

CMS Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

SUNDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 23, 2025, AT 5:00 ▶ 4,639TH CONCERT

Alice Tully Hall, Starr Theater, Adrienne Arsht Stage

Home of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

Benjamin Beilman, violin

Gloria Chien, piano

An Evening with Benjamin Beilman and Gloria Chien

Eugène Ysaÿe **Sonata in D minor for Violin, Op. 27, No. 3, "Ballade"**
(1858–1931) (1924)

Béla Bartók **Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano, BB 85** (1922)
(1881–1945) ▶ Molto moderato
▶ Allegretto
BEILMAN, CHIEN

Karol Szymanowski **Nocturne and Tarantella for Violin and Piano, Op. 28**
(1882–1937) (1915)
BEILMAN, CHIEN

INTERMISSION

Chris Rogerson **Arietta for Violin and Piano** (New York Premiere)
(b. 1988) (2021)
BEILMAN, CHIEN

César Franck **Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano** (1886)
(1822–1890) ▶ Allegretto ben moderato
▶ Allegro
▶ Recitativo-Fantasia
▶ Allegretto poco mosso
BEILMAN, CHIEN

This concert is underwritten, in part, by **Irene R. Miller**.

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From the Artistic Directors

Dear Listener,

Since the earliest days of the Baroque period, works for a single instrument partnered with keyboard figured prominently in the chamber music genre. The multiple duo sonatas by Johann Sebastian Bach, Arcangelo Corelli, Antonio Vivaldi, and George Frideric Handel (to name a few) were performed in intimate settings alongside trios and *concerti grossi*. Real duos, in which both parts are of equal importance, form the backbone of our repertoire. Indeed, composers such as those included on today's program often wrote some of their most significant works for just two instruments.

For artists, the duo recital offers both daunting challenges and unparalleled opportunities. For example, Benjamin Beilman and Gloria Chien must move between musical eras, composer nationalities, and contrasting musical languages with ease and authority. Always exposed to the spotlight, they must be thoroughly prepared down to the smallest details. And while negotiating their often technically difficult parts, they must make music *together*, as all expert chamber artists are expected to do.

But as our musicians are all eager to climb ever-higher mountains, Ben and Gloria will take away from this concert a milestone experience. With this program of their own design, they will say: "This music is of the utmost importance to us; this who we are." And, as true servants of the art form, they will widen our concept of chamber music, proving conclusively that the duo genre holds musical riches on par with those of the string quartet and the piano trio.

We are grateful to Gloria and Ben for sharing their extraordinary artistry with CMS through this rich and unique program. Please join us in giving them the warmest welcome.

Enjoy the performance,



David Finckel



Wu Han

ARTISTIC DIRECTORS



Notes on the Program

By Nicky Swett

Eugène Ysaÿe

Sonata in D minor for Violin, Op. 27, No. 3, "Ballade"

- ▶ Born July 16, 1858, in Liège
- ▶ Died May 12, 1931, in Brussels

Composed in 1923

- ▶ First CMS performance on February 16, 1980, by violinist James Buswell
- ▶ Duration: 7 minutes

In the summer of 1923, Eugène Ysaÿe heard his friend Joseph Szigeti perform one of J. S. Bach's solo violin sonatas. Afterwards, on his way to a sojourn at the beach in Le Zoute, Ysaÿe couldn't stop thinking about the concert: "When one hears an artist like Szigeti, who is able to accommodate his playing to the rectangular lines of the great classics as easily as he can to the expressive melodies of the Romantics, one feels how absorbing it would be to compose a work for the violin whilst keeping ever before one the style of a particular violinist." On arrival at the resort, he disappeared into his room for a couple of days and emerged with sketches of Six Violin Sonatas (Op. 27), each imagined with the sound of a specific artist ringing in his ears.

The first, second, and fourth sonatas allude both to their target violinist and to Bach's approach to creating solo violin music. The others move away from Bach, focusing more exclusively on the violinist dedicatees. Sonata No. 3 in D minor was for George Enescu, whose approach to performing and writing music was infused with the techniques, micro-tonality, and structures of Romanian folk music. In his one-movement "Ballade" for Enescu, Ysaÿe refrains from directly appropriating these elements of style, and yet he does justice to his friend's enormous flair as a player. A slow introduction explores uncannily, augmented sonorities, expressed primarily through chains of minor sixths, setting a tense and dramatic scene. Then the tempo kicks in and the violinist is off, shooting from low string to high and back down through an explosive, springing gesture. A more delicate, vaguely Baroque take on this motif occurs in the middle of the piece, but the shouting passions of the snapping rhythm soon take over once again before Ysaÿe leads us to a breathtaking close.

Béla Bartók

Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano, BB 85

- ▶ Born March 25, 1881, in Nagyszentmiklós, Hungary (now Sînnicolau Mare, Romania)
- ▶ Died September 26, 1945, in New York City

Composed in 1922

- ▶ First CMS performance on December 5, 1976, by violinist Itzhak Perlman and pianist Richard Goode
- ▶ Duration: 19 minutes

The late 1910s and early 1920s were a time of financial and professional frustration for Béla Bartók. He could not fully support his family on his salary as a piano professor at the Royal Hungarian Academy of Music in Budapest, and so he had to write more articles for publication and play more concert tours than he would have liked. It was only at the end of 1921 that he found time and motivation to do the kind of focused composing that satisfied him. “Béla took me by surprise with the news—he is composing again at long last,” his wife Márta Ziegler Bartók wrote in a letter from October of that year. “I hardly contained myself this morning when, as a birthday present, he showed me the violin sonata on which he is working.”

According to Márta, Bartók was startled out of this period of creative dormancy by a productive reading session he had that autumn with a prolific young Hungarian-British violinist, Jelly d’Arányi. They were planning to play concerts with one another in London, where she was based, and they got together in Budapest to select repertoire. On this occasion, d’Arányi apparently introduced her colleague to some recently released works by the Polish composer Karol Szymanowski, including *Myths*, Op. 11, and *Nocturne and Tarantella*, Op. 28, and Bartók was clearly stimulated by them as he requested scores to the pieces from his publisher the day after their meeting. D’Arányi was very direct in letters following this rehearsal that

she wanted him to write a new sonata for them to play together, and he gladly obliged. He completed his Violin Sonata No. 1 in December of 1921 with a dedication to her, though scholars have suggested that much of this piece was actually drafted before their encounter. He quickly followed this up with a second violin sonata, finished in 1922 and again dedicated to d’Arányi; they premiered it together in London in May of 1923.

Bartók’s Second Violin Sonata follows a two-part form typical of rhapsodic works, with a down-tempo, lyrical first movement, followed by a spinning, virtuosic second movement. In the opening *Molto moderato*, the two players almost never change notes at the same time. One voice holds, while the other extemporizes on expressive figures with flexible and capricious rhythms. The movement builds to a climax full of dissonant double-stopped notes in the violin part—especially gnarly major seconds and major sevenths, intervals that may have been inspired by Szymanowski’s explorations of violin technique in the works that Bartók was struck by.

In the *Allegretto*, the two musicians come together rhythmically for a seemingly endless sequence of varied bursts of intensity and activity. The music is very changeable; once Bartók has established a groove, he immediately breaks it by slowing down, speeding up, or changing gears entirely. A stirring echo of the opening movement played in ghostly artificial harmonics disrupts the action. At the very end of the piece, after a euphoric solo passage for the piano, he again returns to the contemplative, wandering music from the first movement, and he finishes on a simple C-major triad. Sometimes, turns to traditional tonality late in Bartók’s works come off as sarcastic, but here it seems quite sincere—a tasteful resolution to the complexly crafted work that precedes it.

Karol Szymanowski

Nocturne and Tarantella for Violin and Piano, Op. 28

- ▶ Born October 3, 1882, in Tymoszwówka, Russian Empire (now Tymoshivka, Ukraine)
- ▶ Died March 29, 1937, in Lausanne, Switzerland
- Composed in 1915**
- ▶ First CMS performance on October 24, 2013, by violinist Benjamin Beilman and pianist Gloria Chien
- ▶ Duration: 7 minutes

Though the Polish composer Karol Szymanowski is perhaps most famous for his creative writing for the violin, he was not himself a practitioner of the instrument. He relied extensively on consultations and correspondence with the violinist Paweł Kochański. Szymanowski's First Violin Concerto, which he completed in 1916 with help from Kochański, was among the first solo works for that instrument to exhibit an unapologetically modernist outlook. Many of the shorter concert pieces he wrote for violin and piano that decade are similarly daring in terms of formal and harmonic language.

He composed his Nocturne and Tarantella in 1915 while he was a guest at Zarudzie, a grand estate close to his home, along with Kochański and another friend of theirs, August Iwanski. Szymanowski's biographer B. M. Maciejewski describes how the group got a bit bored, but fortunately Iwanski "came across a few bottles of old cognac. In the tipsy mood which ensued, Szymanowski jotted down on a bit of paper his merry and carefree Tarantella, Op. 28, for violin and piano. Almost needless to say, the work was dedicated to Iwanski—the cognac finder." Szymanowski grouped this

rollicking, drunken Tarantella together with a contrasting Nocturne, but the piece was shelved until it was premiered by Kochański in 1920 and published in 1921.

The Nocturne opens with a melody played by the violin in perfect fifths. This was an almost unheard-of technical instruction on the instrument at this time. For most so-called double stops, the player can use different fingers of the left hand to block different strings, but to play fifths, violinists have to press two strings down with one finger. Doing this accurately for many fifths in a row is extremely difficult. It is likely that Szymanowski wrote this passage under the encouragement of Kochański, whose abilities and openness to technical innovation allowed the composer to open up many new sonorities on the instrument. The resulting sound has a haunting, ancient quality to it, rather like the medieval practice of "organum," in which singers would intone the same line of chant a fifth apart. For contrast, Szymanowski writes a stirring B-section in a Spanish style, complete with guitar-strum pizzicatos. The Tarantella is based on a snappy theme that captures the debaucherous enthusiasm of its moment of creation. The piece is in the **♩** time that is typical of this wild Italian dance type, but Szymanowski revels in disrupting the characteristic rhythmic patterns of the genre by throwing in virtuosic sets of quadruplets and quintuplets. At very end, an unholy mix of duples, triples, and quintuplets means that the subtleties of rhythm disappear, replaced by an emphatic, ecstatic banging on the big beats.

Chris Rogerson

***Arietta* for Violin and Piano**

► Born 1988, in Buffalo, New York

Composed in 2024

- This is the New York premiere of this piece.
- Duration: 5 minutes

The American composer Chris Rogerson writes lyrical, expressive works with clear connections to music of the past. His Solo Violin Partita, commissioned by violinist Benjamin Beilman in 2021, fills in the forms found in J. S. Bach's solo violin works with a more contemporary harmonic sensibility. By starting quite close to a historical model and gradually moving away from it, Rogerson comfortably leads the listener into the unknown.

When Beilman got married in 2023, he asked Rogerson, a good friend of his, to

write some music for walking down the aisle. Rogerson obliged with an aria for two violins and two cellos (no violas—since, according to Beilman, all the available violists were in the wedding party). In 2024, Rogerson made a more concert-ready version of this music, editing and expanding it into the *Arietta* for Violin and Piano, and making it the first entry in a larger collection of works for these instruments. The short piece opens with a soaring, singable violin line, accompanied by plaintive, steady chords in the piano. True to his style, the composer carefully introduces more dissonant harmonies and tense, conflicting rhythmic combinations. It reaches a soaring, majestic climax before fading back to the lyrical fare with which it began.

César Franck

Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano

► Born December 10, 1822, in Liège

► Died November 8, 1890, in Paris

Composed in 1886

- First CMS performance on April 11, 1976, by violinist Kyung-wha Chung and pianist Charles Wadsworth
- Duration: 30 minutes

The violinist Eugène Ysaÿe married Louise Bourdau in the small Belgian town of Arlon in September of 1886. Bourdau's father, an army major, initially had reservations about letting his daughter marry a musician who would be on tour all the time, but he eventually relented when Ysaÿe accepted a stable job at the Brussels Conservatoire. The event turned out to be a jolly affair: Ysaÿe's father Nicolas composed and conducted a wedding march for the occasion, and the ceremony

was followed by a long, drunken banquet at a nearby hotel.

After many toasts and speeches, the composer Charles Bordes solemnly delivered a substantial manuscript to Ysaÿe on behalf of the eminent French-Belgian composer César Franck. Franck couldn't be there himself, so instead he expressed his good wishes for the couple by offering them the dedication of a 30-minute Violin Sonata in A major full of heartfelt, romantic sentiment. According to the biography of the violinist by his son, Antoine, Ysaÿe leafed through the score on the spot and said to the crowd "Nothing in the world could have done me greater honor or given me more pleasure than this gift. But it is not for me alone. It is for the whole world. . . . Whenever I play this work I shall be thinking of this happy day, and the art

and the affection which Franck has put into his music will spread its glow over our family life.” Ysaÿe decided to play the piece right away, indicating that “I shall understand it and I shall try my best to interpret it as I feel it in my heart.”

He had a quick rehearsal with the pianist Marie-Léontine Bordes-Pène, Charles’s sister. Luckily, given the complexity of the piano part, *she* was not sight-reading; she had already worked on the piece a bit with Franck back in Paris. The sonata soon became a staple of Ysaÿe’s touring programs, which helped to spread awareness of Franck as a composer. He had much success as an organist, but his compositions remained somewhat obscure in the 1880s, and Ysaÿe hoped that by championing this work he could bring attention to a musician “whose genius has not been sufficiently recognized up until now.”

The famous impromptu premiere of the sonata was delivered on an untuned keyboard at the reception venue, with Ysaÿe playing the first violin they could scrounge up. Most appropriately, the work opens with a sublime sequence of ambiguous harmonies in the keyboard part—deliciously orchestrated ninth chords that, in retrospect, sound like jazzy strains of cocktail piano in the background at a wedding dinner. The violin plays the part of the singer, presenting sweet, lilting, melodic lines that twice build to passionate climaxes. In the second movement, a passionate *Allegro*, Franck surrounds a burning, syncopated melody with a flurry of activity

for the keyboard. As with most of his works, this piece was composed using a cyclic form: Franck includes subtle quotations of the first movement’s main theme in all the movements of the piece. Admittedly, in the *Allegro*, the pace of activity is so frantic, and the sweep and appeal of the new themes he has introduced is so great, that references to the earlier movement are easy to miss.

In the third movement, a loosely structured *Recitativo-Fantasia*, the sonata takes a tragic turn. The violin’s entrances are pained cadenzas, marked by dramatic trills and harmonically surprising chords. The second half of the movement alternates between a somber, prayerful motif and a screaming melody in the violin that slides up and down the instrument with aching intensity. The closing *Allegretto poco mosso* is a touching canon, in which the two instruments play the same melody offset by one measure, as if one lover is following the other into the future. The gap between the two voices narrows to half a measure later in the movement, as if the characters are chasing one another as they make their way to becoming completely one unified instrument. Though the outlook in this finale is mostly positive, Franck includes a quotation of the screaming theme from the third movement. It sounds as if he is issuing a slightly stern reminder that even the most joyful and successful relationships can’t escape moments of conflict and grief.

Program notes © Nicky Swett

About the Artists



SOPHIE ZHANG

Benjamin Beilman

Benjamin Beilman's 2025–26 season highlights include appearances with the Minnesota Orchestra, Dresden Philharmonic, Antwerp Symphony, Solistes Européens Luxembourg, Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, and Nashville Symphony. He will also curate, stage, and lead two chamber music programs at Sun Valley Music Festival, and continue his ongoing recital partnership with pianist Steven Osborne. In the summer, he embarks on a month-long tour of Australasia, including appearances with the Sydney Symphony, Tasmanian Symphony,

West Australian Symphony, and Auckland Philharmonia. He studied at the Curtis Institute of Music with Ida Kavafian and Pamela Frank, and with Christian Tetzlaff at the Kronberg Academy. He has received many prestigious accolades including a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship, an Avery Fisher Career Grant, and a London Music Masters Award. He has also recorded works by Stravinsky, Janáček, and Schubert for Warner Classics, and is an alum of CMS's Bowers Program. Beilman performs with the ex-Balaković F. X. Tourte bow (c. 1820), and plays the "Ysayé" Guarneri del Gesù from 1740, generously on loan from the Nippon Music Foundation.



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Gloria Chien

Pianist Gloria Chien has a diverse musical life as a performer, concert presenter, and educator. She made her orchestral debut at age 16 with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Thomas Dausgaard. In 2009 she launched String Theory, a chamber music series in Chattanooga, and the following year was appointed Director of the Chamber Music Institute at Music@Menlo. In 2017, she joined her husband, violinist Soovin Kim, as Co-Artistic Director of the Lake Champlain Chamber Music Festival in Burlington, Vermont. The duo became Artistic Directors at Chamber Music Northwest in 2020, and were named the recipients of the 2021 Award for Extraordinary Service to Chamber Music from CMS. Ms. Chien received her bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees from New England Conservatory, where she was named the Advisor for the prestigious Institute for Concert Artists in 2024. She is an artist-in-residence at Lee University in Cleveland, Tennessee; a Steinway Artist; and an alum 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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