

JULY 18, 2024

CONCERT

Fantasia for Tomorrow

MICHI WIANCKO

Born: 1976

Composed: 2024

- Movement I
- Movement II
- Movement III
- Movement IV
- Movement V

My mother has always been one of my main inspirations in life, as well as in music. She played violin and viola in local community orchestras and chamber ensembles throughout my childhood, often bringing me along to listen and watch. Eventually, I picked up the violin myself, and my earliest musical memories include playing violin-viola duos with my mom in our living room. From there started my gratifying and life-long relationship with chamber music.

Playing duets was one of the most fun and freeing (and deliciously nerdy) ways to hang out and be in kinship with another musician. I experienced this magic during chamber music parties that my mom would host when we were growing up, at music camp and conservatory, and during late-night reading parties in friends' apartments.

Fantasia for Tomorrow was written alongside these visceral memories of some of the most joyous and embodied moments in my life. It contains a multitude of colorful, textural, and dramatic ways for performers to connect with one another.

It's also a wish that I'm throwing out into the universe: that the future will continue to hold similar moments of deep connectivity in the face of ever-increasing societal fragmentation and isolation. And I'd like to give a shout out to every single friend, classmate, colleague, and stranger who has ever come up to me and said "Hey! Want to read this duo with me?" My answer will be "Yes" 100% of the time.

Program Note by Michi Wiancko

Sonata in A Major for Violin and Piano

CÉSAR FRANCK

Born: 1822

Died: 1890

Composed: 1886

- I. Allegretto ben moderato
- II. Allegro — Quasi lento — Tempo I
- III. Recitativo — Fantasia. Ben moderato — Molto lento
- IV. Allegretto poco mosso

Composed in 1886, the Sonata in A Major is one of the finest examples of Franck's use of cyclic form, a technique he had adapted from his friend Franz Liszt, in which themes from one movement are transformed and used over subsequent movements. The Violin Sonata is a particularly ingenious instance of this technique: virtually the entire sonata is derived from the quiet and unassuming opening of the first movement, which then evolves endlessly across the sonata. Even when a new theme seems to arrive, it will gradually be revealed as a subtle variant of one already heard.

The piano's quiet fragmented chords at the beginning of the Allegretto ben moderato suggest a theme-shape that the violin takes over as it enters: this will be the thematic cell of the entire sonata. The piano has a more animated second subject (it takes on the shape of the germinal theme as it proceeds), but the gently-rocking violin figure from the opening dominates this movement, and Franck reminds the performers constantly to play *molto dolce*, *sempre dolce*, *dolcissimo*.

The mood changes completely at the fiery second movement, marked *passionato*, and some critics have gone so far as to claim that this Allegro is the true first movement and that the opening Allegretto should be regarded as an introduction to this movement. In any case, this movement contrasts its blazing opening with more lyric episodes, and listeners will detect the original theme-shape flowing through some of these.

The Recitativo–Fantasia is the most original movement in the sonata. The piano's quiet introduction seems at first a re-visiting of the germinal theme, though it is ingeniously—a variant of the *passionato* opening of the second movement. The violin makes its entrance with an improvisation-like passage (this is the fantasia of the title), and the entire movement is quite free in both structure and expression: moments of whimsy alternate with passionate outbursts.

After the expressive freedom of the third movement, the finale restores order with pristine clarity: it is a canon in octaves, with one voice following the other

at the interval of a measure. The stately canon theme, marked *dolce cantabile*, is a direct descendant of the sonata's opening theme, and as this movement proceeds it recalls thematic material from earlier movements. Gradually, the music takes on unexpected power and drives to a massive coda and a thunderous close.

Franck wrote this sonata for his fellow Belgian, the great violinist Eugene Ysaÿe, who gave the premiere in Brussels in November 1886. The composer Vincent D'Indy recalled that premiere: "The violin and piano sonata was performed . . . in one of the rooms of the Museum of Modern Painting at Brussels. The seance, which began at three o'clock, had been very long, and it was rapidly growing dark. After the first Allegretto of the sonata, the performers could scarcely read the music. Now the official regulations forbade any light whatever in rooms which contained paintings. Even the striking of a match would have been matter for offense. The public was about to be asked to leave, but the audience, already full of enthusiasm, refused to budge. Then Ysaÿe was heard to strike his music stand with his bow, exclaiming [to the pianist], "Allons! Allons!" [Let's go!] And then, unheard-of marvel, the two artists, plunged in gloom . . . performed the last three movements from memory, with a fire and passion the more astounding to the listeners in that there was an absence of all externals which could enhance the performance. Music, wondrous and alone, held sovereign sway in the darkness of night."

Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor, Op. 63

ROBERT SCHUMANN

Born: 1810

Died: 1856

Composed: 1847

- I. Mit Energie und Leidenschaft
- II. Lebhaft, doch nicht zu rasch
- III. Langsam, mit inniger Empfindung
- IV. Mit Feuer

Schumann's three piano trios, all from the final years of his life, are little-known to audiences today. He wrote the first of them, in D minor, very quickly, completing the score between June 3 and 16, 1847—he celebrated his 37th birthday in the process. This was a period of steady creativity for the never-wholly-stable Schumann. He had recovered from a deep depression he had fallen into while on a tour of Russia three years earlier; the family had moved to Dresden following that trip, and their hopes for a quieter situation seemed for the moment to have been fulfilled. Shortly after completing this score,

Schumann would write another piano trio and then plunge into work on his opera *Genoveva*.

The sonata-form opening movement of the Piano Trio in D minor alternates between lyric and dramatic moods (Schumann marks it "With energy and passion"). The sonorities here are full-throated: all three instruments play virtually without pause, the piano part is full of rippling arpeggios, and the strings are often in multiple-stops. A brief passage in the center of the movement where the strings play quietly on the bridge brings relief, but the opening material returns to drive the movement to a sonorous close. The second movement ("Lively, but not too fast") is in ternary form: the outer sections are driven by an omnipresent dotted rhythm, but the trio, led by the piano, offers lyric and chromatic lines.

The third movement ("Slow, with intimate feeling") opens with an impassioned violin solo that wanders far from its home key of A minor, and this haunting melody forms the basis for the first section. A more animated middle section ("Quicker") moves ahead on triplet rhythms before the reappearance of the opening material. The finale ("With fire") returns to the mood and manner of the opening movement. Once again, the sonority is rich, the mood animated. Something of this music's mercurial character can be seen in Schumann's sudden alternation of instructions to the performers: at one point *sempre piano* gives way seven measures later to *marcato*, which is replaced just as quickly by *dolce*. A grand coda ("Faster and faster") drives the trio to an impassioned cadence.

Program Notes by Eric Bromberger