FESTIVAL ARTISTS FINALE: PIANO QUINTETS AND A WORLD PREMIERE

SATURDAY, JULY 22 | 8 PM | THE BREAKERS

This concert is made possible through the generous support of **Matthew Putman.**

Lun Li, violin
Ariel Horowitz, violin
Edwin Kaplan, viola
Titilayo Ayangade, cello
Llewellyn Sanchez-Werner, piano
Curtis Stewart, composer

SCHUMANN	**Piano Quintet in E-flat Major, Op. 44** (Approximate duration 30 minutes)
BRUCH	**Piano Quintet in G minor** (Approximate duration 26 minutes)
	INTERMISSION
CURTIS STEWART	***The Gilded Cage*** **[Newport Classical Commission, World Premiere]** (Approximate duration 10 minutes)
SHOSTAKOVICH	**Piano Quintet in G minor, Op. 57** (Approximate duration 38 minutes)

Robert Schumann (1810-1856): Quintet for Piano and Strings in E-Flat Major, Op. 44

In April of 1842, Robert Schumann ordered scores of all the Mozart and Beethoven string quartets available, which he studied for two months and then, between June and October, in a furious burst of creative energy, composed three string quartets, a piano quartet and this piano quintet.

This quintet has a very important position in Schumann's oeuvre: it is credited with first spreading the reputation of Schumann as a significant composer as well as creating the standard instrumentation for the form of piano quintets to come. Schubert, with his *Trout Quintet,* had used a different instrumentation in his creation of a quintet structure: he left out the second violin, always present in quartets, and instead scored his work for a double bass. Schumann established the quintet instrumentation that became fixed after him. He used the standard string quartet (two violins, viola, and cello) to which he added a piano.

Schumann dedicated the quintet, imbued with a unique sense of novelty, to his wife, Clara, who performed the piano part for its premiere. For the second performance, Mendelssohn

performed the piano part because Clara suddenly had become ill. The more established Mendelssohn praised the work but suggested that Schumann replace the second trio of the Scherzo with something more spirited, and Schumann, receptive to his suggestion, reworked it. Schumann made the changes in time for the first public performance, on January 8, 1843, in Leipzig.

The first movement, *Allegro brillante,* begins with a powerful, expansive main subject and bold opening chords in all instruments. Schumann skillfully utilizes this declarative main subject for elements of all the secondary subjects in this marvelously melodic movement. The second and very poetic subject starts in the piano with a kind of abbreviated statement of the theme; then the cello and viola, responding antiphonally to the piano, embellish the second theme. The development utilizes two measures of the opening theme in a very quick tempo; a very regular recapitulation closes the movement.

The slow second movement, *Un poco largamente, In modo d'una Marcia* ("In the Style of a March") showcases two contrasting episodes. This march has more of a somber character than a parade-like feel. The violin introduces brief phrases with an almost uncanny and compulsive emphasis on the note of middle C, which becomes a broad theme that the violin and cello play. The middle section is comforting with its lyricism, and then the quietly intense initial clipped march theme returns, acting almost as a refrain. Finally, the march yields to an *agitato* section where the piano plays the lead role. In the second episode, a stormy *agitato* section, the piano provides a backdrop of triplets behind ominous brooding in the strings. The critic Arthur Cohn noted that at the time of silent motion pictures, original music was rarely composed to accompany the films. Instead, filmmakers searched diligently for already composed music in certain thematic moods to aid in the pantomimic drama. As a theme of menace, this second movement served frequently.

The Scherzo third movement, *Molto vivace*, made up of virtually nothing but ascending and descending scales, is exhilarating because of its rhythmic and harmonic variety. Two completely contrasting trios both depend on rhythmic patterns for their effects. Although the first feels pleasant and relaxed, the second has a very different character, that of a restless rustic dance often described as reminiscent of Hungarian gypsy music. The latter is the section that Schumann rewrote after Mendelssohn, who otherwise praised the work, suggested that he replace it to give the work something livelier at that point than was originally there.

The vigorous finale, *Allegro ma non troppo,* combines elements of the sonata and rondo forms. Counterpoint, specifically the fugue, dominates the last movement. The movement begins with a kind of Slavic theme that soon occupies all five instruments. When Schumann introduces the second theme, it is accompanied by a disguised version of the first theme. In the coda, Schumann brings back the first movement theme and combines it with that of the last movement in a double fugue style, creating a most impressive and memorable conclusion and giving the work a sense of unity.

Max Bruch (1838-1920): Piano Quintet in G minor

Max Bruch was born eleven years after Beethoven's death and died two years after Debussy, outliving the Romantic era to which he belonged and this piano quintet is one of Bruch's few chamber music works. At the time that Bruch wrote this work, he was living in Liverpool, England, where he had accepted a post as conductor. There he made friends with Andrew G. Kurtz, the British born son of a naturalized German, who loved music and art, was the longtime chair of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society, and an excellent amateur pianist. In 1881, Bruch agreed to write a piano quintet for Kurtz and his friends, who formed a string quartet that

regularly met at Kurtz' house. After five years, Bruch had completed all but the last half of the finale and allowed the group to have the work then, dedicating it to Kurtz.

This very attractive piano quintet is an exemplary specimen of a chamber work intended for the satisfaction of the musicians playing it, which was historically the aim of chamber music. Bruch carefully wrote for the players whom he knew well. He wrote many unison passages for the strings, so as to not overtax the string players, who he knew were not professionals. Although none of the string parts is technically demanding, the piano part suggests that Kurtz was a skilled performer. Bruch highlights the pianist's musicianship without making technical demands on his virtuosity and even sometimes gives the piano an accompanying role. Over the course of the piece, all the parts are highlighted.

The quintet is a good example of Bruch's pleasurable Romantic style, with its protracted lush themes and opportunities for much good-natured interaction between the players. For the first movement, in sonata form, *Allegro molto* moderato, Bruch appended a handwritten note in which he reminds the performers (in English) not to attempt to play the music too fast. After the beginning, which is made up of calm phrases, *Tranquillo*, in chords in a chorale-like fashion, a more spirited theme combines a march-like line with a triplet accompaniment. The cello introduces the slower, lyrical second theme. At the beginning of the recapitulation, the viola reintroduces the second theme. The movement ends with a repeat of the calm beginning. The second movement, *Adagio*, is flowing and lyrical. It is based on two ideas: the first is a gentle but passionate theme introduced by the upper strings in parallel chords over dotted rhythms in the piano, while the contrasting second theme is marked by ascending scalar figures, which the viola introduces. The main theme returns, much louder and building to an intense climax before the movement comes to a quiet end.

The Scherzo third movement, *Molto Allegro,* begins lightly and playfully, although it swells with scalar passages that are very reminiscent of a similar movement in Schumann's *Piano Quintet.* The movement has a lyrical but nostalgic Trio, which contrasts with the main body of the Scherzo.

In the final movement, *Allegro agitato*, written in sonata form, the main theme is articulated in the violins, with somewhat the character of a heroic march. The softer second theme has distinctive rhythms which the piano introduces and then passes to the first violin. It is at this point that Bruch left the movement before he was prodded to finish it. Arpeggiated chords complete the exposition and are followed by an energetic development section and the recapitulation, which brings back the heroic theme almost unchanged. A short coda brings the piece to its end.

Curtis Stewart (b. 1986): *The Gilded Cage* (World Premiere)

"Music, for me, can be a reflection and meditation on the histories of my family and community. My dad happened to be a church kid, growing up in Newport for a time within the Baptist AME church - hearing his stories got me thinking about the people of Newport and the culture of living there versus "having residence."

I became intrigued by the nature of the Breakers, the spirit of the place. I began to gather music from when my dad lived in Newport - historic themes and songs from the Baptist churches he went to in the area, the music of the people that were likely servicing the Breakers, as well as research on the Vanderbilts that lived there and were eventually removed once the place was deemed unlivable. My favorite quote in this research comes from Paul and Gladys Szápáry's

cousin, Jamie Wade Comstock who said, *"the gilded cage was much more interesting when it still had the birds inside it."* This strikes me as ironic, given that for much of the time the Breakers existed, it may have been empty, or just for "holiday"… I wonder which "birds" truly enlivened the house…the ghosts of now old money - or - the people who lived in Newport, taking care of the space - another type of ghost, free of that Gilded history." – Curtis Stewart

Today's performance marks the world premiere of *The Gilded Cage,* which was composed for the Newport Classical Music Festival through its annual commissioning initiative, with additional support from the **Artists Development Fund at the Rhode Island Foundation.**

Dmitri Shastkovich (1906-1975): Piano Quintet in G minor, Op. 57

Shostakovich's great reputation in America was long based almost entirely on his symphonies, the first of which made its way here in 1928, only two years after its Leningrad (now St. Petersburg again) premiere. Shostakovich was only nineteen years old in 1925 when he completed the symphony; chamber music was not one of the major preoccupations of his early career. It was not until 1938 that he finished the first of the fifteen string quartets that he was to write. A year later, in 1939, when he was helping the distinguished Russian ensemble known as the Beethoven Quartet to rehearse it, they asked him to compose a quintet for piano and strings that they could all perform together, since the composer was also a splendid pianist. In another year he had completed a quintet. On November 23, 1940, in Moscow, the group and Shostakovich gave the first performance of the *Piano Quintet in G minor;* it earned Shostakovich one of the Soviet Union's greatest honors of that era, a Stalin Prize of 100,000 rubles.

The quintet followed closely after *Shostakovich's Symphonies Nos. 5* and *6*, thus it must be counted, with them, among the great works of his middle years. Like them, it was soon widely performed and greatly admired for its effective blend of old and new musical thought. Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier,* for example, had been his constant musical companion since childhood, and from it came the structural idea for the quintet's first two movements.

The piano quintet, somewhat unusual for this chamber genre, consists of five movements, each readily accessible and characterized by direct and powerful melodies; the whole gives an impression of seriousness but serenity. The first movement is a noble Prelude, *Lento*, which has a lively, contrasting central section. It sets the tone for much of the rest of the work and states many musical ideas that will be heard later. The second movement follows without pause, and is another slow movement, broad and stately, a Fugue, *Adagio*. The Russian folk song that is its subject will reappear prominently later. A short but condensed Scherzo follows, *Allegretto*, boisterous in tempo and spirit and with a touch of Spanish rhythm in its middle section. As a whole, it is laden with both irony and humor.

In the fourth movement, the tempo returns to *Lento* for a poetic Intermezzo, a Bachian elegiac aria for violin with a steady, rhythmic accompaniment and a contrasting new theme that the piano introduces. It runs directly into the brilliant Finale, *Allegretto*, which is cast in strict sonata form. The music is full of Soviet style "optimism" and "positive" qualities, athletically active and even circus-like, yet without the empty pomp that mars some of Shostakovich's orchestral finales. Here the closing coda brings the music to an end with almost Schubertian charm.
One of Shostakovich's Russian biographers, in a book published in Moscow in 1959, noted that a wit described the quintet as "a five-movement work with seven movements," because although encores are relatively rare at chamber music concerts, since the work's premiere, its Scherzo and Finale had been so often encored.

Curtis Stewart

Curtis Stewart is a multi Grammy-nominated violinist/composer who enjoys bouncing between MTV specials with Wyclef Jean and sold out shows at Madison Square Garden with Stevie Wonder to stints at the Kennedy Center with the Jimmy Heath Big Band and runs at the Guggenheim, MoMA and Whitney Museums in NYC. Curtis has performed as a classical soloist at Lincoln Center, with the New York Philharmonic Bandwagon, as well as held chamber music residencies at Carnegie Hall, the MET Museum and National Sawdust. His work realizes a vision to find personal and powerful connections between styles, cultures, and music. Curtis teaches at The Juilliard School, Perlman Music Program, has been commissioned to write works for the Royal Conservatory of music, The Virginia Symphony, The Eastman Cello Institute, New York Festival of Song, PUBLIQuartet, and Carnegie Hall: Play/USA.

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