

MARY ANNE
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CHAMBER CONCERT SERIES 2016 - 2017 SEASON

ANNE AKIKO MEYERS

Saturday, January 28, 2017
8 p.m.

Sonia Vlahcevic Concert Hall
W.E. Singleton Center for the Performing Arts
Virginia Commonwealth University
922 Park Avenue | Richmond, VA

arts.vcu.edu/music



"AN EVENING OF FANTASY"

Anne Akiko Meyers, violin

Wendy Chen, piano

LUDWIG VAN
BEETHOVEN

Violin Sonata in D major, Op. 12, No. 1
Allegro con brio
Tema con variazioni. Andante con moto
Rondo. Allegro

ARVO
PÄRT

Fratres

EINOJUHANI
RAUTAVAARA

Fantasie for Violin and Piano

- *Intermission* -

MAURICE
RAVEL

Tzigane

MORTEN
LAURIDSEN

O Magnum Mysterium

JAKUB
CIUPINSKI

Wreck of the Umbria

Please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices. Photographing, sound recording or videotaping this performance is prohibited.

Notes on the Program
by Susanna Klein

We are in for a treat tonight with an evocative and daring violin program! As a self-professed “violin geek,” I can’t resist the urge to tell you a little about the instrument’s history before we delve into the actual repertoire. The violin is indeed a small miracle in the western musical tradition. It has captivated the imaginations of composers and audiences alike for over five centuries. The sheer volume of pieces written for violin is astounding, rivaled only by literature for the piano.

The violin as we know it today made its first appearance in Italy in the early 16th century. Its emergence in Italy followed the 1492 expulsion of Jews from Spain, prompting scholars recently to explore a possible link between the two events. The origin of violin precursors is being strongly debated in scholarly circles, with evidence pointing in all different directions – Spain, the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

Whatever its exact history, the small wooden box seems to pull on our heartstrings as soon as we hear it. Composers use the violin to portray a huge range of characters and emotions, from the divine to the demonic. The violin also is claimed as a cultural touchstone by distinct groups of people in musical styles beyond classical music. It provides a unique flavor for Jewish Klezmer music, European Gypsy songs, Appalachian Music and Irish Fiddling. I find it fascinating to follow the collaborations between composers and specific players through the ages. For example, Brahms wrote for the famous violinist Joseph Joachim, Shostakovich wrote for David Oistrakh and Elgar composed his violin concerto for Fritz Kreisler. Much of tonight’s program was written specifically for Anne Akiko Meyers. A champion of living composers, she has commissioned dozens of new works. It’s no wonder The Denver Post dubbed her “the coolest thing to happen to the violin since Stradivari.”

A fantasy, or fantasia, is what we call a musical composition that is free of form. It often involves some loosely constructed variations on a theme or the imaginative representation of a situation or story. The only work on our program that is not a fantasy is **Ludwig van Beethoven's** Sonata for Piano and Violin No. 1, in D Major. In this program, Beethoven (1770–1827) provides the backdrop for the rest of the recital. His music, rooted clearly in the classical style, brings us that strong, formalistic, well-defined Germanic sound. The music has a consistent rhythmic drive, infused with what I like to call (with all due respect to my fellow Germans) the tyranny of the downbeat.

The work opens with a bold unison statement – both instruments play the exact same material. It then quickly breaks into two distinct voices that trade songful melody and harmony. Since Beethoven was both an accomplished pianist and good violinist, he understood very well how to dovetail the instruments beautifully in conversation. He wrote this, this first, violin sonata, for the Courland (present-day Latvia) violinist Karl Amanda. Throughout his lifetime, Beethoven played a huge role in expanding the range of violin parts through the virtuosity of his violin quartet parts and concerti. In this early piece, he only hints at brilliance in the violin part. The piano dominates the texture in many ways, but the vigor and self-assuredness of the writing creates wonderful opportunities for both players to shine. When listening to the Beethoven sonata, enjoy planting yourself firmly in the present and the concrete, as things will become more fanciful and boundless as the evening unfolds.

Estonian composer **Arvo Pärt** (b. 1935) has been the most performed living composer in the world for the last five consecutive years, and for good reason. Originally written for string quintet and wind quintet, Pärt arranged *Fratres* for violin and piano for the great violinist Gidon Kremer. In the violin and piano version, the violin alone introduces the chant-like theme in its low register with a virtuosic string crossing technique we call bariolage. *Fratres*

traverses a vast emotional range in just ten minutes, from the mystical to the dramatic, and has been arranged for over a dozen instrument combinations since its premiere in 1977. Arvo Pärt is currently living and composing in Berlin.

In 2015, Anne Akiko Meyers reached out to the notable Finnish composer **Einojuhani Rautavaara** (1928–2016) to commission a solo violin and orchestra piece. She had admired his music since hearing his *Cantus Arcticus: Concerto for Birds and Orchestra*, a hauntingly beautiful work. *Fantasia*, the violin and piano arrangement of her commission that you will hear tonight, turned out to be Rautavaara's last composition. Meyers describes this ethereal piece on the British blog, "Gramophone":

"A signature, soulful sound permeates throughout the piece, with fluid harmonies and deep moods – much like flowing large movements of water and majestic scenes from nature."

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937) composed his rhapsody *Tzigane* (literally "gypsy music" in French) in 1924 for the great British-Hungarian violinist Jelly d'Arányi, the great-niece of the aforementioned violinist Joseph Joachim. *Tzigane* was at once inspired by d'Arányi, and written for her. At a private musicale, where she performed Ravel's violin and cello duo, the composer asked her to play some of her signature gypsy music once the concert had officially ended. She obliged, and by some accounts, played for Ravel until five in the morning. Ravel used some of what he heard that night in his compositional technique for *Tzigane*, a stunning virtuoso showpiece. It features an array of dazzling violin pyrotechnics, but it sounds almost completely improvised. *Tzigane* starts with a sultry violin cadenza in the low register and develops – bit by bit – into a wild frenzy. Audacious and sensual, it has become an audience favorite throughout the world.

After several years of asking, Anne Akiko Meyers convinced American composer **Morten Lauridsen** (b. 1943) to write for her. What the composer chose to do, in fact, was to arrange his choral mega-hit “O Magnum Mysterium” for violin and orchestra, with mesmerizing results. Lauridsen describes the original choral chant this way: “I wanted this piece to resonate immediately and deeply into the core of the listener, to illumine through sound.” Morten Lauridsen, a household name in the choral world, has been a professor of composition at the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music for more than 40 years.

Jakub Ciupinski (b. 1981), professor of composition at SUNY Purchase College, wrote *Wreck of the Umbria for Violin and Electronics* for Anne Akiko Meyers in 2009. The piece is loosely based on the 1940 scuttling of the Umbria, an Italian freighter ship carrying 180 tons of explosives. The captain found himself in British-controlled waters off the coast of Sudan the day Italy entered World War II. He secretly sank the ship to keep the British Navy from getting its hands on the explosives. The wreck is now a top diving destination in the Red Sea.

With living composers, we have the wonderful opportunity of conversing with them directly about their works. I took the liberty of emailing Ciupinski to ask more about *Wreck of the Umbria*, and in his reply, he described to me how he drew inspiration from his own diving exploration of the wreck:

“I don’t consider this piece to be fully programmatic, it’s more about giving it a ‘flavor’ with a title and a bit of story behind it. When it comes to the electronics, I derived most of the sounds from various recordings of the violin to keep it coherent. While exploring the wreck, I video-taped everything, but I never watched the footage afterwards. Instead, I kept a few images and impressions in my memory. I remember abandoned dark corridors and rooms lighted only by my searchlight. From time to time I could

recognize more concrete shapes. Piles of bombs, bottles of wine, an old-fashioned car somewhere in the cargo bay and pizza ovens in the kitchen. Outside, Umbria, covered by multiple forms of sea life and surrounded by blue light, looked like a surreal castle from a very vivid dream.”

Anne Akiko Meyers is changing the landscape of violin repertoire through her many commissions and collaborations with living composers of various genres. Among those composers are Richmond native Mason Bates, jazz great Wynton Marsalis and superstar composer John Corigliano. If you would like to know more about Anne’s artistic journey and her collaborative process, take a look at the in-depth article in Austin Women’s Magazine (her hometown): austinwomanmagazine.com/articles/anne-akiko-meyers.

As always, thank you for joining us tonight. We look forward to seeing you again next month for the Montrose Trio!

All the best,

Susanna Klein

Rennolds Board Member

Area Coordinator of Strings, Assistant Professor of Violin

Virginia Commonwealth University

About the Artists

Anne Akiko Meyers, violin

Violin superstar Anne Akiko Meyers has actively maintained an extensive touring schedule for three decades and was the top-selling traditional classical instrumental soloist on Billboard charts in 2014. Regularly performing as guest soloist with many of the world's top orchestras and in recital, she is a best-selling recording artist who has released 34 albums. Meyers is known for her passionate performances, purity of sound, deeply poetic interpretations, innovative programming and commitment to commissioning new works.

Recently, Anne returned to the Cartagena Music Festival to perform Vivaldi's Four Seasons with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the Casals Festival in Puerto Rico to perform the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, the Beethoven Festival in Warsaw, Poland, performing the Szymanowski Concerto No.1 and headlines the "Last Night of the Proms" in Krakow, Poland. Other performances include premiering the Mason Bates Violin Concerto with the National Symphony at the Kennedy Center, a tour with the New Zealand Symphony and a return to Hong Kong.

In 2017, Anne will perform the world premiere of Einojuhani Rautavaara's "Fantasia," one of his final works written for her, with the Kansas City Symphony, conducted by Michael Stern. She will perform recitals at the 92nd Street Y in New York and Washington D.C., and return to the Nashville Symphony performing the Bernstein Serenade with Giancarlo Guerrero. Anne's 35th album entitled, "Fantasia: The Fantasy Album," recorded with the Philharmonia Orchestra and conducted by Kristjan Järvi, will be released next year.

Anne appeared in a nationwide PBS broadcast special and on a Naxos DVD featuring the world premiere of Samuel Jones' Violin Concerto with the All-Star Orchestra led by Gerard Schwarz and

the French premiere of Mason Bates Violin Concerto with Leonard Slatkin and the Orchestre de Lyon. Two new recordings and a box set were released – Naïve Classics celebrates Arvo Pärt's 80th birthday with "Passacaglia: Arvo Pärt," works for violin and orchestra whom she collaborated closely with the composer, led by Kristjan Järvi and the MDR Leipzig Orchestra and "Serenade: The Love Album," an album featuring Leonard Bernstein's Serenade and ten newly arranged pieces from the American Songbook and classic movies, with the London Symphony Orchestra, Keith Lockhart conducting. Anne's complete RCA Red Seal recordings are now available on Sony Music. Meyers also stepped in on 24 hours notice to perform and lead the conductor-less Orpheus Chamber Orchestra in the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto in Carnegie Hall and Pennsylvania.

In 2014, eOne Music released "The American Masters" featuring the world premiere recordings of the Mason Bates Violin Concerto, a work she co-commissioned and premiered with the Pittsburgh Symphony and Leonard Slatkin in December 2012 and John Corigliano's "Lullaby for Natalie" (written for the birth of Meyers's first born daughter) and the Samuel Barber Violin Concerto with the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Leonard Slatkin. This recording made Google Play's "Best of 2014" and was heralded by critics and audiences alike. Anne's prior releases include "Four Seasons: The Vivaldi Album," which debuted at #1 on the classical Billboard charts, as did "Air: The Bach Album." The Vivaldi was the recording debut of the "Ex-Vieuxtemps" Guarneri del Gesu violin, dated 1741, which was awarded to Meyers for her lifetime use.

A champion of living composers, Meyers has actively added new works to the violin repertoire by commissioning and premiering works by composers such as Mason Bates, Jakub Ciupinski, John Corigliano, Jennifer Higdon, Samuel Jones, Wynton Marsalis, Akira Miyoshi, Arvo Pärt, Gene Pritsker, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Huang Ruo, Somei Satoh, Adam Schoenberg and Joseph Schwanter.

Anne has collaborated with a diverse array of artists outside of traditional classical, including jazz icons Chris Botti and Wynton Marsalis, avant-garde musician Ryuichi Sakamoto, electronic music pioneer Isao Tomita, pop-era act Il Divo and singer Michael Bolton. She performed the National Anthem in front of 42,000 fans at Safeco Field in Seattle, appeared twice on "The Tonight Show" and was featured in a segment on MSNBC's "Countdown with Keith Olbermann" that became the third most popular story of the year.

Anne has been featured on "CBS Sunday Morning," CBS' "The Good Wife", NPR's "Morning Edition" with Linda Wertheimer and "All Things Considered" with Robert Siegel and the popular Nick Jr. show, "Take Me To Your Mother," with Andrea Rosen. Best-selling novelist, J. Courtney Sullivan, consulted with Anne for "The Engagements" and based one of the main characters loosely on her career. She also collaborated with children's book author and illustrator Kristine Papillon on "Crumpet the Trumpet," where the character Violetta the violinist, is played by Anne.

Anne Akiko Meyers was born in San Diego, Calif. and grew up in Southern California. She studied with Alice and Eleonore Schoenfeld at the Colburn School of Performing Arts, Josef Gingold at Indiana University, and Felix Galimir, Masao Kawasaki and Dorothy DeLay at the Juilliard School. She received the Avery Fisher Career Grant and serves on the advisory board of Composers Concordance and Young Concert Artists. She was recently awarded "The Luminary Award" for her support of the Pasadena Symphony. Meyers lives with her husband and two young daughters in Los Angeles, Calif.

Anne Akiko Meyers is represented by
Colbert Artists Management, Inc.,
307 Seventh Avenue, Suite 2006, New York NY 10001
Tel: (212) 757-0782 | colbertartists.com

Anne Akiko Meyers records extensively for the eOne label.
She may also be heard on Avie, Camerata, Hyperion, Naxos, RCA Victor Red Seal, RPO, Sony and Warner Classics family of labels.

Wendy Chen, piano

At the age of fifteen, Wendy Chen debuted with the Los Angeles Philharmonic under conductor André Previn. In 1990 she became the youngest winner ever of the National Chopin Competition, was one of the inaugural recipients of the Irving S. Gilmore Young Artists Award, and was named a Presidential Scholar by the National Foundation for the Arts. Since then, her career has flourished, adding Young Concert Artists International Auditions and Washington International Competition to her numerous awards.

Chen has garnered critical acclaim for her engagements with leading orchestras and concert halls worldwide, with reviewers exclaiming that "having pianist Wendy Chen on the program is a guarantee that sparks will fly." Her numerous orchestral appearances have included the New York Chamber Symphony, the Cincinnati Symphony and Chamber Orchestra, the Phoenix Symphony, the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra, Uruguay's Orquesta Sinfonica del Sodres, New Zealand's Auckland Philharmonia and Wellington Sinfonia, Montreal's I Musici and many others. The Dominion of New Zealand described that "Chen possesses all the qualities of a modern musical star. Her playing was cuttngly virtuosic, had fantastic clarity and crispness, yet also plenty of sensitivity." Chen has also appeared with the Boston Pops and the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra in unique programs that also featured musical legends James Taylor and Art Garfunkel, respectively. Of her performance with the Pops, the Boston Globe wrote "Chen's performance had stamina, chops, brilliance and sensitivity – a formidable combination."

She has given recitals throughout the world, including appearances in Prague's Philharmonic Hall, Poland's Warsaw Philharmonic Hall, Korea's Seoul Arts Center, New York City's Alice Tully Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall, Washington D.C.'s John F. Kennedy Center, Toronto's Glenn Gould Studio, Nexus Hall

in Tokyo, The Forbidden City in Beijing, and at the United States Supreme Court in a special evening presented by The Honorable Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Equally sought after as a chamber musician, Chen spent many years performing duo recitals with the late cellist Stephen Kates, a pupil of Gregor Piatigorsky. She regularly appears in duo recitals with cellist Andrés Díaz. She has appeared at the Tanglewood, Boston Chamber Society, Montreal, Seattle, Spoleto, Amelia Island, Strings in the Mountains, Cartageña, St. Denis and Montreux music festivals.

Having studied with legendary pianists Aube Tzerko and Leon Fleisher, Chen is a dedicated pedagogue, frequently giving master classes throughout the world. She completed a five year residency teaching at the University of Louisville, and has taught at the Innsbrook Institute in Missouri, the Community School of Performing Arts in Springfield, Mass., the International Festival of Music in Cartagena, Colombia, and The Juan Corpas University in Bogota, Columbia.

Chen has appeared on St. Paul Sunday Morning, can be heard regularly on NPR's "Performance Today," and serves as panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts. Her solo recording "Bolero" featuring works by Chopin, was released on the RCM label. American Record Guide acclaimed "it glitters and it is gold."

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