



FRIENDS OF

CHAMBER

MUSIC

DENVER

ANNA
POLONSKY
PIANO
ORION WEISS
PIANO

DECEMBER 5, 2018

FRANZ SCHUBERT *Allegro in A Minor, D. 947, "Lebensstürme"*
(1797-1828)

**WOLFGANG
AMADEUS
MOZART** *Sonata for Two Pianos in D Major, K. 448*
(1756-1791) *Allegro con spirito*
Andante
Allegro molto

INTERMISSION

**JOHANNES
BRAHMS** *Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann, Op. 23*
(1833-1897)

**CAMILLE
SAINT-SAËNS** *Variations on a Theme of Beethoven in E-flat Major,
Op. 35*
(1835 – 1921)



ANNA POLONSKY
piano

ANNA POLONSKY, PIANO

Anna Polonsky is widely in demand as a soloist and chamber musician. She has appeared with the Moscow Virtuosi, the Buffalo Philharmonic, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Columbus Symphony Orchestra, the Memphis Symphony, the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, the St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble, and many others. Ms. Polonsky has collaborated with the Guarneri, Orion, Daedalus, and Shanghai Quartets, and with such musicians as Mitsuko Uchida, Yo-Yo Ma, David Shifrin, Richard Goode, Emanuel Ax, Arnold Steinhardt, Peter Wiley, and Jaime Laredo. She has performed chamber music at festivals such as Marlboro, Chamber Music Northwest, Seattle, Music@Menlo, Cartagena, Bard, and Caramoor, as well as at Bargemusic in New York City. Ms. Polonsky has given concerts in the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Vienna Konzerthaus, the Alice Tully Hall, and Carnegie Hall's Stern, Weill, and Zankel Halls, and has toured extensively throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia. A frequent guest at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, she was a member of the Chamber Music Society Two during 2002-2004. In 2006 she took part in the European Broadcasting Union's project to record and broadcast all of Mozart's keyboard sonatas, and in the spring of 2007 she performed a solo recital at Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium to inaugurate the Emerson Quartet's Perspectives Series. She is a recipient of a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship and the Andrew Wolf Chamber Music Award.

Anna Polonsky made her solo piano debut at the age of seven at the Special Central Music School in Moscow, Russia. She emigrated to the United States in 1990 and attended high school at the Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan. She received her Bachelor of Music diploma from The Curtis Institute of Music under the tutelage of the renowned pianist Peter Serkin and continued her studies with Jerome Lowenthal, earning her Master's Degree from the Juilliard School. In addition to performing, she serves on the piano faculty of Vassar College and in the summer at the Marlboro and Kneisel Hall chamber music festivals.

Anna Polonsky is a Steinway Artist and performs with the Polonsky/Shifrin/Wiley Trio, which is represented by CM Artists. www.annapolonsky.com.

ORION WEISS, PIANO

One of the most sought-after young American soloists, the pianist Orion Weiss has performed with the major American orchestras, including the Chicago Symphony, Boston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and New York Philharmonic. His deeply felt and exceptionally crafted performances go far beyond his technical mastery and have won him worldwide acclaim.

His 2018-19 season began with the Lucerne Festival and ends with the Minnesota Orchestra, with performances for the University of Iowa, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Albany Symphony, the Kennedy Center's Fortas Series, the 92nd Street Y, and the Broad Stage in between. In 2017-18 Orion performed Beethoven's Triple Concerto with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, toured with James Ehnes, and soloed with 12 orchestras around the United States. Other highlights of recent seasons include his third performance with the Chicago Symphony, a North American tour with the world-famous Salzburg Marionette Theater in a performance of Debussy's *La boîte à joujoux*, the release of his recording of Christopher Rouse's *Seeing*, and recordings of the complete Gershwin works for piano and orchestra with his longtime collaborators, the Buffalo Philharmonic and JoAnn Falletta.

Weiss's impressive list of awards includes the Classical Recording Foundation's Young Artist of the Year (2010), Gilmore Young Artist Award, an Avery Fisher Career Grant, the Gina Bachauer Scholarship at the Juilliard School, and the Mieczyslaw Munz Scholarship. A native of Lyndhurst, Ohio, Weiss attended the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he studied with Paul Schenly, Daniel Shapiro, Sergei Babayan, Kathryn Brown, and Edith Reed. In February 1999, Weiss made his Cleveland Orchestra debut performing Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 1. In March 1999, with less than 24 hours' notice, Weiss



ORION WEISS
piano

stepped in to replace André Watts for a performance of Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No. 2 with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. He was immediately invited to return to the Orchestra for a performance of the Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto in October 1999. In 2004, he graduated from the Juilliard School, where he studied with Emanuel Ax.

Orion Weiss is represented by MKI Artists. Recordings: Naxos Records and Bridget Records. www.orionweiss.com.

NOTES

Program Notes © Elizabeth Bergman

SCHUBERT:
ALLEGRO IN A
MINOR, D. 947,
"LEBENSSTÜRME"

IN BRIEF

BORN: January 31, 1797, Himmelpfortgrund, Vienna, Austria

DIED: November 19, 1828, Vienna, Austria

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

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

ESTIMATED DURATION: 14 minutes

This Allegro movement comes from an unfinished piano sonata that Schubert composed in 1828, the last year of his very short life.

Schubert's publisher thought the work needed a catchy title, so suggested *Lebensstürme*, or *Storms of Life*. The composer did not have the chance to protest this trivialization of his intentions. True, there is an opening thunderclap and intermittent storm-tossed passages, demanding of the two pianists orchestral power and drive. But the music moves into a hymn that involves, like the first movement of his *Unfinished Symphony*, puzzling interruptions and pauses that suggest a testing of the limits of musical form; a striking modulation from A minor down a half step to A-flat, for example, altogether defies convention. Such moments offer a vision into another world, a tranquil alternate realm of wonder. At times the music pauses, as though listening to its own echo.

IN BRIEF

BORN: January 27, 1756, Salzburg, Austria

DIED: December 5, 1791, Vienna, Austria

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: January 25, 1984, Lilian Kallir and Claude Frank, pianists

ESTIMATED DURATION: 23 minutes

MOZART: SONATA FOR TWO PIANOS IN D MAJOR, K. 448

Mozart's Sonata for Two Pianos is a real showstopper—as gorgeous a piece as ever flowed from his prolific musical mind. From the clarion calls at the opening through the tempestuous transitional material (positively Beethovenian in its dark colors, rich harmonies, and tremulous bass line) to the translucent second theme, the Sonata continues to build drama that then bursts forth in a series of syncopated chords and thrilling runs traded between the two pianists.

At a time when most four-hand music (at one piano) was meant for amateurs and students to enjoy playing at home, the Sonata for Two Pianos was instead a concert piece that Mozart wrote for himself and his student, Josepha Auernhammer. She must have been an accomplished musician to be featured on stage with Mozart, yet he had his doubts about her talent: “In cantabile playing she has not got the real delicate singing style,” he observed. Thus the sweet melodies of the second movement of the Sonata were perhaps intended to test her technique and musicality.

The Sonata draws on the most public of concert genres at the time: the concerto and the opera. The second movement in particular could be an aria – just add words – and the finale includes some bravura cadenza-like passages that let the two pianists banter back and forth in a friendly musical sparring.



Pre-Concert Happy Hours at the Pioneer!

Join us prior to each concert for tacos, margaritas, and conversation at the Pioneer Bar, 2401 S. University Blvd., just around the corner from the Newman Center. We will have an area reserved for Friends of Chamber Music to gather for food and drinks beginning at 6:00 p.m. Whether you are a new subscriber or a longtime supporter, we hope you will stop by for a chance to get to know your fellow concert-goers.

**BRAHMS:
VARIATIONS ON A
THEME BY ROBERT
SCHUMANN,
OP. 23**

IN BRIEF

BORN: May 7, 1833, Hamburg, Germany

DIED: April 3, 1897, Vienna, Austria

FIRST PERFORMANCE: October 1863 in Hamburg, Germany with Fritz Brahms and Sidney Smith, pianists.

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

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

ESTIMATED DURATION: 17 minutes

The tale of Johannes Brahms's musical homages to Robert Schumann (there was more than one) is sad. It begins with a memory recounted by Schumann's daughter Eugenie. "One day – it was in the year 1853 – the bell rang toward noon. I ran out, as children do, and opened the door. There I saw a very young man, handsome as a picture, with long blond hair. He asked for my father. My parents went out, I said. He ventured to ask when he could come again. Tomorrow, at eleven, I said, my parents always go out at twelve. The next day at eleven o'clock – we were in school – he came again. Father received him; he brought his compositions with him and father thought that as long as he was there, he could play the things for him then and there. The young man sat down at the piano. He had barely played a few measures when my father interrupted and ran out saying, 'Please wait a moment, I must call my wife.' The midday meal that followed was unforgettable. Both parents were in the most joyful excitement – again and again they began and could not speak of anything but the gifted young morning visitor, whose name was Johannes Brahms."

The wife in this story is pianist and composer Clara Schumann, who nurtured her husband's talent and became the muse for Brahms as well. The three of them loved one another, and Brahms became a member of the Schumanns' household, doing everything from buying postage stamps to paying the servants, rent, and school tuition.

Their affections influenced their music. Brahms wrote two sets of variations to themes by Schumann. The first,

from 1854, is based on a piano piece by Schumann published in a collection titled *Bunte Blätter*, or *Motley Leaves*. Clara also used this theme for a set of variations, and Brahms both dedicated his composition to her and showed her each variation while he was composing. The set moves through various melancholic treatments of the skeletal F-sharp minor theme. Romantic genres beloved by the Schumanns are invoked: the nocturne, a serenade, and the *lied* (a song of poetic significance). A passage featuring staggered entrances in canonic imitation showcases Brahms's own interest in counterpoint.

The second, lesser-known set featured on this program dates from 1861 and was dedicated to Clara and Robert's daughter Julie, with whom Brahms became smitten. But Op. 23 is not at all an amorous work. The set of ten variations is based on a theme by Schumann called "Last Thought." The melody was delivered to him, Schumann claimed, by the ghosts of Schubert and Mendelssohn. Yet focus here falls on the bass line, which Brahms called "the firm foundation on which I then tell my stories." The theme, whether heard in the Primo (first piano part) or Secondo (second piano part) is not substantially changed. It is either present or absent in a texture that moves through different harmonic and contrapuntal possibilities. By turns wistful then pain-filled, the variations conclude with a funeral march. A prominent critic of the time, Adolf Schubring, started his review by stressing Brahms's manipulations of pitches in abstract terms, but ended up by waving away such ideas. No, there was no abstraction here, he wrote. The set was about Schumann's impending death. The music moves from lament to sadness to Brahms's desperate cry: "Ah, they have buried a good man, but to me he was more."

LEGACY GIFTS

For those who want to leave a musical legacy, a planned or deferred gift to Friends of Chamber Music is a meaningful way for you to help ensure our future artistic excellence and stability while potentially providing enhanced tax benefits to you. Visit our website for more information.

SAINT-SAËNS:
VARIATIONS ON
A THEME OF
BEETHOVEN IN
E-FLAT MAJOR,
OP. 35

IN BRIEF

BORN: October 9, 1835, Paris, France

DIED: December 16, 1921, Algiers, Algeria

FIRST PERFORMANCE: March 28, 1874, Paris, Alfred and Marie Jaëll, pianists

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

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

ESTIMATED DURATION: 18 minutes

Camille Saint-Saëns was a prodigy who started composing shortly after he began to walk. At four years old, he performed a Beethoven violin sonata. Seven years later, he had all of Beethoven's piano sonatas lodged in his head and could perform them from memory. His reputation, however, is that of a musical fuddy-duddy who produced a lot of "rubbishy rubbish," in the view of one snobbish modernist critic who considered him dreadfully old-fashioned. This is unfair. He was retrospective to be sure, but in the service of preserving French national traditions, which included religious music.

Saint-Saëns could also be playful, disarmingly so. Why does his most famous work, *The Carnival of the Animals*, include music about plants and fossils? And why does it focus most on creatures, like turtles and fish, that don't produce much sound? He was interested in atmosphere, chiefly, and in lampooning the plant- and fossil-like habits of dull performers. Saint-Saëns also wanted to remind listeners that the musical masters of the past were people, not gods, who composed their fair share of music for fun's sake. "Our contemporaneous composers forget that Mozart, Beethoven, and Sebastian Bach knew how to laugh at times," he wrote. "They distrust all gaiety and declare it unesthetic. As the good public cannot resign itself to getting along without gaiety, it goes to operetta and turns naturally to Offenbach who created it and furnished an inexhaustible supply."

His Variations on a Theme of Beethoven, taken from the middle of the middle movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 18, offer some good musical fun. The music tours through fragmentary and lyrical treatments of the theme, including mysterious exotica and a march. At once relaxed and sophisticated, it captures Saint-Saëns's musical mantra: "In art, as in everything, extremes meet, and there are all kinds of tastes."

CALIDORE STRING QUARTET

Inspiring Student Musicians

Arriving in Denver on November 6, the Calidore String Quartet's first stop was the Denver School of the Arts to coach a string quartet and several student soloists. Young and inspiring, the Calidore



started the master class by performing a movement of both a Haydn and Beethoven string quartet. Student performances followed, with each member of the quartet sharing ideas on practice tips, such as practicing in pairs when learning a new piece, and technique reminders, like playing near the bridge with the flat hairs of the bow to create the strong, strident sound required in a Bartók passage.

Later in the afternoon the Calidore coached two student ensembles from the Lamont School of Music at the University of Denver. The first Lamont ensemble played the Adagio from Mendelssohn's String Quartet in A minor, Op. 13, the same piece the Calidore performed that evening for Friends of Chamber Music. The Calidore musicians instructed students on phrasing and dynamics, sharing tips from their own experience with the piece. The second group of Lamont students played the Poco adagio from Brahms's Piano Quartet in A major, Op. 26, earning praise from the Calidore quartet for their performance. The Calidore reminded both ensembles that every piece of music tells a story. It is the task of the performer to communicate that story to the listener.



FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

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A BANG-UP FAMILY EVENT!



FCM's 5th annual free family concert began with clapping, but the applause came from the stage rather than the audience. Lamont's percussion quartet, Fourth Degree, performed Steve Reich's "Clapping Music" to open an exciting concert of chamber music for percussion. The quartet captured the attention of even the tiniest audience members with their energetic and unusual program. The music included pieces composed for coffee cans, wine bottles, wooden boxes, and voice, as well as for drums, marimba, and vibraphone. Chamber music ensembles must keep a steady beat, follow the rhythmic instructions of the composer, and communicate with each another using body language. The percussion quartet illustrated each of these essential elements of chamber music vividly while the young audience enjoyed the lively, sometimes athletic performance, including a chance to try out various instruments following the concert.



Friends of Chamber Music would like to thank the Denver School of the Arts for its continued generosity in providing the use of its hall for this concert.

Photo credit: Yanita Rowan



Photo credit: Zena Ballas

MUSIC IN THE GALLERIES

SUNDAY, JANUARY 13, 2019

1:00 & 2:00 PM

Clay Quartet

Clyfford Still Museum
1250 Bannock St., Denver

Join us for “Music in the Galleries” featuring the Clay Quartet: Yi Zhao and Chris Jussell (violins), Leah Kovach (viola), and Austin Fisher (cello). The quartet will present a program including works by Maurice Ravel and living Estonian composer Arvo Pärt. This past June, the Clay Quartet performed live at TEDxMileHigh.

Music is free with admission to the galleries. Through this partnership the museum is offering FCM patrons \$5 half price tickets (if purchased in advance) to enter the museum on performance days. The link to purchase discount tickets is available on our website. *Note: Seating is limited and available on a first come, first served basis.*

**SAVE THE DATE FOR
THESE UPCOMING
"MUSIC IN THE
GALLERIES"
PERFORMANCES:**



VIOLAMORE DUO

Sunday, March 10, 2019

Violamore Duo with violists Koko Dylgerski and Leah Kovach. Their program will include works by Garth Knox, Kenji Bunch, and Paul Colette.

ALTIVS QUARTET

Sunday, May 12, 2019

Altivus Quartet returns to “Music in the Galleries” with an innovative program of music for string quartet.

Visit our website for complete program information.

2018-19 PIANO SERIES



SIR ANDRÁS SCHIFF

WED, FEB 20, 2019 | 7:30 PM

One of the most celebrated pianists of our time, world-renowned Sir András Schiff is also a conductor, pedagogue, and lecturer. In June 2014 he was awarded a knighthood for services to music by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

PROGRAM:

Program includes works by Janáček and Schumann.



PIOTR ANDERSZEWSKI

WED, APR 10, 2019 | 7:30 PM

Polish pianist and composer Piotr Anderszewski has been singled out for high profile awards throughout his career. He will be performing Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* for the first time in FCM's 65-year history. "Every one of the 33 variations seemed freshly imagined, with their dizzying contrasts of wit and pathos, explosive energy and communing stillness . . ." - THE GUARDIAN

PROGRAM:

Program features Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations*.

TO ORDER PIANO SERIES TICKETS:

Apply the cost of tonight's ticket and purchase the remaining Piano Series for only \$50! Call 303-388-9839 to order, or visit our ticket table in the lobby.

Subscriptions: \$90 for all 3 concerts; \$65 for current Chamber Series Subscribers. Call 303-388-9839 to order.

Single tickets available at www.friendsofchambermusic.com
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DENVER CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

June 3 - 9, 2019

Artists:

Tessa Lark, violin

David McCarroll, violin

Ayana Kozasa, viola

John Stulz, viola

Julio Elizalde, piano

Alice Yoo, cello & co-artistic director

Matt Zalkind, cello & co-artistic director



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For more information, visit www.DenverChamberMusicFestival.org

MUSIC WITH FRIENDS

TUESDAY, JANUARY 8, 2019

6:00 - 7:00 PM

Robyn Julyan, violin

Nan Shannon, piano

Syntax Physic Opera

554 S. Broadway, Denver



Join us on January 8 for our next “Music with Friends” concert, featuring music celebrating the legacy and values of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with Robyn Julyan, violin, and Nan Shannon, piano.

PROGRAM:

Chen Yi: *Romance and Dance*

Gabriela Lena Frank: *Sueños de Chambi*

Jessie Montgomery: *Rhapsody No. 1*

Lukas Foss: *Three American Pieces*

Concert is free to the public.

Seating is limited — come early and enjoy some great happy hour food and drink specials. Questions? Call 303-388-9839 or email tickets@friendsofchambermusic.com.

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CHAMBER SERIES

Mark Padmore, tenor

Paul Lewis, piano

Wednesday, January 16, 2019

Tafelmusik

Wednesday, March 6, 2019

Tetzlaff-Tetzlaff-Vogt Trio

Tuesday, April 30, 2019

Emerson String Quartet

Wednesday, May 15, 2019

PIANO SERIES

Sir András Schiff, piano

Wednesday, February 20, 2019

Piotr Anderszewski, piano

Wednesday, April 10, 2019

*All Chamber and Piano Series
concerts begin at 7:30 pm at Gates
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SPECIAL EVENTS

“Music with Friends”

Robyn Julyan, violin

Nan Shannon, piano

Tuesday, January 8, 2019

6:00 PM

Syntax Physic Opera

554 S. Broadway

“Music in the Galleries”

1:00 & 2:00 PM

Clyfford Still Museum

1250 Bannock St., Denver

Clay Quartet

Sunday, January 13, 2019

Violamore Duo

Sunday, March 10, 2019

Altius Quartet

Sunday, May 12, 2019

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