

ARTISTIC VISION

“This program is unified less by an intellectual theme than by personal history. It's a program of ‘firsts’: every work on it either marked or was part of a major milestone in my musical development. This is doubly so in the case of a couple of them, which have close ties to my educational heritage as well. They represent not just my own history, but also the histories of those who were most influential in my progress as a musician.

The A minor solo sonata was the first solo Bach that I learned. This is an important rite of passage in every violinist's life, and I remember vividly my excitement when I reached it. The *C minor sonata* was the first Beethoven that I learned and, along with the Brahms D minor and Franck sonatas, it marked the beginning of my exposure to the art of chamber music. This, too, is an important event in the initiation of a violinist into the adult world.

The entire second half of this program is comprised of works that

appeared on my debut recording, which was recorded in 1997 and released in 1998. The repertoire on that disc was chosen by myself, my teacher Dorothy DeLay, my parents, and by the sponsors of the project. Each work that went on it was supposed to have some representative significance. The *Poeme Elegiaque* references two components of my musical identity. First, I play on an ex-Ysaye violin (a J.B. Vuillaume made specifically for Ysaye). Second, my parents were my first violin teachers - and thus my foundational influences - and they're products of the Belgian school. My father studied with Carlo van Neste and my mother with Arthur Grumiaux at the Brussels Conservatory. Ysaye, of course, is the father of the Belgian school. (We'll let Vieuxtemps have the title of grandfather.)

The Armenian pieces, of which the Baghdassarian is the main example, were a reference to my father's ethnic background. The Dvoraks were included because (perhaps ironically given that they're transcriptions) they're a

throwback to a time when violin-playing was undergoing a bit of an identity change, with the stylistic innovations of Kreisler, who adapted them for violin and piano. You might say they're a piece of the history of the violin itself. It's been ten years since my debut disc was released and fifteen or so since I learned the Bach and the Beethoven. My musical style has undergone numerous successive reworkings and overhauls, but, throughout them, I've kept revisiting the works on this program. As a result, they have yet another level of significance: they've become imprinted with features that are representative of many different stages of my musical development. As such, they serve as a document of my history as a musician, and that, in turn, makes them not just of musical but also of personal importance to me.” (*Catherine Manoukian*)

