

**For Immediate Release**

Tuesday, November 9, 2021

**A Musical Banquet in Small Bites and Large**

By Michael Johns

USCB Chamber Music returned from COVID with a full, sold-out house to open its 42<sup>nd</sup> season in October. Expectations remain high for the second concert on Sunday, December 5, 5:00 pm and features a well-loved “chestnut” along with exciting music new to this series. Artistic Director and pianist Andrew Armstrong will be joined by four impeccably credentialed young artists, three of whom will be experiencing Beaufort-style hospitality for the first time: violinists Gabriela Diaz and Michi Wiancko, and violist Ayane Kozasa joining cellist Ani Aznavoorian. The second half features a single work, Schumann's glorious *Piano Quintet in E-flat Major, Opus 44*, while the first half, a storytelling bonanza, presents a collection of thirteen short movements ranging across styles from 1898-2014.

The program begins with a set of folksong-inspired music from a tense historical time: Europe between 1926-1945. Bela Bartók's “With Drums and Pipes” for solo piano is based on motives from a single Hungarian folksong, transforming it into a modernist tour-de-force. *Easy Duets on Folk Themes, for Two Violins* by Polish composer Granzyna Bacewicz is one of her most popular folk-music works for children. The texture is simple but the four selected movements are intended to introduce young musicians, amateur musicians, and music listeners to tunes with elements of expressive dissonance. Two evocative violin duets by Bartók, “Bagpipes” and “Arabian Song,” conclude the set. The atmosphere changes with a miniature, “Berceuse,” from *Three Pieces, Opus 40, for Violin and Piano*, by the American Amy Beach. Mrs. Beach, a master of musical narration, lovingly creates an atmosphere of enchanting, wistful charm with this lullabye. William Grant Still is represented by *Three Visions for Piano* from 1936. These strongly contrasting movements convey moods of horror, mid-nineteenth century Spiritualism, and aspirations about what lies beyond life's veil. Lili Boulanger was well on her way to becoming one of the notable French composers of the twentieth century when she died in 1918 at

the age of twenty-four. *D'un Matin de Printemps, for Violin and Piano* ("Of a Spring Morning"), is a work of vibrant energy and surpassing delicacy, strikingly drawing parallels to the French "Impressionist" composers. Son of an American father and Japanese mother, Paul Wiancko described *American Haiku, for Viola and Cello* as "an identity crisis wrapped in music" and "a search for home." It is an attempt to reconcile two very different aesthetics: fusing together the broad earthiness of Appalachian fiddling and percussive patterns with the tender, sparse rhythms of Japanese folk song.

Robert Schumann's tuneful *Piano Quintet in E-flat Major, Opus 44* balances out the program. Composed in 1842, his so-called "Chamber Music Year," the Quintet seamlessly brings the piano and string quartet together, taking full advantage of the expressive possibilities of their combined forces. A major work of nineteenth-century chamber music and one of Schumann's finest compositions, it revolutionized the instrumentation and musical character of the piano quintet, establishing it as a quintessentially Romantic genre.

Violinist Gabriela Diaz is a champion of contemporary music who works with new music groups in Boston and across the country. A childhood cancer survivor, Gabriela supports cancer research and treatment as a musician by organizing chamber music concerts in cancer units at various Boston hospitals. Michi Wiancko is a violinist and composer whose creative work encompasses a wide spectrum of new composition and commissions, performance, recording and teaching. Violist Ayane Kozasa is a respected chamber musician, collaborator, competition winner, orchestral performer, and educator. She has commissioned multiple new works featuring viola, including Paul Wacko's *American Haiku*. *Strad* magazine describes cellist Ani Aznavoorian as having "scorchingly committed performances that wring every last drop of emotion out of the music. Her technique is well-nigh immaculate, she has a natural sense of theater, and her tone is astonishingly responsive." Her performances at USCB last season confirmed this review.

Pianist Andrew Armstrong has been praised by critics for his passionate expression and dazzling technique while delighting audiences with a sprawling repertoire of more than 50 concertos with orchestra. Andrew's 2021-2022 season takes him around the globe with concerts in London, Glasgow, Geneva, Dresden, and across the US, Canada, and Australia. Nevertheless, Beaufort continues to be a favorite destination, and he has made space in his packed itinerary to continue a USCB Chamber Music Artistic-Director tradition and perform on all five concerts. His brilliant virtuosity, laser-like concentration, simmering intensity, and exuberant music making are not to be missed.

Join us in person or virtually for the substantial and exhilarating second concert of USCB Chamber Music's 42nd season. There are multiple ways to enjoy the December 5, 5:00pm concert—In-Person, Live-Stream and On-Demand. All concert videography is professionally produced: viewers will feel as if they are onstage with the performers. On-Demand is accessible four days after the concert and available to view at your leisure for three weeks. For concert information, COVID restriction updates, or to purchase tickets, both live or virtual, go to <http://www.uscbchambermusic.com> or call 843-208-8246, Monday through Friday. At this time all patrons must be masked, and attendance is limited to the first 300. USCB Center for the Arts, 805 Carteret Street, will open at 4:15 on December 5th.

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