

CMS Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

TUESDAY EVENING, JULY 15, 2025, AT 7:30 ▶ 4,596TH CONCERT

Alice Tully Hall, Starr Theater, Adrienne Arsht Stage

Home of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

Michael Stephen Brown, piano

Stella Chen, violin

Lun Li, violin

Lawrence Dutton, viola

Jonathan Swensen, cello

Summer Evenings III

**Ludwig van
Beethoven**
(1770–1827)

**Variations on “Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen”
from *Die Zauberflöte* for Cello and Piano, WoO 46**
(1801)

BROWN, BROWN

Felix Mendelssohn
(1809–1847)

**Quartet in F minor for Piano, Violin, Viola, and Cello,
Op. 2 (1823)**

- ▶ Allegro molto
- ▶ Adagio
- ▶ Intermezzo: Allegro moderato
- ▶ Allegro molto vivace

BROWN, LI, DUTTON, SWENSEN

INTERMISSION

César Franck
(1822–1890)

**Quintet in F minor for Piano, Two Violins, Viola, and
Cello (1879)**

- ▶ Molto moderato quasi lento—Allegro
- ▶ Lento, con molto sentimento
- ▶ Allegro non troppo, ma con fuoco

BROWN, CHEN, LI, DUTTON, SWENSEN

The Summer Evenings Audience Engagement Initiative is underwritten, in part, by **Robert S. Feldman and Katherine Vorwerk**. Additional support provided by the **Musicians Advocacy Fund**, **Leon Levy Foundation**, **Judy and Alan Kosloff**, a **generous anonymous donor**, and with public funds from the **National Endowment for the Arts**.

This concert features members of the Bowers Program, CMS’s residency for outstanding early career musicians. The Bowers Program is supported by **Ann S. Bowers**. Additional support by the **Marion F. Goldin Charitable Fund** and **Colburn Foundation**.

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The Chamber Music Society acknowledges with sincere appreciation **Ms. Tali Mahanor’s** generous long-term loan of the Hamburg Steinway & Sons model “D” concert grand piano.

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From the Artistic Directors

Dear Listener,

Welcome to the third Summer Evenings concert of 2025. At the conclusion of today's program, we'll be halfway through this series, which ends on July 26. As our program notes are always informative and beautifully written (please take them home for further enjoyment), this letter is our opportunity to share personal insights into the music and performers that you probably won't read in the notes.

The two of us have invested a lot of time and effort into the music for cello and piano by Beethoven. He is revered by cellists who have him to thank for creating the first full-fledged duo works for cello and piano. Mozart had been writing such sonatas for piano and violin for years, but nothing for cello. (Anecdote: cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, who premiered over 200 works for cello, once told us: "It's not Mozart's fault—it's the cellists of his day who did not seize him by the throat and force him to compose for them!") And, you know, he's right). The years in which Beethoven composed his first two cello sonatas and his three sets of variations (the other two are also on themes from operas) were among his most fertile, as he burst on the scene in Vienna. The exact reason he wrote the variations on tonight's program is not completely clear, but perhaps he was intrigued by the cello's singing voice, hence his somewhat whimsical idea to connect it to opera. Beethoven owned a cello that belonged to his complete quartet of instruments, and undoubtedly attempted to play it, as composers of his day frequently taught themselves how to use the instruments they were composing for.

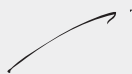
Michael Stephen Brown is not going to have any trouble with the Mendelssohn, but plenty of pianists do. It's unfathomable how talented Mendelssohn was, and that extends to his unmatched dexterity at the keyboard. Just picture this boy of 14 knocking this piece out of the park at one of his parents' home concerts. We are not sure which is more amazing: that he could write it, or that he could play it. By the way, Michael has a lot of talent too, and is also a composer.

Many pieces of chamber music can be grouped with works similar in style, origin, or structure, but Franck's Quintet stands alone. Nothing before is like it, and neither is any work afterward. Its brooding, floating harmonies presaged the coming of the Impressionist era in music. The music's intensity is still quite shocking, even violent. The work had a turbulent birth, the pianist walking off the stage in disdain after the premiere. It wouldn't have been so significant, had

the pianist not been Camille Saint-Saëns. Read all about it in the notes.

Finally, just for fun, we'd like to point out the multi-generational cast of musicians. As guide points, we can reference the years they joined the Bowers Program: Lun Li and Jonathan Swensen, 2024; Stella Chen, 2020; Michael Stephen Brown, 2015; and Lawrence Dutton, 1982. Wait! Is that right? Well, there was no Bowers Program back then, but thanks to our dear, late Charles Wadsworth, Larry joined the roster that year, at typical Bowers-age, as a member of the Emerson String Quartet.

Enjoy the performance,



David Finckel



Wu Han

ARTISTIC DIRECTORS



Notes on the Program

Ludwig van Beethoven

Variations on “Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen” from *Die Zauberflöte* for Cello and Piano, WoO 46

► Baptized December 17, 1770, in Bonn (likely born December 16)

► Died March 26, 1827, in Vienna

Composed in 1801

► First CMS performance on November 1, 1991, by cellist Leslie Parnas and pianist Eduardus Halim

► Duration: 11 minutes

The art of transcribing music for keyboard stretches back hundreds of years, with some of the earliest known examples coming from the 14th century. By the 19th century the genre

was experiencing a boom thanks to the steadily increasing swell of middle-class families purchasing fortepianos for home entertainment, who wanted keyboard transcriptions of instrumental works as well as opera arias. Before the arrival of recording technology, this is how someone could experience or relive a magical moment from the theater or just enjoy a catchy tune. This trend was highly appealing for composers and their publishers, as they could generate additional revenue by selling sheet music to the new market.

Ludwig van Beethoven transcribed four of Mozart's arias, one each from *Don Giovanni* and *The Marriage of Figaro*, and two from *The Magic Flute*: "Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen" ("A girl or a wife") and "Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen" ("Men who feel the call of love"). They were composed during Beethoven's first decade in Vienna, where he was making his mark as a pianist and composer. Both *Magic Flute* transcriptions were for cello and piano, appearing around the same time Beethoven penned his Op. 5 cello sonatas, his first for that genre. All of them are in variation form.

The set of variations on "Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen" a duet between the characters Pamina and Papageno from *The Magic Flute*, was written in 1801 and dedicated to Count Johann Georg von Browne. He and his wife, Countess Anna Margarete, were among Beethoven's most important supporters and were dedicatees of various works in addition to the "Bei Männern" variations, including the Op. 10 piano sonatas and the three string trios, Op. 9. (They are also remembered for gifting Beethoven with

a horse, which he forgot about due to either absentmindedness or disinterest.)

The opening presentation of the theme follows the original aria closely; the piano and cello take turns (as do Pamina and Papageno) with the theme's main melody, coming together toward the end of its statement. The first variation is jaunty and syncopated, the second awash in waves of scales, and the third grounded by repeated chords and organized as melody and accompaniment. The first real shift in mood comes with the fourth variation in the minor key and the cello in a low, melancholy, register. With the fifth variation the tempo rapidly perks up again before tumbling into the elegant, adagio setting of the sixth. The seventh and final variation is a lively showcase that takes place almost entirely within an extended coda, as if Beethoven is trying to squeeze in as many additional ideas as possible before the ending, which is dotted with his signature trills and punctuated by an emphatic flourish.

Program note © Kathryn Bacasmot

Felix Mendelssohn

Quartet in F minor for Piano, Violin, Viola, and Cello, Op. 2

► Born February 3, 1809, in Hamburg

► Died November 4, 1847, in Leipzig

Composed in 1823

► First CMS performance on May 1, 1994, with pianist Lee Luvisi, violinist John Dalley, violist Michael Tree, and cellist David Soyer

► Duration: 28 minutes

In November of 1821, Felix Mendelssohn spent a few weeks staying at the home of the writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. It was an intense but stimulating visit; Goethe put the 12-year-old Mendelssohn through tests of performance, sight-reading, and improvisation at

the piano and also organized a reading of the young composer's new Piano Quartet in D minor (MWV Q10). The poet, who remembered seeing Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart perform at age seven, proclaimed that "musical prodigies are probably not so rare anymore, but what [Mendelssohn] can improvise and play at sight borders on the miraculous, and I did not consider it possible in one so young."

The piano quartet was an important genre at the start of Mendelssohn's career. In 1822 he published a quartet in C minor as his Op. 1; the following year, he wrote a second in F minor (Op. 2) for Friedrich Zelter, an early

composition teacher and the one who facilitated the trips to see Goethe. Mendelssohn dedicated his third, Op. 3 in B minor (1825), to Goethe himself. These early quartets form a close link between Mozart, who established the instrumentation as a viable genre with his dramatic and challenging 1785 Quartet in G minor (K. 478), and this newly emerging prodigy, whom many, including Goethe, would describe as the Mozart of the 19th century.

The first movement of the F-minor quartet starts off a bit conservatively. Mendelssohn follows a clean sonata form, alternating between a minor first theme and a brighter, major-key secondary tune and maintains a wavering, chromatic figure throughout that creates a sense of continuity. We don't feel him let the music go until the coda, where the strings scramble to catch up to running arpeggios and octaves in the piano, which flies forward to the close.

The following *Adagio* is in D-flat major, a quite special key in which none of the open strings can be played except the rumbling low C on cello and viola. Without much assistance from the natural resonances of the instruments, players must give each note an extra bit of life and care for the lines to sing and breathe. Here, we hear Mendelssohn's

melodic gifts: the tunes he writes take advantage of the subdued character of the tonality, and the piano's inherently brighter timbre creates an effective contrast with what's going on in the violin, viola, and cello.

The brief *Intermezzo*, full of wandering chromatic turns, reveals a knack for counter-melodies that would be markers of style in many of Mendelssohn's best symphonic movements. But it is really in the final *Allegro molto vivace* that the young composer shows his exceptional capacities. It's an up-tempo folk dance, with scampering figures in the piano and violin supported by an infectious oom-pah rhythm from the cello and viola. He knows just when to hold the music in place and when to have it push forward with the vitality of these driving offbeats. There is also a jolly, Schubertian string tune that Mendelssohn adds to the mix, which helps to make the movement a raucous, joyous affair. Although it ends back in stormy F minor with a hammered-out, Beethoven-like cadence, it's nonetheless hard not to feel cheery when the quartet finishes. We might even imagine Goethe unable to suppress an admiring grin at the unconstrained, youthful fun of this music.

Program note © Nicky Swett

César Franck

Quintet in F minor for Piano, Two Violins, Viola, and Cello

- ▶ Born December 10, 1822, in Liège
- ▶ Died November 8, 1890, in Paris

Composed in 1879

- ▶ First CMS performance on April 9, 1972, by pianist André Watts, violinists Ani Kavafian and Jaime Laredo, violist Walter Trampler, and cellist Leslie Parnas
- ▶ Duration: 35 minutes

Born in what is now Belgium, César Franck moved with his family to Paris in 1835 and

enrolled in the Paris Conservatory two years later, where he was a very good, though not exceptional, teenage student. After five years, Franck's domineering father, whose main interest was his son's potential for commercial success, withdrew him to embark on a concert tour. During this time Franck published his Op. 1 set of trios and gained attention from established figures like Franz Liszt, who became Franck's cheerleader and mentor. However, any career momentum halted

in 1846 when Franck revolted. He moved away from home, accepted a job as a church organist, and married within a whirlwind 24 months. Throughout the following years Franck periodically completed compositions that garnered public notice, but most of his time was absorbed with the daily responsibilities of church musicianship and teaching.

Change arrived in the 1870s when Franck, in his fifties, began embracing opportunities that brought him back into the Paris Conservatory orbit. His involvement as a founding member of the National Music Society, plus a devoted circle of students, made him the top candidate for a position teaching organ at the Conservatory that he accepted in 1872. With momentum building again, Franck spent the final decade of his life, sadly cut short by illness, producing the works for which he is most remembered, the Piano Quintet in F minor, Violin Sonata, and Symphony in D minor. On January 17, 1880, the premiere of the Piano Quintet took place with Camille Saint-Saëns at the piano. The following year it was awarded the Chartier Prize. Franck was finally stepping into the spotlight that his domineering father had so desperately sought for him 45 years prior, but now on his own terms.

The Piano Quintet is a colossal work organized into traditional sonata form colorfully propelled by unrelenting modulation, thrusting the listener forward in a restless harmonic current. The cyclical use of themes provides

a stabilizing anchor for the ear and binds the three movements together as a whole. In the introduction of the first movement, we hear two main thematic ideas in contrasting temperaments traded back and forth, a jagged downward scale from the strings and a flowing melody from the piano sighing upward. This emphasis on gravitational push and the reactionary pull sets up one of the main sources of drama in the work. A gorgeously imploring secondary theme in the piano provides another touchpoint. We hear glints of it shining through in the dreamscape of the second movement where the piano often functions as accompaniment, supporting the song-like melodies hovering above. This movement also highlights the immense contrasts in dynamics Franck calls for in the score, going from *fff* (extremely loud) to *ppp* (extremely soft), often within the span of one measure. Opening the finale of the work is an intense and cryptic chain of tremolos in the strings over descending octaves in the piano. Chord sequences emerge, but a true melody evades for measures on end. Even as themes surface, they do so in what feels like segments (in other words, it's difficult to imagine humming along). Finally, after spending most of the movement in this tortured state, a familiar theme from the first movement makes a haunting return before launching into an abrupt conclusion that ends with all parts in complete unison on the note F.

Program note © Kathryn Bacasmot

About the Artists



ANITA BENCE SELKOWITZ

Michael Stephen Brown

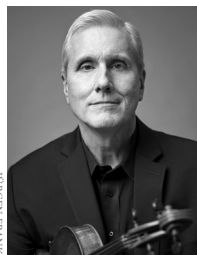
Michael Stephen Brown is a composer and pianist hailed by the *New York Times* as “one of the leading figures in the current renaissance of performer-composers.” A 2025 MacDowell Fellow, 2024 Yaddo Artist, and winner of Lincoln Center’s Emerging Artist Award and an Avery Fisher Career Grant, Michael performs internationally and receives commissions from orchestras, soloists, and festivals around the world. Recent highlights include a recital at Alice Tully Hall for CMS, collaborations with cellist Nicholas Canellakis and violinists Pinchas Zukerman, Kristin Lee, and Arnaud Sussmann, and an Asia recital tour. Currently he is composing *The Magical Carnival*, a CMS-led project co-presented by a consortium of US presenters. His first album devoted entirely to his music, *Twelve Blocks*, will be released in fall 2025. He is the composer for Angeline Gragasin’s upcoming film *Look But Don’t Touch*. An alum of CMS’s Bowers Program, Michael lives in New York City and Wallkill, New York, with his two 19th-century Steinways, *Octavia* and *Daria*.



Stella Chen

Praised for her “silken grace” and “brilliant command” (*The Strad*), American violinist Stella Chen captured international attention as the winner of the 2019 Queen Elisabeth International Violin Competition, followed by the 2020 Avery Fisher Career Grant. Her debut album, *Stella x Schubert*, was released in 2023 on Apple Music’s Platoon label to critical acclaim, garnering her the title of Young Artist of the Year at the Gramophone Awards. Stella has performed across North America, Europe, and Asia, appearing as soloist with orchestras including the

New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Brussels Philharmonic, and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. A recently appointed faculty member of the Juilliard School, she holds a bachelor’s degree from Harvard University and a doctorate from Juilliard, and is an alum of CMS’s Bowers Program. Chen performs on the 1720 “General Kyd” Stradivarius, generously loaned by Dr. Ryuji Ueno and Rare Violins In Consortium, Artists and Benefactors Collaborative.



JÜRGEN FRANKE

Lawrence Dutton

Lawrence Dutton was the violist of the nine-time Grammy-winning Emerson String Quartet, which in 2023 performed its final concert after a storied 47-year career. He has also performed as guest artist with the Beaux Arts and Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trios and the Juilliard and Guarneri String Quartets. With the late Isaac Stern he collaborated on the International Chamber Music Encounters at Carnegie Hall and in Jerusalem. He began violin studies with Margaret Pardee and viola studies with Francis Tursi at the Eastman School. He holds

degrees from the Juilliard School, where he studied with Lillian Fuchs. Currently, Dutton

is Distinguished Professor of Viola and Chamber Music at Stony Brook University; Distinguished Artist at the Robert McDuffie Center for Strings at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia; and Artistic Director of the Hoch Chamber Music Series in Bronxville, New York. He exclusively uses Thomastik Spirocore strings, and his viola is a Samuel Zygmuntowicz (Brooklyn, 2025).



Lun Li

A native of Shanghai currently based in New York, violinist Lun Li won first prize in the 2021 Young Concert Artists Susan Wadsworth International Auditions. He has appeared on major stages around the world, including Helsinki Music Centre, Konzerthaus Berlin, Kulturpalast Dresden, Wiener Konzerthaus, and Verizon Hall at the Kimmel Center. He recently made his solo recital debuts in Merkin Hall at the Kaufman Music Center in New York and at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, as well as his concerto debut at Lincoln Center.

An avid chamber musician, he has participated in the Marlboro, Music@Menlo, Verbier, and Angel Fire music festivals. He is a member of CMS's Bowers Program and holds degrees from the Curtis Institute of Music and the Juilliard School; his mentors include Ida Kavafian, Catherine Cho, and Joseph Lin. Li plays the Stradivarius "Samazeuilh" 1735 violin, on generous loan from the Nippon Music Foundation.



Jonathan Swensen

Cellist Jonathan Swensen is the recipient of an Avery Fisher Career Grant and joint first prize of the Naumburg International Cello Competition, and was featured as "One to Watch" in *Gramophone*. He made his concerto debut performing the Elgar Concerto with Portugal's Orquestra Sinfónica do Porto Casa da Música, and has performed with the Philharmonia Orchestra, Orquesta Ciudad de Granada, Copenhagen Philharmonic, Mobile Symphony, Greenville Symphony, and the Aarhus, Odense, and Iceland symphonies. He has captured

first prizes at the Windsor International String Competition, Khachaturian International Cello Competition, and the Young Concert Artists International Auditions. A graduate of the Royal Danish Academy of Music, Swensen continued his studies with Torleif Thedéen at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo and Laurence Lesser at New England Conservatory, where he received his Artist Diploma. He is now an Artist in Residence at the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel working with Gary Hoffman, and a member of CMS's Bowers Program.

About the Chamber Music Society

Founded in 1969, the **Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (CMS)** brings the transcendent experience of great chamber music to more people than any other organization of its kind worldwide. Under the artistic leadership of cellist David Finckel and pianist Wu Han, the multi-generational and international performing artist roster of 140 of the world's finest chamber musicians enable us to present chamber music of every instrumentation, style, and historical period.

Each season, we reach a global audience with more than 150 performances and education programs in our home at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall and on tour with residencies worldwide.

We offer a wide range of learning formats and experiences to engage and inform listeners of all ages, backgrounds, and levels of musical knowledge through our education programs. The Bowers Program, our competitive three-season residency, is dedicated to developing the chamber music leaders of the future and integrates this selection of exceptional early-career musicians into every facet of CMS activities.

Our incomparable digital presence, which regularly enables us to reach millions of viewers and listeners annually, includes our weekly national radio program, heard locally on WQXR 105.9 FM on Saturday and Monday evenings; radio programming in Taiwan and mainland China; and appearances on American Public Media's *Performance Today*, the monthly program *In Concert with CMS* on the PBS ALL ARTS broadcast channel, and SiriusXM's Symphony Hall channel, among others. The PBS documentary film *Chamber Music Society Returns* chronicles CMS's return to live concerts at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall and on a six-city national tour. It is currently available to watch on PBS Passport. Our website also hosts an online archive of more than 1,700 video recordings of performance and education videos free to the public.

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Updated on June 17, 2025

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Hans and Donna Kilian
Dr. Thomas C. King
Chloë A. Kramer
Harriet and William Lembeck
Helen Brown Levine
Seth Novatt and Priscilla Natkins
Carol Oberman
Debra Pincus
Eva Popper

Martin Riskin
Mrs. Robert Schuur
Susan Stemplewski
Leo Tick
Suzanne E. Vaucher and William R.
Stensrud
Ruby Vogelfanger
Sally Wardwell
Alan G. Weiler
Janet and Peter White
John S. Wilson
Roger and Jill Witten
Anonymous (1)