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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to the opening concert of AFCM's new season, and the opening concert of our most misunderstood series!

A few people said over the summer that they're not subscribing to Now Music because they don't like new music. Perhaps this misunderstanding is a case of vowel trouble: misreading New for Now. More likely, it hinges on the assumption that Now actually does mean New in this context. There's a simple answer to that: not necessarily.

Now Music does incorporate freshly written scores into the series—an example being the Kaija Saariaho piece on today's concert. But we have been incorporating newish music into almost every concert in every series for decades. New music is nothing new. Today's program, in its choice of artists and repertoire, is exactly the sort of thing the old Piano & Friends series presented from its inception in 1995.

But the word Now also applies to the rest of this program. Chamber music is a living, evolving tradition that embraces Beethoven and Brahms as well as Saariaho. The music remains relevant, and musicians continue to explore its meanings and use it as a vehicle for their own self-expression.

The title Now Music means that this series is open to all manner of chamber music and concert presentation that can captivate us in the here and now. That could mean employing our usual concert template, as we are today, or experimenting with shorter concerts preceded or followed by some different component (festivities, talks about the music, artist Q&As), presenting the performance in an unusual yet apt venue, or, yes, sometimes focusing on entirely new music.

So if you are a past Piano & Friends subscriber and have been hesitating, I urge you to go ahead and order your Now Music tickets. If you've never bought anything other than the Evening Series or Festival, I encourage you to consider this group of four concerts. You'll be pleased you did.

JAMES REEL

ames Reel

President



BENJAMIN BEILMAN, VIOLIN ANNA POLONSKY, PIANO





Benjamin Beilman, *violin* Anna Polonsky, *piano*

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BENJAMIN BEILMAN

Twenty-six year old American violinist Benjamin Beilman is recognized as one of the fastest rising stars of his generation, winning praise in both North America and Europe 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." The Times also praised his "handsome technique, burnished sound, and quiet confidence [which] showed why he has come so far so fast." Following his performance of the Sibelius Concerto at the Montreal Competition, The Strad described his performance of the slow movement as "pure poetry."

In recent seasons, Mr. Beilman has appeared with the Philadelphia Orchestra and returned to play with them at the Bravo! Vail Valley Festival, and, last summer, at Saratoga. He has recently appeared both in Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium with the New York Youth Symphony and Weill Hall, for his recital debut, in a program that included the premiere of a new work by David Ludwig commissioned for him by Carnegie Hall. Mr. Beilman is also a frequent guest artist at festivals including Music@Menlo, Music from Angel Fire, and Chamber Music Northwest, as well as at the Bridgehampton, Marlboro, Santa Fe, Seattle, and Sedona Chamber Music Festivals. Internationally, he has appeared in recital at the Louvre, Tonhalle Zürich, Wigmore Hall, and Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. His recordings include Prokofiev's complete sonatas for violin on the Analekta label, and in March 2016, Warner Classics released his debut recital CD of works by Schubert, Janáček, and Stravinsky.

Mr. Beilman studied with Almita and Roland Vamos at the Music Institute of Chicago, Ida Kavafian and Pamela Frank at the Curtis Institute of Music, and Christian Tetzlaff at the Kronberg Academy. He plays the "Engleman" Stradivarius from 1709, generously on loan from the Nippon Music Foundation.

ANNA POLONSKY

Anna Polonsky made her solo piano debut at the age of seven at the Special Central Music School in Moscow, Russia. She emigrated to the United States in 1990 and attended high school at the Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan. Her education continued with a Bachelor of Music diploma from The Curtis Institute of Music, under the tutelage of the renowned pianist Peter Serkin, and a Master's Degree from the Juilliard School, where she studied with Jerome Lowenthal. She currently serves on the piano faculty of Vassar College, and in the summer at the Marlboro and Kneisel Hall chamber music festivals. With her husband Orion Weiss, she is a member of the Polonsky-Weiss Piano Duo.

Widely in demand as a soloist and chamber musician, Ms. Polonsky 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. She 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. A frequent guest at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, she was a member of the Chamber Music Society Two during 2002-2004. She has also 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. In the spring of 2007 she performed a solo recital at Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium to inaugurate the Emerson Quartet's Perspectives Series. Ms. Polonsky is a recipient of a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship and the Andrew Wolf Chamber Music Award.

AFCM last heard Ms. Polonsky on a Piano & Friends concert of February 1, 2015.

THIS AFTERNOON'S PROGRAM

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Sonata No. 1 in D Major for Piano and Violin, Op. 12, no. 1

Allegro con brio Tema con variazioni: Andante con moto Rondo: Allegro

CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS (1835-1921)

Sonata No. 1 in D Minor for Violin and Piano, Op. 75

Allegro agitato—Adagio Allegretto moderato—Allegro molto

INTERMISSION

KAIJA SAARIAHO (b. 1952)

Tocar

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Sonata No. 3 in D Minor for Violin and Piano, Op. 108

Allegro Adagio Un poco presto e con sentimento Presto agitato

PROGRAM Notes

TODAY'S CONCERTGOER might be surprised that Beethoven designated each of his ten violin sonatas for "piano and violin" rather than the reverse modern order. Despite his nod to eighteenth-century practice, the two instruments are essentially equal partners that share both dominant and supporting roles.

Beethoven composed his three Opus 12 sonatas in 1797 and dedicated them to Antonio Salieri, his occasional teacher after he arrived in Vienna from Bonn. However, he chose Mozart's violin sonatas as his models since they were considered the finest examples of the genre. Although Beethoven's Opus 12 sonatas impose formidable musical and interpretive demands, he most probably intended them for salon performances by the serious amateur.

Composers of the eighteenth century, including Beethoven, often attributed emotional affects to specific keys, and D major was widely associated with a bright and spacious mood. The genial Sonata in D Major opens with a classical sonata form movement that reveals interesting harmonic excursions in its development section. The second movement (A major) offers a set of variations on an ingratiating theme. The vivacious rondo finale unfolds with delightful nuances that suggest the good-natured influence of Joseph Haydn, another occasional mentor for Beethoven.

THE PROLIFIC AND VERSATILE Camille Saint-Saëns sought to realize the classical French ideals of balance, clarity of expression, and elegance of line throughout his long career. Obsessed with flawless craftsmanship, he wrote in his memoirs: "Music is something besides a source of sensuous pleasure and keen emotion. He who does not get absolute pleasure from a simple series of well-constructed chords, beautiful only in their arrangement, is not really fond of music." As a pianist Saint-Saëns amazed Wagner with his virtuosity and was ranked as equal to Liszt by Liszt himself; but as a composer he was criticized by his colleagues, who heard his refined, harmonically conservative style as belonging to Old France. Saint-Saëns himself

realized that his individual style of classical romanticism would soon be outmoded. As early as 1879 he stated: "Tonality is in its death throes. There will be an eruption of the Oriental modes, whose variety is immense. Rhythm, scarcely exploited, will be developed. From all this will emerge a new art."

The Opus 75 sonata (1885) succeeded an earlier D minor sonata that Saint-Saëns discarded after its London premiere. Published as his "Première sonate" for piano and violin, Opus 75 was written for the violinist Pierre Marsick to celebrate a successful concert tour. The sonata's four movements are organized into two pairs unified by thematic recurrences.

The turbulent opening movement, in sonata form, develops two themes with restless, syncopated rhythms. The calmer second idea, heard in the violin with an arpeggiated piano accompaniment, captured the imagination of Marcel Proust, who professed that it provided the model for the character Vinteuil's "little phrase" in his novel À la recherche du temps perdu. The fugal passages in the development section reflect Saint-Saëns's lifetime study of baroque practice. A transition passage leads directly to the rhapsodic slow movement, a songful dialogue between the two instruments.

The witty and incisive Scherzo (G minor) is animated by inventive rhythms. A transition area leads without pause to the virtuoso finale, a light and rapid sonata-rondo movement that offers recurring areas of perpetual motion for the violin. The second theme of the first movement returns in the brilliant coda.

"Whilst composing music, I always imagine the instrumentalist's fingers and their sensitivity."

KAIJA SAARIAHO

FINNISH COMPOSER Kaija Saariaho studied violin and piano at the Sibelius Academy and composition in Freiburg and Paris. Known for her luxuriant fusions of traditional instruments with electronics, her primary influence has been post-serialism. However, she resists restrictive categories: "I don't want to write music through negations. Everything is permissible as long as it's done in good taste."

Saariaho writes: "The title, in Spanish, is translated as 'to touch, to play.' One of my first ideas for 'Tocar,' the encounter of two very different instruments, was the question—how could the violin and piano touch each other?

"Whilst composing music, I always imagine the instrumentalist's fingers and their sensitivity. Violin sounds are created by the collaboration between the left hand and the bow controlled by the right hand. In the piano, the pianist should be extremely precise to control the moment when the fingers touch the keys; afterwards the sounds can be colored only by the pedals. Despite such different mechanisms, both instruments have some musical common points—noticeably they share some of the same register.

"In 'Tocar' both instruments move forward independently, but also keep an eye on each other. I imagine a magnetism becoming stronger and stronger—the piano part becoming more mobile—which draws the violin texture toward the piano writing and culminates in a unison encounter. After this short moment of symbiosis, the violin line is released from the measured piano motion, continuing its own life outside the laws of gravity.

"'Tocar' was commissioned by the International Jean Sibelius Violin Competition and was premiered by the twenty semi-finalists in Helsinki in November 2010."

THE LAST OF HIS three violin sonatas, Brahms's Opus 108 surpasses its predecessors in its grand scope, dramatic power, and virtuosic demands for both players. Brahms began the work in 1886 during a productive summer sojourn at Thun, Switzerland and completed it two years later. Although dedicated to the Hungarian violinist Joseph Joachim, the sonata was most probably inspired by his longtime friend Clara Schumann. He wrote to her: "It is lovely to think of my sonata flowing beneath your fingers, and in my thoughts I wander through its maze with you beside me. I know no greater pleasure than this."

The sonata form first movement, based on a soaring first theme and a contrasting second subject, is characterized by an atmosphere of feverish unrest. The Adagio (D major) is an expressive song based on Brahms's folk-inspired lied "Klage" (Lament); a lyrical passage in double stops for violin varies the mood. Emphatic piano chords introduce the playful scherzo (F-sharp minor), the main subject of which is constructed from a five-note motif. Clara commented on this movement: "It is like a beautiful girl sweetly frolicking with her lover... then suddenly, in the middle, a flash of deep passion." The finale (D minor) opens with a vigorous Hungarian melody that is transformed into a pensive song for violin. Momentum builds, and the movement concludes with fervency as both instruments strive to produce nearly symphonic effects.

Notes by Nancy Monsman

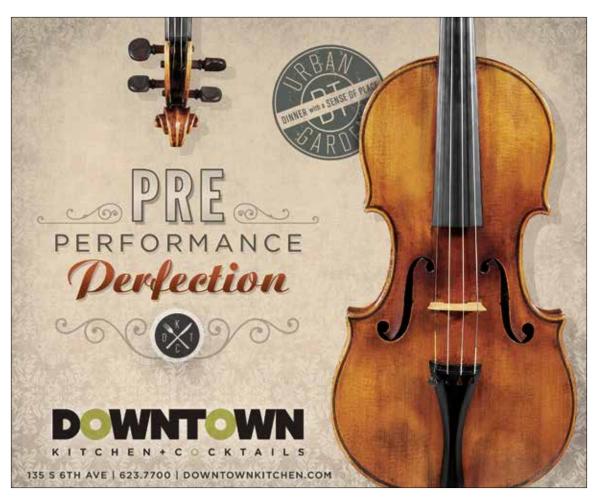


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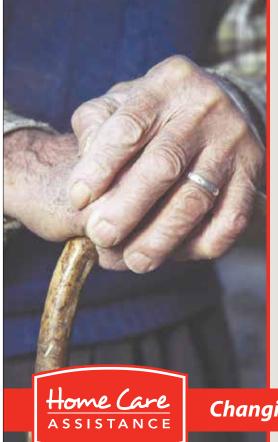
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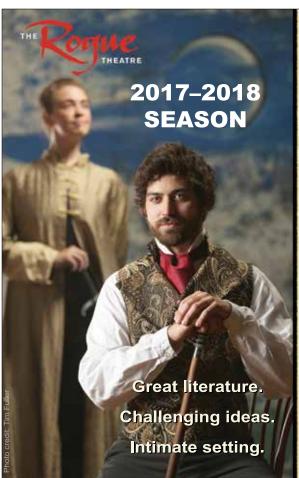
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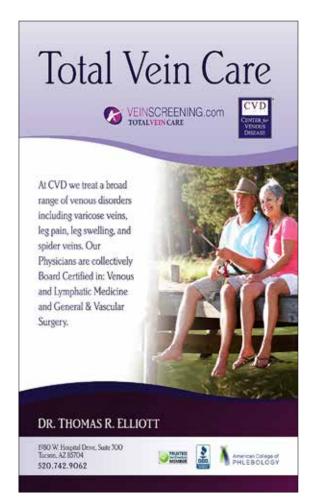
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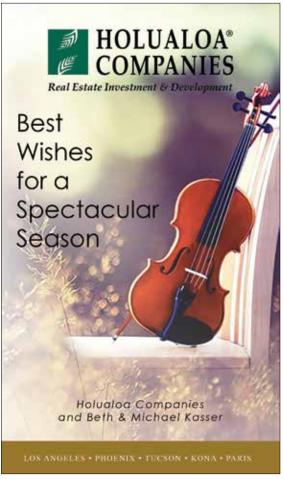
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That Music Always Round Me

WALT WHITMAN, 1819 - 1892

That music always round me, unceasing, unbeginning, yet long untaught I did not hear,

But now the chorus I hear and am elated,

A tenor, strong, ascending with power and health, with glad notes of daybreak I hear,

A soprano at intervals sailing buoyantly over the tops of immense waves.

A transparent base shuddering lusciously under and through the universe,

The triumphant tutti, the funeral wailings with sweet flutes and violins, all of these I fill myself with,

I hear not the volumes of sound merely, I am moved by the exquisite meanings,

I listen to the different voices winding in and out, striving, contending with fiery vehemence to excel each other in emotion;

I do not think the performers know themselves—but now I think I begin to know them.



Selected for tonight's concert by Sarah Kortemeier, Instruction and Outreach Librarian, and Julie Swarstad Johnson, Library Specialist, at the University of Arizona Poetry Center. As you settle in for this first concert of AFCM's 2017–18 season, our cabal of cultural commissars, otherwise known as the board of directors, has already begun planning for next season. At last month's board meeting, Joseph Tolliver returned from the annual Western Arts Alliance conference with recommendations for which ensembles, both new and established, to engage on which dates for next season's Evening Series. This can be tricky, because many groups tend to tour during limited periods, and those tours don't always coincide with the best times for us to present concerts. The Now Music committee has already lined up several exciting, innovative performers for that series, and reserved dates in a couple of exciting venues that will be new to us. Peter Rejto, the artistic director of the Tucson Winter Chamber Music Festival, right now has his mind on assembling musicians for 2019 and 2020. The commissioning committee is negotiating contracts for AFCM-midwifed works to be premiered in 2019 and 2020, and securing the final sponsors for this season's commission from Michael Djupstrom for the Dover Quartet. (If you're interested in being a co-sponsor, talk to me, or committee chair Philip Alejo, or vice-president Paul Kaestle.)

Our minds are planted so far into the future that if you ask us what AFCM is doing next month, you'll be met with a blank stare. To keep you from getting that deer-in-the-headlights look from me and my colleagues, let me fill you in on some of our more unusual activities during the next six months of this new season.

In November, we'll welcome back the Harlem Quartet, an ensemble equally adept in jazz arrangements and the classics. The highlight of this concert, aside from Debussy's luscious string quartet, is a collaboration with Cuban jazz composer-pianist Aldo López-Gavilán. "Crossover" used to be a polite term for schlock, but not here; this is a program that should appeal to classical specialists as well as people unclear on the concept of "string quartet."

The guitar makes an exceptionally strong showing this season. In December, the Pacifica Quartet will bring along the superb guitarist Sharon Isbin, teaming up in a beguiling Italian program. Then in March, the Romero Guitar Quartet will be one of three—count 'em, three—anchor ensembles for the Tucson Winter Chamber Music Festival. For details, look at arizonachambermusic.org and click on "Festival."

In January, we're taking part in the Tucson Desert Song Festival's celebration of the Leonard Bernstein centennial with two pianists and two vocalists from the New York Festival of Song presenting an all-Bernstein concert, including that composer's Arias and Barcarolles and a feast of his immortal show tunes.

And at the end of March, we'll continue our multi-year survey of Beethoven's chamber music (leading up to the composer's 250th anniversary in 2020) with two concerts containing all of Beethoven's piano trios, featuring violinist Philip Setzer of the Emerson Quartet, cellist David Finckel, formerly of that outstanding quartet, and pianist Wu Han, Finckel's wife and a talent equal to those of the Emerson members.

You'll find information on those and our other concerts in future programs, as well as at our website. There, you can purchase tickets for our series and single concerts (before they sell out), support AFCM with a donation, and learn about all the other things we're up to, at least those that we'll admit to.

James Reel

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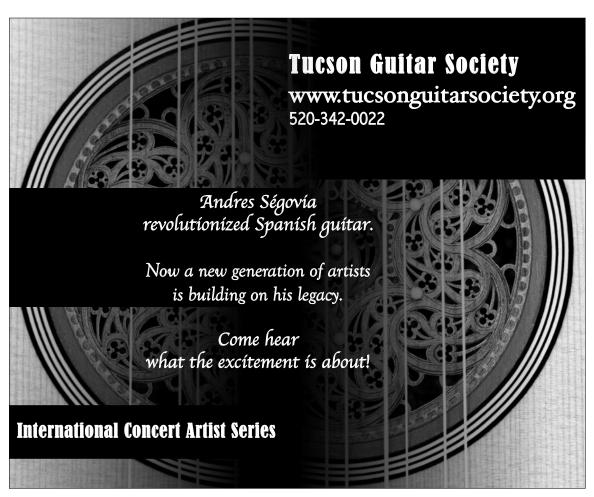
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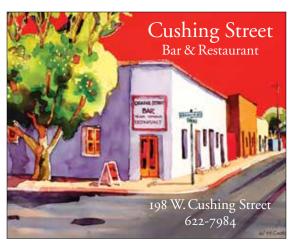
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