

LISA SMITH WENGLER
CENTER FOR THE
arts

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

presents

The Recital Series

Benjamin Baker,
Violin

Daniel Lebhardt, Pianist



Sunday, April 3, 2022, 2 PM
Raitt Recital Hall

Upcoming exhibitions at the Frederick R. Weisman Museum of Art include *Sea of Signs—Pepperdine Studio Arts Senior Thesis Exhibition* (April 14–April 30) and *Gwynn Murrill: Animal Nature* (May 21–July 31).

There is no admission charge.

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PROGRAM

**ESMAIL
(CONTEMPORARY)**

DARSHAN

**DEBUSSY
(1862–1918)**

Sonata for Violin and Piano in G Minor
Allegro vivo
Intermède: Fantasque et léger
Finale: Très animé

**BOULANGER
(1893–1918)**

D'un matin de printemps

**THOMAS
(CONTEMPORARY)**

Pulsar

BOULANGER

Nocturne and Cortège

**ELGAR
(1857–1934)**

Violin Sonata in E Minor, Opus 82
Allegro
Romance

Program subject to change.

Benjamin Baker appears by special arrangement with Young Concert Artists, Inc.

Please turn down or turn off all hearing aides.

Although heard as one work of art, many musical works have three or more movements or sections. A short pause often follows each movement, and during these pauses silence is needed to preserve the flow of the piece. But applause is truly music to a musician's ear at the *end* of a work, so we hope you will clap to your heart's content after the final movement.



Since winning First Prize at the 2016 Young Concert Artists International Auditions in New York and 3rd Prize at the Michael Hill Competition in New Zealand in 2017, accomplished violinist **Benjamin Baker** has established a strong international presence.

Described by the *New York Times* as bringing "virtuosity, refinement, and youthful exuberance" to his debut at Merkin Concert Hall, he is a sought-after soloist and chamber musician.

Recent highlights include regular appearances at Wigmore Hall (live-

streamed and on BBC Radio 3), his debut with Scottish Chamber Orchestra at the East Neuk Festival and with the Christchurch Symphony Orchestra in NZ, along with solo recordings with the BBC Concert and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras.

Baker recorded live concerts commissioned for release online by the Vancouver Recital Society and Banquo de la Republica in Colombia. In 2021, Delphian Records released his album *1942* with pianist Daniel Lebhardt to critical acclaim. His recording "The Last Rose of Summer" on Champs Hill Records was featured on BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM, and reached #22 on the charts the first week of release.

The opening of the 2021/22 season saw the launch of his festival in Queenstown, New Zealand—At the World's Edge—and solo appearances with the Auckland Philharmonia, Royal Philharmonic, and Fort Worth Symphony Orchestras.

By popular demand, Baker has returned to New Zealand to play concerts and appear on radio and television broadcasts. For his devotion to charities for children, he is grateful to be an Honorary Member of the Rotary Club of Port Nicholson. An ambassador for London Music Masters, he created and led a special project for young violinists with dancer Cheryl McChesney, which explored the connection between music and movement.

Baker has toured widely in the US, Colombia, China, and Argentina and taken part in the Al Bustan Festival in Lebanon and the Sanguine Estate Music Festival in Australia. His 2022 US tour appearances this season include the Ravinia Festival, Washington Performing Arts,

Pepperdine University, and Buffalo Chamber Music Society, along with concerto appearances with Fort Worth, Charleston, Long Bay, and Bucks County Symphony Orchestras.

Baker's solo appearances in recent seasons include the Philharmonia, Auckland Philharmonia, RTE Concert Orchestra, Symphony Orchestra Simón Bolívar of Venezuela, Krasnoyarsk Philharmonic, Albanian Radio Symphony, Royal Northern Sinfonia, London Mozart Players, Long Bay Symphony, National Children's Orchestra of Great Britain, Sinfonia Cymru, Orchestra Sinfonica Abruzzese L'Aquila, and Maui Pops Orchestras. In 2017 he collaborated as soloist with the Royal New Zealand Ballet Company.

Born in New Zealand, Baker studied at the Yehudi Menuhin School and with Natasha Boyarsky and Felix Andrievsky at the Royal College of Music where he was awarded the Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Rose Bowl. He was a prize-winner at the 2013 YCAT International Auditions in London and a Fellow at the Ravinia Festival's Steans Music Institute in Chicago in 2016 and 2017.

**Baker plays on a Giovanni Grancino from 1694
on generous loan from a charitable trust.**

Baker appears courtesy of Young Concert Artists, Inc.

benjamin-baker.com

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In 2014, pianist **Daniel Lebardt** won 1st Prize at the Young Concert Artists auditions in Paris and New York. A year later he was invited to record music by Bartók for Decca Records and in 2016 won the "Most Promising Pianist" prize at the Sydney International Competition.

This season sees Lebardt debut with Konzerthausorchester Berlin and National Philharmonic of Ukraine and return to the Barbican for a performance with Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Lebardt also returns to the US for performances in New York,

Chicago, and Washington, DC, among others.

Recent highlights include debuts with Hallé Orchestra and Venice Symphony in Florida. In recital, he had debuts at the Aldeburgh, Heidelberger-Frühling, Tallinn and Lucerne international festivals and in Dublin and Kiev. He has given recitals at Wigmore Hall, Merkin Concert Hall in New York, St. David's Hall in Cardiff, Bath International Festival and L'Eglise Saint Germain in Paris as part of the Week-end à l'Est Festival.

Lebardt has also appeared with State Academic Symphony Orchestra in St. Petersburg and the CBSO Youth Orchestra in Birmingham.

Lebardt returned to the Louvre in Paris, Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in Germany and gave concerts in the USA, Canada, China, Colombia, Argentina, and Chile. In the UK he took part in the Nottingham, Oxford, and Birmingham International Piano Festivals (the latter broadcast by Radio 3), performed Mozart with the European Union Chamber Orchestra, and appeared at Saffron Hall as soloist and chamber musician.

Since 2016 Lebardt has performed across the US, giving recitals at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, Gardner Museum in Boston, Morgan Library and Merkin Concert Hall in New York (to critical acclaim in the *New York Times*), and in Florida, Seattle, Arizona, and Pittsburgh. Solo highlights include performances of Rachmaninov's *Concerto No. 2* with the Auburn and Dearborn Symphony Orchestras in Washington and Michigan.

An avid chamber musician, Lebardt has collaborated with Benjamin Baker, Jonathan McGovern, Timothy Ridout, and Castalian Quartet. He took part in the *BBC Proms Composer Portrait of Olga Neuwirth* broadcast by BBC Radio 3 and has worked with Mark van der Wiel, Eivind Holtmark Ringstad, and Jonathan Bloxham.

Recently Lebardt and Benjamin Baker recorded violin sonatas by Copland, Prokofiev, and Poulenc. Released by Delphian, it garnered much praise in the press and was featured by Apple Music. Lebardt was also given the opportunity to release a selection of Schubert solo piano works with NAXOS.

Lebardt's international awards include 1st Prize at the 2009 Russian Music Competition in California, 2nd Prize at the 2011 Lagny-sur-Marne International Competition in France and 5th Prize at the 2013 China International Piano Competition.

Born in Hungary, Lebardt studied at the Franz Liszt Academy with István Gulyás and Gyöngyi Keveházi and at the Royal Academy of Music with Pascal Nemirovski. He has participated in master classes with Alfred Brendel, Stephen Hough, Leslie Howard, Natalia Trull, and more recently with Ferenc Rados and Rita Wagner at IMS Prussia Cove. He was selected by Young Classical Artists Trust (YCAT) in 2015 and is currently based in Birmingham, where he graduated with an Advanced Diploma in Performance at the Royal Conservatoire.

Baker appears courtesy of Askonas Holt Limited.

askonasholt.com/artists/daniel-lebardt/

Twitter: @DLebardt



Darshan
REENA ESMAIL
(Contemporary)

Composer Reena Esmail received her bachelor's degree from Juilliard in 2015 and her Doctor of Musical Arts from the Yale School of Music in 2018. She has been particularly interested in the relation between Hindustani and Western music, and she received a Fulbright-Nehru grant to study Hindustani music in India. Esmail was composer-in-residence with the Seattle Symphony during the 2021–22 season, and her works have been performed by the Seattle, Baltimore, and Albany Symphonies, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Kronos Quartet, and many others.

Darshan was commissioned by Vijay Gupta. *Darshan* was premiered by the Taos New Music Group on September 22, 2018—it is part of a work in progress and represents the first movement of a work that Esmail intends to have complete by 2024. The composer has furnished a concise program note:

Darshan means 'seeing' in Hindi. In the Hindu religion, to give 'darshan' is to see and worship God. As Vijay and I worked on this music together over three years, we began to see the divine in one another. This movement, in Raag Charukeshi, is the first movement of five, which will be written over a span of five years. It explores grief, in its many facets and forms.

—*Reena Esmail*

Sonata for Violin and Piano in G Minor
CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Born August 22, 1862, Saint-Germain-en-Laye
Died March 25, 1918, Paris

Debussy's final years were wretched. He developed colon cancer in 1909 and underwent a painful operation, radiation therapy, and drug treatment. It was all to no avail, and the disease took its steady course. The onslaught of World War I in 1914 further depressed him, but it also sparked a wave of nationalistic fervor, and he set about writing a set of six sonatas for different combinations of instruments. It may seem strange that the iconoclastic Debussy would return in his final years to so structured a form as the sonata, but he specified

that his model was the French sonata of the 18th century and not the classical German sonata. To make his point—and his nationalistic sympathies—even more clear, Debussy signed the scores of these works “Claude Debussy, musicien français.”

Debussy's *Violin Sonata*, completed in April 1917, was to be his final work, and it gave him a great deal of difficulty. From the depths of his gloom, he wrote to a friend: "This sonata will be interesting from a documentary viewpoint and as an example of what may be produced by a sick man in time of war." Debussy played the piano at the premiere on May 5, 1917, and performed it again in September at what proved to be his final public appearance. His deteriorating health confined him to his room thereafter, and he died the following March.

For all Debussy's dark comments, the *Violin Sonata* is a brilliant work, alternating fantastic and exotic outbursts with more somber and reflective moments. In three concise movements, the sonata lasts only about 13 minutes. Debussy deliberately obscures both meter and key over the first few measures of the *Allegro vivo*, and only gradually does the music settle into G minor. The haunting beginning of the movement feels subdued, almost ascetic, but the dancing middle section in E major is more animated. Debussy brings back the opening material and rounds off the movement with a *con fuoco* coda.

The second movement brings a sharp change of mood after the brutal close of the first. Debussy marks it *fantasque et léger* ("Fantastic [or fanciful] and light"), and the violin opens with a series of leaps, swirls, and trills before settling into the near-hypnotic main idea. The second subject, marked "sweet and expressive," slides languorously on glissandos and arpeggios, and the movement comes to a quiet close. Over rippling chords, the finale offers a quick reminiscence of the very opening of the sonata, and then this theme disappears for good and the finale's real theme leaps to life. It is a shower of triplet sixteenths that rockets upward and comes swirling back down: the composer described it as "a theme turning back on itself like a serpent biting its own tail." There are some sultry interludes along the way, full of glissandos, broken chords, rubato, and trills, but finally the swirling energy of the main theme drives the music to its animated close.

Debussy may have been unhappy about this music while working on it, but once done he felt more comfortable with it, writing to a friend: "In keeping with the contradictory spirit of human nature, it is full of joyous tumult . . . Beware in the future of works which appear to inhabit the skies; often they are the product of a dark, morose mind."

D'un matin de printemps

LILI BOULANGER

Born August 21, 1893, Paris

Died March 15, 1918, Mézy

The younger sister of the great teacher Nadia Boulanger, Lili Boulanger was a musician of extraordinary talent. A student of Fauré, Boulanger was the first woman ever to win the Prix de Rome, but that promise was cut short by perpetually poor health and by an early death—she was only 24 when she died, 10 days before the death of Debussy. So short a life inevitably means that one's output is small, and today she is remembered for her vocal settings and a small amount of instrumental music.

In 1917, late in her brief life, Boulanger composed two mood-pieces, each inspired by a different time of day: the subdued *D'un soir triste* ("Of a Sad Evening") and the lively *D'un matin de printemps* ("Of a Spring Morning"). She composed the latter first as a duo for violin (or flute) and piano, then arranged the music for string trio, and finally arranged it for full orchestra. Marked *Assez animé* ("Very lively"), the opening section bursts to life on the work's dancing, dotted main theme. *D'un matin de printemps* is in three-part form, and it slows slightly for its central episode. Though slower, the mood remains upbeat (the performance marking here is *ardent, heureux*: "ardent, happy"), and one senses the influence of Debussy here. The return to the opening material is not literal, and tempos and colors shift subtly before the music reaches its lively conclusion on a great, happy swoop of sound.

We are left wondering what might have been.

Pulsar

AUGUSTA READ THOMAS

(Contemporary)

Augusta Read Thomas studied at Yale, Northwestern, and the Royal Academy of Music in London. She is one of the most widely-performed composers of her generation (to date, 88 CDs of her music have been released), and her music has been conducted by Pierre Boulez, Daniel Barenboim, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Seiji Ozawa, Lorin Maazel, and many others. Thomas was composer-in-residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from 1997 until 2006. She is currently Professor of Composition in Music at the University of Chicago.

Pulsar for solo violin was commissioned by the BBC jointly with the Royal Philharmonic Society, and was written specifically for Ilya Gringholts; Gringholts premiered *Pulsar* on March 17, 2003 at Wigmore Hall in London.

Composer's Note:

My music must be passionate; involving risk and adventure such that any given musical moment may seem surprising when first heard but, a millisecond later, seems inevitable. I think of my music as nuanced lyricism under pressure! That said, my primary artistic concern is to communicate in an honest and passionate voice, being faithful to my deepest inner promptings and creative urges. This way, any willing listener, irrespective of prior musical knowledge, training or background can engage with my music.

*Every listener brings their own unique perspective to the listening process. In *Pulsar* I offer them aesthetic engagements with the world and with themselves as I, too, undertake a mission of self-discovery. Music of all kinds constantly amazes, surprises, propels, and seduces me into wonderful and powerful journeys. I care deeply that music is not anonymous and generic—easily assimilated and just as easily dismissed and forgotten. *Pulsar* has passionate, urgent, seductive, and compelling qualities of often complex (but always logical) thought allied to sensuous sonic profiles.*

My favorite moment in any piece of music is that of maximum risk and striving. Whether the venture is tiny or large, loud or soft, fragile or strong, passionate, erratic or eccentric—the moment of exquisite humanity and raw soul! All the art that I cherish has elements of order, mystery, love, recklessness, and desperation. For me, music must be alive and jump off the page and out of the instrument as if to say SOMETHING BIG IS AT STAKE.

*This artistic credo leads me to examine small musical objects (a chord, a motive, a rhythm, a color) and explore them from many perspectives. These different perspectives reveal new musical potentials which develop the musical discourse. In this manner, and in *Pulsar* in particular, the music takes on an organic, circular, self-referential character which, at the same time, has a forward progression.*

—Augusta Read Thomas

Nocturne
Cortège
LILI BOULANGER

This segment of the recital offers two brief works for violin and piano by Lili Boulanger: *Nocturne* (composed in 1911, when she was 18) and *Cortège* (1914). *Nocturne* begins quietly as the pianist rocks softly across three octaves of repeated C's and the violin sings its gentle song. But soon the quiet mood of the beginning (marked *doux*: "soft, gentle") is penetrated by unexpected harmonies, the violin line grows more animated, and the music rises to a climax. Matters calm, the rocking accompaniment of the opening reasserts itself, and *Nocturne* concludes in the home key of F major, with the violin high above, the piano in its deepest register. The title *Cortège* might seem to suggest something funereal, or at least ceremonial, but Boulanger's *Cortège* is sprightly music, spirited and fun. Over an extremely active piano accompaniment, the violin has its own energetic line. This music concludes all too quickly, leaving behind its high spirits.

Violin Sonata in E Minor, Opus 82
EDWARD ELGAR

Born June 2, 1857, Broadheath
Died February 23, 1934, Worcester

Elgar moved in April 1918 to a cottage near the village of Fittleworth in West Sussex. In these new surroundings, where he was moved by the beauty of the rolling countryside and the storms that would blow in violently off the Channel, Elgar was blessed with a sudden burst of energy and turned to a form he had avoided for years—chamber music: he quickly composed a violin sonata, a string quartet, and a piano quintet, and then went on to complete a cello concerto the following year. It has become a fashion with some critics to regard these works as Elgar's reactions to World War I, then in its final months, and some have been ready to hear in them the sound of the aging composer brooding over the futility of war and the destruction of Western Civilization.

But this is certainly not true of the *Violin Sonata*, the first of the works completed in the summer of 1918. One of the most striking features of this music is how conservative it is: everyone hears echoes of Brahms (one of Elgar's favorite composers) in the first movement, and this sonata shows not the faintest awareness of the

work of Stravinsky or Schoenberg or the many others who had been transforming music in the three decades since Brahms had written his last violin sonata. The other striking element about this music is how varied it is. After the big-boned drama of the opening movement, the second movement seems to come from a different world entirely—it is intimate and personal music, private and fleeting in its moods. And then Elgar rounds the sonata off with a finale that seems to fuse both these worlds.

Elgar himself was a fine violinist, and this sonata is well-written for the instrument. The beginning is quite dramatic—Elgar marks it both *risoluto* and *con forza*—with the violin leaping across all four strings and driving forward with a furious energy. Some relief comes along the way with a *dolce* passage (in fact a subtle inversion of the very beginning) before the arrival of the unusual second subject. Marked both *tranquillo* and *espressivo*, this theme emerges from the violinist's constant string-crossings: the theme itself is embedded within almost unending waves of arpeggios. From these materials, Elgar builds a long first movement that drives to a full-throated climax and a ringing close on a great E-major chord.

We enter a different world entirely with the second movement. If Brahms was the influence on the first movement, some have heard quite a different influence on the second, which Elgar marks *Romance*. As a young composer, Elgar had written a number of miniatures for violin and piano; some of them (such as *La Capricieuse*) showed a Spanish influence fashionable at that time in salon music. In the sonata's middle movement, Elgar seems to recall that earlier salon/Spanish style. This is intimate music, built on a fluid rhythmic sense, with something slinky and coy about its sudden changes of key or turns of phrase. The movement is in ternary form, and its lengthy central episode plays up to a stirring climax of which Elgar was quite proud, noting that "[some] say it is as good or better than anything I have done in the expressive way."

The finale seems to reinvoke the dramatic manner of the opening movement, but the impressive thing here is the range of expression. At one extreme are grand rhetorical passages with markings like *appassionato*, *con fuoco*, and *largamente*, but these alternate with more inward episodes that have markings like *cantabile*, *dolce*, *espressivo*, and *teneramente* (tenderly). Near the end, Elgar offers a brief reminiscence of the second movement, now rebarred in 3/2, then closes with a superheated coda that drives to a grand cadence on a unison E.

Elgar's *Violin Sonata* is the work of an older composer writing near the end of the most devastating war the world had then seen, but the only real relation of this music to those troubling external events is that it avoids them entirely. Writing for his own instrument, the aging Elgar turns to the past and evokes several of the musical worlds he had known and loved as a young man.

—Program notes by Eric Bromberger



Coming Soon to the Center for the Arts:

SATAN'S FALL

An Oratorio by Stewart Copeland

Sponsored by the Office of the Provost and the Pepperdine Cross-School Collaborative Research Program

West Coast Premiere

Performed by the Pepperdine Chamber Choir and the Pepperdine Pickford Ensemble under the direction of Ryan Board and N. Lincoln Hanks

In 2019, the Pepperdine choral program joined a distinct group of choral organizations from across the US and Europe in order to commission the composition of a new oratorio by rock drumming legend Stewart Copeland. Pepperdine University has secured the rights to the West Coast premiere.

Stewart Copeland chose Milton's *Paradise Lost* as primary inspiration—from Milton's nearly 100,000-word epic, Copeland selected roughly 15,000 from Books V and VI in order to tell the story of the clash between God, the Messiah, and Satan in a 40-minute musical work entitled *Satan's Fall*. Copeland sets his selected text to music performed by mostly classical instruments, soloists and a choir, but the style is anything but traditional. His composition is expectedly rhythmic, edgy, and blends styles as diverse as jazz and death metal.

In order to expand the scope and impact of the project, a team of professors from seven different programs at Seaver College applied for support from Pepperdine's Cross-School Collaborative Research Grant. With this support the project now includes collaboration from students and faculty in art, art history, great books, music, creative writing, and religion. Students have created original poetic works, essays, screen plays, visual art, and have engaged in discussions, lectures, and rehearsals all of which leads up to our culminating events on the weekend of April 23. These include curated mobile art truck exhibits and other exhibits and lectures to be announced, as well as the Center for the Arts performance of *Satan's Fall* on Saturday, April 23. In addition to Copeland's oratorio, the concert will include music performed by Pepperdine's Pickford Ensemble and the Pepperdine Concert and Chamber Choirs. Much of the first half of the program will focus on themes of heaven, angels, and paradise; while the second half depicts the "fall" from grace and Satan's plunge into hell.

SATURDAY, APRIL 23, 2022 • 7:30 PM

\$20-\$40 • \$10 FOR PEPPERDINE STUDENTS

The Recital Series at Pepperdine University has delighted audiences with new and emerging classical musicians since 1993. With intimate Sunday afternoon performances in Raitt Recital Hall, the series is nationally known for the high quality of its performances, the stunning location, the beautiful and acoustically superior venues, and the engagement and loyalty of its audience. Many of the featured artists have gone on to significant critical and professional acclaim, including cellist Johannes Moser, pianist Haochen Zhang, soprano Jessica Rivera, and cellist Alisa Weilerstein. The Recital Series is made possible by the generous support of funders to the Lisa Smith Wengler Center for the Arts. For more information or to purchase tickets, please visit arts.pepperdine.edu.

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