

Hear Johnny Gandelsman play the complete Bach at Salem's Old Town Hall Nov. 8

By Keith Powers / Correspondent

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“I’m trying to save the music I love.” Richard Guérin says emphatically that he isn’t any type of “heroic bureaucrat,” as he puts it. But at the same time, he believes in classical music, and wants it to stay alive, to get the public involved, and additionally, make sure that everyone knows how great it is.

If you go...

WHAT: Violinist Johnny Gandelsman, complete Bach Sonatas and Partitas

WHERE: Old Town Hall, 32 Derby Sq., Salem

WHEN: Wednesday, Nov. 8, 7:30 p.m.

TICKETS: \$10. Visit www.salemclassical.com or call 781-696-0532.

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Guérin runs Salem Classical, a series — now in its third year — of concerts at the Old Town Hall in East India Square. His next presentation could be one of those “I was there then” type concerts: violinist Johnny Gandelsman, playing all of the Bach sonatas and partitas, in one marathon performance.

The complete sonatas and partitas—more than three hours of music—make the utmost demands on the performer (Gandelsman performs from memory as well). Some may remember violinist Jennifer Koh performing the entire set in 2012 at the Rockport Chamber Music Festival, and Gandelsman himself tackled the works in 2015 in Cambridge at MIT's Killian Hall.

In addition to his solo work, Gandelsman is a member of some of the most innovative ensembles performing today. He plays regularly with Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble, and is a founding member of the terrific string quartet Brooklyn Rider.

The Moscow-born violinist's repertory has no apparent boundaries: He's performed the Bach sonatas and partitas multiple times, but has also premiered many contemporary works, by composers like Gabriel Kahane, Vijay Iyer, John Zorn and Shara Worden.

Now based in New York, Gandelsman won a Grammy Award for Best World Music album ("Sing Me Home," on Sony Masterworks) this year with the Silk Road Ensemble.

From a presenter's point of view, the complete set of sonatas and partitas is far too demanding a performance to happen often. But Guérin says "I'm not interested in traditional ways anyway.

"I say the same thing to all the musicians," he says. "I don't care what you play. You just have to care. And engage the audience in what you play.' I charge ten dollars, and I take the money at the door and give it to the musicians. Whatever that is, that's what they make."

The ticket price of ten dollars makes for casual, drop-in audiences—"most of them just walk in off the street," he says. And it turns the venerable Old Town Hall into a friendly, accessible concert space.

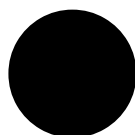
"In my opinion there can never be enough venues where classical music can coexist with other types of music," Guérin says. "My office used to look out at Old Town Hall, and I would think, 'Wouldn't it be great to have concerts there?' Acoustically it has some challenges, but we work around that."

Gandelsman's performance is part of a busy season for Salem Classical. Guitarist Aaron Larget-Caplan, the adventurous new music ensemble Some Assembly Required, and the vocal group Mirror Visions Ensemble are some of the highlighted events. The Boston Artists Ensemble, who have performed for years in Salem, has incorporated their Hamilton Hall concerts into the series.

“Classical music people are always trying to figure out how to be relevant,” Guérin says. “I saw Johnny play this set at MIT, and right before the last partita he broke down, and started crying. The whole thing was so meaningful. It’s gets kind of trippy, after you’ve been listening for more than two hours. That performance totally reminded me of what these concerts could be.”

Violinist Johnny Gandelsman performs the complete sonatas and partitas of Bach on Wednesday, Nov. 8, at Old Town Hall in Salem. For tickets and information visit www.salemclassical.com or call 781-696-0532.

Keith Powers covers music and the arts for GateHouse Media and WBUR’s ARTery. Follow [@PowersKeith](https://twitter.com/PowersKeith); email to keithmichaelpowers@gmail.com



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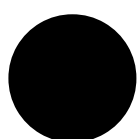
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