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Sunday, January 29, 2023 at 7 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.

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- 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.
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- Solo, chamber music, and world music concerts year-round since 1970.

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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:

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Friday, February 3 at 8 pm

Greek Chamber Music Project—*Uproot: Music for Asia Minor*

Katerina Clambaneva, vocals; Ellie Falaris Ganelin, flute; Lewis Patzner, cello; Elektra Schmidt, piano

Remembering the 1923 Population Exchange, which uprooted 1.6 million people across Asia Minor and is considered an act of ethnic cleansing, through songs and stories to generate a universal dialogue about the impact of forced migration and building a bridge to the experiences of modern-day refugees.

Sunday, February 5 at 4 pm

Gabriela Calderón Cornejo – *Musas*

An enlightening performance with commentary on her album *Musas*, uncovering and celebrating a collection of powerful at-risk compositions written by Latin American women born before 1950, including Carmen Barradas, Nelly Mele Lara, Maruja Hinestrota, Aurora Román Casares, and María Mendoza de Baratta.

Friday, February 24 at 8 pm

Bardin-Niskala Duo—*Songs Reimagined*

An-Lin Bardin, cello & Naomi Niskala, piano

An evening of west coast premiers of works by African, Latinx, Asian, Arab, and Native American composers inspired by a childhood song or folk song from the composer's heritage, including commissioned works by Yiheng Yvonne Wu, Juantio Becenti, Miguel del Aguila, Michael-Thomas Foumai, and more.

For tickets & more information visit www.oldfirstconcerts.org

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PROGRAM

Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel (1805–1847)

String Quartet in E-flat major, H.277 (1834)

Adagio ma non troppo

Allegretto

Romanze

Allegro molto vivace

Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)

from **String Quartet in F minor, Op. 80 (1847)**

Adagio (third movement)

Intermission

Florence Price (1887–1953)

Piano Quintet in A minor (c. 1935)

Allegro ma non troppo

Andante con moto

Juba. Allegro

Scherzo. Allegro - Coda

ABOUT THE MUSIC

Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel *String Quartet in E-flat major*

Fanny Mendelssohn and her brother Felix were born into the same wealthy and privileged family, received a broad and excellent education from the same private tutors, and were precocious as both keyboard players and composers. Fanny seems to have been at least as gifted as her brother, and the siblings regarded each other as musical equals, showing each other their compositions and offering critiques to each other. And yet, one sibling became one of the most famous musicians in Europe, while the other confined herself to presenting salons in a Berlin garden house. In a sadly explicit 1820 letter, their father wrote to Fanny, “Music will perhaps

become Felix's profession, while for *you* it can and must only be an ornament, never the foundation of your being and doing ... Remain true to this line of conduct; it is feminine, and only what is truly feminine is an ornament to your sex."

Felix's participation in public musical culture resulted in works involving large forces, especially orchestral music and oratorios. Fanny, meanwhile, concentrated on short solo piano works and songs; exactly the music best suited for domestic use. This split between two musical worlds, one male, public and professional, and the other female, private and amateur, could hardly be clearer.

Fanny Mendelssohn was a very prolific composer, but her 1834 string quartet is a rare example of an extended multi-movement ensemble work. There is no evidence that it was played at one of her salons, or that she ever heard the piece. The manuscript languished unpublished until 1988. The first two movements of the quartet were originally conceived as part of a piano sonata, begun in 1829 and never completed.

The initial bars of the first movement are immediately reminiscent of the opening of Beethoven's *'Harp' Quartet, Op. 74*, and thereby of Felix Mendelssohn's 1829 *Quartet, Op. 12*, which also opens with a reference to the same Beethoven quartet. (All three quartets are in E-flat major, although Fanny's quartet begins in C minor.). Fanny's incomplete piano sonata was clearly a response to her brother's new work, and she surely must have had a string quartet in her ear even as she wrote for the piano. Both the Beethoven and Felix Mendelssohn models begin with slow introductions, but Fanny's response turns out to be a self-contained slow movement that does not arrive at the home key of E-flat major until its end. The movement is fantasia-like, moving from key to key, and trying out different melodic ideas. Felix

Award, and was highlighted in a PBS Television documentary on the Gilmore Festival.

She has performed solo recitals and chamber music concerts worldwide, in such venues as the Kennedy Center, Vienna's Bösendorfer Saal, Toronto's Koerner Hall, and Montreal's Place des Arts. Featured at the International UNICEF benefit concert for Hurricane Katrina Victims, the Cannes Film Festival, the Gilmore Festival, Australia's Huntington Festival, the Musica Viva chamber music series, the Ravinia Rising Stars Series, and National Public Radio's *Performance Today*, her recitals have been broadcast live on public radio and television in cities around the world, including Washington D.C., New York, Sydney, Cleveland, Montréal, Dallas, and Chicago. Elizabeth gave the world premiere performance of Carl Vine's *Sonata No. 3*, which the composer dedicated to her.

regional orchestras. Sought-after as a chamber musician, Clio has performed with the Friction Quartet, Classical Revolution, Candlelight Concerts, and is a founding member of the Chamber Music Society of San Francisco. She has recorded for Time Warner with the Camerata de Lausanne, and has also been heard in recordings with Shajarian, Geographer, and Meklit.

Stephen Harrison, *cellist*, has been on the Stanford University faculty since 1983. A graduate of Oberlin College and Boston University, he has been solo cellist of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players since 1985. Stephen has been on the faculty of the Pacific Music Festival, the Orfeo and Schlern International Music Festivals (Italy) and the Rocky Ridge Music Center. He is currently principal cellist at the Mendocino Music Festival, and performs and teaches at the SoCal Chamber Music Workshop and the Telluride Chamber Music Festival.

Pianist **Elizabeth Schumann** has a diverse career portfolio of projects, recordings, and performances that have brought her all over the world as recitalist, chamber musician, and concerto soloist. *The Washington Post Magazine* noted her playing as “deft, relentless, and devastatingly good—the sort of performance you experience not so much with your ears as your solar plexus.”

The first-place winner of both the Bösendorfer International Piano Competition and the Pacific International Piano Competition, Elizabeth has won over 25 prizes and awards in other major national and international competitions, including the Cleveland International Piano Competition and the Hilton Head International Piano Competition. Elizabeth was honored with the prestigious Gilmore Young Artists

criticized the freedom of the modulations and the apparent lack of form of this movement, although Fanny (in a strikingly passive-aggressive exchange of letters) pointed out that he himself had done similar things in a recent work.

The ensuing C minor *Scherzo* was her brother’s favorite part of the quartet. The outer sections of the scherzo are mostly quiet, with some sneaky plucked notes enlivening the texture. The middle section is assertive, major and contrapuntal. This is another unmistakable Beethoven reference, this time to the middle of the scherzo from the *Symphony No. 5*. Felix also was very fond of the theme of the third movement, *Romanze*. The opening phrases sound like the beginning of a song-like piece, as implied by the title, but the lyrical phrases shared by all four string players quickly give way to unsettled music that is more about development than about singing. The final movement is the only one in the nominal home key of E-flat major, and is light and charming, especially in comparison to the predominantly serious music that has preceded it. There are some particularly effective combinations of lyrical melodies with rapid accompaniments, including a lilting violin melody over passage work from the viola, and, near the end, a gesture very typical of her brother, with the first violin soaring over brilliant arpeggios from the second violin.

Felix Mendelssohn Adagio from *String Quartet in F minor*

Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel died in May 1847, suffering two strokes while rehearsing a cantata by Felix for one of her Sunday salon concerts. Felix was devastated by the news, and collapsed in shock. After retreating with his family from public life for a few months, he gathered himself to write his final string quartet, which has always been understood as a kind of requiem for his sister. Three of the four movements are filled with stormy, agitated music. The slow movement

that will be played today, however, is the one glowing moment of comfort in the quartet, seeming to offer a memorial to Fanny in the midst of anger and confusion over her death.

The movement starts with a simple descending scale fragment from the cello, seemingly an introduction to the true theme, presented by the first violin beginning with an expressively drooping sigh. As the violin melody rises in pitch and volume, it climaxes with the same scale fragment first heard in the cello. This fragment then drops through the instruments, returning to the cello, where it once again introduces the violin sigh. The contrasting material consists of repeated chords articulated in dotted rhythms, offering a more affirmative sentiment.

Felix never truly recovered from his sister's death, and died, also from a series of strokes, six months after Fanny. The Op. 80 string quartet was his final substantial composition.

Florence Price *Piano Quintet in A minor*

The *Piano Quintet in A minor* is from a trove of unpublished compositions by the African American composer Florence Price, rescued from her long-abandoned summer home in St. Anne, Illinois in 2009. Nearly all accounts of Price's career juxtapose the near loss of these manuscripts with a performance of Price's first symphony by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1933, creating a compelling story of fame, neglect, and now rediscovery. While it is true that Frederick Stock and the Chicago Symphony premiered Price's symphony, that her name was unknown even to musicians and academic specialists for much of the 20th century, and that her works are now frequently performed and recorded by high-profile ensembles, the simple narrative arc is a little misleading.

Musikalischer Sommer Festival in Germany, the Marlboro Music Festival, the Aspen Music Festival, the Sandor Vegh masterclasses at Prussia Cove, and the Isaac Stern Seminar in New York. She has formerly served as first violinist of the Ives String Quartet, which toured nationally, and was based in California.

In 2010, a violin concerto called *Haili Lirico* was written for Ms. Sharp by composer Gabriela Lena Frank, in remembrance of her father, Terry Sharp. In January 1998 Ms. Sharp represented Carnegie Hall in their Rising Stars Series, when she and her then duo partner Jeremy Denk played a recital at Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall following a European tour. The duo also performed on Carnegie Hall's main stage under the guidance of Isaac Stern.

She formerly served as concertmaster for the Berkeley Symphony with conductor Kent Nagano for six seasons, and was a guest concertmaster for both a festival concert in Germany under the baton of conductor Vladimir Ashkenazy, and also as guest concertmaster with the Seattle Symphony with conductor Gerard Schwartz. Ms. Sharp was a Laureate prize winner of the 1994 Indianapolis Violin Competition and was featured in a documentary about the competition.

Freelance violist **Clio Tilton** delights in the diversity and excitement in her career. Seeking to share her gifts through both teaching and performing, she can be heard around the Bay Area in a wide range of groups: early music ensembles, symphony orchestras, and chamber groups.

Clio performs with the San Francisco Symphony, the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, the San Francisco Contemporary Players, Oakland Symphony, Berkeley Symphony, the American Bach Soloists, as well as other

Young Audiences of NY Children's Programs, Lincoln Center Student Programs and the Minnesota School & Resource Center for the Arts Touring Program, Seaside Music Academy and Pacifica School Volunteers. Her past music festival appearances include the Caramoor, Bard, Olympic and Grand Teton Music Festivals.

Kay attended the Juilliard School as a student of Dorothy DeLay. While at Juilliard, she received full scholarships for her Bachelor, Master's and Doctoral degree programs. She also studied with Michael Davis at Ohio State University. Her concerto and chamber music recordings can be heard on Phillips, Nonesuch, Innova, MusicMasters, Koch International, Gramavision and Albany Records.

Violinist **Robin Sharp** is a solo performer, chamber musician, concertmaster, and teacher. Ms. Sharp is on the music faculty at Stanford University as a Senior Lecturer in Violin and Chamber Music, and also maintains a private teaching studio. She performs as Concertmaster of the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra and is frequently featured as a soloist. Her chamber music engagements include ongoing collaborations with the Saint Michael Trio, the ensemble in residence at the Montalvo Arts Center, and with the Prospect Park Chamber Players. Ms. Sharp played in the San Francisco Symphony violin sections for several seasons and is currently an active substitute violinist with them.

Ms. Sharp has appeared in recital at many prestigious venues including Carnegie Hall in New York, the Musikverein in Vienna, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the National Music Hall in Taipei, and the Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco where she performed on Jascha Heifetz's Del Gesu violin. She has participated in music festivals worldwide, including California Summer Music, the

The Chicago Symphony performance was not a subscription concert, but a one-off performance as part of a program of African American music presented at the "Century of Progress" World's Fair. Price was a successful musician in the 1930s, but she was a regional success, based in the Upper Midwest. There is no doubt that she suffered from racism and sexism, but she also benefited from a support network of local music clubs, national awards and New Deal programs that in many ways offered more opportunities for women and African Americans in the 1930s than have been available since. To give two examples, Price's first symphony won the top prize in the annual Wanamaker Music Contest for African American composers, and her third symphony was premiered by the Michigan Works Progress Administration Orchestra in 1940. It is likely that this Piano Quintet was composed for the Chicago Composers-Forum Laboratory, another WPA group. The neglect of Price's music after her death is mostly a consequence of her major works not having been published. She did publish many pedagogical works for piano as well as other short piano works and even popular songs (under a pseudonym), but the symphonies and chamber music remained in manuscript.

As far as its style and musical characters, the *Piano Quintet in A minor* is similar to Price's other major works of the 1930s. Her musical language is lush and romantic, and strongly marked by musical topics that would have been recognized as African American at the time. The themes of the first movement use a pentatonic, gapped scale and melodic figures that evoke African American spirituals. Price would have known the spiritual as a form of art song, and arranged many spirituals herself. (One of Price's arrangements was the closing number for Marian Anderson's recital at the Lincoln Memorial in 1939.) Price also would have known of Antonín Dvořák's use of elements of spirituals in his *'New World'*

Symphony, and she is clearly following his prescription to create a “national” style (in this case, African American) through the addition of “national” elements to a basically European style.

The second movement theme is set over hymn-like chords in the piano, again using pentatonic scales that suggest spirituals. The third movement is called *Juba*, after an African American vernacular dance that involved foot-stomping and patting various parts of the body. Price also used juba dances in her symphonies and in her string quartet, as well as in independent piano works, but she probably knew the style from art music like R. Nathaniel Dett’s *In the Bottoms* rather than from vernacular practice. Price’s syncopated movement sounds much like the stylized cakewalks popular in the early ragtime era, with something that sounds suspiciously like a boogie-woogie bass line in the piano left hand near the end. The last movement, again typically for Price, is a lively *Scherzo* in 6/8 meter.

Notes by Dr. Derek Katz

ABOUT THE MUSICIANS

Kay Stern is the Concertmaster of the San Francisco Opera Orchestra, a position she has held since 1994. She is Professor of Violin and Chamber Music at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. In the past, Kay served as assistant to Dorothy DeLay at the Aspen Music Festival, assistant to the Juilliard Quartet at the Juilliard School and held faculty positions at the Cleveland Institute of Music, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and the Music Academy of the West. She has taught and coached at various music festivals around the world and been in residence at Wellesley College and San Diego State University.

Kay has been featured on television and radio. She has appeared in *PBS’s Live from Lincoln Center*, *CNN’s Women Today*, *Minnesota Public Radio’s A Prairie Home Companion with Garrison Keillor* and *WQXR-NY Robert Sherman’s Listening Room*. Kay has also contributed several articles in *Chamber Music America*. As the former first violinist and founding member of the Lark String Quartet, she performed and gave master classes throughout the United States, Europe and Asia.

Some of Kay’s Concertmaster positions include the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, Concordia at Lincoln Center, the Cabrillo Music Festival, the Cleveland Chamber Symphony and the Youngstown Symphony Orchestra. She regularly performs as Concertmaster for many movie soundtracks and video games recorded at Skywalker Ranch. Kay is an active chamber musician, collaborating with colleagues around the world. She regularly plays for fund raising events and has helped raise money for medical research, schools, arts organizations, student orchestras and political fundraisers. Some of the educational and community programs she participated in include the New York Philharmonic Musical Arts Experience,