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Photo credit: Owen Zhou.

Master's Recital

Runze Li, piano

With:

Paige Scott, clarinet

Levi Spanarella, soprano

Matthew Huff, cello

7:30 p.m., Friday, November 7, 2025

Chamber Hall (S102)

PROGRAM

Sonata for Clarinet and Piano in E-flat Major, Op.120, No.2

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

- I. Allegro amabile
- II. Allegro appassionato
- III. Andante con moto – Allegro

Paige Scott, clarinet

Ariettes oubliées

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Poems by Paul Verlaine (1844-1896)

- I. C'est l'extase langoureuse
- II. Il pleure dans mon cœur
- III. L'ombre des arbres
- IV. Chevaux de bois
- V. Aquarelles I: Green
- VI. Aquarelles II: Spleen

Levi Spanarella, soprano

Intermission

Sonata for Cello and Piano No. 3 in A Major, Op. 69

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

- I. Allegro ma non tanto
- II. Scherzo. Allegro molto
- III. Adagio cantabile – Allegro vivace

Matthew Huff, cello

PROGRAM NOTES

Sonata for Clarinet and Piano in E-flat Major, Op.120, No.2

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Johannes Brahms was a German composer and pianist, a central figure of the Romantic era. He spent much of his professional life in Vienna, where he composed for orchestra, chamber ensembles, piano, and voice, leaving a lasting mark on the repertoire. Known for his mastery of counterpoint and classical forms, Brahms combined structural rigor with expressive warmth, creating music that is both disciplined and deeply human.

Late in his life, Brahms was close to retiring when he met the clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld. Struck by Mühlfeld's tone and musicality, he returned to composing, producing a small set of works featuring the clarinet, including the *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano, Op.120. No.2* (1894). The sonata is in four movements: it begins with *Allegro amabile*, full of graceful, singing lines; the second movement, *Allegro appassionato*, is passionate but controlled, with a sustained, lyrical middle section; the third movement, *Andante con moto – Allegro* presents a series of tender variations; and the finale closes with a

light, lively character. Throughout, the clarinet's warm, vocal tone is matched by a piano part of substantial depth, resulting in music that is balanced, intimate, and quietly expressive, typical of Brahms's late chamber style.

Ariettes oubliées (1885-87)

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Claude Debussy (1862–1918) was a French composer, born in Saint-Germain-en-Laye and became one of the most influential composers of the early twentieth century. Trained at the Conservatoire de Paris, he developed a distinctive musical language shaped by Symbolist poetry and Impressionist art, favoring color, nuance, and fluid rhythms over traditional structures.

Among his early works, *Ariettes oubliées* (Forgotten Songs), composed mainly in Rome and Paris between 1886 and 1887 and published in 1903, is a key song cycle for voice and piano set to Paul Verlaine's poetry. Dedicated to the singer Mary Garden, the cycle demonstrates Debussy's careful attention to matching words and music, bringing Verlaine's poems back into focus. The six songs reveal Debussy's move toward subtle tone colors and speech-like vocal lines, creating music of delicate fluidity. Each song has its own character: the languid *C'est l'extase langoureuse*, the quiet melancholy of *Il pleure dans mon cœur*, the reflective *L'ombre des arbres*, the lively carousel of *Chevaux de bois*, and the intimate lyricism of *Green and Spleen*. *Ariettes oubliées* not only showcases Debussy's early style for voice and piano but also laid the foundation for his later vocal works.

Sonata for Cello and Piano No. 3 in A Major, Op. 69

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) was born in Bonn and became a pivotal figure in the transition from the Classical to the Romantic era. After early study with Christian Gottlob Neefe, he settled in Vienna in 1792, where his career as a virtuoso pianist and ambitious composer unfolded; Among his chamber music, five cello sonatas stand out for their balanced dialogue between cello and piano.

Sonata for Cello and Piano in A Major, Op. 69, No. 3, composed in 1808 during Beethoven's middle "Heroic" period, exemplifies this approach. Dedicated to his friend and amateur cellist Ignaz von Gleichenstein, it was first performed by Nikolaus Kraft and Dorothea von Ertmann. In three movements, the sonata opens with a lyrical *Allegro ma non tanto*, beginning with a soft cello line that gradually unfolds into a spirited conversation with the piano. The central movement is *Scherzo: Allegro molto* in A minor, contrasting rhythmic drive with a more relaxed trio. The finale opens with a broad, lyrical introduction and leads into a joyful, energetic conclusion. Throughout the work, Beethoven blends technical skill with melodic expression, allowing the cello and piano to interact in a balanced and expressive way. Op. 69 has remained a central and frequently performed piece in the cello repertoire.

TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

Ariettes oubliées

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Paul Verlaine (1844-1896)

English translation: Richard Stokes

C'est l'extase langoureuse

C'est l'extase langoureuse,
C'est la fatigue amoureuse,
C'est tous les frissons des bois
Parmi l'étreinte des brises,
C'est, vers les ramures grises,
Le chœur des petites voix.

Ô le frêle et frais murmure!
Cela gazouille et susurre,
Cela ressemble au cri doux
Que l'herbe agitée expire ...
Tu dirais, sous l'eau qui vire,
Le roulis sourd des cailloux.

Cette âme qui se lamente
En cette plainte dormante
C'est la nôtre, n'est-ce pas?
La mienne, dis, et la tienne,
Dont s'exhale l'humble antienne
Par ce tiède soir, tout bas?

It is languorous rapture

It is languorous rapture,
It is amorous fatigue,
It is all the tremors of the forest
In the breezes' embrace,
It is, around the grey branches,
The choir of tiny voices.

O the delicate, fresh murmuring!
The warbling and whispering,
It is like the soft cry
The ruffled grass gives out ...
You might take it for the muffled sound
Of pebbles in the swirling stream.

This soul which grieves
In this subdued lament,
It is ours, is it not?
Mine, and yours too,
Breathing out our humble hymn
On this warm evening, soft and low?

Il pleure dans mon cœur

Il pleure dans mon cœur
Comme il pleut sur la ville;
Quelle est cette langueur
Qui pénètre mon cœur?

Ô bruit doux de la pluie
Par terre et sur les toits!
Pour un cœur qui s'ennuie
Ô le bruit de la pluie!
Il pleure sans raison
Dans ce cœur qui s'écoëure.
Quoi! nulle trahison? ...
Ce deuil est sans raison.

C'est bien la pire peine
De ne savoir pourquoi
Sans amour et sans haine,
Mon cœur a tant de peine.

Tears fall in my heart

Tears fall in my heart
As rain falls on the town;
What is this torpor
Pervading my heart?

Ah, the soft sound of rain
On the ground and roofs!
For a listless heart,
Ah, the sound of the rain!

Tears fall without reason
In this disheartened heart.
What! Was there no treason? ...
This grief's without reason.

And the worst pain of all
Must be not to know why
Without love and without hate
My heart feels such pain.

L'ombre des arbres

L'ombre des arbres dans la rivière embrumée
Meurt comme de la fumée
Tandis qu'en l'air, parmi les ramures réelles,
Se plaignent les tourterelles.

Combien, ô voyageur, ce paysage blême
Te mira blême toi-même,
Et que tristes pleuraient dans les hautes feuillées
Tes espérances noyées!

The shadow of trees

The shadow of trees in the misty stream
Dies like smoke,
While up above, in the real branches,
The turtle-doves lament.

How this faded landscape, O traveller,
Watched you yourself fade,
And how sadly in the lofty leaves
Your drowned hopes were weeping!

Chevaux de bois

Tournez, tournez, bons chevaux de bois,
Tournez cent tours, tournez mille tours,
Tournez souvent et tournez toujours,
Tournez, tournez au son des hautbois.

L'enfant tout rouge et la mère blanche,
Le gars en noir et la fille en rose,
L'une à la chose et l'autre à la pose,
Chacun se paie un sou de dimanche.

Tournez, tournez, chevaux de leur cœur,
Tandis qu'autour de tous vos tournois
Clignote l'œil du filou sournois,
Tournez au son du piston vainqueur!

C'est étonnant comme ça vous soûle
D'aller ainsi dans ce cirque bête:
Rien dans le ventre et mal dans la tête,
Du mal en masse et du bien en foule.

Tournez, dadas, sans qu'il soit besoin
D'user jamais de nuls éperons
Pour commander à vos galops ronds:
Tournez, tournez, sans espoir de foin.

Et dépêchez, chevaux de leur âme,
Déjà voici que sonne à la soupe
La nuit qui tombe et chasse la troupe
De gais buveurs que leur soif affame.

Tournez, tournez! Le ciel en velours
D'astres en or se vêt lentement.
L'église tinte un glas tristement.
Tournez au son joyeux des tambours!

Merry-go-round

Turn, turn, you fine wooden horses,
Turn a hundred, turn a thousand times,
Turn often and turn for evermore
Turn and turn to the oboe's sound.

The red-faced child and the pale mother,
The lad in black and the girl in pink,
One down-to-earth, the other showing off,
Each buying a treat with his Sunday sou.

Turn, turn, horses of their hearts,
While the furtive pickpocket's eye is flashing
As you whirl about and whirl around,
Turn to the sound of the conquering cornet!

Astonishing how drunk it makes you,
Riding like this in this foolish fair:
With an empty stomach and an aching head,
Discomfort in plenty and masses of fun!

Gee-gees, turn, you'll never need
The help of any spur
To make your horses gallop round:
Turn, turn, without hope of hay.
And hurry on, horses of their souls:

Nightfall already calls them to supper
And disperses the crowd of happy revellers,
Ravenous with thirst.

Turn, turn! The velvet sky
Is slowly decked with golden stars.
The church bell tolls a mournful knell—
Turn to the joyful sound of drums!

Green

Voici des fruits, des fleurs, des feuilles et des branches
Et puis voici mon cœur qui ne bat que pour vous.
Ne le déchirez pas avec vos deux mains blanches
Et qu'à vos yeux si beaux l'humble présent soit doux.

J'arrive tout couvert encore de rosée
Que le vent du matin vient glacer à mon front.
Souffrez que ma fatigue à vos pieds reposée
Rêve des chers instants qui la délasseront.

Sur votre jeune sein laissez rouler ma tête
Toute sonore encore de vos derniers baisers;
Laissez-la s'apaiser de la bonne tempête,
Et que je dorme un peu puisque vous reposez.

Green

Here are flowers, branches, fruit, and fronds,
And here too is my heart that beats just for you.
Do not tear it with your two white hands
And may the humble gift please your lovely eyes.

I come all covered still with the dew
Frozen to my brow by the morning breeze.
Let my fatigue, finding rest at your feet,
Dream of dear moments that will soothe it.
On your young breast let me cradle my head
Still ringing with your recent kisses;
After love's sweet tumult grant it peace,
And let me sleep a while, since you rest.

Spleen

Les roses étaient toutes rouges
Et les lierres étaient tout noirs.

Chère, pour peu que tu te bouges,
Renaissent tous mes désespoirs.

Le ciel était trop bleu, trop tendre,
La mer trop verte et l'air trop doux.

Je crains toujours,—ce qu'est d'attendre! —
Quelque fuite atroce de vous.

Du houx à la feuille vernie
Et du luisant buis je suis las,

Et de la campagne infinie
Et de tout, fors de vous, hélas!

Spleen

All the roses were red
And the ivy was all black.

Dear, at your slightest move,
All my despair revives.

The sky was too blue, too tender,
The sea too green, the air too mild.

I always fear—oh to wait and wonder! —
One of your agonizing departures.

I am weary of the glossy holly,
Of the gleaming box-tree too,

And the boundless countryside
And everything, alas, but you!

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