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ANRAN QIAN

APRIL 12, 2026 | 3:00 PM



Anran Qian, *piano*

ANRAN QIAN

Praised by *Sing Tao Daily* for “...bringing the audience into a different sound world with her vibrant tones,” pianist Anran Qian is a versatile and compelling musician whose performances have taken her across Asia, Europe, and North America. She has earned international recognition as a prizewinner and laureate of competitions including the Valsesia Musica International Piano Competition, Chicago International Music Competition, Pro Musicis International Award, and the Beijing International Music Festival and Academy Concerto Competition.

Beyond the stage, Anran finds joy in improvisation, composition, and teaching, continually exploring new ways to connect with people through music. Believing in music’s power to foster understanding and build community, she founded [ArsNova](#), a free concert series in Newton, Massachusetts, dedicated to showcasing underrepresented voices and making classical music more accessible. A passionate performer and educator, she earned her Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees from The Juilliard School and is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at Boston University while serving on the piano faculty at Brookline Music School.

PIANO & FRIENDS SERIES

PROGRAM

FLORENCE PRICE (1887–1953)

Clouds

AMY BEACH (1867–1944)

Four Sketches for Piano, Op. 15

I. In Autumn

II. Phantoms

III. Dreaming

IV. Fire-flies

CLARA SCHUMANN (1819–1896)

Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann, Op. 20

INTERMISSION

CAROLINE SHAW (B. 1982)

Gustave Le Gray

CHEN YI (B. 1953)

Duo Ye

FRANZ LISZT (1811–1886)

Ballade No. 2 in B Minor, S. 171

PROGRAM NOTES

Price: *Clouds*

Florence Price's *Clouds* is a compact but highly distinctive work. Like many character pieces inherited from the nineteenth-century salon tradition, it depends less on formal scale than on atmosphere, contour, and harmonic nuance. Its gently shifting textures and unhurried melodic line suggest motion without urgency, less a scene vividly painted than a mood delicately sustained.

Such miniatures formed an important part of early twentieth-century piano literature, offering composers a compact space in which to distill expressive ideas. Price was especially gifted in this realm. In *Clouds*, her language is warm, supple, and economical, with a natural lyricism that never strains for effect. The piece reminds us that her achievement lies not only in her larger orchestral and vocal works, but also in these finely made smaller forms, where elegance of craft and sensitivity of expression are brought into especially close focus.

Beach: *Four Sketches for Piano, Op. 15*

Amy Beach's *Four Sketches*, published in 1892, belong to a long Romantic tradition of short piano cycles in which each movement evokes a distinct image, state of mind, or poetic suggestion. The title "Sketches" implies brevity, but not incompleteness. These are highly finished miniatures, each carefully shaped and vividly characterized, and together they reveal Beach's refined command of keyboard color.

The four pieces are bound not by narrative, but by contrast. *In Autumn* unfolds in a reflective, dusky lyricism; *Phantoms* is lighter and more elusive, animated by quick changes of gesture and tone; *Dreaming* turns inward, suspending motion in favor of reverie; and *Fire-flies* closes the set with brilliance and mercurial sparkle. Beach's writing is unmistakably pianistic, with textures that shimmer, sing, and flash in turn. At the same time, these pieces show her as a composer of real structural poise, able to suggest an expansive expressive world within the limits of a few pages.

Schumann: *Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann, Op. 20*

Clara Schumann's *Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann*, composed in 1853, is often approached through biography, and understandably so. The theme comes from Robert's *Bunte Blätter*, and the work emerged during a period of intense emotional strain near the end of his life. Yet the piece deserves to be heard as more than an intimate document. It is also a work of considerable compositional assurance, shaped by a pianist-composer of exceptional intelligence and discipline.

Variation form had long offered composers a way to reconcile freedom with restraint, and Clara uses it not merely to embellish a melody, but to uncover its latent expressive possibilities. Her treatment of texture is especially fine: voices are balanced with remarkable clarity, accompanimental figures are never merely decorative, and each variation feels meaningfully related to the last. The result is a work of quiet authority. It honors Robert Schumann's musical world while speaking in Clara's own voice, poised, searching, and deeply musical.

Shaw: *Gustave Le Gray*

Caroline Shaw's *Gustave Le Gray* takes its title from the nineteenth-century French photographer known for his striking seascapes, images notable not only for their beauty but for their careful play of light, atmosphere, and perspective. Shaw's music often proceeds in much the same spirit. Rather than developing material through dense argument, she tends to build form through juxtaposition, resonance, and subtle shifts of pattern and color.

That approach is very much in evidence here. The piece does not "depict" an image in any literal sense; rather, it invites the listener into an experience of layered perception. Sonorities emerge and recede, lines seem briefly to cohere and then dissolve, and familiar gestures are heard from altered distances. Shaw is especially alert to the expressive power of timbre and spacing, and the effect is one of unusual transparency. As with Le Gray's photography, what matters is not simply the object before us, but the way light falls across it, the way form is framed, and the way perception itself becomes part of the subject.

Yi: *Duo Ye*

Chen Yi's *Duo Ye* draws on the song-and-dance traditions of the Dong people of southern China. The title refers to a communal festivity in which music and movement are inseparable, and that sense of collective energy lies at the heart of the work. Yet this is not folk transcription in any simple sense. Chen Yi transforms the spirit and gesture of the source material into the language of a contemporary concert work.

Trained in both Chinese and Western traditions, Chen Yi has long been distinguished by her ability to move between musical worlds without reducing either to surface effect. In *Duo Ye*, rhythmic drive is paramount. Repeated patterns, accented figures, and sharply profiled motives generate an atmosphere of celebration, while the work's structure and instrumental writing reflect a thoroughly modern compositional imagination. What emerges is not a meeting of opposites, but a persuasive synthesis: vernacular impulse recast through contemporary technique, with vitality, clarity, and unmistakable individuality.

Liszt: *Ballade No. 2 in B Minor, S. 171*

Liszt's *Ballade No. 2*, composed in 1853, stands among the most ambitious of his large-scale piano works. The title places it within the Romantic ballade tradition, a genre associated with narrative suggestion and heightened drama, but Liszt enlarges that inheritance into something more fluid and symphonic. The piece unfolds in a single span, yet within that span its ideas are continually transformed, darkening, broadening, and reappearing in altered guise.

This process of thematic transformation was central to Liszt's mature style, and it gives the *Ballade* its particular sense of inevitability. Rather than relying on conventional sectional repetition, the work grows by metamorphosis. A gesture introduced in one character returns in another; lyricism becomes turbulence, turbulence becomes declamation, and the keyboard itself seems to serve as orchestra, narrator, and stage. For all its virtuoso demands, the work is not simply a display piece. Its power lies in the tension between rhapsodic freedom and firm design, between the atmosphere of legend and the discipline of an exceptionally controlled musical architecture.

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Jerusalem Quartet

Wednesday, October 22, 2025
7:30 p.m.

Jasper String Quartet

Wednesday, November 19, 2025
7:30 p.m.

Amernet String Quartet

with Rachel Calloway, *mezzo-soprano*
Wednesday, December 10, 2025
7:30 p.m.

Miró Quartet

with Karen Slack, *soprano*
Wednesday, January 28, 2026
7:30 p.m.

Juilliard String Quartet

Wednesday, February 18, 2026
7:30 p.m.

Brentano Quartet

Wednesday, March 25, 2026
7:30 p.m.

PIANO & FRIENDS

Benett Tsai, *cello*

Sunday, November 9, 2025
3:00 p.m.

Don-Paul Kahl, *saxophone*

Sunday, January 18, 2026
3:00 p.m.

Anran Qian, *piano*

Sunday, April 12, 2026
3:00 p.m.

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Jasper String Quartet
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World Premiere

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Pleasure Garden
Miró Quartet with Karen Slack,
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Wednesday, January 28, 2026
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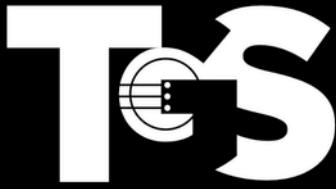
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July 29, 2026 | 7:00 PM | Lauren Roth-Gómez, violin; John Milbauer, piano

August 26, 2026 | 7:00 PM | Philip Alejo, bass; Rie Tanaka, piano

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2026–2027 EVENING SERIES AND PIANO & FRIENDS

October 28, 2026 | 7:30 PM | Borromeo String Quartet

November 11, 2026 | 7:30 PM | Trio con Brio Copenhagen

November 22, 2026 | 3:00 PM | Ziggy & Miles, guitar duo

December 9, 2026 | 7:30 PM | Han-Setzer-Finckel Trio

January 13, 2027 | 7:30 PM | Espresso! Piano Quartet

January 24, 2027 | 3:00 PM | Clayton Stephenson, piano

February 3, 2027 | 7:30 PM | Manhattan Chamber Players

February 21–28, 2027 | All Week | Tucson Winter Chamber Music Festival

March 24, 2027 | 7:30 PM | Calder Quartet with Dashon Burton, baritone

March 28, 2027 | 3:00 PM | Eric Lu, piano

Phone: 520-577-3769

info@arizonachambermusic.org

arizonachambermusic.org

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