



Wednesday | November 19, 2025 | 7:30pm
Longy's Pickman Hall

Amaryn Olmeda violin
Adria Ye piano

Ludwig van Beethoven Violin Sonata No. 8 in G Major, Op. 30, no. 3
Allegro assai
Tempo di minuetto, ma molto moderato e grazioso
Allegro vivace

Johannes Brahms Violin Sonata No. 2 in A Major, Op. 100
Allegro amabile
Andante tranquillo – Vivace
Allegretto grazioso, quasi Andante

INTERMISSION

Felix Mendelssohn Violin Sonata No. 3 in F Major, MWV Q26
Allegro vivace
Adagio
Assai vivace

Carlos Simon *Between Worlds*, for unaccompanied violin

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky "Lensky's Aria" from *Eugene Onegin*
(arr. Leopold Auer)

Tchaikovsky Valse-Scherzo, Op. 34

Today's program will run approximately 90 minutes,
including intermission.

This performance is part of the 2025/26 season **Debut Series**

2025/26 Season Sponsors
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NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Violin Sonata No. 8 in G Major, Op. 30, no. 3

In early 1802, Beethoven wrote a set of three violin sonatas and then, heeding the advice of his physician, left the urban environment of Vienna to go to the pastoral village of Heiligenstadt for the summer months. Musically, at this time, Beethoven was just coming into his incomparably fertile middle years, yet it was a time of turmoil and tragedy personally. On October 6, shortly before he returned to Vienna, he wrote a will, which took the form of a letter to his two brothers; it is a poignant and stirring document in which he confessed the terror and dread of the affliction he had not divulged to anyone, that he was losing his hearing. "How could I possibly admit an infirmity in the *one sense* which ought to be more perfect in me than in other people, a sense that I once possessed in the highest perfection, a perfection such as few in my profession enjoy or have ever enjoyed! I would have ended my life—but my art held me back. To leave the world until I have brought forth everything that I feel within me is impossible." [Abridged] A few days later, he added a postscript of utter despair, but by November he had returned to Vienna with his new compositions from his year's arduous work. Having to continue with the ordinary course of life despite his hearing loss and his feelings about it, he resumed his busy public career.

The violin sonatas were published in the spring of the following year, 1803, with the outmoded designation "Three Piano Sonatas with the Accompaniment of a Violin." Beethoven dedicated them to "His Majesty Alexander I, Emperor of all the Russias," who had ascended the throne in 1801. Protocol required that permission for such a dedication must be granted in advance, and Beethoven had no doubt secured it with the help of one of the many music-loving Russian noblemen he knew in Vienna.

The Op. 30 sonatas are rich, mature, skillful works similar in type to those found in Beethoven's string quartets. The emotions are powerful, the forms original. The instrumental writing is highly original and perfectly idiomatic for the piano and the violin.

The third sonata of Op. 30 was first understood as a pastoral idyll, which pictured rustic dances and other bucolic pleasures. Now, it is more often interpreted as a forcefully passionate composition containing contrasting passages of high spirits, qualities demonstrated in the two principal themes of the opening movement, *Allegro assai*. The rhythmic dynamism of the first movement continues into the second, which is both tender and rugged. The second movement, *Tempo di menuetto ma molto moderato e grazioso*, follows the tempo of a minuet and feels very moderate and gracious. The music is in the shape of a protracted song, melodious and gently paced, in the rhythm of a popular contemporary dance form that frequently found its way into serious musical works. Near the end of the movement, Beethoven has written an especially charming passage in which the main theme is fragmented into tiny elements played first by one instrument and then the other. The last movement is a vigorous, witty rondo, *Allegro vivace*, whose almost perpetual motion provides a vibrant contrast with the music that preceded it.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
Violin Sonata No. 2 in A Major, Op. 100

The musical manner that Brahms adopted as a young man and the skill that he showed when he was merely twenty led Robert Schumann to proclaim in an article in 1853 that he entitled *New Paths*, his discovery of Brahms' musical style and extraordinary skills: "A young man has appeared over whose cradle Graces and Heroes have stood watch, a musician to give ideal expression to his times. At the piano, he played sonatas that were symphonies in disguise. He bore the marks that proclaimed, 'This is a chosen one.'" From the very beginning, he was the Brahms of noble melody, of rich texture, of rhythmic freedom, and of large statements in big forms beautifully written for the instruments. This distinctive "signature" of Brahms does not mean, however, that he did not develop as a composer and that the music he wrote at twenty and that which he wrote at fifty-five are not substantially different. He matured and grew as a composer, musically uttering different things at different times, yet when he was young, he had already found his own eloquent language, which he would use consistently and well until the end of his life.

Schumann's pronouncement also mentioned that Brahms at age twenty had already written some violin sonatas; years later, a Brahms pupil reported that the composer had discarded five of them before composing the first one in 1879 that he thought good enough to preserve and present to the world.

In the fruitful summer of 1886, on the shores of Lake Thun in Switzerland, Brahms wrote his Violin Sonata No. 2, the Cello Sonata, Op. 99, the Piano Trio, Op. 101, another Violin Sonata, Op. 108, and fifteen lieder. It was the time of full and rich maturity in his creative life that followed the completion of his Symphony No. 4. The huge amount of work he completed that season did not require hermit-like retirement from everything but composition. He read, studied, and performed with other musicians in the neighborhood and led a busy social life with friends he invited to Thun from Vienna, among them a talented young singer with whom he was in love.

Violin Sonata, Op. 100, the shortest of his three violin sonatas, is a sweet and lyrical work, given an almost Schubertian flavor by Brahms' use of two melodies from his new songs as the second themes of the first and last movements. The sensitive first movement, *Allegro amabile*, is a tight musical structure whose tenderness may have been inspired by the song text, "Like melodies running lightly through my mind, like the scent of spring flowers in bloom . . ." Second is a slow movement, *Andante tranquillo*, into which Brahms twice inserts a scherzo-like variation on the principal theme. The last movement, *Allegro grazioso (quasi andante)*, is a rondo, unusual for its calm and repose.

The composer and the violinist Joseph Hellmesberger first performed the sonata in public on December 2, 1886.

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
Violin Sonata No. 3 in F Major, MWV Q26

Felix Mendelssohn was a child prodigy, a composer who had his first public performance at the age of nine. When the most distinguished musicians of the day assured his father, a wealthy banker, that the boy was an authentic genius, nothing was spared to bring him to artistic maturity, and he grew up to be the greatest German musician of his generation. He was only twenty-six years old when he was appointed conductor of the orchestra at Leipzig, a city that he made into the musical capital of Germany.

In 1838, Mendelssohn wrote to a friend that “an important branch of piano music,” which he went on to describe as sonatas and chamber music for strings and piano, had captured his interest; he had just finished sonatas for violin and for cello, and he planned to compose a trio next. The trio turned out to be a great masterpiece; it is the one in D minor, Op. 49, while the Cello Sonata referenced was his Op. 45. These two pieces were quickly published, but he withheld the Violin Sonata with the intention of revising it; however, new creative projects and his busy career as a performer prevented him from doing any further work on it. Like his *Italian Symphony*, which later generations hear as a model of perfection, it was never completely revised and was not published during his lifetime. In 1953, the violin virtuoso Yehudi Menuhin prepared the first edition.

It is difficult to guess what Mendelssohn might have wanted to change in this Sonata and why. The splendid violin writing sometimes recalls his masterful Concerto, and the form and spirit of the whole work are those of the great D major String Quartet, Op. 44, no. 1, that was also written at the same time. Perhaps it was just that strange quirk of character, which he recognized and mentioned in another letter: He really hated to have his beautiful manuscripts soiled by printers and to have his music carelessly handled by the people who bought it.

The Violin Sonata is a classical three-movement work, elegantly written and highly expressive. The opening movement, *Allegro vivace*, is at once refined and exuberant, and the central three-part Adagio is an eloquent elegy with a particularly beautiful coda. The finale, *Assai vivace*, combines the sonata and rondo forms with the fleet, elfin quality of Mendelssohn's famous scherzos.

Carlos Simon (b. 1986)

Between Worlds, for unaccompanied violin

Carlos Simon is a native of Atlanta, Georgia, whose music ranges from concert music for large and small ensembles to film scores with influences of jazz, gospel, and neo-romanticism. Simon is the Composer-in-Residence for the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the inaugural Boston Symphony Orchestra Composer Chair, and was nominated for a 2023 Grammy award for his album, *Requiem for the Enslaved*.

Between Worlds, a solo string work, can be performed on violin, cello, or double bass. The following text related to the American artist Bill Traylor and the project title "Between Worlds" are borrowed from, and organized in relation to the 2018 Smithsonian American Art Museum exhibit, *Between Worlds: The Art of Bill Traylor*, and the related book by Leslie Umberger:

Bill Traylor was born a slave in Alabama in 1853 and died in 1949. He lived long enough to see the United States of America go through many social and political changes. He was an eyewitness to the Civil War, Emancipation, Reconstruction, Jim Crow segregation and the Great Migration. As a self-taught visual artist, his work reflects two separate worlds—rural and urban, black and white, old and new. In many ways, the simplified forms in Traylor's artwork tell of the complexity of his world, creativity, and inspiring bid for self-definition in a dehumanizing segregated culture. This piece is inspired by the evocative nature as a whole and not one piece by Traylor. Themes of mystical folklore, race, and religion pervade Traylor's work. [Simon] imagines these solo pieces as a musical study; hopefully showing Traylor's life between disparate worlds.

Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)

"Lensky's Aria" from *Eugene Onegin*

Valse-Scherzo, Op. 34

The plot of Tchaikovsky's opera *Eugene Onegin* is derived from one of the greatest masterpieces of Russian literature, the narrative poem by Alexander Pushkin that the poet described as "a novel in verse" in the manner of Byron's *Don Juan*. Tchaikovsky took only ten months from May 1877 to February 1878, to write this opera, the finest of his ten operas, a story of unrequited love. It had its premiere on March 29, 1879, performed by the students of the Moscow Conservatory.

Eugene Onegin is the tale of a cynical, disillusioned young dandy, Onegin, who is tired of his carefree life and has retired to a country estate, where he and a young romantic poet, Vladimir Lensky, become fast friends. Lensky introduces Onegin to his fiancée, Olga, and her older sister, the sensitive and retiring Tatiana, who falls in love with Onegin and pours out her heart to him in a long letter. Although Onegin admires her frankness, he tells her that he does not share her love; she is too naive, too romantic, and he is too worldly.

In Act II, Scene 2, Lensky sings what is known as his Air, "*Kuda, Kuda*," ("Ah, whither are you fled?"), one of the most famous tenor arias in Russian opera. It is his most passionate goodbye to Olga, to love and to youth.

The arrangement of the beloved aria for violin and piano was made by Leopold Auer (1845-1930) and published in 1921.



Tchaikovsky composed the light-textured Valse-Scherzo, alternately brilliant and lyrical, in 1877 for his student, Yosif Koteik, who was responsible for introducing him to his future patroness, Nadezhda von Meck. In January 1875, at the Moscow home of Nicolai Rubinstein, Tchaikovsky made the acquaintance of a thirty-year-old violinist named Leopold Auer (coincidentally the arranger of the previous work on tonight's program). Auer is best remembered now as the teacher of an entire generation of Russian violinists, including Heifetz and Milstein, and for his long quarrel with Tchaikovsky about his "unplayable" Violin Concerto. Neither Koteik nor Auer gave the first performance of Valse-Scherzo; instead, another violinist, Stanislaw Barawicz, played its debut in Paris at the Trocadéro on September 20, 1878, conducted by Nicolai Rubinstein; the piece was, nevertheless, in the end, dedicated to Auer.

Tchaikovsky's interest in the violin as a solo instrument dates from his meeting with Auer, and this and the other short violin works he composed at this time figure, in a way, as preliminary essays for the concerto. In the brilliant and lyrical Valse-Scherzo the listener can detect Tchaikovsky's burgeoning feelings for the violin, especially his delight in its virtuoso opportunities. This piece, in a three-part form, is simply constructed. A lively waltz melody is followed by an impassioned middle section, and then the opening theme returns with some decorative embellishments. It is a minor work, but a pleasant one with hints of what was soon to come in his violin concerto.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Amaryn Olmeda violin

Winner of first prize and the audience choice award at the 24th Annual Sphinx Competition, American violinist Amaryn Olmeda is a rising star sought after for her bold and expressive performances as a soloist and collaborator. Violinist.com says of Olmeda, "...her commanding stage presence, infallible technique, and interpretive ability already rival that of international concert stage veterans."

Highlights of the 2025/26 season include debut performances with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Calgary Philharmonic, Tallahassee Symphony, Modesto Symphony, Williamsburg Symphony, and Shreveport Symphony, as well as return appearances with the Buffalo Philharmonic, Des Moines Symphony, Stockton Symphony, and Auburn Symphony. Today's performance marks her Celebrity Series debut.

Olmeda made her Lincoln Center solo debut on the 2024 *Summer for the City Series*. Later that season, she returned for her solo debut at David Geffen Hall on the New York Philharmonic's Kravis Nightcap Series with violinist Hilary Hahn and principal ballet dancer Tiler Peck. She made her Carnegie Hall solo debut on the Sphinx Virtuosi tour at age 14, garnering rave reviews.

Recent highlights include debuts with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Houston Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, Seattle Symphony, Charlotte Symphony, Omaha Symphony, and the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra at their New Year's Concert Series, earning her a nomination for the *San Francisco Classical Voice* Audience Choice Awards. In 2023, she recorded Carlos Simon's *Between Worlds* on Deutsche Grammophon, praised by *The Strad* as "an impressive reading by the young musician." In 2022, Olmeda performed for the San Francisco Conservatory Gala with pianist Yuja Wang. At 13, Olmeda became the first member of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and Opus 3 Artists' Artist Apprentice Program.

Born in Melbourne, Australia, in 2008, Amaryn Olmeda studies at the New England Conservatory of Music with Miriam Fried. She previously studied with Ian Swensen at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Olmeda performs on a violin made by J.B. Vuillaume in 1864.

Adria Ye piano

Chinese American pianist Adria Ye has been driven from a young age by a hopeless fascination with music. Described by cellist David Finckel as having a “naturally beautiful sound and lyric instinct,” she made her orchestral debut at age nine with the Oregon Sinfonietta, and has since performed as soloist and chamber musician across Europe, China, and the United States. She has been featured in radio broadcasts of *Performance Today* with Fred Child, and National Public Radio’s *From the Top*. Most recently, she was the recipient of the Paul Streit Special Prize at the 2022 Concours de Genève and was the winner of the 2022 Music Academy of the West Solo Piano Competition.

An avid chamber musician, Adria has also participated in and performed at festivals including the Ravinia Steans Music Institute, Four Seasons Chamber Music Festival Spring Workshop, the Innsbrook Institute, and the David Finckel-Wu Han Chamber Music Studio at the Aspen Music Festival and School. She has worked with artists including Richard Aaron, David Finckel, Miriam Fried, Wu Han, Joel Krosnick, Jerome Lowenthal, Orli Shaham, and Vivian Weilerstein. She frequently collaborates with and performs with cellist Leland Ko.

As a teenager, Adria developed playing injuries in both arms that kept her away from the instrument for nearly two years. The absence of music in her life gave her a deeper and renewed understanding of the joy and meaning that music can bring—a lesson which has reinforced her desire to share that value with others.

Adria earned her Bachelor and Master of Music degrees at the Juilliard School with Yoheved Kaplinsky and Julian Martin, and currently studies with Wha-Kyung Byun at New England Conservatory.

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performance?
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