



Chamber
Music Society
of Lincoln Center

THE ART OF THE RECITAL

ALEXANDER SITKOVETSKY & WU QIAN

THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 11, 2017 AT 7:30

Daniel and Joanna S. Rose Studio

3,709th Concert

ALEXANDER SITKOVETSKY, violin

WU QIAN, piano

**2016-2017
SEASON**

The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

70 Lincoln Center Plaza, 10th Floor

New York, NY 10023

212-875-5788

www.ChamberMusicSociety.org

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THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 11, 2017 AT 7:30 ▶ 3,709TH CONCERT

Daniel and Joanna S. Rose Studio

ALEXANDER SITKOVETSKY, violin

WU QIAN, piano

MANUEL DE FALLA *Suite populaire espagnole for Violin and Piano*

(1876-1946) (1914, arr. 1925)

arr. **Kochánski**

- ▶ El paño moruno: Allegretto vivace
- ▶ Nana (Berceuse): Calmo e sostenuto
- ▶ Canción: Allegretto
- ▶ Polo: Vivo
- ▶ Asturiana: Andante tranquilo
- ▶ Jota: Allegro vivo

ROBERT SCHUMANN *Sonata in D minor for Violin and Piano, Op. 121*

(1810-1856) (1851)

- ▶ Ziemlich langsam—Lebhaft
- ▶ Sehr lebhaft
- ▶ Leise, einfach
- ▶ Bewegt

—INTERMISSION—

ALFRED SCHNITTKÉ *Suite in the Old Style for Violin and Piano* (1972)

(1934-1998)

- ▶ Pastorale: Moderato
- ▶ Ballet: Allegro
- ▶ Minuet: Tempo di menuetto
- ▶ Fugue: Allegro
- ▶ Pantomime: Andantino

EDVARD GRIEG *Sonata No. 3 in C minor for Violin and Piano, Op. 45* (1886)

(1843-1907)

- ▶ Allegro molto ed appassionato
- ▶ Allegretto espressivo alla romanza
- ▶ Allegro animato

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NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Suite populaire espagnole for Violin and Piano

MANUEL DE FALLA

- ▶ Born November 23, 1876 in Cádiz, Spain.
- ▶ Died November 14, 1946 in Alta Gracia, Argentina.

Arranged by Paul Kochánski (1887-1934)

Composed in 1914; arranged in 1925.

- ▶ Premiered on January 14, 1915 in Madrid by soprano Luisa Vela and the composer.
- ▶ Tonight is the first CMS performance of this piece.
- ▶ Duration: 12 minutes

When Manuel de Falla was preparing his opera *La vida breve* for its first Paris performance, at the Opéra Comique on December 30, 1913 (it had been premiered in Nice on April 1st), he received two requests—one from the soprano Luisa Vela, who was performing the leading role of Salud in the cast of *La vida breve*; the other, from a Greek singing teacher. Vela was planning a series of solo recitals during the coming months, and she asked Falla to provide some songs in Spanish style for her programs. The Greek singing teacher wanted advice about the appropriate accompanimental style for some melodies from his homeland. Falla experimented with setting one of the Greek songs, and discovered that he could extrapolate a suitable harmonic idiom from the implications of the melody itself. He tried out this new technique in the songs he was preparing for Vela, which he had decided would be settings of seven popular indigenous melodies culled

from various regions of Spain. The *Siete canciones populares españolas* were largely completed by the time he retreated to Spain in 1914 in the face of the German invasion of France; he and Vela gave their premiere at the Ateneo in Madrid on January 14, 1915. The idiom of the piano accompaniments that Falla devised for his *Seven Popular Spanish Songs* was, according to the composer's biographer Suzanne Demarquez, derived from "the natural resonance ... and modal nature of each song, without in any way neglecting the grace, the sensitivity, the delicate style of his pianistic inspiration." In 1925, six of the *Seven Popular Spanish Songs* were arranged for violin and piano as the *Suite populaire espagnole* by Paul Kochánski (1887-1934), the noted Polish violinist and Juilliard faculty member who excelled in the performance of modern works, most notably those of Karol Szymanowski, and transcribed many works for his instrument.

El paño moruno (The Moorish Cloth), whose accompaniment was inspired by the steely brilliance of the guitar, comes from Murcia in southeastern Spain. *Nana* is an Andalusian lullaby. *Canción* (Song) exhibits the pattern of mixed rhythmic stresses that characterizes much of Spain's indigenous music. *Polo*, Andalusian in origin, evokes the Gypsy world of flamenco. *Asturiana* is a lament from the northern region of Asturias. The *Jota*, mainly associated with the northern province of Aragon, is one of the most familiar of Spanish dance forms. ♦

Sonata in D minor for Violin and Piano, Op. 121

ROBERT SCHUMANN

- ▶ Born June 8, 1810 in Zwickau, Germany.
- ▶ Died July 29, 1856 in Endenich, near Bonn.

Composed in 1851.

- ▶ Premiered in October 29, 1853 in Düsseldorf by pianist Clara Schumann and violinist Joseph Joachim.
- ▶ First CMS performance on April 24, 2014.
- ▶ Duration: 32 minutes

In September 1850, the Schumanns left Dresden to take up residence in Düsseldorf, where Robert assumed the post of municipal music director. He was welcomed to the city with a serenade, a concert of his works, a supper, and a ball. Though he had been cautioned a few years before by his friend Felix Mendelssohn that the local musicians were a shoddy bunch, he was eager to take on the variety of duties that awaited him in the Rhenish city, including conducting the orchestra's subscription concerts, leading performances of church music, giving private music lessons, organizing a chamber music society, and composing as time allowed. Despite Schumann's promising entry into the musical life of Düsseldorf, it was not long before things turned sour. His fragile mental health, his ineptitude as a conductor, and his frequent irritability created a rift with the musicians, and the orchestra's governing body presented him with the suggestion that, perhaps, his time would be better devoted entirely to composition. Schumann, increasingly unstable though at first determined to stay, complained to his wife, Clara, that he was being cruelly treated.

Proceedings were begun by the orchestra committee to relieve him of his position, but his resignation in 1853 ended the matter. By early the next year, Schumann's reason had completely given way. On February 27th, he tried to drown himself in the Rhine and a week later he was committed to the asylum in Endenich, where he lingered with fleeting moments of sanity for nearly two-and-a-half years. His faithful Clara was there with him when he died on July 29, 1856, at the age of 46.

Though Schumann's tenure in Düsseldorf proved difficult and ended sadly, he enjoyed there one of his greatest outbursts of creativity—nearly one-third of his compositions were written in the city, including his two Sonatas for Violin and Piano (A minor and D minor), which were composed in a rush during the autumn of 1851 (September 12-16 and October 26-November 2). A slow introduction juxtaposing bold, declamatory chords and short, quiet phrases opens the D minor Sonata. The principal theme of the first movement comprises a broad strain in widely spaced intervals and a short rising arpeggio that are traded conversationally between the participants. Contrast of mood and thematic material is provided by the subsidiary subject, a long, lyrical, arching melody. The main theme is recalled to close the exposition. The expansive and dramatic central section shows that Schumann in his later years had evolved into a fine craftsman of thematic development while retaining the Romantic passion of his youth. A full recapitulation of

the exposition's themes and a feverish coda close the movement. The scherzo is dynamic and fully scored for the piano; its impetuous progress is twice interrupted by trios of more subdued nature. The third movement is a set of richly textured variations on a simple, chorale-like tune presented by the pizzicato violin at the outset.

A variation in quicker tempo recalls the theme of the scherzo to lend unity to the work's overall structure. The expressive urgency of the opening movement returns with the finale, a tightly reasoned sonata form, which turns from the anxious region of D minor to end the sonata in the triumphant major key. ♦

Suite in the Old Style for Violin and Piano

ALFRED SCHNITTKE

- ▶ Born November 24, 1934 in Engels, Russia.
- ▶ Died August 3, 1998 in Hamburg, Germany.


Composed in 1972.

- ▶ Tonight is the first CMS performance of this piece.
- ▶ Duration: 16 minutes

Alfred Schnittke was born on November 24, 1934 in Engels on the Volga, in the Russian steppes, 500 miles southeast of Moscow. He showed enough musical ability to receive an audition at the Central Music School for Gifted Children in Moscow in May 1941, but the following month the Germans invaded Russia, and the opportunity for early training vanished. In 1945, after the war, Harry Schnittke, a journalist, got a job on a German-language newspaper in Vienna published by the occupying Russian forces. He brought his family to the city the following year, and there 12-year-old Alfred had the world of music opened to him through his first piano lessons and attendance at operas and concerts. The city of Mozart and Schubert inspired Schnittke's earliest attempts at composition.

When the Viennese paper ceased operations in 1948, the Schnittkes returned to Russia, where Alfred gained admittance to the October Revolution Music College in Moscow; in the autumn of 1953, he entered the Moscow Conservatory. His early works gained him a reputation as a modernist, and he was accepted as a member of the Composers' Union following his graduation in 1958 as much to tame his avant-garde tendencies as to promote his creative work. He tried writing Party-sanctioned pieces during the next few years—the 1959 cantata *Songs of War and Peace* was his first published score—but the fit was uncomfortable on both sides, and during the 1960s and early 1970s, when performances of his works were officially discouraged, he devoted most of his creative energy to scoring three or four films a year. In 1962, he started teaching part-time at the Moscow Conservatory (the Soviet officials would not grant him a full-time appointment), leaving little opportunity for original creative work. In 1972, he resigned from the conservatory to devote himself to composition.

Schnittke composed prolifically



IN DEVELOPING HIS OWN DISTINCTIVE MUSICAL SPEECH, SCHNITTKE SIFTED THROUGH A WIDE RANGE OF MUSIC, OLD AND NEW.

during the following years, and by the early 1980s, he had won an international reputation. In 1989, he accepted a grant that allowed him to live in Berlin for a year, after which he settled in Hamburg. During his later years, Schnittke was invited regularly to attend performances of his works from Tokyo to Leipzig to Santa Fe, but he was limited in traveling because of allergies, migraines, kidney disease, and three serious strokes suffered between 1985 and 1994, though he proved remarkably resilient in carrying on his creative work until his death in Hamburg on August 3, 1998.

In developing his own distinctive musical speech, Schnittke sifted through a wide range of music, old and new, and came to understand that he could forge a style of personal expression that could encompass, perhaps might even be formed from, references to other music and other ages. "A mixture of styles which are worked with as they are," he explained, "not in the sense of a synthesis but as 'poly-stylism,' in which the various idioms appear to speak as individual keys on a large keyboard." Though clearly products of the late 20th century, Schnittke's compositions are essentially old-

fashioned and Romantic in trying to create a sense of musical journey, of emotions excited, of memories evoked, of communication from an insightful author to an attentive mind and heart.

The *Suite in the Old Style* was composed in 1972 for violin and keyboard (piano or harpsichord), and arranged in 1987 for viola d'amore and chamber orchestra. (Vladimir Spivakov and Mikhail Milman made a transcription for chamber orchestra alone the following year.) The work is in a mock-Baroque style that places it in the line of such earlier musical homages to bygone eras as Tchaikovsky's *Mozartiana Suite*, Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*, and Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Couperin*. Schnittke's lilting *Pastorale* glows with a sunny sweetness that recalls tender movements by Vivaldi and Handel; the music stops before it reaches its apparent final cadence chord. The *Ballet* is nimble and bustling, with a brief central section that is more veiled in expression. The *Minuet* is slow in tempo and surprisingly lugubrious, giving it the effect of a sad lullaby. The *Fugue* is more a jaunty contrapuntal dialogue than a formally developed example of its genre. The closing *Pantomime*, a sort of modern *Musical Joke*, tosses satiric gibes at the banalities of some lesser Baroque music. Some dissonant harmonies escape to mark the movement's mid-point, after which the banal music resumes unflustered. Like the *Pastorale*, the *Pantomime* ends before it makes it to the expected final resolution. ♦

Sonata No. 3 in C minor for Violin and Piano, Op. 45

EDVARD GRIEG

- ▶ Born June 15, 1843 in Bergen, Norway.
- ▶ Died there on September 4, 1907.

Composed in 1886.

- ▶ Premiered on December 10, 1887 in Leipzig by the composer and violinist Adolf Brodsky.
- ▶ First CMS performance on December 2, 1973.
- ▶ Duration: 25 minutes

After two years as conductor and music director of Bergen's Harmonien Music Society, Edvard Grieg retired from that post in 1882 to devote himself fully to composition and touring, and to preserving his always-frail health. Grieg had never composed easily, however, and as he grew older he felt the need to regiment his work patterns with some care, so even before he had left his conducting position he made the following proposal to Max Abraham, head of the Leipzig publishing firm of Peters and a man who had come to be a close friend during the years of their professional association: "I notice to my surprise that composing is good for my constitution, providing, so to speak, that I am forced into it. I believe that if someone offered to pay me 1,000 *thaler* a year, my conscience would give me no rest until I had finished the agreed quantum." Abraham replied immediately, offering Grieg an annual stipend of 3,000 *marks*, and requested a second piano concerto, several solo piano pieces, a concert overture, and a piano trio or violin sonata or some shorter pieces for violin and piano. It was understood,

however, that the agreement would be flexible so that the type and scope of the works involved would be left largely to the composer's discretion. The first work to be completed under this scheme, during the spring of 1883, was the Sonata for Cello and Piano in A minor, Op. 36. The second piano concerto, much to the principals' regret, never did take wing ("Pegasus won't budge," lamented the composer after being unable to get beyond a few sketches), but Grieg did turn out a set of *Lyrical Pieces* for piano almost annually whose popularity came to make his name well known on both sides of the Atlantic in the decades around the turn of the 20th century.

In 1886, Grieg was inspired to add to this slowly growing collection of instrumental works by a visit of the Italian violinist Teresina Tua to Troidhaugen, his home near Bergen. Though not yet 20, Teresina had already established her reputation with a brilliantly successful European tour and an acclaimed appearance at London's Crystal Palace; when she stopped in Norway to see Grieg, she was on her way to tour America. Grieg was charmed by this attractive young virtuoso—"the little fiddle-fairy on my troll-hill," he called her—and said that it would be entirely due to her if he were "again to perpetrate something for the violin." Teresina's impression must have been strong on the 43-year-old composer, because immediately after her departure, Grieg composed his Violin Sonata No. 3 in C minor.

The sonata's first movement,

dramatic and passionate in a degree rare in Grieg's music, opens with an anxious main theme in short-breathed phrases. The music swells to a climax, and then relaxes to admit the lyrical subsidiary theme, first sung by the violin and then shared with the piano. The music becomes hushed, pauses, and continues into the development section with a broad violin melody above a rippling accompaniment that proves to be a transformation of the main theme in long note values. A passage of accumulating intensity leads to the full recapitulation of the earlier themes and a recall of the development theme. A coda based on the principal subject brings the movement to a vehement close. The second movement is a three-part form (A-B-A) in which the outer sections are devoted to a tender melody of folksong simplicity and the central episode to a village-dance strain built from



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short repeating phrases. The finale, an abbreviated sonata structure that lacks a central development section, takes a vigorous, gapped-scale melody, evocative of the modalism of folk music, as its main theme. The contrasting second subject, presented quietly in the violin's low register, is smooth and comforting. Both the main and second themes return in intensified settings in the recapitulation before the sonata ends with a powerful coda in which the main theme breaks into the victorious key of C major. ♦

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

ALEXANDER SITKOVETSKY

▶ Violinist Alexander Sitkovetsky was praised by *Gramophone* magazine for "his confident, entirely natural musicianship." He has performed with the Netherlands Philharmonic, the Philharmonia, Royal Philharmonic, Tokyo Symphony, Brussels Philharmonic, the European Union Chamber Orchestra, Academy of St Martin in the Fields, St. Petersburg Symphony, Moscow Symphony, Welsh National Opera, and the BBC Concert Orchestra. In recent seasons he made his debut with the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra in Tokyo and with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra in Glasgow, as well as with the Riga Sinfonietta, Poznan Philharmonic, and the Orquesta Filarmónica de Bolivia. He was guest soloist in two nationwide tours of the UK with the Brussels Philharmonic and the St. Petersburg Symphony. He toured Australia as guest director with the Australian Chamber Orchestra Collective. He also performed a six-date series of sold-out concerts with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall. Other recent performances include his debut with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Munich Chamber Orchestra, and the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra as well as a UK tour with the Tonkünstler Orchestra Vienna. His new recording for CPO of Andrzej Panufnik's Violin Concerto has been critically acclaimed and won the 2015 ICMA Special Achievement Award. A former member of Chamber Music Society Two, he was born in Moscow into a family with an established musical tradition and studied at the Menuhin School.

WU QIAN

▶ Winner of a 2016 Lincoln Center Emerging Artist Award, as well as classical music's bright young star award for 2007 by *The Independent*, pianist Wu Qian has maintained a busy international career for over a decade. She has appeared as soloist in many international venues including the Wigmore, Royal Festival, and Bridgewater halls in the UK, City Hall in Hong Kong, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, and the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. As a soloist she has appeared with the Konzerthaus Orchester in Berlin, the Brussels Philharmonic, the London Mozart Players, I Virtuosi Italiani, the European Union Chamber Orchestra, and the Munich Symphoniker. She won first prize in the Trio di Trieste Duo Competition and the Kommerzbank Piano Trio competition in Frankfurt, and has received numerous other awards. Appearances this season include performances in the UK, Germany, USA, Korea, Australia, Spain, and The Netherlands and collaborations with Alexander Sitkovetsky, Leticia Moreno, Cho-Liang Lin, Clive Greensmith, and Wu Han. Her debut recording of Schumann, Liszt, and Alexander Prior was met with universal critical acclaim. She is a founding member of the Sitkovetsky Piano Trio with which, in addition to performing in major concert halls and series around the world, she has released two recordings on the BIS label and also a disc of Brahms and Schubert on the Wigmore Live Label. Wu Qian is a member of Chamber Music Society Two.

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