

# Etienne Gara

Violin

# Sung Chang

Piano



## PROGRAM

Scherzo from Sonatensatz in C minor, Op. posth., .....Johannes Brahms  
"FAE Sonata" (1833-1897)

Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano ..... César Franck  
Allegretto ben moderato (1822-1890)  
Allegro  
Recitativo-Fantasia: Ben moderato  
Allegretto poco mosso

## INTERMISSION

Sonata for Violin and Piano .....Leoš Janáček  
Con moto (1854-1928)  
Ballada  
Allegretto  
Adagio

Sonata in D Major, Op. 94 .....Maurice Ravel  
Tzigane (1875-1937)



*In memory of Brownlee and Carmen C. Waschek,  
longtime friends of Abbey Church Events.*

Etienne Gara and Sung Chang appear by arrangement with  
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26<sup>th</sup> March 2022  
8:00 p.m.

Saint Martin's Abbey  
Lacey, Washington

## About the Artists

Praised for the warm tone and expressiveness of his playing, French-born violinist **Étienne Gara** has performed extensively worldwide, appearing as soloist in such renowned venues as the SOKA Performing Art Center and the Segerstrom Center for the Arts in the Greater Los Angeles Area, Jordan Hall in Boston, the Marigny Theatre in Paris, the Wiener Saal and the Marmor Saal of the Mirabell Palace in Salzburg. Since making his solo orchestral début in 2005 with the Savaria Symphony Orchestra in Hungary, he has continued his soloist career in Europe, the USA and Asia. His concerts have been broadcast in the USA, Hungary, Switzerland, France and Belgium.

Gara has been a frequent guest of international music festivals, including the Stavelot Festival in Belgium, the Aurora Festival in Sweden, the Thy Festival in Denmark and the Academy of Music of Lausanne, where he was a laureate as part of one of the best violin-piano duos. He was invited to participate in the Perlman Music Program in New York in 2009 and 2010, and joined Itzhak Perlman for the winter residency of the festival in Sarasota, FL and Israel.

A 2010 laureate of the prestigious Fondation Marcel Bleustein-Blanchet, as well as a laureate of the Fifth International Chamber Music Ensemble competition in Boston, he is a winner of Sir Yehudi Menuhin's "Music Live Now" Competition and the 2014 and 2016 Beverly Hills National Auditions, and won Second Prize at the Raiffeisen Klassik Competition in Salzburg. In 2005, he had the honor to be appointed concertmaster for the grand opening of the new Auditorium of the Mozarteum in Salzburg and since then, has served regularly as concertmaster for orchestras such as the Los Angeles Virtuosi Orchestra and the Kontrapunktus Chamber Orchestra. He also appears as guest principal violin with many ensembles in halls including the Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles.

A passionate chamber musician, Gara has performed with many renowned players such as Lucy Chapman, Rober Tapping, Jacob Koranyi, Julian Steckel, John Walz, Daniel Blumenthal, Plamena Mangova and Denis Pascal. He has been a guest artist with the St. Lawrence Quartet, collaborated with choreographer Benjamin Millepied and the LA Dance Project, and the American Contemporary Ballet, and starred in several short films. Gara was the artistic director of the Open Academy Orchestra in Los Angeles, and in 2018 founded the award-winning self-conducted chamber orchestra Delirium Musicum, which recently recorded its début CD on Warner Classics. Gara has also recorded for the late Leonard Cohen, and in 2014, he recorded a recital program of French music on a 1714 Stradivarius.

Born in Paris to a French mother and Hungarian father, Gara started playing the violin at the age of five. After studying in Paris, he continued his education at the Mozarteum University of Salzburg. He worked with Victor Tretiakov at the Musikhochschule of Cologne before completing his Performer Diploma with Mauricio Fuks at Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. He earned his Master of Music at the New England Conservatory under renowned pedagogue Donald Weilerstein and later joined world-renowned violinist Midori at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.

Gara was named Artist-in-Residence at USC's Brain and Creativity Institute, led by Prof. Antonio Damasio, in 2019, and at the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts in Los Angeles in 2021.



Pianist **Sung Chang** is known for his outstanding technical abilities, musical maturity, and sensitive yet powerful expression that shines through the keys. He has received critical acclaim for his “poetic imagination, superb technical skills, and, most importantly, a deep emotional connection to whatever music he plays” from Jeffrey Kahane. Born in Seoul, Korea, Sung Chang gave his début concert at the age of five. At 16 he was accepted into the prestigious Korea National University of Arts, and his musical virtuosity attracted international attention when he became the youngest ever to win the Nagoya International Piano Competition in Japan.

Since then Chang has gone on to win more than ten international competitions around the world including in the United States, Germany, Italy, Korea, and Japan. His impressive list of awards from the major international piano competitions includes: First Prize and the audience prize at the Chopin-Gesellschaft Hannover Internationaler Klavierwettbewerb, First Prize and the special award for the "Best Performance of a Virtuoso Piece" at the Bösendorfer USASU International Piano Competition, the Silver Medal with two special prizes for "Best Performance of a Work by a Classical Composer" and "Best Performance of a Work by a Spanish, Latin American or Impressionistic Composer" at the San Antonio International Piano Competition, and the Silver Medal at the New Orleans International Piano Competition.

Chang currently resides in Los Angeles, California after completing further studies at the Hochschule für Musik, Theater und Medien Hannover in Hannover, Germany and the USC Thornton School of Music.

## Program Notes

### **Brahms:**

The "FAE Sonata," a four movement work for violin and piano, was composed in 1853 "by committee." Composer Robert Schumann suggested to Brahms and Albert Diedrich, one of Schumann's young protégés, that they collaborate on a violin/piano sonata as a birthday gift for the violinist Joseph Joachim. Each movement was to use the musical notes F-A-E, which represented Joachim's personal motto, "Frei aber einsam" (free but lonely), and Joachim was to guess the composer of each movement. The work was premiered on October 26th with Joachim and pianist Clara Schumann performing. Brahms composed the *Scherzo* but it was not published until ten years after his death, as Joachim retained the original manuscript.

### **Franck:**

The Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano is one of César Franck's best-known compositions, and is considered one of the finest sonatas for violin and piano ever written. It was written in 1886, when César Franck was 63, as a wedding present for the 28-year-old violinist Eugène Ysaÿe. Twenty-eight years earlier, in 1858, Franck had promised a violin sonata for Cosima von Bülow. This never appeared; it has been speculated that whatever work Franck had done on that piece was put aside, and eventually ended up in the sonata he wrote for Ysaÿe in 1886.

Franck was not present when Ysaÿe married, but on the morning of the wedding, on 26 September 1886 in Arlon, their mutual friend Charles Bordes presented the work as Franck's gift to Ysaÿe and his bride Louise Bourdeau de Courtrai. After a hurried rehearsal, Ysaÿe and Bordes' sister-in-law, the pianist Marie-Léontine Bordes-Pène, played the Sonata to the other wedding guests.

The Sonata was given its first public concert performance on 16 December of that year in Brussels, with Ysaÿe and Bordes-Pène again as the performers. It was the final item in a long program which started at 3 PM. When the time arrived for the Sonata, dusk had fallen and the gallery was bathed in gloom, but the museum authorities permitted no artificial light whatsoever. Initially, it seemed the Sonata would have to be abandoned, but Ysaÿe and Bordes-Pène decided to continue regardless. They had to play the last three movements from memory in virtual darkness. When the violinist Armand Parent remarked that Ysaÿe had played the first movement faster than the composer intended, Franck replied that Ysaÿe had made the right decision, saying "from now on there will be no other way to play it."

Ysaÿe would keep the Violin Sonata in his repertoire for the next 40 years of his life. His championing of the Sonata contributed to the public recognition of Franck as a major composer. This recognition was quite belated; Franck died within four years of the Sonata's public première, and did not have his first unqualified public success until the last year of his life, when his String Quartet in D was premiered.

The Sonata in A regularly appears on concert programs and on recordings, and is in the core repertoire of all major violinists. Jascha Heifetz played it at his final recital in 1972. The piece is further notable for the difficulty of its piano part, when compared with most of the chamber repertoire. Its technical problems include frequent extreme extended figures—the composer himself having possessed huge hands—and virtuoso runs and leaps, particularly in the second movement (though some passages can be facilitated by employing a spare hand to cover some notes).

The work is cyclic in nature, all the movements sharing common thematic threads. Themes from one movement reappear in subsequent movements, but usually transformed. Franck had adapted this technique from Franz Liszt, his friend and Cosima von Bülow's father. Vincent d'Indy described the Sonata as "the first and purest model of the cyclical use of themes in sonata form," and referred to it as "this true musical monument."

In the first movement, *Allegretto ben moderato*, a gentle and sweetly reflective rocking theme, introduced by the violin after a short introduction by the piano, is the thematic core of the entire work. Franck originally intended it as a slow movement, but Ysaÿe preferred a slightly quicker tempo, and convinced Franck to mark it *Allegretto*.

The turbulent *Allegro* movement is sometimes considered the real opening movement, with the *Allegretto ben moderato* serving as a long introduction.

The *Recitativo-Fantasia: Ben moderato* is improvisatory in nature, and free in both structure and expression.

The main melody in the *Allegretto poco mosso* movement is heard in canonic imitation between the instruments, and recurs in a rondo-like manner to a triumphant and soaring conclusion. James Harding described the movement as "a magnificent example of canonic writing, simple, majestic and irresistible in its ample, beautifully wrought proportions."

### **Janáček:**

Leoš Janáček was a Czech composer, musical theorist, folklorist, publicist

and teacher. He was inspired by Moravian and other Slavic and Eastern European folk music to create an original, modern musical style.

His music is steeped in the folk music idioms and speech patterns of his Moravian homeland, located in the north-central region of what was formerly Czechoslovakia. "The whole life of man is in folk music," he proclaimed. Hence, it comes as no surprise to find that this composer's melodic material, both vocal and instrumental, follows closely the inflections, cadences and rhythms of the Czech language, and that he developed a uniquely expressive style.

Janáček left just one violin sonata, which he wrote in his sixties. (His two student works in the genre are lost.) "I wrote it at the beginning of the War when we were expecting the Russians in Moravia," he declared. This was meant in a positive sense, for Janáček was counting on the Russians to liberate his country from the yoke of the Hapsburgs. Some listeners hear the sound of gunfire evoked in the final movement. Evocations of Russia can also be detected in the first and third movements, where the tone and melodic shapes resemble certain passages in Janáček opera "Katya Kabanova," whose story comes from a Russian drama (The Storm by Ostrovsky). The sonata went through several transformations before arriving at its final form in 1922.

### **Ravel:**

It was through the Hungarian violinist Jelly D'Aranyi that Ravel became acquainted with Gypsy music; he found it so fascinating that he determined to write a piece in this style for her. Two years later, he produced the Tzigane (French for Gypsy, and related to the German Zigeuner), modeled after the freely structured Hungarian Rhapsodies for piano by Liszt. D'Aranyi and Ravel gave the first performance in London on April 26, 1924. The violin part was phenomenally difficult, and d'Aranyi had only a few days to learn it, but such was her mastery that Ravel remarked: "If I had known, I would have made the music even more difficult." The work opens with a long, unaccompanied presentation of the melodic material by the solo violin. In the course of a freely rhapsodic succession of ideas employing the so-called gypsy scale, the instrument indulges in all manner of virtuosic effects, including harmonics, double, triple and even quadruple stops.

Notes on the Brahms and Franck from Wikipedia. Notes on the Janáček and Ravel by Augustin Hadelich.

