

violin sonatas. It is a heartfelt and transcendent *Adagio*, which Brahms casts in D Major, and which carries us onto an emotional journey both dramatic and ultimately sad and cathartic. The third movement, typically a scherzo or other fast intermezzo, is marked “Un poco presto e con sentimento,” or only *somewhat fast and with feeling* has elements of playfulness and mischief, but also the quality of a storm that brews out of rising emotion. The final movement certainly tears out of the gates with the agitated quality the title suggests. If there was restlessness in the 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, this is the full outward expression of the agitation and anxiety. The second theme also reminds us of the inner stings of an agitated emotion under the surface.

**Gabriel Fauré’s C minor Piano Quartet** is of a different language than the Brahms sonata. Although the two pieces were written within ten years of each other, Fauré’s sound world is quite different. His is a world of drive and drama but in an energetic language that’s less dense than the Brahms, one which he maintained throughout his compositional career into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, despite musical revolutions taking place around him.

Fauré creates many soundscapes in his writing that bear a distinctive mark of his own. For starters, the first movement opens with a stunning sound of the unison strings opposing a syncopated piano part. The *Scherzo*, which alternates between 6/8 and 2/4 is a rather breathless dance of infinite delicacy, with a muted trio that glides through the whole range of harmony, suggesting impressionism but without Debussy’s harmonic language. The *Adagio*, returning to minor, is one of the most exquisite slow movements in the literature, remarkable in its melodic and harmonic richness, a poignantly melancholy meditation. The *Finale*, with its *furioso* rhythmic drive, is almost relentless in its pace, broken up only by a lyrical second theme of sweetness and yearning. These themes travel through all possible keys before reaching a powerhouse *Coda*, which brings the work to a fiery close in a cascade of C major scales, chords and arpeggios.



A personal note of dedication is that both the Brahms and Fauré are pieces that our late teacher Eric Rosenblith (1920-2010) performed often. It’s difficult for us to play them and not think of his remarkably humanistic and soulful music making. During summers at his music festival in Maine over the past 15 years, the four of us had many opportunities to play chamber music in coaching sessions for Mr. Rosenblith and to hear him play as well. We’ve chosen these pieces today in part as a dedication to Mr. Rosenblith.



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Providence, Rhode Island

*Musicales*

*132<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary Season*

Sunday, May 15, 2011 at 2:00 p.m.

Mary K. Hail Music Mansion

Greetings from: Barbara Speer, President

Providence, Rhode Island

*Presidents’ Day Program*

*Featured Artists:* Sebastian Ruth, violin and viola; Minna Choi, violin

*Guest Artists:* Kanako Nishikawa, piano; Harel Gietheim, cello

Cantabile and Waltz in E Major.....Niccolò Paganini  
(1782-1840)

Sonata in D minor for Violin and Piano, Op. 108.....Johannes Brahms  
(1833-1897)  
Allegro  
Adagio  
Un poco presto e con sentimento  
Presto agitato

*Intermission*

Piano Quartet in C minor, Op. 15.....Gabriel Fauré  
(1845-1924)  
Allegro molto moderato  
Scherzo: Allegro vivo  
Adagio  
Allegro molto

*Presidents’ Day Co-Chairs:* Betty Jane Berberian and Edith Hemenway

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## ABOUT THE PERFORMERS



**SEBASTIAN RUTH**, violin/viola, is the Founder and Artistic Director of Community MusicWorks, a nationally-recognized organization that connects professional musicians with urban youth and families in Providence. As a member of the Providence String Quartet, the organization's resident ensemble, Sebastian has performed in recent seasons in Providence, Boston, Los Angeles, Banff, and New York, and with members of the Borromeo, Muir, Miro, Orion, and Turtle Island String Quartets, with pianist Jonathan Biss, and violist Kim Kashkashian.

A graduate of Brown University, Sebastian's important teachers have included Lois Finkel, Eric Rosenblith, Rolfe Sokol, Pamela Gearhart, Mela Tenenbaum, and Michele Auclair at the Schola Cantorum in Paris.

During a 2010 sabbatical, Sebastian spent time in places as near as Boston and New York and as far as Banff, Alberta for a combination of residencies, performances, lessons in violin and viola, and lots of time to enjoy life and music. In normal times he lives on the South Side of Providence with his wife Minna Choi, and their cat Jhumpa.

Sebastian is the recipient of a 2010 MacArthur Foundation Fellowship.

**MINNA CHOI** is a Resident Musician at Community MusicWorks, a nationally-recognized program that connects professional musicians with urban communities in Providence, Rhode Island. She is also the Director of the Community MusicWorks Fellowship Program, which trains young musicians to establish careers that combine chamber music performance, education and social change. Minna was a founding member of the Providence String Quartet, the organization's resident ensemble from 2001-2004, and continues to perform with the group regularly.

Winner of the 2006 Miami String Quartet Competition at the Hartt School of Music, Minna has also performed with members of the Borromeo, St. Lawrence, and Turtle Island String Quartets. Minna holds a B.A. in Philosophy from Brown University, and a M.M. in violin performance from the Hartt School of Music.

Minna has been a participant at the MusiCorda, Aspen, and Yellow Barn Music Festivals, and at the International Musical Arts Institute. Influential teachers include Katie Lansdale, Eric Rosenblith and Lois Finkel.

**HAREL GIETHEIM**, cello, was born in Kibbutz Ruhama, Israel, and began his cello studies at the age of ten. His major teachers during these formative years were Uri Vardi, Uzi Visel, and Michael Haran. He participated in many master classes with renowned cellists such as Yo-Yo Ma, Lynn Harrell, Janos Starker, and Aldo Parisot, and in 1988 won a major prize in a cello competition organized by Yehuda Hanani. This prize provided him with a full scholarship to the Aspen Music Festival in Aspen, Colorado, and laid the foundations for his future studies in the United States.

Harel Gietheim is currently based in Boston, Massachusetts, where he lives with his wife Kanako. He is a faculty member at Manchester Community Music School, St. Paul's School, and has coached Chamber Music at Longy School of Music. He performs frequently across New England as a solo and chamber musician. His most recent project is a recording of Eric Sawyer's Quartet No. 2 and is available on the Albany Label.

**KANAKO NISHIKAWA**, piano, is a native of Japan, started her piano study at age 4 and won the Machida Piano Competition in Japan at age 7. Ms. Nishikawa received her Bachelor of Music degree in Piano Performance from the Toho-Gakuen School of Music. She continued her studies at the New England Conservatory of Music where she received a Master of Music degree with Honors. She was the recipient of the Artist Diploma with Honors in Piano Performance and Chamber Music at Longy School of Music where she performed extensively with the Longy Chamber Orchestra.

She has attended the Aspen Festival and is a Fellow at the International Musical Arts Institute in Maine. Ms. Nishikawa combines her wide activity as soloist, recitalist and chamber musician in the United States, Europe, Israel, Malaysia and Japan. She has performed with members of the Boston, San Francisco, Dallas, and Montreal Symphonies, and the Philadelphia and Minnesota Orchestras, among others. She has had master classes and private lessons with Richard Goode, Lucas Foss, and Menahem Pressler.

## PROGRAM NOTES

**Niccolò Paganini's Cantabile and Waltz** is a piece of a different nature than those displaying the fire-breathing virtuosity of so many of his violin pieces. Audiences in Paganini's day knew well the pyrotechnics he could display with his immense and, to that point, unprecedented violin technique, but they were equally familiar with Paganini the romancer, who could make one cry with his tender playing. The **Cantabile and Waltz** reminds us that Paganini was a contemporary of the opera composers Rossini and Bellini, and one can imagine that this piece was written with a Bel Canto soprano in mind to spin its melodies. Perhaps the plot of this opera involves the lover wooing her beloved, but also a dark middle period of jealousy and drama. No Paganini would be complete, of course, without some elements of soloistic bravura.

The **Brahms D minor Sonata** is the third of Brahms' three sonatas for violin and piano, and the fieriest of the set. Our late teacher, Eric Rosenblith, said about the Brahms sonatas: "I think about how rich this is, how it delves in the corners of our soul, how we couldn't express this in words unless we were equally great in words as he is in music. It appears in a weight of the emotional quality. There isn't a useless note in it. There isn't a note that doesn't belong or could be different or could be not there. It's totally miraculous."

I believe that Rosenblith's enthusiasm for this music comes from a sense of awe that Brahms could convey such a depth of human experience through his music, while keeping to a very well-conceived and carefully constructed form. Early in his career, Brahms was intimidated by the looming presence of Beethoven and took great care throughout his compositional career to express the depth of what he had to offer but within the context of extraordinarily well-crafted forms.

The first movement journeys from an opening theme that introduces the intensity of the character of the movement in an under the surface voice (Brahms' marking is "sotto voce ma espressivo," or *with a soft voice but expressively*, to a singing longing theme and a mysterious anxious one, all with the formal structure of a classical sonata first movement. The inner movements of this sonata are each relatively short. The second movement is the emotional center of this piece, and possibly of all the Brahms