Alina Ibragimova Violin
Cédric Tiberghien Piano
Dear Friends,

Just a few weeks ago, I had the privilege of sitting on our stage with the Chiaroscuro String Quartet, led by violinist Alina Ibragimova as part of our Performances Up Close series. It was a mesmerizing concert that left me singing Mendelssohn and Beethoven for days, a telltale sign for me of a great concert. It made me even more excited about this evening’s concert.

What a gift it is to be able to welcome Alina back just weeks later in a different context, this time with pianist Cédric Tiberghien. The duo first began their musical partnership in 2005 as members of the BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists. The Times (of London) declared that “both of these players have the potential to conquer the world.” And this is precisely what the pair proceeded to do—consistently topping classical charts, receiving coveted awards for their recordings, and enjoying devoted followings across five continents. Add Princeton to their list!

Tonight, I am also excited to tease you with the details of our 2023-24 Concert Classics Series, where once again you will hear the world’s most vibrant and celebrated classical musicians within the intimacy of our beloved Richardson Auditorium. Mark your calendars. The full season will be announced and subscriptions will go on sale on April 27, 2023.

Warmly,

Marna Seltzer
Director of Princeton University Concerts
Alina Ibragimova Violin
Cédric Tiberghien Piano

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–1856)
Violin Sonata No. 1 in A Minor, Op. 105 (1851)
Mit leidenschaftlichem Ausdruck
Allegretto
Lebhaft

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847)
Violin Sonata in F Minor, Op. 4 (1823)
Adagio—Allegro moderato
Poco adagio
Allegro agitato

INTERMISSION

ANTON WEBERN (1883–1945)
Four Pieces for Violin and Piano, Op. 7 (1910)
Sehr langsam
Rasch
Sehr langsam
Bewegt

ROBERT SCHUMANN
Violin Sonata No. 2 in D Minor, Op. 121 (1851)
Ziemlich langsam—Lebhaft
Sehr lebhaft
Leise, einfach
Bewegt

For the health of our entire community of music lovers, masks at our performances are strongly encouraged.
About the Program

By Lucy Caplan © 2023 • Program Annotator

Lucy Caplan is a Lecturer on History and Literature at Harvard University. In 2016 she received the Rubin Prize for Music Criticism.

Biography is compelling. The notion that we might understand a composer’s music more deeply by attending to the circumstances of their life is enticing, promising insight into the mysterious combination of factors that foster the creation of great art. Yet it’s worth asking some follow-up questions: What kind of music lends itself best to biographically grounded interpretation? How might knowing something about the person who composed a work nudge us to listen differently? Conversely, how do we avoid making overly neat assumptions, retrofitting what we hear to align with what we already know about the person who created it?

The three composers featured on this evening’s program prompt different ways of thinking about these queries. Schumann’s music is often interpreted through the lens of his mental illness; for example, some listeners presume that abrupt shifts in mood within a piece are meant to evoke his own fragmented psychological state. Mendelssohn is lauded as a child prodigy whose preternatural talents (and, perhaps, whose immaturity) can be heard in the virtuosic intricacy of his compositions. Webern’s music, interestingly, is less often interpreted through a biographical framework; his abstruse departures from conventional tonality are taken to be the product of his intellect, rather than the circumstances of his life. What, then, can biography help us hear, and what might it obscure?

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Robert Schumann, Violin Sonata No. 1 in A Minor, Op. 105 (1851)

Schumann waited until middle age to write a violin sonata. A revered pianist whose performance career was cut short by a devastating injury, he spent most of his teens and twenties writing for solo piano; it was only later that he began writing
in earnest for chamber ensembles and orchestras. In this sonata, one can hear ample evidence of his background as both a pianist and a composer for the piano. Throughout the piece, he treats the violin as a virtual extension of the piano: The two instruments share a register for most of the piece, with many of the violin’s melodies appearing first on its lower strings. This burnished tessitura perfectly suits the work’s evocative opening melody, marked to be played “with passionate expression.” The first movement unfolds in what is essentially sonata form, although Schumann blurs the boundaries between formal sections much as he blurs the boundaries between instrumental timbres.

The second movement is similarly pianistic in style, recalling the miniatures for the instrument that were one of Schumann’s specialties as a composer. A smiley opening phrase bobs up and down, and the tempo expands and compresses in line with the contours of the melody. Brief fantastical episodes are interpolated throughout the movement, transporting us briefly to other emotional worlds. In the sonata’s final movement, the violin and piano trade sixteenth-note passages back and forth, creating an agitated atmosphere that occasionally breaks free into more triumphant moments.

The sonata ends close to where it began: A fragment of the first movement’s opening melody returns; the violin swoops back down to its low register; and the piece comes to a fittingly stormy close.

**Felix Mendelssohn, Violin Sonata in F Minor, Op. 4 (1823)**

Written when the composer was still in his early teens, this sonata speaks to Mendelssohn’s exceptional talents not just as a young composer, but also as a young violinist and pianist who appreciated the creative possibilities of both instruments. It was composed for one of his early teachers, the violinist Eduard Rietz, who was just a few years older than Mendelssohn but served as an important mentor to him. Although this work—like Mendelssohn’s two other violin sonatas and elusive D major violin concerto—has been largely eclipsed by his ultra-popular violin concerto in e minor, it offers fascinating insight into how he approached writing for the instrument in a more intimate context.

The rhapsodic solo passage that opens the sonata creates an atmosphere of somber elegance, which carries through the work as a whole. After the curtain rises, the violin and piano join forces for an elegant minor-key melody, which is balanced out by a lovely contrasting theme in A-flat major. In the second movement, the
piano takes an introductory solo turn, setting the scene for the violin’s entrance with a melody whose sweetness betrays an undercurrent of sadness. Later, gently rocking triplets in the piano underlie the violin’s sustained, song-like line; there are flashes of pathos, but the players ultimately return to a peaceful mood. The final movement contains glimmers of the scherzo-like playfulness so characteristic of Mendelssohn’s music, without ever reaching a full-speed-ahead loss of abandon.

Anton Webern, Four Pieces for Violin and Piano, Op. 7 (1910)
The abstract, aphoristic quality of Webern’s Four Pieces resists easy interpretation. If Mendelssohn’s and Schumann’s more openhearted works invite us to imagine certain accompanying narratives rooted in their biographies, Webern’s music keeps listeners on their toes as it jumps from idea to idea. The extremely compressed time scale of the composer’s music only complicates matters. Each piece is over almost as soon as it begins, before there is time to determine what counts as its beginning, middle, or end.

Even if it is difficult to hear the details of Webern’s life in his music, he was, of course, just as much a product of his social and musical worlds as were his Romantic-era predecessors. As a child, he enjoyed a close friendship and intellectual companionship with a cousin, Ernst Diez, who became an important art historian. As a young composer, he became an incredibly dedicated student of Arnold Schoenberg; one scholar has described Webern’s opinion of Schoenberg as “an esteem the fervour of which at times resembled that of a love affair, at times, worship.” The Four Pieces for Violin and Piano date from 1910, about two years after his formal studies with Schoenberg concluded. The first of the pieces, a prelude of sorts, is slow, hushed, and mysterious, never rising above a pianissimo dynamic. The second goes to opposite extremes: loud, extroverted, and full of fast-paced figures. The third maintains an enigmatic, eerie opacity, while the fourth takes on a more declamatory and assertive tone.

Robert Schumann, Violin Sonata No. 2 in D Minor, Op. 121 (1851)
Written just months after his first violin sonata, Schumann’s second work in the genre matches its counterpart in terms of emotional intensity and impassioned character. Yet it is a more expansive work in length and style, traversing a wider expressive range across its four movements. The first movement begins with a series of declamatory d-minor chords before moving into a stormy exposition. It teems with half-finished thoughts and wandering melodic figures, as if unable
to settle on a principal idea. A more unified sensibility appears in the second movement, a scherzo. Beginning in b minor, it increases in brightness en route to an exultant triumphant major-key finish. The third movement opens with charming pizzicato chords in the violin, creating a spare, even rustic ambience. As the violin moves into a beautifully unadorned bowed melody, the two instruments separate more fully from one another, each taking on a distinct role during the variations that follow. The sonata’s final movement is pervaded by a nervous, kinetic energy. There is some respite in its sunnier second theme, although its underlying agitation never fully dissipates.

The sonata won the praises of its first performers. The violinist Joseph Joachim, who first performed the work with the composer and pianist Clara Schumann (to whom Robert was married), wrote, “It overflows with noble passion, almost harsh and bitter in expression, and the last movement reminds one of the sea with its glorious waves of sound.” This idea of “overflowing,” in fact, aptly describes both of Schumann’s sonatas; they seem to be bursting at the seams with feeling, pushing against the structural constraints of sonata form in an effort to achieve their maximum expressive potential.
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Full season will be announced and subscriptions will go on sale on April 27, 2023.

GOLDA SCHULTZ
Soprano
April 8, 2024

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CHANTICLEER VOCAL ENSEMBLE*
Music of a Silent World

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DANISH STRING QUARTET
Haydn, Shostakovich, Scandinavian Folk Music

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HÉLÈNE GRIMAUD* Piano
Beethoven, Brahms, Bach/Busoni

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JEAN-GUIHEN QUEYRAS Cello
ALEXANDER MELNIKOV Piano
Beethoven, Elliott Carter, Dvořák

Thursday, March 7, 2024
HAGEN STRING QUARTET
Haydn, Debussy, Beethoven

Wednesday, April 3, 2024
JONATHAN BISS Piano
MITSUKO UCHIDA Piano
All Schubert

Monday, April 8, 2024
GOLDA SCHULTZ* Soprano
JONATHAN WARE* Piano
This Be Her Verse—exploring the female perspective

Thursday, May 2, 2024
DORIC STRING QUARTET*
Brett Dean, Beethoven, Schubert

and more to come, including PERFORMANCES UP CLOSE, HEALING WITH MUSIC, FAMILY CONCERTS & A SPECIAL EVENT

*Princeton University Concerts debut
ALINA IBRAHIMOVA

Performing music from Baroque to new commissions on both modern and period instruments, Alina Ibragimova is recognized for the “immediacy and honesty” (The Guardian) of her performances.

This season Alina will play concertos by Jörg Widmann, Bartók, Prokofiev, and Mendelssohn with the Budapest Festival Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, London Philharmonic, Helsinki Philharmonic, and Dresden Philharmonic. She also begins a two-year Mozart cycle with the Kammerorchester Basel.

Highlights of recent seasons include concerts with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, and Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich; collaborating with Vladimir Jurowski, Sir John Elliot Gardner, Jakub Hrůša, Maxim Emelyanychev, Daniel Harding, and Edward Gardner.

In recital, Alina regularly performs at London’s Wigmore Hall and Southbank Centre, Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw, Berlin’s Pierre Boulez Saal, Hamburg’s Elbphilharmonie, and at the Royal Albert Hall where she performed Bach’s sonatas and partitas for solo violin at the BBC Proms. Her award-winning partnership with pianist Cédric Tiberghien continues this season with concerts across Europe and North America. She also performs with the Chiaroscuro Quartet—one of the most sought-after period ensembles of which she is a founding member.
Alina’s discography on Hyperion Records ranges from Bach concertos with Arcangelo to Prokofiev sonatas with Steven Osborne. Her 2020 recording of Shostakovich violin concertos won a Gramophone Award, while her 2021 recording of Paganini’s 24 caprices topped the classical album charts on its release.

Born in Russia in 1985, Alina attended the Moscow Gnesin School, Yehudi Menuhin School, and Royal College of Music, studying with Natasha Boyarsky, Gordan Nikolitch, and Christian Tetzlaff. An alumnus of the BBC New Generation Artists Scheme, Alina’s many accolades include two Royal Philharmonic Society awards and an MBE in the 2016 New Year Honours List. This concert marks Alina’s Concert Classics series debut. She also appeared on our Up Close series with the Chiaroscuro Quartet this season. Alina performs on a c. 1775 Anselmo Bellosio violin kindly provided by Georg von Opel.

CÉDRIC TIBERGHIEN

Cédric Tiberghien has been celebrated for his versatility, as demonstrated by his wide-ranging repertoire, interesting programming, an openness to explore innovative concert formats, and his dynamic chamber music partnerships.

Concerto appearances in the 2022-23 season include his debut with the Sao Paulo State Symphony Orchestra and return visits to the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, DC and Sydney Symphony Orchestra. He will also perform Messiaen’s Turangalîla Symphony with both the Berlin Philharmonic and Orchestre National de France. His recital appearances with Alina Ibragimova include Wigmore Hall in London and Sao Paulo. He will also perform with violist Antoine Tamestit in both Madrid and Prague. Cédric’s solo recitals will include London, Paris, and performances of John Cage’s 16 Sonatas and Interludes for prepared piano in Australia. The latter is a collaboration with the percussion artist Matthias Schack-Arnott. The project will receive its world premiere performance at the Perth Festival.

Recent debuts include the Berlin Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, and NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra. Other recent collaborations have included the Boston Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, London Symphony, BBC Scottish Symphony, Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestras, and at the BBC Proms with Les Siècles.

Cédric’s most recent recording includes the Ravel concertos with Les Siècles/Roth, which received an Editor’s Choice in Gramophone Magazine. The CD was released by
Harmonia Mundi, for whom Cédric currently records. Cédric has been awarded five *Diapason d’Or* for his solo and duo recordings on Hyperion. His most recent solo project is a three-volume exploration of Bartók’s piano works.

A dedicated chamber musician, Cédric’s regular partners include violinist Alina Ibragimova, violist Antoine Tamestit, and baritone Stéphane Degout. His discography with Alina includes complete cycles of music by Schubert, Szymanowski, and Mozart (Hyperion) and a Beethoven sonata cycle (*Wigmore Live*). This concert marks Cédric’s Princeton University Concerts debut.

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Thursday, October 13 | 7:30PM
GENEVA LEWIS* Violin
AUDREY VARDANEGA* Piano

Thursday, November 3 | 7:30PM
BRENTANO STRING QUARTET

Sunday, November 20 | 3PM
VIKINGUR ÓLAFSSON* Piano
Pre-concert talk by Professor Scott Burnham at 2PM

Thursday, February 16 | 7:30PM
ALEXIKENNEY Violin

Wednesday, March 8 | 7:30PM
LAWRENCE BROWNLEE Tenor
KEVIN J. MILLER* Piano

Thursday, March 30 | 7:30PM
JUPITER ENSEMBLE*

Thursday, April 6 | 7:30PM
ALINA IBRAIMOVA* Violin
CÉDRIC TIBERGHIEN* Piano

Thursday, April 27 | 7:30PM
EMERSON & CALIDORE STRING QUARTETS

PERFORMANCES UP CLOSE

Wednesday, October 26 | 6PM & 9PM
JESS GILLAM Saxophone
THOMAS WEAVER* Piano

Tuesday, December 13 | 6PM & 9PM
tenTHING BRASS ENSEMBLE*

Saturday, November 13 & Sunday, March 5 | 3PM
RICHTHERSTON CHAMBER PLAYERS

SPECIAL EVENTS

Wednesday, February 1 | 7:30PM
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IL POMO d’ORO* Orchestra

Tuesday, February 21 | 7:30PM
MITSUKO UCHIDA Piano

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INTRODUCING CLEMENCY BURTON-HILL
Exploring music’s role in brain injury recovery

Wednesday, November 9 | 7:30PM
JOSHUA ROMAN Cello
Living with Long COVID as a musician

Thursday, February 9 | 7:30PM
FRED HERSCH* Piano
Exploring music’s role after an AIDS-related coma

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1PM
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Featuring The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

Saturday, October 22 | 1PM
MEET THE MUSIC, for ages 6–12

Saturday, May 20 | 1PM & 3PM
CMS KIDS, for neurodiverse audiences ages 3–6

AT THE MOVIES

Tuesday, October 11 | 7:30PM
FALLING FOR STRADIVARI

Wednesday, February 8 | 7:30PM
THE BALLAD OF FRED HERSCH

LIVE MUSIC MEDITATION
Matthew Weiner, Meditation Instruction

Thursday, September 29 | 12:30PM
ALEXIKENNEY Violin

Wednesday, October 26 | 12:30PM
JESS GILLAM Saxophone

Thursday, February 9 | 12:30PM
FRED HERSCH Piano

*Princeton University Concerts debut