

## **ARTIST SERIES – ALESSIO BAX AND LUCILLE CHUNG**

### **PROGRAM**

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)

Concerto No. 14 in E-flat major for Piano and String Quintet, K. 449 (1784)

Allegro vivace

Andantino

Allegro ma non troppo

Alessio Bax, piano • Arnaud Sussmann, violin • Bella Hristova, violin • Paul Neubauer, viola • Sophie Shao, cello • Joseph Conyers, double bass

BÉLA BARTÓK (1881-1945)

Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion (1937)

Assai lento—Allegro molto

Lento ma non troppo

Allegro non troppo

Alessio Bax, piano • Lucille Chung, piano • Ian David Rosenbaum, percussion • Ayano Kataoka, percussion

### **NOTES ON THE PROGRAM**

#### **Concerto No. 14 in E-flat major for Piano and String Quintet, K. 449 (1784)**

#### **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (Salzburg, 1756 - Vienna, 1791)**

Mozart composed this concerto at a watershed moment in his career. By 1784, he had been living in Vienna for three years and, after attempting various money-making ventures, came upon the one that would earn him substantial money and increase his fame: his own subscription concert series. He rented a small performance space for the last three Wednesdays in Lent and secured an impressive 176 subscribers that comprised a veritable who's who of Viennese society. A renowned pianist, he knew that performing a new concerto would be a highlight. The first concert, on March 17, 1784, featured this concerto, K. 449 in E-flat major. Mozart wrote to his father, "The hall was full to overflowing; and the new concerto I played won extraordinary applause. Everywhere I go I hear praises of that concert." The years 1784-86 were Mozart's most successful years in Vienna and his piano concertos played a major role in his popularity.

Mozart's music was also in demand for home performance and K. 449 was one of a number of piano concertos that he said could be accompanied by a string quartet (reinforced by double bass in this performance) rather than the small orchestra that performed the premiere. In his catalogue he marked

the wind parts ad libitum (or optional). The first movement, in concerto form with an extended introduction and dramatic solo entrance, is in an unusual 3/4 time and the major key is shaded by passages in minor throughout. The cadenza near the end was written out by the composer. The poised slow movement leads to a jaunty rondo finale infused with intricate counterpoint. Another cadenza (which Mozart did not write out) introduces a romping final section in 6/8 time.

### **Alessio Bax on Mozart**

Since I was a little boy, Mozart has held a very special place in my heart, for it is in Mozart's output that we can clearly see the universality of the musical language. His music speaks to each one of us directly, honestly, and without any boundaries or need for translation. Somehow, Mozart wrote music that is simple yet deep, immaculate yet human. That is perhaps why Mozart is so universally understood and loved. We musicians are always humbled, astonished, and also challenged and intimidated by the perfection of Mozart's music and the skill that is required in order to share its depth and constant sense of wonder with the audience. Honoring the genius of Mozart is one of the greatest privileges a musician could have. -Alessio Bax

### **Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion (1937)**

**Béla Bartók (Nagyszentmiklós, Hungary [now in Romania], 1881 - New York, 1945)**

Bartók wrote this piece in 1937 for Swiss benefactor Paul Sacher and the International Society for Contemporary Music in Basel. The composer thought up the unusual instrumentation, perhaps inspired by the success of another Sacher commission that premiered at the beginning of the year: his Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta, which included piano. After that orchestral work, Bartók stated that he believed two pianos were necessary to balance out a battery of percussion for a chamber work. In a nod to the difficulty of the percussion parts, Bartók changed the title from Quartet to Sonata before the premiere to allow for performances that may require three percussionists. The premiere took place in Basel on January 16, 1938 with the composer and his wife at the pianos alongside two Swiss percussionists.

Three days before the premiere, Bartók published a detailed analysis of the sonata in the local newspaper. The first movement—by far the longest—is in sonata form with a slow introduction, percussive first theme, and mysterious second theme. The main part of the development section breaks down the first theme before it returns in a powerful climax punctuated by the xylophone. The slow movement is in Bartók's characteristic night music style, with quiet, atmospheric melodies broken up by rustling insect sounds. The last movement is a boisterous rondo.

The Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion, in addition to reimagining the chamber ensemble, opened a new chapter in Bartók's performing career. He and his wife, Ditta Pásztory, went on to perform frequently together in the following turbulent years, especially after they moved from their native Hungary to the US in 1940. In order to increase their performance opportunities, Bartók arranged this sonata as the Concerto for Two Pianos, Percussion, and Orchestra, and his last public appearances were at Carnegie Hall in the US premiere on January 21-22, 1943.

*Program notes by Laura Keller, CMS Editorial Manager*

## **Lucille Chung on Duo Playing with Alessio Bax**

Alessio and I were first asked to play together for the 10th anniversary of the Ottawa Chamber Music Festival and Steinway and Sons' 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It was a huge piano extravaganza which included 16 pianists and 10 Steinway Concert Grand Pianos on the stage of the National Arts Centre in Canada. In the middle of this gargantuan program, we performed the Romance from Rachmaninov's Suite No. 2 for Two Pianos. In that evening's context, it felt like an intimate interlude and the heart of the program. Now, 17 years later (!), we still love to explore a genre of music making that is so human, trusting, intimate, and satisfying. -Lucille Chung

## **TWO QUESTIONS FOR ALESSIO BAX**

### **What advice do you have for aspiring musicians?**

Alessio Bax: Every day that I play the piano I try to think first about the music I'm playing. In a way we're so lucky to make close contact with some of the greatest art that has ever been produced so I think that should always come first. Not to showcase our abilities but to use our abilities to showcase the music.

### **Was there a moment when you knew you had to be a musician?**

AB: As a kid, once you love something you think there's nothing else in the world. Music was not my first love. I was born in Italy and as an Italian my first love was soccer. After a few weeks, I saw my friends playing in the street who were so much better than I was. That dream was over so the next thing was music. I feel very lucky not to have changed that dream.

## **ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

Pianist **Alessio Bax**—a First Prize winner at both the Leeds and Hamamatsu International Piano Competitions, and the recipient of a 2009 Avery Fisher Career Grant—has appeared with more than 100 orchestras, including the London Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Dallas Symphony, Houston Symphony, Japan's NHK Symphony, St. Petersburg Philharmonic, and City of Birmingham Symphony. In summer 2017 he launched a three-season appointment as artistic director of Tuscany's Incontri in Terra di Siena festival, having also appeared at such festivals as Music@Menlo, the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Switzerland's Verbier Festival, Norway's Risør Festival, Germany's Klavier-Festival Ruhr and Beethovenfest, and England's Aldeburgh Festival, Bath Festival, and International Piano Series. An accomplished chamber musician, he regularly collaborates with his wife, pianist Lucille Chung, superstar violinist Joshua Bell, Berlin Philharmonic principals Daishin Kashimoto and Emmanuel Pahud, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, where he is an alum of The Bowers Program. Last season brought the release of *Italian Inspirations*, his 11th recording for Signum Classics, whose program was also the vehicle for his solo recital debut at New York's 92nd Street Y. Last season, he undertook Beethoven's complete works for cello and piano at CMS and on a forthcoming Signum Classics release with Paul Watkins of the Emerson String Quartet. At age 14, Mr. Bax graduated with top honors from the conservatory of Bari, his hometown in Italy, and after further studies in Europe, he moved to the US in 1994.

Canadian pianist **Lucille Chung** made her debut at the age of ten with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and went on tour with Charles Dutoit in Asia. She has performed with over 65 leading orchestras including The Philadelphia Orchestra, Moscow Virtuosi, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Israel Chamber Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic, Staatskapelle Weimar, Dallas Symphony, and has appeared with conductors such as Penderecki, Spivakov, Nézet-Séguin, Petrenko, and Dutoit. She has given solo recitals in over 35 countries in venues including New York's Weill Hall and Lincoln Center, Washington's Kennedy Center, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Wigmore Hall in London, and Madrid's Auditorio Nacional. Festival appearances include the Verbier, Bard, Music@Menlo, and Santander festivals. She has received excellent reviews for her discs of the complete piano works of Ligeti and Scriabin on the Dynamic label, garnering five stars from *BBC Music Magazine* and *Fono Forum* (Germany), as well as the highest rating, R10, from *Répertoire Classica* (France). Her vast discography includes Saint-Saëns piano transcriptions, Mozart rarities, and more recently for Signum Records, a piano duo album with Alessio Bax, Poulenc piano works, and Liszt piano works. Ms. Chung graduated from both the Curtis Institute and The Juilliard School before she turned 20. She furthered her studies in London, at the "Mozarteum," and in Imola, Italy. She and her husband, pianist Alessio Bax, live in New York City with their daughter Mila and are co-artistic directors of the Joaquín Achúcarro Foundation.

**Joseph H. Conyers**, assistant principal bass of The Philadelphia Orchestra since 2010, joined Philadelphia after tenures with the Atlanta Symphony, Santa Fe Opera, and Grand Rapids Symphony where he served as principal bass. A 2004 Sphinx Competition laureate, he has performed with many orchestras as soloist and in numerous chamber music festivals collaborating with international artists and ensembles. In addition to being the most recent recipient of the C. Hartman Kuhn Award (the highest honor given to a musician in The Philadelphia Orchestra by music director Yannick Nézet-Séguin), he is the inaugural recipient of the Young Alumni Award from his alma mater, the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied with Hal Robinson and Edgar Meyer. An advocate for music education, he is executive director of Project 440—an organization that provides young musicians with the career and life skills they need to develop into tomorrow's civic-minded, entrepreneurial leaders. Additionally, he is the music director of the All City Orchestra, which showcases the top musicians of the School District of Philadelphia. Project 440 partners with the School District in providing its curriculum in college and career preparedness, social entrepreneurship, and leadership. He is a frequent guest clinician presenting classes across the country including Yale University, New England Conservatory, The Colburn School, and University of Georgia. Mr. Conyers currently sits on the National Advisory Board for the Atlanta Music Project. He performs on the "Zimmerman/Gladstone" 1802 Vincenzo Panormo double bass which he has affectionately named "Norma."

Acclaimed for her passionate, powerful performances, beautiful sound, and compelling command of her instrument, violinist **Bella Hristova's** growing international career includes numerous appearances as soloist with orchestra including performances with the Milwaukee and Kansas City symphonies, and Beethoven's ten sonatas with acclaimed pianist Michael Houstoun on tour in New Zealand. Last season, she performed ten different works as soloist with orchestra, from Mozart to Sibelius to Bartók, as well as concertos by Florence Price (with the Knoxville Symphony) and David Ludwig (with the Hawaii Symphony and Symphony Tacoma). She has performed at major venues and worked with conductors including Pinchas Zukerman, Jaime Laredo, and Michael Stern. A sought-after chamber musician at festivals, she performs at Australia's Musica Viva, Music from Angel Fire, Chamber Music Northwest, and the Santa Fe Chamber and Marlboro Music festivals. Her recording *Bella Unaccompanied* (A.W. Tonegold Records) features works for solo violin by Corigliano, Kevin Puts, Piazzolla, Milstein, and J. S. Bach. She is recipient of a 2013 Avery Fisher Career Grant, first prizes in the Young Concert Artists

International Auditions and Michael Hill International Violin Competition, and a laureate of the International Violin Competition of Indianapolis. Ms. Hristova attended the Curtis Institute of Music, where she worked with Ida Kavafian and Steven Tenenbom, and received her artist diploma with Jaime Laredo at Indiana University. An alum of CMS's Bowers Program, she plays a 1655 Nicolò Amati violin.

Percussionist **Ayano Kataoka** is known for her brilliant and dynamic technique, as well as the unique elegance and artistry she brings to her performances. The first percussionist to be chosen for The Bowers Program, she has collaborated with many of the world's most respected artists, including Emanuel Ax, Jaime Laredo, Ani Kavafian, David Shifrin, and Jeremy Denk. She gave the world premiere of Bruce Adolphe's *Self Comes to Mind* for cello and two percussionists with cellist Yo-Yo Ma at the American Museum of Natural History in 2009. She presented a solo recital at Tokyo Opera City Recital Hall which was broadcast on NHK, the national public station of Japan. Her performances can also be heard on the Deutsche Grammophon, Naxos, New World, Bridge, New Focus, and Albany record labels. Since 2013 she has toured the US and Mexico extensively as a percussionist for *Cuatro Corridos*, a chamber opera led by soprano Susan Narucki and Mexican author Jorge Volpi that addresses human trafficking across the US-Mexican border. The recording of Hebert Vazquez's *Azucena*, the first scene of *Cuatro Corridos*, on Bridge Records was nominated for a Latin Grammy in the Best Contemporary Composition category. A native of Japan, Ms. Kataoka began her marimba studies at age five, and percussion at 15. She received her artist diploma degree from Yale University, where she studied with marimba virtuoso Robert van Sice. She is currently an associate professor at University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Violist **Paul Neubauer** has been called a "master musician" by the *New York Times*. He recently made his Chicago Symphony subscription debut with conductor Riccardo Muti and his Mariinsky Orchestra debut with conductor Valery Gergiev. He also gave the US premiere of the newly discovered *Impromptu* for viola and piano by Shostakovich with pianist Wu Han. In addition, his recording of the Aaron Kernis Viola Concerto with the Royal Northern Sinfonia was released on Signum Records and his recording of the complete viola/piano music by Ernest Bloch with pianist Margo Garrett was released on Delos. Appointed principal violist of the New York Philharmonic at age 21, he has appeared as soloist with over 100 orchestras including the New York, Los Angeles, and Helsinki philharmonics; National, St. Louis, Detroit, Dallas, San Francisco, and Bournemouth symphonies; and Santa Cecilia, English Chamber, and Beethovenhalle orchestras. He has premiered viola concertos by Bartók (revised version of the Viola Concerto), Friedman, Glière, Jacob, Kernis, Lazarof, Müller-Siemens, Ott, Penderecki, Picker, Suter, and Tower and has been featured on CBS's *Sunday Morning*, *A Prairie Home Companion*, and in *The Strad*, *Strings*, and *People* magazines. A two-time Grammy nominee, he has recorded on numerous labels including Decca, Deutsche Grammophon, RCA Red Seal, and Sony Classical and is a member of SPA, a trio with soprano Susanna Phillips and pianist Anne-Marie McDermott. Mr. Neubauer is the artistic director of the Mostly Music series in New Jersey and is on the faculty of The Juilliard School and Mannes College.

Praised for his "spectacular performances" (*Wall Street Journal*), and his "unfailing virtuosity" (*Chicago Tribune*), percussionist **Ian David Rosenbaum** has developed a musical breadth far beyond his years. As a passionate advocate for contemporary music, he has premiered over one hundred new chamber and solo works. He has collaborated with and championed the music of established and emerging composers alike, from Andy Akiho, Christopher Cerrone, and Amy Beth Kirsten to John Luther Adams, George Crumb, and Paola Prestini. In 2017, he released his first full-length solo album, *Memory Palace*, on NS Tracks. It features five of his commissions as well as collaborations with Brooklyn Rider and flutist Gina Izzo. He has appeared at the Bay Chamber, Bridgehampton, Chamber Music Northwest, Music@Menlo, and Yellow Barn festivals, and has collaborated with the Dover Quartet and Brooklyn

Rider. In 2012 he joined CMS's Bowers Program as only the second percussionist in the program's history. Highlights of the 2019-20 season included the world premiere of *Seven Pillars*, an evening-length multidisciplinary work by Andy Akiho at the Mondavi Center, performances at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and debuts at the Moab Music Festival, Rockport Music, and Dumbarton Oaks. He is on faculty at the Mannes School of Music and a member of Sandbox Percussion, the Percussion Collective, and the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble. Mr. Rosenbaum performs with Pearl/Adams instruments, Vic Firth mallets, and Remo drumheads.

Cellist **Sophie Shao** received an Avery Fisher Career Grant at age 19, was a major prizewinner at the 2001 Rostropovich Competition, and was a laureate of the XII Tchaikovsky Competition in 2002. She has given the world premiere performances of Howard Shore's *Mythic Gardens*, a concerto written for her, and Richard Wilson's Concerto for Cello and Mezzo-Soprano with Leon Botstein and the American Symphony Orchestra. She has also appeared as soloist with the BBC Concert Orchestra and Keith Lockhart in performances of the Elgar and Haydn C major concertos; performed Saint-Saëns's *La Muse et Le Poete* with violinist Miranda Cuckson at the Bard Music Festival; and presented the six Bach Suites in one afternoon at Union College in Schenectady. She can be heard on EMI Classics, Bridge Records (Marlboro Music's 50th anniversary recording), and on Albany Records, and released a double-CD set of the Bach Cello Suites. Ms. Shao studied at the Curtis Institute with David Soyer and Felix Galimir, and, upon graduating, continued with Aldo Parisot at Yale University, receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in Religious Studies from Yale College and a Master of Music degree from the Yale School of Music, where she was enrolled as a Paul and Daisy Soros Fellow. Ms. Shao is an alum of CMS's Bowers Program, on the faculty of Vassar College, and plays an Honore Derazey cello previously owned by Pablo Casals.

Winner of a 2009 Avery Fisher Career Grant, **Arnaud Sussmann** has distinguished himself with his unique sound, bravura, and profound musicianship. Minnesota's *Pioneer Press* writes, "Sussmann has an old-school sound reminiscent of what you'll hear on vintage recordings by Jascha Heifetz or Fritz Kreisler, a rare combination of sweet and smooth that can hypnotize a listener." A thrilling musician capturing the attention of classical critics and audiences around the world, he has recently appeared as a soloist with the Mariinsky Orchestra under Valery Gergiev, the Vancouver Symphony, and the New World Symphony. As a chamber musician, he has performed at the Tel Aviv Museum in Israel, London's Wigmore Hall, Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, the White Nights Festival in Saint Petersburg, the Dresden Music Festival in Germany, and the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC. He has been presented in recital in Omaha on the Tuesday Musical Club series, New Orleans by the Friends of Music, and at the Louvre Museum in Paris. He has also given concerts at the OK Mozart, Moritzburg, Caramoor, Music@Menlo, La Jolla SummerFest, Mainly Mozart, Seattle Chamber Music, Chamber Music Northwest, and Moab Music festivals. He has performed with many of today's leading artists including Itzhak Perlman, Menahem Pressler, Gary Hoffman, Shmuel Ashkenasi, Wu Han, David Finckel, and Jan Vogler. An alum of The Bowers Program, he regularly appears with CMS in New York and on tour. Mr. Sussmann is Co-Director of Music@Menlo's International Program and teaches at Stony Brook University.