

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

May 17, 2024 6:00 p.m.

Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall



Tiffany Chang, violin
with Aaron Wolff, cello; Elené Tabagari, harpsichord;
and Youlan Ji, piano

“Grief Reflections”

Rosary Sonata No. 10 in G minor, “The Crucifixion” (1674) Heinrich Ignaz Franz
Praeludium von Biber (1644–1704)
Aria and 5 variations

with Aaron Wolff, cello and Elené Tabagari, harpsichord

Violin Sonata (1914) Leoš Janáček
Con moto (1854–1928)
Ballada
Allegretto
Adagio

with Youlan Ji, piano

INTERMISSION

Darshan for Solo Violin (2020) Reena Esmail
III. Charukeshi (b. 1983)

Violin Sonata No. 10 in G Major, Op. 96 (1812) Ludwig van Beethoven
Allegro moderato (1770–1827)
Adagio espressivo
Scherzo: Allegro - Trio
Poco allegretto

with Youlan Ji, piano

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.

Notes on the Program

Grief Reflections

I have always been fascinated by the way in which composers choose to evoke grief through their music – whether it is fueled by their own personal struggles or inspired by a larger, collective experience. Grief is a universal feeling, yet it is one that looks different on every person. At times, it manifests itself externally, with cries of sorrow or fits of rage. In other moments, it is so deeply agonizing that a single sound cannot be expressed. This program aims to reflect the various facets of grief, the complex process of pain, despair, anger, acceptance, and finally, hope after loss.

Mystery (Rosary) Sonata No. 10, “The Crucifixion” (1674)

When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.
-(John 19:30 NIV).

Divided into three cycles – five Joyful Mysteries, five Sorrowful Mysteries, and five Glorious Mysteries – **Heinrich Biber’s** (1644-1704) Rosary sonatas were presumed to accompany the meditations on important periods in Jesus Christ and Mary’s life. The Sorrowful Mysteries conclude with the Tenth Sonata, “The Crucifixion.” Using scordatura tuning, Biber drastically changes the violin’s register and timbre to create an entirely new sound world. The potential virtuosity and technical prowess of the instrument are showcased in this work, from extreme lyricism to rapid flourishes.

The *Praeludium* – the first of two movements – is one of many dark depictions of Jesus’s crucifixion. Percussive rhythms remind us of the violent manner in which he was affixed to the cross. Chords are struck with a passionate fervor throughout the movement, and with one final stroke of the bow, Jesus’s agony ends. In the *Aria*, Biber integrates major and minor harmonies, mirroring the complex relationship between suffering and hope. This movement moves away from the brutality of Jesus’ death. Rather, Biber reflects on God’s sacrifice and the hope of salvation.

Violin Sonata (1914)

Born in Moravia (part of the modern-day Czech Republic), **Leoš Janàček** (1854-1928) experienced plenty of bereavement throughout his life. He lost both of his children – his son, Vladimir, at age two and later his daughter, Olga, at age twenty-one. In 1917, he would meet a married woman and develop an unrequited, obsessive affection that would last over a decade. The first version of the Sonata was written soon after the beginning of the Great War, undoubtedly a period when Janàček dealt with uncertainty around his national identity. The work evokes these sentiments, in addition to reflecting the upheaval of everyday life during this time.

A master of implementing speech-like melodies into his pieces, Janàček’s vivid lyricism appears from the very beginning. Rhapsodic melodies are sung by the violin while the piano replicates the sound of a cimbalom (a large-hammered instrument commonly found in Moravian folk bands). Amidst evocations of folk themes and rhythms are moments of hysteria and borderline madness. A glimmer of light emerges with the *Ballada*. French impressionistic elements paint the landscape as a soulful melody is sung by the violin. Janàček commented on his piece: “I could just about hear sound of the steel clashing in my head.” The *Allegretto* emulates this sentiment with the piano’s piercing folk melody amidst an abundance of wild trills. In a complete juxtaposition to the emphatic and rhapsodic beginning of the piece, a somber atmosphere envelops the last movement. Grief begins with an abrupt ending – the end of a relationship or loss of a loved one. The Sonata’s ending echoes this abruptness, leaving us chillingly empty.

***Darshan* for Solo Violin, III. Charukeshi (2020)**

Indian-American composer, **Reena Esmail** (b. 1983) describes “Charukeshi” as a piece that “explores grief, in its many facets and forms.” This movement (part of a larger, uncompleted work) masterfully combines Hindustani techniques with Western Classical traditions. Based on the Hindustani scale – or raag – by the same name, “Charukeshi” marries major and minor modes, creating a sense of emotional complexity.

The piece begins with a sorrowful melody, contrasted with improvisatory embellishments and haunting afterthoughts. Esmail takes full advantage of the violin’s register and its ability to emulate the human voice throughout the piece, increasing the intervallic range of the instrument as the emotional content becomes more drastic. Distinct cries of pain and yearning can be heard at the apex of the piece. As grief transforms those who confront it, so too does the introductory melody. Pain still lingers in this returning theme, though promises of healing and acceptance begin to emerge.

Violin Sonata No. 10 in G Major, Op. 96 (1812)

Following “Charukeshi” without pause is **Ludwig van Beethoven’s** (1770-1827) Violin Sonata No. 10 in G Major. As the final piece on the program, this sonata represents the journey towards the final stage of grief: acceptance and hope. Written nearly a decade after the fiery “Kreutzer” Sonata, Beethoven’s final Sonata for Violin is arguably the most introspective out of the ten. Beethoven’s music is often recognized for its heroism, passion, and indignation – the Tenth Sonata could not be farther from those attributes. Rather, affection and warmth surround the piece, coupled with wonder and a bit of mischief.

The first movement opens with fluttering trills. These trills ultimately become a familiar motive throughout the movement, yet in the beginning, they are just abstract figures, curious and hopeful. Beethoven spends much of the first movement in wandering contemplation, patiently engaging with various harmonies before finding himself in a new theme. The second movement, *Adagio espressivo*, draws us further into Beethoven’s inner world. The piano introduces the main theme, simple, yet utterly beautiful. The culmination of expressivity in this melody can be heard in its final three notes – a scale down from G to E-flat. Beethoven repeats this figure, as if to reiterate the multitude of emotions contained within these three notes. A declaration of love? A farewell? Or perhaps a combination of both... Beethoven continues his patient exploration of harmonies from the first movement until we arrive at a moment of timelessness and otherworldliness, a preview of what is to be explored in many of Beethoven’s later works.

The *Scherzo* begins immediately after the second movement, full of mischief and playful jabbing from the two instruments. Though brief, expectations are continually subverted throughout the movement. The playfulness of the *Scherzo* continues into the final movement, a set of variations. The two instruments unite in singing a joyous, light-hearted theme. From boozily and undulating, to grandiose and ecstatic, this theme undergoes significant character changes, often bearing little resemblance to the original, yet still maintaining the essential essence of hope. Before reaching the coda, we are suddenly sucked back into the inner, timeless world that was introduced in the second movement. Sparkling cadenzas from the piano send us spinning into the spiritual cosmos. After a brief meditation, Beethoven hits the ground running again with pure elation. The future remains uncertain, but the composer appears unafraid of what is to come as he gallops with optimism to the end.

About the Artists

Born in Arizona, **Tiffany Chang** began playing the violin at the age of three and soon discovered a passion for sharing and playing music with others. This passion has led her to cultivate a career that embodies and promotes musical collaboration. Always looking to broaden her collaborative endeavors, Tiffany has worked in various musical spheres, from Indie Pop recordings to a recent national tour with Los Angeles-based chamber orchestra, Delirium Musicum. An ardent supporter of new music, Tiffany has worked with and performed pieces by prominent composers including Gabriel Kahane, Sarah Snider.

Tiffany's love of music lies in the chamber world, where she finds the most creative freedom and expression. Festival appearances include the Ravinia Steans Institute of Music, Perlman Music Program, Taos School of Music and Norfolk Chamber Music Festival. Tiffany has worked with members of the Brentano, Miro, Emerson, and Borromeo quartets and has performed alongside distinguished musicians such as Miriam Fried, Nina Lee, and Amy Yang among others. Tiffany is a founding member of the piano trio, Trio Rai.

Tiffany received her B.M. and M.M. in Violin Performance at the New England Conservatory under Miriam Fried. She is currently a doctoral fellow at the CUNY Graduate Center, studying with Mark Steinberg. Outside of music, Tiffany enjoys consuming copious amounts of hot pot and teaching tricks to her cat, Slim Bim.

Aaron Wolff is a New York City-based cellist and performer active in solo, collaborative, and cross-disciplinary capacities. Recent performances include collaboration with eighth blackbird, Beethoven's *Cello Sonata in A Major* at Ravinia's Steans Music Institute, and the premier of Eric Montalbet's *Quartetsatz* at IMS Prussia Cove Open Chamber Music.

Aaron received a B.A. in comparative literature and B.M. in cello performance from Oberlin College & Conservatory. He then completed Master's degree at Juilliard, where he was a Kovner Fellow under Joel Krosnick, and an Artist Diploma under Tim Eddy and Fred Sherry. As the winner of the Leo B. Ruiz Memorial Recital, he gave his Carnegie Hall debut in December 2023. He is now pursuing a Doctorate of Musical Arts at CUNY: The Graduate Center, studying with violinist Mark Steinberg of the Brentano Quartet.

Aaron has found creative outlets in acting – most notably in a lead role in the Coen brothers' film *A Serious Man* – and in arranging and writing about music: he has provided string arrangements for Comedy Central's *Broad City* and covered New York's new music scene for I Care If You Listen.

Elené Tabagari is a 24-year-old harpsichordist from Tbilisi, Georgia. Based in New York City, Tabagari is an active continuo player for the Juilliard 415, and studies historical keyboard instruments under the guidance of Peter Sykes and Beatrice Martin. During her early years, Tabagari explored Georgian polyphony in folk music, and traditional instrumentation, specifically strummed instruments. Tabagari's musical background includes years as a concert pianist in central Florida, where she studied organ and harpsichord with Boyd Jones. In the future, Tabagari hopes to lead her own ensemble and share her love for early music with audiences in her home country.

Known for her dynamic and thoughtfully curated programs, Chinese-born pianist **Youlan Ji** has been featured in recitals in Beijing, Shanghai, Amsterdam, New York City, Washington D.C., Florida Keys, and Aspen.

With a passion for collaboration and an extensive chamber repertoire, Youlan has frequently performed in chamber ensembles, featuring at venues such as Alice Tully Hall in New York City and on the NPR radio show 'From the Top'. In addition, Youlan has performed piano concertos with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, the Juilliard Pre-College Orchestra, and the Aspen Conducting Academy Orchestra.

Youlan has been a prizewinner at numerous international competitions, including the United States Open Music Competition (2011), the Third International Rosario Marciano Piano Competition (2011), the Cliburn International Junior Competition (2015), the New York International Piano Competition (2018), and the Aspen Music Festival Concerto Competition (2022).

Youlan graduated in 2022 with a Bachelor of Music degree from the Juilliard School, where she continues to study, now pursuing a Master of Music degree under the guidance of Dr. Yoheved Kaplinsky. Youlan has been a proud recipient of the Jerome L. Greene Fellowship since 2018, which provides a full scholarship towards her studies at Juilliard.