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SOPHIE SHAO AND FRIENDS

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2025

7:30 PM

MAHANEY ARTS CENTER, ROBISON HALL



Sophie Shao and Friends

Carmit Zori, Violin

Sophie Shao, Cello

Ieva Jokubaviciute, Piano

Program

Piano Trio in A Minor, Op. 150 (1938)

Amy Beach

Allegro

(1867–1944)

Lento espressivo – Presto

Allegro con brio

Selections from **Pièces en Concert** (1722)

François Couperin

I. Prélude: Gravement

(1668–1733)

III. La Tromba: Galement

V. Air de Diable: Vivement

∞ *Intermission* ∞

Cello Sonata No. 2 (2024) (Vermont premiere)

Elena Ruehr

Intense

(b. 1963)

Floating

Energetic

Piano Trio No. 3 in F Minor, Op. 65 (B. 130) (1883)

Antonín Dvořák

I. Allegro ma non troppo

(1841–1904)

II. Allegretto grazioso – Meno mosso

III. Poco adagio

IV. Finale. Allegro con brio



*This concert is made possible with support from the Paul Nelson Performance Endowment
and the Rothrock Family Residency Fund.*

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Program Notes

BEACH Piano Trio in A Minor, Op. 150 (1938)

Program note courtesy of the LA Philharmonic

Amy Beach (née Cheney) was born in Henniker, NH. She studied piano with several well-known teachers, including Ernst Perabo and Carl Baermann, but regarding composition she was almost entirely self-taught. She made her concert debut at the age of 16. Two years later, she married Dr. Henry Harris Aubrey

Beach, a physician 24 years her senior. During her lifetime, she was known by neither her maiden name nor her own given name but by the moniker “Mrs. H.H.A. Beach.” As even the most celebrated actresses in Britain and America were known by their husband’s names, so were her compositions credited to Mrs. H.H.A. Beach. Only in these more egalitarian times have her accomplishments become known under her own name, Amy Beach. For social propriety’s sake within Boston’s upper crust, her husband insisted that she limit her concert performances to one per year. It was only after his death in 1910 that she embarked on a concert tour of both Europe and America. She wrote in most genres and was the first American woman to write and publish a symphony, the “Gaelic.” Ultimately, she was considered one of America’s leading composers, writing in a late-Romantic idiom that is tonally more advanced than her contemporaries such as Arthur Foote and George Chadwick.

Beach’s biographer Adrienne Fried Block wrote, “On the day in 1938 when she began her work on [this piano trio], Beach wrote in her diary, ‘Trying a trio from old material. Great fun.’ Her pleasure in making do with old material grew out of her composer’s sense that musical ideas and themes from earlier works had further developmental possibilities. The result was one of her last compositions and an important addition to the trio repertory. Indeed, these old materials include borrowings from an art song, a piano solo, and two folk melodies.”

Beach wrote this trio at the MacDowell Colony, the famous retreat for artists, composers, and writers in New Hampshire. She completed it in 15 days and premiered it a year later at the MacDowell Club in New York, playing the piano part herself.

COUPERIN Selections from **Pièces en Concert** (1722)

Program note courtesy of the Kennedy Center and Schott Music Publishing

French composer François Couperin (nicknamed “le grand”) was born in Paris in 1668. Composer, harpsichordist, and organist, he was the son of Charles Couperin, the organist of St. Gervais in Paris, and was the most important member of the Couperin dynasty. He wrote some of the finest music of the French classical school and may be considered the most important musical figure in France between Jean-Baptiste Lully and Jean-Philippe Rameau. On his father’s premature death, the organist position was held by Michel-Richard Delalande. Couperin, an early musical genius, was already deputizing for Delalande at the age of ten, and on his 18th birthday, he officially inherited his father’s previous position. As his teacher, Delalande played an important role in Couperin’s early musical development, not only as a mentor, but also as a powerful advocate of his work. [Delalande] praised the young man’s innovative 1690 collection of *Pieces d’orgue* as “worthy of being given to the public,” which helped to establish him as a court organist in 1693. Couperin’s early sonatas are the first fruits of his admiration for the Italian Baroque masters, and for Corelli in particular. Contact with Italian instrumental music may have been through an involvement with the musical life of the court of the exiled James II in Saint Germain-en-Laye, where things Italian were much prized. His admiration for the Italian style was eventually expressed in overt terms in his *Apotheose de Corelli* of 1724, but a much earlier ambition, sustained throughout his life, was to unite the complementary strengths of the Italian and French styles. In the preface to his fourth harpsichord book, Couperin wrote of his health failing him day by day. In the same year he gave up both of his court appointments, arranging for his talented daughter Marguerite-

Antoinette to take over as harpsichordist, and for Guillaume Marchand to replace him in the royal chapel. Three years later, on September 11, 1733, Couperin died.

Initially written by Couperin in 1722, this set of *Pièces en Concert* (*Concert Pieces*) was later arranged and edited by Paul Bazelaire, a professor at the Paris Conservatoire. This cello and piano version includes five pieces: Prélude, Sicilienne, La Tromba, Plainte, and Air de Diable. Written in increasing difficulty, these pieces also exist in a version for cello and string quartet.

Three of these pieces are performed on tonight's concert. They were programmed as a nod to the Middlebury College Museum of Arts' current exhibition "Le Petit Salon: The Journey of an Eighteenth-Century Room from Paris to Vermont" which features a set of wooden carved panels from an 18th century Parisian interior. You can learn more about the exhibit at museum.middlebury.edu.

RUEHR Cello Sonata No. 2 (2024)

Program note courtesy of composer Elena Ruehr

"As a composer, I am interested in narrative and expressing emotion in sound. One of the things that is on my mind lately is the anxiety we feel about our changing planet. It seems to me that we are in a constant state of cognitive dissonance—we know that our use of airplanes, cars, heat, plastic, etc. are endangering our future, but we have no choice but to live our lives in the way the world works. In my second cello sonata, I express that experience with the cello acting as the main character in a journey, reacting and interacting with the

environment that the piano creates. Although anxiety is one of the primary emotions of the piece, it is interspersed with the joy and comfort we find in the natural world, as well as hope.”—*Elena Ruehr*

This sonata was written for cellist Sophie Shao and pianist Amy I-Lin Cheng—longtime Curtis Institute of Music and Yale University roommates. The duo performed the world premiere of the work at the Kerrytown Concert House in Ann Arbor, Michigan on March 13, 2025. The Middlebury Performing Arts Series is thrilled to host the Vermont premiere of the work this evening.

DVOŘÁK Piano Trio No. 3 in F Minor, Op. 65 (B. 130) (1883)

Program note courtesy of the LA Philharmonic

For some reason, single works from a series are often taken as emblematic of the entire collection. Thus, Dvořák’s “Dumky” Trio overshadows the composer’s three other piano trios, casting the powerful and emotional F minor work aside as an also-ran.

It is difficult to find a commentary on this music which does not praise its eloquence in the highest terms. As the composer of solo concertos for each of the three instruments in the ensemble (two of them acclaimed masterworks, the third—for piano—not such a success), Dvořák clearly had the skill to produce an idiomatic work. What is so rewarding is the emotional honesty and intensity of feeling he can deliver in this intimate yet dramatic format.

In 1883, in an apparent effort to emulate the German style, Dvořák composed three movements that have a decidedly Brahmsian cast, and his natural sense of melody and structure served him well here. The recent death of the composer's mother was surely a factor in drawing from him a richness of expression, both in the compelling Allegro ma non troppo opening movement and in the heartfelt Poco adagio. The second movement provides moments of exuberance, but even here, an element of somber resolve can be detected in the central section. The finale (marked con brio) offers a return to the exuberant folk style for which the composer is best known and so beloved.

Biographies



Cellist Sophie Shao, winner of the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant and top prizes at the Rostropovich and Tchaikovsky competitions, is a versatile and passionate artist whose performances the *New York Times* has described as “eloquent, powerful,” the *LA Times* noted as “impressive,” and the *Washington Post* called “deeply satisfying.” Shao has appeared as soloist

to critical acclaim throughout the United States and has commissioned Howard Shore's cello concerto *Mythic Gardens*, performing the premiere with Leon Botstein and the American Symphony Orchestra, the UK premiere with Keith Lockhart and the BBC Concert Orchestra, and the European premiere with Ludwig Wicki and the 21st Century Orchestra. She also premiered Richard Wilson's *The Cello Has Many Secrets* and Shih-Hui Chen's multimedia concerto *Our Son is Not Coming Home to Dinner*.

Shao has given recitals in Suntory Hall in Tokyo, the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Middlebury College, Phillips Collection, University of Notre Dame, Lyric Society of New York, Lincoln Center, Bargemusic, and has performed the complete Bach Suites at Union College. Her dedication to chamber music has conceived her popular “Sophie Shao and Friends” groups, performing in festivals around the country such as Chamber Music Northwest and Festival Mosaic. She has attended the Marlboro Music Festival, Ravinia Steans Institute, and as a member of Chamber Music Society Two, a young artist residency of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. She is a dedicated music educator, presenting a lecture “Why Bach is Still Relevant in the 21st Century” and recital at the National Gallery of Art. Shao is artist-in-residence at the Zeta Charter Schools in the Bronx; she has led masterclasses at University of Michigan, Juilliard, and Indiana University; and she is on faculty at the University of Connecticut, where she teaches cello, chamber music, and organizes an annual UConn Cello Day. She has previously been on the faculty of Vassar College, Princeton University, and Bard Conservatory.

Shao’s recordings include the Complete Bach Suites, Andre Previn’s *Reflections for Cello, English Horn, and Orchestra* on EMI Classics, Richard Wilson’s *Diablerie and Brash Attacks*, and Barbara White’s *My Barn Having Burned to the Ground, I Can Now See the Moon* on Albany Records, Howard Shore’s original score for the movie *The Betrayal* on Howe Records, Marlboro Music Festival’s 50th Anniversary on Bridge Records, Herschel Garfein’s *The Layers* on Asic Records, and Howard Shore’s *Mythic Gardens* on Sony Classical. Her new solo album, *CanCan Macabre*, has just been released on Centaur Records.

A native of Houston, Texas, Shao began playing the cello at age six, and studied with Shirley Trepel, the principal cellist of the Houston Symphony. At age 13 she enrolled at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, studying cello with David Soyer and chamber music with Felix Galimir. After graduating from the Curtis Institute, she continued her cello studies with Aldo Parisot at Yale University, receiving a B.A. in Religious Studies from Yale College and an M.M. from the Yale School of Music, where she was enrolled as a Paul and Daisy Soros Fellow. Learn more at <http://sophieshao.com>



Violinist Carmit Zori came to the United States from her native Israel at the age of 15 to study with Ivan Galamian, Jaime Laredo, and Arnold Steinhardt at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, at the recommendation of Isaac Stern and Alexander Schneider. Zori is the recipient of a Levintritt

Foundation Award, a Pro Musicis International Award, and the top prize in the Walter W. Naumburg International Violin Competition. Zori has appeared as a soloist with the New York Philharmonic, the Rochester Philharmonic, and the Philadelphia Orchestra, among many others. Her solo recitals include concerts at Lincoln Center, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, the Phillips Collection in Washington D.C., and Jerusalem Center of the Performing Arts.

Her engagements abroad have included performances throughout Latin America and Europe, as well as in Israel, Japan, Taiwan, and Australia, where she premiered the Violin Concerto by Marc Neikrug.

In addition to her appearances with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Zori has been a guest at chamber music festivals and concert series around the world, including the Chamber Music at the “Y” series in New York City; Festival Casals in Puerto Rico; Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festival; Chamber Music Northwest; the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival; the Seattle Chamber Music Festival; Cape Cod Chamber Music Festival; and BDDS Chamber Music.

Zori, who for ten years was an artistic director at Bargemusic, founded the Brooklyn Chamber Music Society in 2002. She has performed in concerts sponsored by Music for Food, an organization providing local hunger relief, and Project Music Heals Us, a nonprofit community outreach organization targeting underserved populations. She is also a member artist of The Israeli Chamber Project. Zori has recorded on the Arabesque, Koch International, and Elektra-Nonesuch labels. She serves on the faculties of Bard College, Rutgers University and SUNY Purchase. Learn more at <http://www.brooklynchambermusicsociety.org/artists.htm>



Lithuanian **pianist Ieva Jokubaviciute**'s powerfully and intricately crafted performances have earned her critical acclaim throughout North America and Europe. Her ability to communicate the essential substance of a work has led critics to describe her as possessing “razor-sharp intelligence and wit” and “subtle, complex, almost impossibly detailed and riveting in every way” (*The Washington Post*) and as “an artist of commanding technique, refined temperament and persuasive insight.” (*The New York Times*). In 2006, she was honored as a recipient of a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship.

Labor Records released Jokubaviciute's debut recording in 2010 to critical international acclaim, which resulted in recitals in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington DC, Vilnius, and Toulouse. She made her orchestral debuts with the Chicago Symphony; in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; with the American Youth Philharmonic in 2016. In February 2017, Jokubaviciute was the soloist with the Orquesta Filarmónica de Montevideo in Uruguay. Her piano trio—Trio Cavatina—won the 2009 Naumburg International Chamber Music Competition. Jokubaviciute's recording, *Returning Paths: solo piano works by Janáček and Suk*, was also released to critical acclaim in 2014.

In the fall of 2016, Jokubaviciute began a collaboration with the violinist Midori, with recitals in Canada, at the Cartagena International Music Festival in Colombia, and in Germany and Austria. Since then, they've given recitals in Japan, Germany, Austria, Poland, Peru, Colombia, Mexico, India, and Sri Lanka.

Jokubaviciute's latest piano solo recording *Northscapes* was released in 2021. This recording project weaves works, written within the last decade by composers from the Nordic and Baltic countries of Europe, into a tapestry of soundscapes that echo the reverberations between landscape, sound, and the imagination. This recording will include works by Kaja Saariaho, Anna Þorvaldsdóttir, Raminta Šerkšnyte, Lasse Thoresen, Bent Sørensen, and Pēteris Vasks.

A much sought-after chamber musician and collaborator, Jokubaviciute regularly tours and appears at international music festivals including: Marlboro, Ravinia, Bard, Caramoor, Chesapeake Chamber Music, Prussia Cove in Cornwall, England, and Festival de la musique de chambre at La Lointaine in France. She has participated in the Schleswig-Holstein Festival in Lubeck, Germany; the Katrina Chamber Music Festival, Åland Islands, Finland; the Oulunsalo Chamber Music Festival in Oulunsalo, Finland; the Joaquín Turina Chamber Music Festival in Seville, Spain; Music in the Vineyards in Napa Valley, CA; the Lake Champlain Chamber Music Festival in Burlington, VT; Salt Bay Chamber Music Festival in Maine, and the Four Seasons Chamber Music Festival at East Carolina University.

Earning degrees from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia and from Mannes College of Music in New York City, her principal teachers have been Seymour Lipkin and Richard Goode. Currently, Jokubaviciute is Associate Professor of the Practice of Piano at Duke University in Durham, NC, having previously been on the faculty at Shenandoah Conservatory in Winchester, VA. Jokubaviciute is also on the faculty at the Kneisel Hall Chamber Music School and Festival in Blue Hill, ME, and has established herself as a mentoring artist at the

Marlboro Music Festival in Marlboro, VT. Learn more at
<https://www.ievajokubaviciute.com/>



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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.