



presents...

**JAY CAMPBELL** | Cello  
**CONOR HANICK** | Piano

Wednesday, November 8, 2023 | 7:30pm  
Herbst Theatre

**WUBBELS**

**gretchen am spinnrade**

**SCHUBERT**

**Two Impromptus**

*in A-flat Major, D.899, No. 4*  
*in F Minor, D.935, No. 4*

**LIGETI**

**Three Etudes**

*Fanfares*  
*Arc-en-ciel*  
*L'escalier du diable*

**INTERMISSION**

**POULENC**

**Sonata for Piano and Cello**

*Tempo di Marcia*  
*Cavatine*  
*Ballabile*  
*Finale*

**This program is made possible in part by the generous support of John M. Sanger.**

**San Francisco Performances acknowledges the generosity of Concert Partners  
Tim and Peggy Brown & David and Judy Preves Anderson.**

**Jay Campbell** is represented by Schmidt Artists International, Inc.  
21 West 74th Street, Suite 1C, New York, NY 1002 schmidtart.com

**Conor Hanick** is represented by Blu Ocean Arts bluocceanarts.com

Steinway Model D, Pro Piano, San Francisco

## ARTIST PROFILES

Tonight is Jay Campbell's sixth appearance with SF Performances; he has been seen previously here with the JACK Quartet, The Junction Trio, together with violinist Jennifer Koh and pianist Timo Andres, and with violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja.

Conor Hanick makes his SF Performances debut.



Jay Campbell is a cellist actively exploring a wide range of creative music. He has been recognized for approaching both old and new music with the same curiosity and commitment, and his performances have been called “electrifying” by the *New York Times* and “gentle, poignant, and deeply moving” by the *Washington Post*.

The only musician ever to receive two Avery Fisher Career Grants—in 2016 as a soloist, and again in 2019 as a member of the JACK Quartet—Jay made his concerto debut with the New York Philharmonic in 2013, and in 2016 he worked with Alan Gilbert as the artistic director for *Ligeti Forward*, part of the New York Philharmonic Biennale at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In 2017, he was Artist-in-Residence at the Lucerne Festival along with frequent collaborator violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja, where he gave the premiere of Luca Francesconi's cello concerto *Das Ding Singt*. In 2018 he appeared at the Berlin Philharmonie with Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin. He has recorded the concertos of George Perle and Marc-Andre Dalbavie with the Seattle Symphony, and in 2023–24 will premiere a new concerto, *Reverdecen*, by Andreia Pinto Correia with the Gulbenkian Orchestra in Portugal, and in Brazil with the Orquestra Sinfonica do Estado de Sao Paulo. In 2022 he returned to the Los Angeles Philharmonic as curator and cellist for his second Green Umbrella

concert, premiering two concertos by Wadada Leo Smith and inti figgis-vizueta.

Jay's primary artistic interest is the collaboration with living creative musicians and has worked in this capacity with Catherine Lamb, John Luther Adams, Marcos Balter, Tyshawn Sorey, and many others. His close association with John Zorn resulted in two discs of new works for cello, *Hen to Pan* (2015) and *Azoth* (2020). Deeply committed as a chamber musician, he is the cellist of the JACK Quartet as well as the Junction Trio with violinist Stefan Jackiw and pianist Conrad Tao, and multidisciplinary collective AMOC.



Pianist **Conor Hanick** is regarded as one of his generation's most inquisitive interpreters of music new and old whose “technical refinement, color, crispness and wondrous variety of articulation benefit works by any master” (*New York Times*). Hanick has recently performed with the San Francisco Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Alabama Symphony, Orchestra Iowa, and the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, been presented by the Gilmore Festival, New York Philharmonic, Elbphilharmonie, De Singel, Caramoor, Cal Performances, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, and the Park Avenue Armory, and worked with conductors Esa-Pekka Salonen, Ludovic Morlot, Alan Gilbert, and David Robertson.

A fierce advocate for the music of today, Hanick has premiered over 200 pieces and collaborated with composers ranging from Pierre Boulez, Kaija Saariaho, and Steve Reich, to the leading composers of his generation, including Nico Muhly, Caroline Shaw, Tyshawn Sorey, Samuel Carl Adams, and Anthony Cheung. This season Hanick presents recitals in the US and Europe, including performances with Julia Bullock, Jay Campbell, Joshua Roman, Seth Parker Woods, AMOC (American Modern Opera

Company), and the Takt Trio. Hanick also makes his San Francisco Performances debut at Herbst Theater, joins Sandbox Percussion at 92NY, returns to the Aix-en-Provence Festival, and in Ojai as part of the California Festival performs a new set of piano etudes by Samuel Carl Adams, whose piano concerto *No Such Spring* Hanick premiered last year with the San Francisco Symphony.

Hanick is the director of Solo Piano at the Music Academy of the West and serves on the faculty of The Juilliard School, Mannes College, and the CUNY Graduate Center.

## PROGRAM NOTES

### gretchen am spinnrade

#### ERIC WUBBELS

(Contemporary American)

At the time of its premiere, the composer prepared a program note for this work, from which the following is excerpted:

*Goethe/Schubert's Gretchen  
at the spinning wheel  
("Meine Ruh' ist hin/Mein Herz ist schwer")  
but also  
the wheel of karma  
(Bhavachakra)  
turning of cause and effect*

*compulsive loops of thought and action  
repetitive behavior and cycles of history*

*A manic, hounded piece, alternating relentless motoric circuits with plateaus of regular, "idling" motion.*

*gretchen am spinnrade* was written for and is dedicated to cellist Mariel Roberts. It is the sixth in a series of duo works for piano paired with another instrument, originally written for myself to play with some of my closest collaborators.

*gretchen* was written primarily during a residency at the MacDowell Colony (Peterborough, NH) in the fall of 2016, a period colored and eventually consumed by events surrounding the 2016 presidential election. The extremity of its expression derives at least in part from an attempt to process, metabolize, and transform some of the toxic, chaotic atmosphere of that moment.

—Eric Wubbels

## Two Impromptus

### FRANZ SCHUBERT

(1797–1828)

Schubert wrote two sets of four *Impromptus* each during the summer and fall of 1827, probably in response to a request from his publisher for music intended for the growing number of amateur musicians with pianos in their homes: this music is melodic, attractive, and not so difficult as to take it out of the range of good amateur pianists. The term “impromptu” lacks precise musical meaning. It refers to a short instrumental piece, usually for piano, without specified form; the title suggests music that gives the impression of being improvised on the spot. But the notion that this music is improvised should be speedily discounted—Schubert’s impromptus are very carefully conceived music, set in a variety of forms that include variation, rondo, and minuet.

This program offers two of Schubert’s impromptus, one from each of the two sets. The *Impromptu in A-flat Major, D.899, No. 4* is built on a wealth of thematic ideas. The opening theme falls into two parts: first comes a cascade of silvery sixteenth notes, followed by six chords; Schubert soon introduces a waltz tune in the left hand. In the central section he modulates into C-sharp minor and sets his theme over steadily-pulsing chords before the music makes a smooth transition back to the opening material and concludes brightly.

The *Impromptu in F Minor, D.935, No. 4* is one of Schubert’s longest, and any amateur pianist who takes this music up had better be a good one. The *Impromptu in F Minor* has been compared to a sonata-form movement: it presents two quite elaborate theme-groups, both extended and full of subordinate ideas, and then Schubert brings back both groups, as if recapitulating them—the effect is of a sonata-form movement without a development section. This is generally wistful music, and despite moments of energy the atmosphere is subdued and dark. Schubert marks the opening *Allegro moderato*, and that moderate pace continues throughout. The opening theme—energized by dotted rhythms and turns—spins off some very active secondary material, full of chordal writing and passages that send the right hand into the piano’s highest range. The second theme group glides darkly along a steady murmur of sixteenth notes—though this music is very quiet, Schubert marks it *ap-*

*passionato*. It is the right hand that has this steady pattern of murmuring sixteenths and the left has the fragmentary theme, which means that the left hand must frequently cross over to play above the right. Schubert brings back both these groups and then concludes quietly with a brief reminiscence of the very beginning.

## Etudes for Piano

### GYÖRGY LIGETI

(1923–2006)

György Ligeti studied the piano as a young man but never became a virtuoso performer, or even a particularly accomplished pianist. But he always longed to be a good pianist, and he made a point of playing the piano every day: staying in physical contact with the keyboard brought a particular kind of reality and a special inspiration. In a liner note to a recording of his *Etudes for Piano* Ligeti spoke of the physical impact of the piano on him as a composer.

“I lay ten fingers on the keyboard and imagine music. My fingers copy this mental image as I press the keys, but this copy is very inexact: a feedback emerges between ideas and tactile/motor execution. This feedback loop repeats itself many times, enriched by provisional sketches...The result sounds completely different from my initial conceptions: the anatomical reality of my hands and the configuration of the piano keyboard have transformed my imaginary constructs...A well-formed piano work produces physical pleasure.”

Shortly after his sixtieth birthday, Ligeti began composing a series of etudes for piano. He collected these as *Book 1* (six etudes, published in 1985), *Book 2* (eight etudes, 1994), and *Book 3* (four etudes, 2001). *Fanfares* (from *Book 1*) is marked *Vivacissimo molto ritmico* and built on an ostinato of eight notes stressed 3+2+3. This ostinato continues throughout, leaping between the pianist’s hands. Against this constant, irregular pulse Ligeti sets a series of consonant melodies that dance lightly, almost playfully. Ligeti disagreed with those who described some of his etudes as jazz, though he has spoken of his admiration for Thelonious Monk and Bill Evans, and some may hear their influence here. In fact, Ligeti’s original title for this etude was *Bartoque*, and the irregular meter of the ostinato recalls the folk music of Eastern Europe that Bartók loved so much.

*Arc-en-ciel*, also from *Book 1*, is reminiscent of another composer who sometimes

wrote ecstatically about rainbows, Olivier Messiaen. Ligeti marks this music *Andante con eleganza*, with swing and stresses that “The metronome mark represents an average, the semiquaver movement fluctuating freely around this average tempo, as in jazz.”

The longest of Ligeti’s etudes, *L’escalier du diable* (*Book 2*) is a brilliant toccata that seems always to be driving upward. Ligeti’s initial marking is *Presto legato, ma leggiero*, but soon that legato gives way to some spiky staccato writing, and this hard-edged music rises to climaxes that Ligeti specifies should be played *ffffffffff*. The central episode is built on great chords that have been compared to the sound of ringing bells; Ligeti marks passages here *Miniaccioso e maestoso* (“Threatening and majestic”). The fast opening material returns, but rather than ending brilliantly, this etude drives to a sustained chord spread over three octaves, and the music concludes as that massive chord decays into silence.

## Sonata for Piano and Cello

### FRANCIS POULENC

(1899–1963)

Poulenc made his original sketches for the *Sonata for Cello and Piano* in 1940, but the war and German occupation delayed its actual composition for eight years. He returned to the sketches in 1948 and completed the sonata between April and October. One thinks of Poulenc as the composer of witty and light music rather than as someone much concerned with classical forms, and in fact he wrote only two sonatas for stringed instruments. His *Cello Sonata* is in four movements, and it seems to have the general shape of a classical sonata, yet Poulenc’s handling of form here is quite free: movements tend to be episodic (often in simple three-part form), and the music seems animated more by dance rhythms than by a desire to conform to classical principles. Throughout, Poulenc treats the cello as a lyric instrument.

Poulenc marks the opening movement *Tempo di Marcia* and specifies that it should be played “without dragging,” but despite a certain hard-edged vitality the music is more notable for its easy glide, and in fact Poulenc is soon reminding the performers to play *espressivo* and *bien chante*. The middle section is even more lyric and restrained and, following a return of the opening material, the movement winks out on a barely-audible pizzicato stroke

*continued on page 4*

Poulenc's performance instruction for the *Cavatine* is *Très calme*. He asks for "beau-coup de pedale" from the piano, whose chords should sound as if they are in a "sonorous halo"; the cello part—muted throughout—is marked "*tres doux*" ("very gentle"), an instruction that occurs frequently throughout the sonata.

The third movement is titled *Ballabile*, which simply means music "suitable for

dancing" (Verdi's dance music in *Otello* is titled *Ballabili*). Poulenc asks that this movement be *Très animé et gai*, and it does dance deftly; its middle section is once again marked *très doux*. This gentle manner vanishes in the *Finale*, which opens with a declamatory passage full of heavy chording from both instruments. And then off the music goes, dancing energetically through the main part of the movement, and although Poulenc changes meter constantly, the triplet rhythms flow

seamlessly. A quiet center section leads to a return of dancing triplets, and Poulenc rounds off the sonata with the declamatory chords that opened the finale.

Cellist Pierre Fournier, who assisted the composer in the preparation of the cello part, gave the first performance of the *Cello Sonata* in Paris on May 18, 1949.

—Program notes by Eric Bromberger