

## Alina Ibragimova and Cédric Tiberghien Duo

Friday, March 31, 2017 at 8:00pm

Pre-concert conversation at 7:15pm

This is the 709th concert in Koerner Hall

Alina Ibragimova, violin

Cédric Tiberghien, piano

### PROGRAM

Johann Sebastian Bach: Violin Sonata No. 4 in C Minor, BWV 1017

- I. Siciliano: Largo
- II. Allegro
- III. Adagio
- IV. Allegro

Johannes Brahms: Violin Sonata No. 2 in A Major, Op. 100

- I. Allegro amabile
- II. Andante tranquillo
- III. Allegretto grazioso (quasi Andante)

### INTERMISSION

John Cage: Six Melodies

Robert Schumann: Violin Sonata No. 2 in D Minor, Op. 121

- I. Ziemlich langsam – Lebhaft
- II. Sehr lebhaft
- III. Leise, einfach
- IV. Bewegt

## Johann Sebastian Bach

Born in Eisenach, Germany, March 21, 1685; died in Leipzig, Germany, July 28, 1750

### Violin Sonata No. 4 in C Minor, BWV 1017 (before 1725, rev. 1740)

“He perfectly understood the possibilities of all the violin family,” Bach’s second surviving son, Carl Philip Emanuel, wrote of his father. He was admiring a collection of six ‘accompanied sonatas’ – sonatas for violin with a fully written-out part for keyboard – written more than 50 years earlier. This C Minor Violin Sonata is the fourth of the collection. Bach did much of the work early in his career while employed at the court of Cöthen, where he wrote a great deal of chamber music. He subsequently revised the collection at least twice. In the sonatas, Bach rethinks the conventions of the continuo accompaniment, fully writing out the keyboard part and doing away with the customary supporting cello. The C Minor Sonata falls into the traditional four-movement (slow-fast-slow-fast) structure of the church sonata, the sonata da chiesa. It opens with a gentle Siciliano which is darkly coloured and reminiscent of the poignant violin obbligato aria, “Erbarne dich, mein Gott,” from the *St. Matthew Passion*. The keyboard then introduces the subjects of both of the sonata’s intricately woven Allegro movements. In them, the texture is that of a trio sonata in which the upper parts are taken by violin and keyboard, right hand and the lower part by the keyboard, left hand. In the Adagio between the two quicker movements, the violin presents a solo dialogue of alternating forte and piano phrases over a constant flow of keyboard triplets.

## Johannes Brahms

Born in Hamburg, Germany, May 7, 1833; died in Vienna, Austria, April 3, 1897

### **Violin Sonata No. 2 in A Major, Op. 100 (1886)**

Brahms wrote his Second Violin Sonata in the summer of 1886 in the Swiss town of Hofstetten on Lake Thun, near Bern. The setting proved ideal. Renting the entire top floor of a farmhouse, at the edge of the river Aar, with a view of the alpine glaciers in the distance, Brahms produced three of his most successful chamber works – the A Major Violin Sonata, the F Major Cello Sonata, and the C Minor Piano Trio. His latest flirtation was with the North German contralto Hermine Spies, who was on vacation in Switzerland, and for whom Brahms was to write many of his late songs. Echoes of two of his best known songs (“Immer leiser” and “Wie Melodien”) and others written for her in Hofstetten are woven into the violin sonata. As his close and trusted friend, Elisabet von Herzogenberg, put it: “The entire sonata is a caress.” In performance, the caress may sound as spontaneous and as unbuttoned as Brahms ever becomes. But there is a rigorously disciplined mind behind the romantic glow. Listen, for instance, how the opening phrase reappears, inverted, as the melody of the second movement – and, again, how it can be clearly heard in the background, in the piano accompaniment to the violin’s new third movement theme. Similar intricacies abound and give the sonata an inner strength and structural balance. The second movement is something of a hybrid, alternating a slow-movement’s graceful hymn melody with a Scherzo-like, though still melancholy Slavonic-style dance, with its distinctive hiccup at the end. The finale will not be rushed and its emotional path is rich and complex.

## John Cage

Born in Los Angeles, California, September 5, 1912; died in New York, New York, August 12, 1992

### **Six Melodies (1950)**

Written shortly after American composer John Cage returned from an extended trip to Paris, the Six Melodies are brief, delicately drawn miniatures with just the merest suggestion of melody. Violin and piano are limited to a handful of sonorities, with the lean intervals of a fourth and fifth, second and seventh being prominent from the outset, for example. At the same time, the music works within a rhythmic durational structure, with each piece following the structure of 3 ½, 3 ½, 4, 4, 3, 4. Taking a cue from the gentle, understated music of Erik Satie, which he had been studying in Paris, Cage’s aphoristic music here has a hypnotic and enigmatic quality, unfolding moments of beauty and constantly shifting moods through incremental change. This was an atmosphere that Cage had recently explored in his String Quartet in Four Parts to which he described tonight’s violin and piano pieces as a ‘postscript.’ In both works, he asks for no vibrato from the string players, because, in the case of the earlier work, it “is associated with literature that moves toward climaxes, whereas this Quartet does not.” The same is true of the Six Melodies and, here, the violin is further instructed to play with minimum weight on the bow, thereby drawing the listener in to a reduced yet nevertheless inviting sound-world of great imagination.

## Robert Schumann

Born in Zwickau, Saxony, June 8, 1810; died in Endenich, nr. Bonn, Germany, July 29, 1856

### **Violin Sonata No. 2 in D Minor, Op. 121 (1851)**

After a successful first year as music director of the municipal choir and orchestra in Dusseldorf, Schumann’s arguments with officials and members at the beginning of the second foreshadowed the complete breakdown in relations that lay ahead. Nevertheless, at this difficult time, in the fall of 1851, the composer moved ahead with plans to form a private vocal group to explore Baroque and earlier choral music in weekly meetings and for a similar society of amateur instrumentalists for chamber music readings. Then his creative energies zeroed in on chamber music, producing two violin sonatas and the G Minor Piano Trio over a few weeks, from September through early November. Violinist Joseph Joachim informally read through the second of these sonatas, the D Minor Sonata to be played tonight, titled *Grosse Sonate* (Grand Sonata), with Clara Schumann and could not contain his enthusiasm in a letter to Brahms. “I consider it one of the finest compositions of our times in respect of its marvellous unity of feeling and its thematic significance,” he wrote. “It overflows with noble passion, almost harsh and bitter in expression, and the last movement reminds one of the sea with its glorious waves of sound.”

Imposing chords from both violin and piano which open the recitative-like introduction foreshadow the first movement's main theme (marked 'Lively') which soon follows. This is a terse, powerful theme which will uncoil like a spring over the course of a sizable movement. A second theme shares much of its urgency of mood and a syncopated section linking the themes soon evolves into a restless development section. As the tonality constantly shifts from minor to major and back, both piano and violin drive the music forward. A stormy scherzo maintains the intensity, often sounding more Brahms than Brahms himself, moderated momentarily by two brief lyrical trio sections. After the second of these, a sequence of fortissimo chords from both instruments anticipates the main theme of the slow movement which follows. This is a series of meditative reflections on the chorale melody *Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ*, turned into triple time, and bound inextricably to the previous movement with a recurring, pounding triplet figure. As in the opening movement, the two themes of the finale wrestle continuously with the minor-major conflict, seldom pausing for respite in the onward momentum of the music. Only with the heroic closing measures does the major key triumphantly ring through at the conclusion of an exceptionally virtuoso, compactly reasoned sonata of symphonic proportions – the most substantial of Schumann's three violin sonatas.

- Program notes © 2017 Keith Horner

## **Alina Ibragimova**

### **Violin**

Alina Ibragimova has established a reputation as one of the most accomplished and intriguing violinists of our time.

Recent and upcoming concerto engagements include debuts with the Boston Symphony, Montreal Symphony, Wiener Symphoniker, Camerata Salzburg, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Hungarian National Philharmonic, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and the Tokyo Symphony; returns with the London Symphony, BBC Symphony, and Chamber Orchestra of Europe; and residencies with the Strasbourg Philharmonic and at the Casa della Musica in Porto.

As a recitalist, she has appeared at venues including the Wigmore Hall, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Salzburg Mozarteum, Vienna's Musikverein, Carnegie Hall, Palais des Beaux Arts Brussels, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, San Francisco Performances, and the Salzburg, Verbier, Manchester, Lockenhaus, Lucerne, Mostly Mozart New York, and Aldeburgh festivals.

Her long-standing duo partnership with pianist Cédric Tiberghien has featured highly successful complete cycles of both the Beethoven violin sonatas and the Mozart sonatas for violin and keyboard at Wigmore Hall.

Born in Russia in 1985, Ms. Ibragimova studied at the Moscow Gnesin School before moving to the UK in 1995, where she studied at the Yehudi Menuhin School and Royal College of Music.

Alina Ibragimova has been the recipient of awards such as the Royal Philharmonic Society Young Artist Award 2010, the Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award 2008, the Classical BRIT Young Performer of the Year Award 2009, and was a member of the BBC New Generation Artists Scheme. She records for Hyperion Records and performs on a c.1775 Anselmo Bellosio violin kindly provided by Georg von Opel.

## **Cédric Tiberghien**

### **Piano**

Cédric Tiberghien's career spans five continents, taking him to some of the world's most prestigious concert halls.

Highlights of the current season include return projects with the Cleveland Orchestra, Hong Kong Sinfonietta, Auckland Philharmonia, Tasmania Symphony, BBC Scottish Symphony, and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestras. He is in residence with the Orchestre de Bretagne, where he directs the orchestra from the piano in concertos by Mozart as well as concerto performances by Saint-Saëns and Mendelssohn.

Mr. Tiberghien recently made his debut with the London Symphony Orchestra, and his recital debuts at the Vienna Konzerthaus and Kumho Art Hall in Seoul. This season he also looks forward to returning to London's Wigmore Hall, Flagey in Brussels, the Beethoven Haus Bonn, and Laeiszhalle in Hamburg.

During the 2015-16 season, he presented a major focus on the music of Bartók and his most recent recital disc released on Hyperion (April 2016) is the first in a three-volume exploration of Bartók's solo piano works. His discography also includes Szymanowski *Etudes and Masques*, César Franck's *Symphonic Variations* and *Les Djinns* with the Liege Philharmonic, Brahms's Concerto No.1 with the BBC Symphony and Jiří Bělohlávek, and six recital discs on Harmonia Mundi: Debussy, Beethoven Variations, Bach Partitas, Chopin and Brahms Ballades, Brahms

*Hungarian Dances*, and a recital of Chopin Mazurkas.

Cédric Tiberghien is also a dedicated chamber musician. With regular partner Alina Ibragimova, he has recorded Schubert (Hyperion), Ravel and Lekeu (Hyperion), Szymanowski (Hyperion), and the complete Beethoven violin sonatas (Wigmore Live).

*Both artists are making their Royal Conservatory debuts tonight.*

*Please join us for a postlude performance with **students from The Glenn Gould School** in the Leslie & Anna Dan Galleria.*