

29
june

FRIDAY

8 PM

Barry Shiffman, *artistic director*
Osvaldo Golijov, *composer-in-residence*

YEKWON SUNWOO, *piano*

WITH

BRENTANO QUARTET

Mark Steinberg, *violin* | Serena Canin, *violin*
Misha Amory, *viola* | Nina Lee, *cello*

IMPROMPTU IN B-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 142 NO. 3, D. 935 (1827)
Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

LA VALSE: POÈME CHORÉGRAPHIQUE (1919-20)
Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

RAMBLE ON THE LAST LOVE DUET FROM *DER ROSENKAVALIER*, FS 4
(1920-27)
Percy Grainger (1882-1961)

Yekwon Sunwoo

:: INTERMISSION ::

PIANO QUINTET NO. 2 IN A MAJOR, OP. 81, B.155 (1887)
Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

Allegro, ma non tanto
Dumka: Andante con moto
Scherzo (Furiant): Molto vivace
Finale: Allegro

Brentano Quartet, Yekwon Sunwoo

This concert is sponsored in part by the generosity of Janet and Irv Plotkin.

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IMPROMPTU IN B-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 142 NO. 3, D. 935

Franz Schubert (b. Vienna, Austria, January 31, 1797; d. Vienna, November 19, 1828)

Composed 1827; 12 minutes

Schubert was by temperament drawn to the independent piano piece, unattached to sonata or suite—a genre that would soon become the mainstay of romantic piano music. The title “Impromptu” originated with the Bohemian composer Jan Václav Voříšek, who imported it to Vienna when he moved there in 1818. He and his teacher, Václav Tomášek, were in the vanguard of composers writing short, independent piano pieces, often inspired by poetry. Schubert almost certainly knew Voříšek’s first set of Impromptus, published in 1822, since the two pianist-composers moved in similar social and musical circles. The aim of both composers and their publishers was to tap into the growing Viennese appetite for informal music-making in the home. Still, the third of Schubert’s Four Impromptus, Op. 142, D. 935 takes *hausmusik* to an altogether more sophisticated level. It is as though the improvisatory freedom implied in the title allowed Schubert’s creativity free reign at the keyboard. In it, he borrows an amiable theme from an entr’acte in his incidental music to *Rosamunde* as the springboard for a set of five extended variations. These range widely over the keyboard, incorporate poignant harmonic shifts and travel through a turbulent third variation in the minor key and well beyond the innocence of the initial melody in the last two.

LA VALSE: POÈME CHORÉGRAPHIQUE

Maurice Ravel (b. Ciboure, France, March 7, 1875; d. Paris, France, December 28, 1937)

Composed 1919–20; 11 minutes



The dark lady, Boldini's portrait of Luisa Casati, 1914

La Valse is a disturbing work, a product of the disturbing times in which Ravel worked on it. He began the score before the First World War as a symphonic poem to be called *Wien (Vienna)*. “It is a grand waltz,” he wrote at the time, “a kind of homage to the memory of the great Strauss—not Richard—the other, Johann!” *La Valse* only took its final form in 1920, when both Vienna and the world around Ravel himself were very different places. By 1920—almost a century after Schubert wrote his Impromptus in the city—Imperial Vienna had forever been changed and Ravel’s attitude towards its ideals had been shaped by events in Europe. He dropped the original title of the piece and reworked its music as a “choreographic poem.” He no longer referred to his score as an apotheosis of the Viennese waltz. All the surface charm of the Straussian waltz appears to be present in *La Valse*. But there are unsettling undertones and snatches of uneasy tension that couldn’t have been written before the war. The fantastic and fatal whirling seems to speak of narcissism and the end of an era. The typical Viennese “lift” to the music seems ironic. The very bones of the waltz are laid out in front of us, picked over and fall apart, even as we listen. Diaghilev commissioned *La Valse* from Ravel for his Ballets Russes. But he rejected the music with a perceptive comment: “It’s a masterpiece,” he said. “But it isn’t so much a ballet as the portrait of a ballet, a painting of a ballet.” One side of the canvas is an impressionist representation of the waltz; the other is expressionist.

RAMBLE ON THE LAST LOVE DUET FROM *DER ROSENKAVALIER*, FS 4

Percy Grainger (b. Brighton, Victoria, Australia, July 8, 1882;
d. White Plains, New York, February 20, 1961)

Composed 1920–27; 8 minutes

The Australian-American composer, virtuoso pianist and inveterate collector of folksong, Percy Aldridge Grainger left about ninety solo pieces for the piano, largely unknown these days. There are, of course, the potboilers—*Molly on the Shore* (1907), *Shepherd's Hey* (1908–13), *Handel in the Strand* (1911–12) and a few others. Their royalties helped sustain the fiercely independent composer throughout a career who strived for his own concept of the ideal in art. This he threw himself into with the pioneering imagination of the inventor he was. This side of his complex character co-existed with other interests, which, he wrote to his mother in 1911, revolved around “sex, race, athletics, speech and art.”

Grainger established a high reputation as a pianist, despite a marked love-hate relationship with the instrument, during the fourteen years he spent in London, up to the outset of World War One. Moving to the U.S.A., he built on this, winning recording contracts, serving in the U.S. Army as a band instructor and, in 1919, penning his best-known work, *Country Gardens*, based on a Morris dance melody. He later became chair of the music department of New York University (1932–33). His legacy includes invigorating a new generation of Australian composers in the 1960s and inspiring Benjamin Britten and other English composers with his many inventive folksong settings. He similarly inspired composers in the American wind band tradition, particularly with his sonorous *Lincolnshire Posy* (1937), which is deeply inspired by folksong.

Grainger's *Ramble on Love* (aka *Ramble on the last love duet* in the opera *The Rose-Bearer*, FS 4) is among his finest piano works. The “ramble” in its title is, in Grainger's idiosyncratic “pure” Anglo-Saxon English, another term for a paraphrase. The “FS 4” bit indicates that it belongs to a collection of eight “Free Settings of Favorite Melodies” made 1922–42. The music? It's an exquisite, poignant meditation on Strauss's exquisite, poignant last duet in *Der Rosenkavalier*, as the Marschallin gracefully gives the young Octavian his freedom from her as a lover. Grainger's meticulously notated score, making much use of the sustaining middle pedal, is dedicated to the memory of his much-loved mother, Rose (whose name is embedded in the title), after she fell to her death in a highly publicized suicide in 1922.



“It is my theory to like vulgarity — to think well of it, to champion it ... Richard Strauss is a greater, grander genius than Maurice Ravel because he (Strauss) has so amply the vulgarity that Ravel lacks.”

— PERCY GRAINGER



Jacques Marquis, President and CEO of The Cliburn writes: *“The competition is looking for someone who brings a unique artistic voice. Today's young artists can play everything; technique is not an issue. We are looking for an artist who has something to say, a vision to share with the public—right now and tomorrow. The rounds are crafted to ‘give information’ to the jury members about each competitor's vision: their programming ideas, cohesion, stamina.*

“For the Final Round, chamber music focuses on their capacity to work well with other musicians: the way they approach and prepare the work together, and listen and respond in performance. The ‘meeting’ between the Brentano and Yekwon really happened (sometimes it does not). It was a true communion between artists to make music and share it with the audience.”

PIANO QUINTET NO. 2 IN A MAJOR, OP. 81, B.155

Antonín Dvořák (b. Nelahozeves, Bohemia, September 8, 1841; d. Prague, May 1, 1904)

Composed 1887; 41 minutes

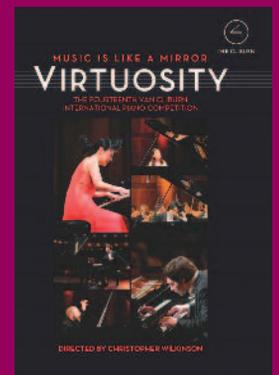
By 1887, Dvořák was a successful composer with requests for new works from musicians throughout Europe. His 7th and 8th symphonies were winning a wide audience for his music. In England, conductors were jealously fighting with one another to get the premiere of the next new Dvořák symphony. To speedily fill the need for new music, Dvořák turned to several works he had written a decade or two earlier. These included a Piano Quintet in A, which he now set about revising. But Dvořák himself had changed and, although no political animal, he was now caught up in a strong nationalistic current that swept through Bohemia. It gave him an incentive to turn to the Slavic folk melodies he had grown up with—music that he both knew and loved. His style now combined Bohemian, or Czech, nationalism with an up-to-date musical internationalism. The old Piano Quintet [eventually published as No. 1 in 1959] belonged to the composer he had left behind. A new work was called for.

The new piano quintet that resulted was also in A major. Its composition went smoothly. He was happily living in a small cottage in the countryside at Vysoká. In less than seven weeks, from mid-August to the beginning of October 1887, the score was complete. From the outset, it was recognized as a masterpiece of the chamber repertoire, standing with the Schumann, the Brahms and the Franck piano quintets at the pinnacle of the piano quintet repertoire. Two of the most immediately striking characteristics of the new work are its clarity of design and effortless lyricism. Dvořák moves rapidly from the gentle cello melody of the opening movement to a more passionate statement of its material. This is done in an entirely natural way, where nothing is contrived. This is helped by the influence of the *dumka*, a popular folk form that Dvořák frequently turned to in his music. The *dumka* was originally a narrative folk poem celebrating heroic deeds. Its mood swings alternately from quiet meditation (*dumka* comes from the Slavic word *dumati*, meaning “to meditate or recollect”) to the most exuberant celebration. This stimulated Dvořák to incorporate a wide range of emotions into his music—including the elegiac second movement, with its skillful A-B-A-C-A-B-A structure. The Scherzo is full of melodic vitality and rhythmic bounce. It’s based on a dance, the *furiant*, from Dvořák’s own region of Bohemia, though without the dance’s traditional displaced accents. A high-spirited Finale rounds off the work with unstoppable momentum.

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 Post-screening talk with
 Cliburn CEO Jacques Marquis.

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BRENTANO STRING QUARTET

The Brentano String Quartet has appeared throughout the world to popular and critical acclaim, garnering several coveted awards, including the Cleveland Quartet Award, Naumburg Chamber Music Award and Royal Philharmonic Award for Most Outstanding Debut. In 1996, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center invited them to be the inaugural members of Chamber Music Society Two. In recent seasons the Quartet has traveled widely, performing in the most prestigious venues in the United States and abroad. The Brentano Quartet performs a wide range of repertoire, from Baroque and Classical to commissions from contemporary composers. The Quartet has also worked with the poet Mark Strand, commissioning poetry to accompany works of Haydn and Webern, and has collaborated with such artists as Jessye Norman, Joyce DiDonato and Richard Goode. The Quartet has made multiple recordings for Aeon Records, including works of Haydn, Mozart and Schubert, and all of Beethoven's late quartets. In 1999, the Quartet became the first Ensemble-In-Residence at Princeton University,

where they taught and performed for fifteen years, and then became the Resident String Quartet at the Yale School of Music. The Quartet is named for Antonie Brentano, whom many scholars consider to be Beethoven's "Immortal Beloved," the intended recipient of his famous love confession.

YEKWON SUNWOO, piano



Gold medalist of the Fifteenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, the 28-year-old South Korean pianist Yekwon Sunwoo began learning piano at age 8. He gave both his recital and orchestral debuts in 2004 in Seoul before moving to the United States in 2005 to study with Seymour Lipkin at the Curtis Institute of Music. He earned his bachelor's degree there, his master's at The Juilliard School with Robert McDonald and his artist diploma at the Mannes School of Music with Richard Goode. He currently studies under Bernd Goetzke in Hanover. Record label Decca Gold released *Cliburn Gold 2017* two weeks after his Cliburn win, which includes his award-winning performances of Ravel's *La Valse* and Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Sonata. An avid chamber musician, he has had such partners as the Brentano String Quartet and the pianist Anne-Marie McDermott. In addition to the Cliburn gold medal, Mr. Sunwoo has won first prizes at the 2015 International German Piano Award in Frankfurt, the 2014 Vendome Prize held at the Verbier Festival, the 2013 Sendai International Music Competition and the 2012 William Kapell International Piano Competition.

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