SAN FRANCISCO
PERFORMANCES

presents...

JOHAN DALENE | Violin
SAHUN SAM HONG | Piano

Friday, March 28, 2025 | 7:30pm
Herbst Theatre

SCHUMANN — **Violin Sonata No. 1 in A Minor, Opus 105**
Mit leidenschaftlichem Ausdruck
Allegretto
Lebhaft

RAUTAVAARA — **Notturno e Danza**

RAVEL — **Tzigane**

INTERMISSION

LUTOSŁAWSKI — **Partita**
Allegro giusto
Ad libitum
Largo
Ad libitum
Presto

GRIEG — **Violin Sonata No. 2 in G Major, Opus 13**
Lento doloroso; Allegro vivace
Allegretto tranquillo
Allegro animato

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Johan Dalene is represented by Enticott Music Management in association with IMG Artists
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Sahun Sam Hong sahunhong.com

Steinway Model D, Pro Piano, San Francisco

ARTIST PROFILES

Tonight is the San Francisco Performances debut of Johan Dalene and Sahun Sam Hong.

Winner of the 2019 prestigious Carl Nielsen Competition, Swedish-Norwegian violinist **Johan Dalene** "is not just a virtuoso like many others, he is a voice. He has a tone, a presence" (*Diapason*). At the age of 24, he has performed with leading orchestras and in celebrated recital halls both at home and abroad. His ability to "make his Stradivarius sing like a master" (*Le Monde*), coupled with his refreshingly honest musicality and engagement with musicians and audiences alike, has won him countless admirers. In 2022, he was named *Gramophone's* Young Artist of the Year.

After simultaneous residencies with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Gavle Symphony, Johan takes on a new collaboration with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, working with conductors such as Antonello Manacorda and Robert Trevino. An advocate for new music, he continues to perform the concerto written for him by Tebogo Monnakgotla, notably with the Berlin Radio Symphony and Giedrė Slekyte, having given the world premiere with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic and John Storgards in April 2023. Johan's other recent and forthcoming highlights include debut performances with the Minnesota Orchestra and Thomas Sondergaard, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and Sakari Oramo and San Francisco Symphony and Esa-Pekka Salonen; return appearances with the Bergen Philharmonic, Swedish Radio Symphony, London Philharmonic, and Warsaw Philharmonic.

Johan is equally passionate about chamber music and will be going back to North America to give recitals, notably on the Vancouver Recital Series, San Francisco Performances, and at the Gardner Music in Boston, as well as making his debut tour in Australia. He is otherwise making return appearances at the Verbier and Rosendal festivals, as well as London's Wigmore Hall, where he is now a regular guest.

Recording exclusively for BIS, Johan released his fourth album on the label in October 2023, a recital disc comprising Ravel's *Sonata* and Prokofiev's *Second Sonata,* alongside short pieces by Arvo Pärt, Lili Boulanger and Grazyna Bacewicz. The Strad hailed this album as "interesting by its repertoire and marvelous by its quality." His previous recording featured the Nielsen and Sibelius Concerti, with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic with John Storgards, and garnered Johan his third coveted "Editor's Choice" from *Gramophone Magazine*, as well as a prestigious Swedish Grammis Award.

Johan began playing the violin at the age of four and made his professional concerto debut three years later. In Summer 2016, he was student-in-residence at Switzerland's Verbier Festival (where he made his performance debut in 2021) and in 2018 was accepted on to the Norwegian Crescendo program, where he worked closely with mentors Janine Jansen, Leif Ove Andsnes, and Gidon Kremer. Andsnes subsequently invited Johan to play at the Rosendal Chamber Music Festival and they performed together again in May 2019 at the Bergen International Festival. In 2019 he joined Janine Jansen and other members of the Crescendo Programme for a performance at the Wigmore Hall in London, and at the International Chamber Music Festival in Utrecht.

Johan studied with Per Enoksson, Professor at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, as well as with Janine Jansen, and has also participated in masterclasses with several distinguished teachers, including Dora Schwarzberg, Pamela Frank, Gerhard Schulz, and Henning Kraggerud. He has been awarded various scholarships and prizes, notably from the Royal Swedish Academy of Music, The Anders Wall Giresta Scholarship, Queen Ingrid's Honorary Scholarship, The Håkan Mogren Foundation Prize, Equinor Classical Music Award, Norwegian Soloist Prize, Sixten Gemzéus Stora Musikstipendium, Expressen Cultural Prize Spelmannen and Rolf Wirténs Kulturpris.

Johan plays the 1725 "Duke of Cambridge" Stradivarius, generously on loan from the Anders Sveaas' Charitable Foundation.

Praised as an "artist of enormous prowess" (*Verbier Festival Newsletter*) with "lots of clarity, confidence, and wisdom" (*New York Concert Review)* and a "wide range of rich colors" (*San Diego Story*), pianist **Sahun Sam Hong** brings his colorful style and riveting energy to the solo, chamber, and concerto stage.

Hong was the winner of the 2017 Vendome Prize at Verbier, and a prizewinner of the Naumburg International Piano Competition and International Beethoven Competition Vienna. He was also the recipient of a 2021 American Pianists Award.

Hong has been featured as a soloist with orchestras including ORF-Vienna, Milwaukee, Indianapolis, Camerata New York, Fort Worth, Richardson, Racine, Waco, Galveston, and Brazos Valley Symphony. He has performed in prestigious venues such as Carnegie Hall's Weill Hall, Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, the Vienna Musikverein, Église de Verbier, Merkin Hall, and the Kennedy Center.

A sought-after interpreter of the duo and chamber repertoire, Hong has been invited to perform at major chamber music festivals including Marlboro, Music@Menlo, Ravinia's Steans Institute, Taos, and Four Seasons. He recently became a member of the Bowers Program (2024–27) at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

In addition to performing, Hong is a prolific arranger of chamber music and orchestral works, and his innovative transcriptions are performed all over the world. The chamber music collective ensemble132 presents Hong's creative transcriptions on annual tours throughout the United States.

At the age of 16, Hong graduated magna cum laude from Texas Christian University (TCU), studying with John Owings. He also studied with Leon Fleisher and Yong Hi Moon at the Peabody Institute. Hong

is currently based in New York City and serves on the faculty of CUNY Queens College. Sahun Sam Hong is a Steinway Artist.

PROGRAM NOTES

Violin Sonata No. 1 in A Minor, Opus 105

ROBERT SCHUMANN
(1810–1856)

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, Schumann's 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.

Notturno e Danza

EINOJUHANI RAUTAVAARA
(1928–2016)

Einojuhani Rautavaara trained first at the Sibelius Academy and University of Helsinki, and then—on the recommendation of Jean Sibelius—he received a scholarship to the United States. In this country he studied with Vincent Persichetti at Juilliard and with Copland and Sessions at Tanglewood before embarking on a completely different direction: he returned to Europe to work with avant garde composers Wladimir Vogel in Switzerland and Rudolph Petzold in Cologne. Rautavaara taught at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki until 1990, when he retired to devote himself entirely to composition (Esa-Pekka Salonen was one of his final students). Rautavaara was an extremely prolific composer: he wrote eight symphonies, fifteen concertos, nine operas (one was about Vincent van Gogh, another was about Rasputin), as well as chamber and vocal music.

In 1994 Rautavaara was asked to compose a test-piece for the Juvenalia Chamber Music Competition, to be held in Espoo, Finland, and he responded by writing *Notturno e Danza*. Test-pieces are often in a slow-fast sequence of movements: the slow opening section tests the ability of a performer to sustain a long lyric line, and the concluding section shows off a performer's technical skill. Notturno e Danza does these things exactly, but one of the interesting things about both sections is Rautavaara's unusual metrical sense. In the opening "nocturne" the meter alternates unpredictably between 2/4 and 3/4 (and sometimes 4/4), while the violin sings its long and gentle melodic line above an unusual piano accompaniment: the left hand has steady eighth notes virtually throughout, but the right hand's chords are draped in unexpected rhythms above that basic pulse. Rautavaara sets the concluding "dance" in the extremely unusual meter 11/8, which can be pulsed here either as 2+2+1+2+2+2 or 3+3+2+3. That asymmetrical pulse gives this music a pleasing vitality and demands some very alert playing from both performers, right through its final measure, which brings the piece to a very sudden stop.

Tzigane

MAURICE RAVEL
(1875–1937)

In the summer of 1922, just as he began his orchestration of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Ravel visited England for several concerts of his music, and in London he heard a performance of his brand-new *Sonata for Violin and Cello* by Jelly d'Arányi and Hans Kindler. Jelly d'Arányi must have been a very impressive violinist, for every composer who heard her was swept away by her playing—and by her personality (Bartók was one of the many who fell in love with her). Ravel was so impressed that he stayed after the concert and talked her into playing gypsy tunes from her native Hungary for him—and he kept her there until 5 a.m. the next morning, playing for him.

Tzigane probably got its start that night. Inspired by both d'Arányi's playing and the fiery gypsy tunes, Ravel set out to write a virtuoso showpiece for the violin based on gypsy-like melodies (the title *Tzigane* means simply "gypsy"). Its composition was much delayed, however, and Ravel did not complete *Tzigane* for another two years. Trying to preserve a distinctly Hungarian flavor, he wrote *Tzigane* for violin with the accompaniment of lutheal, a device which—when attached to a piano—gave the piano a jangling sound typical of the Hungarian cimbalon. The first performance, by Jelly d'Arányi with piano accompaniment, took place in London on April 26, 1924, and later that year Ravel prepared an orchestral accompaniment. In whatever form it is heard, *Tzigane* remains an audience favorite.

It is unusual for a French composer to be so drawn to gypsy music. Usually it was the composer from central Europe—Liszt, Brahms, Joachim, Hubay—who felt

the charm of this music, but Ravel enters fully into the spirit and creates a virtuoso showpiece redolent of gypsy campfires and smoldering dance tunes. *Tzigane* opens with a long cadenza (nearly half the length of the entire piece) that keeps the violinist solely on the G-string across the span of the entire first page. While *Tzigane* seems drenched in an authentic gypsy spirit, all of its themes are Ravel's own, composed in the spirit of the tunes he heard d'Arányi play late that night. Gradually the accompaniment enters, and the piece takes off. *Tzigane* is quite episodic, and across its blazing second half Ravel demands such techniques from the violinist as artificial harmonics, left-hand pizzicatos, complex multiple-stops, and sustained octave passages. Over the final pages the tempo gradually accelerates until *Tzigane* rushes to its scorching close, marked Presto.

Partita

WITOLD LUTOSŁAWSKI
(1913–1994)

Lutosławski's *Partita* began with a slight misunderstanding that nevertheless had a profound impact on the music. The St. Paul Chamber Orchestra commissioned Lutosławski to compose a work for violinist Pinchas Zukerman and pianist Marc Neikrug, and because the commission had come from an orchestra, Lutosławski assumed that he was to write for violin and orchestra. He conceived a piece for violin and an orchestra that had a large piano part, and only when composition was underway did he learn that the commission was in fact for a chamber piece for only violin and piano. So Lutosławski had to switch gears: he recast the piece just for violin and piano and completed it in the fall of 1984; Zukerman and Neikrug gave the premiere on January 18, 1985 in St. Paul. For the composer, however, the original orchestral conception remained central to how he thought about this music—he came back to this score in 1988 and made an arrangement for violin and orchestra.

The title *partita* comes from baroque music, where it denoted a form made up of "parts," usually a collection of dance movements. Lutosławski explained his choice of that title by noting: "The word 'partita,' as used by Bach to denominate some of his suite-like works, appears here to point out a few allusions to Baroque music, e.g. at the beginning of the first movement, the main theme of the Largo, and the gigue-like Finale." In the published score, Lutosławski made another connection to the baroque: "The three major movements follow, rhythmically at least, the tradition of pre-classical (18th century) keyboard music." Yet these allusions should be understood only as a structuring metaphor. Lutosławski's Partita does not sound like baroque music, and its idiom is thoroughly modern.

The work is in three major movements—*Allegro giusto*, *Largo*, and *Presto*—but between these movements come *ad libitum* interludes, which are improvised by the performers from music written out by Lutosławski; a climactic sequence in the final movement is also performed *ad libitum*. Lutosławski was a first-class pianist, and he also played the violin as a young man, so he knew the instruments well. His writing for violin here emphasizes the lyric side of that instrument: he reminds his performer repeatedly to play *cantabile* and *espressivo*. Each of the three principal movements is sectional, with strong contrasts between the different sections within the movements. Lutosławski writes some of the violin part in the first movement in quarter-tones, and that movement rises to a climax before closing quietly. The composer stresses that in all the *ad libitum* passages, the violin and piano "are not to be coordinated in any way." The first *ad libitum* builds to a forceful conclusion and plunges straight into the *Largo*, where the violin sings above steady quarter-note accompaniment. The dynamic here is *forte* and the atmosphere fierce, but the composer nevertheless stresses that this is to be played *cantabile*. The same sectional construction leads to another *ad libitum* interlude, and the music proceeds into the finale, which Lutosławski described as "gigue-like." Bach's gigue finales were usually in 9/8 or 12/8, and Lutosławski preserves some of that feel here (his metric marking is a very fast 15/8). Both meter and mood evolve somewhat as this movement proceeds, and Lutosławski breaks its progress with an *ad libitum* interval marked *fortissimo*. Some have felt that this represents the climax of the entire *Partita*, and with this complete the music rushes to its abrupt close on three sudden strokes.

Violin Sonata No. 2 in G Major, Opus 13

EDVARD GRIEG
(1843–1907)

Grieg completed his *Second Violin Sonata* in July 1867, a month after his 24th birthday. Grieg set out to make this music as Norwegian as possible, incorporating Norwegian folk tunes and dance rhythms and using violin techniques associated with the *hardingerfidel*, the fiddle of Norwegian folk music. When accused of nationalism, Grieg reacted defiantly—that had been his intention. To foreign ears, however, the identification of Grieg with the music of Norway is already so automatic that this sonata does not sound like Norwegian folk music to us—it sounds like Grieg.

The *Second Violin Sonata* is in three movements, and there are thematic links between the outer movements. The first movement opens with a slow introduction in G minor, marked *Lento doloroso* and featuring a freely rhapsodic passage for the violin. The main idea bursts forth in the piano at the *Allegro vivace*. This is a vigorous Norwegian dance in 3/4 meter known as the *springdans*, and the ear quickly picks up the fact that Grieg had anticipated the shape of this theme in the movement's slow introduction. The second subject is a gently-rocking waltz tune for violin marked *tranquillo ed espressivo*. The development, based on both themes, is impassioned and exciting.

The *Allegretto tranquillo*, in ABA form, opens with a piano melody in E minor that is quickly picked up by the violin. Soon both instruments swirl and swoop through an energetic extension of that melody. The center section, by contrast, is a quiet, rhapsodic interlude.

The soaring violin melody that opens the *Allegro animato* is directly related to the introduction to the first movement—for all the charges of nationalism, this music is much more tightly constructed than one might at first think. The quiet second theme at the center of this movement, in fact, is a variation of the center section of the slow movement. High spirits prevail throughout the energetic finale, which flies to its close.

At its premiere, Grieg's *Second Violin Sonata* had a tough time with the critics, especially Norwegian critics uncomfortable with his use of native material. Infrequently heard today, this sonata deserves to be better known, as do Grieg's other two violin sonatas: they are attractive music, well-crafted, appealing for their thematic ideas, and continually rewarding.

—Program notes by Eric Bromberger