

Gotham Early Music Scene (GEMS) presents



Thursday September 14, 2023 1:15 pm
St Malachy's Church – The Actors' Chapel in New York City
Live Streamed to midtownconcerts.org and [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com)

Edson Scheid
On Paganini's Trail ~ H.W. Ernst & More
Edson Scheid ~ period violin

Six Polyphonic Studies

Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst (1812–1865)

- I Rondino Scherzo – Con spirito
- II Allegretto – Con grazie
- III Terzetto – Allegro moderato e tranquillo
- IV Allegro risoluto
- IV Air de Ballet – Allegretto con giusto
- VI Variations on The Last Rose of Summer

Grand Caprice for Solo Violin (after Schubert's *Erlkönig*), Op. 26

Rondo from Duo in G Major for Violin and Viola, KV 423

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

Arranged for solo violin by Edson Scheid

Midtown Concerts are produced by Gotham Early Music Scene, Inc., and are made possible with support from St. Malachy's Church–The Actors' Chapel, The New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature; public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural affairs in partnership with the City Council; the Howard Gilman Foundation; and by generous donations from audience members.

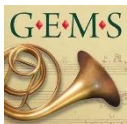
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www.gemsny.org

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst was considered to be the successor of legendary violin virtuoso Nicolò Paganini. This program showcases Ernst's incredible works for solo violin, which are rarely (if ever) performed on gut strings: the *Six Polyphonic Studies* (including the set of variations on *The Last Rose of Summer*), and the famous transcription of Schubert's song *Erlikönig*. Completing the program is Edson Scheid de Andrade's own transcription for solo violin of Mozart's Rondo from the *Duo for Violin and Viola in G Major*, KV 423.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Edson Scheid has been praised for his "polished playing" (*The Strad*), and for being a "virtuoso violinist" (*The Boston Globe*). His performance of Strauss's song *Morgen* at Carnegie Hall alongside Joyce DiDonato and Il Pomo d'Oro was described as follows: "The concertmaster, Edson Scheid, proved a worthy foil as violin soloist" (*The New York Times*).

A native of Brazil, Edson Scheid is based in New York. He performs on both modern and period instruments with many ensembles in the United States, and frequently tours in Europe, Asia, North and South America with ensembles including Les Arts Florissants and Il Pomo d'Oro. He regularly plays as concertmaster of the Clarion Orchestra, Seraphic Fire, American Baroque Orchestra, Teatro Nuovo and Il Pomo d'Oro, among other groups.

Edson Scheid's many performances of Paganini's *24 Caprices*, on both period and modern violins, have been received with enthusiasm around the world. He has been featured live in-studio on "In Tune" from BBC Radio 3 and his recording of the *Caprices* on the Baroque violin for the Naxos label has been critically acclaimed: "Far from being mere virtuoso stunts, Scheid's *Caprices* abound in the beauty and revolutionary spirit of these works..." (*Fanfare Magazine*).

His most recent solo album, "On Paganini's Trail... H. W. Ernst and more", has been released under the Centaur Label – the first recording ever of this repertoire on a period violin. *New York Concert Review* writes that "Mr. Scheid is a superb violinist and a musician who can handle the fiendish challenges of this repertoire while finding the music in it", and *Early Music America* praises Edson Scheid for taking "his time through these works, letting them breathe without losing sight of execution or musicality..."

Edson holds degrees from the Universität Mozarteum Salzburg, the Yale School of Music and The Juilliard School, where he was the recipient of a Kovner Fellowship. He is a two-time winner of the Historical Performance Concerto Competition at Juilliard, and a recipient of the Broadus Erle Prize at Yale.

www.edsonscheid.com

NEXT CONCERT: Gwendolyn Toth & Audrey Fernandez Fraser
Found in a Flea Market: The Carlo G Manuscript

Notes on the Program, by Edson Scheid

During the mid-19th Century, there was a debate in the music world: who would be the next Paganini, the legendary violinist who stupefied audiences throughout Europe with his technical virtuosity and personal magnetism? Two names on the top of the list were Camillo Sivori, who had been a student of Paganini, and Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst, an avid admirer of the Italian virtuoso. Perhaps the British journal *The Musical World* offered the definitive answer to the debate in 1843: “In short, to express all in a few words, we should say... Sivori is a *fine player*, Ernst is a *great one*.” This point of view was supported by the young violinist Joseph Joachim in a letter to Ferdinand David in 1847: “I consider Ernst to be a very great violinist and he seems to me incomparably greater than Sivori as virtuoso, artist and man”.

Ernst was born in Moravia (today's Czech Republic) and received his violin training at the Vienna Conservatoire, where he studied with Joseph Böhm, an influential violin teacher who had himself studied with Pierre Rode, one of the founders of the French school of violin playing. It was, however, a series of performances by Paganini in Vienna in 1828 that most influenced Ernst's performing and composing style. He was so impressed by those Paganini concerts that he decided to follow him on tour during the next years in an effort to learn from the Italian virtuoso and to become a master of the violin himself.

Ernst was able to achieve great success as a violinist, performing at a remarkably high level, one that seems to have impressed even Paganini himself, who attended an Ernst concert in Frankfurt in 1830. On that occasion, Ernst played Paganini's yet unpublished set of variations on *Nel cor più non mi sento* (from Paisiello's opera *La Molinara*), which he apparently had learned only from listening to Paganini's public performances of the piece, and by renting rooms next to him, so he could secretly hear the master practicing. This is perhaps the most challenging work Paganini ever composed to be played on the violin. Here, we find many of Paganini's favorite “tricks”, including the bow stroke *ricochet*, alternating left-hand *pizzicati* with bowed notes, double harmonics, double, triple, and quadruple stops, passages to be played entirely on the G string, and perhaps the most ingenious trick of all: sustaining a long note (open D string) while plucking notes in the upper strings with the fingers of the left hand.

Ernst not only incorporated most of the technical elements mentioned above in his own works, but he also went on to compose pieces for the violin that some would say are even more challenging to play than Paganini's. In his *Six Polyphonic Studies* and his transcription of Schubert's song *Erlkönig*, Ernst offers a torrent of technical difficulties, most notably in his *Study No. 6*, a set of five variations on *The Last Rose of Summer*, a very popular melody in the 19th Century which was based on a traditional Irish tune and published in 1813 as part of volume 5 of Thomas Moore's *A Selection of Irish Melodies* – this melody was so popular that many composers wrote pieces based on it, including L. van Beethoven and F. Mendelssohn, among many others. In Ernst's solo violin version, on Variation 4, the theme must be played by plucking the strings with the fingers of the left hand, while the accompaniment is provided by ascending and descending *arpeggios*. This passage is perhaps the most technically difficult one to play in the entire set. The *Studies* carry the dedication *Grüß an Freunde und Kunstbrüder* (Greetings to Friends and Brothers in Art), and each of them is dedicated to a colleague of his: No. 1 to Ferdinand Laub, No. 2 to Prosper Sainton, No. 3 to Joseph Joachim, No. 4 to Henri Vieuxtemps, No. 5 to Joseph Hellmesberger, and No. 6 to Antonio Bazzini. Ernst himself considered *Study No. 3* to be his “best” and dedicated it to his closest friend among the dedicatees. Joachim was indeed a good friend until the last years of Ernst's life. In 1864, a year before his death, when Ernst was no longer concertizing, Joachim performed at a benefit concert for his friend in London, playing Ernst's *Elegy*. On that occasion, another great violinist, Henryk Wieniawski, played Ernst's transcription of Schubert's *Erlkönig*.

Ernst was not only a great technician but was also regarded by many of his colleagues as a great musician. As reported by Andreas Moser, Joachim had the following to say about Ernst: “Never have I heard a more expressive tone than the one he produced in the Adagios of Beethoven's Quartets Op. 59 and 74 [...] In short, Paganini may have been a greater virtuoso, but he could not have played with more warmth, poetry,

and esprit than Ernst". Hector Berlioz called Ernst "a great musician as well as a great player". The musicianship and artistry of Ernst shines through his *Studies*, which are more than mere virtuoso stunts, but works of art with the power to move the listener's soul.

The arrangement for solo violin of Mozart's Rondo from his *Duo in G Major for Violin and Viola* was very much inspired by works of Ernst and Paganini, such as Ernst's transcription of Schubert's *Erlkönig* and Paganini's *Duo for solo violin* (published by Carl Guhr on the same treatise as the variations on *Nel cor più non mi sento*, in 1830). The idea of bringing to the violin a work originally intended for multiple instruments (or instrument and voice, in the case of *Erlkönig*), was fascinating. One has to find the necessary solutions to make certain passages playable on the violin, while preserving as much as possible the original ideas of the composer. I have certainly very much enjoyed working on such an arrangement.

The repertoire in today's program is rarely (if ever) performed on a period violin with gut strings and without a shoulder rest. The idea to perform them on such an instrument came from the desire to explore what it means to play these works on gut strings, with all the different colors of sound that only they can offer (gut strings kept being used by violinists until the mid-20th Century), and to incorporate some ideas of period performance practice into these works, including less use of vibrato (eminent violinists in the 19th Century encouraged sparing use of *vibrato*, including Joachim, Spohr, and de Bériot, among others) and the use of *portamento* (Beethoven's associate Anton Schindler said that Ernst "is a great violinist with fantasy and feeling though the latter suffers from the mannerism of sliding up and down"), just to mention a few. It is my hope that the listener will join me on this extraordinary journey with these solo violin works played on a period violin.