SAN FRANCISCO
PERFORMANCES

presents...

Subscriber and Member Concert

GENEVA LEWIS | Violin
EVREN OZEL | Piano

Tuesday, April 22, 2025 | 7:30pm
Herbst Theatre

MOZART — **Sonata for Piano and Violin in G Major, K.301**
Allegro con spirito
Allegro

C. SCHUMANN — **Three Romances for Violin and Piano, Opus 22**
Andante molto
Allegretto
Leidenschaftlich schnell

SILVESTROV — **Post Scriptum Sonata for Violin and Piano**
Largo—Allegro—Allegretto
Andantino
Allegro vivace

INTERMISSION

R. SCHUMANN — **Three Romances for Violin and Piano, Opus 94**
Nicht schnell
Einfach, innig
Nicht schnell

FRANCK — **Sonata in A Major for Violin and Piano**
Allegretto ben moderato
Allegro
Recitativo — Fantasia ben moderato — molto lento
Allegretto poco mosso

San Francisco Performances' Subscriber and Member Concert is sponsored by Camilla and George Smith.

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Evren Ozel is represented by Concert Artists Guild
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ARTIST PROFILES

San Francisco Performances presents Geneva Lewis in her recital debut. She also appeared earlier this month as part of our Sunday Strings Series with Owen Dalby, Masum Per Rostad, and Hannah Collins.

Tonight is the San Francisco Performances debut of Evren Ozel.

American/New Zealand violinist **Geneva Lewis** has forged a reputation as a musician of consummate artistry whose performances speak from and to the heart and who has been lauded for the "remarkable mastery of her instrument" (*CVNC*) and hailed as "clearly one to watch" (*Musical America*).

Named a BBC New Generation Artist (2022–24), Geneva is also the recipient of a 2022 Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award and a 2021 Avery Fisher Career Grant. She was also Grand Prize winner of the 2020 Concert Artists Guild Competition, winner of the Kronberg Academy's Prince of Hesse Prize (2021), *Musical America's* New Artist of the Month (June 2021), a Performance Today Young Artist in Residence, and a YCAT Concordia Artist.

In 2023, Geneva made her BBC Proms debut with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and Jaime Martin. The 2024–25 season includes debuts with the Orquestra Filarmonica de Minas Gerais, Indianapolis Symphony, Des Moines Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, The Florida Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and Vancouver Symphony.

Geneva made her solo debut at age 11 with the Pasadena POPS and has since gone on to perform with orchestras including Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra, North Carolina Symphony, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, BBC New Orchestra of Wales, BBC Symphony, Kansas City Symphony, Austin Symphony, and San Diego Symphony under conductors such as Gemma New, Hugh Wolff, Nicholas McGegan, Grant Llewellyn, Giordano Bellincampi, and Dirk Meyer.

Deeply passionate about chamber music, Geneva has had the pleasure of collaborating with prominent musicians such as Jonathan Biss, Glenn Dicterow, Miriam Fried, Kim Kashkashian, Gidon Kremer, Marcy Rosen, Sir András Schiff, and Mitsuko Uchida. She has performed in venues and festivals such as London's Wigmore Hall, the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Marlboro Music Festival, Kronberg Festival, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Ravinia, and Chamberfest Cleveland.

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

Geneva received her Artist Diploma from New England Conservatory as the recipient of the Charlotte F. Rabb Presidential Scholarship, studying with Miriam Fried. She also studied with Professor Mihaela Martin in the Professional Studies Program at the Kronberg Academy. Prior to that, she studied with Aimée Kreston at the Colburn School of Performing Arts.

Geneva currently performs on a composite violin by Giovanni Battista Guadagnini, c. 1776 generously on loan from a Charitable Trust.

American pianist **Evren Ozel** has established himself as a musician of "refined restraint" (*Third Coast Review*), combining fluent virtuosity with probing, thoughtful interpretations. Having performed extensively in the United States and abroad, Evren is the recipient of a 2023 Avery Fisher Career Grant, 2022 Salon de Virtuosi Career Grant, and is currently represented by Concert Artists Guild as an Ambassador Prize Winner of their 2021 Victor Elmaleh Competition.

Since his debut with the Minnesota Orchestra at age 11, Ozel has been a featured soloist with the Cleveland Orchestra, Jacksonville Symphony, and The Orchestra Now at Bard College, with conductors Jahja

Ling, Courtney Lewis, and Leon Botstein. In March of 2025, his first album of Mozart Concertos with the ORF Radio Symphony of Vienna and conductor Howard Griffiths will be released on Alpha Classics.

Ozel's 2024–25 season highlights include solo recitals for La Jolla Music Society, Capital Region Classical, and Cal Performances. Previously, he has performed recitals for Harvard Musical Association, Schubert Club, Chopin Society of Minnesota, and The Gilmore. Carrying a vast and varied recital repertoire, his 2023–24 season included a program ranging from Bach and Rameau to Ligeti, as well as a program of Beethoven's last three piano sonatas.

An esteemed chamber musician, Ozel performs alongside artists like David Finckel and Wu Han, Stella Chen, Zlatomir Fung, Paul Huang, and Peter Wiley. He spent four summers at the Marlboro Festival and is currently a 2024–27 Bowers Program Artist for the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. His 2024–25 season includes a tour with Musicians from Marlboro, as well as CMS concerts at Alice Tully Hall.

Ozel resides in Boston, where he is currently a candidate in New England Conservatory's prestigious and highly-exclusive Artist Diploma program, under the tutelage of Wha Kyung Byun. Other important mentors include Jonathan Biss, Imogen Cooper, Richard Goode, András Schiff, and Mitsuko Uchida.

PROGRAM NOTES

Sonata for Piano and Violin in G Major, K.301

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART
(1756–1791)

One of the unusual features of Mozart's youth was that so much of it was spent

traveling. Father Leopold was anxious to show off both Wolfgang and his sister Maria Anna (nicknamed Nannerl) and to find a position worthy of his son's talents, and so the family spent years on the road. It was during the last of these extended tours—which lasted from September 1777 to January 1779 and took Mozart and his mother to Mannheim and Paris—that the young composer wrote the *Sonata in G Major, K.301*. It dates from February 1778 in Mannheim, where Mozart and his mother spent five months.

Mozart's earlier violin-and-keyboard duos had sometimes included a cello or continuo part, and there is evidence that he had intended some of these sonatas for flute as well as violin. But when the set of sonatas that includes K.301 was published in Paris later in 1778, Mozart specified that this was a set of "Six Sonatas for Harpsichord or Fortepiano with Accompaniment of Violin." Much has been made—too much—of the fact that these are piano sonatas with violin accompaniment, as if the violin could be removed with no real damage to the music. Even a cursory examination of K.301 shows how false that idea is.

The *Allegro con spirito* opens with a flowing melody played by the violin, and it is the piano that murmurs the accompanying voice. Quickly the melody passes to the piano and now the violin accompanies, but the point has been made: this is a sonata for equal partners, and they share the music-making evenly. The opening *Allegro* is in sonata form, with a gracefully-syncopated second theme, and the movement comes to a surprisingly sudden close.

Mozart's violin-and-keyboard sonatas from this period were usually in only two movements, a pattern true of the *Sonata in G Major*. There is no slow movement, simply another *Allegro*. The flowing main theme, in an easygoing 3/8, undergoes a series of variations as the movement develops. Particularly effective is the gently-dotted middle section, which dances in a graceful G minor.

Three Romances for Violin and Piano, Opus 22

CLARA SCHUMANN
(1819–1896)

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*. She 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). 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, she had this inscription printed in the score: "Dedicated to Joseph Joachim with the greatest friendship."

Post Scriptum Sonata for Violin and Piano

VALENTIN SILVESTROV
(B. 1937)

Though he trained originally as a civil engineer, Ukrainian composer Valentin Silvestrov studied piano and composition at the Kyiv Conservatory and has made his career as an independent composer since then. Silvestrov's style has evolved sharply over the decades. He first composed in a "modernist" style, often writing atonal music, but in the mid-1970s he turned away from that style and began to create more intimate compositions, elusive in expression and virtually ephemeral in their effect. His recent music has been described as "post-modern," and certainly a sense of the past is important to Silvestrov—he once said: "I do not write new music. My music is a response to and an echo of what already exists." Now 87 years old, Silvestrov, along with his daughter and granddaughter, fled Kyiv with the Russian invasion of February 2022. He currently lives in Berlin.

Silvestrov composed *Post Scriptum* in 1990, in part to mark the bicentennial of Mozart's death, which would take place the following year. He explained the title as "a postscript to Mozart and the whole classical tradition. The text has already been written. We simply add our annotations, thoughts, questions, consternation, astonishment and regret. The classical phonemes begin to waft through other times and spaces. There is no longer such a thing as the ability to predict what something means, and its place is taken by a mysterious symbolism."

Silvestrov's *Violin Sonata* is in three movements, and listeners may determine for themselves what is "classical" in this composition and what is a reaction to that now- disappeared classicism. Characteristically, the sonata begins with silence: the violinist plays a long upbow that at first should be inaudible to the audience and that will only gradually intrude on that silence—Silvestrov's instruction to the violinist here is "to carefully cross from the imaginary to the real music." The "real

music" arrives immediately as the violin sings the sonata's principal theme, a gentle melody of disarming sweetness and innocence; Silvestrov asks that this be "light, transparent, distant." The movement then offers a series of variations on this theme, some fast, others very slow. Do we hear throughout this movement the rhythm of the first four notes of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, one of the supreme icons of classical music? The ending of Silvestrov's movement is ambiguous, inconclusive.

The violin is muted throughout the brief *Andantino*, which begins with another delicate theme, here set very high in the violin's register. This movement is, harmonically and dramatically, almost static, and it too fades into silence.

The marking for the final movement, *Allegro vivace*, seems to suggest a brilliant fast movement that will resolve the uncertainties of the first two movements, but this is not the case. The surprising thing here is that the violinist never bows the instrument's strings: the part is played entirely pizzicato or col legno (tapping the wood of the bow against the strings). Against this continually ticking sound, the piano has a most subdued part, built on fragments of the theme that opened the first movement. Once again, the conclusion is inconclusive.

Three Romances for Violin and Piano, Opus 94

ROBERT SCHUMANN
(1810–1856)

The year 1849 was intense for Robert Schumann and his family. In May, the revolutionary fervor that was sweeping across the German states erupted in Dresden. Buildings were burned, Prussian troops called in to suppress the revolt killed 200 civilians, and the Schumann family fled to the countryside to escape the fighting. They did not return until the middle of June, but their return did not bring calm. The ever-suspicious Schumann had come to believe that rivals in Dresden were plotting against him, and now—very quietly—he began to make plans to leave the city for good.

But if 1849 brought tumult, it was a very good year for the Schumann household. In July, Robert and Clara welcomed their sixth child, a boy named Ferdinand. And it was a good year for Schumann the composer. The works he wrote that year ranged from large-scale orchestral pieces like the *Introduction and Allegro* and the *Concert-Piece for Four Horns* to a number of settings of Goethe (1849 was the Goethe centennial) to choral music and individual songs. That year, music just seemed to pour out of the 39-year-old composer.

Early in December Schumann set aside big projects to write a set of three miniatures that he called "romances." When he published this music in 1850, Schumann specified that it could be played by either oboe or violin, and he made slight variations in the score to suit the differences between those two instruments. Since then, this music has appealed to many other instrumentalists, and it is now performed in versions for clarinet, cello, French horn, and flute. At this concert the *Three Romances* are heard in Schumann's original version for violin and piano.

Music this attractive and straightforward needs little comment. All three pieces are in ABA form, all are at a restrained dynamic and moderate tempos, and all end quietly. The first is in somber A minor, while the second—in A major—is probably the best known and is sometimes performed by itself. The singing simplicity of its outer sections contrasts with the dark and surging interior episode. In the final movement, Schumann asks for great fluidity of phrasing, as the music holds back and then rushes ahead; the center section sings gracefully over triplet accompaniment, and Schumann appends a brief coda.

Those interested in this music should know that in 1927—in the earliest days of electrical recording—Fritz Kreisler recorded the second of these pieces in a Berlin studio. That performance, now nearly a century old, remains a model of impassioned, expressive playing.

Sonata in A Major for Violin and Piano

CESAR FRANCK
(1822–1890)

Composed in 1886, the *Sonata in A Major* is one of the finest examples of Franck's use of cyclic form, a technique he had adapted from his friend Franz Liszt, in which themes from one movement are transformed and used over subsequent movements. The *Violin Sonata* is a particularly ingenious instance of this technique: virtually the entire sonata is derived from the quiet and unassuming opening of the first movement, which then evolves endlessly across the sonata. Even when a new theme seems to arrive, it will gradually be revealed as a subtle variant of one already heard.

The piano's quiet fragmented chords at the beginning of the *Allegretto ben moderato* suggest a theme-shape that the violin takes over as it enters: this will be the thematic cell of the entire sonata. The piano has a more animated second subject (it takes on the shape of the germinal theme as its proceeds), but the gently-rocking violin figure from the opening dominates this movement, and Franck reminds the performers constantly to play *molto dolce, sempre dolce, dolcissimo*.

The mood changes completely at the fiery second movement, marked *passionato*, and some critics have gone so far as to claim that this *Allegro* is the true first movement and that the opening *Allegretto* should be regarded as an introduction to this movement. In any case, this movement contrasts its blazing opening with more lyric episodes, and listeners will detect the original theme-shape flowing through some of these.

The *Recitativo—Fantasia* is the most original movement in the sonata. The piano's quiet introduction seems at first a re-visiting of the germinal theme, though it is— ingeniously—a variant of the *passionato* opening of the second movement. The violin makes its entrance with an improvisation-like passage (this is the fantasia of the title), and the entire movement is quite free in both structure and expression: moments of whimsy alternate with passionate outbursts.

After the expressive freedom of the third movement, the finale restores order with pristine clarity: it is a canon in octaves, with one voice following the other at the interval of a measure. The stately canon theme, marked dolce cantabile, is a direct descendant of the sonata's opening theme, and as this movement proceeds it recalls thematic material from earlier movements. Gradually, the music takes on unexpected power and drives to a massive coda and a thunderous close.

Franck wrote this sonata for his fellow Belgian, the great violinist Eugene Ysaÿe, who gave the premiere in Brussels in November 1886. The composer Vincent D'Indy recalled that premiere: "The violin and piano sonata was performed... in one of the rooms of the Museum of Modern Painting at Brussels. The seance, which began at three o'clock, had been very long, and it was rapidly growing dark. After the first *Allegretto* of the sonata, the performers

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could scarcely read the music. Now the official regulations forbade any light whatever in rooms that contained paintings. Even the striking of a match would have been matter for offense. The public was about to be asked to leave, but the audience, already full of enthusiasm, refused to budge. Then Ysaÿe was heard to strike his music stand with his bow, exclaiming [to the pianist], "Allons! Allons!" [Let's go!] And then, unheard-of marvel, the two artists, plunged in gloom…performed the last three movements from memory, with a fire and passion the more astounding to the listeners in that there was an absence of all externals that could enhance the performance. Music, wondrous and alone, held sovereign sway in the darkness of night."

—Program Notes by Eric Bromberger