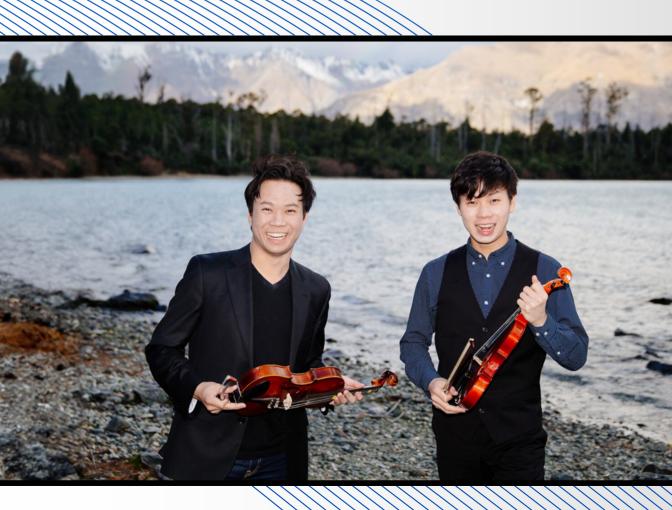


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VIOLINS

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### CHOOI BROTHERS SUNDAY, JANUARY 7, 2024 | 3:00 PM



Chooi Brothers Nikki Chooi, *violin* Timothy Chooi, *violin* 

#### **CHOOL BROTHERS**

Praised for his powerful and poetic performances, internationally-acclaimed violinist **Nikki Chooi** has established himself as an artist of rare versatility. Gramophone stated he performed with "total conviction and assurance." Nikki is a Laureate of the Queen Elizabeth and Tchaikovsky Competitions, and was awarded 1st Prize Winner at the Montreal Symphony's ManuLife Competition, the Klein International Strings Competition, and the Michael Hill International Violin Competition.

In 2022-2023, Nikki made critically-acclaimed debuts at Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium as soloist with the Buffalo Philharmonic and at Lincoln Center's Rose Hall with Orchestra NOW. He was also featured soloist with the Vancouver Symphony, Puerto Rico Symphony, National Taiwan Symphony Festival Orchestra, Santa Fe Symphony, Hamilton Philharmonic, and Manitoba Chamber Orchestra. In past seasons, he has appeared as soloist with orchestras across Canada and internationally including the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, National Arts Centre Orchestra, Victoria Symphony Orchestra, Louisiana Philharmonic, Chamber Orchestra of Wallonie, National Orchestra of Belgium, Auckland Philharmonia, Malaysian Philharmonic, and Hong Kong Philharmonic.

Nikki is currently Concertmaster of the Grammyaward winning Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra under Music Director JoAnn Falletta.

Nikki began his studies at the Victoria Conservatory, Mount Royal Conservatory, Morningside Music Bridge, and at the National Arts Centre Young Artist Programme. He completed his formal studies at the Curtis Institute and the Juilliard School under the mentorship of Joseph Silverstein, Ida Kavafian, and Donald Weilerstein.

He has recorded for Naxos, Beau Fleuve, Atoll, and Decca labels. Nikki performs on a 1713 Stradivarius courtesy of CANIMEX INC. from Drummondville, Quebec, Canada, a 1749 G.B Guadagnini on extended loan through the Stradivari Society of Chicago, and a 2016 Joseph Curtin. Nikki proudly endorses Thomastik-Infeld strings.

### PIANO & FRIENDS

Internationally acclaimed violinist **Timothy Chooi** has captivated audiences worldwide with his virtuosic and finely nuanced performances. He is highly sought after for his passionate renditions and extensive repertoire, as well as his exceptional ability to connect with a global audience, amassing a media following of millions of viewers who have tuned in to his music.

Chooi gained international recognition by winning First Prize at the Joseph Joachim International Violin Competition in Hannover, Germany, and Second Prize at the Queen Elisabeth International Competition. He also received the prestigious classical music award, the "Yves Paternot Prize" at the Verbier Festival in Switzerland. He has performed with renowned orchestras such as the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Belgian National Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, and Wiener Concert-Verein, among others.

Chooi's music has been broadcasted on several prestigious stations worldwide. In 2023, he recorded with Anne-Sophie Mutter and Mutter's Virtuosi on Deutsche Grammophon, and his performance with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra was featured on Medici TV. His music has also been aired on NPO Radio Klassiek Amsterdam, WQXR New York, RTBF Belgium, Swiss Public Radio, CBC Radio Canada, Deutschlandfunk Kultur, and Danish Public Radio.

Born in Canada and raised in the United States of America to Indonesian parents, Chooi embarked on his violin journey inspired by his older brother, Nikki Chooi. At the age of sixteen, his debut performance with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra (Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal) catapulted his career onto the global stage. Currently, Chooi serves as the Professor of Violin at the University of Ottawa in Canada. He performs on two exceptional rare violins: the Titan Guarneri Del Gesu violin from 1741, on loan from CANIMEX INC. in Drummondville, Quebec, Canada, and the Engleman Stradivarius violin from 1709, on loan from the Nippon Music Foundation in Japan.

#### **PROGRAM**

#### JEAN-MARIE LECLAIR (1697-1764)

Sonata for Two Violins in E Minor, Op. 3 No. 5

Allegro ma poco Gavotte. Andante grazioso Presto

#### JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

Sonata No. 2 in A Minor, BWV 1003: "Andante"

#### BEHZHAD RANJBARAN (B. 1955)

Caprice No. 1

#### JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750)

Sonata No. 3 in C Major, BWV 1005 "Largo"

#### JOHN CORIGLIANO (B. 1938)

Red Violin Caprices for Solo Violin

#### INTERMISSION

#### SERGEI PROKOFIEV (1891-1953)

Sonata for Two Violins in C major, Op. 56

Andante Cantabile

Allegro

Commodo (quasi allegretto)

Allegro con brio

#### ALFRED SCHNITTKE (1934-1998)

Moz-Art

Selected arrangements for two violins to be announced on stage

## FRENCH COMPOSER, VIOLINIST, AND BALLET MASTER JEAN-MARIE LECLAIR

(the Elder) began his career as principal dancer at the court in Turin. After composition studies with Corelli's pupil Somis, he returned to France and launched a brilliant career as violinist-composer with the royal chamber. Personal difficulties clouded his final years, and he was possibly murdered by his estranged wife.

Dubbed "The Corelli of France," Leclair is notable for his unique fusion of Italian and French styles in his published body of work (1723 and following), which includes two sets of violin concerti and six books of sonatas for solo or duo violins. All develop with bold harmonies, sequential thematic treatment, and motoric energy that suggest the influence of Vivaldi. Leclair's French origins are revealed in his slow movements, the subtle airs tendres (calming songs) favored by his contemporaries Lully and Couperin. A performer with Gallic finesse, Leclair established the French school of violin playing, which emphasizes perfect bow control, clear execution of ornaments, and virtuosic polish.

All movements of the late Baroque Opus 3 No. 5 are binary in form with each section repeated; the key of E minor prevails throughout this elegant sonata. The two violins interact with exuberant complementary figuration. Frequent double stops in the second violin complete the harmonies and dynamic contrasts clarify thematic areas. The central dance movement, despite its Italian spelling, is a French gavotte with a gracefully ornamented songful theme. Vigorous running figuration drives the Presto finale.

#### **DURING HIS SIX-YEAR TENURE at**

Germany's court in Cöthen, Bach wrote much instrumental music for his patron, Prince Leopold. His set of six solo sonatas and partitas (1720), the technical difficulties of which transcend any found in earlier literature, have been described as "the Himalayas for the violinist." Influenced by the "broken," or freely-voiced style of the French lutenists, Bach strove to create the illusion of full harmonic and contrapuntal texture through a single melodic line divided to suggest the interplay of several independent voices. The works also challenge the listener, who must intuit the voice leading that Bach only implied on the solo violin.

The Andante heard today is the third of the sonata's four movements. Cast in C major with two repeated sections, the movement unfolds with a calm, sustained melodic line over a pulsing rhythmic line that conjures an accompanying second violin. Expressive double stops are heard throughout this supremely poised movement.

#### BEHZAD RANJBARAN WAS BORN IN

IRAN, where he studied violin and composition at the Tehran Conservatory. He emigrated to the United States in 1974 and earned advanced degrees at both Indiana University and the Juilliard School, where his mentors were Vincent Persichetti and David Diamond. He now serves on the faculty of the Juilliard School.

During his early years in Iran, Ranjbaran closely observed its folk idioms, which have consistently pervaded his music. Although grounded in neo-Romantic idioms of the late twentieth century, Ranjbaran's works reflect the ancient modes and mellifluous melodies of Persia, for which music was "painter's work set off with gold." His set of Six Caprices (published in 2000), scored for solo violin and dedicated to Joshua Bell, also suggests the inspiration of Nicolo Paganini's technically challenging but songful Twenty-Four Caprices (published in 1820).

From the composer: "What is better than one violin? Two violins! In 1986 I began composing series of short character pieces for two violins to explore a variety of violin techniques and textures. For my purposes the free form of a caprice seemed suitable. In these virtuosic pieces both violins are treated equally and each caprice can be performed independently or in any order. The first caprice begins with a three-note motif that can be found throughout the set. It is the longest caprice, with a variety of characters and textures, from quick imitative passages to lyrical lines to crashing chords implying a larger ensemble."

## What is better than one violin? Two violins!

-Behzad Ranjbaran, composer

#### BACH'S LARGO HEARD TODAY IS Sonata

No. 3's third movement, a tranquil statement that follows a substantial and intricate fugue. This sublimely meditative Largo (F major) unfolds continuously with consistent double stops that delineate the voices and triple stops that punctuate cadences. Graceful trills ornament its poised lines. It has been described as one of Bach's greatest movements, "a little gem packed with meaning in every bar."

#### AFTER AMERICAN COMPOSER JOHN

CORIGLIANO received an Academy Award for his film score The Red Violin (1997), he created his Red Violin Caprices as a solo violin work for Joshua Bell. Corigliano writes: "These Caprices, composed in conjunction with the score for François Girard's film The Red Violin, takes a spacious, troubadour-inspired theme and varies it both literally and stylistically. These variations intentionally evoke Baroque, Gypsy, and arch-Romantic idioms as they examine the same material (a dark, seven-chord chaconne as well as that principal theme) from differing aural viewpoints. The Caprices were created and ordered to reflect the structure of the film, in which Bussotti, a fictional eighteenth-century violin maker, crafts his greatest violin for his soon-to-be-born son. When tragedy claims wife and child, the grief-stricken Bussotti, in a gesture both ardent and macabre, infuses the blood of his beloved into the varnish of the instrument. Their fates thus joined, the violin travels across three centuries through Vienna, London, Shanghai, and Montreal, passing through the hands of a doomed child prodigy, a flamboyant virtuoso, a haunted Maoist commissar, and at last a willful Canadian expert, whose own plans for the violin finally complete the circle of parent and child united in art."

A sustained, meditative statement of the theme (D minor) introduces five contrasting variations: the rapid Variation 1 (Presto); the rhapsodic Variation 2 (Con bravura); Variation 3 (Adagio, languid), cast in octave double stops; the florid Variation 4 (Slowly, with rubato), which accelerates with fervent triple stops as it leads without pause into Variation 5, which requires the performer's utmost virtuosity.

#### WHILE ON VACATION IN SAINT

TROPEZ, PROKOFIEV wrote his Opus 56 Sonata as a commission for the 1932 debut concert of Tritone, a Parisian society for the performance of new chamber music. Prokofiev wrote about the sonata's format: "After once hearing an unsuccessful piece for two violins without piano accompaniment, it struck me that despite the apparent limitations of such a duet one could make it interesting enough to listen to for ten or fifteen minutes." He later describes the frenetic premiere: "My new ballet came on a half hour later, so immediately after the sonata we dashed over to the Paris Opera - musicians, critics, author all together." Although early audiences heard the sonata as "strangely cold," it is now perceived as a warm and sensuous work that is an important part of the duo repertoire.

The four brief movements of the sonata all develop widely spaced, angular melodies that are basically diatonic but undergo jagged harmonic shifts. Andante cantabile opens with a reflective solo statement soon joined by the second violin; together they explore two closely related themes. The percussive second movement moves with whirlwind force. Played with mutes, the transparent Commodo provides a gentle contrast. In the zestful finale the opening motif of the Andante cantabile returns dolcissimo to unify the composition.

#### ALFRED SCHNITTKE'S "MOZ-ART,"

composed in 1977, is an eccentric and humorous composition for two violins, representing a fascinating example of polystylism. Drawing inspiration from the first violin part of Mozart's unfinished "Music to a Carnival Pantomime" and incorporating elements from his 40th Symphony, "Moz-Art" also incorporates a playful twist in its German title, which roughly translates to "In a way." According to musicologist David Fanning, Schnittke's treatment of Mozart in this composition often reflects an outsider's bemused perspective, akin to encountering an artifact from a bygone civilization."

Notes by Nancy Monsman

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Michael Stephen Brown, *piano* Wednesday, November 8, 2023 7:30 p.m.

#### Isidore String Quartet

Wednesday, December 6, 2023 7:30 p.m.

#### Argus Quartet

Wednesday, January 17, 2024 7:30 p.m.

## Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

Wednesday, January 31, 2024 7:30 p.m.

#### Juilliard String Quartet

Wednesday, February 7, 2024 7:30 p.m.

#### Fauré Quartett

Wednesday, March 27, 2024 7:30 p.m.

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Alexander Malofeev, *piano* Sunday, October 22, 2023 3:00 p.m.

Nikki Chooi, *violin* Timothy Chooi, *violin* Sunday, January 7, 2024 3:00 p.m.

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