Sonata in E minor for violin and basso continuo

BWV 1023 (Leipzig, after 1723)

$\text{C} - \frac{3}{4}$  Adagio ma non tanto

$\text{C}$  Allemanda

$\frac{12}{8}$  Gigue

### Sonata no. 3 in E major

BWV 1016 (Köthen or Weimar, before 1725)

*Sechs Sonaten für Cembalo concert: und Violino*

$\text{C}$  Adagio

$\text{C}$  Allegro

$\frac{3}{4}$  Adagio ma non tanto

$\frac{3}{4}$  Allegro



The 24 Violins Cross the Alps, May 2024

## WELCOME

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**Johann Sebastian Bach's** six sonatas for violin and obligato harpsichord were immediately recognized as special works. Unlike earlier baroque sonatas, where the harpsichord played a continuo role, these fully integrate both instruments as equal partners. The violin sings with expressive lyricism while the harpsichord, freed from its traditional accompanimental function, engages in intricate counterpoint. These sonatas blend dance rhythms, lyrical arioso, and complex fugues, revealing Bach's ability to combine intellectual rigor with emotional depth.

We are sharing three of these sonatas with you tonight, each highlighting a different facet of Bach's expressive range:

Both slow movements of the **C minor sonata, BWV 1017**, are filled with pathos: the first movement is an aria reminiscent of *Erbarne dich*, from Bach's *Saint Matthew Passion*, and the third movement features a beautiful melody above gentle rolling triplets in the harpsichord. The two Allegro movements are angular and rather severe.

Bach kept returning to the **G major sonata, BWV 1019**, and changing its form, removing

movements and adding new ones. We perform the final version today, which is in a symmetrical form with five movements. At the center of the sonata is a harpsichord solo, surrounded by cryptic slow movements, and then sandwiched by two of Bach's cheeriest, happiest pieces.

My personal favorite, the **E major sonata, BWV 1016** is larger than life. It opens with unusually thick harpsichord writing—the left hand as a tolling bell, the right hand with wildly thick interlocking right-hand lines—under a soaring violin melody. Despite a puckish second movement fugue, the third movement returns to the majesty of the opening, written on a repeating ground bass line—the violin takes up chordal accompanying duties each time the harpsichord has the melody. The last movement is unusually explosive, with a mad dash to the finish line.

Tonight, we also perform Bach's remarkable **E minor sonata for violin and basso continuo, BWV 1023**. The dramatic opening arpeggios give this sonata an improvisatory feel, leading to three dance movements filled with uncommonly tortured harmonic thorniness. The figured bass

Bach includes for this piece makes it clear he knew exactly what he wanted the keyboardist to play—the figures outline exact chromatic passing tones in obsessive detail—but unlike the sonatas for violin and harpsichord, Bach doesn't spell it out in written notes. I only hope to take my lead from the way Bach teaches us how to accompany a violin.



Both *sonnet* and *sonata* originate from the Latin *sonare* (to sound). *Sonata* came from the Italian *sonare* (to sound or play), and originally referred to an instrumental piece (as opposed to vocal music). *Sonnet* derives from the Italian *sonetto* (little song), meaning a short lyrical poem often set to music. In the thirteenth century, Giacomo da Lentini wrote the first 14-line sonnets with a structured rhyme scheme, and Petrarch (1304–74) later established the form now known as the Italian sonnet: eight rhyming lines (ABBAABBA) followed by six lines (with a more flexible rhyme pattern), and a shift of thought at the ninth line, known as the *volta* (“turn”).

The sonnet form spread across Europe and was adapted into English poetry in the sixteenth century, but it was **William Shakespeare** (1564–1616) who popularized what we now call the English sonnet, adapted to rhyme-poor English: three quatrains with their own rhyme schemes (ABAB CDCD EFEF), followed by a final rhymed couplet (GG), often featuring an ironic twist.

The Shakespearean sonnet became the

dominant English form, influencing poets like **John Donne**, **William Wordsworth**, and **Elizabeth Barrett Browning**, even as they modified the form to suit their own taste.

Sonnets, particularly those of Shakespeare, distill profound emotions and meditations on love, time, and human experience into a tightly structured poetic form. Despite their rhythmic precision, sonnets achieve a delicate balance between discipline and expressiveness.

Just as a poet crafts words within the constraints of meter and rhyme, Bach weaves his counterpoint with exquisite precision, allowing expressive freedom to emerge from strict structure. Both forms invite interpretation, their meaning deepening with each encounter. Whether through music or poetry, these works speak across time, offering a timeless exploration of longing, beauty, and the passage of life. We hope our musical and poetic juxtapositions this evening help to highlight the common emotional power and deeply human pursuits of both forms.



Thank you for joining us tonight, and a special thanks to the staff, elders, and clerks of Good Shepherd–Faith Presbyterian Church for welcoming us yet again into this beautiful space. I hope to see you all in a few weeks for our collaboration with TENET Vocal Artists!

— Jeffrey Grossman, *Artistic Director*



Voices of Versailles, November 2023

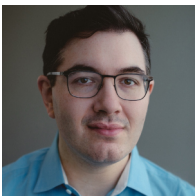


# PERFORMERS



**Gabby Beans** is a Tony Award nominated actress. She recently played Mercutio/The Friar in *ROMEO AND JULIET* on Broadway, opposite Rachel Zegler and Kit Connor. She has won an Obie Award and a Lortel Award for Best Performance in a Lead Role for last year's production of *JONAH* at the Roundabout Theatre Company. She recently wrapped a supporting role in Ethan Coen's feature film *HONEY DON'T*, and she can now be seen in *PRESUMED INNOCENT* on Apple TV+. Other recent TV credits include *SUCCESSION*, *THE GOOD FIGHT*, *HOUSE OF CARDS*, *BLUE BLOODS*, and *RAY DONOVAN*.

[gabbybeans.com](http://gabbybeans.com)



Keyboardist and conductor **Jeffrey Grossman** specializes in vital, engaging performances of music of the past, through processes that are intensely collaborative and historically informed. As the artistic director of the Sebastians, Jeffrey has directed Bach's *Passions* and Handel's *Messiah* from the organ and harpsichord, and he is a frequent performer with TENET, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, and numerous other ensembles across the country. Recent seasons include his conducting operas of Haydn and Handel with Juilliard Opera, leading Monteverdi's *Vespers* with the Green Mountain Project in New York and Venice, and conducting a workshop of a new Vivaldi pastiche opera for the

Metropolitan Opera. A native of Detroit, Michigan, he holds degrees from Harvard, Juilliard, and Carnegie Mellon University. Jeffrey teaches performance practice at Yale University. [jeffreygrossman.com](http://jeffreygrossman.com)



**Daniel Lee** thrives in the intersection of the arts and spirituality. His work involves redefining the roles of sacred and secular music with regards to their intention, function, and venue. Praised by *The New York Times* as "soulful" and "ravishing," he performs as a period violinist and leader with various ensembles throughout the United States and Europe, including his own, the Sebastians. He currently serves as the concertmaster for the Providence Baroque Orchestra (RI) and the resident baroque orchestra at the Washington National Cathedral (DC). He performs on various historical instruments and fosters ongoing collaborative research with luthier Karl Dennis (Warren, RI) and bowmaker David Hawthorne (Waltham, MA). When not traveling and performing, he splits his time between Willard, MO, where he pastors a Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation, and New Haven, CT, where he teaches early music at the Yale School of Music. Born in Chicago and raised in Seoul, South Korea, and in NYC, Daniel is equally (un)fluent in Korean and in English. He identifies himself as ethnically a New Yorker. He enjoys learning about different cultures and is a student of ancient languages. [danielslee.com](http://danielslee.com)

## THE SEBASTIANS

**The Sebastians are a dynamic and vital musical ensemble specializing in music of the baroque and classical eras.** Lauded as "everywhere sharp-edged and engaging" (*The New York Times*), the Sebastians have also been praised for their "well-thought-out articulation and phrasing" (*Early Music Review*) and "elegant string playing... immaculate in tuning and balance" (*Early Music Today*). Their 2018 unconducted *St. Matthew Passion* with TENET Vocal Artists was called "shattering" and "a performance of uncommon naturalness and transparency" (*NYT*).

Recent seasons have included dozens of originally conceived programs, including collaborations with poets, choreographers, and actors; a musical installation in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine; programs dealing with musical "immigration" and nationalism; and major works of J.S. Bach.



Photos by Michael Kushner and Grace Copeland

They have performed at the Princeton Festival, Music Matters, Friends of Music at Pequot Library, the Yale Collection of Musical Instruments, Juilliard in Aiken, in the Twelfth Night Festival and Concerts@One at Trinity Wall Street, Early Music in Columbus, the Renaissance and Baroque Society of Pittsburgh, the Academy of Early Music, and Houston Early Music.

# SUPPORT THE SEBASTIANS

## The Sebastians are a 501(c)3 non-profit.

Producing these concerts is a labor of love that your tax-deductible gifts help make possible. With your support, we can bring these baroque treasures to life and share them with audiences around New York and across the country.

If this music moves you, please consider making a donation— no amount is too small. You can give online at [sebastians.org/support](https://sebastians.org/support), or by mailing a check made out to “Sebastian Chamber Players” to 163 Saint Nicholas Avenue, #2H, New York, NY 10026. **Thank you.**

## THANK YOU

The Sebastians would like to thank all of our first-time supporters, as well as the generous donors who have already renewed their support for 2024–25. We couldn't do it without you!

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Brenda Van Ness

*\* This list up-to-date as of Feb. 20, 2025.  
Please forgive any errors or omissions.*



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**NYC Cultural  
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The Sebastians 2024–25 concerts are made possible, in part, by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature.

This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.



**BACH, IN CONVERSATION**

Saturday, September 14 at 2pm & 5pm

**FIREWORKS & FLOURISHES**

Thursday, October 10 at 7:30pm

**VIM & VIGOR**

Sunday, November 10 at 3pm

**SONNETS & SONATAS**

Saturday, March 1 at 5pm

**CONFESSIONS**

PRESENTED BY  
TENET VOCAL ARTISTS

Saturday, March 22 at 6pm

**BACH: MARKUS PASSION**

WITH MUSIC BEFORE 1800  
AND CHATHAM BAROQUE

Sunday, April 13 at 4pm

**ALL STRINGS, NO BACH**

Saturday, May 10 at 5pm



**AMERICAN BACH SOCIETY  
BIENNIAL CONFERENCE**

Thursday, September 26 at 7:30pm  
Atlanta, GA

**CAPITAL REGION CLASSICAL**

Sunday, October 13 at 3pm  
Albany, NY

**JAMESPORT MEETING HOUSE**

Saturday, November 9 at 7:30pm  
Jamesport, NY

**CHAMBER MUSIC DETROIT**

Sunday, December 15 at 4pm  
Detroit, MI

**BACH: MARKUS PASSION  
WITH MUSIC BEFORE 1800  
AND CHATHAM BAROQUE**

Friday, April 11 at 7:30pm  
Pittsburgh, PA

**TICKETS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS AT SEBASTIANS.ORG**