



presents

ESPRESSIVO!



Thursday, March 14, 2024, at 7:30 PM,
Sweeney Concert Hall / Sage Hall, Smith
College, Northampton, MA

About Today's Concert

John Montanari, Artistic Director

The Piano Quartet – the ensemble of (usually) piano, violin, viola and cello – may lack the cachet of the String Quartet and may be less frequently encountered than the Piano Trio – piano, violin and cello – but it possesses a wonderful repertoire filled with masterworks by the greatest composers, three of which are on tonight's concert.

Mozart's Piano Quartet in E-flat, the second of two he composed, comes from 1787, the same year as such well-known works as *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* and *Don Giovanni*. In its concerto-like three movement form and soloistic writing for the keyboard, you can hear the Piano Quartet genre's beginnings as a sort of mini-concerto for piano with string accompaniment.

Don't be fooled by the "Opus 1" designation of Mendelssohn's Piano Quartet in C Minor into thinking that it was his first major work. Rather, it was the first work of his to be published, in 1823, when he was fourteen, and already the composer of several String Symphonies and, at least, one Piano Quartet. Mendelssohn likely performed the brilliant piano part in the work's original performances during a series of Sunday house concerts *chez* Mendelssohn.

The pianist in the 1861 Hamburg premiere of Brahms's G Minor Quartet was none other than Clara Schumann. As a young pianist, Brahms toured with the Hungarian violinist Eduard Reményi whose purportedly Gypsy stylings inspired Brahms's Hungarian Dances and the "Rondo alla Zingarese" (Gypsy Rondo) that concludes tonight's concert.

ESPRESSIVO!

Anna Polonsky, piano
Jaime Laredo, violin
Milena Pájaro-van de Stadt, viola
Sharon Robinson, cello

P R O G R A M

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Piano Quartet in E-flat Major, K.493 (1786)

- I. Allegro
- II. Larghetto
- III. Allegretto

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Piano Quartet No. 1 in C minor, Op. 1 (1822)

- I. Allegro vivace
- II. Adagio
- III. Scherzo
- IV. Allegro moderato

INTERMISSION

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Piano Quartet No. 1 in G minor, Op. 25 (1861)

- I. Allegro
- II. Intermezzo. Allegro ma non troppo — Trio. Animato
- III. Andante con moto
- IV. Rondo alla Zingarese. Presto

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Artist Information

JAIME LAREDO violin

For over six decades, Jaime Laredo has excelled in the roles of soloist, conductor, recitalist, pedagogue, and chamber musician. Since his orchestral debut at the age of eleven with the San Francisco Symphony, he has won the admiration and respect of audiences, critics and fellow musicians with passionate and polished performances. In addition to championing many new works throughout his career, conducting and performing highlights include the Chicago, Boston, BBC, and London symphonies, Los Angeles and New York Philharmonics, and Cleveland and Philadelphia Orchestras.

Laredo has recorded nearly one hundred discs, including a Grammy Award-winning disc of Brahms Piano Quartets with Emanuel Ax, Isaac Stern and Yo-Yo Ma. His recordings range from collaborations with Glenn Gould to double concertos with violinist Jennifer Koh and cellist Sharon Robinson, plus award-winning recordings with the beloved Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio, with whom he toured for 45 years. A 23-CD box set on Sony Classical celebrates Laredo's extraordinary recorded legacy.

MILENA PÁJARO-VAN DE STADT viola

Praised by Strad magazine as having "lyricism that stood out . . . a silky tone and beautiful, supple lines," violist Milena Pájaro-van de Stadt has established herself as one of the most sought-after violists of her generation. In addition to appearances as soloist with the Tokyo Philharmonic, the Jacksonville Symphony, and the Sphinx Chamber Orchestra, she has performed in recitals and chamber music concerts throughout the United States, Latin America, Europe, and Asia, including an acclaimed 2011 debut recital at London's Wigmore Hall, which was described in Strad as being "fleet and energetic . . . powerful and focused."

Ms. Pájaro-van de Stadt was the founding violist of the Dover Quartet, and played in the group from 2008-2022. During her time in the group, the Dover Quartet was the First Prize winner and recipient of every special award at the Banff International String Quartet Competition 2013, and winner of the Gold Medal and Grand Prize in the 2010 Fischhoff Chamber Music Competition. Her numerous awards also include First Prize of the Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition and top prizes at the the Sphinx Competition and the Tokyo International Viola Competition. While in the Dover Quartet, Ms. Pájaro-van de Stadt was on the faculty at The Curtis Institute of Music and Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music, and a part of the Quartet in Residence at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

SHARON ROBINSON cello

Winner of the Avery Fisher Recital Award, Piatigorsky Memorial Award, Pro Musicis Award and a GRAMMY nominee, cellist Sharon Robinson is recognized worldwide as a consummate artist and one of the most outstanding musicians of our time. Whether as a recitalist, soloist with orchestra, or member of the world-famous Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio, critics, audiences and fellow musicians respond to what the Indianapolis Star has called "a cellist who has simply been given the soul of Caruso." Her guest appearances with orchestras include the Philadelphia and Minnesota Orchestras; Los Angeles Philharmonic; Boston, Baltimore, Cincinnati, Dallas, Houston, National, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and San Francisco Symphonies; and in Europe, the London Symphony, Helsinki Philharmonic, Zürich's Tonhalle Orchestra and the English, Scottish and Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestras.

Recipient of the 2012 Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts from the state of Vermont, Robinson divides her time between teaching, solo engagements, performing with her husband, violinist and conductor Jaime Laredo, and is much in demand as a chamber player.

She is co-artistic director of the Linton Chamber Music Series in Cincinnati and of the Hudson Valley Chamber Music Circle at Bard College. As of fall 2012, she began teaching on the renowned instrumental and chamber music faculty of the Cleveland Institute of Music. She previously was a full professor at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music and has an Honorary Doctorate from Marlboro College.

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, 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.



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From the Valley Classical Concerts President

On behalf of the Board of Valley Classical Concerts, I would like to welcome our audience to the Spring 2024 series of four amazing classical chamber music concerts.

Since 1979, Valley Classical Concerts has presented music lovers in the Pioneer Valley and Western Massachusetts with chamber music performed exclusively by internationally acclaimed ensembles. We hope you, our audience, are as excited as we are to hear these fabulous artists, from young prize winners to musicians who have played together for decades.

I would like to thank and to gratefully acknowledge our many generous corporate sponsors and individual donors who have helped make this season possible and who have supported VCC over the years. They are all listed in the playbill.

So, enjoy the music and encourage friends, family, and younger adults and students to come to the concerts. And please consider donating to Valley Classical Concerts! Without continued financial support from our loyal patrons and lovers of chamber music, Valley Classical Concerts would not exist.

“Music is the universal language of mankind” -- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Dr. William Harbison, Board President

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