

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

December 9, 2022 6:00 p.m.

Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall



Gabrielle Chou, piano and violin
with Martine Thomas, viola; Audrey Chen, cello;
and Baron Fenwick, piano

Down by the Riverside (1979)

Frederic Rzewski
(1938–2021)

Lies You Can Believe In (2006)

Missy Mazzoli
(b. 1980)

Gabrielle Chou, violin; Martine Thomas, viola; Audrey Chen, cello

Thousandth Orange (2018)

Caroline Shaw
(b. 1982)

Gabrielle Chou, violin; Martine Thomas, viola; Audrey Chen, cello;
Baron Fenwick, piano

INTERMISSION

Piano Sonata, Op. 1 (1910)

Alban Berg
(1885–1935)

Variations, Op. 41 (1984)

Nikolai Kapustin
(1937–2020)

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the D.M.A. degree.
Please switch off your cell phones and refrain from taking flash pictures.

Suite Italienne (1933)

Igor Stravinsky
(1882–1971)

Introduzione
Serenata
Tarantella
Gavotta con due Variazioni
Scherzino
Minuetto e Finale

Gabrielle Chou, violin; Baron Fenwick, piano

Notes on the Program

One of the great pianist-composers of his time, the American **Frederic Rzewski** leaves a legacy of social and political commitment through his work, which spans a range of styles and techniques from Baroque counterpoint to minimalism to, most famously, the incorporation and celebration of leftist folk and protest songs. His most well-known work is arguably the massive variation set *The People United Will Never Be Defeated!*, which features 36 variations on the Chilean protest song of the same name, and other works of note include *Les Moutons de Panurge* for any number of melody instruments, *Coming Together* for speaker and variable ensemble, and *The Road*, a 9-hour-long cycle of piano pieces.

Down by the Riverside is the third of Rzewski's four *North American Ballads*, of which the other three are *Dreadful Memories*, *Whose Side Are You On?* and *Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues*. Its namesake is an African American spiritual often invoked as an anti-war protest song, particularly during the Vietnam War; the tune is simply spun at the piece's beginning and then fragmented and exploded against the keyboard, sometimes spanning its width, sometimes dissolving into something amorphous and effervescent, sometimes rearing up to bare its teeth. Just when it seems past the point of no return, it is brought back, first as a shadow, then growing into something real, then solid, then looming, then obliterating, before fading one last time.

Praised for her “apocalyptic imagination” (Alex Ross, *The New Yorker*), Grammy-nominated American composer **Missy Mazzoli** is one of the foremost composers of the contemporary music scene. In 2018 she became one of the first women to receive a main stage commission from the Metropolitan Opera, and she is currently the Mead Composer-in-Residence at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra as well as the co-founder of Luna Lab, a mentorship program for young female composers. I first encountered Mazzoli's music in a performance of *Still Life with Avalanche* (which is still one of my bucket-list pieces!) and was immediately drawn to the inherent and electric energy that permeates her works. Throughout the past few years, I have lovingly studied a few of her piano works—*Orrizonte*, *Isabelle Eberhardt Dreams of Pianos*, *Bolts of Loving Thunder*—and *Lies You Can Believe In* is my first foray on the violin. Here is Mazzoli's program note:

The "lies" in the title are not untruths, and instead refer to the old-fashioned word for an improvised and embellished story. This type of lie is not malicious; the process of invention and the telling of the tale are ultimately more important than the truth behind the account. In this piece I created my own "lie," an invented and embellished urban folk music. The strings tell an improvisatory tale, touching upon the violence, energy, mania and rare moments of calm one finds in a city. This piece is inspired as much by modern gypsy music, punk, and electronica as it is by traditional Bulgarian and Romanian folk music.

The music of **Caroline Shaw** has always held a wondrous place in my heart and repertoire, and it is an honor to have explored her (so far) only piano quartet, *Thousandth Orange*. The recipient of the 2013 Pulitzer Prize in Music, several Grammy awards, an honorary doctorate from Yale, and a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship, Shaw describes herself as “a musician who moves among roles, genres, and mediums, trying to imagine a world of sound that has never been heard before but has always existed.” Below is Shaw’s program note; her voice shines through in her writing, no matter the medium:

Thousandth Orange begins with a very simple 4-chord progression. Nothing fancy. Nothing extravagant. Just something quite beautiful and everyday, that is enjoyed and loved and consumed and forgotten. Something you’ve probably heard before, in a pop song or a music theory class. While considering my love of Brahms’ piano quartets and my memory of playing them—and more generally how our memories of beloved music evolve over time—I began thinking about the history of still-life paintings. Those bowls of fruit we see framed in museums—sort of lovely and banal, at first glance, but then richer when considered in the long story of humans painting things that they see, over and over and over again. There’s a reason that Van Gogh painted those vases of sunflowers again and again, or Caravaggio his fruit. Maybe after the tenth, or the hundredth, or the thousandth time one paints, or looks at, or eats, an orange (or plays a simple cadential figure), it is just as beautiful as the first time. There is still more to see and to hear and to love. More angles reveal themselves—more perspectives and corners and stories, more understanding—more appreciation of something that most would consider unremarkable. *Thousandth Orange* is about these tiny oblique revelations that time’s filter can open up in a musical memory. The title also suggests a thousand different shades of the color orange, or the image of a thousand oranges, or perhaps a thousand ways of looking at an orange.

A pillar of the Second Viennese School, **Alban Berg** brought an expressive, Romantic-adjacent language to the discipline of twelve-tone technique, which had been conceived by his teacher, Arnold Schoenberg. Berg’s only piano sonata (and only piano work with an opus number) is known as one of the formidable “firsts” of any composer. Cast in a single movement, Berg originally intended the work to follow the typical three or four-movement structure of sonatas but found it impossible to follow the first movement after it was complete. Upon consulting his teacher, Schoenberg reassured Berg that it was not due to lack of inspiration, but that Berg had “said all there was to say.”

The **Piano Sonata** functions within a perfectly traditional sonata work while reaching dizzying heights with its harmonic language, which frequently threatens the tonal stability of B minor. In addition, the idea of “developing variation” formalized by Schoenberg is utilized so completely and satisfyingly that nearly every phrase of the piece can be traced back to the two opening gestures. The piece rides waves of anxiety and catastrophe, often surging forward with relentless anguish and refusing to settle for long. Nevertheless, my teacher Richard Goode (who played the piece for Rudolf Serkin, who played it for Berg) told me that Serkin advised him to always retain a lyrical quality, despite everything, to

channel Schubert and let the piece sing. I keep these two sides of understanding with me every time I embark on this piece.

The Ukrainian pianist-composer **Nikolai Kapustin** came to jazz as a classically-trained pianist studying at the Moscow Conservatory. Working with jazz idioms within European classical structures such as variation and sonata forms, Kapustin's works are studious yet unfettered, intricate yet dazzling. Kapustin did not consider himself a jazz musician, particularly in that he never improvised within performance, but described his process as notating and therefore improving his improvisations; as a matter of fact, he is said to have disliked when performers, compelled by the style, improvised within his compositions. Besides the *Variations*, some of his popular works (nearly all involved the piano) include the *Eight Concert Etudes*, *Twenty-four Preludes and Fugues*, and twenty piano sonatas.

The *Variations* are on an unlikely theme: the mournful opening bassoon solo of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. The melody takes on a life and energy all its own as the variations plunge it through a kaleidoscope of blues, bebop, ragtime, and more—some techniques worth listening out for include Count Basie-inspired chordal interjections, call-and-response figures as in big band, “comping,” walking bass, and the virtuosic stride style. Unlike many pieces in the form, in Kapustin's *Variations* there is no delineation between the variations themselves, resulting in a juggernaut of splashing colors and a brief period of respite and reflection before its inevitable, exhilarating finish.

Suite Italienne is one of several instrumental spin-offs from the ballet *Pulcinella*, which is a hallmark, and marked the beginning, of **Stravinsky's** neoclassical style. An ambitious collaboration with Léonide Massine as librettist and choreographer and Pablo Picasso as costume and set designer, the ballet was commissioned by Sergei Diaghilev of the *Ballets Russe* and premiered with rousing success. Stravinsky's neoclassical style is more akin to neo-Baroque, and the music of *Pulcinella* was built upon pieces Stravinsky believed to be by the Italian Baroque composer Giovanni Battista Pergolesi. As it happens, not all the music was actually by Pergolesi; the *Introduzione*, *Tarantella*, and *Finale* were by Domenico Gallo and the *Gavotta* and its two variations by Carlo Monza, both Pergolesi's contemporaries.

This particular *Suite Italienne* (there are a few) was arranged by the composer alongside violinist Samuel Dushkin. The *Introduzione* opens with a sprightly, faux-pompous tune that allows no darkness to penetrate for long. The solemn, elegant *Serenata* takes the form of a sicilienne with its characteristic dotted rhythms, while the *Tarantella* is a fleeting but humorous jaunt that, through changing articulations in the violin, gives the impression of frenzied hopping or skipping. The *Gavotta* and its variations are all song, with the variations acting more as reflections than their own contained units, and the *Scherzino* is a perfect character study, full of not only mischief but an overall sense of peskiness. The *Minuetto*, just slightly too slow to be reasonably danced, is good-natured but a bit haughty, with its stuffiness eventually ballooning until the tension is released in a rush of unrestrained joy and laughter in the sparkling *Finale*.

About the Artists

Gabrielle Chou is a New York-based pianist and violinist seeking to defy genres and break barriers in music education and performance tradition. On both instruments she performs solo, chamber music, and in large ensembles, teaches and lectures, coaches chamber music and gives masterclasses, collaborates with composers and dancers, and is active in community engagement and activism. She studied at the Colburn Music Academy and received her B.M. and M.M. from The Juilliard School; currently she is a candidate for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the City University of New York's Graduate Center, writing her dissertation on play and game mechanics in music. She has studied piano with Jerome Lowenthal and Richard Goode, violin with Lewis Kaplan, and chamber music with Emmanuel Ax, Timothy Eddy, Joseph Kalichstein, Matti Raekallio, and Sylvia Rosenberg.

Gabrielle performs throughout the country and internationally, including appearances as both a piano and violin soloist with orchestras in the United States, Europe, and Asia. She is the winner of the Center for Musical Excellence's 2018 International Performing Arts Grant and regularly serves as artist-in-residence and faculty at festivals, most recently at the Sphinx Performance Academy and the Altenburger Musik Akademie in Austria. While she plays the breadth of repertoire for either instrument, Gabrielle is particularly passionate about chamber and contemporary music and enjoys all forms of collaboration with musicians of any genre and artists of any medium. She has premiered piano, violin, and chamber works at Juilliard, the Yale School of Music, National Sawdust, the Avaloch Music Institute, and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden.

Currently in New York Gabrielle serves as professor of music history at Baruch College, piano and violin faculty at Musart Music, and staff pianist and keyboard studies teaching fellow at The Juilliard School. She plays with the Grammy-nominated Metropolis Ensemble, the Miami-based multi-genre Nu Deco Ensemble, and the activist orchestra Protestra. In her free time she enjoys frequenting art museums and aquariums, playing board and video games, birding (as best as one can in the city), and reading science fiction. This season includes recitals and performances throughout New York, as well as in Rhode Island and Long Island. Her website is gabriellechou.com.

Washington state native and cellist **Audrey Chen** has performed around the world in venues including Carnegie Hall, the Mariinsky Theatre, Royal Albert Hall, Disney Hall, and the Kennedy Center. She has appeared on NPR's From the Top Radio Show, concertized with the Seattle Symphony and the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra, and has been featured as a guest artist with the Boston Chamber Music Society, Silk Road Ensemble, Argus Quartet, Parker Quartet, and Borromeo Quartet. An avid chamber musician, Audrey's festival appearances include performing at YellowBarn, Olympic Music Festival, Music@Menlo, Ravinia Steans Music Institute, Four Seasons Chamber Music, Perlman Music Program, Tanglewood Music Center, Taos Music School, and Sarasota Music Festival. She received her B.A. from Harvard University and an M.M. from the New England Conservatory, where her teachers included Laurence Lesser and Lluís Claret. Currently, she is pursuing a D.M.A. at the CUNY Graduate Center under Marcy Rosen while teaching at CUNY Hunter College. Outside of music, Audrey enjoys watching films, cooking/baking, and making greeting cards. She was also recently named a 2022 recipient of the prestigious Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans.

Pianist **Baron Fenwick** has performed recitals and as a soloist with orchestras around the world and throughout the United States. He is the winner of numerous awards, including the Silver Medal in the 2019 Sendai International Music Competition in Japan. A graduate with his Master's and Bachelor's degrees from Mannes School of Music, he is currently pursuing his Doctorate of Musical Arts at The Juilliard School. Baron enjoys performing a wide range of repertoire. He has played works by dozens of living composers, including four world premiere piano concertos. In addition to being a Teaching Fellow at Juilliard, he also maintains a private studio, offers masterclasses for young students, and has been a guest artist in festivals including the International Keyboard Institute and Festival and the Beijing Musical Festival and Academy. Originally from Boone, North Carolina, he now lives in New York City.

Martine Thomas, violist, performs internationally as a soloist, chamber musician, and improviser. She has appeared at the Berliner Philharmonie, Carnegie Hall, BBC Proms, and Lucerne Festival and has performed with Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble, the International Contemporary Ensemble, and Ghost Ensemble. Martine has recently premiered works by Tyshawn Sorey, Catherine Lamb, and Miya Masaoka. She looks forward to solo recitals this season in New York City, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and upstate New York. Martine studied in the Harvard-NEC dual degree program, is a doctoral candidate in viola performance at CUNY Graduate Center, and teaches at Brooklyn College Conservatory. For more of her music and writing, please visit martinethomas.com.