

CMS Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

TUESDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 24, 2026, AT 7:30 ▶ 4,675TH CONCERT

Alice Tully Hall, Starr Theater, Adrienne Arsht Stage

Home of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

Gloria Chien, piano
Gilles Vonsattel, piano
Stella Chen, violin
Julian Rhee, violin
Arnaud Sussmann, violin

Winter Festival II: The Age of Romance

Franz Schubert (1797–1828) **Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano, D. 574,
“Grand Duo” (1817)**

- ▶ Allegro moderato
- ▶ Scherzo: Presto
- ▶ Andantino
- ▶ Allegro vivace

CHEN, VONSATTEL

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897) **Sonata No. 1 in G major for Violin and Piano, Op. 78
(1878–79)**

- ▶ Vivace ma non troppo
- ▶ Adagio
- ▶ Allegro molto moderato

SUSSMANN, VONSATTEL

INTERMISSION

PLEASE TURN OFF CELL PHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES.

Photographing, sound recording, or videotaping this performance is prohibited.

Amy Beach **Romance for Violin and Piano, Op. 23** (1893)
(1867–1944) CHEN, CHIEN

Felix Mendelssohn **Sonata in F major for Violin and Piano**
(1809–1847) (1838, rev. Menuhin 1953)
▶ Allegro vivace
▶ Adagio
▶ Assai vivace
RHEE, CHIEN

This concert is underwritten, in part, by **Frederick L. Jacobson**.

This concert features members of the Bowers Program, CMS's residency for outstanding early career musicians. The Bowers Program is supported by the **Estate of Ann S. Bowers**. Additional support by the **Marion F. Goldin Charitable Fund, Colburn Foundation, Dr. Nancy Maruyama and Mr. Charles Cahn Jr.**, and **Patricia Kopec Selman and Jay E. Selman, MD**.

Jerome L. Greene Foundation is the 2025–2026 CMS Season Sponsor.

All CMS digital programming is supported by the **Hauser Fund for Media and Technology**.

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.

From the Artistic Directors


Dear Listener,

During the last year of Schubert's life, 1828, the Italian virtuoso Niccolò Paganini took Vienna by storm, performing nine sold-out recitals. Schubert used proceeds from his only public concert to purchase a ticket. While the music world buzzed with accounts of Paganini's unfathomable technical feats (many believed he was possessed by the devil), Schubert came away from the concert raving about a less-documented aspect of Paganini's artistry. Schubert excitedly told his friends the next day: "Last night, I heard an angel sing."

It will be obvious as we listen to this concert's opening work that Schubert already knew, more than a decade earlier, that the violin could sing. For that matter, even Johann Sebastian Bach, along with his contemporaries, composed music for the violin that begged for vocal treatment (there are many cantata movements by Bach in which a solo violin part is intertwined, in intimate musical conversation, with the voice). However, if we believe those who profess to know exactly how the violin was played during the Baroque era, its tone resembled the human voice very little until the 19th century, when violinists such as Paganini, Vieuxtemps, Wieniawski, and notably Ysaÿe, reimagined the voice of the violin to sound as we know it today.

Composers responded with a virtual tsunami of Romantic music for the violin which mined the instrument's vocal potential. It was a timely adaptation of the instrument that allowed music to effectively represent the soul of the Romantic artist: emotional, personal, passionate, and expressive. In addition to the composers on today's program, that vocal treatment of the violin can be heard in music of the era from England, Russia, Spain, Bohemia, and France, to name a few. The imaginations of the great violinists of the 19th century, and their willingness to embrace the vocal tradition, opened the door for Romantic music to bridge the Classical and modern ages, inspiring a body of music of unrivaled popularity with audiences and players alike.

Enjoy the performance,



David Finckel



Wu Han

ARTISTIC DIRECTORS



Notes on the Program

Franz Schubert

Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano, D. 574, "Grand Duo"

- ▶ Born January 31, 1797, in Vienna
- ▶ Died November 19, 1828, in Vienna

Composed in 1817

- ▶ First CMS performance on November 4, 1983, by violinist Josef Suk and pianist Charles Wadsworth
- ▶ Duration: 22 minutes

Franz Schubert was, unlike many leading figures of the Viennese Classical style, born in Vienna itself. The Schubert family greatly valued music education; Franz's first piano lessons came from his older brother Ignaz, while his father introduced him to the violin. A talented child, he received a scholarship to a prestigious boarding school, where he took advantage of rigorous academics alongside opportunities for high-level music study.

Schubert's earliest known compositions date from around age 13 and reflect the strong influence of predecessors like Mozart and Beethoven. A surge of creativity in 1814–15 saw the composition of what some scholars estimate to be an average of approximately 65 measures of new music per day, on top of his duties as a schoolteacher, his own composition lessons, and social obligations.

The first three sonatas for violin and piano—published initially as sonatinas owing to the publisher's desire to capture the attention of amateur musicians—came in 1816, following this remarkably prolific period. Though deserving of full sonata status and showing no lack of substance, they stop short of the ambitious scale and

emotional depth associated with Schubert's more mature sonatas.

The same cannot be said of the 1817 Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano, which marks a turning point in Schubert's approach to this genre. The piece opens with a lilting melody in the left hand of the piano, setting a tone of simplicity and grace. The primary theme unfolds in a conversational manner, with both players trading motivic snippets. The violin takes the lead in the development's plaintive melody tinged with subtle anxiety. The first movement's closing gesture fades out to a *pianissimo* dynamic level from which the next movement begins. In a nod to Beethoven, Schubert opts for a scherzo instead of a minuet here—a departure from the earlier sonatas. The outer sections are buoyant and playful, while the calm C-major trio is elegant. Its chromatic lines and grace-note ornaments evoke the refined charm of a Viennese dance, and its tonality prepares the listener for the next movement.

The *Andantino* is a true duet between the piano and violin, with a tender melody that highlights Schubert's gift for lyricism. The movement does not shy away from tonal exploration, visiting numerous distant key areas throughout and, even in its final measures, oscillating between C major and C minor—a quintessential Schubertian gesture. The sonata concludes with a vibrant, dancing finale.

Program note © Jack Slavin

Johannes Brahms

Sonata No. 1 in G major for Violin and Piano, Op. 78

- ▶ Born May 7, 1833, in Hamburg
- ▶ Died April 3, 1897, in Vienna
- Composed in 1878–79**
- ▶ First CMS performance on January 25, 1980, by violinist James Buswell and pianist Lee Luvisi
- ▶ Duration: 26 minutes

Brahms's Sonata No. 1 in G major is his first published work for violin and piano, though he had reportedly drafted several earlier sonatas that were never published. He composed Opus 78 over the course of the summers of 1878 and 1879, which he spent in Pörtschach am Wörthersee, a lakeside resort town. The sonata is often dubbed "Regensonate" ("Rain Sonata"), highlighting its references to two of Brahms's songs—*Regenlied* and *Nachklang*—both set to poetry by Klaus Groth. Though the clearest connections to the songs are in the third movement, their influence is present throughout the piece.

The first movement opens with a singing violin line over sustained chords in the piano. The piano texture unfurls into rolling arpeggios while the violin continues its dotted (long-short) melody. Several scholars suggest that this movement may point to Beethoven's final violin sonata, also in G major.

The E-flat major *Adagio* is cast in a ternary (A–B–A) form, introduced by a solemn passage in the piano's right hand supported by an arpeggiated accompaniment. The expressive yet restrained outer theme—delivered first by the piano's chorale-style writing and later echoed by the violin's double stops—frames a

contrasting middle section whose stark dotted rhythms evoke a funeral march. Brahms sent an early version of this movement's first theme to Clara Schumann, with whom he shared a very close personal and musical relationship. He wrote on the back of the copy, "If you play what is on the reverse side quite slowly, it will tell you, perhaps more clearly than I otherwise could myself, how sincerely I think of you and Felix, even about his violin, which however surely is at rest." Felix Schumann, Brahms's godson and a gifted violinist and poet, was terminally ill with tuberculosis at the time and died shortly after Brahms sent Clara the excerpt.

The finale is in G minor, the parallel key of the sonata's tonic—an uncommon tonal choice for a closing movement. The violin melody recalls *Regenlied*, as does the accompaniment pattern, which mimics the sound of raindrops hitting a surface. Clara reacted to this movement in a letter written in the summer of 1879: "You can imagine my delight when, in the third movement, I discovered my melody, that I love so enthusiastically, with its charming eighth-note movement! I say 'my' because I cannot believe that anyone could find this melody so delightful and full of melancholy as I." To receive such praise from Clara was likely the greatest compliment Brahms could have received; she captures the unique confluence in this sonata of warm lyricism, nostalgia, and a quiet sense of loss.

Program note © Jack Slavin

Amy Beach

Romance for Violin and Piano, Op. 23

- ▶ Born September 5, 1867, in Henniker, New Hampshire
 - ▶ Died December 27, 1944, in New York City
- Composed in 1893**
- ▶ First CMS performance on March 20, 2025, by violinist Kristin Lee and pianist Michael Stephen Brown
 - ▶ Duration: 6 minutes

Brilliant from a young age, Amy Beach (née Cheney) showed her remarkable aptitude as early as the first year of her life when she was already able to hear and then repeat up to forty melodies while staying on key. As a toddler she could improvise vocal lines alongside her mother and was composing small pieces by age four. By her teenage years she had developed into a local celebrity, making her Boston debut at sixteen and going on to solo as a pianist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra multiple times.

At age 18, Beach married a prominent Boston doctor, 24 years her senior, who was also an amateur vocalist. In keeping with the custom at the time for a woman of her social status to center her life around the home, her husband requested that she limit public performances and donate any earnings to charity. However, recognizing her talent, he simultaneously encouraged her to shift the focus of her career to composition. Having had only a brief formal education in

harmony and counterpoint, Beach leaned upon the training she received from conductor Wilhelm Gericke who had empowered her with the skills to teach herself any number of musical forms and styles. This soon made her a prolific composer, who earned the deep respect of her New England colleagues, including G. W. Chadwick, who counted her as “one of the boys.”

Though Beach largely waited until the death of her husband in 1910 to resume her place as a performer as well as a composer, she did occasionally take the stage for rare opportunities. In 1893 she traveled to Chicago to participate in the Women’s Music Congress as part of the World’s Columbian Exposition. At the event, she accompanied the renowned violin virtuoso Maud Powell in a performance of her *Romance*, a work bursting at the seams with heartfelt passion. The brief work is constructed out of a yearning theme that rises and falls with increasing intensity. Beach builds the tension so seamlessly, and blends the piano and violin so thoroughly, that the entirety of the piece seems to be one large rapturous sigh until it dreamily exhales. It was met with such enthusiasm the day of its premiere that it was encored immediately.

Program note © Kathryn Bacasmot

Felix Mendelssohn

Sonata in F major for Violin and Piano

- ▶ Born February 3, 1809, in Hamburg
- ▶ Died November 4, 1847, in Leipzig
- Composed in 1838, revised by Yehudi Menuhin in 1953**
- ▶ First CMS performance on March 18, 1997, by violinist Ani Kavafian and pianist Anne-Marie McDermott
- ▶ Duration: 24 minutes

The late 1830s were a busy time for Felix Mendelssohn. He was conducting all over Europe, curating concert programs in Leipzig, and doing a good amount of composing as well. In the first part of 1838, he worked on an extroverted sonata in F major for Ferdinand David, concertmaster of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, his close friend, and a valued informant on the subtleties of violin technique. Mendelssohn finished a first version of it in June of that year, but in his typically self-effacing manner he found it “wretched” and determined that the first movement needed revising. He was still working away on it the following summer, but he never got around to completing his adjustments to the piece. Perhaps his attention was drawn to an even more ambitious project for the violin, the Concerto in E minor that saw its triumphant premiere in 1845 but had been on his mind for the better part of a decade, and which he once told David “gives me no peace.”

The F-major Violin Sonata was listed in the catalogue of Mendelssohn’s unpublished works provided by his brother Paul in an 1863 volume of the composer’s correspondence, but nobody took up the piece until well over a century after it was written. In the early 1950s, the violinist Yehudi Menuhin determined to revive it, and he produced the first published performance edition by combining elements from Mendelssohn’s original draft with some of the composer’s sketched

revisions. When Menuhin debuted it at Carnegie Hall in January of 1953, the reviewer from the *New York Times*, Howard Taubman, was impressed by the piece and performance but amusingly skeptical of the work’s provenance: “This was a first performance of Sonata in F, which Mr. Menuhin claims to be a hitherto unknown work by Mendelssohn. Mr. Menuhin has been digging up other pieces by Mendelssohn and Schumann in recent years.” Though Taubman was mostly wrong to doubt the sonata’s authenticity, it is true that the version of it he heard represented Menuhin’s spin on the source material; at least the first movement is perhaps better conceived of as “Mostly Mendelssohn.”

The mood in the opening *Allegro vivace* is unapologetically upbeat. All the themes are joined together by a characteristic dotted figure that hops with pleasure even when it’s found in a more lyrical setting. Many of the musical ideas are presented in the fashion of a Mozart violin sonata: the piano goes first, and then the violin repeats the piano’s line while the keyboard builds up rhythmic energy with lively accompaniment figures.

The touching *Adagio* begins with a theme in four-part harmony in the tenor and bass range of the keyboard. When the violin enters above, the instrument almost sounds like a crooning soprano, supported by a chorus of male voices. Though the texture changes at various points, and the violin eventually picks up some pianistic, arpeggiated accompaniment figures, a Romantic, vocal quality endures for the entirety of the movement.

Mendelssohn was in rather good spirits the spring he drafted this piece. His newly designed “historical concerts,” which brought together repertoire of past composers like Handel, Bach, and Beethoven, had proven fairly successful. His first child, Carl, had

been born in February, and he and his wife Cécile had the chance to introduce the baby to his family at a rewarding reunion in Berlin in April. If the warmth and songfulness of the *Adagio* speak to Mendelssohn's satisfaction at this time in his life, the perpetual-motion *Assai vivace* expresses his general optimism.

It has the same twinkle and sparkle as the brilliant finale of his Violin Concerto, with the additional flexibility and playful instrumental interaction made possible by having only two players on stage.

Program note © Nicky Swett

Artist Perspectives

For this year's Winter Festival, CMS violinists chose sonatas that are particularly important to them. We asked each soloist on tonight's program to reflect on their selection.

My deep and unwavering love affair with Schubert began unexpectedly during my college years; no composer, to me, writes more beautiful melodies, thanks to his unmatched ability to translate vulnerability into music—exposed, fragile, and profoundly human. The “Grand Duo” is no exception, transporting us into that unmistakably Schubertian world. This is the only violin-piano duo by Schubert that did not appear on my debut all-Schubert album, so I'm especially delighted to share this gem with Gilles. It is also Schubert's sole work for violin and piano to have been warmly received at its premiere (the *Fantasie* and *Rondo* were slandered). It is as rewarding on a first listen as on the hundredth.

— Stella Chen

The three violin sonatas by Brahms have always held a very special place in my heart. From the very long lines, passed around seamlessly between the violin and the piano, to the rich harmonies and the emotional depth of the music—these sonatas create an intimate conversation that has always felt deeply personal to me. The first sonata is imbued with warmth and a quiet sense of nostalgia. What an honor it is to have the opportunity to perform it at CMS.

— Arnaud Sussmann

Perhaps the least familiar work on this program, Mendelssohn's F-major Sonata is one of the most generous, effusive, and heartfelt sonatas in the repertoire. Although written later in his life, this sonata seems to capture the radiance and optimism of early works such as his Octet. For me, the middle movement is the jewel of the work, conveying a tenderness and angelic purity that only Mendelssohn could capture. It's thrilling to have the chance to share this with you!

— Julian Rhee

CMS Chamber Music Society
of Lincoln Center

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About the Artists



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.



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.



Julian Rhee

Winner of the prestigious 2024 Avery Fisher Career Grant, Korean-American violinist Julian Rhee came to international prominence following his prize-winning performances at the 2024 Queen Elisabeth International Violin Competition and Silver Medal finish at the 11th Quadrennial International Violin Competition of Indianapolis. He has appeared with orchestras including the Stuttgarter Kammerorchester, Oregon Symphony, Milwaukee Symphony, Calgary Philharmonic, Belgian National Orchestra, Antwerp Symphony, Indianapolis Sym-

phony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Richmond Symphony, and San Diego Symphony. Julian is a member of CMS’s Bowers Program and has performed at festivals including Marlboro Music, Ravinia Steans Institute, and North Shore Chamber Music Festival. He studied at the New England Conservatory with Miriam Fried, and currently works with Christian Tetzlaff at the

Kronberg Academy. Julian is the recipient of the 1699 “Lady Tennant” Antonio Stradivari violin and a Jean Pierre Marie Persoit bow on extended loan through the generosity of the Mary B. Galvin Foundation and the Stradivari Society.



MATT LIPMAN

Arnaud Sussmann

Winner of a 2009 Avery Fisher Career Grant, Arnaud Sussmann has recently appeared as soloist with the Vancouver Symphony and the New World Symphony. As a chamber musician, he has performed at London’s Wigmore Hall, the Dresden Music Festival, and the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC. He has also given concerts at the Moritzburg, Caramoor, Music@Menlo, La Jolla SummerFest, Mainly Mozart, Seattle Chamber Music, Chamber Music Northwest, and Moab Music festivals. An alum of CMS’s Bowers Program, Sussmann is Artistic Director of the Chamber Music Society of Palm Beach and Co-Director of Music@Menlo’s International Program, and teaches at Stony Brook University. In September 2022, he was named Founding Artistic Director of the Boscobel Chamber Music Festival. Mr. Sussmann plays a 1731 Stradivarius violin on loan from a private owner.



MARCO BORGHERINI

Gilles Vonsattel

Swiss-born American pianist Gilles Vonsattel boasts remarkable versatility and artistic originality. Winner of an Avery Fisher Career Grant, the 2016 Andrew Wolf Chamber Music Award, and top prizes in the Naumburg and Geneva competitions, he has graced prestigious stages worldwide, enthraling audiences with recitals and chamber performances, and collaborating with renowned orchestras including the Munich Philharmonic and the Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco symphonies. As a champion of new music, he has premiered compositions by celebrated composers such as Jörg Widmann, Heinz Holliger, Anthony Cheung, and George Benjamin. He is an alum of CMS’s Bowers Program and has earned degrees from Columbia University and the Juilliard School. Today, Vonsattel shares his passion for music as a Professor of Piano at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

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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Paul Appleby, TENOR
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Gloria Chien, PIANO
Anna Geniushene, PIANO*
Sahun Sam Hong, PIANO*
Gilbert Kalish, PIANO
Anne-Marie McDermott, PIANO (Alice
Tully and Edward R. Wardwell Piano
Chair)
Ken Noda, PIANO
John Novacek, PIANO
Evren Ozel, PIANO*
Juho Pohjonen, PIANO
Mika Sasaki, HARP/SICHHORD
Cory Smythe, PIANO
Gilles Vonsattel, PIANO
Angus Webster, PIANO
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Francisco Fullana, VIOLIN
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Bella Hristova, VIOLIN
Paul Huang, VIOLIN
Leila Josefowicz, VIOLIN
Ani Kavafian, VIOLIN (Fan Fox and Leslie
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Kristin Lee, VIOLIN
Sean Lee, VIOLIN
Yura Lee, VIOLIN
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Cho-Liang Lin, VIOLIN
Richard Lin, VIOLIN
Daniel Phillips, VIOLIN/VIOLA
Julian Rhee, VIOLIN*
Alexander Sitkovetsky, VIOLIN
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Ayano Kataoka, PERCUSSION
Ian Rosenbaum, PERCUSSION

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