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Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

FRIDAY, JANUARY 27, 2023
MAHANEY ARTS CENTER, ROBISON HALL



Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

Magical Schubert

Gloria Chien, Piano

Alessio Bax, Piano

Benjamin Beilman, Violin

David Requiro, Cello

Program

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

**Fantasie in F Minor for Piano, Four Hands, D. 940, Op. 103
(1828)**

Alessio Bax, Piano

Gloria Chien, Piano

**Fantasy in C Major for Violin and Piano, D. 934, Op. 159
(1827)**

Benjamin Beilman, Violin

Gloria Chien, Piano

Intermission

**Trio No. 1 in B-flat Major for Piano, Violin, and Cello, D. 898,
Op. 99 (1827)**

Allegro moderato

Andante un poco mosso

Scherzo: Allegro

Rondo: Allegro vivace

Alessio Bax, Piano

Benjamin Beilman, Violin

David Requiro, Cello

A replay of this concert is available on demand until 7:30 PM
ET on Sunday, January 29 at

<http://go.middlebury.edu/CMS-Schubert/>

This residency is possible thanks to support from the Paul
Nelson Performance Endowment and the Rothrock Family
Residency Fund.

Program Notes

Courtesy Kathryn Bacasmot, music writer and regular program annotator for CMS

SCHUBERT Fantasie in F Minor for Piano, Four Hands, D. 940, Op. 103

Schubert wrote around 30 works for piano duet or four hands, but the Fantasie in F minor stands out from the rest as a kind of Janus piece, looking both backward and forward, as the composer struggled against time. Written in January of 1828, and perhaps performed that same month at the last Schubertiad gathering during his lifetime, it is one of his final compositions. By that time Schubert had been living with the effects of syphilis for half of the decade, teetering between hospitalizations and attempts to exist as normally as possible. He could either live with the disease for many years or fade more quickly – it was an unknown that surely haunted his thoughts.

Looking back, the F minor seems to summon two significant details from Schubert's youth. First, it recalls the genre of his first composition, the Fantasy in G Major for four hands, D.1, written around age 13. Second, its dedication to Caroline Esterházy alludes to a pivotal moment in his professional career.

Caroline was one of Schubert's students. Her father, Count Johann Karl Esterházy, a relative of Haydn's patrons, extended an offer to the 21-year-old Schubert to tutor his daughters in their countryside summer estate. At the time, Schubert was at a crossroads. Though he had studied with the legendary Salieri, sang as a member of what is now the Vienna Boys Choir, and composed hundreds of works (sometimes reaching a volume average of 65 measures per day), he had chosen to become certified to teach at his father's school. It proved unsatisfactory as he itched to delve into music again. He wrote in a letter, "Thank God I live at last, and it was high time, else I should have become nothing but a thwarted musician." After a few

more years of wavering between teaching and composing, he was invited to tutor the Esterházy girls again, and he finally dedicated himself to a life in music.

Looking forward, the Fantasie hints at a direction in which Schubert hoped to go. With its impressive scale at nearly 20 minutes in length, it not only displays tremendous sophistication in interweaving free-flowing material with more structured sonata form over the course of four movements, but it also includes an impressive fugue section in the final movement. Later the same year of its composition, in early November, Schubert expressed to his friend and fellow composer Joseph Lanz an interest in gaining greater proficiency at counterpoint, saying he mostly studied scores with Salieri and wanted to perfect double fugues. Lanz later noted in his personal recollections that he agreed because he felt Schubert's fugue in the Fantasie was weak, and so they went for a lesson with theorist Simon Sechter. The following week Schubert and Lanz were scheduled for a second lesson,

but Lanz went alone, as Schubert was feeling ill. Less than two weeks later, Schubert had died.

SCHUBERT Fantasy in C Major for Violin and Piano, D. 934, Op. 159

Violin virtuosos existed long before Niccolò Paganini, but the Italian's influence on his craft was so profound as to create a veritable before and after in both audience and performer expectations. His first tour across the European continent began in Vienna in 1828, and Schubert made sure to get a ticket. Just the previous year the composer had written the ambitious *Fantasie in C Major for Violin and Piano* as a showpiece for a Czech teenaged virtuoso named Josef Slavík, who aspired to be the next Paganini. Unfortunately, members of the public who were at the first performance that Slavík gave did not respond favorably – even the reactions of the critics present ranged from tepid to downright uninterested. One of them even confessed: “Herr Franz Schubert's *Fantasia for Pianoforte and Violin* [...] lasts rather longer than the time

that the Viennese are prepared to devote to their aesthetic pleasures. The hall gradually emptied, and your correspondent admits that he, too, is unable to say how this piece of music ended.”

Over time the piece has gained traction, including calls for it to be given more attention and inclusion in the “canon” of virtuoso violin pieces. One suggestion for why it is not as frequently performed to this day is the sheer difficulty of the work. Not only is it technically difficult, but its sprawling nature traverses such a range of emotion that the performers must have the maturity to contemplate how to navigate all the changes while preserving artistic integrity. It is this aspect that highlights fantasy as a form, as Thomas Morley noted in his 16th-century treatise: “In this may more art be shown than in any other music, because the composer is tied to nothing but that he may add, diminish, and alter at his pleasure.” Schubert was an ultimate master at this wandering quality.

Structurally, there are multiple “sections” to the work, though it is performed as one continuous whole. The almost imperceptible entrance of the violin over the tremolo accompaniment leads just as smoothly into a dance-like melody. The centerpiece of the work arrives in the third section, which is a set of variations on Schubert’s 1822 setting of Friedrich Rückert’s poem *Sei mir gegrüsst!* (“I greet you!”). If the melody sounds familiar, it might be due to its striking resemblance – perhaps direct homage – to a theme from Mozart’s Piano Sonata No. 11 (popularly known for its final movement, *Rondo alla Turca*). Suddenly, the opening tremolos return, recalling the opening theme but transposed to a higher register so they seem to float down from above. A series of trills in both violin and piano propel the piece into a vivacious section that tricks the listener with a false ending before bringing back snippets of the song theme that launch into a driving presto towards the end.

SCHUBERT Trio No. 1 in B-flat major for Piano, Violin, and Cello, D. 898, Op. 99

In the early spring of 1827, Ludwig van Beethoven died, and the Viennese poured into the streets to honor his memory. Schubert deeply admired Beethoven, but either by accident or by design had avoided meeting him for all the years they lived in the same city. Their paths only really crossed at Beethoven's funeral, at which Schubert served as a torchbearer. In the ensuing 12 months Schubert would plan the only public concert entirely of his own compositions that took place during his lifetime. The date was set, but then moved a few days to fall exactly on the anniversary of Beethoven's death, March 26, 1828.

As Schubert selected works for the program, he added the piano trio in E-flat major, choosing it over its sibling work, the only other piano trio he wrote, the B-flat major. Both seem to have been written in quick succession to one another in late 1827. Since the B-flat major was not selected for Schubert's

public concert, it is difficult to know when (or if) it was performed, but it may have been played in a concert at the Musikverein, or more likely at the final Schubertiad gathering in January 1828. There, the performers would have been violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh, whose string quartet premiered many of Beethoven's works; Joseph Linke, cellist in Schuppanzigh's quartet; and pianist Karl Maria Bocklet, who premiered the Fantasy in C major with violinist Josef Slavík. Given the sheer weight of talent these three individuals possessed, it has been suggested that they may have been part of the inspiration for Schubert to turn to the piano trio as a genre in the first place. In a curious twist, poignant in hindsight, Schubert had dabbled in writing for piano trio in 1812, the year his mother died, when he was 15 years old. That early effort – today performed as the Sonatensatz, D. 28 – is also in B-flat major. Of course, Schubert could not have known when his own death would arrive but given the monumental reminder of Beethoven's funeral and his own fragile physical state, it is easy to imagine that his mind would turn to ideas

from the past that he may have felt were unfinished, in an effort to find as much closure as possible.

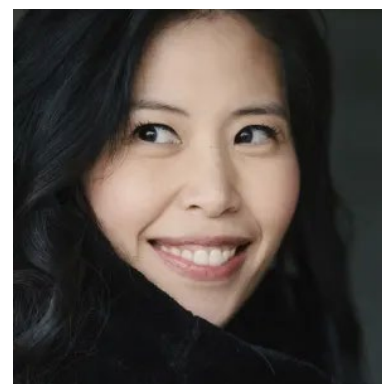
The declamatory unison in the strings and assured rhythmic accompaniment in the piano alert the listener from the start that, although it was written in the last year of Schubert's life, it has decidedly banished all ponderous questions to embrace buoyancy and delight. Often referenced is Schumann's reaction to its joyous nature: "One glance at Schubert's Trio and the troubles of our human existence disappear and all the world is fresh and bright again." Given the scale and scope of the trio, the length of which matches a performance of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, it is astonishing that only three instruments are involved. Listen especially for how Schubert slowly spins out his themes – often lingering and wandering around a given pattern more than our ears realize. As Alfred Brendel, one of the great interpreters of Schubert, observed, "In Beethoven's music we never lose our bearings, we always know where we are; Schubert, on the other hand,

puts us into a dream.” This is Schubert bringing the fullness of his genius to bear, leaving us only to imagine what else he may have accomplished had he lived longer.

About the Artists

Gloria Chien, Piano

Taiwanese-born pianist Gloria Chien has a diverse musical life as a performer, concert presenter, and educator. She made her orchestral debut at the age of 16 with the



Boston Symphony Orchestra under Thomas Dausgaard, and performed again with the BSO under Keith Lockhart. Recently she has performed as a recitalist and chamber musician at Alice Tully Hall, the Library of Congress, the Phillips Collection, the Kissingen Sommer festival, the Dresden Chamber Music Festival, and the National Concert Hall in Taiwan. A former member of The Bowers Program, she

performs frequently with Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (CMS). In 2009 she launched String Theory, a chamber music series at the Hunter Museum of American Art in Chattanooga, which has become one of Tennessee's premier classical music presenters. The following year she was appointed Director of the Chamber Music Institute at Music@Menlo by Artistic Directors David Finckel and Wu Han, a position she held for the next decade. In 2017, she joined her husband, violinist Soovin Kim, as Co-Artistic Director of the Lake Champlain Chamber Music Festival in Burlington, VT. The duo became Artistic Directors at Chamber Music Northwest in Portland, OR, in 2020, and were named the recipients of the 2021 Award for Extraordinary Service to Chamber Music from CMS, recognizing their efforts during the pandemic. Chien received her bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees from New England Conservatory of Music as a student of Russell Sherman and Wha-Kyung Byun. She is an artist-in-residence at Lee University in Cleveland, Tennessee, and is a Steinway Artist.

Alessio Bax, Piano

Alessio Bax catapulted to prominence with First Prize wins at both the Leeds and Hamamatsu International Piano Competitions. He has appeared with more than 150 orchestras, including the London, Royal, and St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestras, the Boston, Dallas, and Sydney Symphonies, and the NHK Symphony in Japan, collaborating with such eminent conductors as Marin Alsop, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Sir Andrew Davis, Sir Simon Rattle, Yuri Temirkanov, and Jaap van Zweden. He released his 11th Signum Classics album, *Italian Inspirations*, whose program was also the vehicle for his solo recital debut at New York's 92nd Street Y as well as on tour. He and his regular piano duo partner, Lucille Chung, have given recitals at Lincoln Center and were featured with the St. Louis Symphony and Stéphane Denève. This season he makes his debut with the Milwaukee



Symphony and will return for the fourth time for two recitals at the historic Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. Last summer he made return appearances at the Seattle Chamber Music Festival and at the Bravo! Vail Music Festival with the Dallas Symphony and Fabio Luisi conducting. At age 14, Bax graduated with top honors from the conservatory of Bari, his hometown in Italy, and after further studies in Europe, he moved to the United States in 1994. A Steinway artist, he lives in New York City with pianist Lucille Chung and their daughter, Mila. He is a former member of CMS's Bowers Program and on the faculty at the New England Conservatory.

Benjamin Beilman, Violin

Violinist Benjamin Beilman has won praise both for his passionate performances and deep, rich tone which the *Washington Post* called "mightily impressive," and the *New*



York Times described as "muscular with a glint of violence."

Highlights of recent seasons include debuts with the Budapest

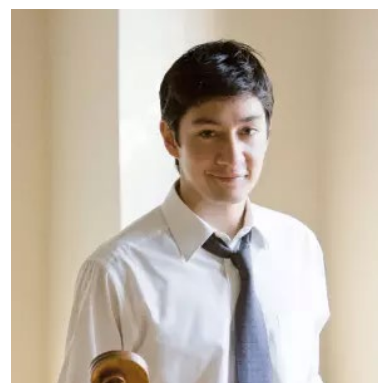
Festival Orchestra, return engagements with the Philadelphia Orchestra, and his return to the London Chamber Orchestra to play-direct. He has also performed with the Chicago Symphony, Antwerp Symphony, Rotterdam Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, Frankfurt Radio Symphony, Zurich Tonhalle, Sydney Symphony, Houston Symphony, Detroit Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, and Minnesota Orchestra. In recital and chamber music, he performs regularly at major halls across the world, including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Kölner Philharmonie, Berlin Philharmonie, Wigmore Hall, Louvre (Paris), and Bunka Kaikan (Tokyo). In 2018 he premiered a new work dedicated to the political activist Angela Davis written by Frederic Rzewski and commissioned by Music Accord. An alum of CMS's Bowers Program, Beilman studied with Almita and Roland Vamos at the Music Institute of Chicago, Ida Kavafian and Pamela Frank at the Curtis Institute, and Christian Tetzlaff at the Kronberg Academy, and has received many prestigious accolades including a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship, an

Avery Fisher Career Grant, and a London Music Masters Award. He has an exclusive recording contract with Warner Classics and released his first disc Spectrum for the label in 2016. He plays the “Engleman” Stradivarius from 1709 generously on loan from the Nippon Music Foundation.

David Requiro, Cello

First Prize winner of the 2008 Naumburg International Violoncello Competition,

David Requiro (pronounced re-KEER-oh) is



recognized as one of today’s finest American cellists. After winning First Prize in both the Washington International and Irving M. Klein International String Competitions, he captured a top prize at the Gaspar Cassadó International Violoncello Competition in Hachioji, Japan, coupled with the prize for the best performances of works by Cassadó. He has appeared as soloist with the Tokyo Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, and numerous orchestras across North America. His Carnegie Hall debut recital at Weill Hall

was followed by a critically acclaimed San Francisco Performances recital at the Herbst Theatre. Soon after making his Kennedy Center debut, he completed a cycle of Beethoven's cello sonatas at the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC. An alum of CMS's Bowers Program, he has performed with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Seattle Chamber Music Society, Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players, and is a founding member of the Baumer String Quartet. Requiro serves as Associate Professor of Cello at the University of Colorado Boulder, where he joined faculty in 2015. He has previously served as Artist-in-Residence at the University of Puget Sound and Guest Lecturer at the University of Michigan. His teachers have included Milly Rosner, Bonnie Hampton, Mark Churchill, Michel Strauss, and Richard Aaron.



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Middlebury College sits on land which has served as a site of meeting and exchange among indigenous peoples since time immemorial. The Western Abenaki are the traditional caretakers of these Vermont lands and waters, which they call Ndakinna, or "homeland."

We remember their connection to this region and the hardships they continue to endure.

We give thanks for the opportunity to share in the bounty of this place and to protect it.