

AMELIA ISLAND
CHAMBER MUSIC
FESTIVAL

Presents



© Lisa Marie Mazzucco

Emanuel Ax

MARCH 22, 2019

Amelia Plantation Chapel
36 Bowman Road, Amelia Island, Florida

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1. Present the world's greatest musical artists in chamber music concerts of classical and alternative genres for diverse audiences;
2. Offer music education to concert attendees, students, and aspiring young musicians; and
3. Promote local businesses and tourism by attracting music lovers from Nassau County, Northeast Florida, and beyond.

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Celebrating its eighteenth anniversary season, The Amelia Island Chamber Music Festival is nationally recognized as one of the foremost music events of its kind. The Festival is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.



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AMELIA ISLAND
CHAMBER MUSIC
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PROGRAM

EMANUEL AX

The Rhapsodies, Op.79

No. 1 in B minor, Agitato

No. 2 in G minor, Molto passionato, ma non troppo allegro

JOHANNES BRAHMS

(1833-1897)

Piano Figures: Ten Short Pieces for Piano

GEORGE BENJAMIN

b.1960

Fantasiestücke, Op.12

ROBERT SCHUMANN

(1810-1856)

— *Intermission* —

Valses nobles et sentimentales

MAURICE RAVEL

(1875-1937)

Nocturne in B Major, Op. 62, No. 1

Mazurkas, Op. 50 No. 1 in G major

No. 2 in A-flat major

No. 3 in C-sharp minor

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN

(1810-1849)



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EMANUEL AX



Acclaimed as one of the greatest piano virtuosos of the last 40 years, Emanuel Ax has performed at the world's leading concert venues as a recitalist, chamber musician and with many of the greatest symphony orchestras. He appears regularly at the BBC Proms, Blossom Festival, Edinburgh Festival, Hollywood Bowl, Mostly Mozart Festival, Tanglewood Festival, and Ravinia Festival, among many others. Frequent chamber music collaborators have included Isaac Stern, Yo-Yo Ma, and Young Uck Kim.

Mr. Ax has received Grammy Awards for the second and third volumes of his cycle of Haydn's piano sonatas. He also has made a series of Grammy-winning recordings with cellist Yo-Yo Ma of the Beethoven and Brahms sonatas for cello and piano. Mr. Ax was Artist-in-Residence at the New York Philharmonic for the 2012-13 season. He has been on the Juilliard faculty since 1990.

Born in Poland to parents who survived Nazi concentration camps, he took up the piano at age six. Mr. Ax moved to Winnipeg, Canada, with his family as a young boy and later received a Diploma from the Juilliard School of Music. He captured public attention in 1974 when he won the first Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Competition in Tel Aviv. In 1975 he won the Michaels Award of Young Concert Artists, followed four years later by the coveted Avery Fisher Prize.



PROGRAM NOTES

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

The Rhapsodies, Op.79

No. 1 in B minor, Agitato

No. 2 in G minor, Molto passionato, ma non troppo allegro

“Sitting down at the piano, he [Brahms] began to open regions of wonder. We were drawn more and more into charmed circles. Add to this a technique of absolute genius which turned the piano into an orchestra of wailing or exultant voices.”

— **Robert Schumann**

His life and art was one of contrasts. Johannes Brahms could be solitary and quiet contrasted with a gregariousness, self-absorbed yet generous, insecure, self-critical but confident, known to be harshly coarse at times yet tempered with a delicate kindness. He was expansive and cryptic, taciturn and combustible. He exemplifies an enigma.

Over his lifetime Brahms composed 4 symphonies, 2 overtures, 4 concertos, over 200 Lieder and folk song arrangements, numerous choral and chamber works plus piano music. He composed and worked thoughtfully and slowly allowing his ideas to germinate. His advice to a young composer stressed the necessity of allowing the notes to arrange themselves and exercising intense patience. He said:

“Let it rest and keep going back to it and working at it over and over again until it is completed as a finished work of art; until there is not a note too much or too little, not a measure you could improve upon. Whether it is beautiful also is an entirely different matter, but perfect it must be. You see I am lazy, but I never cool down over a work once begun, until it is perfected, unassailable. One ought never to forget that by actually perfecting one piece one learns more than by beginning or half-finishing ten.”

The Rhapsodies, Op. 79 were published in July 1880 by Simrock in Berlin. They are dedicated to a friend and student, Elisabeth von Herzogenberg. “Liesl”, as she was later affectionally known, was a most attractive woman. So much so that Brahms said he was unable to concentrate in her presence. He confessed that he had difficulty even speaking to her much less trying to teach her. (Another teacher, pianist Julius Epstein experienced the same difficulty.) It was only after her marriage to Heinrich von Herzogenberg that Brahms could comfortably find his voice with her.

A Rhapsody is an instrumental composition in irregular form and has strong improvisational tendencies. While composing in an era where literary titles were the predominate choices, Brahms disliked programmatic music. Instead he preferred “to invite the listener” to share in finding the meaning. Using the term, *Rhapsody* for the Opus 79 No. 1 in B Minor and No. 2 in G Minor, gives specific instructions: *Agitato* or agitated and *molto passionato, ma non troppo allegro*, very passionate and quick but not too quick. He had first considered using the title “capriccio” meaning a lively piece of music, one that is short and free in form but chose the word, Rhapsody, derived from ancient Greek “rhapsoders” for singers who chanted the heroic exploits of ancient Greece.

Pianist Arthur Rubinstein described these two works at “intensely intimate” ones “that

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cannot really convey their full substance to a larger audience. They should be heard quietly in a small room, for they are actually works of chamber music for the piano.”

George Benjamin b.1960
Piano Figures: Ten Short Pieces for Piano

“Music has an extraordinary power to transcend time and provoke the deepest emotion; yet in essence it’s weightless, transient and invisible. This phenomenon seems to be both mysterious and poignant.” — George Benjamin

Quoting from a 2018 interview for Van magazine by Robert Barry “George Benjamin was once the boy wonder of British classical music. A composer at 9, he became the star pupil to Oliver Messiaen in his teens, the youngest ever composer to see his music performed at the Proms while still a student.” And yet the young composer did not come from a musical family. When asked what drew him to music, Benjamin replied: “-seeing Walt Disney’s “Fantasia” as a young child. I can still recall the thrill that the works by Beethoven, Dukas, Stravinsky and Mussorgsky gave me.”

Benjamin reflected on the many things learned from studying under the composer Messiaen. His teacher said: “Don’t talk about your pieces. In other words, keep them to yourself until you finish them. To create a work of art is a deeply private thing, and you need to live in a deeply private space.” Most importantly, Benjamin said he learned that one must “hear.” “For him [Messiaen] the most severe musical error for a composition was not to internally imagine every note, rhythm and timbre. He taught innumerable things of the greatest fascination and value but perhaps his greatest lesson was his utterly sweet nature and the musical values he breathed and lived.”

Benjamin’s compositional working habits were described to be daily. “I work all the day, every day though often a week (or more) can go by when I’m unable to write anything acceptable. Most of my work takes place in my head, though I do use the piano on occasion. I create a vast quantity of sketches before I arrive at the finished result, and I don’t use Sibelius or any other computer program. Paper and pencil (and sometimes colored pens) are my preferred tools.”

His *Piano Figures* was commissioned by Etablissement public Salle de Concerts Grande-Duchesse Josephine-Charlotte-Philharmonie Luxembourg. It is a work comprised of ten short pieces: Spell, Knots, In the Mirror, Interruptions, Song, Hammers, Alone, Mosaic, Around the Corner, and Whirling Duration. Its world premiere took place in Luxembourg in May 2006.

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)
Fantasiestücke, Op.12

“Without enthusiasm nothing great can be effected in art.” — Robert Schumann

Fantasiestücke or “Fantasy Pieces” was completed in the early weeks of 1838. It is dedicated to a gifted and attractive British pianist, Anna Robena Laidlaw. Schumann who was well versed in law, literature, and the visual arts was influenced by E.T.A.

PROGRAM NOTES *(continued)*

Hoffman's novellas *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier* ("Fantasy Pieces in the Manner of Callot"). Years later Schumann would return to again use the title for a set of pieces for clarinet and piano and another piano trio. His Opus 12 for piano is a dialogue between Florestan and Eusebius, the two pen names used to represent himself when writing for his *Davidsbund*, a created society that discussed music and wrote reviews. Eusebius, the dreamer, speaks with the reflective side of Schumann's personality whereas Florestan reveals his exuberant, impetuous, passionate nature. (British author and neurologist Oliver Sacks attributed the composer's mental illness to a "manic-depressive or schizo-affective disorder, as well as towards the end of his life, neurosyphilis.")

Eusebius begins Opus 12 with *Des Abends* (In the evening) and Florestan responds with *Aufschwung* (Soaring). *Warum?* (Why) and *Grillen* (Whims or Caprices) also alternate between the two with *In der Nacht* (In the Night) describing a struggle demonstrating Eusebius under the influence of Florestan. *Traumata Wirren* (Dreams Confusion) and *Ende vom Lied* (The End of Song) complete the cycle. In a letter to Clara Schumann who became his wife in 1840, Schumann wrote: "*At the time, I thought: well in the end it all resolves itself into a jolly wedding. But at the close, my painful anxiety about you returned.*"

Clara's favorites were *Fabel*, *Des Abends*, *Aufschwung*, *Grillen*, and *Ende vom Lied*. In *der Nacht* (No. 5), said to be the most challenging, was Schumann's favorite. It along with No. 7 *Ende vom Lied* were the only two Schumann thought suitable for public performance.

In a letter to Clara on April 21, 1838 he outlined the story for *In der Nacht*: *After I had finished it I found, to my delight, that it contained the story of Hero and Leander...how Leander swam every night through the sea to his love, who awaited him at the beacon with a torch to light the way. When I am playing 'In der Nacht' I cannot get the idea out of my head. First he throws himself in the seas, she calls him, replies; he fights his way through the waves, reaching land safely. Then the cantilena [the slow middle section], when they are clasped in each other's embrace, until they must part again. He cannot tear himself away, then night envelops everything in darkness again.*

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Valses nobles et sentimentales

"Music, I feel, must be emotional first and intellectual second."

— Maurice Ravel

Although Maurice Ravel entered the Paris Conservatory at age 14 to study piano, he changed his course to become a student of composition with Gabriel Faure and Andre Gedalge. Unlike his contemporary Claude Debussy, Ravel's compositions did not win the Conservatory's Prix de Rome. His style did not comply with the school's stringent compositional guidelines but his writing was well received. His Violin Sonata (1897) and his *Sheherazade* (1898) won such admiration that his failure to win the Prix de Rome in 1905 resulted in a change in the Conservatory directorship. Following Debussy's death, Ravel was recognized as the greatest living French composer. Both

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were considered Impressionists (a term Debussy disliked) with Ravel being labeled more as an “objectivist and a Classicist.”

Ravel, along with Stravinsky, was also a member of “Les Apaches,” an artistic circle of poets, musicians, critics and painters. The term itself literally refers to Native American Indians but in French it carries the meaning of “hooligans.”

In the spring of 1910 Ravel helped to found the anti-establishment Société Musicale Indépendente. On May 9, 1911 the Société, whose membership consisted mostly of professional musicians, composers, and music critics, presented its entire concert in a most daring way. The audience was to guess the composer as no credit was given to the performed work. Ravel’s *Valses nobles et sentimentales* was played to a “curious reception” of “an alarming avalanche of jeers and catcalls.” Most of the audience believed his solo piano piece performed by Louis Aubert was either a joke or had been written by either Erik Satie or Zoltán Kodály. A slim majority correctly attributed *Valses nobles et sentimentales* to its rightful paternity while Ravel himself had been selected as the probable composer to works by the relatively unknown Hector Fraggi and Lucien Wurmser.

Ravel had drawn his inspiration for *Valses nobles et sentimentales* from Schubert’s *Valses nobles*, Op. 77 and the *Valses Sentimentales*, Op. 50. He wrote: “The title shows clearly enough of my intention to compose a chain of waltzes in the style of Schubert. In place of the virtuosity which characterized *Gaspard de la Nuit* there was a style cleaner, clearer, which emphasized the harmonies and brought them to life.”

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

Nocturne in B Major, Op. 62, No. 1

*Mazurkas, Op. 50 No. 1 in G major, No. 2 in A-flat major,
No. 3 in C-sharp minor*

“Simplicity is the final achievement. After one has played a vast quantity of notes and more notes, it is simplicity that emerges as the crowning reward of art.”

— **Frédéric Chopin**

In 1831, twenty-one year old Robert Schumann, composer and critic, wrote in his first published article a review of *Variations on Mozart’s “La ci darem la mano” for Piano and Orchestra* by Frédéric Chopin. Exclaiming his respect he wrote: “Hats off, gentleman, a genius!” Later the contemporary and critic would write: “It was an unforgettable picture to see Chopin sitting at the piano like a clairvoyant, lost in his dreams; to see how his vision communicated itself through his playing, and how, at the end of each piece, he had the sad habit of running one finger over the length of the plaintive keyboard, as though to tear himself forcibly away from his dream.” And it is the composer Franz Liszt who eloquently described Chopin’s writing: “He [Chopin] confided...those inexpressible sorrows to which the pious give vent in their communication with their Maker. What they never say except upon their knees, he said in his palpitating compositions.”

Chopin's father was an Alsatian school teacher who settled in Poland. His mother was of Polish nobility and was introduced to Chopin's father through the family of Countess Skarbek at Zelazowa Wola where his mother was a lady in waiting. The elder Chopin was the family's French tutor. Frédéric was the second child born to Justina and Nicholas. Their home in Warsaw was one of harmony and culture which provided "a felicitous setting." Quoting historians Milton Cross and David Ewen:

"He was a sensitive, imaginative, and happy child, with an infectious sense of humor, who indulged as eagerly in childish pranks and mimicry as in music, in which he demonstrated exceptional interest and talent from earliest childhood. He was continually found at the piano, trying to produce pleasing melodies and harmonies. When a melody was particularly pleasing he would suddenly burst into tears."

At age fifteen he entered his father's school for academic studies and also studied piano with Josef Elsner, director of the Warsaw Conservatory. Elsner, understanding the delicate, sensitive nature of his pupil, allowed the young Chopin great latitude in expressing his artistic nature. "And it was largely due to Elsner's sympathy and understanding that Chopin was able to evolve a personal style of writing almost from the very beginnings his creative career - a style already thoroughly recognizable in the mazurkas, nocturnes, sonatas, and variations he was writing." In 1830 as Chopin was leaving Warsaw for Vienna, it was his admiring teacher, Elsner, who presented Chopin with a silver urn containing a handful Polish earth saying: "May you never forget your native land wherever you may go, nor cease to love it with a warm and faithful heart." Traveling through Austria and Germany to eventually settle in France, Chopin embodied the parting blessing. He never lost his Polish accent nor completely mastered the French language, and was buried with this urn in Paris in 1849.

During his lifetime, Frédéric Chopin composed 21 nocturnes, 58 mazurkas, 19 waltzes, 27 etudes, 17 polonaises, 2 piano concertos, and 26 preludes.

His *Nocturne in B Major, Op. 62, No. 1* was composed in 1846. French for Nocturnal, a nocturne is a composition evocative or inspired by the night. There are two nocturnes of Op. 62 and these were the last to be published during his lifetime. The Mazurka was a Polish dance that originated in the province of Mazovia. Chopin's Op. 50, a set of three, was published in Vienna in 1842. They were composed in Nohant where he spent his summers with his lover Aurore Dudevant, better known as author George Sand. His *Andante spianato et grande polonaise brillante in E-flat Major, Op. 22* was originally written between September 1830 and July 1831 as a virtuoso concert piece for piano and orchestra. Three years later hoping to be fully integrated into Parisian musical life and performances, he scored the work for solo piano and played its premiere in Paris on April 26, 1835. Detesting crowds, this proved to be one of his final public performances as he preferred more intimate settings rather than the concert stage. The *Andante Spianato* provides some of Chopin's most characteristic melodic material as it weaves the calm -spianato translated as "level," "even" "smoothed out" with a polonaise which is an old Polish dance in triple meter.

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 Dot Houk
 Peter and Ruth Igoe
 Linda Janca
 Marsha Joyner
 Russ and Judy Kahoe
 Mark and Donna Paz Kaufman
 Stan and Claudia Kavan
 Joy Kemp

Nick and Lis Krawiecki
 Rob and Amy Laidlaw
 Robert and Karen Lavine
 Linda Lay
 Allen and Sharon Lennon
 Chris London
 Donna Lott
 Karen Lotz
 Sylvia Madiol
 Kyril and Susan Magg
 Peter and Jackie Martin
 Judy Marzilli
 Gail McCamy
 Don and Sally McCarron
 Jeannine McKeown
 Bruce and Jackie Modahl
 Eileen Shannon Ira
 Bruce and Deb Billings-Morrison
 Ruthellen Muhlberg
 Pat Murray
 Ellen Myers
 Jeanette Nichols
 Judy Ogden
 David Olson
 Ralph and Anne Oman
 Marilyn Perkins
 Nancy Philips
 Stewart Pikula
 Dorothy Robb
 Bob and Janet Ross
 Eric and Gail Sakurai
 Irene Sanchez
 Tapha Sears
 Frances Shea.
 Susan Sinor

VOLUNTEERS *(continued)*

Ed Stanley	Tom and Lynn Unkenholz
Kay Stephens	Betty Waas
Karen Sutton	Lisa Webber
Rosemary Syczygiel	Jack and Karen Weber
Bryan and Karen Tabler	Joyce Wells
Susanna Theo	Norman and Marilyn Wesley
Lou and Joyce Tonti	Catherine West
Jerry and Mary Lynn Torchia	Tom and Vicki Whittemore
Steven Traver	Steve Zebrasky

SPECIAL THANKS

Dickie Anderson, The Porch	Phil Kelly, Amelia Islander Magazine
Ktimene Axetell, Young Patrons group	Steve Leimberg, photography
Deb Billings-Morrison, ticket sales management	Kurt Marasco, IT consultant
Emma Mills Bledsoe, Strings Program piano teacher	Jack Melvin, Keyboard Connection
Caroline Blochlinger, website developer	Omni Amelia Island Plantation
Bob Bolan, governance consultant	Omni Atlanta Hotel, Atlanta, GA
Mike Brooks, marketing	Omni Bedford Springs Resort, Bedford, PA
Dick Cinquina, marketing and publicity	Penny Reid, Mouth of Amelia
Club 14 Fitness, 3-month membership C-Note prize	Lynne Radcliffe, master class support
Concours d'Elegance, car show tickets C-Note prize	Christopher Rex, original painting C-Note prize
Foy Maloy, Fernandina Beach News Leader	Jeff Ringhoffer, graphic design
Lea Gallardo, photography	Ritz-Carlton Amelia Island
Gallo Winery	Sue Sinor, grant writer
Russell Glasheen, Trips in the Village	Summer House Realty, James and Jenny Schaffer, owners
Pam Green, Facebook	Lauren Templeton, Young Patrons group and Instagram
Anne Taylor Hensley, low country boil C-Note prize	Shelby Trevor, Strings Program violin teacher
Will Howery, luthier services	UPS Store, Fernandina Beach
Stewart and Eileen Shannon Ira, sunset cruise C-Note prize	The Violin Shop, instrument appraisal services
Bill Ivins, graphic design	Catherine West, grant writer

HOUSING PARTNERS

We thank the many organizations & individuals for their hospitality in housing the Festival's guest artists.

Fairbanks House	Jim and Jane Flynn
Omni Amelia Island Plantation	Louis and Susan Goldman
Ritz-Carlton Amelia Island	Anne Taylor Hensley
Victor and Linda Bilanchone	Bill Hensley
Emma Bledsoe	Jack and Beverly Keigwin
Sue Braddock	Steve and Jackie Kennard
Bruce and Lee Buchanan	Christopher Rex and Dr. Martha Wilkins

UPCOMING EVENTS

- March 31 **Christiania Piano Quartet**
5 p.m. - Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 2600 Atlantic Ave., FB (\$50)
- April 6 **Dover Quartet**
5 p.m. - Amelia Baptist Church, 961167 Buccaneer Trail, FB (\$60)
- April 26 **Season Finale Celebration:**
Anne Akiko Meyers with Jason Vieaux
7:30 p.m. - Ritz-Carlton Amelia Island, 4750 Amelia Island Pkwy, FB, (\$65)
(Includes a Dessert Buffet)

Tickets: aicmf.com or call 904-261-1779

YOUNG PATRONS

The Young Patrons are a group of young adults with a love of music and a desire to mingle with other like-minded young adults. The program had a successful debut with a special pre-party before the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis concert.

For more information, please visit www.aicmf.com



Thank you for your continued support!
Please consider making a tax-deductible donation today:

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