



70th Concert Series 2023-24



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is pleased to present

Manhattan Chamber Players

Adam Golka, piano

Elizabeth Fayette, violin

Siwoo Kim, violin

Grace Park, violin

Luke Fleming, viola

Michael Katz, cello

Saturday, September 23, 2023. 8:00 pm.

Sleepy Hollow High School, Sleepy Hollow, New York

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Who We Are

Friends of Music Concerts, Inc. is an award-winning, non-profit, volunteer organization now in its 70th season of showcasing, right here in Westchester, artists chosen from among the finest in today's diverse world of chamber music. Additionally, our Partnership in Education program in the public schools and free student admission to our concerts give young people enhanced exposure to and appreciation of classical music.

In order to help sustain what one of our artists called this “legendary series,” we would welcome people who can join the volunteers listed above. People we are seeking include, but are not limited to, those with writing/publishing production and/or fund development/grant writing skills. Call us at 914-861-5080 or contact us on our website (see below); we can explore the possibilities together.

Acknowledgments

We are proud to be a grantee of ArtsWestchester with funding made possible by Westchester County government with the support of County Executive George Latimer. Additional support has been received from many friends of Friends of Music, including subscribers and other ticket holders listed in this program.* If you, too, can contribute in this way, please send your gifts to Friends of Music Concerts, Inc., P.O. Box 675, Millwood, NY 10546.

Program

String Quartet No. 2 (1983)

I.

II.

III.

IV.

Philip Glass
(b. 1937)

Piano Quintet in E-flat Major, Op. 44 (1842)

Allegro brillante

In modo d'una Marcia: Un poco largamente

Scherzo: Molto vivace

Allegro ma non troppo

Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)

Intermission

Concerto for Violin, Piano, and String Quartet in D Major, Op. 21, (1891)

Décidé

Sicilienne

Grave

Très animé

Ernest Chausson
(1855-1899)

Musicians from the **Manhattan Chamber Players** appear by arrangement with Arts Management Group, 130 W. 57th St., Suite 6A, New York, NY 10029. info@artsmg.com.

Piano by Steinway

Next concert

Saturday, October 7, at 8:00 pm. Ossining High School, Ossining, NY

Trio Zimbalist

Program: Josef Haydn's Piano Trio No. 39 in G Major, Hob. XV:25; Bohuslav Martinů's Bergerettes for Piano Trio, H. 275; and Maurice Ravel's Piano Trio in A minor.

Program notes

String Quartet No. 2 “Company” Philip Glass

One of the most influential composers of the 20th century, **Philip Glass** discovered his love for music as a child in his father’s radio repair shop and record store, and began flute lessons early at Baltimore’s Peabody Conservatory. At fifteen, he entered the University of Chicago. After graduation, he went on to Juilliard in New York, where he studied with Steve Reich, then to Aspen, where he studied with Darius Milhaud, and then to Paris for further study with Nadia Boulanger. After becoming interested in the Indian sitarist Ravi Shankar and non-European music, he made exploratory trips to Africa and India for further study. On his return to New York, he organized a group of like-minded musicians into the Philip Glass Ensemble, which performed music in the idiosyncratic style he was developing. That style, which repeated and varied a very small number of basic musical ideas, came to be called “minimalism,” and grew into a movement.

In addition to inspiring admiration, minimalist music has had the ability to puzzle, annoy, and even infuriate. A typical audience reaction to Glass’s spare music during the late 1970s and 1980s included frantic bravos and violent boos, sometimes coming from the same people. Glass once explained: “Most music begins with an introduction, then it develops and has all sorts of adventures, some happy, some sad, and then it finally comes to an end.” He quite consciously did not use that model. His music also has a new conception of the listener’s sense of time. He often utilizes a constant beat and subtly shifting rhythms over a static harmonic structure, which tends to hypnotize the listener. Instead of the expected development sections, he uses increasingly complex repetitions and overlapping lines.

Many feel that Philip Glass’s string quartets, works of a very public composer, a most important opera reformer, and a longstanding music theater collaborator, contain his most intimate music. He has composed eight quartets; however, the first three were student works that he did not retain. **Quartet No. 1**, composed in Paris in 1966, contains short sections of tiny repeated motifs, his classic minimalist technique.

Glass’s first wife, JoAnne Akalaitis, was very involved with a theatre group formed during the couple’s years in Paris (1964-1966). This group eventually became known as Mabou Mines, becoming associated with the work of Samuel Becket and staging versions of his works. Glass had been Mabou Mines’ unofficial composer for about 20 years when he wrote this **Quartet No. 2**, commissioned by the Mabou Mines Foundation to accompany the dramatization of Becket’s *Company*, a short novel that had been adapted for the stage and performed as a monologue by Frederick Neumann. During the years between the first and second quartets, the composer had formed an ensemble; developed his motoric, repetitive style; produced a large body of music for dance, theater, and film; and had written four operas. With each succeeding work, he had further enriched his harmonic, rhythmic, melodic, and structural procedures.

The quartet made its New York premiere in January 1983 at the Public Theater. Glass wrote: “I liked the idea of using the medium of the string quartet that would allow for both and introspective and passionate quality well suited to the text. Becket picked four places in his work which he referred to as the ‘interstices as it were.’ Not surprisingly, these four short movements have turned out to be a thematically cohesive work which now, as my **String Quartet No. 2**, has taken on a life of its own.”

String Quartet No. 2 is a lyrical, almost romantic piece with strong, prominent melodies in a deceptively simplistic arrangement that somewhat reflects Glass’s original minimal compositions. The music follows the soliloquy of a man, presumably at the end of his life, who hears a voice from his past and comes to terms with a profound solitude. The work showcases all his signature features, such as looping minor-key chord progressions, churning arpeggios, and poignant melodies.

The first movement offers a series of variations on a harmonic scheme with a mostly static tonal center; shifting textures give this movement its individuality. With similar harmonic

choices, the second movement has faster figurations, with a steady rhythmic undercurrent. The third movement shares contours similar to those of the first movement, making some harmonic changes. The final movement hearkens back to the second movement's rhythmic tensions, but is more subdued, becoming very soft by the quartet's end.

Quintet for Piano and Strings in E-flat Major, Op. 44

Robert Schumann

Robert Schumann's father was a small-town bookseller who encouraged his son's inclination towards the arts. At the age of six, the boy began to play the piano and to compose; by the time he was fourteen, he was a published poet. Although he entered Leipzig University as a law student, he dropped out in his third year, determined to become a great pianist. When accident or illness injured his hand, he abandoned hope of a career as a performer and turned instead to composition. His subsequent brilliant collections of short, descriptive, atmospheric pieces established his position as Germany's leading composer.

Throughout his career, Schumann's output consisted of a series of works in related forms and styles. For instance, in 1840, the year of his marriage to Clara Wieck, he wrote almost nothing but songs, more than 130 of them, in a great outpouring of love and gratitude. In 1841 his attention was diverted to the orchestra; he wrote four symphonic compositions and the first movement of his Piano Concerto. In 1842 he put other work aside to concentrate on chamber music; that October, in a furious burst of creative energy, he composed three string quartets, a piano quartet, and this piano quintet. Its instrumentation - the standard string quartet of two violins, viola, and cello plus a piano - is that used for piano quintets by nearly all composers who followed him.

The **Quintet for Piano and Strings in E-flat Major** was dedicated to the composer's wife Clara Wieck Schumann, herself a well-known pianist, who first performed it in public. When she became ill before its scheduled second performance, Felix Mendelssohn took over at the piano. After he suggested that the composer make some changes in the second trio of the Scherzo, Schumann complied in time for its first official public performance in Leipzig on January 8, 1843.

The first movement, *Allegro brillante*, starts 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, very poetic subject starts in the piano with a kind of abbreviated statement of the theme before the cello and viola embellish it. The development utilizes two measures of the opening theme in a very quick tempo; a regular recapitulation closes the movement.

The slow second movement, *In modo d'una Marcia: Un poco largamente*, showcases two contrasting episodes. Actually, 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 comforts us with lyricism and then the quietly intense initial clipped march theme returns, acting almost as a refrain. Finally, the march yields to a stormy *Agitato* section, in which the piano provides a backdrop of triplets behind ominous brooding in the strings.

The third movement, *Scherzo: Molto vivace*, made up of virtually nothing but ascending and descending scales, is exhilarating because of its rhythmic and harmonic variety. There are two completely contrasting trios, each depending on rhythmic patterns for their effects. The first is pleasant and relaxed. The second's character is that of a restless rustic dance, often described as reminiscent of Hungarian gypsy music.

The vigorous finale, *Allegro ma non troppo*, combines elements of the sonata and rondo forms. Counterpoint, specifically the fugue, dominates it. 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's theme and combines it with that of the last movement in a double fugue style, creating a most impressive and memorable conclusion, giving the work a sense of unity.

Concerto for Violin, Piano, and String Quartet in D Major, Op. 21

Ernest Chausson

Ernest Chausson was the son of a wealthy Parisian family who required him to study law, but at the age of twenty-five he was able to turn to music and enrolled at the Paris Conservatory as a pupil of Massenet. When he failed to win the Prix de Rome because his musical ideas were too radical, he left the Conservatory to become a private pupil of César Franck, who exerted a strong influence over his work. Chausson was a shy man but a magnanimous one; he was generous with his considerable wealth, and helped many fellow composers. His career was brief because, at the age of forty-four, he died as the result of a fall from the bicycle he was riding down a hill at his country estate.

Because of that brevity, Chausson's musical output was relatively small. He wrote fewer than forty pieces, most of them songs. All possessed a strong, sensual appeal that made them especially memorable. He completed a symphony, many *mélodies* (settings of poetry), some religious motets, and a few chamber works. Most well-known today are the symphony, *Poème* for violin, some exquisite songs, and this distinctive **Concerto for Violin, Piano, and String Quartet**.

Chausson composed the **Concerto** in 1889-1891. At its 1892 premiere in Brussels, it was performed by violinist Eugène Ysaÿe, pianist Auguste Pierret, and Quatour Crickboom, and was Chausson's first critically acclaimed work. He dedicated it to Ysaÿe. Full of emotion and structured meticulously, it is a tour-de-force, distinguished by its instrumental color. The music is romantic, moody, sometimes optimistic yet frequently despondent. It is heavily chromatic with its lyrical lines rhapsodic and expansive, and the dramatic parts somewhat naïvely bombastic.

The spirited first movement, *Décidé*, begins with a slow introduction in which the piano introduces a three-note motif in three octaves that becomes the foundation of the movement's main theme. The solo violin and piano introduce the main theme in one of many sections that feature the two instruments. The quartet makes a grand entrance with the main theme, with the piano supporting them with octaves and brilliant high-pitched trills. The lyrical second theme receives a complex development. The violin and piano sadly play a melancholy passage; it is the three-note phrase and the beautiful second theme together, heard one final time. The final notes rise to the highest reaches of the violin as the piano closes the movement, which ends serenely.

The charming *Sicilienne* second movement has a light French feel, restrained and graceful, yet not without a sense of Chausson's majesty. It is cheerful and melodic, in contrast to the seriousness, even darkness, of the first movement. The piano ranges restlessly over the keyboard; the violin, pitched above the other instruments, proclaims its position of distinction.

The third movement, *Grave*, makes a strong contrast again, starting with a deeply melancholic and brooding violin/piano duo, almost a lament. When the quartet enters, the mood becomes even more somber. The theme from the first movement reappears, now in a different key. As the development unfolds, it seems as if the themes have become more downcast. The piano provides a passage that descends lower and lower, while the violin plays a steady high note as the movement ends.

The vigorous, spirited finale, *Très animé*, is energetic and elaborately virtuosic, its brilliance highlighting all the instruments in a bouncy rhythm. The piano begins with a joyful, syncopated passage, immediately joined by the violin, whereupon the piano articulates another lyrical passage. The quartet enters, participating in the spirited activity before some calm takes over, and the violin and piano become somewhat romantic. A big crescendo introduces a section of lively dance rhythms. The quartet and violin revisit some themes from earlier movements with increasing intensity. A final repeat of the work's opening notes, with a cyclical flourish, takes it to its spectacular ending.

--- Notes provided by Susan Halpern

About the Artists

Manhattan Chamber Players is a chamber music collective of New York-based musicians, all friends and colleagues, who share the common aim of performing at the highest level the greatest works in the chamber music repertoire. Formed in 2015 by Artistic Director and violist Luke Fleming (see below), MCP is comprised of an impressive roster of musicians who all come from the tradition of great music making at the Marlboro Music Festival, Steans Institute at Ravinia, Music@Menlo, Yellow Barn Chamber Music Festival, and Perlman Music Program, and are former students of The Curtis Institute, The Juilliard School, Colburn School, and New England Conservatory.

Born and raised in Texas to a family of Polish musicians, **pianist Adam Golka** has won widespread critical and popular acclaim. As a concert soloist, he has appeared with dozens of orchestras in Europe and throughout the United States. He collaborates regularly with MCP and in recital with several musicians. We first heard him during our 68th season as the extraordinary piano collaborator with cellist Jonathan Swensen.

A Long Island native, **violinist Elizabeth Fayette** most recently was first violinist of the Vega Quartet, Quartet-in-Residence at Emory University. With them, she has performed across North America, including Mexico and Alaska, and throughout Denmark. She regularly performs with the Marinus Ensemble and the Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players, as well as with MCP.

Violinist Siwoo Kim is the founding co-Artistic Director of VIVO Music Festival in his hometown of Columbus, Ohio. He also founded the Quartet Senza Matura, which has performed around the world. He performs on the 1690 “Stephens” Stradivari violin on generous loan from Florian Leonhard Fine Violins.

A native of Los Angeles, **violinist Grace Park** is a winner of the Naumberg Violin Competition. This past year she recorded her first album, as soloist with the Prague Philharmonia, which will include works by Mozart and Dvorák; it will be released next spring. She is an alumnus of Carnegie Hall’s Ensemble Connect, and has taught master classes internationally. She performs on a 1717 Giuseppi Filius Andrea Guaneri on loan from an anonymous sponsor.

In addition to being MCP’s founding Artistic Director, **violist Luke Fleming** is Artistic Director of Crescent City Music Festival and is founding member of the Delaware-based Serafin Ensemble. Formerly violist with the internationally-acclaimed Attacca Quartet, he currently serves as Adjunct Professor of Viola at the University of New Orleans School of the Arts. He is lecturer-in-residence for the concert series Project: Music Heals Us.

Israeli **cellist Michael Katz** has appeared as soloist and chamber musician in venues around the world. As cellist of the Lysandra Piano Trio, he was a winner of the 2021 Concert Artists Guild Competition and was awarded first prize in the 2011 Coleman Competition and the 2011 J.C. Arriaga Competition. He holds a Doctor of Music from SUNY/Stony Brook.



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