

The String Project is a flagship program that provides affordable, carefully-structured lessons in violin and cello for elementary school children, taught by the dedicated and talented School of Music undergraduate and graduate teacher trainees. Our mission is to:

- Create a partnership by providing accessible string education and mentorship for the community and teaching experience for School of Music students who may be pursuing a career in string education
- Provide our participants with an opportunity for musical enjoyment and education through the study of stringed instruments
- Encourage the personal development of our participants by providing them with an outlet for self-expression in a structured environment
- Encourage student leadership in our participants' school music programs
- Share our accomplishments within the community, acting as a supplement to the current string programs in the school systems, or as a substitute string program for children who do not have access to a program

Donations to the String Project may be made in the lobby this evening or online:



Thank you for your support!

String Project Benefit Concert

SATURDAY, 7:00 P.M.
APRIL 23, 2022

CAPISTRANO CONCERT HALL

Nocturne Lili Boulanger
(1893-1918)
Anna Presler, violin; Karen Rosnak, piano

Vocalise André Previn
(b. 1929)
Julie Miller, soprano; Timothy Stanley, cello
Kirsten Smith, piano

Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 J.S. Bach (arr. by Richard Meyer)
(1685-1750)

Song of the Wind Shinichi Suzuki
(1898-1998)

Go Tell Aunt Rhody traditional

Bloozy-Woozy Frank M. Rogers

Children from the Sacramento State String Project

Xiaoxue Feng, Madelynn Her, Ann Lu, Manuel Navarrete, Prabhat
Tanikella, Vitalina Tomchuk, Natalie Tran, and Christina Zhao, violins
Amanda Tran, cello
Hector Morales, leader/cello

Selections from *44 Duos for Two Violins*, B.B. 104 Béla Bartók
(1881-1945)
Anna Presler and Chase Spruill, IV, violins

Sonata for cello and piano George Walker
(1922-2018)

- I. Allegro passionato
- II. Sostenuto
- III. Allegro

Timothy Stanley, cello; Kirsten Smith, piano

piano pedagogy. In demand as a lecturer, adjudicator and columnist, Ms. Smith was awarded a prestigious Pedagogy Enhancement Award at CSUS. Raised in a musical family, she began formal lessons with her mother at age four and began teaching piano by age thirteen. Ms. Smith resides in Sacramento, where she divides her time between university teaching, performing, and a thriving private studio.

Chase Spruill has gained an international reputation as a soloist and recording artist promoting contemporary classical music. He is more widely known for his collaborations with minimalist masters such as composers Philip Glass and Michael Nyman. BBC Music Magazine has called Spruill, "...an engaging and convincing advocate... who plays with great spirit... and a great sense of presence..." His most recent album A COMMON TIME released in January 2022 and is a collaboration with Philip Glass, exploring themes about grief and solace through new music for solo violin. The French Classical Magazine DIAPASON hailed the album as having, "...a poignant intensity..." while Composer Magazine raved, "...the whole album is a wonderful listening experience." He is an alumnus of Sacramento State University where he studied with violinist Anna Presler and is a State Credentialed educator currently directing the music program at Sierra Vista K-8 in his hometown of Vacaville, CA.

Cellist **Timothy Stanley** has performed and taught in Sacramento since 2004. He performs seasonally with orchestras, chamber ensembles, choirs, opera companies, and baroque ensembles throughout Northern California. He is a founding member of Sinfonia Spirituosa Baroque Chamber Orchestra and Citywater New Music Ensemble. On faculty at Sacramento State University School of Music, he is the co-director of the Festival of New American Music and Master Teacher with the Sacramento State String Project, a service-learning initiative that provides very low-cost strings education to Sacramento area children and teaching experience to music majors within the School of Music. He is an avid backpacker, triathlete, ultra-marathoner, and open water swimmer.

Anna Presler, a longtime member of Left Coast Chamber Ensemble and its artistic director, teaches violin and chamber music at the School of Music at Sacramento State. Recent projects include a recording of Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* and Kurt Rohde's *one wing* on the Avie label, garden concerts featuring Bach's Chaconne, and adaptive online concerts for the pandemic. She has recently performed as resident artist at the Red Note and Wunsch New Music Festivals, and at Virginia Tech, and has appeared at the Valley of the Moon Music Festival in performances of works by Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Mozart, and Chausson. She was a member of New Century Chamber Orchestra for two decades, and has been a fellow at the Banff Art Center, the International Music Seminar at Cornwall, and Tanglewood Music Center. She holds degrees from North Carolina School of the Arts, Yale, and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

Pianist **Karen Rosenak** is a recent émigré to Sacramento from the Bay Area where she enjoyed a long and richly varied career as a performing musician and full-time faculty member at UC Berkeley. Her professional engagements have included performances with the Berkeley Early Music Festival, San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, the New Esterhazy Quartet, and many seasons and premieres with Earplay and Empyrean (new music ensembles based in San Francisco, and University of California at Davis, respectively), both of which she was a founding member. At present, she happily divides her time between increasing involvement in the music life of Sacramento and Davis, and a recent and ongoing embrace of the Hudson Valley in New York, where her very, very young granddaughters reside.

A passion for learning led American pianist **Kirsten Smith** to begin part-time studies at Arizona State University at the age of thirteen, studying sociobiology, history, mathematics and foreign languages. She completed her undergraduate and graduate degrees in piano performance there, studying with pianist Steven De Groote, Gold Medalist of the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. A winner of multiple competitions herself, Ms. Smith has been the recipient of awards, scholarships and invitations to music festivals including the Aspen Music Festival, Interlochen Center for the Arts and the Van Cliburn Institute. She has been chosen to premiere numerous new works from contemporary composers and has recorded several times for the Centaur label. In addition to the solo repertoire, Ms. Smith is devoted to the performance of collaborative works, and is a passionate teacher who believes deeply in the importance of discovering and sharing musical knowledge. Ms. Smith has been on the faculty of Sacramento State University since 1996, where she teaches piano, music theory, aural skills, collaborative piano and

Born into a very musical family, French composer Lili Boulanger (1893-1918) was a prodigy displaying perfect pitch as early as two years old. She attended music school right away as a child alongside her sister Nadia, and studied organ and composition with famous French organist Louis Vierne. Battling poor health all her life, she moved through her studies rapidly and learned piano, violin, cello and harp. She was accepted into the Paris Conservatoire in 1912 (one year after composing the *Nocturne*) but sadly would only live a few more years before succumbing to Crohn's Disease in 1918. Her very famous sister taught composition to both Lili and featured composer on this program George Walker as well as many notable composers of the 20th century, and often referred to Lili as the "real talent" of the family.

Nocturne was composed in 1911. It was inspired simply by nighttime. Some speculate the subtle air of grief in this piece is a remnant of her father's untimely death when Lili was six. As this short piece unfolds, we hear richness from the violin and a sparing piano accompaniment move into more intensity and dynamically soaring violin with the piano becoming more turbulent alongside. It is a short work full of heartfelt complexity that finishes with a quiet fading away.

Some works seem to have been wrung out from inspiration over months or years, and others like Andre Previn's *Vocalise* for soprano, piano, and cello were written over the course of a day. Andre Previn's varied career took him to Tanglewood (the Summer home of the Boston Symphony) during the storied decades when Seiji Ozawa was artistic director. There, an opportunity arose to record a piece with famous soprano Sylvia MacNair and famous cellist Yo-yo Ma. Previn reportedly wrote the piece on July 18, 1995 and the three of them (the composer at the piano) performed it the following morning in what is now Ozawa Hall.

Described as "deeply affecting," this piece's simplicity of undulating melodic lines and remarkably lean accompaniment make every note feel emotionally charged and important.

This arrangement of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 is from a method book for class strings titles "String Explorer." This book is the primary way we at String Project work on note reading and additional technical development

Song of the Wind and *Go Tell Aunt Rhody* are two short songs which are a part of the traditional Suzuki repertoire. String Project uses a modified version of the method. These two pieces are used very early in the young string

players' learning to broaden the use of the bow to its very tip from shorter, more easily controlled strokes.

Bloosy Woosy is one of our favorite pieces to learn and play. We love the fun shuffle bowing used by the violins and the juicy cello part that outlines a walking bass line in the second part.

It is especially appropriate to perform some of Bartok's wonderful duos on tonight's recital. Composed in 1931, they were initially meant as pedagogy pieces. Based on folk songs, or material Bartok decided was folk song-like, they've since delighted audiences in any setting from salon to concert hall. As short, quirky pieces with all manner of tricky compositional techniques to play, Bartok broke the set into four books of increasing difficulty and nuance, and liked them well enough to arrange some of them for the piano under the title "Petit Suite." We will first enjoy hearing the String Project children playing their folks songs, and then we can savor the performance of Sacramento State violin professor Anna Pressler and her former pupil, Chase Spruill perform together as teacher/performer colleagues; every teacher's dream come true.

Composer and pianist George Theophilus Walker has had articles written about him titled, "The Great American Composer You've Never Heard Of." (*The Guardian*), and "Trailblazing" (*NPR*). His output over a career spanning eight decades includes 90 published works, six honorary doctorates, numerous awards, and a Pulitzer Prize in Music in 1996. His *Sonata* for cello and piano being performed tonight is an earlier work from 1957, two years after his completion of his doctorate from the Eastman School in Boston. He was the first African American to receive that degree as well as the first to graduate from the Curtis Institute and Oberlin School. The *Sonata* is described by cellist Seth Parker Woods as "undoubtedly challenging," and Kirsten Smith and I have found it to reveal layer after layer of compositional genius. The writing is consistently engaging, and Walker's use of the instruments in tandem and on their own is always carefully considered. It shows a true understanding of the capacities of this pairing. It is to be hoped that more and more cellists take up this sonata, a piece of rich rewards for performer and audience alike.

The first movement has three main segments. First, a rousing "Allegro passionata" opens the piece with an immediately soaring cello melody over a rolling ostinato from the piano. The second segment cuts the tempo more than in half and presents first a beautiful and intricately strange harmonic voicing followed by an abrupt and heated musical "dialogue" between the

two instruments. A moment of quiet reconciliation flows into the third section and our third tempo. Each of these sections then returns in its own time and we end with a soft and beautiful sonority.

The second movement is simply marked "sostenuto." But it is assuredly the emotional center of the whole sonata. Walker deftly writes a melody made up of slower longer note values separated at times by very wide intervals, often deliberately obscuring where in the measure they lay. The piano carefully places chords that provide the single cello notes expressive and harmonic context. In the center section, listen for a surprising gentle but insistent canon at the quarter note. We then return to the opening idea again with a sense that an equilibrium has been briefly achieved.

The last movement plays with time and rhythm the most. Although strictly speaking in only one tempo, the material goes through some very disparate uses of meter to shift the groove like quicksand around the players and listeners alike. All meters get used here and there, but the main sections tend to be in 9, broken into a 3+4+2 feel. After exploring each of his main motives a few times, Walker gives us a rollicking presto coda and finishes with a quick three-part counterpoint.

Hailed for the "arresting color" (*Cincinnati Enquirer*) of her voice, **Julie Miller** has appeared as a soloist with orchestras and opera companies throughout the U.S.A. As a member of the Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center at Lyric Opera of Chicago she appeared on the stage of the Lyric Opera of Chicago as Emilia in *Otello*, Annina (*La Traviata*), Ida (*Die Fledermaus*) and Krysna (*The Passenger*). Other notable assignments with the company include Baroness Nica in Charlie Parker's *Yardbird* plus understudies of Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier* and Waltraute in *Die Walküre*. She recently performed the title role in Handel's *Ariodante* which *Chicago Classical Review* described as an "admirable and professional performance" and the *Chicago Tribune* called "deeply musical."

Ms. Miller is the recipient of the Jerome and Elaine Nerenberg Foundation Scholarship and the Rose McGilvray Grundman Award (American Opera Society of Chicago), the Richard F. Gold Career Grant (Shoshana Foundation) the Edith Newfield Scholarship Award (Musicians Club of Women). She earned her Master's Degree as a member of the inaugural class of Dawn Upshaw Graduate Program in Vocal Arts at the Bard College Conservatory of Music. She also participated in the Georg Sol Accademia Bel Canto in Castiglione della Pescaia, Tuscany.