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presents

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Circadian String Quartet

Monika Gruber & David Ryther, *violins*
Omid Assadi, *viola*; David Wishnia, *cello*

Friday, February 4, 2022 at 8 PM

Old First Church

1751 Sacramento St. at Van Ness Ave.

San Francisco, CA 94109

(415) 474-1608 www.oldfirstconcerts.org

Old First Concerts' piano is a New York Steinway D model, circa 1980, with Hamburg action. It was donated by The Stanley Ibler Fund, and is maintained by David Love Piano Service and Restoration.

ABOUT OLD FIRST CONCERTS

- Great venue for music with beautiful acoustics and amazing Steinway concert grand piano.
- Primarily local emerging and mid-career professional musicians presenting innovative programs.
- Every concert offers new insights and virtuosic performances.
- Complimentary refreshments served at intermission or after the concert.
- An independent 501(c)3 non-profit organization devoted to presenting music at affordable prices, especially for low-income seniors and students.
- Solo, chamber music, and world music concerts year-round since 1970.

DONATING TO OLD FIRST CONCERTS

Ticket sales provide about 38 percent of our operating revenue each year. In addition, we rely on support from private foundations and Grants for the Arts from the city of San Francisco. Our generous individual donors complete the picture. We invite you to join us in our mission to connect audiences and local musicians and build up the classical music and world music scene in San Francisco. Donations are tax-deductible and donating on our website is easy and secure: www.oldfirstconcerts.org/give/, or checks can be mailed to: Old First Concerts, 1751 Sacramento Street, San Francisco, CA 94109. Thank you!

COVID-19 RESPONSE: RETURNING TO THE MUSIC

Old First Concerts is committed to the health and safety of our audiences, performers and staff. We look forward to having all audiences back in our space when it is safe to do so. In the meantime, we are happy to be able to continue presenting artists of the highest caliber to our audience in the Bay Area—and beyond—via livestreamed events. We are following city guidelines and safety protocols to help ensure the safest possible environment for our performers and staff.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Following us on **Facebook** is a great way to keep informed about the latest concert information. While you are there, don't forget to **share** events with your friends and hit the "Like" button liberally. [facebook.com/oldfirstconcerts/](https://www.facebook.com/oldfirstconcerts/)

You can also find us on **Instagram @oldfirstconcerts** with information about upcoming events plus photos and videos from our concerts.

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COMING UP AT OLD FIRST CONCERTS

Sunday, March 27 at 4 pm

Junior Bach Festival

An all-J. S. Bach concert showcasing some of the most talented young musicians in Northern California. Hear J. S. Bach's music played with great skill and youthful exuberance!

Friday, April 8 at 8 pm

Laure de Marcellus, *mezzo soprano*; **Alberto Urroz**, *piano*

Seldom-heard music of Pauline Viardot and her admirers—including Fauré, Gounod, Chapí, and Saint-Saëns.

Sunday, April 10 at 4 pm

Motoko Honda—*The Emergent Piano*

With stylistic influences ranging from jazz to Indonesian music and contemporary prepared & electrified piano, Honda is a musical force of nature, bringing a unique creative sound to her solo works and wide-ranging collaborations.

Friday, April 22 at 8 pm

Miles Graber, *piano*; **Mary Artmann**, *cello*; **Kate Stenberg**, *violin*

The piano trios of Maurice Ravel, Rebecca Clarke and Dmitri Shostakovich were composed within a ten-years of WWI and express emotional currents reflecting this transformative time.

For tickets & more information visit www.oldfirstconcerts.org

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PROGRAM

J. S. Bach (1685–1750)

Erbarne dich, mein Gott from *St. Mathew Passion*

Fanny Mendelssohn (1805–1847)

String Quartet in E-flat major

Adagio ma non troppo

Allegretto

Romanze

Allegro molto

Intermission

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

String Quartet No. 6 in F minor, Op. 80

Allegro vivace assai

Allegro assai

Adagio

Finale: Allegro molto

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Circadian String Quartet tells the story of older sister Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel and her younger brother Felix Mendelssohn by presenting two masterworks for string quartet-Fanny Mendelssohn-Hensel's dramatic String Quartet in E flat major and Felix Mendelssohn's String Quartet in F minor Op. 80. Fanny and Felix were both prodigiously talented musicians but were unequally supported and encouraged in their talents due to the prevalent sexism of the time to the point that many of Fanny's compositions were errantly attributed to Felix. That this sexist treatment did not dampen their affection and respect for one another is born out by the fact that Op. 80 was composed by Felix as a loving "requiem for Fanny." It turned out to be Felix's last composition. Celebrate with us the enduring musicality and strong bond of this famous sister and brother-Fanny and Felix.

ABOUT THE MUSICIANS

Circadian String Quartet was born in 2013 during some of the more hopeful months of the Arab Spring. Ideas and culture were colliding in unexpected ways. What if a musical concert could express the collision of culture, politics and ideas? The Four of us set out to explore this question and picked a name that evoked the circular rhythms of the day as well a mythical name that might be of Mesopotamian origin.

We chose repertoire based on what kind of story we wanted our concert to tell. When we were looking to tell the story of the relationship of Claude Debussy and Igor Stravinsky we did something bold. We knew that they had met at a dinner party and sat down together and played Stravinsky's as yet unfinished score of *The Rite of Spring* and the meeting enriched both of their artistic lives. Given this, we knew that

COMING UP AT OLD FIRST CONCERTS

Sunday, February 6 at 4 pm

Sierra Ensemble: Matthew Vincent, violin; Janis Lieberman, horn; Marc Steiner, piano

Sierra Ensemble performs the premieres of two genre-expanding new works for horn, violin and piano: the World Premiere of Richard Aldag's *Trio for Violin, French horn, and Piano* and works by Charles Koechlin, Lennox Berkeley, and Johannes Brahms.

Saturday, March 12 at 7 pm

3rd Annual Pacific Pythagorean Music Festival: *Modes of Change*

featuring Del Sol String Quartet, Ken Ueno, Viola Yip, Hafez Modirzadeh, and Keshav Batish

A festival celebrating the experimental innovators and traditional masters of pure-ratio harmonies, highlighting Persian scales with the World Premiere of Reza Vali's newest string quartet, plus a World Premiere of Madeline Ashman's *Gravitation*.

Sunday, March 13 at 4 pm

Hadley McCarroll, piano – *Pancultural!*

McCarroll's new program embraces the different musical traditions found across our globe, spanning America, Germany, the Czech Republic, and India, including the West Coast Premiere of B.P. Herrington's *How Come That Blood – seven variations and a canonic rhapsody on a local band*.

Friday, March 18 at 8 pm

Friction Quartet – Doug Machiz, cello; Otis Harriel, violin;

Kevin Rogers, violin; Rachyl Martinez, viola

with Melinda Martinez Becker, mezzo soprano

Friction Quartet are joined by soprano Melinda Martinez Becker in a program featuring lieder by Clara Schumann and Fanny Mendelssohn's *String Quartet in E-flat major*.

For tickets & more information visit www.oldfirstconcerts.org

Native of Iran, **Omid Assadi**, *viola*, holds a B.M. and M.M. from San Francisco Conservatory of Music where he studied with Jodie Levitz and Bettina Mussumeli. Mr. Assadi is an active ensemble player and soloist; he has concertized with many of the Bay Area's orchestras and has appeared numerous times as soloist with Golden Gate Philharmonic, City College of San Francisco String Orchestra, Kensington Symphony Orchestra, and Villa Sinfonia. Omid's love for chamber music has led him to study chamber music with the members of the Kronos String Quartet as well as the San Francisco Conservatory of Music faculty members. In addition, he has collaborated with Jennifer Culp, Jodi Levitz, Jorja Fleezanis, and with the Shams Ensemble.

An active chamber musician, **David Wishnia**, *cello*, routinely concertizes with both the Circadian String Quartet and the Villa Piano Trio, and has taught at the Zephyr Point Chamber Music Camp and Sequoia Chamber Music Workshop. David has also appeared as a soloist with the Contra Costa Chamber Orchestra and Villa Sinfonia. He is currently a member of the Marin Symphony, and has performed in numerous Bay Area ensembles, including the Berkeley Symphony, Modesto Symphony, Sacramento Symphony, Russian Chamber Orchestra, and Marin Oratorio, among others. David received his Master of Music degree from the Yale School of Music, where he studied with Aldo Parisot. He also studied with Jerome Carrington and Maurice Gendron, and received coaching from Paul Tortelier, Janos Starker, and Pierre Pasquier.

come hell or high water we were going to create our own version of *The Rite of Spring* and pair it with Debussy's *String Quartet*. That's the kind of Quartet we are, we will go to great lengths to realize a good idea. This good idea became our Stravinsky Project, a concert series and dance collaboration focusing on the early ballets of Stravinsky including *The Rite of Spring*, *Firebird*, and *Petroushka*. Our premieres of our original transcriptions of the Rite of Spring and Firebird were premiered to critical acclaim in 2017 and 2019.

We gravitate toward bold original ideas that break boundaries or reach across cultures, that is why we love working with composers. CSQ is proud to have given world and U.S. premieres of exciting new pieces of chamber music written by Sahba Aminikia, Ben Carson, Toronto-based Noam Lemish, and British composer Ian Venables. We first performed Sahba Aminikia's *One Day Tehran* live on air on KPFA's radio show *Music of the World* with Joanna Manqueros in 2015. Then in 2016 we commissioned Aminikia to write a new piece for string quartet and narrator. The result, a glowing kaleidoscopic mixture of text by Allan Ginsburg and Hafez called *The Weight of the World* was premiered in 2017 at the Piedmont Arts Center and exemplifies what we are about.

The narrator for this piece, the historian and storyteller Nicolaus Holmann helped us tell the story of the events surrounding World War Two. We set his stories and poems to music and our *Chiaroscuro* project was born. Chiaroscuro is a technique in Renaissance oil painting using contrasts of light and darkness to show depth of perspective. For us *Chiaroscuro* became a short musical piece or interlude composed or improvised by us, using light and dark to color and shade the larger works on our program. *Chiaroscuros* are now a regular part of all our concerts and help us create a narrative arc and

through line for our concerts. Some of our recent projects include our collaboration with world class santour player Hamid Taghavi, and the premiere of *Eurydice's Defiance*, David Ryther's new Opera written especially for Kitka soprano Lily Storm. These projects highlight the breadth of our repertoire as we continue to expand the string quartet's possibilities.

Praised by critics for her "irresistibly melting tone, which she can also imbue with gripping fire", **Monika Gruber** is a versatile violinist, appearing in concerts throughout the United States and Europe. As violinist of the Eusebius Duo she was invited to perform in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, following the duo's success as first prize winners of the CMFONE International Chamber Music Competition. Throughout her years of study she was the recipient of numerous scholarships and awards, notably the Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship, which enabled her to continue her studies in the US.

Monika received her training at Hochschule für Musik in Weimar, Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Lyon, and at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where she studied with Ian Swensen. She is equally active as chamber and orchestra musician, performing lots of modern music in addition to the classical and romantic repertoire, as well as some branching out into baroque music. She has worked in public master classes with musicians such as Norbert Brainin (Amadeusquartett), Samuel Rhodes (Juilliard Quartet), Menahem Pressler (Beaux Arts Trio), and Petra Müllejjans (Freiburger Barockorchester).

Always eager to share her passion for music in many ways, Monika was a teaching assistant in Weimar while receiving her Teaching Degree, and she continued to teach, instill, and

foster the love of music in people of all ages ever since. Upon completion of her Masters Degree in San Francisco she was offered a position as violin instructor at SFCM's Pre-College Division, where she is now also coaching chamber music. Her students are doing well in competitions, and they got accepted into the San Francisco Youth Orchestra as well as into colleges, such as Rice University Shepherd School of Music, Cleveland Institute of Music, Vanderbilt University Blair School of Music, and UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music.

David Ryther, *violin*, has brought his interpretive powers as a soloist to such festivals as the Darmstadt Summer Festival of New Music, the Banff Center, and the Green Umbrella Series at the Bing theater in Los Angeles. He has been featured playing new music with adventurous ensembles sfSoundGroup, Earplay, San Francisco Contemporary Players, the Berkeley New Music Ensemble, Sonor, and Octagon. An active violinist, he can be found playing in many of the orchestras and ensembles in the Bay Area including the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra. David graduated with highest honors in music from UC Santa Cruz and recently received his doctorate in contemporary violin performance from UC San Diego. A dedicated teacher and conductor, David is a teacher and assistant conductor with Villa Sinfonia in San Francisco, teaches violin at the Crowden School, and has served as coach and interim conductor with the Berkeley Youth Orchestra. As a composer, David has had world premieres played by the Villa Sinfonia, an orchestra piece called *Friend* commissioned by the Croi Glan dance troupe in Cork, Ireland, and has worked in residency with Kate Weare company in New York and Dandelion Dance Theater in the San Francisco Bay Area.