

PIERRE-LAURENT AIMARD
PIANO

OLIVIER MESSIAEN
(1908-1992)

Catalogue d'oiseaux
VI. L'alouette-lulu

**LUDWIG VAN
BEETHOVEN**
(1770-1827)

**Piano Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp Minor, Op. 27,
no. 2 "Moonlight"**
Adagio sostenuto
Allegretto
Presto agitato

MESSIAEN

Catalogue d'oiseaux
V. La chouette hulotte

INTERMISSION

**JAN PIETERSZOOM
SWEELINCK**
(1562-1621)

Fantasia Cromatica, SwWV 258

GEORGE BENJAMIN
(b. 1960)

Shadowlines
Cantabile
Wild
Scherzando
Tempestoso
Very freely, solemn and spacious
Gently flowing, flexible

BEETHOVEN

Piano Sonata No. 28 in A Major, Op. 101
Etwas lebhaft und mit der innigsten Empfindung
Lebhaft, marschmäßig
Langsam und sehnsuchtsvoll
Geschwind, doch nicht zu sehr, und mit
Entschlossenheit



**PIERRE-LAURENT
AIMARD**

Piano

PIERRE-LAURENT AIMARD

Deemed an “extraordinary visionary” by *The Washington Post* and a pioneer artist renowned for his revelatory insights, Aimard was awarded the prestigious 2017 International Ernst von Siemens Music Prize in recognition of a life devoted to the service of music.

Aimard is widely acclaimed as a key figure in the music of our time and has had close collaborations with many leading composers including György Ligeti, whose complete works for piano he has recorded. He has also worked with Karlheinz Stockhausen, George Benjamin, and Pierre Boulez, who appointed Aimard, aged 19, to become the Ensemble intercontemporain’s first solo pianist. Praised by *The Guardian* as “one of the best Messiaen interpreters around,” Aimard has had a close association with the composer himself and with Yvonne Loriod, with whom he studied at the Paris Conservatoire. Recent seasons have included the release of Olivier Messiaen’s *Catalogue d’oiseaux* on Pentatone, which was honored with multiple awards, including the prestigious German music critics’ award “Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik.” Aimard has also performed the world premieres of piano works by György Kurtág at Teatro alla Scala; Elliott Carter’s last piece, *Epigrams*, which was written for Aimard; and Sir Harrison Birtwistle’s works *Responses: Sweet Disorder and the Carefully Careless* and *Keyboard Engine* for two pianos.

An innovative curator and uniquely significant interpreter of piano repertoire from every age, Aimard has been invited to direct and perform in a number of residencies, with ground-breaking projects at New York’s Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, Konzerthaus Vienna, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Alte Oper Frankfurt, Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels, Lucerne Festival, Mozarteum Salzburg, Cité de la Musique in Paris, Tanglewood Festival, and Edinburgh Festival, and was Artistic Director of the Aldeburgh Festival from 2009 to 2016. He performs throughout the world each season with major orchestras under conductors including Esa-Pekka Salonen, Peter Eötvös, Sir Simon Rattle, and Vladimir Jurowski.

Aimard's 2019/20 program focus, "*Beethoven and the Avant-Garde*," is a tour de force of pianistic discoveries that transcends traditional boundaries. In this unique and very personal take on Beethoven's legacy, developed in response to the composer's 250th anniversary year, Aimard juxtaposes Viennese classical music with compositions of the avant-garde to reveal surprising cross-references. This season Aimard presents the project in concerts as part of Berliner Festspiele at Philharmonie Berlin, Philharmonie de Paris, Tokyo Opera City, Southbank Centre, and on tour in the US.

Together with the Gürzenich Orchestra and François-Xavier Roth, Aimard tours Europe with their "*New Academy Concerts*" series created in the spirit of Beethoven's Academy soirées, where the musical revolutionary presented his own creations to the Viennese public. Aimard takes both Beethoven projects to London as part of his ongoing three-year residency at Southbank Centre. In recital, Aimard pairs two mighty and transcendental piano sonatas—Charles Ives's *Concord* sonata (which Aimard recorded and for which he received a Grammy award) and Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* sonata.

This season, Aimard is also resident at Casa da Música, performing works by Olivier Messiaen and Hughes Dufourt, as well as Tristan Murail's piano concerto *Le Désenchantement du Monde*, premiered with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and receiving the 2017 Gramophone award. He returns to Berliner Philharmoniker, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, among many others.

Through his professorship at the Hochschule Köln, as well as numerous concert lectures and workshops worldwide, Aimard sheds an inspiring light on music of all periods. During the 2008/09 season Aimard was an Associate Professor at the College de France, Paris and he is a member of Bayerische Akademie der Schönen Künste. In 2015 he launched a major online resource, Explore the Score, centered on the performance and teaching of György Ligeti's piano music in collaboration with Klavier-Festival Ruhr.

NOTES

Program Notes © Elizabeth Bergman

MESSIAEN: CATALOGUE D'OISEAUX

IN BRIEF

BORN: December 10, 1908, Avignon, France

DIED: April 27, 1992, Clichy, France

FIRST PERFORMANCE: Premiered by Yvonne Loriod in Paris on April 15, 1959.

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: Tonight marks the first performance of this work on our series.

DURATION:

NO. 6: L'alouette-lulu, 7 minutes

NO. 5: La chouette hulotte, 7 minutes

The seven books of *Catalogue d'oiseaux* (*Catalog of Birds*, 1956-58) by Olivier Messiaen stand as his most formidable work for piano and the culmination of a decade spent studying birdsong. It unites the composer's passions for sound, color, and nature.

In 1919, at only eleven years old, Messiaen entered the Paris Conservatoire, where he studied composition as well as organ, piano, and percussion. As a deeply devout Catholic, Messiaen suffused his music with the mysteries, rituals, and celebrations of the Christian faith. He also took to heart the advice of his teacher, composer Paul Dukas, who told the young Messiaen to "listen to the birds, they are great masters."

In 1952 Messiaen became obsessed with birdsong, seeking out the company of leading French ornithologists and spending hours transcribing birdsong into special notebooks. His commitment to accuracy was fueled by his faith: he believed that birdsong was God's song, and struggled to be sure nothing was lost in translation at the piano.

The birds and their environs are depicted in the *Catalogue*. Both "L'alouette-lulu" (the wood-lark) and "La chouette hulotte" (the tawny owl) depict the night. The call of the wood-lark is described by Messiaen as "poetic, liquid, unreal." Her calls alternate with those of a nightingale,

whose voice is “sparkling and caustic.” The calls of the tawny owl are interspersed with sections of music that depict the evening forest. Two others (the long-eared owl and little owl) share the forest with her.

IN BRIEF

BORN: December 1770, Bonn, Germany

DIED: March 26, 1827, Vienna, Austria

COMPOSED: Completed in 1801 and dedicated in 1802 to Beethoven’s pupil, Countess Giulietta Guicciardi.

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: Tonight marks the first performance of this work on our series.

DURATION: 15 minutes

BEETHOVEN:
PIANO SONATA
NO. 14 IN C-SHARP
MINOR, OP. 27,
NO. 2
“MOONLIGHT”

In 1801, Ludwig van Beethoven realized that his hearing was failing and confessed his condition to a friend.

“For almost two years I have ceased to attend any social functions,” he wrote, “just because I find it impossible to say to people: ‘I am deaf.’” He held out hope that the illness might be cured, but by the summer of 1802 he had resigned himself to his fate.

This time of personal crisis coincided with a period of remarkable artistic growth. Beethoven was working hard to establish himself as a pianist and composer among the Viennese elite. He sought at once to claim the musical mantle of Haydn and Mozart and make his own mark as a mature composer. The piano sonatas from around the turn of the century document his efforts to expand the genre and cement his own reputation for invention.

The sobriquet “Moonlight” was attached to the sonata by a poet and critic. Beethoven himself gave the work a much more significant title: *Sonata quasi una fantasia*. The hybrid title brings together two distinct genres, the sonata and the fantasy. The sonata was, of course, a most prestigious and exalted genre mastered by Beethoven’s predecessors, Haydn and Mozart. The styles and forms of the sonata were generally settled. A sonata consists of three movements, the first in sonata-allegro form staging a dramatic contest between two keys; the second a more lyrical respite; and the third another sonata-allegro or a rondo, generally

fast and sometimes furious. The number of movements might contract to two or expand to four, but the basic structure was set. The fantasy, on the other hand, was the product of immediate invention. Fantasies could embrace multiple styles and create comparatively free forms. They were generally in a single movement, and whereas sonatas were to be tightly constructed, fantasies could be rather discursive.

Thus a sonata-as-fantasy might be understood as an attempt to incorporate creativity (as in an improvisational fantasy) within the frame of a traditional sonata. It was a way for Beethoven to announce to his audiences his desire to equal the Classical masters, yet be judged by the standards of his own creativity.

The opening of this sonata would have been, to listeners at the time, quite shocking. The first movement might typically begin with a hazy introduction, but the real business of the music was supposed to soon begin within the conventions of sonata-allegro form. Instead, the first movement of the “Moonlight” Sonata unfolds like a song in two parts. In between, a second idea features a three-note dialogue between the hands.

Franz Liszt referred to the second movement minuet and trio as “a flower between two abysses.” It falls in a traditional ABA form, but the syncopations in the middle section unsettle the triple meter. Whereas the two-note groupings in the minuet lean heaviest on the first beat, as expected, in the trio emphasis falls on the third beat of the bar.

Although the opening movement may have been well within reach of the amateur pianist (one reason it’s so popular), the finale demands the most accomplished technique. The first theme features almost violent arpeggios capped by two sharp chords. The second theme is more lyrical, but the accompaniment still roils underneath. Both themes are taken up in the development and repeated in the recapitulation. A coda stays true to the *fantasia* with cadenza-like passagework.

IN BRIEF

BORN: May 1562, Deventer, Netherlands

DIED: October 16, 1621, Amsterdam, Netherlands

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: Tonight marks the first performance of this work on our series.

DURATION: 10 minutes

SWEELINCK:
*FANTASIA
CROMATICA*,
SWWV 258

Sweelinck's illustrious *Fantasia Cromatica* is a late-Renaissance composition that served as inspiration for a series of Baroque-era composers, including J.S. Bach. A transitional composition in music history, it cannot be entirely appreciated without considering the distinction between musical tuning systems before and after the time of Bach. Sweelinck conceived his score during the age of mean-tone temperament, which had greater variety, and more dissonance, than the equal temperament that defines composition to the present day. In the mean-tone temperament system, E-flat and D-flat are not the same pitches as D-sharp and C-sharp, whereas in the equal-temperament system the slight audible differences between these and other enharmonically equivalent pitches is erased.

Sweelinck's score has a descending opening theme whose opening pitch is repeated three times before the tune sinks, unsettlingly, through the range of a perfect fourth. The dissonance persists whenever this theme is heard. It sounds in imitation, then it is combined with a second theme, and then further combined with the second theme in inversion. The dissonance eases during those episodes when the theme, the descending slide through the fourth, is absent. The score is a masterpiece in counterpoint, and cast in a three-part form (the structure is admittedly hard to hear) that builds to a brilliant, accelerating climax, the opening note values halved and halved again in length.

BENJAMIN: SHADOWLINES

IN BRIEF

BORN: January 31, 1960, London, UK

FIRST PERFORMANCE: This work was written for Pierre-Laurent Aimard, commissioned by Betty Freeman, and premiered by Aimard on February 13, 2003 in London's Barbican Hall.

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: Tonight marks the first performance of this work on our series.

DURATION: 10 minutes

British composer George Benjamin began composing at the age of seven. At 16 he entered the Paris Conservatoire, where he studied composition with Olivier Messiaen. Benjamin follows his teacher's advice when composing by secluding himself away. "Messiaen said to me, 'Don't talk about your pieces,'" Benjamin explains. "In other words, keep them to yourself until you finish them. To create a work of art is a deeply private thing, and you need to live in a deeply private space."

Benjamin's own program note for *Shadowlines: Six Canonic Pieces for Piano* reads as follows:

This sequence of pieces, all canons in different ways, was conceived as a continuous, cumulative structure: 1) A brief, seemingly improvisatory prologue. 2) The high register, fierce and harshly chromatic, against the lower, which is consonant and calm; a compact coda reconciles these opposites. 3) A miniature scherzo, all within the space of 1 1/2 octaves in the bass, leading immediately to: 4) Explosive and monolithic, the pianist's hands perpetually drifting apart then re-uniting in rhythmical unison. 5) The most expansive and lyrical movement; at its heart a slow ground-bass, over which builds a widely contrasted procession of textures. After a short pause: 6) A simple and gentle epilogue. This work was written for Pierre-Laurent Aimard and was commissioned by Betty Freeman.

IN BRIEF

COMPOSED: 1816, dedicated to the pianist Baroness Dorothea Ertmann

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: Jean-Efflam Bavouzet, April 19, 2016

DURATION: 20 minutes

BEETHOVEN: PIANO SONATA NO. 28 IN A MAJOR, OP. 101

Composed during his innovative “late” period, Op. 101 has most often been described as like a “fantasy.” By 1816, when Op. 101 was composed, however, Beethoven was nearly deaf, his days as a celebrated improviser at the piano long over. Perhaps Op. 101, with its fantasy-like musings and surprising turns of phrase, captures the composer’s wistful longing for his days as a public performer. (He had last played in public in January 1815.)

In addition, fantasy also conveys a sense of something imaginative, even private or intimate, and we seem as listeners to interrupt Beethoven’s own fantasy in Op. 101—entering the room of his thoughts, unexpected and unannounced. The sonata begins as if in the middle of something. Or, as has been suggested, it might be picking up where another piece left off. Op. 101 can be considered the second in a trilogy of late sonatas along with Op. 90 and Op. 106, the “Hammerklavier.”

The title “Hammerklavier” was Beethoven’s own, but the titles of other sonatas (like the “Moonlight”) were not. Publishers and critics named them. Beethoven did suggest his own title for Op. 101 (tongue in cheek, of course): “The Difficult to Play Sonata in A,” referencing a snide remark by a critic who had reviewed a recent performance of “Beethoven’s difficult to play symphony in A major.”

The difficulty here is as much expressive as technical. At the opening of the first movement, Beethoven instructs the pianist to play “with innermost expressiveness.” The second movement is full of counterpoint, a key element of Beethoven’s later works, and the finale also features a fugato section with musical ideas repeated and overlapping. The slow third movement feels like an introduction to the finale and, like the opening, offers a glimpse into a private reverie. Beethoven here describes the music as “slow and

full of longing.” The finale is remarkably boisterous—with bouncing octaves, finger-tangling runs that recall Bach’s two-part inventions or Carl Czerny’s etudes, Haydnesque pauses, and lots of dramatic flourishes.



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FAMILY OF FOUR

Ivalas Quartet Makes Family Connections

On October 6, FCM’s annual Family Concert entertained an audience of over 125 at the Denver School of the Arts. In their program, “Family of Four,” the Ivalas Quartet performed a diverse selection of music while presenting how they work though “string quartet family dynamics”—from musical decision-making to communication among the four members, who spend many hours together each day rehearsing. The Ivalas ended with a joyful “Four for Tango” by Astor Piazzolla.

The Ivalas Quartet is the newly appointed Graduate Quartet in Residence at CU Boulder, mentored by the famed Takács Quartet. Founded in 2016 in Ann Arbor, Michigan, the quartet includes members from the Black and Latinx communities with the aim of bringing greater visibility to musicians of color. Hear the Ivalas Quartet on February 9, 2020 on the “Music in the Galleries” series presented in partnership with the Clyfford Still Museum.

Our sixth free Family Concert is part of FCM’s commitment to community outreach, made possible by generous grants and donor gifts.



COLORADO GIVES DAY IS DECEMBER 10

It's the 10th Anniversary of Colorado Gives Day, Colorado's largest day of giving. Join thousands of Coloradans to support local nonprofits like ours on Tuesday, December 10, 2019.

Why give to Friends of Chamber Music? Your gift is vital in supporting our mission to bring world-class chamber music to the Denver area for decades to come. With your support, FCM is committed to nurturing future audiences and ensuring that the beauty of chamber music is shared with adults and students throughout our community. For every concert we present in Gates Concert Hall we offer three more in the community, most free of charge.

Please help us reach our Colorado Gives Day goal of \$10,000. Your donation goes further on Colorado Gives Day thanks to the \$1Million Incentive Fund from Community First Foundation and FirstBank.

Schedule your donation today at www.coloradogives.org/FCM.



WINTER WEATHER IS HERE!



With inclement weather, FCM's concern is the safety of our patrons. Up-to-the-minute information about concert cancellations can be found on our website, Facebook, and on FCM's office voicemail, 303-388-9839. We will also notify you by email if we have your email address. If you are not receiving our "Chamber Notes" newsletter or you have opted out of our email system you can subscribe or re-subscribe by using the sign-up form on the homepage of our website, friendsofchambermusic.com.





SPEKTRAL QUARTET

December Residency Activities

The Spektral Quartet, named “Chicagoans of the Year” (2017), is known for creating seamless connections across centuries, drawing in the listener with charismatic deliveries, interactive concert formats, and bold, inquisitive programming.

The quartet will launch a four-day residency with FCM on December 8. The following public programs will be offered as a part of this residency:

SUN, DEC 8, 1:00 & 2:00 PM

“Music in the Galleries”

Clyfford Still Museum

1250 Bannock Street, Denver

Music is free with admission to the galleries. Half-price tickets available (if purchased in advance). Visit our website for link and discount code.

TUE, DEC 10, 10:30 AM

FREE Community Concert

Denver Public Library - Central Branch

10 West 14th Ave Pkwy, Denver

WED, DEC 11, 7:30 PM

FCM Chamber Series

Gates Hall, Newman Center

\$40 General Admission

\$10 Ages 30 & Under

Spektral’s residency also includes performances at Florence Crittenton High School, focusing on music and meditation.

Our thanks to the SCFD and Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF) for their support of this residency.

PRE-CONCERT TALKS

Before the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center took the stage on October 16, FCM offered the first Pre-Concert Talk of the season for 172 patrons in Gates Hall. Arts journalist Marc Shulgold outlined the fascinating connections between Antonín Dvořák and the works in the Chamber Music Society's *New World Spirit* program. Marc described how Dvořák, appointed director of the National Conservatory of Music in New York in 1892 and tasked with identifying an "American sound," was influenced by composer Harry Burleigh, who introduced him to African American spirituals, and his visit to Spillville, Iowa, where he heard Native American rhythms. To round out this educational prelude to the concert, CMS musician David Shifrin joined Marc on stage to share a few beautiful clarinet lines from the Bernstein and Copland pieces featured in the second half of the concert.

Pre-Concert Talks will be held before each Chamber Series concert this season. Join us for our next talk on December 11 at 6:30 pm to hear about the Spektral Quartet's four-day residency in Denver.



MASTER CLASS WITH KRISTIN LEE

FCM sponsored a master class with Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center violinist Kristin Lee on October 16. Working with two violin performance students at the Lamont School of Music, Ms. Lee discussed how technique and musical intention inform and shape phrasing. She also shared exercises focusing on the breath and stance, such as having the feet grounded, for a relaxed set-up that produces a full resonant sound that rings. Even as a professional touring violinist, Ms. Lee assured the students that she also reminds herself to practice these basics.

FCM is delighted to offer master classes with our series artists who share their expertise and experience with aspiring, local music students. Generous grants and donor gifts help FCM provide educational support for the next generation of chamber musicians.



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CHAMBER SERIES

Spektral Quartet

Wed, Dec 11, 2019

Miró Quartet

Wed, Jan 15, 2020

Danish String Quartet

Tue, Feb 4, 2020

Wed, Feb 5, 2020

Lawrence Brownlee, tenor

Myra Huang, piano

Wed, Mar 4, 2020

Alisa Weilerstein, cello

Inon Barnatan, piano

Wed, Apr 1, 2020

Arnaud Sussmann, violin

Anna Polonsky, piano

Wed, May 13, 2020

*All Chamber and Piano Series
concerts begin at 7:30 pm at Gates
Hall, 2344 E. Iliff Avenue, Denver*

PIANO SERIES

Benjamin Grosvenor

Wed, Mar 18, 2020

SPECIAL EVENTS

"Music in the Galleries"

Spektral Quartet

Sun, Dec. 8, 2019, 1:00 & 2:00 PM

Clyfford Still Museum

1250 Bannock St., Denver

Free Community Concert

Spektral Quartet

Tue, Dec. 10, 2019, 10:30 AM

Denver Public Library -

Central Branch

10 W. 14th Ave. Pkwy

SAVE THE DATE

Dinner with the

Danish String Quartet

Mon, Feb. 3, 2020

Nocturne Jazz Club

1330 27th Street, Denver

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