

# The Ph.D./D.M.A. Programs in Music

December 8th, 2021 1:00 p.m.

*Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall*



## Jessica Oddie, violin with Ari Livne, piano and Peter Clark, violin

Drones & Violin (2011)  
*Material in E Flat*

Nico Muhly  
(b. 1981)

Duets on Folk Themes (1945)  
*Preludium*  
*I Krakowiak*  
*Nokturn*  
*Kujawiak*  
*II Krakowiak*  
*Piosenka*  
*Marsz groteskowy*

Grażyna Bacewicz  
(1906–69)

Ark for Violin Duo (2017)  
I. *Frantic*  
II. *Expansive*  
III. *Locked Groove*

Anderson Alden  
(b. 1991)

### INTERMISSION

Violin Sonata in E-Flat Major, Op. 18 (1887)  
*Allegro, ma non troppo*  
*Improvisation: Andante cantabile*  
*Finale: Andante – Allegro*

Richard Strauss  
(1864–1949)

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the D.M.A. degree.

## Notes on the Program

The sonic imagination of **Nico Muhly** draws upon the sound worlds of disparate genres, from minimalism to pop to music of the distant past. Growing up in Rhode Island, Muhly sang in boys' choirs, loving above all the Renaissance repertoire he encountered there. Later, when he studied composition at Juilliard and English at Columbia, he worked as an assistant to Philip Glass, whose minimalist music Muhly describes as enacting the "simplest musical processes" in a way that is "familiar and achingly beautiful." These two influences of the English renaissance and American minimalism resonate in much of Muhly's music, as critics often note. In **Drones & Violin**, their echoes can be heard as well, as Muhly invites the violin to explore dissonances, resolutions, and textures in small, expressive cells that expand and contract above the thrum of the piano's drone.

"Drones & Violin" was written for violinist Pekka Kuusisto in 2011. Kuusisto, for whom Muhly has also written a violin concerto, is known in the violin world for his exploratory style of sound creation, as well as his spontaneous, near-improvisational approach to staples of the repertoire. Indeed, the notion of improvisation is ever-present in "Drones & Violin." Muhly writes, "I started writing the Drones pieces as a method of developing harmonic ideas over a static structure. The idea is something not unlike singing along with one's vacuum cleaner, or with the subtle but constant humming found in most dwelling-places... the Drones pieces are an attempt to honor these drones and stylize them." One can certainly envision Muhly singing improvised melodies above the hums of the everyday modern world, and yet there is also a spirit of timelessness in this work. Perhaps we can also imagine the shadow of the boy Muhly in the cloisters, singing sacred music of the Notre-Dame school above a bourdon drone, or enacting one of the vocal drones that Guido d'Arezzo encountered in Rome during his travels and described as a type of organum. Through the drone in the piano and the improvisational interplay of the violin with it, ancient and modern sound worlds are brought together in this work from 2011.

On the 20th of August, 1945, **Grażyna Bacewicz** wrote from war-torn Poland to her younger brother Witek:

*"We were so happy when we finally received letters from you. We see from your letters, however, that you have no idea at all what we've gone through and how much we've had to endure... Suffice to say that Warsaw is no more, that the city is gone...nothing but heaps of ruins. The Germans slaughtered the populace. Mummy's house does not exist, it has burnt down...they have lost everything."*

Forced to flee Warsaw with her two-year-old daughter and ailing mother after the failed Warsaw Uprising in 1945, Bacewicz narrowly avoided extended time in forced labor camps and managed to return to Lodz, her hometown. It was during this tumultuous time, in which Bacewicz and her family became refugees in their own country, that Bacewicz wrote her **Duets on Folk Themes**. These works marked the beginning of the second phase of her vast compositional output, in which she took inspiration from folklore.

Bacewicz, born in 1909, had to contend in her lifetime with two World Wars and a society that often discriminated against her gender. Despite the cards she was dealt, she became one of Poland's most important twentieth-century composers, as well the first Polish woman composer to be recognized internationally, all while maintaining a flourishing career as a highly respected violinist, orchestral leader and teacher. In the first phase of her compositional life, Bacewicz composed exclusively in a neoclassical idiom. After 1945, folklore became a staple of her composing style, as evident in these

seven vivid vignettes that comprise the “Duets on Folk Themes.” Bacewicz never lost touch with the musical roots of her pre-war musical education with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, and the duets also feature moments that highlight modernist harmonic techniques, much like Bartók’s 44 Duos from 1931.

The Preludium is a gentle introduction to the set of folk themes, and its simplicity (setting aside its ever-changing meter) is permeated with a touch of nostalgia. The two Krakowiak movements are stylized forms of the Polish folk dance of the same name, marked by duple meter, accented syncopations, and a vivacious tempo. In contrast to these humorous Krakowiak dances, the Nokturn enters a darker world, embracing moments of harsh modernist dissonances. The Kujawiak that follows is one of the five national dances of Poland, alongside the aforementioned Krakowiak and the well-known polonaise, oberek, and mazurka. This stylized version of the Kujawiak begins hazily, in a far-off world remote from dance, but ends with an accelerando which returns us to a real and joyful world. After the 2nd Krakowiak comes the lamenting Piosenka, or song. The final movement, a march, wraps up the set of folk dances with vivacity and humor.

In another letter to her brother in 1946, Bacewicz wrote: “Music can be either simpler or more complex, no matter – it all depends on the language of the composer – but it must be well constructed... I want the merest trifle to be flawless.” Her folk miniatures are brief but intimate examples of the new folkloric idiom that Bacewicz would embrace for at least the next decade.

In the three-movement work **Ark for Violin Duo**, LA-based composer **Anderson Alden** explores the violin’s resonance and extremes of register to create a sound world with more depth and breadth than many other works with the same instrumentation.

The first movement, “Frantic,” launches into the work at a relentless pace, as unexpected changes in meter and pulse create excitement and a sense of drive. A hushed but still swift middle section features bubbling minimalist patterns as the violinists synchronize spiccato bow strokes, and a drone passage is followed by a build to the ferocious climax. In the slow movement, “Expansive,” techniques like hushed tremolos and double-stop trills lend an ethereal otherworldliness to the music. The memory of Aaron Copland’s music resonates in the simple and evocative melodies that sing out above the open-string drones, and the influence of Arvo Pärt seems present in the repetitive and pulsating harmonies with their occasional pangs of poignant dissonances. The duo’s third movement, “Groove,” is an exhilarating close to the piece, as the violins trade extended solo passages over a percussive ostinato.

Alden wrote the work in 2017, partially in response to the natural disasters that were then devastating the country:

“ARK is an ongoing collection of musical ideas that I would not want to lose amid the daily flood of sound and information. This first set of violin duos was written between hurricanes and mudslides as a tribute to those who have lost everything to floodwaters. It is a meditation on loss and rebuilding. It is my attempt to answer the question: if I were to lose all my possessions in a natural disaster, what music would I take with me?”

In 1887, when **Richard Strauss** was just 23 years old, he wrote what would be his last major chamber music work: the extraordinarily virtuosic **Sonata for Violin and Piano, Op. 18**. Already a much sought-after conductor and composer, Strauss was on the cusp of composing his first significant tone poems: *Don Juan* (1888), *Macbeth* (1888), and *Death and Transfiguration* (1889). He had also recently met and fallen in love with his future wife, soprano Pauline de Ahna, and it is often thought that his sonata, with its abundance of romantic melodies, might be imbued with his love for her. Certainly, Op. 18 pushes the boundaries of the violin sonata genre in terms of form and virtuosity, foreshadowing the tone poems' chromaticism and complexity of rhythm, texture, and motivic development.

The sonata is in three movements: an ambitious sonata-allegro, followed by a cantabile movement in ternary form, and concluding with a finale in sonata form. The first and third movements are in E-flat Major, and project a certain heroism - indeed, they share a key and a noble sensibility with Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben (A Hero's Life)*. In each of the sonata-form movements, Strauss employs the development technique of Berlioz, the *r union de deux th emes*, to great effect: two themes, which are heard first separately, are then uttered simultaneously at a climactic moment. The sonata's abundance of themes, and the nature of their development, foreshadow what occurs in Strauss's tone poems.

The first movement, "Allegro ma non troppo," opens with a declamatory theme in the piano, evocative of a heroic horn call. This theme is taken up more tenderly by the violin, before it regains its chivalric nobility and launches us towards a series of lyrical themes that range from rhapsodic to nostalgic. The extensive development section features three distinct phases, each traveling to remote keys, before finally arriving back home.

The second movement, "Improvisation: Andante Cantabile," opens with the violin singing a melody above the piano's gentle accompaniment. Later on, this melody is equally shared by the two instruments, and is passed spontaneously between them in dialogue. The movement's stormy middle section is reminiscent of Schubert's "Erlk nig" in texture and mood.

The third movement, "Finale: Andante-Allegro," begins with a somber and somewhat ominous E-flat minor prelude, which bursts into another Allegro fanfare in the piano with virtuosic interjections from the violin that span more than two octaves. As in the first movement, Strauss introduces several melodies before finally reaching the second key area of C Major. This second theme, operatic in nature, is first played by the violin, and when passed to the piano, features an extremely unusual texture: the violin takes up a bariolage figure to accompany the piano, in a musical moment which has no precursor in the sonata repertoire. A hushed scherzando figure, passed fleetingly between instruments early on in the movement, gains enormous importance in the development, and returns again in the extremely intricate and lengthy coda of the piece. The sonata's passionate close is symphonic in scope, as both instruments are called upon to play with a virtuosic fervor till the very end.

## About the Artists

Violinist **Jessica Oddie** has recently returned to New York City after working as the Assistant Concertmaster of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. Active as a chamber musician and soloist as well as orchestral leader, she has performed recitals internationally at Teatro La Fenice (Venice), Le Poisson Rouge, Lincoln Center, Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris, the Sydney Opera House, and the Melbourne Recital Centre.

Following an acclaimed performance of Sibelius 'Violin Concerto with the Colorado Symphony Orchestra, Jessica recorded two albums of chamber music for the Naxos and Tactus recording labels, including the premiere recording of 20th-century Italian composer Gino Gorini's chamber works. She is committed to playing the works of contemporary composers, performing solo and chamber music recitals at *Lo Spirito della Musica di Venezia*, one of Italy's premiere contemporary music festivals, which runs parallel to the Biennale. In 2015, Jessica was concertmaster for the *Lachenmann Perspektiven* in Stuttgart, Germany, a festival celebrating Helmut Lachenmann's 80th Birthday, in which she worked closely with the composer to perform his orchestral works.

In Europe, Jessica's performances have been described as "brilliantly convincing" (Schwäbische Zeitung), while Polish music magazine *Muzyka21* has called her playing "revelatory" for her "energy, commitment, and artistry."

In Australia, Jessica has performed as concertmaster for Victorian Opera (Melbourne), and works regularly with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Victoria, the Australian Romantic and Classical Orchestra, and as a core violinist of the Invention Ensemble. In 2022, she will take up a permanent position as one of the principal second violins of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

Jessica received with her Master of Music from Yale School of Music in 2015, and her Bachelor of Arts with distinction from Yale University in 2013, where she was concertmaster of the Yale Symphony Orchestra. She has also studied at the Juilliard School. She completed further postgraduate studies in Germany, where she was sponsored by a German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) grant. Jessica has been incredibly fortunate to study with Mark Steinberg and Danny Phillips at the Graduate Center, Gerhard Schulz and Christian Sikorski in Germany, and Syoko Aki and Wendy Sharp at Yale.

Active as a solo artist, collaborator, and chamber musician, pianist **Ari Livne** has performed extensively throughout the United States at such venues as Benaroya Hall and the Kennedy Center. His diverse set of interests and skills has allowed him to become equally comfortable as a performer, opera coach, and lecturer. He has worked as répétiteur for Don Giovanni and Butterfly with New York's Heartbeat Opera, and has presented lecture-recitals on themes from psychoanalysis for the Northwestern Psychoanalytic Society and Institute.

Ari was a Gold Award winner at the youngARTS competition, and subsequently was selected as a Presidential Scholar in the Arts. While at Juilliard, Ari was recognized for his inventive programming; he premiered a new set of songs by the composer Cyrus Von Hochstetter at one of his recitals, and presented a recital consisting of Brahms 'last four completed works. He was one of two Juilliard students selected to be a featured performer at the Kyoto International Music Festival in Kyoto, Japan, and he has been invited to perform multiple times at the Hudson Chamber Society in New York and at Piano on Park. Ari has appeared twice at the Juilliard Focus Festival, and in April 2012 he performed

for Dr. Alexander Scriabine and Dr. Christine Scriabine, close relatives of the composer Alexander Scriabin. He has also been a faculty member at the State College Piano Festival (State College, PA), where he performed both a solo recital and a recital of Beethoven Violin Sonatas on successive evenings.

Ari Livne received his Bachelor of Arts from Yale University in 2012 and his Master of Music Degree at The Juilliard School in 2014. He is currently working towards a doctorate at the CUNY Graduate Center, where he is the recipient of a Graduate Center Fellowship.

One of the most dynamic young leaders and directors in Australia today, violinist **Peter Clark** is known for the energy he brings to the stage and the engaging nature of his leadership. His first performance in Carnegie Hall was with the Australian Chamber Orchestra and Andreas Scholl at the age of twenty.

As concertmaster, he performs regularly with New Zealand Opera, Victorian Opera, Handel in the Theatre, Sydney Chamber Opera, The Orchestra of St James, Darwin Symphony Orchestra, and has appeared as principal second of the RTÉ Concert Orchestra, Dublin. Deeply committed to new Australian music, Peter has been concertmaster for the world premieres of six new Australian operas.

In 2020, his appearance as concertmaster for Semele with New Zealand Opera received warm praise: "Concertmaster Peter Clark led the ensemble with passion and enormous energy, inviting both aching melancholy and playful duetting." (Clare Martin, Radio 13)

Through his work with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Peter has developed a beloved music outreach program at Melbourne's Royal Children's Hospital, now in its sixth year. His commitment to regional touring has led him to perform in more than 125 cities and towns all across Australia.

Peter is the recipient of the 2021 Judith Neilson Scholarship for Social Innovation and Cohesion, awarded by the Monash Foundation, to pursue doctoral studies at the Graduate Center, where he studies with Mark Steinberg.

He plays a fine 1936 AE Smith violin.