



PRINCETON
UNIVERSITY
CONCERTS

Alexander Melnikov Piano

Isabelle Faust Violin

Jean-Guihen Queyras Cello



2023/24 SEASON



Dear Friends,

On the evening of February 6, 2020, the illustrious trio of Alexander Melnikov, Isabelle Faust, and Jean-Guihen Queyras made a brilliant Princeton University Concerts debut performance. It was a night to remember, etched into my memory as one of the finest chamber concerts we have ever presented.

Backstage after the concert the mood was ebullient, and I found myself already dreaming of the next time we could bring them back. Amidst the post-concert buzz, I gave Isabelle a small bottle of hand sanitizer that she had innocently requested for her plane trip the next day to Asia. Little did we know, it would be our last concert for well over a year. That night became not only a testament to an electrifying performance but also a poignant prelude to a silent intermission that would stretch across a year and a half.

Now, as I eagerly anticipate their return to our stage, I'm reminded of both the uncertainty we've faced and how lucky we are to be back in the concert hall together again. I am beyond grateful to be able to welcome back these prodigious musicians to our stage, and I am reminded of the enduring power of music to heal, to unite, and to illuminate the path forward.

With eager anticipation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marna Seltzer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "M" and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Marna Seltzer
Director of Princeton University Concerts

ALEXANDER MELNIKOV Piano
ISABELLE FAUST Violin
JEAN-GUIHEN QUEYRAS Cello

**ROBERT
SCHUMANN**
(1810–1856)

Trio No. 2 in F Major, Op. 80
Sehr lebhaft
Mit innigem Ausdruck
In mässiger Bewegung
Nicht zu rasch

**ELLIOTT
CARTER**
(1908–2012)

Epigrams for Piano, Violin, and Cello
I.
II.
III.
IV.
V.
VI.
VII.
VIII.
IX.
X.
XI.
XII.

INTERMISSION

**JOHANNES
BRAHMS**
(1833–1897)

Trio No. 1 in B Major, Op. 8 (1889 version)
Allegro con brio
Scherzo: Allegro molto
Adagio
Finale: Allegro



About the Program

By Lucy Caplan © 2024 • Program Annotator

Lucy Caplan is Assistant Professor of Music at Worcester Polytechnic Institute and a winner of the Rubin Prize for Music Criticism.

Only about a decade passed between the final year of Johannes Brahms's life, in 1897, and the first year of Elliott Carter's, in 1908. Yet while Brahms began writing the trio that appears on this evening's program in the 1850s, Carter's Epigrams were not composed until well into the twenty-first century. The vast stretch of time that separates these pieces, despite the relative proximity of their respective composers' lives, suggests that our tendency to divide music history into clearly defined periods—Baroque, then Classical, then Romantic, and so on—may be overly neat. Instead, we might think more expansively about the connective threads that link composers of different eras, regions, and aesthetic proclivities.

Schumann once mused that the future of music, in his view, should be “a higher echo of the past.” But that perspective was not his alone; there is a shared retrospective quality to this evening's program. Schumann's trio is an homage of sorts to his predecessors in the genre, merging Bach's counterpoint with Beethoven's vivacity with Schubert's lyricism. Carter's work, written when he was more than one hundred years old looks back to his collegiate study of Greek poetry with a series of brief, pithy pieces. Brahms's trio is a late-in-life revision of one of his earliest works, completed more than three decades after his first attempt. Together, they illuminate a consistent curiosity about the past among three very different composers, a shared interest in circling back to the beginning.

Robert Schumann, Trio No. 2 in F Major, Op. 80 (1847)

A quietly joyful atmosphere pervades Schumann's Piano Trio No. 2. He wrote two piano trios in 1847, within a few months of one another, and while the first is alternately melancholic and stormy, this one, in his own description, “makes a friendlier and more immediate impression.” Rather than dashing off to embark upon soloistic flights of fancy, all three players stay mainly in the middle registers of their instruments. Intimacy takes precedence over brilliance, with each member of the ensemble staying closely attuned to the others by way of melodies played in parallel, imitative figures that bounce from player to player and passages of close-knit counterpoint. From these understated materials, the trio crafts a vibrant, tightly woven tapestry.

The first movement, marked *Sehr lebhaft* (very lively), begins with a serious yet genial theme, whose phrases resist the sense of a definitive ending, seeming always to stretch on for just a few more measures. The violin and cello each introduce the movement's second theme—a

loose quotation from one of Schumann's songs, a lovely descending melody which drapes easily over the gentle texture of eighth notes in the piano. The second movement has an achingly beautiful calm. There is a subtle canon between the piano and cello at its beginning, but the listener is just as likely to be drawn to the searching melody in the violin. In the graceful third movement, the composer offers still another melody that is characterized by a downward-falling, sighing figure. Like the movement that precedes it, it features a canon among the three voices—but this time the imitation is hard to miss, creating a sense of unmistakable cohesion. In the final movement, Schumann casts off the understated feeling that has characterized much of the trio so far. Now is the time for scales that vault upward, propulsive dotted rhythms, and a sense of blossoming energy, which propels us through to the work's triumphant close.

Elliott Carter, Epigrams for Piano, Violin, and Cello (2012)

When Elliott Carter applied to Harvard in 1926, Charles Ives wrote him a letter of recommendation. But although Carter was already immersed in the world of modern music—he heard the American premieres of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* and Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*, and he and Ives attended concerts together—he elected to study Greek, philosophy, and literature in college rather than music. As he continued to refine his technique as a composer, he became enamored with Renaissance- and Baroque-era early music, from Machaut's motets to Bach's cantatas. These heterogenous influences are evident in Carter's music, which has a kaleidoscopic range that stretches from mannered choral pieces to ultramodernist quartets to conceptually idiosyncratic symphonies. Later in his life, he became fascinated by small-scale compositions, writing a wide array of short pieces for soloists or small ensembles of just a few players. After his one hundredth birthday, in 2008, he wrote almost twenty-five new works.

The Epigrams are Carter's final composition, written during the spring and summer of 2012. In title and content, they allude to the ancient Greek literary form characterized by conciseness and cleverness. (The poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge offered the following example: "What is an Epigram? A dwarfish whole, / Its body brevity, and wit its soul.") Carter's twelve musical epigrams are each barely more than a minute in length, yet they are full of surprising twists and turns. In the second, for example, a flurry of angry chords abruptly gives way to the icy calm of sustained harmonics in the violin and cello. In the sixth, the cello offers a *cantabile* melody over a wide melodic range, which the violin repeatedly interrupts. The eighth epigram begins with a feeling of perpetual motion, followed by a concluding series of stark, simple tones. The overarching effect of the set as a whole is one of unsettled entropy, yet the piece also includes moments of ethereal beauty.

Johannes Brahms, Trio No. 1 in B Major, Op. 8 (1889)

Brahms was never quite satisfied with the piano trio he composed in 1854, when he was in his early twenties. It was “dreary,” he thought, and it needed more editing, but once it had been accepted by a publisher it was too late. More than three decades later, when the publisher transferred the rights to Brahms’s earliest compositions, an opportunity to return to the piece finally arose. “I have rewritten my B Major Trio,” he reported in a letter to Clara Schumann. “But will it be better?” Not only was the revised trio a piece of incredible beauty, but it also offers fascinating insight into Brahms’s skills as a composer. He seems to effortlessly cast off the initial work’s less successful features (a sleepy second theme in the first movement, for instance, is replaced by a more rhythmically vital version) and add in new ones (a beloved cello melody that appears in the third movement). In the second movement, he elected to change nothing at all.

As in the original, the revised version of the trio begins with a gloriously impassioned melody in the cello, soon joined by the violin. A minor-key second theme feels more urgent but no less lyrical. Throughout the movement, syncopations and triplets in the piano create a sense of almost inexhaustible depth, an answer to the broad expansiveness of the melodic line. The second movement is a dramatically conceived scherzo, darker and less mischievous than its Mendelssohnian counterparts. Yet the clouds part for its contrasting trio, a lovely, warm dance with a rustic elegance. The third movement combines a sense of architectural grandeur—created through slowly paced rhythms, abundant double-stops in the strings, and unhurried rests—with an introspective, even intimate character. The cello takes center stage partway through the movement with a gorgeous melody whose openhearted feeling recalls the first movement. In the final movement, Brahms turns to minor. The vexed first theme is both lyrical and propulsive, and the pianist supports the string players with a near-constant river of triplets. A somewhat more optimistic second theme offers a respite, but the movement never loses its sense of urgency, and it concludes with a restatement of the opening theme that only increases in intensity and expressivity, becoming ever more ardent.

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About *the* Artists



ALEXANDER MELNIKOV Piano

Alexander Melnikov graduated from the Moscow Conservatory under Lev Naumov. His most formative musical moments in Moscow include an early encounter with Sviatoslav Richter, who thereafter regularly invited him to festivals in Russia and France. He won important prizes at eminent competitions such as the International Robert Schumann Competition in Zwickau and the Concours Musical Reine Elisabeth in Brussels.

Known for his often unusual programmatic decisions, Alexander Melnikov has developed a career-long interest in historically informed performance practice. His major influences in this field include keyboard players Andreas Staier and Alexei Lubimov. Melnikov performs regularly with distinguished period ensembles including the Freiburger Barockorchester, Musica Aeterna, and Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin.

As a soloist, Alexander Melnikov has performed with orchestras including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Philadelphia Orchestra, NDR Sinfonieorchester, HR-Sinfonieorchester, Russian National Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic, Rotterdam Philharmonic, BBC Philharmonic, Orchestre des Champs-Élysées, and the NHK Symphony and under conductors such as Mikhail Pletnev, Teodor Currentzis, Charles Dutoit, Paavo Järvi, and Valery Gergiev.

Alexander Melnikov's association with Harmonia Mundi arose through his partnership with Isabelle Faust, and in 2010 their complete recording of the Ludwig van Beethoven sonatas for violin and piano won a Gramophone Award. This album was also nominated for a Grammy. Their most recent release features the Brahms sonatas for violin and piano.

Melnikov's recording of the preludes and fugues by Shostakovich was awarded the BBC Music Magazine Award, Choc de classica, and the Jahrespreis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik. In 2011, it was also named by the BBC Music Magazine as one of the "50 Greatest Recordings of All Time." Additionally, his discography features works by Brahms, Rachmaninov, Shostakovich, and Scriabin.

This is Alexander's fourth appearance at PUC. In addition to a stunning solo performance of the complete preludes and fugues of Shostakovich in 2016, he appeared in a duo recital with pianist Andreas Staier and in the trio with Faust and Queyras in 2020.

ISABELLE FAUST Violin

After winning the renowned Leopold Mozart Competition and the Paganini Competition at a young age, Isabelle Faust soon began to perform regularly with the world's major orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, NHK Symphony Orchestra Tokyo, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Les Siècles, and the Freiburger Barockorchester. This led to collaborations with conductors like Andris Nelsons, Giovanni Antonini, François-Xavier Roth, Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Daniel Harding, Philippe Herreweghe, and Sir Simon Rattle, with whom she will tour again in March 2024.

Highlights of her 2023-24 season include the celebration of Ligeti's 100th birthday with an extensive tour with Les Siècles and François-Xavier Roth. Faust will perform with orchestras such as the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, NDR Radiophilharmonie, Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, Orquesta Nacional de España, NHK Symphony Orchestra, Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, and Orchestra of St. Luke's, as well as a tour with the London Symphony Orchestra. She is also Artist-in-Residence with the SWR Symphony Orchestra this season. Her chamber music projects will include collaborations with violist Antoine Tamestit, keyboard player Kristian Bezuidenhout, and the current North America tour with Melnikov and Queyras.

Her numerous recordings have been praised by critics and awarded the Diapason d'or, the Gramophone Award, the Choc de l'année and other prizes. Recent recordings include Stravinsky's violin concerto with Les Siècles and François-Xavier Roth, Schoenberg's violin concerto with the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra and Daniel Harding, and Beethoven's Triple Concerto with Melnikov, Queyras, Pablo Heras-Casado and the Freiburger Barockorchester.

This is Isabelle's third appearance at PUC. In addition to a previous trio appearance, she played all of the Bach solo sonatas and partitas in one sitting at the Princeton University Chapel in 2015.

JEAN-GUIHEN QUEYRAS Cello

Jean-Guihen Queyras' approaches to early music—as in his collaborations with the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra and the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin—and to contemporary music are equally thorough. He has given world premieres of works by, among others, Ivan Fedele, Gilbert Amy, Bruno Mantovani, Michael Jarrell, Johannes-Maria Staud, Thomas Larcher, and Tristan Murail. Conducted by the composer, he recorded Peter Eötvös' Cello Concerto to mark his 70th birthday in November 2014. Jean-Guihen Queyras was a founding member of the Arcanto Quartet and is a regular member of tonight's celebrated trio with Faust and Melnikov. He has also collaborated with zarb specialists Bijan and Keyvan Chemirani on a Mediterranean program.

The versatility in his music-making has led to many concert halls, festivals, and orchestras inviting Jean-Guihen to be Artist-in-Residence, including the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Vredenburg Utrecht, De Bijloke Ghent, and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg. Jean-Guihen often appears with renowned orchestras such as the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, the Orchestre de Paris, the London Symphony Orchestra, the Gewandhausorchester, and the Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich.

Jean-Guihen Queyras' recordings of cello concertos by Edward Elgar, Antonín Dvořák, Philippe Schoeller, and Gilbert Amy have been released to critical acclaim. As part of a Harmonia Mundi project dedicated to Schumann, he has recorded the complete piano trios with Faust and Melnikov and at the same time the Schumann cello concerto with the Freiburger Barockorchester under Pablo Heras-Casado.

Highlights of the 2023/24 season include concert tours to Australia, the United States, Canada, and Europe, performances with the Rosas Dance Company and choreographer Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, invitations from the Orchestre de Chambre de Paris, the Philharmonia Orchestra London, the Orquesta Nacional de España, the Residentie Orkest Den Haag, and the Cleveland Orchestra, as well as numerous chamber music concerts with Faust and Melnikov, pianist Alexandre Tharaud, keyboardist Kristian Bezuidenhout, violist Tabea Zimmermann, and the Belcea Quartet.

Jean-Guihen has appeared at PUC twice before, once with the Arcanto Quartet in 2015 and in the trio with Faust and Melnikov in 2020.

We are deeply grateful for the support we have received and thank all of our donors and volunteers. The list below acknowledges gifts of \$100 or more, received between May 1, 2023 and January 31, 2024. If you see an error or would like to make a change in your listing, please contact the Concert Office at 609-258-2800.

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Princeton 2024

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The first concert in what is known today as Princeton University Concerts was presented on October 29, 1894, thus establishing one of the oldest continuous series of musical events in the country. From 1894 to 1914, the “Ladies Musical Committee” presented concerts by the Kneisel Quartet. After 1914, the programs diversified. In 1929, the Ladies Committee became the Princeton University Concerts Committee—a town and gown group of interested and knowledgeable music lovers—which has guided the University Concerts to date.

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PRINCETON
UNIVERSITY
CONCERTS

23/24

SEASON



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Soprano

CONCERT CLASSICS

Thursday, October 12, 2023 | 7:30PM
CHANTICLEER VOCAL ENSEMBLE*

Thursday, November 2, 2023 | 7:30PM
DANISH STRING QUARTET

Wednesday, January 24, 2024 | 7:30PM
HÉLÈNE GRIMAUD* Piano

Thursday, February 15, 2024 | 7:30PM
ISABELLE FAUST Violin
JEAN-GUIHEN QUEYRAS Cello
ALEXANDER MELNIKOV Piano

Thursday, March 7, 2024 | 7:30PM
HAGEN STRING QUARTET

Wednesday, April 3, 2024 | 7:30PM
JONATHAN BISS Piano
MITSUKO UCHIDA Piano

Monday, April 8, 2024 | 7:30PM
GOLDA SCHULTZ* Soprano
JONATHAN WARE* Piano

Thursday, May 2, 2024 | 7:30PM
DORIC STRING QUARTET*

PERFORMANCES UP CLOSE

Sunday, October 8, 2023 | 3PM & 6PM
DREAMERS' CIRCUS* Violin, Cittern, Accordion

Thursday, October 26, 2023 | 6PM & 9PM
THÉOTIME LANGLOIS DE SWARTE* Baroque Violin
JUSTIN TAYLOR* Harpsichord

Wednesday, November 8, 2023 | 6PM & 9PM
JEAN RONDEAU* Harpsichord

Thursday–Sunday, January 18–21, 2024
MAHLER CHAMBER ORCHESTRA in virtual reality

RICHARDSON CHAMBER PLAYERS

Sunday, February 22, 2024 | 7:30PM: *Les Six*
Sunday, March 24, 2024 | 3PM: *A French Afternoon*

*Princeton University Concerts debut

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Thursday, February 1, 2024 | 7:30PM
BRAD MEHLDAU Piano

Thursday, February 8, 2024 | 7:30PM
VÍKINGUR ÓLAFSSON Piano

HEALING WITH MUSIC

Wednesday, November 15, 2023 | 7:30PM
SULEIKA JAOUAD* Writer
JON BATISTE* Musician
Healing from Cancer through Music

Sunday, March 3, 2024 | 3PM
DANCE FOR PD® A Mark Morris Dance Group Program
Exploring the intersection of music, dance, and Parkinson's Disease.

Wednesday, April 24, 2024 | 7:30PM
JONATHAN BISS Piano
ADAM HASLETT* Writer
Anxiety, Depression, and Music

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Saturday, March 16, 2024 | 1PM
ADVENTURES IN CHAMBER MUSIC for ages 6–12

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