

presents

The Recital Series

Geneva Lewis, Violin

Marisa Gupta, Piano

Sunday, December 5, 2021, 2 PM Raitt Recital Hall

The Cultivators: Highlights from the Kinsey African American Art and History Collection will be on view in the Weisman Museum of Art from January 15–March 27, 2022.

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PROGRAM

JOACHIM AND FRIENDS

R. SCHUMANN (1810–1856) Violin Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano in A Minor, Opus 105

I. Mit leidenschaftlichem Ausdruck II. Allegretto

II. Lebhaft

C. SCHUMANN (1819-1896) Three Romances for Violin and Piano, Opus 22

I. Andante molto
II. Allegretto

III. Leidenschaftlich schnell

BACH (1685–1750) Chaconne from the Partita No. 2 in D Minor for Unaccompanied Violin, BWV 1004

— INTERMISSION —

JOACHIM (1831–1907) Romance in B-flat Major, Opus 2

BRAHMS (1833–1897) Violin Sonata No. 3 in D Minor, Opus 108

I. Allegro II. Adagio

III. Un poco presto e con sentimento

IV. Presto agitato

Program subject to change.

Geneva Lewis 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.



Violinist Geneva Lewis has forged a reputation as a musician of consummate artistry whose performances speak from and to the heart. A New Zealand native, Lewis is the recipient of a 2021 Avery Fisher Career Grant and winner of the Grand Prize at the 2020 Concert Artists Guild Victor Elmaleh Competition. Lewis' other recent accolades include being named a Finalist at the 2018 Naumburg Competition as well as a Performance Today Young Artist in Residence.

After her stellar solo debut at age 11 with the Pasadena Symphony, Lewis has gone on to perform with such orchestras as Symphony NH, Diablo Symphony Orchestra, Culver City Symphony, Sierra Summer Festival Orchestra, Brentwood Westwood Symphony Orchestra, Antelope Valley Symphony Orchestra, and the Pasadena Pops. She has worked with a number of notable conductors, including Nic McGegan, Edwin Outwater, and Michael Feinstein. While Lewis' claim to chamber music fame came early on as a member of the renowned Lewis Family Trio with her siblings Nathan (piano) and Rochelle (cello), she has since gone on to become the violinist of the Callisto Trio, Artist-in-Residence at the Da Camera Society in Los Angeles. Callisto was the recipient of the Bronze Medal at the Fischoff National Chamber Music Competition (senior division) as the youngest group to ever compete in the finals. In fall 2019, they were invited on the Masters on Tour series of the International Holland Music Sessions and performed at the celebrated Het Concertgebouw Amsterdam. Deeply passionate about collaboration, Lewis has had the great pleasure of performing with such prominent musicians as Atar Arad, Efe Baltacigil, Glenn Dicterow, Miriam Fried, Ilya Kaler, Michael Kannen, Kim Kashkashian, Ida Kavafian, Marcy Rosen, Mitsuko Uchida, and the Borromeo String Quartet, among others.

An advocate of community engagement and music education, Lewis was selected for the New England Conservatory's Community Performances and Partnerships Program's Ensemble Fellowship, through which her string quartet created interactive and educational programs for diverse audiences within the Boston community. Her quartet was also chosen for the Virginia Arts Festival Residency, during which they performed and presented master classes in elementary, middle, and high schools.

Lewis is currently in the Artist Diploma program as the recipient of the Charlotte F. Rabb Presidential Scholarship at the New England Conservatory studying with Miriam Fried. Past summers have taken her to the Ravinia Steans Institute, Perlman Music Program's Chamber Workshop, International Holland Music Sessions, Taos School of Music, and the Heifetz International Music Institute. Lewis is also a regular participant of the Marlboro Music Festival and will be returning in 2021.

Lewis appears courtesy of Concert Artists Guild.

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Pianst Marisa Gupta has a versatile musical life, comprised of solo and chamber music performances, ranging from rare repertoire of the past to a deep commitment towards music of today, performed with heartfelt conviction and a deep intellectual engagement. Born in the USA of Thai and Indian parentage, Gupta made her debut performing Prokofiev's 1st Piano Concerto with the Houston Symphony. She is the recipient of

numerous awards, including top prizes at the Concours Maria Canals (Barcelona), the Viotti Competition (Vercelli, Italy), Corpus Christi and Kingsville International Music Competitions, a Solti Foundation Award, a Fulbright scholarship for study in the UK, and many others. She was an Edison Visiting Fellow at the British Library (for the study of early chamber music recordings and performance styles) and was named a finalist by the BBC for its New Generations Thinkers Scheme, an initiative inviting leading British thinkers to broadcast on BBC Radio 3. Gupta has appeared as a soloist and chamber musician in some of the world's leading venues including the Wigmore Hall, Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), Palau de la Música (Barcelona), South Bank Centre, Kings Place (London), the Bridgewater Hall (Manchester), LSO St. Luke's, Warsaw Philharmonic Hall, Bucharest's Ateneul Român, Zipper Hall (Monday Evening Concerts – Los Angeles), LACMA (Los Angeles), Tokyo Opera City, Munegetsu Hall (Nagoya), and other venues throughout Europe, Japan, and the USA. Radio broadcasts include those on BBC Radio 3, BBC TV 4, Radio 4 (Netherlands), Radio Catalunya, KUSC (L.A.) and KUHF (Houston). She has appeared at numerous festivals including Rockport, Ravinia, Three Choirs Festival, Prussia Cove, Yellow Barn, and many others. Gupta has worked closely with a number of composers, notably Jörg Widmann, Brett Dean, Philippe Hersant, and David Matthews, and has given the US and UK premieres of works by Jean-Frédéric Neuburger, European premieres of major works by Aaron Jay Kernis and Ned Rorem at the Wigmore Hall, and the world premiere of Rhapsodie by Philippe Hersant. Chamber music collaborations include those with Anthony Marwood, Philippe Graffin, Stephen Kovacevich, Nicolas Dautricourt, Lynne Dawson, Tom Meglioranza, Mats Lidstrom, Natasha Brofsky, Eduardo Leandro, Alan Kay, members of the Berlin

Philharmonic, COE, Bavarian Radio Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic, Philharmonia, LPO, Hallé, the Verona, Calder, Rolston, and Doric Quartets, Nash Ensemble and many others.

Gupta received the Diplôme de Soliste from the HEM Genève in Switzerland, where she studied with Pascal Devoyon. She received her Doctorate at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, focused on the performance of approximately 50 recently discovered solo piano works by the Catalan composer Frederic Mompou. Gupta's other important mentors include Richard Goode, Horacio Gutierrez, and John and Nancy Weems.

marisagupta.com



Violin Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano in A Minor, Opus 105

ROBERT SCHUMANN Born June 8, 1810, Zwickau Died July 29, 1856, Endenich

Schumann's relation with the violin was never wholly comfortable. A pianist, Schumann found the prospect of writing for stringed instruments intimidating, and he appears to have been threatened most of all by the violin—he wrote a number of pieces of chamber music for viola and for cello before he was finally willing to face writing for the violin. Then that music came in a rush—during the final years of his brief creative career, Schumann wrote three violin sonatas, a violin concerto, and a fantasy for violin and orchestra.

The Violin Sonata in A Minor was the first of these. Schumann composed it very quickly—between September 12 and 16, 1851—during a period of personal stress. The previous year he had become music director for the city of Düsseldorf, and by the time he wrote this sonata his tenure there had already become mired in clashes with local authorities and in his own suspicions of plots against him. Schumann himself reported that when he wrote this sonata, he was "very angry with certain people," though the music should not be understood as a personal reaction to artistic squabbles. Instead, his first engagement with the violin produced a compact sonata in classical forms.

The sonata is in three movements that offer Schumann's customary mixture of German and Italian performance markings. The opening *Mit leidenschaftlichem Ausdruck* ("with passionate expression") bursts to life with the violin's forceful, surging main idea over the piano's shimmer of constant sixteenths. This busy motion is punctuated by great swooping flourishes that lead to gentle secondary material; it is the opening theme, however, that dominates the development, and Schumann rounds off the movement with a lengthy coda that drives to a dramatic close.

Relief arrives in the central *Allegretto*, which treats the violin's innocent opening melody in rondo form. Tempos fluctuate throughout, with the music pulsing ahead, then reining back; some of these episodes become animated before the movement winks out on two pizzicato strokes.

Marked *Lebhaft* ("lively"), the finale returns to the tonality and mood of the opening movement. The violin's steady rush of sixteenths makes this feel at first like a perpetual-motion movement, but it is in fact another sonata-form movement, complete with a jaunty little

secondary tune and an exposition repeat. This movement shows subtle points of contact with the first movement that run beyond their joint key of A minor and impassioned mood: the rhythm of the sonata's opening theme underlies much of the finale, and near the close that theme actually makes a fleeting appearance. But the finale's forceful main subject quickly shoulders this aside and drives the sonata to an almost superheated close.

Three Romances for Violin and Piano, Opus 22

CLARA SCHUMANN Born September 13, 1819, Leipzig Died May 20, 1896, Frankfurt am Main

In 1853 Robert and Clara Schumann welcomed into their home in Düsseldorf two young men who would go on to become giants of nineteenth-century German music: Johannes Brahms and Joseph Joachim. Brahms and Joachim would develop a lengthy (and frequently stormy) relation of their own, but they quickly became true friends of the Schumann family. Robert's mental health was now in rapid deterioration, and they stood by during his decline and death in an asylum, visiting him frequently and helping Clara and the seven children. In turn, Clara remained close to both men over the remaining 40 years of her life. Her long and intense friendship with Brahms is familiar, but she was also close to Joachim: she gave a number of duo-recitals with him after Robert's death, and she was close enough to give the violinist financial and domestic advice as he approached his own marriage. Brahms and Joachim were among the most intense mourners at her death in 1896.

In 1853, during the first rush of the Schumanns' friendship with Joachim, Clara wrote—specifically for him—the *Three Romances for Violin and Piano*. Clara did not compose a great deal. The demands of being wife, mother, and pianist left her little time, and in any case she was ambivalent about composing: in a diary entry at age 19 she wrote, "a woman must not desire to compose—not one has been able to do it, and why should I expect to?" In fact, these *romances* were virtually her final composition (her list of opus numbers runs only to 23), for after Robert's death she stopped composing altogether.

A *romance* is a type of music without strict formal meaning: that title simply suggests music of an expressive character. All three of these romances are in ternary form plus coda, and all end quietly. Though they were composed during the stress that accompanied

Robert's decline, these pieces show absolutely no sign of that pain—they may be regarded as brief explorations of gentle moods. In the *Andante molto*, the violin soars easily over the piano accompaniment, though the music's characteristic quintuplet turn appears in both parts. The *Allegretto*, in G minor, is more intense, though Clara's instruction is "with tender performance." Some have heard the influence of Mendelssohn in this music, which moves into G major for its center section, full of trills and grace notes; this romance winks out with quiet pizzicato strokes that return to G major in the last measure. The final romance, marked "passionately fast," is also the longest: the violin sings above a rippling piano accompaniment; when this section returns, the composer effectively varies the sound by making the piano accompaniment entirely staccato.

Joachim very much liked the *Three Romances*, and he and Clara performed them frequently. When she published the set in 1855, Clara had this inscription printed in the score: "Dedicated to Joseph Joachim with the greatest friendship."

Chaconne from the Partita No. 2 in D Minor for Unaccompanied Violin, BWV 1004

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH Born March 21, 1685, Eisenach Died July 28, 1750, Leipzig

This *Chaconne* is of course THE *Chaconne*, one of the most famous and difficult pieces ever written for the violin. Bach composed it around 1720 as the final movement of his *Partita No. 2 in D Minor for Unaccompanied Violin*. The first four movements present the expected partita sequence—*Allemande*, *Courante*, *Sarabande*, and *Gigue*—but then Bach springs a surprise: the last movement is a chaconne longer that the first four movements combined. The *Chaconne* offers some of the most intense music Bach ever wrote, and it has worked its spell on musicians everywhere for the last two-and-a-half centuries. Beyond the countless recordings for violin, it is currently available in performances by guitar, cello, lute, and viola, as well as in piano transcriptions by Brahms, Busoni, and Raff.

A *chaconne* is one of the most disciplined forms in music: it is built on a repeating ground bass in triple meter over which a melodic line is varied. A *chaconne* demands great skill from a performer under any circumstances, but it becomes unbelievably complex on the unaccompanied violin, which must simultaneously suggest the ground

bass *and* project the melodic variations above it. Even with the curved bow of Bach's day, some of this music borders on the unplayable, and it is more difficult still on the modern violin, with its more rounded bridge and concave bow.

This makes Bach's *Chaconne* sound like supremely cerebral music—and it is—but the wonder is that this music manages to be so expressive at the same time. The four-bar ground bass repeats 64 times during the quarter-hour span of the *Chaconne*, and over it Bach spins out gloriously varied music, all the while keeping these variations firmly anchored on the ground bass. At the center section, Bach moves into D major, and here the music relaxes a little, content to sing happily for awhile; after the calm nobility of this interlude, the quiet return to D minor sounds almost disconsolate. Bach drives the *Chaconne* to a great climax and a restatement of the ground bass at the close.

Romance in B-flat Major, Opus 2

JOSEPH JOACHIM Born June 28, 1831, Pressburg Died August 15, 1907, Berlin

Joseph Joachim was one of the greatest violinists of the nineteenth century, a performer of impeccable technique and complete artistic integrity—not for him were the flashy crowd-thrilling antics of some nineteenth-century virtuosos. Joachim knew and worked with almost every major musical figure of his era, and his influence as performer, teacher, and adviser was profound. The young Brahms was unstinting in his admiration for the violinist, writing to Clara Schumann to say that "There is more in Joachim than all us young people put together."

Born in what is now Hungary, Joachim was a prodigy who began performing in public while still a child. At 12 he studied with Mendelssohn in Leipzig, and at 19 he became concertmaster of Liszt's orchestra in Weimar, but left two years later, feeling that his and Liszt's artistic aims were so different that they could not work together. Instead, Joachim became a part of the circle of Robert and Clara Schumann, and there he met Brahms when both were in their early twenties. It would prove a long, productive, and at times very difficult friendship, but Joachim remained a lifelong advocate of Brahms, and he gave the premieres of Brahms' *Violin Concerto* and *Double Concerto*.

During the years 1848 and 1852—when he was between 17 and 21—Joachim composed three short works for violin and piano

and published them under the title *Three Pieces, Opus 2*. The first of these is the *Romance* heard on this program. In music, a *romance* is a term without precise formal meaning—it has come to denote a short piece of expressive character. Joachim's *Romance in B-flat Major* is a moderately-paced work (the marking is *Andantino*) built on a series of flowing melodies over quiet piano accompaniment (Joachim marks the violin's entrance *dolce assai*: "very gentle"). Matters grow more animated along the way, but the character of this music is entirely serene, and it comes to a most peaceful conclusion.

Violin Sonata No. 3 in D Minor, Opus 108 JOHANNES BRAHMS Born May 7, 1833, Hamburg Died April 3, 1897, Vienna

Brahms spent the summer of 1886 at Lake Thun in Switzerland. He had just completed his *Fourth Symphony*, and now—in a house from which he had a view of the lake and a magnificent glacier—he turned to chamber music. That summer he completed three chamber works and began the *Violin Sonata in D Minor*, but he put the sonata aside while he wrote the *Zigeunerlieder* ("Gypsy Songs") and *Double Concerto for Violin and Cello*, grumbling that writing for stringed instruments should be left to "someone who understands fiddles better than I do." He returned to Lake Thun and completed his final violin sonata in the summer of 1888.

Despite Brahms' customary self-deprecation, his writing for stringed instruments could be very convincing, and the *Third Violin Sonata* is brilliant music—not in the sense of being flashy but in the fusion of complex technique and passionate expression that marks Brahms' finest music. The violin's soaring, gypsy-like main theme at the opening of the *Allegro* is so haunting that it is easy to miss the remarkable piano accompaniment: far below, the piano's quiet syncopated octaves move ominously forward, generating much of the music's tension. Piano alone has the second theme, with the violin quickly picking it up and soaring into its highest register. The development of these two ideas is disciplined and ingenious: in the piano's lowest register Brahms sets a pedal A and lets it pound a steady quarter-note pulse for nearly 50 unbroken measures—beneath the powerful thematic development, the pedal notes hammer a tonal center insistently into the listener's ear. Its energy finally spent, this

movement gradually dissolves on fragments of the violin's opening melody.

The heartfelt *Adagio* consists of a long-spanned melody (built on short metric units—the meter is 3/8) that develops by repetition; the music rises in intensity until the double-stopped violin soars high above the piano, then falls back to end peacefully. Brahms titled the third movement *Un poco presto e con sentimento*, though the particular sentiment he had in mind remains uncertain. In any case, this shadowy, quicksilvery movement is based on echo effects as bits of theme are tossed between the two instruments. The movement comes to a shimmering close: piano arpeggios spill downward, and the music vanishes in two quick strokes.

By contrast, the *Presto agitato* finale hammers along a pounding 6/8 meter. The movement is aptly titled: this is agitated music, restless and driven. At moments it sounds frankly symphonic, as if the music demands the resources of a full symphony orchestra to project its furious character properly. Brahms marks the violin's thematic entrance *passionato*, but he needn't have bothered—that character is amply clear from the music itself. Even the noble second theme, first announced by the piano, does little to dispel the driven quality of this music. The complex development presents the performers with difficult problems of ensemble, and the very ending feels cataclysmic: the music slows, then suddenly rips forward to the cascading smashes of sound that bring this sonata to its powerful close.

—Program notes by Eric Bromberger

Next in the Recital Series

GABRIEL MARTINS, CELLO

Gabriel Martins is the winner of the 2020 Concert Artists Guild/Young Classical Artists Trust Grand Prize and the 2020 Sphinx Competition. Martins has performed as a soloist and chamber musician in venues around the world, and he exhibits "heart, passion, and a finely-nu-anced palette of colors in a compelling manner worthy of a seasoned artist." (Ralph Kirshbaum)

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TONY YUN, PIANO

Pianist Tony Yun is the First Prize winner and Gold Medalist at the First China International Music Competition and a recipient of the Jerome L. Greene Fellowship at the Juilliard School. With playing that combines poetry and elegance, Yun has given recitals throughout North America, Europe, and Asia, including the Juilliard School, New York's Steinway Hall and at the Heidelberger Frühling Music Festival.

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BENJAMIN BAKER, VIOLIN

Violinist Benjamin Baker won first prize at the 2016 Young Concert Artists International Auditions and third prize at the Michael Hill Competition in New Zealand in 2017. He demonstrates "virtuosity, refinement, and youthful exuberance" (*New York Times*) in his music and has performed as a soloist with London's Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the English Chamber Orchestra, the National Children's Orchestra in Manchester, and more.

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