

STEFAN JACKIW, VIOLIN
KEVIN AHFAT, PIANO

ARVO PÄRT
(b. 1935)

Fratres

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL
(1685-1759)

Sonata in D Major, HWV 371
Affetuoso
Allegro

SERGEI PROKOFIEV
(1891-1953)

Sonata No. 2 in D Major, Op. 94
Moderato
Scherzo
Andante
Allegro con brio

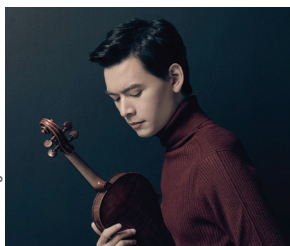
INTERMISSION

CONRAD TAO
(b. 1994)

All I Had Forgotten or Tried To

JOHANNES BRAHMS
(1833-1897)

Sonata No. 3 in D Minor, Op. 108



STEFAN JACKIW

Violin

STEFAN JACKIW, VIOLIN

Stefan Jackiw is one of America's foremost violinists, captivating audiences with playing that combines poetry and purity with impeccable technique. Hailed for playing of "uncommon musical substance" that is "striking for its intelligence and sensitivity" (*Boston Globe*), Jackiw has appeared as a soloist with the Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco symphony orchestras, among others and performed in numerous major festivals around the world, including the Aspen Music Festival, Ravinia Festival, Caramoor International Music Festival, Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival, Lincoln Center's Summer for the City Festival, and the Celebrity Series of Boston.

Jackiw frequently tours with his musical partners, pianist Conrad Tao and cellist Jay Campbell, as part of the Junction Trio. He also enjoys collaborating with pianist Jeremy Denk with whom he recorded the complete Ives Violin Sonatas on Nonesuch Records. The album was universally lauded by critics, with *The New Yorker's* Alex Ross naming Jackiw's performance "a new standard." In 2019, he recorded Beethoven's Triple Concerto with Inon Barnatan, Alisa Weilerstein, Alan Gilbert, and the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields.

Born to physicist parents of Korean and Ukrainian descent, Jackiw began playing the violin at the age of four. His teachers have included Zinaida Gilels, Michèle Auclair, and Donald Weilerstein. He holds a Bachelor of Arts from Harvard University, as well as an Artist Diploma from the New England Conservatory, and is the recipient of a prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant. Jackiw plays a violin made by Domenico Montagnana "ex. Rossi" c. 1730, generously loaned by a private foundation. He lives in New York City.

Stefan Jackiw is represented by Arts Management Group, Inc.

KEVIN AHFAT, PIANO

An artist that “leaves no question about his riveting presentation and technical finesse” (*Seattle Times*), Canadian pianist Kevin Ahfat is “poised to become one of the young heirs of the classical piano realm” (*Vanguard Seattle*). Possessing “a balanced mix of expressiveness and virtuosity” (*Musical America*), he “summons plenty of thunderpower in the big moments, but clearly values musicianship over mere showmanship” (*American Record Guide*).

Named one of CBC Music’s “30 Hot Canadian Classical Musicians Under 30” in 2018, Kevin continues as the newest core member of the three-time GRAMMY-nominated ARC Ensemble, one of Canada’s preeminent chamber ensembles and foremost cultural forces. Their latest releases on Chandos Records have been named among the “Top 10 Classical Musical Albums of 2020” by the *Boston Globe* and WQXR’s “Best Classical Albums of 2020.”

Kevin has had the privilege of sharing the stage with many renowned artists, including Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Stefan Jackiw, Sonia Rodriguez, and SO Percussion, and recently with the Esprit Orchestra and Kaleidoscope Chamber Orchestra, L’Orchestre symphonique de Trois-Rivières, and Seattle, Bellevue, and Oakville Symphonies. Festival appearances include Seattle, Music@Menlo, Rockport, Fall for Dance North, and Kyoto Festivals. He has been broadcast on CBC and contributed to Yamaha Canada’s recent *Dear Glenn* AI Project.

Originally from Toronto, Kevin grew up in the Denver area, studying piano with Dr. Lei Wang (University of Northern Colorado) and Larry Graham (University of Colorado, Boulder). A two-time winner of the Juilliard Concerto Competition, Kevin studied at Juilliard with Joseph Kalichstein and Stephen Hough, and was in-residence as a Rebanks Fellow at the Royal Conservatory. Kevin is Artistic Director of OPUS Chamber Music, Toronto’s newest premier hub for chamber music.



Photo: Donald van Hasselt

KEVIN AHFAT
Piano

NOTES

ARVO PÄRT: FRATRES FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO

IN BRIEF

BORN: September 11, 1935, Paide, Estonia

FIRST PERFORMANCE: August 17, 1980, commissioned by the Salzburg Festival

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: April 3, 2013, Vadim Repin, violin and Andrei Korobeinikov, piano

DURATION: 11 minutes

Estonian-born Arvo Pärt has an unusual story of musical survival. Born into the former Soviet Union, he graduated from Tallinn Conservatory in 1963. Although he had already earned first prize in a Soviet young composer competition in 1962, Pärt's career was hampered because of the spiritual component that underlies much of his music. His aesthetic and religious beliefs conflicted with official Communist Party policy, which led to many of his works being banned.

Pärt left the Soviet Union for the west in 1980. He lived for two years in Vienna, taking Austrian citizenship, then settled in Berlin. Since then, his music has become far better known, revealing a fascinating composer who bridges Eastern and Western European cultures. Pärt went through a serialist phase with a strong emphasis on contrapuntal technique. He abandoned that approach in the late 1960s in favor of music that shares traits with minimalism. His works emphasize tonality and employ repetitive patterns. Sometimes his long melodic lines approach the soothing quality of medieval chant. The compelling effect of his compositions has led to the labels "musical mystic" and "mystic minimalist."

Pärt is a colorist, which in broad musical terms means that he takes full advantage of the various qualities of timbre available from individual instruments. He reveals his palette slowly, allowing time for each change in tone color to be thoroughly perceived. Composer Eric Salzman has written:

The effect of Pärt's music is striking and hypnotic, but its meditative qualities are mystical and emotional rather than physical or nostalgic (as in much American music). The music sometimes actually seems to weep; its qualities of lyrical modality and sadness are strengthened by its

coloristic and process form, and relate it very strongly to Eastern European tradition.

Pärt draws inspiration from a number of sources: mysticism, Renaissance harmony, chant-like melodies, and the works of Prokofiev and Shostakovich, which clearly made a strong imprint upon him during his youth.

He refers to his style as *tintinnabuli*. The term comes from the complex overtone series that arise when bells peal. Pärt uses it in a more philosophical way. He has written:

Tintinnabulation is an area I sometimes wander into when I am searching for answers – in my life, my music, my work. In my dark hours, I have the certain feeling that everything outside this one thing has no meaning. The complex and many-faceted only confuses me, and I must search for unity. What is it, this one thing, and how do I find my way to it? Traces of this perfect thing appear in many guises – and everything that is unimportant falls away. Tintinnabulation is like this ... The three notes of a triad are like bells. And that is why I call it tintinnabulation.

Fratres is arguably Pärt's best-known work, in part because multiple versions exist. He composed it in 1977 for the Estonian Renaissance music ensemble Hortus Musicus. That original version was for three voices above a pedal point for seven instruments, plus percussion. Pärt subsequently arranged and adapted it for a variety of different ensembles and instruments, sometimes adding a prelude or interpolating new music. In 1980, the Salzburg Festival commissioned variations on the original for violin and piano. Pärt dedicated that version to Gidon and Elena Kremer, who introduced it that summer at the festival. As a duo, *Fratres* has become a staple of the violin/piano repertoire.

What differentiates it from its musical siblings is the unaccompanied violin cadenza that opens the work. Out of this dazzling brilliance emerges a mesmerizing calm. The piano's role is chorale-like, with a pedal point under blocked chords, while the violin spins a series of variations. Pärt's hypnotic music gives us a sense of peaceful, purposeful movement; at the same time, we feel stasis, as if the music were hovering, weightless in mid-air.

GEORGE FRIDERIC
HANDEL: SONATA IN
D MAJOR, HWV 371

IN BRIEF

BORN: February 23, 1685, Halle (Saale), Germany

DIED: April 14, 1759, London, United Kingdom

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: Tonight marks the first time this work has been performed on our series.

DURATION: 6 minutes

Handel's D major sonata, composed in 1750, is believed to have been his last piece of chamber music. The English publisher Walsh had issued a dozen sonatas for violin and continuo in the 1730s as Op. 1. A late 19th-century edition prepared by Friedrich Chrysander, in the first attempted collection of Handel's complete works, appended this Sonata to those twelve as Op. 1, No. 13. This Sonata stands apart from those earlier works and represents Handel's mature mastery.

The structure of a Baroque instrumental sonata in the 18th century was four movements arranged slow-fast-slow-fast. Handel's violin part, as it appears on the printed page, is spare. His solo works for the violin focused on clarity of line and structure, leaving elaboration and ornamentation to the discretion of the performer. (This approach applies to the harpsichord part as well, which he notated only in figured bass, a kind of musical shorthand for the sonata's harmonic underpinning.) Baroque performers were trained to flesh out the skeleton provided by the composer and embellish melodic lines tastefully. The beauty of the music is that it communicates to us in its simple, unadorned fashion as well as in a more decorated and mannered style.

The opening movement—whose tempo marking appears in some editions as *Largo e maestoso* or *Adagio* and in others as *Affetuoso*, opens with what sounds like an ascending arpeggio, but its concluding note is a whole step higher than expected: a startling sound that seizes the listener's attention. It asks a question to which the balance of the movement responds. As it continues, the melodic line becomes rhythmically complex. Some of its ornaments are indicated in the score; elsewhere,

Handel has provided places that allow the violinist to improvise embellishments. The movement ends on a cadence of A, rather than the home key of D, indicating that the second movement will follow with a minimal pause.

Handel's dance-like Allegro soon breaks into arpeggiated 16th note figuration that showcases the violinist's technique. While the texture is not strictly fugal, it is imitative. The keyboard part allows the player to echo Handel's violin line, as if in conversation. Indeed, in places the violinist appropriates the bass part (in a higher register, of course), temporarily yielding the melody to the keyboard. Their switched roles keep the listener guessing and add to the movement's narrative momentum.

IN BRIEF

BORN: April 23, 1891, Sontsivka, Ukraine

DIED: March 5, 1953, Moscow, Russia

FIRST PERFORMANCE: June 17, 1944 (violin version) by David Oistrakh, violin and Lev Oborin, piano

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: October 2, 1985, Oscar Shumsky, violin

DURATION: 25 minutes

SERGEI PROKOFIEV:
SONATA NO. 2 IN
D MAJOR, OP. 94

Prokofiev's D major sonata is one of the most popular chamber works in the 20th-century literature. It came about as the result of a commission that Prokofiev sought out from the Soviet Committee on Artistic Affairs in 1942, because he felt the flute was under-represented in the repertoire. His work on the Flute Sonata provided a change of pace from his labors on the ballet *Cinderella*, which dominated his calendar for much of 1943.

Initially, Prokofiev set out to compose a sonata that would reflect the clarity and transparency he so admired in the sound of the flute. The first performance took place in Moscow on December 7, 1943. Nikolai Kharkovsky was the flutist; Sviatoslav Richter was at the piano. In the audience was the great Russian violinist David Oistrakh, who heard it in his mind's ear as a violin/piano sonata. He persuaded Prokofiev to transcribe the work for him, arguing that the piece deserved a broader audience that he, Oistrakh, could deliver through his extensive concertizing. With Oistrakh's advocacy, the D major sonata embarked on a second life. Inevitably, other

instrumentalists, including clarinetists, have been drawn to the piece as well. We hear it in the version that Prokofiev wrote for his friend David Oistrakh.

The Sonata has elements of both mischief and fantasy, with a pastoral scherzo and a sparkling finale that continue to delight players and audiences. Structurally, his four-movement layout adheres to the Baroque *sonata da chiesa* (church sonata) pattern of slow-fast-slow-fast. The music, however, has a stronger kinship to the classical era. The first movement, for example, is in clear sonata form, complete with a repeat of the exposition.

Emotionally straightforward, the sonata has little of the Russian darkness and sardonic wit that so frequently permeate Prokofiev's music. When he employs his sense of humor, it is lighthearted and playful, as in the delightful second movement scherzo. For the most part, this piece is very upbeat. Its overriding moods are lyric serenity and joy. An abundance of melodies has helped to make it Prokofiev's most beloved chamber composition.

CONRAD TAO:
ALL I HAD FORGOTTEN
OR TRIED TO

IN BRIEF

BORN: June 11, 1994, Urbana, IL

FIRST PERFORMANCE: January 25, 2019, 92nd Street Y. Stefan Jackiw, violin and Conrad Tao, piano

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: Tonight marks the first time this work has been performed on our series

DURATION: 3 minutes

Though he is only 31, Conrad Tao has emerged as a major figure in both performance and composition. He has been composing since he was a small child. He remembers playing melodies by ear at the piano when he was a toddler. He soon started formal piano lessons and played his first concerto with an orchestra at age eight. By the time he was nine, his parents had found him proper training in composition as well. Early on, Tao acquired a thorough foundation in Western composition. While still in his teens, he received

eight ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer awards. In 2012—at age 18—he received an Avery Fisher Career Grant and was named a Gilmore Young Artist, a biennial award that highlights the most promising American pianists of the younger generation.

A native of Urbana, Illinois, Tao studied piano with Emilio del Rosario in Chicago. His higher education was at the Columbia University / Juilliard School joint degree program, where his principal piano teacher was Yoheved Kaplinsky. He also studied composition with Christopher Theofanidis at Yale. Tao has appeared as a piano soloist with major orchestras throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia. His wide-ranging interests include world music, the avant-garde, and extended instrumental techniques.

His composer's note explains his unusual title and the genesis of the piece:

In the summer of 2017, I was asked if I would play a piece of mine for an encore. I didn't have any three-minute pieces lying around, so I wrote one. The piece takes its title from a passage in *Impossible Princess*, a book by the New Narrative writer Kevin Killian. *Impossible Princess* is a collection of short stories and poetry, and it takes its title from the 1998 Kylie Minogue album of the same name.

“Dietmar was super-clairvoyant. When he went out in the street, he would soak everything up until he was ready to faint. When he saw an ant crawl across a pavement, into a crack, he became that ant. When he came across a bloodied T-shirt in a North Beach dumpster, he followed the flux back through time and felt the blood flow. He saw me through time, back before I was married, to the early days of San Francisco when acid and disco and bathhouses were my whole life, and he saw or felt all I had forgotten or tried to.”

– Conrad Tao

Tao wrote the violin/piano version for Stefan Jackiw. The music is introspective and searching. In several places, the pianist plays inside the instrument, yielding other-worldly sonorities. Within a three-minute span, Tao builds to an anguished climax, before receding into quietude.

JOHANNES BRAHMS:
SONATA NO. 3 IN D
MINOR FOR VIOLIN
AND PIANO, OP. 108

IN BRIEF

BORN: May 7, 1833, Hamburg, Germany

DIED: April 3, 1897, Vienna, Austria

FIRST PERFORMANCE: 1888, Budapest. Jenő Hubay, violin, and Johannes Brahms, piano

MOST RECENT FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

PERFORMANCE: October 16, 2021, Arnaud Sussman, violin, and Anna Polonsky, piano

DURATION: 22 minutes

Brahms spent three summers in the Swiss village of Thun, from 1886 to 1888. The mountains and stunning natural beauty inspired him to a high level of productivity. These three vacations were no exception, yielding a number of remarkable compositions ready for publication at the conclusion of each summer. Both the Second Violin Sonata in A Major, Op. 100, and the third sonata on this evening's program were composed at Thun. Brahms sketched the D minor work during the summer of 1886, then set it aside for a while. He completed the piece in the summer of 1888 and played the first performance on December 21 in Budapest with the Hungarian violinist Jenő Hubay. His publisher, Fritz Simrock, issued the score the following year. Brahms dedicated the sonata to the pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow.

Like so many of the later Brahms works, Op.108 transcends the specifics of circumstance and envelops us in its grandeur and warmth. "There is a romantic melancholy about the *Allegro* of the D minor Sonata," biographer Peter Latham has written:

"It starts with a great sigh and ends with an even greater one. In between there is considerable variety of mood, but the brooding element predominates, especially in the ruminating development."

Foregoing the customary repeat of the exposition, Brahms focuses attention on this extraordinary development. Rather

than exploring a number of distant key centers in expounding on the expository material, the music holds fiercely to a dominant pedal—for an astonishing 45 measures! Shifting the formal organization of the sonata form in this manner requires balance elsewhere. Brahms makes his adjustment by providing unexpected harmonic exploration in the recapitulation and extended coda.

Tender and intimate, the slow movement is the closest Brahms came to composing a Mendelssohnian “Song Without Words.” Only in this *Adagio* does he relinquish the fiery, stoic approach that characterizes the outer movements. For much of this *Adagio*, the violin plays largely in its lowest register, evoking a darker sound and a warmth more generally associated with the viola.

Un poco presto e con sentimento, though not specifically marked a scherzo, has the same eerie character as the scherzo movements of the two mature piano trios, Op. 87 in C major and Op. 101 in C minor. Hovering between the whimsical and the spooky, the third movement is a foil of restraint, sometimes delicate, other times passionate. Brahms thus makes an effective transition from the slow movement to the agitation of his finale.

Full of broad gestures and sweeping melodies, the last movement links the sonata more closely with the Second Cello Sonata, Op. 99, than with its companion piece, the A major Violin Sonata, Op. 100. No wasted breath extends this compact movement, which is a masterpiece of economy. Bold harmonic exploration and insistent syncopations endow it with musical and rhythmic energy that carry it to its dramatic close. As biographer Karl Geiringer has written:

The impetuous Finale, with its fiery brilliance, borne onward by intense emotion, is so richly endowed with structural and intellectual values that it is able to hold its own with the first movement, and indeed almost to surpass it. Perfect as each movement of the three violin sonatas is, they seem, in this last movement, to have reached their culminating point.

Program Notes by Laurie Shulman ©2025

UPCOMING CONCERTS

PAUL LEWIS, PIANO

SUN, JAN 11, 2026 | 4:00 PM | GATES CONCERT HALL

Photo: Kauppo+Kikkas



Renowned British pianist Paul Lewis, celebrated for his masterful interpretations of the European piano repertoire, returns to our series with a program of profound musical contrasts. From Mozart's lyric Sonata in C Major (K.330) and the stormy Sonata in C Minor (K.457) to the charm of Poulenc's *Improvisations*, Lewis's program showcases both virtuosity and deep musical insight.

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THU, FEB 5, 2026 | 7:30 PM | GATES CONCERT HALL



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Tickets for all performances are available at friendsofchambermusic.com.

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MUSIC SALON: PAUL LEWIS, PIANO

MON, JAN 12, 2026 | 7:00 PM



Join us for an unforgettable evening of music and conversation at our second FCM Music Salon, featuring acclaimed pianist Paul Lewis. Enjoy an intimate performance in a relaxed setting, hosted by long-time FCM board member Rosemarie Murane. Tickets at friendsofchambermusic.com

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Photo: Ashley Gellmon



Owls is a fresh and original new string quartet collective featuring some of chamber music's most creative voices, including violinist Alexi Kenney, violist Ayane Kozasa, and cellists Gabriel Cabezas and Paul Wiancko.

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Sun, Jan 11, 2026 | 4:00 pm

Zlata Chochieva, piano

Thu, Feb 5, 2026 | 7:30 pm

Owls

Sun, Mar 1, 2026 | 4:00 pm

Lakewood Cultural Center

Le Consort

Thu, Mar 19, 2026 | 7:30 pm

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SPECIAL EVENT

Music Salon: Paul Lewis, piano

Mon, Jan 12, 2026 | 7:00 pm

Home of Rosemarie Murane

Brentano Quartet

Mon, Apr 6, 2026 | 7:30 pm

Jean-Yves Thibaudet, piano

Thu, May 7, 2026 | 7:30 pm

COMMUNITY EVENTS

MUSIC IN THE GALLERIES

Erik Peterson, violin &

Rachel Ellins, harp

Sun, Dec 14, 2025 | 12:00 & 1:00 pm

Masakazu Ito, classical guitar

Sun, Mar 8, 2026 | 12:00 & 1:00 pm

Timberline Quartet

Sun, May 10, 2026 | 12:00 & 1:00 pm

Clyfford Still Museum

1250 Bannock Street, Denver

SPECIAL THANKS

**SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL
FACILITIES DISTRICT (TIER III)**

for supporting FCM's 2025-26 season

**COLORADO PUBLIC RADIO
(KVOD 88.1 FM)**

for broadcasting FCM concerts on its
"Colorado Spotlight" programs

BONFILS-STANTON FOUNDATION

for sponsorship of FCM's audience
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for providing lead gifts to the FCM
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for streaming FCM concerts this season



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