

# Cocktails and Concert with **Johannes Moser** and **Drew Petersen**

SATURDAY | JULY 16 | 8 PM  
REDWOOD LIBRARY & ATHENÆUM



This concert is dedicated to **Jennie and Steve Huttler** and **Dennis and Roseanne Williams** in recognition of their generous support of Newport Classical.

Special thanks as well to **Elizabeth Leatherman** for her generous support of the Champagne Toast in honor of her mother Elizabeth Firestone Willis on her 100th birthday.

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**Johannes Moser**, cello | **Drew Petersen**, piano

**DEBUSSY** Sonata, L. 135

I. Prologue. Lent

II. Sérénade. Modérément animé

III. Finale. Animé

(Approximate duration 12 minutes)

**BRAHMS** Cello Sonata No. 1 in E minor, Op. 38

I. Allegro non troppo

II. Allegretto quasi menuetto

III. Allegro

(Approximate duration 27 minutes)

INTERMISSION

**FRANCK** Cello Sonata in F Major, Op. 42

I. Allegro

II. Scherzo. Allegro vivace

III. Adagio molto espressivo

IV. Presto

(Approximate duration 27 minutes)

### **Claude Debussy (1862-1918): Sonata for Violin and Piano, in G minor, L. 140**

In his last years, Claude Debussy was greatly concerned about the future of French music, which he thought had not only been too much influenced by Wagner, but also for too long. When World War I began, Debussy saw what was happening in French music as an offshoot of Germany's attempt to dominate the governments of other nations. He felt concerned that Germany already dominated French music. To illustrate his position and as a demonstration of French artistic independence, he decided to write a series of six sonatas for various instruments in the tradition of Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764). He had a title page designed in the 18th century style for his sonatas, and he signed them, "Claude Debussy, French musician." He wrote to a friend, "They say he [Rameau] is boring, but they don't dare admit that they don't know how to play his music any more. Where is French music? Where are our old harpsichordists in whose work there is so much real music? They had the secrets of profound grace, of emotion without exaggeration that we have repudiated like ungrateful children."

Debussy completed three sonatas in the projected series, but he died before he could start the fourth. This *Sonata for Violin and Piano*, composed during the winter of 1916-17, is the third, and it is the last work he completed before his death from cancer, a year later. It was first performed in Paris on May 5, 1917, by the violinist Gaston Poulet and the composer at a concert given for the benefit of soldiers blinded in the war.

In a letter he wrote to a friend, Debussy pointed out the inconsistency of the spirit of the times and the sonata's "joyous tumult." The music of the *Sonata for Violin and Piano* highlights the highly personal, introspective style Debussy was developing during his last years. In his effort to escape from what he felt was Germany's prevailing musical tyranny, he abandoned the regularity and the symmetry of the forms inherited from the Viennese classicists and their North German followers and searched for new ways to assemble musical creations, which could be made to seem improvisatory or freely rambling rather than rigidly formal. He contended they could be multi-thematic or athematic. Actually writing the sonata caused Debussy a great deal of frustration; in the end, he felt that it never really coalesced in the way he had originally hoped; nevertheless, the work is a powerful, forward-looking effort that joins elements of the traditional concert form with an enthusiasm and affinity for gypsy violin playing.

### **Johannes Brahms (1833-1897): Cello Sonata No. 1 in E minor, Op. 38**

Brahms loved chamber music in all forms, and wrote piano parts for himself to play. Brahms composed the first two movements during the summer of 1862, as well as an Adagio which was later deleted. The final movement was composed in 1865. Although it is nearly as long as the other two movements combined, the opening Allegro is architecturally clean, almost severe in construction. The first edition was titled "Sonate für Pianoforte and Violoncell," in what was then still a common listing for sonatas of solo instruments with piano. However, as Emanuel Ax wrote in the liner notes for his recording of the piece with Yo-Yo Ma over 20 years ago, "the placement of the instruments in relation to each other is quite fresh and astonishing. The cello is often the bass support of the entire harmonic structure, and the piano is often in the soprano in both hands. This constant shifting of registers, with the cello now above, now below, now in between the hands of the pianist, creates an intimate fusing of the two instruments, so that there is no feeling of a more important voice that is continuous – the lead is constantly shifting."

The melancholic Allegretto quasi Menuetto has been called a "sad waltz," but it is also strictly shaped, with a four-note motive that introduces the dance proper, connects it to the contrasting Trio section, and percolates through the whole movement.

The subject of the fugato in the finale seems closely connected to the Contrapunctus XIII of Bach's *The Art of the Fugue*. Brahms demonstrates his Bachian command of strict counterpoint with inversions, stretto, and the like, but he also organizes the movement with sonata-form elements as Beethoven did. Polyphony does not equal pedantry here, however. The music is furiously energized by the linear relationships, a brilliantly bristling combination of technical wizardry and expressive power.

### **César Franck (1822-1890): Sonata for Violin and Piano, in A Major, FWV8**

César Franck was a child prodigy pianist whose father wished him to make a career as a traveling virtuoso. The elder Franck hoped his son would emulate the career of the young Mozart and that Franck senior could arrange it for him as Mozart's father so successfully had done for his son. Although the young prodigy did give many concerts in Belgium, the dream of the elder Franck was never fulfilled, and by 1835, when he was thirteen, Franck had exhausted the musical possibilities of his teachers in Liège and went to Paris to find better ones. In 1836, he entered the Paris Conservatory, where he won numerous prizes in piano, organ, and composition (specifically for his fugues).

It was not until late in life that Franck discovered his talent for composition, and thus his own composing did not begin in earnest until he was about fifty years old. All of Franck's music that we listen to now he composed late in his life: his only symphony was composed when he was sixty-six, and his String Quartet was completed in the year before he died, when he was sixty-seven. The distinguishing characteristics of Franck's music are clarity of contrapuntal structure and fullness of harmony as well as a fine balance between diatonic and chromatic writing in his melodic themes.

He wrote this sonata in 1886, when he was sixty-three, as a wedding present for the renowned Belgian violinist Eugène Ÿsaye (1858-1931), who played the first public performance on December 16, 1886, in Brussels and introduced it to Paris in May 1887.

The sonata, which became one of the landmarks of the violin and piano repertory, is now one of Franck's most popular, most frequently performed works. It displays the principal characteristics of his late style: the instability that comes from constantly shifting harmonies; the stabilizing counter-force of many closely interrelated melodic themes and cell-like fragments of melody that recur throughout the work, unifying the movements and giving the whole coherence. In the sonata these qualities appear in conjunction with basic forms that add structural strength to the warmth of the melody. It is an example of Franck's use of cyclic form in which themes from one movement are used, sometimes in transformations, throughout the work. © Susan Halpern, 2022.

### **Johannes Moser**

Hailed by Gramophone Magazine as "one of the finest among the astonishing gallery of young virtuoso cellists", German-Canadian cellist Johannes Moser has performed with the world's leading orchestras such as the Berliner Philharmoniker, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, London Symphony, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, and Tokyo NHK Symphony, with conductors of the highest level including Riccardo Muti, Zubin Mehta, Christian Thielemann, Pierre Boulez, Semyon Bychkov, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, and Gustavo Dudamel.

Concerto highlights of the 2022/23 season include performances with the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie, Gävle Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Nashville Symphony, and Orchestre National d'Île-de-France, among others. Chamber music performances include a US tour with Academy of St Martin in the Fields, as well as appearances at Philadelphia Chamber Music Society and Colorado Music Festival.

Renowned for his efforts to expand the reach of the classical genre, as well as his passionate focus on new music, Johannes has recently been heavily involved in commissioning works by Julia Wolfe, Ellen Reid, Thomas Agerfeld Olesen, Johannes Kalitzke, Jelena Firsowa and Andrew Norman.

Born into a musical family in 1979, Johannes began studying the cello at the age of eight. He was the top prize winner at the 2002 Tchaikovsky Competition and was awarded the Special Prize for his interpretation of the Rococo Variations. In 2014 he was awarded with the prestigious Brahms prize.

Johannes Moser plays on an Andrea Guarneri Cello from 1694 from a private collection.

### **Drew Peterson**

Acclaimed young American pianist Drew Petersen is a sought-after soloist, recitalist, and chamber musician. He has been praised for his commanding and poetic performances of repertoire ranging from Bach to Zaimont and is the recipient of the 2018 Avery Fisher Career Grant, 2017 American Pianists Award, and the Christel DeHaan Fellow of the American Pianists Association.

With the resumption of live concerts his 21/22 season will include orchestras in Cincinnati, Santa Fe, Buffalo, Delaware, Columbus and Indianapolis and recitals in San Francisco, Madison and Sanibel, FL. Recent highlights have included debuts with the Sarasota, Houston, Phoenix, Pacific, Milwaukee, Fort Smith, Buffalo, Waco, and Allentown symphonies as well as his recital debut at the Kennedy Center. In solo recital Petersen has appeared at the Gilmore International Keyboard Festival, University of Indianapolis, Williams College Concert Series, Dame Myra Hess Concerts in Chicago, Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival, Brevard Music Center's Summer Festival and Chicago's Ravinia Festival. 2018 marked the release of his first solo recording of music by Barber, Carter, and other American composers on the Steinway & Sons label for which BBC Music Magazine acknowledged his presence as a rising star.

A frequent radio contributor, Petersen has performed on McGraw-Hill Young Artists Showcase, *From the Top*, and *Performance Today*. Profiles include *The New York Times*, *New York Magazine*, and the documentary "just normal" by award-winning director Kim A. Snyder. A champion of chamber music, Petersen has appeared on French radio's *France Musique* while a member of a Verbier Festival piano trio.

Drew Petersen's firm belief in the importance of music in contemporary society led to collaborations with Young Audiences NY that presents performances in New York City's public schools. His appearance in Andrew Solomon's *New York Times* bestselling book, *Far From the Tree*, sparked a nation-wide conversation on raising extraordinary and different children who test the willpower and capabilities of their families and society. Petersen continually advocates for the necessity of classical music and other arts in society and was named a 2006 Davidson Fellow for his portfolio entitled *Keeping Classical Music Alive*.