Santa Fe CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

51ST SEASON

Wednesday
6 p.m.

JULY 17

St. Francis Auditorium in the
New Mexico Museum of Art

*Due to unforeseen circumstances, pianist **Zoltán Fejérvári** is unable to perform at the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival this summer. We look forward to welcoming him back to the Festival in a future season, and we're grateful to **George Li**, who joins violinist Yura Lee in Bartók's Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano this evening.*

Since winning the silver medal at the 2015 International Tchaikovsky Competition, **George Li** has rapidly established a major international reputation. He's a winner of the 2016 Avery Fisher Career Grant, the 2012 Gilmore Young Artist Award, and first prize at the 2010 Young Concert Artists International Auditions. Highlights of his 2023–24 season include recitals across the United States and in Europe, debuts with the Prague Philharmonia and Jakarta Simfonia Orchestra, appearances with the Cincinnati and Milwaukee symphony orchestras, and performances with the Dover Quartet and violinist Stella Chen. Recent engagements include the Los Angeles, New York, and London philharmonic orchestras; recitals at New York's Carnegie Hall, Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie, and the Seoul Arts Center; and appearances at the Edinburgh, Verbier, Ravinia, and Aix-en-Provence festivals. Li's most recent album, featuring music by Schumann, Ravel, and Stravinsky, will be released this summer.

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM by Eric Bromberger

HENRI DUTILLEUX (1916–2013)
Les Citations (1985; rev. 2010)

Dutilleux underwent his earliest musical training at a conservatory in Douai, France, before attending the Paris Conservatory. He was awarded the Prix de Rome in 1938, but World War II interrupted his life and musical career. He served as a stretcher-bearer in the French army and later worked as a coach and chorus director at the Paris Opera during the occupation.

The interruption caused by the war had a perhaps unexpected effect on Dutilleux as a composer. After the liberation, he reassessed his earlier work (which had been heavily influenced by Debussy and Ravel) and essentially disowned it, coming to regard his Piano Sonata of 1948 as his first truly characteristic composition. Dutilleux composed part-time while working as the director of music production at Radio France beginning in 1945, but in 1963, he resigned to devote all his time and energy to composing.

Dutilleux's music is known for its clarity, bright sound (his music just sounds good), and economy of means as well as its composer's refusal to be bound by traditional forms and procedures. The most careful of craftsmen, Dutilleux could let ideas germinate for years. The composition process could be slow, and a piece could be revised over the course of several years before

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he was satisfied. As a result, Dutilleux produced a very small body of work and often missed deadlines, sometimes by years.

It comes as no surprise, then, that Dutilleux composed *Les Citations* over a period of 25 years. The work began as a short piece for oboe, harpsichord, and percussion called *For Aldeburgh 85*, which Dutilleux wrote for the Aldeburgh Festival in 1985. That year marked the 75th birthday of the English tenor Peter Pears, who, along with Benjamin Britten and the director, producer, and librettist Eric Crozier, founded the festival in 1948. *For Aldeburgh 85* includes a brief quotation from the arioso "Now the Great Bear and Pleiades" from Britten's opera *Peter Grimes*. Pears had created the title role of that opera when it was premiered in 1945, and Dutilleux's quotation was a gesture of homage to both Pears and Britten.

In 1991, Dutilleux composed a companion piece to *For Aldeburgh 85* called *From Janequin to Jehan Alain*, and it also included some brief quotations. Clément Janequin was a 16th-century French composer, and Jehan Alain (1911–40) was a French organist and composer. Alain was serving as a motorcycle courier for the French Army when he was killed by German soldiers. (His younger sister Marie-Claire Alain, who was 13 at the time of her brother's death, went on to become one of the greatest organists of the 20th century.)

In 1937, three years before his death, Alain had composed his *Variations sur un thème de Clément Janequin*. Dutilleux pulled an excerpt from those variations as well as a short quotation from Janequin himself and used them as the basis of *From Janequin to Jehan Alain*; he also added a double bass to the ensemble. In 2010, he revised the now two-movement score and created a part for the double bass in *For Aldeburgh 85* as well. Dutilleux titled this resulting work *Les Citations* since it's dependent upon citations of other composers' music.

Les Citations is an extraordinarily difficult piece to play, and it's rarely performed precisely for that reason; it's hard to gather in one place an oboist, a double bassist, a harpsichordist, and a percussionist who are capable of playing it.

For Aldeburgh 85 opens with a long, unbarred solo for oboe that Dutilleux marks *Ad libitum*, giving the oboist a measure of performing freedom. The oboe is eventually joined by the marimba (the percussionist plays several instruments here, including vibraphone, tam-tam, cymbals, bongos, and others). As the movement unfolds, we hear the quotation from *Peter Grimes* played high in the oboe's register, and Dutilleux very carefully cites that borrowing in the score.

Between the two movements of *Les Citations* is a brief interlude, *As for the Wolf's Moan*, which Dutilleux composed over the course of his ongoing revisions of *Les Citations*. The interlude leads to *From Janequin to Jehan Alain*, which begins with a long and fierce harpsichord solo before the other instruments gradually enter. Once again, Dutilleux's quotations are carefully notated in the score.

The demands on the performers are extraordinary in this movement due to both the individual virtuosity and coordinated ensemble playing that's required. The double bass has a particularly prominent role here, and the oboe is, at some points, required to play multiphonics (several different notes sounded at once).

The concluding section begins with a long and dignified chorale-like passage into which Dutilleux inserts several carefully measured silences. The music rises to a climax marked *Éclatant* ("Shining, sparkling, brilliant") before its conclusion on a sudden swoop of sound.

BÉLA BARTÓK (1881–1945)
Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano, Sz. 75 (1921)

The World War I years were devastating for Bartók professionally. Musical life throughout Europe had gone dormant, and, depressed by adverse criticism and his failure to find an audience, Bartók had almost stopped composing. But as he approached his 40th birthday, in 1921, his fortunes changed. He had several successful premieres, Universal Editions agreed to publish his works, and he gave piano recitals throughout Europe, where he was warmly received by audiences and critics in London, Berlin, Paris, and many other cities.

Bartók also began to hear music he'd been unable to hear during the war, in particular the music of Schoenberg, whose influence can be felt in the works Bartók composed in the early 1920s. Bartók's biographer Halsey Stevens noted

that the two violin sonatas, composed in 1921 and 1922, were "farther from traditional standards of tonality than anything else Bartók wrote." And while Bartók was aware of the influence, he later said: "[I]t is an unmistakable characteristic of my works of that period that they are built upon a tonal base."

The Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano should be enjoyed as Bartók's own music rather than valued for any influence from another composer. It's very dramatic music, and, at roughly 35 minutes long, it's an unusually big sonata. It also makes a splendid sound. Bartók writes entirely different music for the two instruments here, as they share no thematic material: the piano's music is vertical (chords or arpeggiated chords) while the violin's is linear (Bartók rarely has the violin play in double-stops).

Bartók scrupulously annotated this score. He specifies exact metronome markings and changes them frequently, he minutely graduates dynamics, and he achieves a varied sonority: At times the piano is made to sound like the old Hungarian cimbalom or the percussive gamelan. Even individual phrases are shaped exactly—Bartók gives one passage the unique marking *Risvegliandosi* ("Waking up"). Perhaps the best way to approach this sonata is to enjoy its sweep, its extraordinary sound, and its drive, which propels the music across two huge movements to one of Bartók's most exciting finales.

The opening movement, aptly titled *Allegro appassionato*, takes the general shape of sonata form—an exposition that lays out a wealth of themes and brief motifs, an extended development (introduced by quietly tolling arpeggiated piano chords), and a lengthy recapitulation that brings back the themes not literally but radically transformed. Throughout the movement (and the entire sonata), the writing for both instruments is of a concerto-like virtuosity. The opening of the movement is of unusual harmonic interest. Bartók felt that this sonata was in C-sharp Minor, and while the piano seems to begin in that key, the violin enters in C Major, creating a bitonal clash that presages the harmonic ambiguity of the entire work. This music is so chromatic that a firm sense of these keys quickly vanishes, and even the conclusion of the sonata states C-sharp Minor only ambiguously.

The *Adagio*, in ternary form, opens with a lengthy passage for unaccompanied violin. The quiet opening section gives way to a slower and more ornate middle one before the movement concludes with a return of the quiet opening material, once again radically transformed. The finale, marked *Allegro molto*, is a wildly dancing rondo based on its opening idea, which is a sort of moto perpetuo for the violin. Tempo changes are frequent here, as Bartók varies the mood with sharply contrasted episodes before the sonata rushes to its bravura close.

Composed between October and December 1921, this sonata was premiered in London on March 24, 1922, by the composer and violinist Jelly d'Arányi, who then played it throughout Europe. One might guess that early reviews would have been uncomprehending, but, in fact, they were quite positive. Bartók's First Violin Sonata is a massive work—tough, demanding, and uncompromising. It's also some of the most bracing, exhilarating, and exciting music Bartók ever wrote.

ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK (1841–1904)
String Quintet in G Major, Op. 77 (1875; rev. 1888)

Early in 1875, Dvořák—33 years old and still a struggling and unknown musician—wrote a quintet for the unusual combination of string quartet and double bass. The quintet was in five movements and incorporated a slow movement, *Andante religioso*, from an earlier (and abandoned) string quartet. Dvořák intended for this new work to be his Opus 18, but he wound up not publishing it.

Three years later, in 1878, Dvořák became famous almost overnight when his first set of Slavonic Dances carried his name around the world. Over the next decade, as commissions and conducting assignments took him across Europe, Dvořák found himself in the happy position of trying to keep up with the many requests for more of his music. In order to satisfy his publisher's demands, Dvořák turned to music he'd already written.

In 1888, Dvořák revisited his 1875 string quartet music and thoroughly revised it, excising the *Andante religioso* movement in the process. He then sent the quintet off to his publisher, Simrock,

in Berlin. Simrock liked the music but didn't want to give the impression that he was publishing "old" music, so, over Dvořák's loud protests, he published the work with the misleadingly high opus number of 77, which suggested that it was a mature work, composed even later than the magnificent Seventh Symphony of 1885.

The String Quintet in G Major is very attractive music, and it's only the unusual combination of instruments that keeps it from being performed more frequently. This music benefits greatly from the richness that the double bass brings to its textures, and it sings with a full, deep sonority. The *Allegro con fuoco* opens with an introduction-like passage that foreshadows the shape of the main theme, which suddenly leaps ahead on its characteristic triplet rhythm. The second subject arrives on springing, staccato bows—Dvořák marks it *Leggiero* ("Light")—and in the completely unexpected key of F Major. The opening theme dominates the full-throated development, though Dvořák builds the coda on the graceful second theme.

The two middle movements are particularly inviting. The E-Minor *Scherzo* dances along triplet rhythms, and the energetic opening is set in nice relief by the violin's somber second idea. This is not, however, the trio section, which later arrives on a flowing melody that again comes from the first violin; Dvořák rounds matters off with a repeat of the entire opening section. The *Poco andante*, in C Major, is endlessly (and effortlessly) lyrical; its central section—which sends the first violin soaring high above a pulsing accompaniment—is one of the joys of the work, and once again Dvořák concludes with a reprise of the opening material before the movement comes to an end on a quiet, radiant, C-Major chord.

The *Finale*, which Dvořák specifies should be "very fast," is spirited and amiable. Its central theme has some of the shape of the main theme of the *Scherzo*, but this movement is more remarkable for its boundless energy: dotted rhythms, sforzando attacks, resounding unisons, and great chords all help power this spirited music along its way.

ERIC BROMBERGER earned his doctorate in American literature at UCLA and for 10 years taught literature and writing courses at Bates College and San Diego State University. Then he quit teaching to devote himself to his first love, music. Bromberger, a violinist, writes program notes for the San Diego Symphony, the La Jolla Music Society, San Francisco Performances, the University of Chicago Presents, Washington Performing Arts at The Kennedy Center, and many other organizations. He was a pre-concert lecturer for the Los Angeles Philharmonic for more than 20 seasons.