

# Santa Fe CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

**51<sup>ST</sup> SEASON**

Tuesday  
12 p.m.

**JULY 16**

St. Francis Auditorium in the  
New Mexico Museum of Art

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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. We're grateful to pianist **George Li**, who makes his Festival debut at today's recital with the following program:

GEORGE LI, *Piano*

**ROBERT SCHUMANN**  
(1810–56)

***Arabeske in C Major, Op. 18*** (1838)

**ROBERT SCHUMANN**

***Dauidsbündlertänze (Dances of the League of David), Op. 6*** (1837)

Lebhaft  
Innig  
Mit Humor. Etwas hahnbüchen/Schneller  
Ungeduldig  
Einfach  
Sehr rasch und in sich hinein  
Nicht schnell, Mis äusserst starker Empfindung  
Frisch  
Lebhaft  
Balladenmässig, Sehr rasch  
Einfach  
Mit Humor  
Wild und lustig  
Zart und singend  
Frisch  
Mit gutem Humor  
Wie aus der Ferne  
Nicht schnell

**IGOR STRAVINSKY**  
(1882–1971)

***Three Movements from Pétrouchka*** (1921)

Danse russe (Russian Dance)  
Chez Pétrouchka (Pétrouchka's Room)  
La Semaine grasse (The Shrovetide Fair)

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*The Music at Noon Tuesday Series is generously sponsored by  
the Lorlee and Arnold Tenenbaum Memorial Fund.*



## ABOUT THE ARTIST

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; recital and concerto performances throughout China; and performances with the Dover Quartet

on the ECHO Chamber Music Series and with violinist Stella Chen at San Francisco's Davies Symphony Hall. Recent engagements included the Los Angeles, New York, and London philharmonic orchestras; the Baltimore, Dallas, Frankfurt Radio, Montreal, San Francisco, and Sydney symphony orchestras; and the Cleveland Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, and Orchestre National de Lyon. He's given recitals at New York's Carnegie Hall, Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie, Munich's Gasteig, and the Seoul Arts Center, and his festival appearances include Edinburgh, Verbier, Ravinia, and Aix-en-Provence. Li's most recent album, featuring music by Schumann, Ravel, and Stravinsky, will be released this summer.

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## NOTES ON THE PROGRAM by Eric Bromberger

### ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–56)

*Arabeske in C Major, Op. 18 (1838)*

*Davidsbündlertänze (Dances of the League of David), Op. 6 (1837)*

Schumann moved to Vienna in the fall of 1838 with the thought that he and Clara Wieck might establish their home in that fabled city after they were married, but the move wasn't a successful one. Unlike so many other composers, Schumann didn't like Vienna. He found it to be a closed society and so conservative in its attitudes that he couldn't imagine publishing his progressive music journal, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik (New Journal for Music)*, there. He remained in Vienna until the end of March 1839, when the death of his brother called him back to Leipzig.

The move wasn't a total loss, however. While in Vienna, Schumann visited Schubert's brother, and in a stack of old music, he discovered the manuscript for Schubert's Symphony No. 9 in C Major (known as the *Great Symphony*). Schumann sent the manuscript to Mendelssohn, who conducted the full work's public premiere in Leipzig.

Schumann also composed some pieces for piano while he was in Vienna. In a note to his publisher, he wrote: "I am composing very intensely at the moment and hoping to elevate myself to the rank of favorite composer of all women in Vienna." That comment wasn't meant to disparage women pianists (Clara Wieck was one of the finest pianists in the world) but rather to speak to the marketability of his music: Schumann was very aware of the growing number of young women who were amateur pianists, and, like Schubert before him, he was ready to write for this new market. **Arabeske**, composed in December 1838, was intended (at least in part) for it, but this lovely music shouldn't be seen as a relatively easy piece intended only for domestic consumption.

Schumann's use of the title *Arabeske* may seem open to question. An arabesque isn't a specific musical form but rather a composition full of florid atmosphere and decoration (as in Debussy's two *Arabesques*). Schumann's *Arabeske* is in a Classical form: It's a rondo based on a flowing, almost impulsive main subject,

which is heard immediately. Along the way, Schumann offers two contrasting episodes, both full of dark and expressive shading, and then rounds things off with a slow coda derived from the rondo tune.

In 1834, Schumann helped found the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, a journal that was dedicated to praising new music and attacking the conservative and entrenched musical opinions of the day. He soon became its editor, and he used his position to publish witty and insightful reviews. Because he and his fellow writers felt that they were doing battle with musical philistines, they referred to themselves as “the league of David” (*Davidsbünd* in German). Schumann loved games and hidden messages, and there were several in-jokes in his writing. One of them was Schumann’s invention of two editorial personalities that he believed represented the two sides of his own nature: Florestan was the hotheaded and impetuous side and Eusebius was the dreamer.

The same year he helped found the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Schumann began composing a set of short pieces that he grouped under the title *Davidsbündlertänze (Dances of the League of David)*, but he didn’t complete it until 1837. Schumann subtitled the work “Eighteen Character Pieces,” and he apparently intended the music to represent the varying responses of Florestan and Eusebius to the world of the philistines: at the end of each piece, he wrote the initial E or F to indicate which character had been speaking.

Schumann wrote *Davidsbündlertänze* during a time when he and Clara Wieck were struggling to get free of her repressive father and marry, and some of that struggle seems to have made its way into this music. To Clara, Schumann wrote: “In the Dances there are many marriage thoughts. They originated in the most joyful excitement that I can ever recall . . . . If ever I was happy at the piano, it was while composing these.” At the very end of the last piece, the pianist’s left hand strikes a deep C twelve consecutive times. Are these the strokes of midnight or an evocation of Clara’s name?

All of this said, it should be noted that one need not know any of it to enjoy this music. In fact, it may be better to not know it and to just take these 18 concise pieces as they come. As many have noted, they aren’t dances but rather brief works that strike a mood, evoke an atmosphere, and convey a young composer’s verve.

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## IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882–1971)

### *Three Movements from Pétrouchka (1921)*

In the early 1920s, Igor Stravinsky—one of the greatest orchestrators in history and creator of some of the finest music ever written for orchestra—began to write for solo piano. There were several reasons for this, including Stravinsky’s realization that, in the aftermath of World War I, orchestras that were able to play huge and complex scores were rare (and expensive), and he didn’t want to go on repeating himself by writing yet another opulent ballet. But the main thing that drew Stravinsky to writing for solo piano was that he was a pianist himself, and he could supplement his uncertain income as a composer by appearing before the public as both a creator and a performer.

While not a virtuoso pianist, Stravinsky was a capable one, and over a handful of years he wrote a series of works for piano that he introduced and then played on tour. The impetus for all this piano music may well have come from Arthur Rubinstein, who asked Stravinsky to prepare a version of the ballet *Pétrouchka* for solo piano. Rubinstein paid Stravinsky what the composer called “the generous sum of 5,000 francs” for this music, but Stravinsky made clear that his aim wasn’t to cash in on the popularity of his ballet. “My intention,” he said, “was to give virtuoso pianists a piece of a certain breadth that would permit them to enhance their modern repertory and demonstrate a brilliant technique.” Stravinsky also stressed that this work wasn’t a transcription for piano and that he wasn’t trying to make the piano sound like an orchestra. Rather, he was re-writing orchestral music specifically as piano music.

The ballet *Pétrouchka*, with its haunting story of a pathetic puppet brought to life during a Russian fair, has become so popular that it's easy to forget that this music had its beginning as a piano concerto of sorts. Stravinsky said: "I had in my mind a distinct picture of a puppet, suddenly endowed with life, exasperating the patience of the orchestra with diabolical cascades of arpeggi." As the story of the ballet took shape, that puppet became Pétrouchka, "the immortal and unhappy hero of every fair in all countries," but the piano itself receded into the background of the ballet. Perhaps it was only natural that Stravinsky should remember the ballet's origins when Rubinstein made his request for a piano version.

Stravinsky drew the piano score from three of the ballet's four tableaux. The opening movement, *Russian Dance*, comes from the end of the first tableau: An aged magician has just used his wand on his three puppets, including Pétrouchka, and now the three leap to life and dance joyfully. Much of this music was given to the piano in the original ballet score, and here this dance makes a brilliant opening movement.

The second movement, *Pétrouchka's Room*, is the ballet's second tableau, which introduces the hapless Pétrouchka trapped in his room and railing against fate. It also shows the entrance of the Ballerina puppet. The third movement, *The Shrovetide Fair*, incorporates most of the music from the ballet's final tableau, with its genre pictures of a St. Petersburg square at carnival time. Here, however, Stravinsky excises the end of the ballet (where Pétrouchka is murdered and the tale ends enigmatically) and replaces it with the more abrupt ending that he wrote for concert performances of the ballet suite.

**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.