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SCHOLARLY PROGRAM NOTES OF HE  
ZHANHAO'S (何占豪) AND CHEN GANG'S  
(陈钢) BUTTERFLY LOVERS VIOLIN  
CONCERTO, JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH'S  
CHACONNE FOR SOLO VIOLIN AND  
LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN'S VIOLIN  
SONATA OP. 12 NO. 1

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CHACONNE FOR SOLO VIOLIN AND LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN'S VIOLIN SONATA  
OP. 12 NO. 1

by

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B.M., Conservatorio de Música de Puerto Rico, 2015

Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
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A Research Paper Submitted in Partial

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Approved by:

Michael Barta, Chair

Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF

HERSON A. PÉREZ VALENTÍN, for the Master of Music degree in MUSIC, presented on APRIL 11, 2017, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: SCHOLARLY PROGRAM NOTES OF HE ZHANHAO'S (何占豪) AND CHEN GANG'S (陈钢) BUTTERFLY LOVERS VIOLIN CONCERTO, JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH'S CHACONNE FOR SOLO VIOLIN AND LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN'S VIOLIN SONATA OP. 12 NO. 1

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Michael Barta

The document that is presented here is a scholarly program note on the Graduation Recital of Master of Music in Violin Performance of Herson A. Pérez Valentín. This scholarly program note will introduce He Zhanhao's (何占豪) and Chen Gang's (陈钢) "Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto," Johann Sebastian Bach's Chaconne for unaccompanied violin and Ludwig van Beethoven's Violin Sonata Op. 12 No. 1. The document will show a synopsis of the pieces accompanied with historical background and analysis for better understanding of the works.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
ABSTRACT .....	i
LIST OF FIGURES .....	iii
CHAPTERS	
CHAPTER 1 – Analysis and discussion of the Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto .....	1
CHAPTER 2 – Analysis and discussion of Johann Sebastian Bach’s Chaconne for Solo Violin.....	14
CHAPTER 3 –Analysis and discussion of Ludwig van Beethoven’s Violin Sonata Op. 12 No.1.....	20
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	22
VITA .....	23

## LIST OF FIGURES

<u>FIGURE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Figure 1 .....	6
Figure 2 .....	7
Figure 3 .....	8
Figure 4 .....	14

## CHAPTER 1

### HE ZHANHAO'S (何占豪) AND CHEN GANG'S (陈钢) BUTTERFLY LOVERS VIOLIN CONCERTO

The “Butterfly Lovers” Violin Concerto is a modern piece composed in 1959 by Chinese composers He Zhanhao and Chen Gang. This Violin Concerto is often referred in the Western world as the “Butterfly Lovers” Violin Concerto but it is more commonly known in China as the He Zhanhao and Chen Gang Violin Concerto. The Concerto is based on an ancient Chinese legend called the Liang Shanbo (梁山伯) and Zhu Yingtai (祝英台) tale, often abbreviated as Liang Zhu (梁祝). In English it is also referred as the Chinese “Romeo & Juliet.” The legend of Liang Shanbo(梁山伯) and Zhu Yingtai(祝英台) is a story of two lovers and the circumstances that they have to face because of their unexpected love.

The tale begins with a young Chinese girl, Zhu Yingtai(祝英台) from the Jin Dynasty. In those times women were not allowed to pursue education, nevertheless Zhu Yingtai(祝英台) decided to go to the city of Hangzhou in southeast China where she disguised herself as a man to enter a school. In her studies she met Liang Shanbo(梁山伯) and they became very close friends. After three years of studies Zhu Yingtai(祝英台) had to return back home, however she never had revealed her true identity to Liang Shanbo(梁山伯). By this time the young Chinese girl had fallen in love with her friend. She decided to tell Liang Shanbo(梁山伯) to marry her sister, this was a common practice between educated Chinese men who were close, to marry people of their families. This was to intertwine families and to bring more unity to their friendship.

Zhu Yingtai(祝英台) did not have a younger sister but Liang Shanbo(梁山伯) accepted her invitation without knowing this.

After a year Liang Shanbo(梁山伯) went to visit his friend in his hometown. When he found out that the young sister that Zhu Yingtai(祝英台) promised him was in fact Zhu Yingtai (祝英台) herself he was surprised but happy so he decided to be together and get married. However, Zhu Yingtai's(祝英台) parents at the time had promised their daughter's hand to someone else. Her parents did not approve of their love so they forced her to marry the wealthy man called Ma Wencai and asked Liang Shanbo(梁山伯) to depart. Liang Shanbo(梁山伯) left and when he returned to Hangzhou, he got ill from his broken heart and died. On Zhu Yingtai's(祝英台) wedding day she was told by someone that Liang Shanbo(梁山伯) had passed away. When she heard the news she immediately went to his grave. When she arrived she cried with great pain and sorrow and then the heavens were so moved that it started to rain and the earth trembled. Liang Shanbo's (梁山伯) grave cracked open and Zhu Yingtai(祝英台) jumped into his grave. Suddenly they miraculously transformed into butterflies and flew away together. Min-Tzu Chao refers to a comparison made by Hong Xin. Hong Xin states that this tale is similar to the Western romantic love story of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

1) the hero and heroine met accidentally and fell in love of their own free will; 2) there were hidden conflicts and crises in their love; 3) someone came along and helped them in the realization of their love; 4) the lovers were crushed and destroyed by a 'reactionary' force; and 5) their lives ended tragically. Therefore, through the resembling relationship between *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Butterfly Lovers*, the spirit of their love remains immortal everywhere in the world through generations. Many centuries passed by, the stories have inspired young people to pursue their own romantic love. Due to conditions in the Chinese feudal era, young people did not have the right to marry for love. Their parents arranged most of the marriages. For Ying-tai, her desire to pursue her love for Shan-bo was so strong that she could not live without him.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Chao, Min-Tzu. "Interpretation and Expressive Imagery in the Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto on Double Bass: Transcribed by Yung-Chiao Wei." Doctoral thesis, Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 2011.



The “Butterfly Lovers” Violin Concerto is a mixture of East Asian and Western styles created by He Zhanhao and Chen Gang, two Chinese students of the Shanghai Conservatory School of Music. Zhanhao is a violinist and well known composer. He was born in 1933 and a native of Zhuji in the Zhejiang Province. In the early stages of his career in 1950 he joined a traditional Chinese opera troupe from his region. There he learned traditional Chinese music and instruments like the *erhu* that is often referred as the Chinese violin. In 1952 Zhanhao also came in contact with *Yueju* opera also known as *Shaoxing* opera where he worked as an accompanist. When he was gaining experience on the Chinese traditions he had the opportunity to perform Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai (The Butterfly Lovers) in the *Yueju* operas. This was his first encounter with the old Chinese tale and the traditional melodies and singing style it contained.

In his studies as a violinist in the Shanghai Conservatory School of Music Zhanhao gathered a group of colleagues to discuss experimental works for the violin. He wanted to incorporate traditional Chinese techniques of playing into the Western instrument. The result of this was the emergence of the “Butterfly Lovers” Violin Concerto. In 1960 he continued to pursue his studies as a composer. Dr. Chao Min-Zu comments the following regarding He Zhanhao’s musical influence: “Inspired by the mastering of foreign techniques and familiarity with traditional Chinese music, his motto of composing—nationalization of foreign formality, and modernization of traditional folk music—has been adapted for his entire composition life.”<sup>2</sup>

The second composer of the “Butterfly Lovers” Violin Concerto is Chen Gang, born in 1935 whose father is Chen Gexin(陳歌辛). Genxin is also a Chinese composer from Shanghai.

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<sup>2</sup>Chao, Min-Tzu. "Interpretation and Expressive Imagery in the Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto on Double Bass: Transcribed by Yung-Chiao Wei." Doctoral thesis, Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 2011.

Most of Gang's musical background and influences came from his father. Chen Gang was also a pianist and in 1995 Gang decided to study music in the Shanghai Conservatory School of Music where he pursued his studies as a composer. There he met Zhanhao and together they collaborated to create the Violin Concerto. Gang has also composed several pieces during 1973-1975 that have traditional Chinese influence. The "Butterfly Lovers" Violin Concerto is an attempt by Zhanhao and Gang to make Western music appealing to the Chinese public. Zhanhao wanted the violin to become part of Chinese culture so the Chinese people may view the Western instrument through a Chinese perspective. They used traditional techniques, pentatonic scales, harmonies and sonorities and incorporated them into Western orchestra. Many of the melodies that are present in the piece come directly from the traditional Chinese opera of Liang Zhu.

Related to the political situation in China Dr. Xiaoming Lang comments the following:

Following this tradition, the Chinese government policy for all arts in the late nineteen-fifties was expressed by this brief and well-known phrase: "To make the past serve the present, and foreign things serve China." The government appealed to musicians to compose Chinese style symphonic music which must conform to the principles of "Revolutionization, Nationalization (in the meaning of race, not the state) and Popularization." Following these principles, especially Chinese nationalization, the composers of The Butterfly Lovers used the famous Chinese tale 'Liang-Zhu' to create this concerto.<sup>3</sup>

The "Butterfly Lovers" Violin Concerto was not known right away because it was written in a time close to the Cultural Revolution in China around 1966. Later in the late 1970s after restrictions in China diminished the concerto was exposed worldwide. The "Butterfly Lovers" Concerto was premiered in 1959 in Shanghai to commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. The violinist that premiered the piece as soloist was

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<sup>3</sup>Lang, Xiaoming. "He Zhanhao and Chen Gang: 'The Butterfly Lovers' violin concerto." PhD diss.

an 18-year old girl called Yu Lina(俞丽拿). The first recording of the concerto was done in 1959 with violinist Shen Rong under the direction of Fang Chengwu with the Symphony Orchestra of Shanghai Music Conservatory.

The instrumentation for the concerto is the following: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, percussion instruments (gu ban, cymbal and tam-tam), harp, piano and string section. Also, there is a piano reduction of the orchestra parts to accompany the violin. The concerto is written in one long movement and has different tempo markings through the piece. These tempo markings correspond to different parts of the story. These are the markings of the different tempos that divide the concerto in sections: (*Adagio cantabile* ♩=50), (*Allegro con brio* ♩=152), (*Adagio assai doloroso* ♩=88), (*Pesante* ♩=60), (*Allegro molto risoluto* ♩= 142), (*Patimento* ♩=126), (*Rabbioso* ♩=132), (*Lagrimoso* ♩=48), (*Presto risoluto* ♩=160), (*Patimento* ♩=54), (*Tranquillo* ♩=50), (*Adagio cantabile* ♩=48). The different tempo markings help the piece flow and evolve into a storyline. The tempo markings give the listener a better narrative perspective of the events from the legend.

The beginning of the concerto starts with (*Adagio cantabile* ♩=50). This part begins with the string sections playing quietly with the harp also present preparing the theme that will be played by the soloist. Suddenly the flute appears playing a beautiful melody imitating a bird song followed by the rest of the orchestra with a gentle and calm sonority. After this introductory passage from the orchestra is played then the violin soloist appears. The violin begins by playing a melody, this is the main melody of the piece. He Zhanhao and Chen Gang borrowed this melody from the Chinese opera of Liang Zhu. In this beginning the soloist plays the famous melody several times. The melody is exposed on the violin's high and low register exploring different timbres that are unique to the instrument.

The Chinese equivalent of the violin is called the *erhu*, which is a bowed stringed instrument with two strings. This instrument has several limits compared to the western counterpart. Today this concerto has been transcribed for *erhu*, but it does not have the same intensity of popularity as the original. Although the *erhu* may have a lack of register and projection, it is still an agile instrument. However, if the solo part is played by the *erhu* instead of the violin, the introductory theme would not have the same effect. A reason may be that the violin shows the listener the same thematic material with two different timbres, using high and low registers. An *erhu* can not accomplish this due to the limits of having only two strings.

Figure 1. *Erhu*



The composers chose to involve the western violin as the representative soloist for the legendary tale to merge the Western culture with East Asian culture. The western violin has more possibilities to express their intentions and on a broader musical spectrum. Many of the western orchestral instruments in this concerto behave as Chinese instruments. This is true not only because they are using pentatonic scales but also how their thematic material was written. When the violin is playing the introductory melody there is a responsorial alternation between the

woodwinds, particularly the clarinet. While this is occurring, in the background you can hear a harp playing several chords accompanying the main melody. The harp's chord structure, treatment and rhythm are reminiscent of the *Guzheng*. This instrument is one of the most recognized Chinese plucked string instruments. It is often referred to as the Chinese harp or zither. Just like its Western counterpart, the *Guzheng* shares many qualities with it, it is similar in technique and overall structure.

Figure 2. *Guzheng*



After the main theme is exposed and developed, the violin enters on a *Cadenza ad lib.* solo. In the beginning the solo the violin moves with rapid motions on upward pentatonic scales, also using rapid trills and rhythms, echoing the type of movement a butterfly might make. In the background the solo is accompanied by a piano in its upper register. The piano is playing several chords in an arpeggiated motion. This too is a direct reference to the *Guzheng* or the *Yangqin* that is a hammered stringed instrument similar to the western Hammered Dulcimer. The treatment of the piano, its fast and light motion, and broken chords when playing the arpeggios, imitates the nature of the *Yangqin*.

Figure 3. *Yangqin*



The *Allegro con brio* is the beginning of a fast and energizing tempo. It is marked as 152 on the quarter note ( $\text{♩}=152$ ) on a 2/4 meter. It begins with the woodwinds followed by the entrance of the soloist. Generally, in this part the violin portrays fast rhythms using the *spiccato* technique while playing a pentatonic melody in its upper register. Regarding pentatonic scales on the violin, it is a bit of an unknown territory. Pentatonic scales are not practiced a lot on the instrument because of the lack of use in western music. Different scale patterns are created depending on the positioning and fingering of the left hand. This passage is played beginning in the fourth position and stretching the fourth finger to complete the pentatonic pattern. The reason why the fourth finger is stretched consecutively to finish several melodies in this passage is because it is played on the E string of the violin. If this passage existed in a lower register it might have used string crossings and the stretching of the finger would not have been necessary. The open posture of the left hand in the E string while playing pentatonic scales are some technical occurrences that are not used in the violin on a standard repertoire. After the violin has played the fast passage on the E string the woodwind section introduces a *legato cantabile* melody that is immediately taken by the soloist. While the violin plays this legato passage the

string section enters playing the melody that the soloist introduced in the beginning of the Allegro but only with a slight variation to it.

The *Allegro con brio* has several luxurious melodies that shows off the instrument's timbre. In measure 109 there is a modulation and a new thematic material is introduced starting on the violin playing double stops. The double stop passage is played on the D and A string while rapidly shifting up to the E string in order to play a pentatonic scale with an open left hand. In this whole line the orchestra is accompanying with a light but *marcato* feel on the strong beat of the measure, supporting the violin with the rhythm it has. Beginning in measure 130 the string section is playing in *pizzicato* accompanying the violin. Further on the string section plays an eighth note on the down beat using *pizzicato* while the woodwinds answer on the second eighth note. This alternation between strings and woodwinds creates an interesting orchestral machinery effect that keeps the listener engaged. In this fast movement we also find several arpeggios by the soloist in measure 209. This passage may be a direct quote on a well known concerto: Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E minor, which has a similar arpeggio motion.

In measure 244 we have a new drastic tempo change, Adagio assai doloroso marked 88 on the eighth note ( $\text{♩}=88$ ). The thematic material played in the beginning of the concerto is reinstated here in a new key with slight rhythmic and harmonic variations. The violin uses the *glissando* technique consecutively. This technique is not common in western art music, but is very common in traditional East Asian music. It is one of the trademarks for its traditional style and it certainly can be adapted to western instruments. These *glissandos* were notated in a way that help the soloist know the exact intentions of the composers. They begin by placing an *appoggiatura* lead by a curved arrow pointing to the direction of the *glissando*.

The *appoggiatura* usually acts like a starter point for the *glissando*, sometimes the *appoggiatura* repeats the presiding note of the melody that was played to emphasize a repetition on that note. This repetition of the note followed by the *glissando* is a common trait found in Chinese music and it is typical in the language of the *erhu*. In this section in the *A tempo* in measure 269 the violin plays a beautiful lyric melody that is joined by a solo cello. This is the first time in the concerto that another instrument joins the soloist on a duo. The florid duo is accompanied by the string section playing *pianissimo* using *tremolo* creating a delicate cloud of sonority that sustains the soloists. The soloists are representative of the two lovers, the violin is Zhu Yingtai(祝英台) and the cello is Liang Shanbo(梁山伯). Rapidly after the solos are finished the orchestra starts playing, introducing a much faster theme preparing a bridge for the soloist. This leads to the *Recitando Elevato* which is a cadential moment for the violin. The cadenza-like solo was well written by the composers. It has fast runs that lead to several chords using an open D string that make the violin resonate.

Also, octave moving with *glissandos* on a downward motion followed by *tremolos*. The melody played in the octave movement is responded immediately by the brass section. In this segment the orchestra occasionally intervenes playing several loud chords supporting the soloist on its down beats. The orchestra introduces a faster tempo, *Allegro molto risoluto* marked 142 the quarter note ( $\downarrow=142$ ). In this fast *Allegro* the soloist starts playing the same melody as it played in the beginning of the *Allegro con brio* and in the same key of G but with double stops and chords added. These chords resonate a lot on the instrument not only because it is in a vibrant key but also because the majority of the chords contain three open strings. Similar to passages from the *Allegro con brio*, the orchestra plays with the soloist every time the violin does the open chords giving it rhythmic support. A few measures ahead starting in measure 394



these same chords are played in unison with the soloist, the whole orchestra and soloist have the same rhythm. Rapidly the violinist plays a fast passage crossing all three strings. The style in which this line is made is very similar to Vivaldi's writing in his violin solo concertos. It has a folk-like feel that is idiomatic of the instrument.

In the *Pantimento* marked as 126 on the quarter note ( $\text{♩}=126$ ), the violinist finishes the fast passage and unites with the orchestra playing in unison. The soloist has the same thematic material that the violins from the orchestra have but with a slight alteration adding some extra notes to form chords. On many occasions in the whole concerto you can see this style of writing when the soloist joins the orchestra *tutti*. This style of writing is more used in the Baroque period when the soloist joins the *tutti* often, and occasionally in the Romantic period composers also wrote this way. The *Rabbioso* marked 132 the quarter note ( $\text{♩}=132$ ) is merely an orchestral transition. In this moment the orchestra picks up the tempo leading to the *Lagrimoso* marked as 48 on the quarter note ( $\text{♩}=48$ ) which is a much slower tempo. Near the end of the *Rabbioso* there is a modulation beginning the *Lagrimoso* in E flat. The concerto so far had only sharp keys, this is the first time a flat key is introduced. This adds a darker tone to the soloist and the string section in general. Again, the principal cello of the orchestra joins the soloist and the slow duo between the instruments is repeated.

In the *Presto risoluto* marked as 160 on the quarter note ( $\text{♩}=160$ ) the tempo changes drastically into a faster one again. In this new marking starting at measure 468 to measure 647 it is very much like a recapitulation of previous material that was used by the soloist during the concerto. The violinist plays several recitative-like solos, fast pentatonic scales on the E string, many double stops, *tremolos*, and the same scales that were used in the beginning of the *Allegro con brio*. The only difference that can be found between these measures is a passage that has

double stops combined with the Vivaldi-like three string crossing movement. In measure 634 there is a drastic metric change to 1/4 that lasts until the *Cadenza recitativa* at the end of this segment. This is not the first time that the 1/4 meter is introduced in the concerto, but this is the first time that it is more noticeable to the listener's ear. After the soloist plays its cadenza the orchestra takes command of several transitions. The orchestra plays without the soloist for 27 measures before the *Adagio cantabile* that recapitulates the beginning of the concerto. In this moment the orchestra goes to a different tempo marking, *Tranquillo* marked as 50 on the quarter note ( $\downarrow=50$ ). Between the *Tranquillo* and the *Adagio cantabile* marked as 48 on the quarter note ( $\downarrow=48$ ) the harp takes a very important role for the transitions. The harp plays several notes that leads the orchestra into the recapitulation of the original key of G. Also, the harp has a solo using glissandos that transition into the *Adagio cantabile*. The string section takes over the principal melody of the concerto that was originally played by the soloist in the beginning.

The soloist enters reestablishing the main melody. The melody is the same but with slight alterations. In the *Più mosso* in measure 684 to measure 692 there is a new variation to the original melody and it is accompanied by *pizzicatos* on the strings and the piano. This part sounds very much like traditional Chinese music like if it were played only by traditional instruments. Close to the end the main melody is reinstated with the orchestra and the soloist playing in unison in a *forte* dynamic. This is the last time this melody is played. In measure 710 the soloist enters playing in *pianissimo* along with the piano. The piano plays several arpeggiated chords accompanying the violin, these two are the only ones present. A measure before the ending the soloist sustains a high D with the marking *Calando*. While the soloist gradually decreases tempo and sound there is a subtle flute solo leading to the last measure. In the ending the soloist and string section conclude with the final note in harmonics. This delicate ending

symbolizes Liang Shanbo(梁山伯) and Zhu Yingtai(祝英台), the two lovers that have turned into butterflies emerging from the ground flying together forever.

He Zhanhao and Chen Gang are two brilliant composers that have used many elements of their traditional Chinese folk music and incorporated them into a western ensemble. The use of specific instruments like the harp, piano, strings, woodwinds and the treatment they had elevated the concerto to be a full experience that reveals a wonderful tale between two lovers. The solo violin part was written in excellence and it was considered along with the orchestra to create a nationalistic style with the western instruments.

## CHAPTER 2

### JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH'S CHACONNE FOR SOLO VIOLIN

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) is one of the most important composers from the Baroque period. His works are still known today, but in his time he was not universally recognized. Bach's music is rich in counterpoint, harmony and motivic patterns that he established in his works as a German composer. His *Chaconne* for Solo Violin is one of the most recognized pieces for unaccompanied violin. Bach's Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin were completed around 1720. They are considered one of the major influences in the repertoire of the modern violinist. It would be essential for any advanced violinist to read or perform the famous *Chaconne* or any of Bach's solo works. The *Chaconne* is part of a collection of Baroque dances from the Partita II, and is the concluding piece of the whole work. A *Chaconne* is a Baroque dance of Spanish origin that is usually written in a triple meter. It is a piece that has continuous variations based on a repetitive bass line known as a ground bass or chord progressions, similar to the Baroque *passacaglia*. Bach uses the following chord progression for his *Chaconne*: (Dm, E dim 7/D, A7/C#, Dm, Bflat, Gm, Dm/A, C#dim, Dm, E dim.7/D, A7/C#, Dm, Bflat, Gm, A, A7, Dm). This illustration from Dr. Larry Lipkis shows the voicing Bach placed for the chords.

Figure 4. *Chaconne* chord progression

The figure displays a musical score for the Chaconne chord progression in D minor, 3/4 time. The score is written on three staves. Above the notes, chord names are provided: Dm, Edim7/D, A7/C#, Dm, Bb, Gm, Dm/A, C#dim, Dm, Edim7/D, A7/C#. Below the notes, Roman numerals are provided: d: i, iiø4/2, V6/5, i, VI, iv, i 6/4, viio, i, A, A7, iiø4/2, V6/5. The notes are: Staff 1: D4, F4, A4, Bb4; Staff 2: D4, F4, A4, Bb4; Staff 3: D4, F4, A4, Bb4. The progression is: Dm (D4, F4, A4), Edim7/D (D4, F4, A4, Bb4), A7/C# (D4, F4, A4, Bb4), Dm (D4, F4, A4), Bb (D4, F4, A4, Bb4), Gm (D4, F4, A4, Bb4), Dm/A (D4, F4, A4, Bb4), C#dim (D4, F4, A4, Bb4), Dm (D4, F4, A4), Edim7/D (D4, F4, A4, Bb4), A7/C# (D4, F4, A4, Bb4), Dm (D4, F4, A4), Bb (D4, F4, A4, Bb4), Gm (D4, F4, A4, Bb4), A (D4, F4, A4, Bb4), A7 (D4, F4, A4, Bb4), Dm (D4, F4, A4).

Meredith Little and Natalie Jenne discuss the different treatments on progressions that one may find in a *Chaconne*.

It is difficult to list the identifying characteristics of the chaconnes and passacaglias because there are so many exceptions. For example, most chaconnes and passacaglias are in triple meter (metric structure III–2–2) but several occur in the duple meter, and it is not uncommon to find a temporary shift to duple meter within a long piece. The continuous variations of these two dances are based on a four-measure phrase with an identifiable of fixed-bass pattern. However, in many pieces the “fixed” bass changes as the piece progresses; and occasionally one finds an eight-measure fixed bass pattern.<sup>4</sup>

This is true of Bach’s *Chaconne*, we can see that his chord progressions are not the expected four measures but eight measures of progression. Bach’s *Chaconne* chord progressions allowed him to create around 64 variations based on them. Each of these variations contain technically challenging passages that demand a lot from the performer. Bach’s use of unorthodox chords disturbs the player’s mind and muscle memory. They are the major challenge that violinists face when studying the *Chaconne*. Many of the chords that he used are not considered idiomatic because of the unconventional stretching of the fingers and playing in odd positions. Bach was an organist, so the way that he wrote the chords for the *Chaconne* are in fact easier to be played on a keyboard instrument than a bowed string instrument. There are many allegations regarding Bach’s *Chaconne*, many believe that there are many hidden meanings from the Lutheran dogma and numerology. Many attribute Bach of hiding symbolism of spiritual significance by using gematria. This ancient practice originated from the Babylonians, Greeks, Assyrians and also adapted by Jews and it consists of adding a numerical value to letters, words or phrases. It is said

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<sup>4</sup>Meredith Little and Jenne Natalie. *Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998.

that Bach has hidden his name using this technique in many of his works. An article published by David Rumsey titled "The Symbols of the Bach Passacaglia" states the following:

In much of Bach's music, especially his religious works, certain forms of numerology are often present. This partly involves the use of gematria, in ancient practices going back to the Cabbala . There is evidence that Bach was using this system in many of his works, 38 particularly those which had some special significance, for example religious music. Should we find evidence of an appropriate use of numerology in the Passacaglia it will give significant support to our previous deductions. The Covenants are implicitly doctrines of faith, of Christian belief, or creed. The word "CREDO" may be represented by numbers according to the Cabbala system as: C=3 R=17 E=5 D=4 O=14. These numbers total 43, thus making "43" the number-equivalent of "Credo." If we total the 14 intervals of the passacaglia theme (C-G=5th, G-E =3rd, E -F=2nd, etc.) we also get 43: C -G -E=- F- G -A=- F- G- D- E=- B- C- FF- GG – CC. The musical intervals thus created may be summed accordingly:  
 $5+3+2+2+2+3+2+4+2+4+2+5+2+5=43$ .<sup>5</sup>

This evidence shows that Bach consecutively practiced the use of gematria in his works, incorporating symbolism using intervals. Bach has hidden chorales within the *Chaconne*. Musicologist Dr. Helga Thoene has researched about the *Chaconne* and has found several chorales hidden in the piece.

There are eleven chorales used in the Ciaccona overall; six in the first minor part, five in the major, and three repeated from the first minor part in the third part. The main chorale used in the Ciaccona is "Christ lag in Todesbanden" ("Christ Lay in Death's Bonds"). This chorale's first and last line frame the whole three-part Ciaccona (and the first part on itself). This chorale derived from Martin Luther (1483-1546) and is a hymn for the first day of Easter celebration, written in 1524. It is also found in Bach's Cantata (BWV 4, Number 2, a Duet for Soprano and Alto).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Rumsey, David. "The Symbols of the Bach Passacaglia." David Rumsey: Organist, Consultant. Last modified 1992. [http://www.davidrumsey.ch/davidrumsey\\_bio.php](http://www.davidrumsey.ch/davidrumsey_bio.php).

<sup>6</sup>Stroh, Irene. "Bach Ciaccona for Solo Violin: Hidden Chorales and Messages." Master's thesis, Masters of Music, 2011.

The variations on the Bach *Chaconne* get complex as the piece develops. One of the first simple variations starting in measure 25 consist of simple melodic lines with eight note and sixteenth note value. This rhythmic motion will continue until it is broken in measure 64 when Bach introduces Thirty-second notes on a new variation. In this fast passage between measure 64 and 75 we find ascending and descending lines that stop on specific notes that are part of the original cord progression. This shows how Bach mastered the variation technique displaying it in different forms.

In measure 88, a new complex variation is added that challenges the right hand technique of the violinist. This variation consists of many arpeggios. The arpeggios start in the fifth position on the G string of the violin. The arpeggios are written in blocks of chords rather than notating the rhythmic value of them. Since there are no written rhythmic value different violin schools from all over the world rely on oral tradition on how this passage is played. The arpeggiated bow stroke used for this section consists on a left to right motion crossing all four strings of the violin. If we compare different performances from recognized violinists it is noticeable that they engage the passage in contrasting ways depending on how this passage was passed down to them by their teacher. The long fest of arpeggios begins in measure 88 and ends in measure 118. During this passage there is a change in the 30 measures of arpeggios, starting in measure 103. Performance practices traditionally passed from teacher to student involves changing the rhythmic pattern of the arpeggios in this section. The change that violinists make when performing it does not appear in the score. Bach did not write a different pattern; he still continues to use the same writing.

A very important moment in the initiation of a new variation in measure 131 is the contrasting change of key. Bach has used the key of D minor in most of the work, but in this

moment he uses D major. The major key is a drastic change in atmosphere giving the piece a wonderful twist. Original manuscripts of Baroque music rarely have any dynamic markings. Another performance practice that is based in oral tradition is this variation. Violinists are told to perform it a quietly and with a delicate style. The passage is written in a way that strongly resembles a Baroque organ. This variation is the most different from all of the existing ones and it is treated opposite of the other ones. The change of key and chords states that there is a clear difference between a *passacaglia* and a *chaconne*. Although very similar, the ground bass of the *passacaglia* will always stay the same while the *chaconne* has more freedom in harmonic treatment. Johann Sebastian Bach's *Chaconne* for Solo Violin is a very complex work that relies mostly on oral tradition. Violinists are presented with many options in how to approach the work stylistically.

The majority of violinists use the modern violin to play Bach's works. It is evident that this piece was not played with such instrument. In Bach's time the instrument was very different compared to its modern form. The bow was more curved and shorter, the bridge of the violin was shorter and the measurements and proportions were slightly smaller. Therefore, the change of instrument alters the style of performance. The *Chaconne* performance has greatly changed in the past centuries. Today many violinists will try to perform Bach's *Chaconne* as close to actual Baroque style with the modern instrument.

Editions like the *Bärenreiter Urtext* are considered to be one of the most reliable sources of the *Chaconne*. Musicians attempt to be stylistically correct when using the *Bärenreiter Urtext*. This version contains two options on how to approach the performance. Many scholars attribute the writing of Bach's works to have been copied by Anna Magdalena Bach. Therefore, it is uncertain that the original transcriptions in the *Bärenreiter Urtext* is Bach's handwriting. The



Baroque period is approached in many ways by different schools of performance. Nevertheless, it demands virtuosity and creativity from the performer. Bach's *Chaconne* is crucial for the development of a violinist. The skills used in the *Chaconne* are still acknowledged and are considered an important part of the violin technique.

### CHAPTER 3

#### LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN'S VIOLIN SONATA OP. 12 NO. 1

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) was one of the most exuberant composers from the mid to late Classical period. His innovative use of patterns, abrupt dynamics, and complexity sets his music on a high level. It is evident that Beethoven had a deep level of cogitation when writing music. His drastic and moody personality comes out in all of his works, as represented in his Violin Sonatas. Beethoven's Violin Sonata Op. 12 No.1 is in the key of D major. It consists of three movements: *Allegro con brio*, *Tema con Variazioni* and *Rondo Allegro*

D major is one of the best keys for a violin to play because it allows the instrument to resonate properly and it is within the left hand's best interest. This key allows the violin to have a brighter sound because of the use of open strings such as A and D. The first chord that is played in the beginning of the sonata is a brilliant D major chord played in unison by the piano and the violin. This chord is treated differently between the two instruments. Violinists tend to arpeggiate chords that have more than two notes in them, while the piano instinctively will play it differently. Horace and Hanna Rosenberg point out details regarding the treatment of the initiating chord. "Pianists have entirely done away with the stereotype arpeggio fashionable at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Regrettably, this is not true of the violinist, who still have the bad habit of spreading almost all the chords, which leads to a dilution of the rhythm. In this case there is neither musical nor technical reason for it."<sup>7</sup>

The reason why a violinist will automatically break a chord is due to how traditionally they have learned to play Baroque music. In Baroque music, chords are either broken or

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<sup>7</sup>Rosenberg, Horace and Hanna. *Beethoven The Sonatas for Piano and Violin*. Verlag, Munich: Toccata Press, 1985.

arpeggiated. Keyboard instrumentalists also practiced the broken chord technique but composers like Beethoven were looking for a different style and form of playing. Today many violin instructors teach their pupils to try to play the chord with all three notes present without having to break it. The violin is a very agile instrument; it can play three notes at the same time but it depends on the voicing of the chord. Technically, the violin can play three notes but it is only able to sustain the two upper notes. Some performers choose to break the chord for Beethoven's Violin Sonatas, others decide to play all three notes and sustain the last ones.

This first movement has many lyric passages between the violin and piano. Both instruments have equal distribution of solos in Beethoven's sonatas, and they manifest their ability for virtuosity and independence. Even if there are moments when both instruments showcase their nature, they also accompany each other in many occasions. In bar 147 to bar 154 you can see how the violinist accompanies the piano instead of playing the melody. Also, there are many moments in this movement that both piano and violin are playing different lines and unite on the same rhythmic pattern, such as bar 220 to the end.

The second movement is Themes and Variations. Beethoven wrote four contrasting variations to this movement. The theme is in A major which is different from the last key. The beginning is marked as *Andante con moto*. It begins with an introduction by the piano followed by the entrance of the violin carrying the melody. The character of the movement is on a medium and soft tempo that allows the violinist to play lush lyric lines. After it concludes, the first variation is played. This variation is rather simple for the violinist. Its role is to accompany the pianist who carries the main melody. The second variation exposes the violin's upper register in an ascending scale line with fast and rhythmic patterns. The third variation is a bit more drastic, this one engages the soloists on a wider dynamic range and intensity. This variation is different

from the others because Beethoven changed the key to A minor. Beethoven also uses large *crescendos* and dynamics like *fortissimo* and abrupt *pianos*. Beethoven's treatment of dynamics was not unusual if we compare them to other composers from the Classical Period. He utilizes *crescendos*, sudden *pianos* and unforeseen *sforzandos* that keep the performer and listener on edge. His fourth variation returns to A major and is similar in essence of the initial theme in the beginning. It brings the listener back to the state of which he initiated the movement. This is a great effect created by Beethoven because it also prepares the atmosphere for the third movement.

The third movement is marked as *Rondo Allegro*, beginning with the piano and following the violin. The same recurring theme is heard several times which is the nature of a *Rondo* form. Just like the first movement there is a modulation from the key of D major to F major with several modulations to G minor and D minor creating a path to return to the original key of D major. After the *Rondo* and clear melodies exchanged between piano and violin near the ending the instruments exchange a motive responding each other. After this motive is exchanged several times the motive is played together and suddenly a downward scale by the piano appears while the violin plays three chords. Both instruments ending on the third chord concludes the sonata. Beethoven's goal for his music was not to settle with the current style of the epoch, but rather to bring innovative sound. His Violin Sonatas are popularly performed today and considered important repertoire for a violinist's mastery of chamber music.

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BACH'S CHACONNE FOR SOLO VIOLIN AND LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN'S VIOLIN  
SONATA OP. 12 NO. 1

Major Professor: Michael Barta