

SCHOOL OF MUSIC, THEATRE, AND DANCE

— A VIRTUOSO SERIES CONCERT BY —

Duo Francois *+ friends*

RON FRANCOIS, VIOLIN • SILVANA SANTINELLI, PIANO
ROMINA MONSANTO, CELLO • PHILLIP STEVENS, VIOLA

JANUARY 29, 7:30 P.M. **ORGAN RECITAL HALL**

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DUO FRANCOIS + Friends

JANUARY 27, 2024 | 7:30 P.M. | ORGAN RECITAL HALL

Sonata for Violin and Piano in A Major

Cesar Franck
(1822-1890)

Allegretto Ben Moderato

Allegro

Recitative-Fantasia

Allegretto poco mosso

INTERMISSION

Piano Quartet in E-flat Major Op. 47

Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)

Sostenuto assai - Allegro ma non troppo

Scherzo: Molto vivace – Trio I – Trio II

Andante cantabile

Finale: Vivace

Phillip Stevens – Viola
Romina Monsanto – Cello

PROGRAM NOTES

Sonata for Violin and Piano in A Major by Cesar Franck

Cesar Franck's Violin Sonata in A Major was written in 1886 as a wedding present to Belgium violin virtuoso Eugène Ysaÿe. Like Franck, Ysaÿe was born in the town of Liege, Belgium and the composition became so special to Ysaÿe that he kept it in his repertoire for many years on his concert tours.

The Franck A Major Sonata comprises four movements: Allegretto Ben moderato, Allegro, Recitativo-Fantasia: Ben Moderato and Allegretto poco Mosso. All the movements share a common thread. The main melodic ideas find their way into all the movements, but modified, giving the work a unified cyclical nature.

1. *Allegretto Ben Moderato*. Originally Franck wrote the first movement to be played very slowly. But Ysaÿe played it slightly faster, convincing Franck to change the tempo marking to Allegretto Ben moderato.
2. *Allegro*. The second movement is a very dramatic Allegro with a turbulent piano introduction and several lyrical interludes.
3. *Recitativo-Fantasia: Ben Moderato*. Rich harmonies and emotional intensity give this movement an improvisatory and atmospheric effect.
4. *Allegretto poco Mosso*. Thematic elements recur throughout this movement in a canonic writing style. Majestic harmonies and irresistible melodies make this movement and the entire work a triumphant composition, making it a favorite among performers and audiences.

Piano Quartet in E-flat Major Op. 47 by Robert Schumann

Full of spirit and vitality, the Piano Quartet in E flat Major by Robert Schumann Op. 47 showcases Schumann's expressive Romantic style, with beautiful lyrical melodies and interplay between the piano, violin, viola and cello. Written in 1842, the work consists of four movements:

Allegro ma non troppo, Scherzo: Molto Vivace, Andante cantabile, and Finale: Vivace.

The Piano Quartet was dedicated to Count Mathieu Wielhorsky, a cellist and impresario and was first performed at a private function in 1843 with Clara Schumann at the piano. After several revisions, the piece received its 1st public premiere in 1844 again with Clara Schumann, piano, Ferdinand David, violin, Niels Gade, viola and Franz Karl Wittman, cello. The work was published in 1845.

1. *Sostenuto - Allegro ma non troppo*. The first movement starts with an introduction, *Sostenuto*, which resembles a hymn in four- and five-part writing. All strings use double stoppings helping achieve a chordal texture. The movement continues with the dynamic *Allegro ma non troppo*, with two subjects, alternating back and forth with the *Sostenuto* section, finishing with a captivating Coda. Throughout the whole movement there is a notable conversation between the strings and the piano. It emphasizes a chamber texture forming a unified ensemble.
2. *Scherzo: Molto Vivace – Trio I – Trio II*. The second movement starts with a quick figuration going up and down in the key of G minor. The fast-running notes give momentum and a sense of instability. This motive alternates with Trio I and Trio II, settling the “anxiety” and giving the whole movement a “Fantasy-like” feel.
3. *Andante Cantabile*. According to musicologist Karl Bömer, this is the highlight of the piece, featuring one of the most beautiful cello themes ever written in the Romantic period. The work includes beautiful sublime melodies with conversations among instruments in the form of canons, duets, interludes, which make this movement a magical experience.
4. *Finale: Vivace*. Partly Fugal, partly Sonata form, the last moment starts with the three-note melodic line of the preceding movement. The whole movement is a “tour de force” for all instruments, making references of melodic lines found in the previous three movements.

RON FRANCOIS, VIOLINIST

Ron Francois has performed in venues across the United States, Canada, Europe and Mexico as a soloist, chamber musician and orchestral player. His performances have consistently won the acclaim of notable musicians. "...A fantastic violinist...a big talent" quoted Abram Shtern—concertmaster of the Kiev State Opera and Professor at the Kiev Conservatory. Francois' playing is "...extremely musical. Francois plays with great sensitivity and warmth" quoted concert violinist Daniel Heifetz"...A wonderful musician...sensitive ensemble player and a brilliant violinist" said Michael Tree from the Guarneri String Quartet.

Ron François has collaborated with some of the world's finest musicians including Boris Garlitsky-former concertmaster of the London Philharmonic orchestra, Martin Chalifour-concertmaster of the Los Angeles Philharmonic orchestra, Arkady Fomin of the Dallas Symphony, the Borromeo String Quartet to name a few. He has appeared with major orchestras in Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

As a chamber musician, Ron Francois has a broad experience. From 2008-2012, Ron Francois served as the violinist for the Mendelssohn Trio and performed numerous concerts in Europe and the United States with this group. In 2010, the Denver post named the Mendelssohn Trio one of Colorado's top chamber music groups. As a member of the Canadian chamber orchestra IMusici de Montreal, Francois toured extensively in Canada and the USA. Francois appears on two CD's with this group on the Chandos Label.

Founder of the Duo Francois with pianist Silvana Santinelli, the duo was the winner of the Silver Medal in the best "Duo" and "Emerging Artists" category at the Global Music Awards. This prize was awarded for the 2017 release of the Duo Francois' first CD entitled "Mexico City Blues" on the Itinerant Classics label. This CD was also nominated as a Semifinalist in the "American Prize Awards" under the category of "Professional Chamber Music Groups". "Mexico City Blues" compiles works from three modern composers from Canada, Mexico and the United States. The CD was partially funded by the prestigious Mexican grant, FONCA (Fondo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes).

Since then, the Duo Francois has commissioned the Sonata No. 5, Op. 95 for Violin and Piano by Canadian composer Andrew Paul MacDonald, "Vault", Veil, and Veer". The premiere took place in September 2022 at the University Center for the Arts in Fort Collins, CO. The recording of this piece will be in the near future.

Ron Francois' most influential mentors were, Concert Violinist Daniel Heifetz, Arnold Steinhart and John Dalley from the Guarneri String Quartet, Elizabeth Adkins-former concertmaster of the National Symphony, David Salness of the Audubon Quartet, Svi Zeitlin and Charles Castleman from the Eastman School of Music.

Renown as wonderful teacher and pedagogue, Ron Francois has been in demand since 2004. He has presented masterclasses in Canada, the United States, Mexico and China. For more than 15 years he has been invited frequently to teach and give master classes at Universities and Conservatories in Mexico. He just came back from performing and teaching at the prestigious Festival Internacional de Camara, (FICA25) in Xalapa Veracruz.

In 2013, he won the Outstanding Service Award for teaching from the Colorado ASTA chapter.

Since 2002, Ron Francois has served as the head of the string division and is the main violin professor at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado.

SILVANA SANTINELLI, PIANIST, DMA

Silvana Santinelli has performed in Russia, Czech Republic, France, Canada, China and Switzerland, in addition to the United States and her native Mexico. A Fulbright former scholar, Dr. Santinelli's many accomplishments include being the first prize winner of the Mexican National piano Competition. At the age of fourteen, she made her solo debut with the San Antonio Symphony, performing the Ravel Piano Concerto in G Major, after winning first prize in the Young Artist Award Competition.

Other prizes and awards include being the winner of the Ulrich Piano Competition, in Maryland, the French International Piano Festival Competition in Paris and the Josef Hoffman International Piano Competition. She was a semifinalist in the San Antonio International Piano Competition, the Missouri International Piano Competition, and the New Orleans International Piano Competition.

Dr. Santinelli graduated with a Doctorate in Musical Arts from the University of Maryland, College Park. Her main instructors include Santiago Rodriguez, Andre Watts, Alexander Alexandrov, Valeri Gromovskiy, Emmett Vokes, and Robert Avalon.

Santinelli's two-CD set of the "Most Representative Piano Works" by Mexican Composer Rodolfo Halffter on Centaur Records label has been internationally acclaimed. Her recent CD recent with violinist Ron Francois (Duo Francois) "México City Blues" has won the Silver Medal in the "Golden Global Awards" in the category of Best Duo and emerging Artists. The CD features works for Violin and Piano by Andrew Paul MacDonald, Canada, James David, United States and Juan Trigos, México. The CD under iTinerant Classics label is available on iTunes, Spotify, Amazon. The recording of the Concerto for Piano and Orchestra by Mexican composer Carlos Chavez, with the Orchestra of Guanajuato, will be available in the near future.

In addition to her extensive career as a soloist, Silvana Santinelli is a member of the "Duo Francois" with violinist Ron Francois.

Dedicated to music education and outreach, Dr. Santinelli regularly connects with students and teachers through interactive performances, masterclasses, and lectures, both in person and online. Since 2011, Silvana Santinelli has been a frequent guest and lecturer at the University of Guanajuato and Conservatorio de Celaya in Mexico. She maintains a flourishing private studio in Fort Collins, Colorado.

ROMINA MONSANTO, CELLIST

Cellist Romina Monsanto is a versatile performer and educator originally from Venezuela. She has performed as a soloist and ensemble member in Venezuela, Mexico, Brazil, and the United States. She performs in varied styles, from orchestral, new music ensembles, to diverse chamber music ensembles.

Ms. Monsanto is the Cello Instructor at Colorado State University. She was invited to lecture about music technology at Aims Community College, *El Sistema* at the University of Wyoming, and *Writing for Cello* at the University of North Texas. She is scheduled to visit several universities in the United States, including Brigham Young University, Western Colorado University, and the University of Nebraska, to perform and give masterclasses.

She was the principal cellist of the Porto Alegre Symphony Orchestra in Brazil and served as faculty in the 17th Encontro de Violoncelos in Porto Alegre, Brazil, Festival de la Musica Orquestal in Jalisco, Mexico, and is faculty at the chamber music camp Point CounterPoint Session 2 in Leicester, Vermont. She performs with ensembles in Colorado, including the Fort Collins Symphony, Greeley Philharmonic Orchestra, Opera Steamboat, Sphere Ensemble, and Range Ensemble.

An avid performer of contemporary music, she is a founding member of the oboe and cello duo New Duobus. She has performed new commissions, including *Portraits Bizarre: Quartet Miniatures Based on the Paintings of Edward Hopper and Andrew Wyeth* by C.L. Shaw, and *Six Questions* by Paul Elwood. She has appeared for four seasons in the Open Space Festival of New Music, where she performed works by Paul Elwood, Andrew Norman, Augusta Read Thomas, and Ellen Fullman.

Ms. Monsanto participated in album recordings, including *Portraits, Moods, and Places* by C.L. Shaw, *The Akari Sessions* by Anne Lanzilotti, *Heaven? Indeed* by Julian Cary, *Andean Dream* by Daniela Paez, *Émissions Transparents* by Paul Elwood, and *The Uncommon Ensemble at The TANK*. She recorded sound effects for Ludek Drizhal in the Polish movie *Solid Gold* and Daniel Wakefield's movie score for *The Forgiving*. *The Akari Sessions* featured in the Noguchi Museum in New York during the *Akari: Sculpture by Other Means* exhibit.

PHILLIP STEVENS, VIOLIST

Phillip Stevens has been a member of the Colorado Symphony Orchestra since 1996 and is currently Affiliate Professor of Viola at Metropolitan State University of Denver. He has also performed with the Rochester Philharmonic, the Ann Arbor Symphony, and the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra. Phillip teaches privately, and is active in educating youth through the programs of the Colorado Symphony, Friends of Chamber Music, and Englewood Arts, where he serves as Personnel Manager.

Phillip began his musical education in his hometown of Kansas City, Missouri. In 1994, while completing his Bachelor's degree the University of Michigan studying with Yizhak Schotten, he won first prize in the Viola division of the 1994 National ASTA Music Competition. He spent many summers attending the Aspen Music Festival, and continued his formal education at Northwestern University, where he received his Master's degree studying under Peter Slowik.

Chamber music has always been an important part of Phillip's career, being a founding member of the Sheridan Chamber Players in Chicago, and more recently as a member of the Ivy Street Ensemble in Denver. In addition to the busy concert schedule, CD recordings, and radio broadcasts, he frequently participates during the summer at the Grand Teton Music Festival in Jackson, Wyoming, the Chintimini Chamber Music Festival in Corvallis, Oregon, and the Off the Hook Arts Summerfest in Ft. Collins, CO, including performances with the Miami String Quartet.

Phillip currently serves as an artistic director of the Chamber Music at the Mansion series at the Highlands Ranch Mansion, and performs regularly at the Lone Tree Arts Center and with the Front Range Chamber Players. Additionally, he has been featured in recital at the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall as part of the DCINY Distinguished Concert Artist Series.

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