Celebrity Series of Boston

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Thursday | December 7, 2023 | 7:30pm
Longy's Pickman Hall

Diana Adamyan violin
Renana Gutman piano

W.A. Mozart	Sonata in B-flat Major, K. 378 Allegro moderato Andantino sostenuto e cantabile Rondo. Allegro
Jean Sibelius	Five pieces for violin and piano, Op. 81 Mazurka Rondino Valse Aubade Menuetto
Jean Sibelius	Humoresque No. 3 in E-flat Major, Op. 89
	INTERMISSION
Edvard Baghdasaryan	Rhapsody for violin and piano
Camille Saint-Saëns	Sonata No. 1 for violin and piano, Op. 75 Allegro agitato – Adagio Allegro moderato – Allegro molto

This evening's program will run approximately 90 minutes, including intermission.

Diana Adamyan appears by arrangement with Opus 3 Artists.

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Celebrity Series of Boston is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

W.A. Mozart
Sonata in B-flat Major, K. 378

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart wrote his Sonata in B-flat Major, K. 378 (317d) in his early twenties, a period that contains the first of his masterpieces and showcases his first significant innovations in composition. Common to a lot of Mozart, the ease that characterizes the piece is, rather than an essential characteristic, a clever trick masking the depth of its complexity.

The first movement is representative of Mozart's extraordinary ability to string together contrasting themes. Though the movement is in well-trod sonata allegro form, the content feels fresh, avoiding predictable patterns associated with lesser composers of the era. The transition between the flowing first theme and the animated second is never halting, and exceptional for its own several stitched-together motifs. The second movement, more a piano showcase, is a virtuosic exploration of instrumental color. Even the simple piano accompaniment when the violin finally takes prominence midway is expressive in its tight, sidling clusters. The third movement is a sprightly rondo, a form built on contrast. The first section is in perpetual motion, consistently subverting expectations to stop or resolve. The first contrasting section in minor presents a shift in mood, but essentially develops the material from the first theme. As the first section repeats and the listener acclimates to its gestures, Mozart shifts to an entirely different rhythmic pattern in three, forcing them to confront an almost entirely new composition. Though this high-octane burst feels like it should hurry us to the end, the first section returns, its contrast this time making it feel new again. The piece ends assuredly, grounded but curiously fresh.

Jean Sibelius
Five pieces for violin and piano, Op. 81

Intimacy and expressiveness are the primary goals in the Five Pieces, Op. 81, by Jean Sibelius (1865-1957). They are salon pieces, a still popular and lucrative 19th-century genre when Sibelius wrote them in the second decade of the 20th century. They are best performed where they were intended, in a small room with a small audience, or maybe simply at home with a friend. Though they still contain moments for the instrumentalists to impress, these pieces are not, like often in the era of Chopin, demonstrations of dexterous technique. They are meant to please and occasionally to wow.

The first piece is a punchy mazurka, a dance form in three that Sibelius uses to showcase the drama of the violin. Many jumps in register present the color of the instrument distilled, while the piano punctuates and adds variety to the standard form melody. The second piece (rondino) and third piece (waltz) are pure charm and lightness. The aubade, a piece meant to evoke daybreak, glows at the beginning with its subtly surprising sequence of chords, like a cozy wake-up alarm or a colorful sunrise. A more rapid theme in three appears that, like the rest of the pieces, never pushes its intensifying too far so as not to detract from the melody and form. The final piece, a minuet, is the most daring, its subtle march-like first theme relenting to a more rhapsodic, unpredictable trio section, ending the Op. 81 in a kind of passionate stateliness.

Jean Sibelius
Humoresque No. 3 in E-flat Major, Op. 89

The first thing one notices when listening to the Sibelius Four Humoresques, Op. 89, is how much the composer loved the violin. The variation in textures in just the first few seconds is a dazzling showcase of his joy in and his knowledge of what the instrument can do. It is a vestige of Sibelius' aspirations as a young man to be a concert violinist. Perhaps fortunately for the world, he did not succeed. He instead cultivated some of the most beloved works for violin in the repertoire from his idyllic home in Järvenpää, Finland.

Sibelius' passion is not only evident from the music, but also from his rather theatrical observation about the piece and its sibling the Op. 87 Two Humoresques: that they reflect "the anguish of existence . . . fitfully lit up by the sun." However excessive his comment, fitful is the exact word for this collection. Of the four, the third Humoreskque is the most outwardly playful, a sort of march and folk dance that rapidly alternates between boisterousness and buoyancy.

Edvard Baghdasaryan
Rhapsody for violin and piano

Edvard Baghdasaryan was an Armenian composer of great distinction. In his home country, he was an important figure in the development of modern concert music as part of the generation before the more internationally well-known Aram Khachaturian. His work for piano is especially respected, his 24 preludes a touchstone of Armenian concert music. Apart from writing several major orchestral works and teaching at the Yerevan Komitas State Conservatory, Baghdasaryan was also a soundtrack composer who wrote music for one of Armenia's classic films, *Tjvjik*.

Baghdasaryan's 1958 composition Rhapsody for violin and piano, also known as the Armenian Rhapsody, is one of his most important and well-regarded works. Though a through-composed piece, its knit together contrasting sections make it seem like a summarized concerto akin to something like Samuel Barber's first symphony – it is a single movement meant to do the work of several. The piece begins enigmatically, almost melancholic, as the listener can't be sure where, or if, the succession of chords will resolve. They do suddenly as the violin assumes prominence with a more romantically tinged melody. After a solo virtuosic display, the violin leads with a plaintive melody in minor, the first moment that feels planned rather than improvised. Suddenly, midway through the piece, the piano enthusiastically hammers out an up-tempo Armenian dance. As the rest of the piece unfolds, the first part of the composition retrospectively becomes an extended introduction. Themes that once showed up extemporaneously are now understood to be a part of several danceable melodies. The performers cycle through several dances before rather abruptly returning to the mood from the first half. Mysterious chords reminiscent of the start return, leading to the expectation of a musical palindrome. Suddenly, though, the piano plays an ascending whole-tone scale, reminiscent of a dream sequence from an old film, and the piece fades to conclusion.

Camille Saint-Saëns
Sonata No. 1 for violin and piano, Op. 75

The work of Camille Saint-Saëns altogether possesses an air of fluidity and self-possession that, like Mozart's work, makes it feel inevitable. No alternative sequence of notes feels like it would be sufficient. He was one of the most impressive prodigies in the history of European music, and one who, with brilliant pieces like his Violin Sonata No. 1, Op. 75, made good on the promise of his youth. Saint-Saëns' reputation as a conservative feels curious here: though it repurposes formal innovations from the recent past, the sonata demands a level of virtuosity from both performers that is still somewhat alarming today.

The sonata is in two sections subdivided into four movements so that the first two and final two movements are played through unbroken. The first movement spares nothing from the start. The first theme is puzzle-like and winding, made hypnotic by its insistent repetition of an arpeggiated figure. A sure sounding second theme follows, a more traditional Romantic melody that will become a prominent motif throughout the piece. The densely textured piano accompaniment constantly churns, no less virtuosic than the violin, and pushes the piece toward each next stage of development. The first theme recurs throughout the movement and acts as primary contrapuntal material, threading the violin and piano together inextricably. The *Adagio* begins poignantly with a slowed version of the original arpeggiated figure and continues to play with augmented versions of material from the *Allegro agitato*. When the violin reaches its height in the middle of the movement, it feels so natural and unplanned that its deliberate planning becomes remarkable evidence of Saint-Saëns' skill as a composer.

The second section introduces an aspect of play. In the *Allegretto*, a traditional scherzo, when one performer introduces a theme, the other quickly snatches it to further develop, like a single mind is operating both instruments. When the minds diverge, a B section theme modeled after the *Allegro agitato* melody emerges, a more sedate expression that suddenly relents as the bustling *Allegro molto* begins. At first, it seems the performers are warming up, rehearsing scales together at a blistering pace, challenging each other until, spontaneously, the material expands and becomes a coherent, thematically united piece. Bach's influence is unmistakable. It is "sewing machine music," as the common metaphor for Bach's music goes, precise, rhythmically intricate, and incessant. As it coasts along, a new theme emerges before the primary melody from the first movement is triumphantly restated and becomes a driving force amidst the patter toward an exultant conclusion.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Diana Adamyan violin

Diana Adamyan is quickly gaining an international reputation as one of her generation's most outstanding violinists. After winning the First Prize at the 2018 Yehudi Menuhin International Competition, the world's most prestigious prize for young violinists, she went on to receive First Prize in the 2020 Khachaturian Violin Competition.

Diana Adamyan has performed concerts all over the world, from the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in London to the Seiji Ozawa Academy in Switzerland and the Matsumoto International Music Festival in Japan. Among her recent engagements are performances with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin at the Philharmonie Berlin, the Bruckner Orchestra Linz at the Prinzregententheater in Munich, the Göttinger Symphonieorchester, the Niederbayerische Philharmonie, the Staatsorchester Darmstadt, as well as recitals in Tokyo and France. In summer 2022, she gave her debut at the Aspen Festival with Dvořák under Lionel Bringuier and with the Boston Pops Orchestra performing Mendelssohn at Symphony Hall.

In the 2023/24 season, she returns to the Bruckner Orchestra Linz and performs with various orchestras, including the Nürnberger Symphoniker, the Uppsala Chamber Orchestra, the Philharmonisches Orchester Altenburg Gera, the Colorado Springs Philharmonic, and the Pasadena Symphony and POPS. She also gives recitals in the US in Malibu, Richmond, and today's Celebrity Series debut.

Born in 2000 in Yerevan, Armenia, into a family of musicians, Diana Adamyan completed her studies in 2023 at the University of Music and Theater Munich with world-renowned teacher Prof. Ana Chumachenco, whose distinguished students have included Lisa Batiashvili, Julia Fischer, and Veronika Eberle. Before that, she was a student of Prof. Petros Haykazyan at the Tchaikovsky School of Music in Yerevan, and at the Yerevan Komitas State Conservatory under the guidance of Prof. Eduard Tadevosyan.

Ms. Adamyan is the recipient of a scholarship from the Deutsche Stiftung Musikleben and under the patronage of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) and "YerazArt" organization in Boston. She performed on a violin crafted by Urs Mächler for the Menuhin Competition, and now performs on an instrument made by Nicolò Gagliano in 1760, generously on loan from the Henri Moerel Foundation.

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Renana Gutman piano

Praised by the *New York Times* for her "passionate and insightful" playing, Renana Gutman has performed across four continents as an orchestral soloist, recitalist, and collaborative artist. She has played at venues like The Louvre and Grenoble Museum in France; the Carnegie Recital Hall, People's Symphony Concerts, and Merkin Hall in New York; St. Petersburg's Philharmonia in Russia; Italy's Stresa Music Festival; Ravinia Rising Stars; Herbst Theatre in San Francisco; Menuhin Hall (UK), UNISA (South Africa), and Marlboro (VT); the National Gallery, the Phillips Collection, and Freer Gallery in Washington, DC; and Jordan Hall and the Gardner Museum here in Boston. Her performances are heard frequently on WQXR Young Artists Showcase, NY, WFMT Dame Myra Hess, Chicago, and Minnesota Public Radio on *Performance Today*.

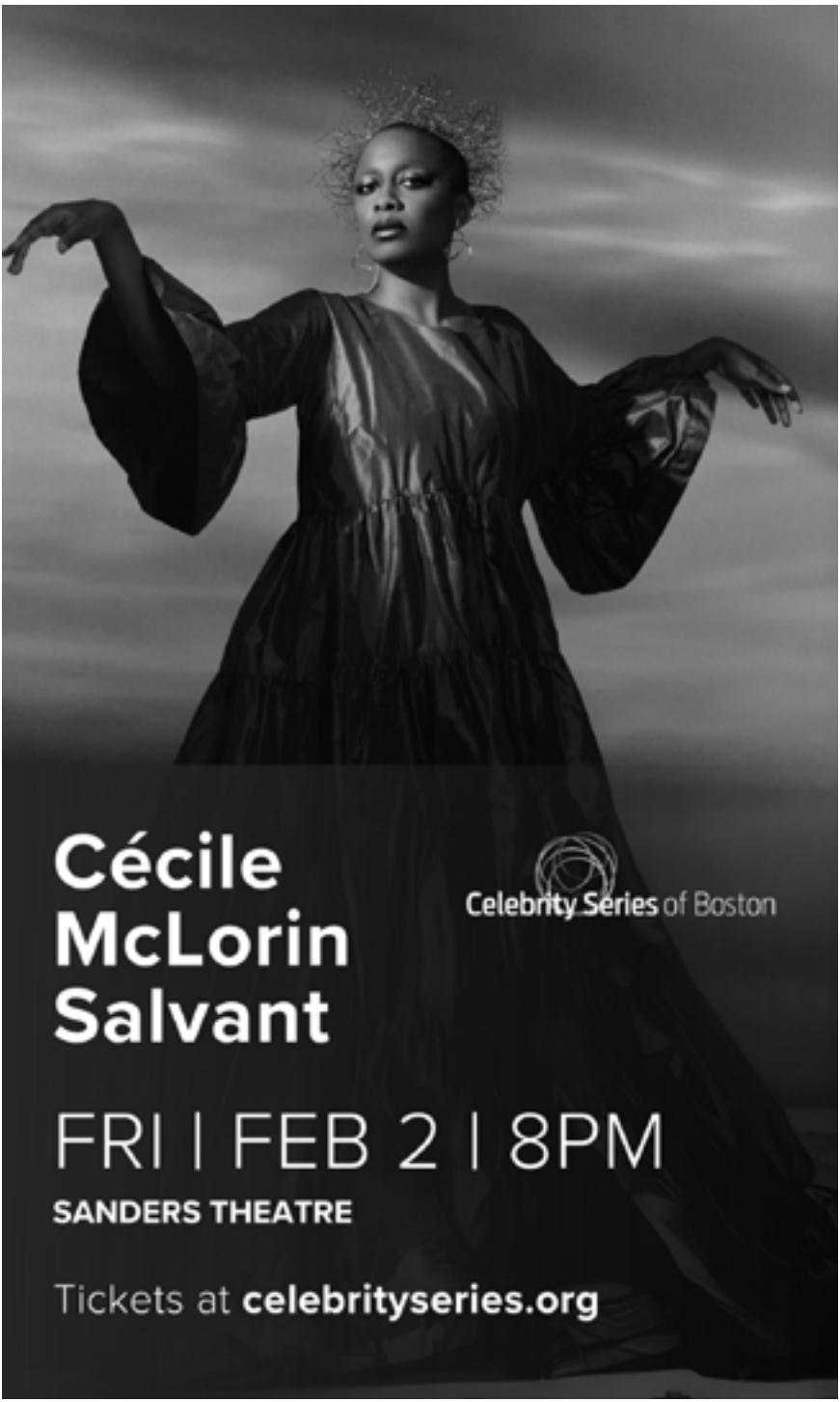
Renana was one of four young pianists selected by Leon Fleisher to participate in his workshop on Beethoven piano sonatas hosted by Carnegie Hall, where she presented performances of the "Hammerklavier" and "Appassionata" sonatas. Her recording of Chopin Etudes op.25 was released in November 2021 as Volume 4 of The Chopin Project.

A top prize winner at the Los Angeles Liszt competition, International Keyboard Festival (NY), and Tel-Hai International Master Classes, she has performed concerti such as Brahms 2nd, Rachmaninoff-Paganini Variations, and Beethoven's "Emperor" with the Jerusalem Symphony, Haifa Symphony, Belgium's I Fiamminghi, and Mannes College Orchestra. She has appeared at festivals including Marlboro and Ravinia, where she collaborated with pianist Richard Goode, clarinetist Anthony McGill, and members of the Guarneri string quartet, among others.

Renana has toured with Musicians from Marlboro, and served as the collaborative pianist of Steans Institute at the Ravinia Festival from 2012 to 2018, performing chamber music and lieder. Recent chamber music collaborators include violist Kim Kashkashian, violinist Miriam Fried, and clarinetist Charles Neidich. She tours regularly with violinist Alexi Kenney.

Renana has premiered music by Paul Schoenfield, Tamar Muskal, Judith Zaimont, and other living composers. As a member of the "Echoes of Hope" project, she is also dedicated to performing obscure pieces by Jewish composers who perished in the Holocaust, including Erwin Schulhoff, Viktor Ullmann, and others. She was a founding member of the award-winning piano trio Terzetto, which performed in festivals and concerts across the US. Renana joined the piano faculty of the Longy School of Music of Bard College in 2019, having previously served at the UK's Yehudi Menuhin Music School .

A native of Israel, Renana started playing at age six. She received scholarships from the America Israel Cultural Foundation and the Jewish Foundation for the Education of Women. She holds bachelor and master of music degrees from Mannes College of Music in New York, where she studied with Richard Goode. In Israel, her teachers were pianists Natasha Tadson, Viktor Derevianko, and the Israeli composer Arie Shapira. Renana became an American citizen in 2015 and makes her home in Boston. She also pursues her passion for Argentinian Tango, languages, and poetry.


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