

November 14th, 2024, concert
**Julian Rachlin
& Friends**

The WMCT gratefully acknowledges
Dianne Henderson
for her support of the Student Outreach Program

As a courtesy to others, please refrain from wearing perfume or other scents.
Please turn off cell phones and other noise-making devices.
No photography or recordings of any type during the performance.

Please come and meet the artists on the stage following the concert.

Visit the artists' websites at
julianrachlin.com
sarahmcelravy.com
karenouzounian.com
shengcai.ca

Tuning Your Mind Lecture:
The Two Bs: Brahms and Bach
Robin Elliott, Professor of Musicology, U of T Faculty of Music
Open to all, 12.15 p.m. sharp
Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building

REVISED PROGRAM for NOVEMBER 14, 2024

From *Goldberg Variations*
(arr. Dmitry Sitkovetsky)

Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750)

Ciaccona from *Polish Requiem*

Krzysztof Penderecki
(1933-2020)

Music for the Passing of Days, Mvt 1

Lembit Beecher
(b. 1980)

Cadenza from *Tell Me Again*
for cello and orchestra

Lembit Beecher
(b. 1980)

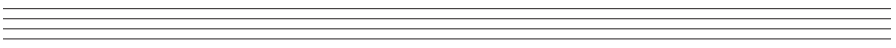
La Mamma
(arr. Lembit Beecher and Karen Ouzounian)

Charles Aznavour
(1924-2018)

---INTERMISSION---

Piano Quartet in A major, no. 2, op. 26
I. Allegro non troppo
II. Poco adagio
III. Scherzo: Poco allegro
IV. Finale: Allegro

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)



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Work for solo cello
(to be announced from the stage)

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Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Julian Rachlin, violin; **Sarah McElravy**, viola;
Karen Ouzounian, cello; **Sheng Cai**, piano

Julian Rachlin is Music Director of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra and Chief Conductor of the Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra. He also served as Principal Guest Conductor of the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra and as Principal Artistic Partner of the Royal Northern Sinfonia. With a career spanning more than thirty years, Rachlin has taken his multifaceted interests across the globe as a conductor, soloist, chamber musician, teacher and artistic director. His critically acclaimed recordings have been released by Deutsche Grammophon, Sony Classical and Warner Classics.

Rachlin is a much sought-after symphonic guest conductor worldwide. Highlights of recent seasons include the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Israel Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Vienna Symphony, Oslo Philharmonic, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, Helsinki Philharmonic, and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic.

As a violinist, he has shared the stage with the world's most prestigious orchestras and conductors. Recent highlights include appearances with the Oslo Philharmonic and Klaus Mäkelä, Philharmonia Orchestra with Santtu-Matias Rouvali, National Symphony Orchestra and Gianandrea Noseda, Munich Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic with Zubin Mehta, St. Petersburg Philharmonic with Yuri Temirkanov, Boston Symphony, Filarmonica della Scala, RAI National Symphony with Andrés Orozco-Estrada, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal and the Pittsburgh Symphony with Manfred Honeck.

Rachlin's music festivals reflect his passion for bringing audiences together in a celebration of music and art. He frequently collaborates with longtime musical partners Martha Argerich, Evgeny Kissin, Janine Jansen and Mischa Maisky. His work and dedication to Julian Rachlin & Friends, a festival in Dubrovnik, Croatia, which ran for over a decade, received worldwide recognition. Rachlin has been artistic director of the Herbstgold Festival at the Esterházy Palace in Eisenstadt, Austria, since 2021.

Rachlin plays a 1704 ex-Liebig Stradivarius and a 1785 Lorenzo Storioni viola, courtesy of Dkfm Angelika Prokopp Privatstiftung.

Described as “a consummate musician” (*Naples Daily News*) with “a divine sound... exquisitely sculpted” (*The Prague Post*), Canadian violist **Sarah McElravy** leads an exceptional and multifaceted career as a chamber musician, soloist, and pedagogue.

Ms. McElravy has appeared as a soloist with some of the world's most prestigious orchestras, including the Helsinki Philharmonic, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Warsaw Philharmonic, Moscow Philharmonic, Russian National Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Kammerorchester des Symphonieorchesters des Bayerischen Rundfunks, and the Naples Philharmonic Orchestra, among many others. As a dedicated chamber musician, Ms. McElravy regularly appears at leading festivals and venues around the world. In 2024/25, she will participate in the Z+ Chamber Music Festival in Shanghai, the Groba and Westport Chamber Music Festivals, a chamber music expedition in Armenia, and a return to the Herbstgold Festival in Austria.

She frequently performs in prestigious venues such as the Vienna Musikverein, Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, and Suntory Hall, and has participated in renowned festivals like the Prague Spring Festival, La Jolla SummerFest, Oslo Chamber Music Festival, Kronberg Academy, and the Beethoven Festival. Collaborations have included

artists such as Vilde Frang, Janine Jansen, Denis Kozhukhin, Itamar Golan, Andreas Ottensamer, Mischa Maisky, Nicolas Altstaedt, and Daniel Müller-Schott.

Sarah McElravy plays on a 1791 Ferdinando Gagliano violin and a 1785 Lorenzo Storioni viola, generously on loan courtesy of the Dkfm. Angelika Prokopp Privatstiftung in Vienna.

Described as “radiant” and “expressive” (*The New York Times*) and “nothing less than gorgeous” (*Memphis Commercial Appeal*), cellist **Karen Ouzounian** creates music from a deeply personal place. An acclaimed soloist, chamber musician, collaborator and composer, she is the recipient of the S&R Foundation’s Washington Award and is sought after for her open-hearted, vibrantly detailed and fiercely committed performances. Recent projects include the creation of an experimental theater work with director Joanna Settle; the world premiere of Lembit Beecher’s cello concerto *Tell Me Again* with the Orlando Philharmonic; the world premiere of Anna Clyne’s *Shorthand* for solo cello and strings with The Knights, which she toured as soloist with The Knights throughout Europe and the U.S. and released on Avie Records; the release of Kayhan Kalhor’s *Blue as the Turquoise Night of Neyshabur* for solo cello, kamancheh and tabla; the development, touring and recording of Osvaldo Golijov’s *Falling Out of Time*; and the digital world premiere of Beecher’s *A Year to the Day*.

Dedicated to the art of chamber music, she was a founding member of the Aizuri Quartet for eleven years, during which time the ensemble was awarded major chamber music prizes on three continents and earned a GRAMMY nomination. She has toured with Musicians from Marlboro, appeared at the Ravinia, Caramoor and Ojai festivals, and performs regularly as a member of the Silkroad Ensemble and The Knights. Her evening-length video work *In Motion*, was presented by BroadBand. Recent compositions include works for the Silkroad Ensemble, Noe Music, and an upcoming work for solo cello, Armenian instruments and choir for Cantori New York.

Recently described as “having the inner passion paired with Rubinstein’s nonchalance” by *Thüringer Allgemeine* in Germany and as “with enormous technique and graceful control of rubatos and tempi” (Clevelandclassical.com) Canadian pianist **Sheng Cai** has embraced the keyboard tradition which epitomizes the greatness of the romantic virtuoso. His performances of major keyboard works of the past centuries have touched audiences and won the praise of leading critics on four continents.

Since winning the top prizes at Le Concours OSM (Montreal symphony competition) and Toronto Symphony's competition at 15 years old, Sheng Cai has performed a broad spectrum of over 35 different piano concertos from Mozart to 21st-century living composers with invitations to more than 60 orchestras worldwide as guest soloist. Recent and upcoming concerto performance collaborations with orchestras includes the ORF Vienna radio Symphony, Toronto Symphony, Vancouver Symphony, Quebec Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, Calgary Philharmonic, Edmonton Symphony, Memphis Symphony, Windsor Symphony, Canton Symphony of Ohio, Shanghai Symphony, Shenzhen Symphony, in Germany with Nuremberg Symphoniker, Erfurt Philharmonic, Sinfonieorchester Aachen, Thüringen Philharmonie Gotha-Eisenach, Philharmonie Südwestfalen, Oldenburgisches Staatsorchester, Orchestre National de Cannes in France, Biel Solothurn Symphony of Switzerland, Armenian National Philharmonic, Krakow Philharmonic of Poland, North Czech Philharmonic, Malaga Philharmonic of Spain among many others.

Sheng Cai began his musical studies in Canada and US where he was a student at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto and the Juilliard School's pre-college division in New York. He received his Bachelor of Music Degree under full scholarship at The New England Conservatory in Boston. His teachers and mentors include pianists Anton Kuerti, Gary Graffman and Russell Sherman.

NOTES for NOVEMBER 14, 2024

The "Goldberg" in the title of the work on today's program is part of a delightful story told by Bach's first biographer, Johann Forkel. According to him, the work was commissioned from Bach by a Russian diplomat, Count Hermann Karl von Keyserling, who wanted music that his harpsichordist, Johann Goldberg, could play for him during his frequent bouts of insomnia. Modern scholars now regard this as an example of what we have learned to call alternative facts. More prosaically, the work is the fourth installment in a series of publications Bach undertook between 1732 and 1742, under the general title *Clavier-Übung* (Keyboard Exercise). It is worth noting that a relatively small amount of Bach's music was published in his lifetime. The title page of this fourth printed volume is typically grandiose: *Keyboard exercise, consisting of an ARIA with diverse variations for harpsichord with two manuals. Composed for connoisseurs, for the refreshment of their spirits, by Johann Sebastian Bach, composer for the royal court of Poland ... etc.*

In its complete form, the work also has a clear overall structure: a theme (the aria of the title) and 30 variations grouped in threes with every third one a canon. The theme must have been written earlier since it appears in the study booklet that Bach wrote for his second wife, Anna Magdalena in 1725. There is an additional complication in that each succeeding canon starts its imitating voice at a larger interval – the first at the unison, the second at a 2nd and so on. This all sounds esoteric, and it is, but the music is far from dry and academic, as you can confirm today with the arrangement of some of the work for string trio.

The Polish composer, Krzysztof Penderecki, first became known outside Poland with a series of avant garde works that explored extended instrumental techniques and new methods of notation. One of these works from the '60s, that was originally called 8' 37" was later named *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima*. As Adrian Thomas puts it, this renaming is a symptom of "Penderecki's burgeoning fascination with historical events and storylines, especially those of a traumatic nature." In 1980, a monument was erected in Gdansk in memory of the Fallen Shipyard Workers who were killed in the riots of 1970. For this occasion Penderecki wrote a piece using the text of the *Lacrimosa* from the Catholic mass; he dedicated it to Lech Wałęsa, the leader of the trade union Solidarity, and subsequently president of Poland. Over the next few years Penderecki added further movements, each related to different people or historic moments to form a complete Polish Requiem. A first version of this was performed in 1983. In 2005 the composer added a movement for string orchestra, a *Ciaccona*, between the *Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei* in memory of Pope John Paul II – the "Polish Pope". This *Ciaccona* has had an independent life and has been arranged for a variety of different instruments. Today we hear a version for violin and viola.

Brahms' career as a composer was given a resounding boost in 1853 by Schumann, who besides his own compositional work, had become an influential music critic. In a famous article titled *New Paths*, the older composer praised the 20 year old Brahms in terms that today sound embarrassingly over-stated: "a young blood at whose cradle graces and heroes mounted guard..." who has sprung "... fully armed like Minerva from the head of Jove." Schumann describes him sitting at the piano and disclosing by turn, "sonatas, or rather veiled symphonies; songs...individual piano pieces of almost demonic nature...; sonatas for violin and piano, quartets for strings – and all so different from one another ..." In fact, when Schumann published this, Brahms had written very few of the compositions that we now consider part of his

complete works, so the galaxy of music that Schumann heard either disappeared into the wastepaper basket, or remained to be endlessly, and often painfully, revised to surface many years later in a completely different form. Brahms' natural reticence to put himself forward as a composer, must surely have been intensified by his being pushed into the spotlight at this point in his career. Indeed he said exactly this when, two weeks after the article appeared, he wrote to Schumann: "I do not know how I shall manage to do even approximate justice to [this public praise]. Above all it forces me to exercise the greatest caution in the choice of pieces for publication." Nonetheless, he then goes on to lay out a methodical plan of action. "... I shall select the [piano] sonatas... to be my opus 1 and 2, songs for opus 3 and as opus 4 the Scherzo..."

Brahms wrote three piano quartets in all, one that was begun in 1856, three years after the *New Paths* article, but was not published until almost twenty years later, and two in the summer of 1861, of which the one on today's programme is the second. In September of that year, Brahms wrote to his friend, the violinist Joseph Joachim, suggesting that they exchange compositions and counterpoint exercises, as they had done in the past, because it was good for overcoming his "indolence and day-dreaming." Included with the letter were two of the products of this indolence and day-dreaming – the G minor and A major Piano Quartets! A couple of months later, following a great deal of prompting from Brahms, Clara Schumann visited Hamburg with her daughter Julie and took part in a number of concerts, including the premiere of the G minor Quartet. The A major quartet was given its first performance the following year by the composer on his first visit to Vienna. Brahms had intended a short stay in the Austrian capital, but was so delighted by the city and the friends he made there, that he remained for many months. "I have settled in," he writes, "...ten paces from the Prater, and can drink my wine where Beethoven drank his." The quartet was the first item on a concert that Brahms gave in the hall of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, that also included his *Handel Variations*, a *Fantasia* by Schumann and the F major Toccata by Bach. Writing home to his parents afterwards he said, "...my concert went quite splendidly, much better than I had hoped. After my Quartet had been very cordially received, people were exceptionally pleased with me as a pianist. Every number received the richest applause; I believe there was real enthusiasm in the hall."

-John Mayo