

— FESTIVAL —
MOZAIC

NOTABLE EXPERIENCE WEEKEND

May 12-13, 2023

Notable Dinner: Brahms Quartet

Brahms Quartet in C minor

Friday, May 12, 5:30 PM
Monday Club, San Luis Obispo

Notable Insight: Poulenc Sonata

Poulenc Sonata
for Cello and Piano

Saturday, May 13, 11:00 AM
Community Church of Atascadero

Chamber Concert

Debussy, Schumann,
Poulenc and Brahms

Saturday, May 13, 4:00 PM
Templeton Performing Arts Center



Mercedes-Benz
OF SAN LUIS OBISPO

Presenting Sponsor & Official Auto

ARTISTS

ORION WEISS

Piano

JESSICA CHANG

Viola

SCOTT YOO

Violin

SOPHIE SHAO

Cello

PROGRAM

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Selections from Douze études (Twelve Études) (1915)

1. *Pour les cinq doigts, d'après Monsieur Czerny*
(For the Five Fingers, in the Manner of Mr. Czerny)
2. *Pour les tierces* (For the Thirds)

Mr. Weiss

ROBERT SCHUMANN

Fantasiestücke (Fantasy Pieces), op. 73 (1849)

- Zart und mit Ausdruck* (Tender and with expression)
Lebhaft, leicht (Lively, light)
Rasch und mit Feuer (Quick and with fire)

Ms. Chang, Mr. Weiss

FRANCIS POULENC

Sonata for Cello and Piano, FP 143 (1940-48; rev. 1953)

- Allegro: Tempo di marcia
Cavatine
Ballabile
Finale

Ms. Shao, Mr. Weiss

INTERMISSION

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Piano Quartet No. 3 in C minor, op. 60 (1875)

- Allegro non troppo
Scherzo: Allegro
Andante
Finale: Allegro comodo

Mr. Weiss, Mr. Yoo, Ms. Chang, Ms. Shao

PROGRAM NOTES

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862–1918)

Douze études (Twelve Études) (1915)



When Debussy became a father, he often saw the world through the eyes (and ears) of his daughter “Chouchou.” In 1908, three years after her birth, he paced nervously outside the hall where the pianist Harold Bauer was premiering Debussy’s *Children’s Corner* suite. Happily, the audience laughed “in the right places,” and Debussy turned to musical humor again in 1915 when he crafted his last set of piano works, the *Douze études*. Parisians were

fearing a German invasion (World War I had been underway for a year), so Debussy took his family to Normandy for safety, with composition clearly providing a psychological refuge.

In these eccentric studies, Debussy may be evoking the atmosphere of the nine-year-old Chouchou’s piano lessons. In the first étude (which instructs players to perform “wisely”), countless pianists will recognize the simple up-and-down patterns drilled into their fingers via the exercises of Carl Czerny—and they may also recognize the “wrong notes” that soon creep in, followed by the occasional pounding of the keyboard in exasperation. In fact, Debussy told his publisher that the études would “frighten the fingers,” which certainly is true of No. 2, requiring paired notes to move in challenging strings of parallel motion.

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–1856)

Fantasiestücke (Fantasy Pieces), op. 73 (1849)



In times of turmoil, we all need ways to escape the barrage of distressing news. For composers, that escape can take the form of creativity: Debussy had written the *Douze études* during the first world war, while Robert Schumann also turned to composition during political upheavals in Dresden. Although Schumann called 1849 “the worst year,” he also noted that it was his “most fruitful.” In fact, his income from compositions quadrupled from the year before.

Part of that financial flowering may have stemmed from some shrewd marketing. The three miniatures of the opus 73 *Fantasiestücke*, for instance, were written with Dresden clarinetist Johann Gottlieb Kotte in mind, but the published score proclaimed that the work was also suitable for the violin and cello—and many violists have performed it as well, since their warm register resembles that of the clarinet. Regardless of the performance medium, the three lovely pieces present a compelling progression of moods. Curiously, the lyrical opening of the first piece almost seems as if it had gotten underway before we started to listen. The second piece is more animated and playful, while the finale grows increasingly passionate as it races, faster and faster, to its exhilarating ending.

FRANCIS POULENC (1899–1963)

Sonata for Cello and Piano, FP 143 (1940–48; rev. 1953)

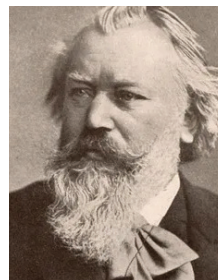


Warfare leaves its wounds. One consequence of the Franco-Prussian conflict of 1871-2 was the subsequent effort by generations of French composers to do all they could to reject the previous Austro-Germanic dominance in France’s concert halls and to honor their national heritage instead. An outgrowth of this patriotic surge was the rise of impressionism, featured in many works by Debussy.

Debussy’s approach was rejected in turn by the next generation of French composers. Francis Poulenc, in particular, embraced a more breezy, carefree style, drawing from Parisian cabaret music, music halls, and even the circus. But unlike Debussy and Schumann, who composed their way through unsettled times, Poulenc drafted only part of his Sonata for Cello and Piano in 1940 before he had to set it aside. After the war, however, the cellist Pierre Fournier prodded him to return to the sonata, and the two men premiered it in 1949. Poulenc filled the sonata with delights and with drama. The first movement’s shifting meters are a challenge for toe-tappers, while the second movement takes the cello stratospherically high at the end. The two instruments dance their way through the light-hearted *Ballabile*, while the finale alternates between intensity, eeriness, and whimsical energy.

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1896)

Piano Quartet No. 3 in C minor, op. 60 (1875)



When Brahms sent his third piano quartet to his publisher, he made an odd suggestion: that the cover illustration should depict himself, dressed and posed like Werther. Austrians would have immediately recognized that “meme”: Werther—the title character in a novel by Goethe—shoots himself in despair over his hopeless love for a married woman. Why would Brahms want to evoke that anguished suitor? We know that Brahms had

staunchly supported Clara Schumann during the two years of her husband Robert’s declining mental and physical health, and we also know that Brahms’s friendship with Clara strengthened during her widowhood. Scholars disagree, however, whether Clara ever allowed that relationship to flame up into physical passion. Brahms’s comment hints that his feelings, like Werther’s, had gone unrequited.

It has escaped no one’s notice that the quartet features a piano—Clara’s instrument—and she had given Brahms feedback as he refined the work. Storm and stress dominate the first movement; the subsequent *Scherzo* is equally energetic, but more exuberant in mood. The *Andante* is a peaceful respite from the preceding energy, but the restlessness of the opening returns for the finale. Its abrupt ending has led scholar Malcolm MacDonald and others to wonder: did “Werther” pull the trigger?

ARTISTS



JESSICA CHANG | Viola

Violist Jessica Chang leads a versatile career as a chamber musician and educator. As the Founder and Executive Director of Chamber Music by the Bay, Jessica directs and performs concerts for diverse communities throughout the San Francisco Bay Area which reach thousands of young people annually. She has held residencies with Project 440, the Savannah Music Festival, Music from Angel Fire, and Music Beyond the Chamber.

She has also served as violist of the Afiara Quartet, with whom she toured North America, including a residency at The Banff Centre and the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto. She appeared at many festivals including Juneau Jazz and Classics, Bard, Prussia Cove, Tanglewood, Taos School of Music, Verbier, and Aspen, among others. She teaches viola privately and regularly performs with ensembles throughout the Bay Area including Ensemble SF, Ensemble Illume, and Chamber Music Silicon Valley. Jessica holds degrees from Yale University, The Juilliard School, and the Curtis Institute of Music.



SOPHIE SHAO | Cello

Sophie received an Avery Fisher Career Grant at age 19, was a major prizewinner at the 2001 Rostropovich Competition, and a laureate of the XII Tchaikovsky Competition in 2002. She has appeared as a soloist with the American Symphony Orchestra and the BBC Concert Orchestra. Sophie has performed at the Bard Music Festival, Chamber Music Northwest, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, and at Union, Middlebury,

and Vassar Colleges. She can be heard on EMI Classics, Bridge Records, and Albany Records, and recently released a double-CD set of the Bach Cello Suites. Sophie holds degrees from the Curtis Institute and Yale, and is a former member of Chamber Music Society Two at Lincoln Center.



ORION WEISS | Piano

One of the most sought-after soloists and chamber music collaborators of his generation, Orion Weiss is widely regarded as a “brilliant pianist” (*The New York Times*) with “powerful technique and exceptional insight” (*The Washington Post*). He has dazzled audiences with his lush sound and performed with dozens of orchestras in North America including the Chicago Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Boston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and New York Philharmonic and at major venues and festivals worldwide. Known for his affinity for chamber music, Weiss performs regularly with violinists Augustin Hadelich, William Hagen, Benjamin Beilman, and James Ehnes; pianists Michael Brown and Shai Wosner; cellist Julie Albers; and the Ariel, Parker, and Pacifica Quartets. Weiss can be heard on the Naxos, Telos, Bridge, First Hand, Yarlung, and Artek labels. Weiss has been awarded the Classical Recording Foundation’s Young Artist of the Year, Gilmore Young Artist Award, an Avery Fisher Career Grant, and the Mieczyslaw Munz Scholarship. Weiss attended the Cleveland Institute of Music and the Juilliard School, where he studied with Emanuel Ax.

KCBX *fm*

Central Coast Public Radio

Supporting Festival Mozaic and the entire
Central Coast arts community.

90.1 SANTA MARIA / SAN LUIS OBISPO
89.5 SANTA BARBARA • 91.1 CAYUCOS • 95.1 LOMPOC
91.7 PASO ROBLES & S. MONTEREY COUNTY
90.9 SANTA YNEZ, AVILA BEACH, CAMBRIA

STREAMING AT: KCBX.ORG



New Times
is a proud sponsor of
Festival Mozaic



New Times
Covering the arts for 35 years

San Luis Obispo County's
News & Entertainment Weekly
NewTimesSLO.com · 805.546.8208