Sunday, February 16, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.

Sanders Theatre, Cambridge

Beethoven **String Trio in C minor, Op. 9, No. 3**

Allegro con spirito
Adagio con espressione
Scherzo: Allegro molto e vivace
Finale: Presto

Jennifer Frautschi, violin Marcus Thompson, viola
Raman Ramakrishnan, cello

Bartók **Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano, Sz. 75**

Allegro appassionato
Adagio
Allegro

Jennifer Frautschi, violin Benjamin Hochman, piano

I N T E R M I S S I O N

Fauré **Piano Quartet in C minor, Op. 15**

Allegro molto moderato
Scherzo: Allegro vivo
Adagio
Allegro molto

Jennifer Frautschi, violin Marcus Thompson, viola
Raman Ramakrishnan, cello Benjamin Hochman, piano

Pianist Benjamin Hochman is the Haim and Joan Eliachar Guest Artist for the concert.

Please join us for a post-concert reception downstairs in the Green Room.

String Trio in C minor, Op. 9, No. 3 (1797–98)
Ludwig van Beethoven

Born in December 1770 in Bonn, Germany
Died on March 26, 1827 in Vienna, Austria

Lewis Lockwood notes that with this final trio of Op. 9, Beethoven felt he had reached a quality on par with Mozart's Divertimento in E-flat major, so he turned to the string quartet and left the string trio behind for the remainder of his career. Indeed, of the three trios in the set, including No. 1 that was performed by BCMS last winter, it is the C minor trio that most clearly presages Beethoven's middle and even late period works, in some cases.

The opening descent of four notes heard in unison from all three instruments provides the major motivic idea for the binary-sonata form Allegro. The presence of the motive is pervasive, particularly as Beethoven uses it as both thematic and transitional material. At the end of the development, Beethoven seamlessly connects to the recapitulation by layering the motive, rather than providing a more obvious transition back to the tonic. The coda, too, maintains the motive as a reference point, sometimes in clear dotted quarters, and sometimes filled out with eighth-note patterns. Lockwood notes that the descending pattern (minor scale degrees 1-7-6-5) would come to figure prominently in Beethoven's middle and late period works.

Now recast in C major, that four-note pattern is heard in the cello at the beginning of the Adagio, linking it, at least referentially, to the first movement. Here, however, it does not act as such a strong motivic signifier for the entire movement. The ascending figures in the violin soon lead to an almost Haydnesque change in character, with unexpected phrasing and a certain playfulness. All three instruments lend themselves to the texture, building in ardor before returning to the opening chorale-like material. The violin carries the movement out in the final bars with solo figures that almost sound *ad libitum*, like a restrained cadenza.

The brief Scherzo returns to both the 6/8 meter and key of the opening movement. While the violin leads most of the gestures and phrases, the viola and cello switch guises between contrapuntal partners and harmonic support at a virtuosic speed. A graceful arpeggiated figure in C major announces the Trio that transforms one of the rhythmic figures from the Scherzo into a galant-style dance before returning back to the driving accents and striking gestures.

The finale maintains most of the energy from the scherzo, interpolated with moments of buoyant elegance. Rapid agitato repetition invokes a sense of urgency in all three instruments, but the movement ends quietly in C major, gently renouncing any hint of darkness from the beginning of the piece.

Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano, Sz. 75 (1921)
Béla Bartók

Born on March 25, 1881 in Sânnicolau Mare, Romania
Die on September 26, 1945 in New York, New York

Described by one commentator as "alternately rhapsodic and violent," Bartók's Violin Sonata No.1 was composed near the end of a postwar period (spanning from 1918 to 1922) that saw some of the composer's most harmonically adventurous works. Atonality had been on Bartók's mind, as evidenced by a 1920 essay heavily referencing Schoenberg. But the work isn't truly atonal in the Schoenbergian sense: it could be said to exude a manner of C-sharp minor, and Bartók might have included it in a group of pieces that he described as "veiled either by idiosyncracies of the harmonic texture or by temporary deviations in the melodic curves." Certainly the piece is rhapsodic and well-suited for the style of its dedicatee, violinist Jelly d'Arányi, for whom several violin masterworks of the 1920s were written, including Bartók's Second Violin Sonata and Ravel's *Tzigane*. D'Arányi performed the sonata with Bartók in March 1922 at a private recital in London, followed by performance in Paris. The sonata enjoyed generally favorable reception from international audiences as well as composers Igor Stravinsky and Maurice Ravel, as Bartók wrote in a letter to his mother.

The rhapsodic/violent juxtaposition is echoed in what one might call the lyrical angularity of the violin writing in the Allegro appassionato. The virtuosic arpeggiations in the piano seem keen on establishing a C-sharp minor of sorts, but then the violin enters on a C, immediately invoking tension. While not overtly audible, Bartók changes the meter to group the beats with different emphasis in order to articulate different kinds of gestures, particularly in the piano. The instruments momentarily switch responsibilities, with the violin providing energized sextuplets against the piano melody. As the agitation in both instruments seems to build, glissandi in the violin signals a *ppp* section wherein the piano whispers rolled octaves toward an almost impressionistic passage of parallel thirds under cantorial trilled violin lines. While the sonata form aspects of the first movement have been debated, it seems less important in light of the composer's ability to float in and out of such a wide range of characters. Bartók makes plain the modal inflection in the final measures of the violin line, which decrescendos through a rapid iteration of a four-note pattern that recalls the *Dies irae*.

The expressive melody of the violin solo that opens the Adagio sits just on the edge of tonality. The quality is pensive and searching, but not nostalgic. As with the first movement, the variety of characters is vast, but presented at a slower pace. Bell-like chords in the piano (again recalling parallelisms heard in Debussy) seem to hint at a more grandiose trajectory, but the violin still persists with its questioning melody. A low F-sharp pedal in the piano provides a dramatic moment of tonal centricity before the violin and piano enter into a shimmering duet where dissonance seems almost as timbral as it is harmonic. The movement ends with a reserved violin cadenza, ending on a C against a C-sharp in the piano, recalling the work's opening gambit.

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The quiet reverie of the Adagio is quickly supplanted by a frenetic and bitonal Hungarian rondo finale. Bartók's ability to craft a final movement complete with nineteenth-century virtuosic flourishes and runs in the piano in a modal and dissonant sound world testifies to his interests in negotiating and combining all sorts of harmonic influences. Both instruments exhibit an exhaustive palette of gestures, and Bartók keeps the momentum throughout every change. A heavy *marcato* section in the piano articulates a modal folk melody, characteristically reshaped by Bartók's own harmonies. Just when the energy seems to be building unrelentingly toward a denouement, however, Bartók unapologetically shifts to a contrasting character and idea. Finally, the end brings a Presto that accelerates via a sustained trill in the violin against jaunty staccato chords in the piano, closing the work in a resolute bitonal cadence.

Piano Quartet in C minor, Op. 15 (1876–79; rev. 1883)
Gabriel Fauré

Born on May 12, 1845 in Pamiers, France
Died on November 4, 1924 in Paris, France

Five years prior to the composition of this quartet, Gabriel Fauré joined Camille Saint-Säens's Société Nationale de Musique with many of his fellow composers, including Henri Duparc and Jules Massenet. This initiative sought to differentiate French music from that of the Germanic traditions, and it certainly influenced Fauré's clarity in terms of musical language. Late in the 1870s Fauré was actively

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engaged with musical life in Paris, including his participation in the salon of singer Pauline Viardot. He had in fact become engaged to Mme. Viardot's daughter, Marianne, in July of 1877, but the latter broke off the engagement four months later. Whether one can hear in this quartet's slow movement Fauré's sorrow at losing his engagement to Marianne Viardot has been a point of contention between performers, biographers, musicologists, and aficionados.

The Allegro molto moderato opens with an aggressive unison quasi-pentatonic theme in the strings against syncopated chords in the piano. The modal quality invokes not so much "Frenchness" as something more akin to Dvořák. However, the secondary theme presented in a graceful imitative texture provides both a pleasant contrast and a more obvious embodiment of French musical language. Fauré develops the motivic materials with a great deal of variety of texture and articulation, with all four instruments having relatively equal importance at varying times. The unison strings voice the theme against harp-like arpeggiations in the piano to signal the coda, and the movement closes quietly—"perdendosi"—with soft chords in the piano and sustained tones in the strings.

The character of the scherzo is established immediately with pizzicato strings and a delightful piano theme. The sprightly interplay of 6/8 and 2/4 keeps the phrasing interesting without being off-kilter. The more expressive Trio provides a good contrast in mood, but is still gesturally related to the scherzo.

The somber chords that introduce the lament of the Adagio open a movement of sensitivity and pathos. Even if the movement does not specifically mourn love lost, there is a deeply reflective and deliberate quality to the writing for both the strings and the piano. Fauré the song composer is present here, and there are glimpses of what's to come in his Requiem as well as songs like his well-known "*Les Berceaux*" of 1879. Fauré seems sensitive to the emotional nuance connected to the different timbres, and carefully distributes the lyricism and expressivity between the strings and the keyboard to great emotional effect.

For the Allegro finale, Fauré returns to triple meter (as in the first movement), building on a theme not unrelated to the ascending "lament" theme of the Adagio. Here, however, it is recast with galloping gaiety, evoking a hopeful and soaring soundscape. The lyrical second theme, introduced in the viola, develops into an expansive and broadly-conceived sonata form movement that seems to leave behind any hint of the Adagio's sorrow. The movement's coda bursts forth with majesty and optimism. What is heard in this movement was not the original finale for the work—Fauré changed the final movement in 1883 prior to publication, and the original does not survive. As with other revised finales (one might look at Beethoven's Op. 130 string quartet), it has a spirit of unbridled enthusiasm that may have been a crowd-pleasing strategy, but Fauré also demonstrates his harmonic skill and ingenuity.

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Guest Artist | February 16, 2020



Winner of the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant in 2011, pianist **Benjamin Hochman** previously made his New York recital debut in 2006 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, proceeding to establish a vibrant and venerated musical presence in New York City. In 2009, Mr. Hochman's debut solo recording of works by Bach, Berg and Webern was released by Artek. He recorded his second solo album, titled *Homage to Schubert*, for Avie records in 2013. Mr. Hochman has performed with the New York and Los Angeles Philharmonics, Chicago, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Cincinnati, Houston, Seattle, Vancouver, New Jersey, American and Portland Symphonies, the New York String Orchestra, IRIS Orchestra in Memphis, Prague Philharmonia, Istanbul State Orchestra, and the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Canada. He has appeared in his native Israel with several orchestras including the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Jerusalem Symphony and the Tel Aviv Soloists. Past festival highlights include Marlboro, Ravinia, Caramoor, Santa Fe, Bard, Gilmore and Vail in North America, as well as international festivals such as Lucerne, Spoleto, Verbier, Ruhr, Israel Festival and Prussia Cove. A dedicated advocate for contemporary music, he has worked closely with composers Krzysztof Penderecki, Brett Dean, Philippe Hurel, Joan Tower, William Bolcom, Yehudy Wyner, Tamar Muskal, David Ludwig and Menachem Wiesenberg, among others. Mr. Hochman's admiration for the rich orchestral repertoire has led him in recent years to seriously pursue conducting studies. They resulted in his appointment as the musical assistant to Louis Langrée and a guest conductor at the 2016 Mostly Mozart Festival. Born in Jerusalem, Benjamin Hochman began his studies at the Conservatory of the Rubin Academy in Jerusalem, and is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music and the Mannes College of Music where his principal teachers were Claude Frank and Richard Goode. He is currently on the piano faculty of Bard College Conservatory of Music. Benjamin Hochman is a Steinway Artist and lives in New York City.

