

## ARTIST SERIES – MICHAEL BROWN

### PROGRAM

SAMUEL BARBER (1910-1981)

*Souvenirs* for Piano, Four Hands, Op. 28 (1951)

Waltz

Schottische

Pas de deux

Two-step

Hesitation-Tango

Galop

Michael Brown, piano • Gilles Vonsattel, piano

MICHAEL BROWN (b. 1987)

*Prelude and Dance* for Cello and Piano (2014, rev. 2017)

Nicholas Canellakis, cello • Michael Brown, piano

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)

Sextet in D major for Piano, Violin, Two Violas, Cello, and Double Bass, Op. 110 (1824)

Allegro vivace

Adagio

Menuetto: Agitato

Allegro vivace

Michael Brown, piano • Chad Hoopes, violin • Paul Neubauer, viola • Matthew Lipman, viola • Nicholas Canellakis, cello • Joseph Conyers, double bass

### NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

***Souvenirs* for Piano, Four Hands, Op. 28 (1951)**

**Samuel Barber (West Chester, PA, 1910 – New York, 1981)**

Barber's *Souvenirs* is a suite containing a waltz, schottische, pas de deux, two-step, hesitation tango, and galop. Barber provided his own notes for the work: "One might imagine a divertissement in a setting of the Palm Court of the Hotel Plaza in New York, the year about 1914, epoch of the first tangos; 'Souvenirs' – remembered with affection, not with irony or tongue in cheek, but in amused tenderness." Barber had a nostalgic affection for the Plaza, where his mother took him to tea as a child. *Souvenirs* reflects the forgotten spirit and magnificence of pre-WWI opulent hotels of another era.

Each of its six dances was fashionable during the early 1900s, and Barber sets each dance in a different room or area of the Hotel Plaza. The *Waltz* takes place in the lavish lobby, where its music reflects the elegant surroundings. The rambunctious *Schottische* is set in the third floor hallway. The Plaza's ballroom provides the intimate setting for the *Pas-de-deux*. All the Palm Court's hustle and bustle is perfectly captured in the humorous *Two-Step*. Barber labeled the *Hesitation Tango* "a bedroom affair," and its sensual rhythm and beguiling melody is the perfect background for an erotic rendezvous. The final *Galop* takes place the next afternoon and the suite concludes with virtuosic flair and exuberance.

### **Michael Brown on Duo Performance**

One of the joys of being a pianist is the opportunity to play four-hands and to explore its rich and vast literature. A totally different animal from solo playing (and far less lonely), it is in many ways similar to playing "doubles" in tennis where the duo has to choreograph every movement and learn to breathe as one. There are different challenges such as voicing the four hands so there's a balanced clarity of expression. Sharing one pedal is also as strange as someone else brushing your teeth! The intimate art form was originally intended for making music in one's home, a form of socializing in the salon, and to widely disseminate reductions of new works (a 19th century Spotify if you will.)

### ***Prelude and Dance for Cello and Piano (2014, rev. 2017)***

**Michael Brown (b. Oceanside, NY, 1987)**

*Prelude and Dance* was commissioned and premiered at Bargemusic's 2014 "Here and Now" Festival. Inspired by Baroque dance suite forms, it is the third work composed for my duo with cellist Nicholas Canellakis. *Prelude* presents musical material that is languorous and exploratory in character. Hushed repeated notes that gradually gain prominence throughout the movement foreshadow motivic material in the *Dance*. The second movement is a stark contrast from the first—strict in temperament and inspired by the spirited nature of the Baroque gigue. It is a high-octane, perpetual-motion piece that sizzles along at breakneck speed, featuring virtuosic interplay between the cello and piano.

### **Michael Brown on Nicholas Canellakis and How He Became a Musician**

Nicholas Canellakis and I met in 2008 as students at the Ravinia Festival's Steans Institute outside of Chicago. After some initial skepticism and contention with each other, we soon became best friends and musical collaborators with a desire to explore the cello/piano repertoire.

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My musical life began at the age of two as I danced in front of the TV to the songs of Raffi. By age three, I had listened to Billy Joel's *Piano Man* so many times that I wore out the cassette tape. At four, I realized I wanted to be the reincarnation of Mozart so I embarked upon a life of exploration, some isolation, but mostly pure and utter joy.

**Sextet in D major for Piano, Violin, Two Violas, Cello, and Double Bass, Op. 110 (1824)  
Felix Mendelssohn (Hamburg, 1809 – Leipzig, 1847)**

Mendelssohn's music never ceases to satisfy and amaze me; I love playing it and find his voice deeply refreshing and personal. The sextet, composed in 1824 at the astonishingly youthful age of 15 (!), is Classical in design and spirit but possesses his inimitable qualities of lightness and virtuosity. Speaking of which, the work is a beast (and a joy) to play; filled to capacity with thousands of notes in the piano (I started counting and then stopped). Most important of course is its humor, elegance, shifting moods, delightful interplay among the musicians, and ultimately sheer optimism that reminds us what chamber music is all about.

*Program notes by Michael Brown*

**Michael Brown on His Pianos**

I live up in Washington Heights with Octavia and Daria. Collectively they weigh almost 1,980 pounds and have been on this earth for 264 years! Octavia is a Steinway model D Concert Grand, from 1892. Daria, my other 9 foot Steinway from 1884, is the 31st Steinway D every made. She snuggles up to Octavia and both of them occasionally romp through concerti and two-piano works.

**ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

**Michael Brown** has been described as “one of the leading figures in the current renaissance of performer-composers” (*New York Times*). Winner of a 2018 Emerging Artist Award from Lincoln Center and a 2015 Avery Fisher Career Grant, he is an artist of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and an alum of CMS's Bowers Program. He makes regular appearances with orchestras such as the National Philharmonic, the Seattle, Grand Rapids, North Carolina, and Albany symphonies, and was selected by pianist András Schiff to perform an international solo recital tour, making debuts in Zurich's Tonhalle and New York's 92nd Street Y. He has appeared at the Tanglewood, Mostly Mozart, Marlboro, Ravinia, Music@Menlo, Tippet Rise, Bridgehampton, and Bard music festivals and performs regularly with his longtime duo partner, cellist Nicholas Canellakis. A prolific composer, Mr. Brown wrote a Piano Concerto that was scheduled to premiere in 2020 at the Gilmore Festival and by the NFM Leopoldinum Orchestra in Poland. He was the composer and artist-in-residence at the New Haven Symphony for the 2017-19 seasons and a 2018 Copland House Award winner. He is the First Prize winner of the Concert Artists Guild competition and earned degrees in piano and composition from The Juilliard School, where he studied with pianists Jerome Lowenthal and Robert McDonald and composers Samuel Adler and Robert Beaser. A native New Yorker, he lives there with his two 19th-century Steinway D's, Octavia and Daria.

Hailed by the *New Yorker* as a “superb young soloist,” **Nicholas Canellakis** has become one of the most sought-after and innovative cellists of his generation. In the *New York Times* his playing was praised as “impassioned... the audience seduced by Mr. Canellakis's rich, alluring tone.” His recent highlights include his Carnegie Hall concerto debut with the American Symphony Orchestra; concerto appearances with the Albany, Delaware Lansing, Bangor, and New Haven symphonies, Erie Philharmonic; and Europe and Asia tours with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. He also performs recitals throughout the United States with his long-time duo collaborator, pianist-composer Michael Brown, including a recital of American cello-piano works presented by CMS. He is a regular guest artist at many of the world's leading music festivals, including Santa Fe, Ravinia, Music@Menlo, Bard, La Jolla,

Bridgehampton, Hong Kong, Moab, Music in the Vineyards, and Saratoga Springs. He was recently named artistic director of Chamber Music Sedona. An alum of CMS's Bowers Program, Mr. Canellakis is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music and New England Conservatory. Filmmaking and acting are special interests of his. He has produced, directed, and starred in several short films and music videos.

**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 by critics for his exceptional talent and magnificent tone, American violinist **Chad Hoopes** has remained a consistent performer with many of the world's leading orchestras since winning First Prize at the Young Artists Division of the Yehudi Menuhin International Violin Competition. He is a 2017 recipient of Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Career Grant. Highlights of past and present seasons include performances with The Philadelphia Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, and Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse for the French premiere of Qigang Chen's concerto *La joie de la souffrance*. He has performed with leading orchestras, including the San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Houston, and National symphonies, as well as the Minnesota, Colorado Music Festival, and National Arts Centre orchestras. He has additionally performed recitals at the Ravinia Festival, the Tonhalle Zürich, the Louvre, and at Lincoln Center's Great Performers series in New York City. His debut recording with the MDR Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra under Kristjan Järvi featured the Mendelssohn and Adams concertos and was enthusiastically received by both press and public. His recording of Bernstein's Violin Sonata with pianist Wayne Marshall was released last autumn. Born in Florida, he began his violin studies at the age of three in Minneapolis, and continued his training at the Cleveland Institute of Music. He additionally studied at the Kronberg Academy under the guidance of Professor Ana Chumachenco, who remains his mentor. An alum of CMS's Bowers Program, he plays the 1991 Samuel Zygmuntowicz, ex Isaac Stern violin.

American violist **Matthew Lipman** has been praised by the *New York Times* for his "rich tone and elegant phrasing." He has appeared with the Minnesota Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Grand Rapids Symphony, Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, Montgomery Symphony, Juilliard Orchestra, and at Chicago's Symphony Center. Recent solo appearances include the Aspen Music Festival, Carnegie Hall, New World Symphony, Seoul's Kumho Art Hall, and CMS's Rose Studio. *The Strad* praised his "most impressive" debut album *Ascent*, released by Cedille Records in February 2019, and his recording of Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* with violinist Rachel Barton Pine and Sir Neville Marriner on the Avie label topped the Billboard Charts. He was featured on WFMT Chicago's list of "30 Under 30" of

the world's top classical musicians and has been published in *The Strad*, *Strings*, and *BBC Music* magazines. He performs regularly with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and at renowned chamber music festivals including Music@Menlo, Marlboro, Ravinia, Bridgehampton, and Seattle. The recipient of an Avery Fisher Career Grant and a winner of the Primrose, Tertis, Washington, Johansen, and Stulberg International Viola Competitions, he studied at The Juilliard School with Heidi Castleman and was further mentored by Tabea Zimmermann at the Kronberg Academy. A native of Chicago and an alum of CMS's Bowers Program, Mr. Lipman is on faculty at Stony Brook University and performs on a 1700 Matteo Goffriller viola on generous loan from the RBP Foundation.

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.

Swiss-born American pianist **Gilles Vonsattel** is an artist of extraordinary versatility and originality. He is the recipient of an Avery Fisher Career Grant, winner of the Naumburg and Geneva competitions, and was selected for the 2016 Andrew Wolf Chamber Music Award. In recent years, he has made his debut with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, and San Francisco Symphony while performing recitals and chamber music at Ravinia, Tokyo's Musashino Hall, Wigmore Hall, Bravo! Vail, Chamber Music Northwest, and Music@Menlo. Deeply committed to the performance of contemporary music, he has premiered numerous works both in the United States and Europe and has worked closely with notable composers including Jörg Widmann, Heinz Holliger, and George Benjamin. Recent and upcoming projects include appearances with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (Bernstein's *Age of Anxiety*), Philharmonisches Staatsorchester Hamburg (Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*), Beethoven concertos with the Santa Barbara Symphony and Florida Orchestra, as well as multiple appearances with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. An alum of CMS's Bowers Program, Mr. Vonsattel received his bachelor's degree in political science and economics from Columbia University and his master's degree from The Juilliard School. He currently makes his home in New York City and serves as a faculty member at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.