SAN FRANCISCO
PERFORMANCES

presents...

RANDALL GOOSBY | Violin
ZHU WANG | Piano

Thursday, April 3, 2025 | 7:30pm
Herbst Theatre

BOLOGNE — **Violin Sonata No. 3 in G Minor, Opus 1a**
Allegro
Rondo gracioso

FAURÉ — **Violin Sonata No. 1 in A Major, Opus 13**
Allegro molto
Andante
Allegro vivo
Allegro quasi presto

INTERMISSION

CHAUSSON — **Poème, Opus 25**

SCHUBERT — **Rondo brillant in B Minor for Violin and Piano, D.895**

Randall Goosby is represented by Primo Artists
244 Fifth Avenue, Suite B222, New York, NY 10001 primoartists.com

Zhu Wang is represented by Young Concert Artists
1776 Broadway, Suite 1500, New York, New York 10019 yca.org

Steinway Model D, Pro Piano, San Francisco.

ARTIST PROFILES

Tonight is the San Francisco Performances debut of Randall Goosby and Zhu Wang.

"For me, personally, music has been a way to inspire others"—Randall Goosby's own words sum up perfectly his commitment to being an artist who makes a difference.

Signed exclusively to Decca Classics in 2020 at the age of 24, American violinist **Randall Goosby** is acclaimed for the sensitivity and intensity of his musicianship alongside his determination to make music more inclusive and accessible, as well as bringing the music of under-represented composers to light.

Highlights of Randall Goosby's 2024–25 season include debut performances with the Chicago Symphony/Sir Mark Elder, the Minnesota Orchestra/Thomas Søndergård, National Arts Centre Orchestra/Alexander Shelley, Montreal Symphony Orchestra/Dalia Stasevska, and Netherlands Radio Philharmonic/Michele Mariotti. He joins the London Philharmonic Orchestra on their U.S. tour led by Edward Gardner.

Goosby returns to the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony, Detroit Symphony and Utah Symphony. He appears in recital across North America and Europe as soloist as well as with the Renaissance Quartet.

Randall Goosby was First Prize Winner in the 2018 Young Concert Artists International Auditions. In 2019, he was named the inaugural Robey Artist by Young Classical Artists Trust in partnership with Music Masters in London; and in 2020 he became an Ambassador for Music Masters, a role that sees him mentoring and inspiring students in schools around the United Kingdom.

A former student of Itzhak Perlman and Catherine Cho, he received his Bachelor's, Master's and Artist Diploma degrees from the Juilliard School. He is an alumnus of the Perlman Music Program and studied previously with Philippe Quint. He plays the Antonio Stradivarius, Cremona, "ex-Strauss," 1708 on generous loan from Samsung Foundation of Culture.

Praised as "especially impressive" and "a thoughtful, sensitive performer" (*The New York Times*), pianist **Zhu Wang** won First Prize at the 2020 YCA Susan Wadsworth International Auditions. He has also secured top prizes at the Zhuhai International Mozart Competition, Manhattan International Music Competition, Hilton

Head Young Artist Piano Competition, and Juilliard's Gina Bachauer and Mieczyslaw Munz Scholarship Competitions. In 2019, Zhu was a finalist in the Clara Haskil International Piano Competition and has been featured on WQXR's Young Artist Showcase and WFMT's Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concerts.

Celebrated for his "technical mastery and deep sense of lyricism" (*The Durango Herald*), Zhu has performed in notable venues such as The Kennedy Center's Terrace Theater, Caramoor's Evnin Rising Stars Series, The Morgan Library & Museum, Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall, and more. His Zankel Hall debut was listed in *The New York Times'* "Best of Classical Music 2021."

A dedicated chamber musician, Zhu has collaborated with Chamber Music Detroit, Vancouver Recital Society, La Jolla Music Society, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. In March 2025, he will perform at Carnegie Hall in a chamber music program with musicians from the Orchestra of St. Luke's.

Zhu made his orchestral debut at age 14 with the Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra. His recent and upcoming orchestral engagements include performances with the Columbus Symphony, Kansas City Symphony, Fort Collins Symphony, Memphis Symphony, Spokane Symphony, and the New York Youth Symphony at Carnegie Hall, under the baton of conductors such as Rossen Milanov and Robert Moody.

Internationally, Zhu has performed at prestigious venues like the Kammermusiksaal of Berliner Philharmonie, Warsaw Philharmonic Concert Hall, and Shanghai Concert Hall, and with ensembles such as the Salzburg Chamber Soloists and Zermatt Music Festival Orchestra. This season, he will also perform with Randall Goosby at Queen Elizabeth Hall in London.

A native of Hunan, China, Zhu began piano studies at age five. He holds a Bachelor of Music from The Juilliard School, an Artist Diploma from the Curtis Institute of Music, and is pursuing a Master's at Juilliard under Emanuel Ax and Robert McDonald, supported by the Bagby Foundation for the Musical Arts.

PROGRAM NOTES

Violin Sonata No. 3 in G Minor, Opus 1a

CHEVALIER DE SAINT-GEORGES
(1745–1799)

Joseph Bologne de Saint-Georges, known as the Chevalier de Saint-Georges, led one of the most astonishing careers in the his-

tory of music. He was the son of the white general controller of the island of Guadeloupe in the West Indies and a black woman from that island, and while details of his early life are sketchy and often conjectural, it is known that the family moved first to Haiti and then to Paris when the boy was about 10. He was an extraordinary youth, excelling in athletics (fencing, swimming, skating, riding) and in music (he quickly became a virtuoso violinist). A superb swordsman, good enough to compete and win competitions, he seemed to find his true calling in music. Saint-Georges performed as a soloist, orchestral violinist, and conductor and composed a great deal of music, including comic operas, orchestral and chamber music, and songs. He took up a military career during the French Revolution but had no success and was imprisoned for 18 months. In the first years of the new French republic, Saint-Georges tried to resume his career in music but never regained the fame he had enjoyed a generation earlier.

Saint-Georges composed a set of three violin sonatas in about 1770, and they were published in Paris in 1781. On the title page, the young composer described the sonatas as having been written "For the Clavichord or Fortepiano with the Accompaniment of Obbligato Violin," yet the piano is here not just to accompany the violin—it is given the principal melodic role in this sonata. The *Sonata in G Minor* is in two brief movements, just as the violin sonatas by Mozart from this decade were usually in only two movements. Saint-Georges' sonata begins with an *Allegro* in sonata form, based on its firm opening idea and a flowing second subject. The development turns briefly turbulent, but the graceful spirit of this music is never violated. The concluding movement, marked *Rondeau gracioso*, is based on a smooth rondo theme in G major. The movement is sectional, with several parts repeated, and at moments the piano is given extended solo passages.

Violin Sonata No. 1 in A Major, Opus 13

GABRIEL FAURÉ
(1845–1924)

One of Fauré's students, the composer Florent Schmitt, described his teacher as an "unintentional, unwitting revolutionary." The term "revolutionary" hardly seems to apply to a composer best-known for his gentle *Requiem*, songs, and chamber works. But while Fauré was no heaven-storming radical bent on undoing the past, his seemingly-quiet music reveals enough rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic surprises to justify Schmitt's claim. The *Violin Sonata in A Major*, written in the summer of 1876 while Fauré was vacationing in Normandy, is dedicated to his friend, the violinist Paul Viardot. Following its first performance, the sonata was praised by Fauré's teacher Saint-Saëns for its "formal novelty, quest, refinement of modulation, curious sonorities, use of the most unexpected rhythms… charm [and]…the most unexpected touches of boldness." This is strong praise, but close examination of the sonata shows that Saint-Saëns was right.

One of the most interesting features of the opening *Allegro molto* occurs in the accompaniment, which is awash in a constant flow of eighth notes. The piano immediately hints at the first theme, and that instrument is busily weaving a filigree of accompanying eighth notes that will shimmer throughout this movement when the violin enters to sing that theme fully. The movement is in the expected sonata form, and the violin's falling second subject is accompanied by murmuring triplets from the piano. There is an elegance and grace about this movement that is easy to sense but difficult to describe. It can also be passionate music, and the movement concludes on a fiery restatement of its opening theme.

Distinguishing the *Andante* is its rhythmic pulse: a 9/8 meter throbs throughout the movement, though Fauré varies its effect by syncopating the accents within the measure. The third movement, a scherzo marked *Allegro vivo*, goes like a rocket. Fauré chooses not the expected triple meter of the traditional scherzo but a time signature of 2/8, an extremely short rhythmic unit, particularly when his metronome marking asks for 152 quarter-notes per minute. He further complicates the rhythm by writing in quite short phrases, so that the effect is of short phrases rapidly spit out, then syncopated by sharp off-beats. A lovely, graceful trio gives way to the opening material, and the movement suddenly vanishes in a shower of pizzicato notes.

The tempo marking for the finale—*Allegro quasi presto*—seems to suggest a movement similar to the third, but despite its rapid tempo the last movement flows easily and expressively. Or at least it seems to, for here Fauré complicates matters harmonically. The piano opens in the home key—A major—but the violin seems always to prefer F-sharp minor, and the resulting harmonic uncertainty continues throughout the movement until the sonata ends in unequivocal A major.

To emphasize this sonata's originality may have the unhappy effect of making the music sound cerebral, interesting only for its technical novelty. That is hardly the case. Fauré's *Sonata in A Major* is one of the loveliest violin sonatas of the late nineteenth century, full of melodic, graceful, and haunting music.

Poème, Opus 25

ERNEST CHAUSSON
(1855–1899)

Ernest Chausson grew up in an educated and refined family who believed that he should make a career in law. But the lure of music proved too strong, and at age 24—after completing law school—he entered the Paris Conservatory. Perhaps because of this late start, it took Chausson some years to refine his art and develop a personal style, and it was not until his late thirties that he began to produce a series of carefully crafted works, particularly for voice. The promise demonstrated in this music was cut short, however, when Chausson was killed in a bicycle accident at age 44.

A cultivated man, Chausson was particularly attracted to the work of Russian novelist Ivan Turgenev. When he set out to write a piece for the great Belgian violinist Eugene Ysaÿe, Chausson turned to the work of Turgenev for inspiration, choosing a short story called (in its French translation) *Le chant de l'amour triomphant*. Chausson composed this music in the spring of 1896, though he finally chose a much simpler title, *Poème*.

The *Poème* is neither a concerto nor a tone poem that sets out to tell Turgenev's tale in music. Rather, it is a mood-piece—expressive, dark, almost voluptuous in its lush harmonies and melodies—meant to reflect the atmosphere of Turgenev's tale. The musical form of the *Poème* is difficult to define: it is episodic, somewhat in the manner of a slow rondo. After the misty introduction, marked *Lento e misterioso*, the unaccompanied violin lays out the long and graceful main theme, which is repeated by the piano. The violin's music grows more intense and florid, rushing ahead into the contrasting section, marked *Animato*, where it soars high above the murmuring accompaniment. Chausson alternates these sections before the *Poème* moves to a quiet close on a return of the opening material. This end-

ing drew particular praise from Debussy who, some years after Chausson's death, wrote in a review: "Nothing touches more with dreamy sweetness than the end of this Poème, where the music, leaving aside all description and anecdote, becomes the very feeling which inspired its emotion."

Though the *Poème* is not consciously a display piece, it is nevertheless quite difficult for the violinist, who must sustain a singing line (often high in the instrument's register) and project the complex runs, trills, and arabesques that give this music its distinctive character. The great Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe was very fond of the *Poème* and gave it several performances (both private and public) before the Paris premiere on April 4, 1897. Chausson had not had much success with critics or audiences, and the response to the Poème caught him by surprise. One of his friends told of seeing a look of astonishment on Chausson's face as he stood backstage listening to the waves of applause that greeted the premiere: "I can't get over it," was all the amazed composer could say. Over a century later, the *Poème* remains Chausson's most famous work, a favorite of audiences and violinists alike.

Rondo brillant in B Minor for Violin and Piano, D.895

FRANZ SCHUBERT
(1797–1828)

Schubert composed the *Rondo brillant in B Minor for Violin and Piano* in October 1826, and it was published the following year, one of his few works to appear in print during his lifetime. Schubert wrote this music for the Bohemian violinist Josef Slavik and pianist Karl von Bocklet, who were active in promoting Schubert's music during the final years of the composer's all-too-brief life. Schubert played both violin and piano, so the graceful and idiomatic writing for the two instruments here is no surprise, but the unusual feature of this music is its difficulty. Perhaps the knowledge that he was writing for virtuoso players encouraged Schubert to compose very demanding music, and one of the early reviewers in Vienna noted: "Both the pianoforte and the fiddle require a practiced artist, who must be prepared for passages that have not by any means attained to their right of citizenship by endless use but betoken a succession of new and inspired ideas." The music's publisher also recognized its difficulty: Schubert had himself called it only *Rondo*, but the publisher added the adjective brillant.

The *Rondo brillant* is in two parts: a slow introduction followed by the animated rondo. The opening *Andante* alternates the piano's pounding dotted chords with fiery runs from the violin, and this music in turn frames a haunting middle section that Schubert marks *dolce*. The introduction concludes with an almost timid two-note cadence: B rising to C-sharp. But this restrained figure promptly becomes the basis for the rondo itself, marked *Allegro*. Both violin and piano hammer it out to launch the rondo, and this rising motif will figure as an important thematic element throughout. The rondo section itself combines equal parts virtuosity (busy passagework, high positions, surprising accidentals, and difficult string-crossing) with the most melting lyricism, as Schubert breaks into the bustle of this music with gentle interludes. Along the way, he brings back reminiscences of the slow introduction before a *più mosso* coda drives this music to its spirited close.

—Program notes by Eric Bromberger