

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

April 15, 2024 6:00 p.m.

*Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall*



## Claire Bourg, violin Min Young Kang, piano

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| Sonata No. 28 in E-flat Major for Piano and Violin, K. 380 (1781)<br><i>Allegro</i><br><i>Andante con moto</i><br><i>Rondo. Allegro</i>                  | W.A. Mozart<br>(1756–91)        |
| Sonata in D Minor for Solo Violin, Op. 27, No. 3, “Ballade” (1923)   | Eugene Ysaÿe<br>(1858–1931)     |
| Caprice in C Major for Solo Violin, Op. 1, No. 11 (1801-07)  | Niccolò Paganini<br>(1782–1840) |
| Three Romances for Violin and Piano, Op. 22 (1853)<br><i>Andante molto</i><br><i>Allegretto. Mit zarterm Vortrage</i><br><i>Leidenschaftlich schnell</i> | Clara Schumann<br>(1819–96)     |
| For Violin Alone (2020)  | Vijay Iyer<br>(b. 1971)         |

### INTERMISSION

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.

Sonata No. 2 in A Major for Violin and Piano, Op. 100 (1886)      Johannes Brahms  
*Allegro amabile*      (1833–97)  
*Andante tranquillo—Vivace*  
*Allegretto grazioso, quasi Andante*

Rhapsody No. 1 for Violin and Piano, Sz. 87 (1928)      Béla Bartók  
*Lassú. Moderato*      (1881–1945)  
*Friss. Allegretto moderato*

### Notes on the Program

In the summer of 1781, **Mozart** returned to a bustling Vienna to pursue his career as a freelance composer, player, and teacher. Among his students was one whom he became quite fond of in admiration for her playing: Josepha von Auernhammer. It was this student that inspired Mozart's set of six violin and keyboard sonatas most frequently referred to as the "early-Viennese" sonatas, illustrated by his dedication to her in the printing. Within this set blossoms a virtuosic world where the violin begins to take on a more prominent role in comparison to the early sonatas, providing more of an equal role next to the piano.

The last of these six sonatas, **K. 380 in E-flat Major**, demonstrates this perfectly. In three movements, the violin and piano explore many textures and timbres, from that of a boisterous orchestra to a small intimate duo. The first movement, *Allegro*, charges right out of the gate with grandiose chords in both instruments, contrasted immediately by delicate flourishes in the piano. As the violin and piano trade off increasingly bombastic chords, one cannot help but imagine a full symphonic presence. The second movement, *Andante con moto*, takes us to a darker and deeper place, with a constant churning of sixteenth notes that weaves in and out of both instruments. This is one of the most tender and heart-breaking movements in all of Mozart's duo works. What follows is the *Rondo* movement, teeming with light and levity. This is where the pain of the slow movement dissolves and playfulness enters, assuring us that the sun has come out at last.

One of the great figures in the history of violin, **Eugene Ysaÿe** was a true visionary who changed the course of violin playing forever. Inspired by J.S. Bach's six sonatas and partitas for solo violin, Ysaÿe set out to use his revolutionary technical style and deep expression to write his own compositions. His set of six solo violin sonatas have now become a quintessential part of the violin repertoire, presenting challenges in both execution and artistry. Ysaÿe dedicated each sonata to a different younger violinist, using the inspiration of each artist to inspire the work. Perhaps the most famous of the six, the third violin sonata, titled "**Ballade**", harkens back to Bach's Chaconne, both in its key of D minor as well as its one movement form. Written in 1923 alongside the five other sonatas, the Ballade is dedicated to Romanian violinist and composer George Enescu, a dear friend of Ysaÿe. In just one movement, Ysaÿe

covers a large swath of emotional material, from mystery to wonder to intense passion and beyond, using lots of dissonance and chromatic leaps to flavor the content. The somewhat lengthy introduction builds the suspense before leading ferociously into the main section of the sonata. Here, a dance-like triplet rhythm is transformed using dotted figures to add a jolting anxiety, which comes back multiple times throughout the piece interspersed with fantasy-like episodes. Working itself into a frenzy, the end spins out of the control as Ysaÿe adds more and more notes to go from single notes, to double-stops, to finally triple stops. What strikes me about this work is how deeply personal and poignant it is, with Ysaÿe using these difficult techniques not only to show off mastery of the instrument, but to serve the arc and narrative of the piece. Everything fits perfectly into place, all the while sounding improvised and off-the-cuff.

**Niccolò Paganini** was a true Rockstar of his time. Standing extremely tall and lanky with long and flexible fingers, Paganini was a virtuoso of the violin who modernized violin technique most famously through his **24 Caprices** for solo violin. Born in 1782 in Genoa, Paganini's talents were noticed from a young age. He began playing the violin locally and before long, he was touring Europe frequently garnering huge acclaim and fame. Known for using tricks and gimmicks in his concert such as cutting his own strings and improvising, it did not take long for rumors to begin swirling that perhaps Paganini had sold his soul to the devil for such talents.

Published in full in 1820, the Caprices serve as short etude-like pieces each exploring a different technique of either the bow or the left-hand. While most people would think of the fast arpeggios or double-stop trills that make these pieces fiendishly difficult, Paganini was also a master of bel canto style. Many of the caprices offer soaring melodic lines reminiscent of operatic music. This is most evident in his eleventh caprice, in C Major. After opening with a recitative in which the violinist accompanies themselves with underlying chords, the middle body of the caprice is a delightful *Presto* filled with playful dotted figures and arpeggios that scale the entire fingerboard of the violin. Through leaps and bounds it is the violinist's job to make these caprices sound effortless, a challenge that continues to exist for violinists of every stature.

Often overlooked in the shadow of her husband Robert, **Clara Schumann** was a brilliant composer and pianist in her own right. A child prodigy, she began playing recitals and concerti at age nine in Germany. With much success across Europe, Clara turned to composing, although not leaving behind a large output of material after her death. She was a frequent collaborator of Joseph Joachim, a prominent violinist at the time, with whom she played works such as the Beethoven violin and piano sonatas with often. It was with Joachim in mind that Clara sat down in 1853 to write the **Three Romances for Violin and Piano, Op. 22**. Both Schumann and Joachim went on tour with these pieces shortly after their conception, with great reception from audiences and critics alike. 1853 was a relatively good year in the lives of Clara and Robert, but many tribulations were around the corner in the following years, with Robert's mental health declining rapidly and Clara stopping composing following his death.

Extremely sincere in nature, the romances each capture a different feeling from one another that transports the listener back to a small salon in the mid-nineteenth century. Teeming with plaintiveness and love, the first romance toggles back and forth between the violin and piano in an improvisatory conversation. The second, an Allegretto, foreshadows some of the darkness which Clara would experience in a very fleeting moment. Making up the body of the Romances, the last romance is full of lyrical sweep underpinned by winding pianistic figures. The harmonies pull and tug at the heartstrings with great poignancy. It is no wonder these pieces have become a mainstay in the violin repertoire as of late.

Born in 1971 to Indian immigrants in Albany, **Vijay Iyer** has become one of the most renowned composers, performers and writers of today. Iyer learned to play violin classically as well as piano by ear as a child and has since used his skill and interest to merge genres of Jazz and Classical music. He has been commissioned to write music for many famous orchestras, chamber music ensembles and soloists which blends improvisation with more traditional techniques. In 2020, with the Pandemic halting the world in place, Iyer was commissioned by violinist Jennifer Koh to write a short piece for an album of solo violin commissioned works entitled “Alone Together”. With this project in mind, Iyer wrote a piece titled “**For Violin Alone**”. The meditative work uses stillness and silence which creates a trance like feeling amongst the repeated chords. In just three short minutes, Iyer paints a melancholic portrait inviting the audience to reflect.

Amidst towering mountains and rolling green hills, **Johannes Brahms** sat down to write his second violin and piano sonata in the summer of 1886 in Switzerland. It is clear from the work how in love with life Brahms must have been at this time. In Switzerland to stay with a dear friend and poet, Josef Widmann, Brahms was certainly inspired as seen in his large output of music during this particular summer. In addition to the **second violin sonata**, Brahms also wrote the third piano trio and the second cello sonata during this period, as well as several songs. It was with another close friend, contralto Hermine Spies, for which he wrote these lied. Several snippets of these songs even make their way into the violin sonata.

Full of radiant and soaring melodies, Brahms was very careful to state that this was a sonata for piano and then violin. This is evident in the very opening phrase of the work which is given to the piano interrupted by short echoes in the violin part. Full of tenderness and lyricism, the work breathes a breath of fresh air into the world with its reflective nature. Each movement could very well be written as a song, something that is unique to this sonata in the role which the violin plays. The first movement quotes Brahms’ own song ‘*Wie Melodien*’ in the second theme. The middle movement marries a lullaby-like melody with a scherzo passage that brings playfulness and levity to the work. The last movement, perhaps my own favorite, is a kind of rondo in which the warm-hearted theme is constantly transformed through underlying piano textures which soar. While this is considered to be an understated work, the genius of Brahms is evident at every twist and turn.

In 1928, **Béla Bartók** surprised two of his dear friends with the manuscripts to two new pieces he had written. These friends were Josef Szigeti and Zoltan Szekely, prominent violinists who worked with Bartók often over the course of his career. These two works were both **Rhapsodies for Violin and Piano** and drew heavily on the Hungarian folk elements for which Bartók was known to use in his compositions. He was able to bring these traditional elements and themes to the concert hall and to Western culture. Virtuoso in nature, the rhapsodies both feature two separate sections, one slow and one fast. In the first Rhapsody, Bartók uses both Romanian and Transylvanian tunes and pairs them with his own harmonic and structural language. The result is a stunning mix of basic fiddle-style melodies with pleading motives. In the fast section, Bartók holds together a string of different melodies with a long *accelerando* showing off the brilliance of the players as well as the songs which the melodies were derived from.

## About the Artists

Violinist **Claire Bourg** has appeared as a soloist and chamber musician in many of the world's leading venues, such as Carnegie Hall, Chicago's Orchestra Hall, Kimmel Center, and Jordan Hall. Most recently, she was a soloist with the Camerata Bern in Hannover, as part of the Joachim International Violin Competition. Ms. Bourg was granted the 2021 Luminarts Fellowship, awarded second prize at the 2020 Barbash J.S. Bach Competition, and was the winner of the New England Conservatory Competition. She performs regularly with Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Music for Food, Chameleon Arts Ensemble, and Curtis on Tour. A passionate chamber musician, Claire has attended festivals such as Marlboro, Yellow Barn, Ravinia, and Taos, among others. A native of Chicago, Ms. Bourg's primary teachers have been Miriam Fried, Pamela Frank, Arnold Steinhardt, and Joseph Lin at the New England Conservatory, Curtis Institute of Music and the Juilliard School, where she held a Kovner Fellowship. She is now pursuing her Doctorate at the CUNY Graduate Center with Mark Steinberg. Claire currently performs on a violin by Zosimo Bergonzi of Cremona, c. 1770 on generous loan through Guarneri Hall NFP and Darnton & Hersh Fine Violins, Chicago.

Praised as "an absolute gem" by Montecito Journal, Korean-born pianist **Min Young Kang** enjoys a versatile career as a chamber musician, collaborative pianist, and music director. For the past ten years, Min Young has performed in concerts and recitals throughout the United States, France and South Korea, at venues that include Weill Recital Hall, Merkin Concert Hall, Château de Fontainebleau, and the Sejong Center M Theater. She has shared the stage with prominent artists including Ani Kavafian, Ettore Causa, Robert Langevin, David Geber, Linda Chesis, Nicholas Mann, Alan Kay, and Stephen Taylor.

Min Young released her first record "Remembering Russia" with Pentatone with Spanish Violist Jesus Rodolfo in Oct 2021 and her playing was described as 'sensitive' and 'nuanced with a lyrical right hand' in the review by Tarraco Culture Club. A prize winner at both the J.C. Arriaga Chamber Music Competition, Artur Balsam Duo Competition, and Lillian Fuchs Chamber Music Competition, Kang has also been recognized with numerous awards and scholarships, including the Talisman Energy Emerging Artist Award, Kraeuter Musical Foundation Award, and Prix special du Directeur and Prix de Musique de chambre from Ecoles D'Art Americaines de Fontainebleau.

Kang received a Master of Music (MM) in collaborative piano and chamber music from Eastman School of Music under the tutelage of Dr. Jean Barr. She completed a Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) in collaborative piano from Manhattan School of Music under the tutelage of Dr. Heasook Rhee. Min Young completed a Collaborative Piano Fellowship at the Yale School of Music.

Min Young is a Founder/Artistic Director of Kallos Chamber Music Series ([www.kalloscms.org](http://www.kalloscms.org)) based in New Haven, CT, and also a current staff pianist at Mannes School of Music in NYC and SUNY Purchase, and Rutgers University.