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FRIDAY, JULY 27, 2018 ■ 7:30 P.M.

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND FINE ARTS CENTER CONCERT HALL

EARLY MORNING, THEATRE, AND ROMANCE

SPONSORED BY AMICA INSURANCE

ABERDAM *Grisailles Vaporeuses* (Misty Grayness)
for Violin, Cello, and Piano

Pensif (Pensive)

Lyric (Lyrical)

Joyeux (Joyful)

VIOLIN: AMY OSHIRO-MORALES

CELLO: PRISCILLA LEE

PIANO: NATALIE ZHU

GUASTAVINO *Tres Romances Argentinos* for Two Pianos

Las Niñas de Santa Fe (The Girls of Santa Fe)

Muchacho Jujeño (Jujeño Boy)

Baile en Cuyo (Dance from Cuyo)

PIANOS: NATALIE ZHU AND RONALDO ROLIM

MILHAUD *Scaramouche* for Two Pianos

Vif

Modère

Brasileira

PIANOS: RONALDO ROLIM AND NATALIE ZHU

INTERMISSION

BRUCH *String Octet in B-flat Major, Op. posthumous*

Allegro moderato

Adagio

Allegro molto

VIOLINS: NOAH GELLER, AMY OSHIRO-MORALES,

JASMINE LIN AND DAVID KIM

VIOLAS: BURCHARD TANG AND CHE-HUNG CHEN

CELLO: EFE BALTACIGIL

BASS: HAROLD HALL ROBINSON

*Please join us for a post-concert Q&A
with Artistic Director Natalie Zhu and
founding Artistic Director David Kim*

***Grisailles Vaporeuses* (Misty Grayness) for Violin, Cello, and Piano**

ELIANE ABERDAM (B. 1969)

Eliane Aberdam is a prolific and diverse composer whose works have been premiered in France, Hungary, Israel, and throughout the United States. A native of France, she received her early musical education at the Conservatoire National de Région in Grenoble and holds degrees from the Rubin Academy of Music and Dance in Jerusalem, the University of Pennsylvania (where she studied with George Crumb), and her PhD in Composition from the University of California at Berkeley. Formerly on the faculty of the University of Northern Iowa and the Beth-Rivkah College in Paris, she studied electronic music at IRCAM (Institut de Recherche et Coördination Acoustique-musique, Paris) and has received commissions for chamber ensemble, symphony, orchestra, opera, and theater productions in the U.S. and Europe. A strong advocate of musical and cultural diversity, she is the recipient of both international composition and musician-in-residence awards.

In 2000, the Ensemble Intercontemporain (Paris) commissioned and premiered Aberdam's chamber orchestra piece *Quoi? Ce point.* (after Primo Levi's book *Periodic Table*). In 2006, she completed *Tamar*, an opera based on the biblical story of Tamar and Amnon, which was premiered the following year at the University of Rhode Island. Other works include a piece for soprano and electronics *The Seven Deadly Sins* (2010), an orchestra piece *Les Bons Augures* (2011), a piece for wind ensemble *Zamarine*, and a piece for soprano, harp, and violin *Deux Poèmes Océaniques* (both 2012). She composed *A Demon in My View* for the Aurea Ensemble (2013), and *Figurines*, for the Earplay Ensemble, was performed in San Francisco (2015). Also that year *Shahrazad* for harp, singer, and actress (a monodrama) was premiered in Pittsburgh. In 2016, she recorded *Encounter* for pianist and piano Disklavier with pianist Eric Ferrand N'Kaoua. In 2017, Ted Mook performed her *Souvenir des Alpes* for cello solo, and in 2018, Garry Buttery performed her piece for tuba solo, *Grésivaudan*.

Aberdam has been teaching composition and theory at the University of Rhode Island since 2001. She provided the following description of *Grisailles Vaporeuses* (Misty Grayness).

I wrote this trio in 2006, shortly after moving to Westerly, R.I. It was the first of my compositions that was inspired by natural surrounds and special places that I cross every day on my way to work. The work is in three movements: Pensif (Pensive), Lyric (Lyrical), and Joyeux (Joyful). Its title evokes the mini wriggling 'fogglings' above ponds and rivers in New England, in the fall, early morning. I would see these patches of mist when I crossed the Potter Hill Bridge over the Pawcatuck River almost every autumn day; these misty figures looked like dancing ghosts or spirits and made me reflect on the wonders of natural phenomena, thus the title of the first movement, Pensif.

The second movement, Lyric, is meant to evoke the beauty of autumn's changing colors and landscape — the trees turning red, yellow, orange, and brown, then the wind blowing the leaves away. This second movement also incorporates changing moods: from a slow dance in three with wide leaps, to express awe, followed by a leggiro passage of pizzicato 'a la chitarra' (like a guitar) to capture the feeling of a light wind filled with swirling leaves, and ending with a return to the calmer, slower lyrical dance. The Joyeux third movement is a fast, fun interplay among the instruments, reminiscent of a game of hide-and-seek between autumn and winter, and the piece ends with a furious arpeggio passage, a warning from the Nor'easter.

Each movement represents a different mood, but also makes use of different techniques, such as tremolando, arpeggios in pizzicato, and glissandi. The compositional emphasis is on the melody as well as on a few recognizable harmonic fields such as the Octatonic and Pentatonic scales, with a rich texture involving canonic imitations. However, the third movement relies heavily on the rhythmic feel and angular shapes of the motives to create the very contrasted textures throughout the movement.

— Eliane Aberdam

***Tres Romances Argentinos* for Two Pianos**

CARLOS GUASTAVINO (1912–2000)

Born in the Santa Fe province of Argentina, Carlos Guastavino first studied music in his native Santa Fe, then moved to Buenos Aires. He became widely known for his songs, lusciously melodious, many of which have become almost national songs. His large output of songs has led to his being sometimes called “the Schubert of Argentina.” Also a talented pianist, Guastavino composed his *Tres Romances Argentinos* (“Three Argentine Romances”) in 1948. In 1947 he had traveled to England on a British Council fellowship, remaining there for two years. Originally conceived for two pianos, he also made an orchestral version, which was performed during his English stay by the BBC Symphony under the direction of Walter Goehr. Later on, he toured both Russia and China, where his folk-oriented works were well received.

By far the largest part of Guastavino's output consists of solo songs with piano, but the *melos* of those works also finds its way into his smaller body of chamber works, including three guitar sonatas, choral works, piano works, and a small number of orchestral works.

There can be no surprise why the “Three Argentine Romances” has been popular with duo pianists ever since the premiere of the pieces. The first movement draws an enchanting, swirling, sensuous picture in “The Girls of Santa Fe.” The second movement adds a little testosterone to depict “The Jujuy Boy” (Jujuy is a northern province of Argentina, bordering on Chile and Bolivia). The last movement is a lively, even jazzy “Dance from Cuyo” (Cuyo is a wine-producing mountainous region in central-west Argentina).

***Scaramouche* for Two Pianos**

DARIUS MILHAUD (1892–1974)

One might regard it as a safe bet that French composer Darius Milhaud was inspired to write his lively two-piano score *Scaramouche* from the popular 1921 novel of that name by Rafael Sabatini. However, the title actually refers to the Théâtre Scaramouche in Paris, which specialized in productions for children. In May 1937 Milhaud wrote some music for playwright Charles Vildrac's adaptation of a Molière comedy, *Le Médecin volant* (The Flying Doctor).

As often happened with a composer as prolific as Milhaud, he had a number of commissions at hand, one of which was for a piano duo for Marguerite Long (for whom Ravel composed his Concerto in G) and Marcelle Meyer, an old friend of Milhaud's, for the Paris International Exposition. To create it, Milhaud reworked two of the musical cues from the Molière play for the outer movements. For the middle movement he drew upon music written for *Bolívar*, a 1936 play by Jules Superville. This seemingly make-work assemblage of ideas became hugely popular. Meyer and Long recorded it almost at once, and Milhaud found himself forced to create alternate versions for different instrumentations to supply the demand. The last movement was even converted into a pop song.

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The popularity is not hard to understand. Energy, verve, wit, and charm practically tumble out of the piece. Its bi-tonal sonorities give it a modern touch, yet still suggesting popular tunes more than learned structures. Twenty years earlier Milhaud had spent time in Brazil, where he has composed the delightful solo piano work *Saudades do Brasil* (Memories of Brazil); he returns to that happy milieu in the final movement of *Scaramouche*.

String Octet in B-flat Major, Op. posthumous

MAX BRUCH (1838–1920)

Max Bruch was among the most popular composers of the late 19th century, precociously gifted and blessed with an attractive, tuneful style. For a time, his large choral works were the mainstay of choral societies all over Europe and America, while his concertos promptly went into the standard repertory. Only a handful of works — especially the G-minor Violin Concerto — are now heard with any regularity outside of Germany. The large choral works — *Odysseus* and *Das Lied von der Glocke* (a setting of Schiller’s most famous poem) — were heard everywhere in Europe and the United States during the era of the great choral festivals that largely closed with World War I, and it seems unlikely that they will recover their former popularity. But chamber works are beginning to be heard again, and they may yet form a beachhead for the recovery of Bruch’s reputation.

All his life he was associated with great violinists, and he eagerly wrote for them. It was at the very end of that long life that the octogenarian Bruch wrote the Octet, quite possibly at the instigation of his friend Willy Hess. And it came immediately after two string quintets, so it appears that he was willing to move away from the large choral works that he had so long preferred. Bruch evidently modeled his Octet on Mendelssohn’s, but he made one significant change in the scoring, replacing the second cello with a double bass. (This suits the work to be taken over easily by a string orchestra.) The composition took most of January and February 1920. It is Bruch’s last piece of any size. He died quietly about seven months later.

The first movement opens tranquilly with a theme in the viola, then taken up by the first violin. The second theme is rather more energetic. When the themes return in the recapitulation, they begin with the relatively calm opening but build, à la Mendelssohn, to a fiery unison climax. The slow movement begins in a dark E-flat minor, with the contrasting material in a bright B major, which helps engineer a calmly serene close in E-flat major. The last movement, too, begins with an ominous opening (intimations of mortality, perhaps?) but yields to a lively perpetual motion figure that is Bruch’s homage to Mendelssohn.

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