

**Kanneh-Mason Family
Celebration**

AMINATA KANNEH-MASON
violin, piano

BRAIMAH KANNEH-MASON
violin

ISATA KANNEH-MASON
piano

JENEBA KANNEH-MASON
cello, piano

KONYA KANNEH-MASON
violin, piano

MARIATU KANNEH-MASON
cello, piano

SHEKU KANNEH-MASON
cello

JERRY BOCK (1928-1910)
Fiddler on the Roof (arr. Kanneh-Masons)
(approx. 9 minutes)

Isata, *piano*
Braimah, Konya, Aminata, *violin*
Mariatu, Sheku, Jeneba, *cello*

FLORENCE PRICE (1887-1953)
Fantasia Nègre No. 1 in E minor
(approx. 10 minutes)

Jeneba, *piano*

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF (1873-1943)
Élégie in E flat minor Op. 3 No. 1
Moderato - Più vivo - Tempo I
(approx. 5 minutes)

Mariatu, *cello*
Isata, *piano*

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)
Piano Concerto No. 2 (2nd movement)
Andante
(approx. 6 minutes)

Konya, *piano*
Braimah, Aminata, *violin*
Sheku, Jeneba, Mariatu, *cello*

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)
Piano Trio No. 2 in C major Op. 87 (1st movt)
Allegro moderato
(approx. 10 minutes)

Isata, *piano*
Braimah, *violin*
Sheku, *cello*

INTERMISSION

GASPAR CASSADÓ (1897-1966)

Suite for Solo Cello

Fantasia – Preludio. Andante

Sardana (danza). Allegro giusto

Intermezzo e danza finale. Lento ma non troppo
(approx. 16 minutes)

Sheku, *cello*

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Romance No. 2 in F major Op. 50

(approx. 9 minutes)

Aminata, *violin*

Jeneba, *piano*

FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)

Scherzo from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

(arr. Rachmaninoff)

(approx. 4 minutes)

Isata, *piano*

PABLO DE SARASATE (1844-1908)

Zigeunerweisen Op. 20

Moderato – Lento - Un poco più lento -

Allegro molto vivace

(approx. 9 minutes)

Braimah, *violin*

Jeneba, *piano*

BOB MARLEY (1945-1981)

Redemption Song (arr. Kanneh Masons)

(approx. 4 minutes)

Isata, *piano*

Braimah, Konya, Aminata, *violin*

Mariatu, Sheku, Jeneba, *cello*

VITTORIO MONTI (1868-1922)

Czárdás (arr. Kanneh-Masons)

(approx. 4 minutes)

Isata, *piano*

Braimah, Konya, Aminata, *violin*

Mariatu, Sheku, Jeneba, *cello*

Jerry Bock

Fiddler on the Roof (arr. Kanneh-Masons)

The musical *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964) by composer Jerry Bock, lyricist Sheldon Harnick and playwright Joseph Stein, won nine Tony Awards in its record-breaking run of more than 3,000 performances on the Broadway stage and reached an even wider audience through Norman Jewison's Academy-Award-winning film adaptation in 1971.

Based on the stories of Jewish life in the Russian Empire by Yiddish writer Sholem Aleichem (1859-1916), it relates the joys and struggles of Tevye the Dairyman, as he tries to find suitable husbands for his five daughters while keeping a wary eye out for the ever-present danger of anti-Jewish violence in his pogrom-prone land.

Hundreds of productions of *Fiddler on the Roof* have been staged around the world and many of its musical numbers are instantly recognizable even to the non-theatre-going public. Amongst the most popular of these are *If I Were a Rich Man*, *Matchmaker Matchmaker* and *Sunrise, Sunset*.

Florence Price

Fantasia Nègre No. 1 in E minor

Florence Price was born in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1887 and studied piano, organ and composition at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, graduating with honours in 1906. Life in the Jim Crow South was not easy for a well-educated African-American woman, and she eventually moved to Chicago in 1927 where her talents began to be recognized. In the 1930s she gradually rose to national prominence as a symphonic composer following the performance of her *Symphony No. 1* by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1933.

In all she composed over 300 works, including symphonies, works for piano and for chamber ensembles. She was especially well known for her art songs and arrangements of spirituals, many of which were sung by the most celebrated singers of her day, including Marian Anderson and Leontyne Price.

Her musical style is conservative, firmly planted in the late Romantic era, but permeated with elements drawn from her African-American heritage. This mixture of European 'high-art' and African-American popular musical styles is perfectly exemplified in her *Fantasia Nègre No. 1* (1929), which incorporates traditional spirituals and jazz dance rhythms into the structure of a typically 19th-century virtuoso piano fantasy. The work opens in the classic manner with a series of introductory flourishes offering tantalizing hints in the left hand of the principal theme to come.



This principal theme is the spiritual *Sinner, please don't let this harvest pass*, artfully harmonized with chromatic passing tones in the inner voices.



The piano textures spawned by this theme, with their multitude of countermelodies in the inner voices and melodically active bass lines, reflect the influence of Chopin's piano style.

The work's secondary theme comes in the major mode and evokes H. T. Burleigh's *Going Home* used by Dvorak in the *Largo* second movement of his *New World Symphony* No. 9.



As the work progresses it alternates restatements of these themes and non-thematic sections featuring scintillating – one might even say ‘flashy’ – piano figuration, at times inflected with harmonies we are more used to hearing in the music of George Gershwin. The piece ends, however, in a thunderous affirmation of the ‘flat-7’ melodic minor scale in which the work's principal theme is situated.

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Élégie in E flat minor Op. 3 No. 1

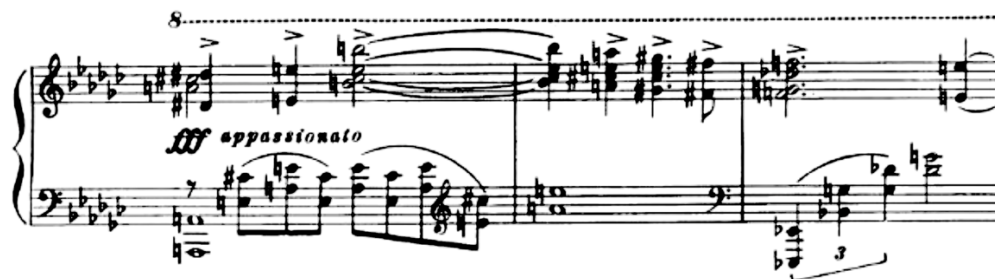
The five short pieces of Rachmaninoff's Op. 3 *Morceaux de fantaisie* were the very first of his solo piano works to be published. Dating from 1892, when the composer was still studying at the Moscow Conservatory. They nonetheless convey the brand of warm pianistic lyricism, enveloped in dark brooding harmonies, that would come to characterize his mature compositions.

The first piece in the set, the *Élégie in E flat minor*, evokes the style of a Chopin nocturne, with its wide-spaced *pianissimo* chordal accompaniment in the left hand introducing a lonely distant solo voice in the high treble register.



The dreamy nocturne-like atmosphere is created not only by this rich carpet of deep-bass piano tone but also by the tentative, halting melody line above that persistently enters and moves forward on weak beats of the bar, as if unsure of where to go. This softly mournful melodic line is perfect for the cello to sing out in its high register.

A slightly more active middle section in the major mode provides temporary relief from the gloomy atmosphere of the opening. But all is not well in this section's heart of hearts either, as the piece's yearning climax, worthy of *Tristan und Isolde*, makes clear.



When the opening section finally returns it seems to have been affected by what has come before, and the work ends with a cascade of figuration to the bottom of each instrument's register.

Dmitri Shostakovich

Piano Concerto No. 2 – 2nd movement

Shostakovich wrote his Second Piano Concerto as a present for his son Maxim, who performed the piece at his graduation concert after completing his pre-Conservatory studies at the Moscow Central Music School on the day of his 19th birthday, 10 May 1957.

Written in an uncharacteristically simple style suitable for performance by young pianists, it typifies the well-known category of the 'youth concerto,' a musical genre promoted in the Soviet Union for use in the nation's vast network of music schools and institutions.

The *Andante* slow movement is the simplest in terms of its style and texture. It begins with a chorale-like string introduction, shockingly direct and sincere to the ears of those used to the acerbic ironies and cryptic subtexts of Shostakovich's other scores.



Retained in this movement, however, is Shostakovich's penchant for surprising inflections of tone colour. The string introduction, for example, is in a solemn and reverential C minor but when the piano finally enters, it does so in a naively tender and childlike C major.



Transparently scored, delicate in sentiment, and softly pulsing with gentle cross-rhythms, this wistfully nostalgic movement could easily pass for the soundtrack to a French movie.

Johannes Brahms

Piano Trio No. 2 in C major Op. 87

Allegro moderato

Brahms' second piano trio is a deeply serious work, thickly scored for piano, and roiling with the rhythmic ambiguities that are a trademark of the composer's mature compositional style. Begun in 1880 and completed in 1882, it treats the piano very much in the grand style of his 'symphonic' Piano Concerto No. 2 in B flat from the same period. In both works he gives the instrument a massively wide field of play extending to both ends of the keyboard, the hands often separated by as much as four or five octaves. The violin & cello frequently play in unison or in parallel, pooling their sonic resources to provide a stable sonority in the mid-range of the texture, where the important thematic material is most often presented.

The first movement opens with a broad heroic theme laid before the listener by the violin and cello alone, doubled at the octave. Rife with bold melodic leaps, it has the air of a fugue subject, or a fanfare.



As if to compensate, Brahms' more intimate second theme, perfumed with the charm of the Viennese salon, is introduced by the piano and circles round a small patch of tonal space, curiously at odds with the downbeats implied by its bar lines.



A surprise comes in the development section when the aggressively bold opening theme waxes rapturously lyrical and a further surprise arrives with the movement's extended coda that almost sounds like a second development section.

Gaspar Cassadó

Suite for Solo Cello

Gaspar Cassadó is hardly a household name, but he was one of the great cellists of the twentieth century, active as a performer, composer and transcriber for his instrument. Born in Barcelona in 1897, he was discovered at the age of nine by a young Catalan cellist just starting out on his career, the 21-year-old Pablo Casals, and was accepted to study with him in Paris on a scholarship from his native city.

Among the strongest influences on him, however, came from Casals' championing of the Bach suites for solo cello, which certainly influenced the composition of his own *Suite for Solo Cello*, composed in 1926. Cassadó's student Marçal Cervera, who studied the piece with him, says that it represents in its three movements three important cultural regions of Spain: Castilla-La Mancha, Catalonia, and Andalusia.

Like the Bach suites, Cassadó's suite is a collection of dances, introduced by a *Preludio*, which in the first movement of his suite turns into a *zarabanda*, related to the baroque *sarabande*.

PRELUDIO - FANTASIA

Gaspar Cassadó



Cervera suggests that the two presentations of the opening theme, one *forte*, the other *piano*, represent in turn Don Quixote and his beloved, Dulcinea. But other associations run through the movement as well, including quotations from Ravel's *Daphnis & Chloe* (the famous opening flute solo) and from Zoltan Kodaly's *Sonata for Solo Cello*.

The second movement is a *sardana*, the folk dance most closely associated with the Catalan nationalist revival of the 19th century. The *sardana* is a round dance accompanied by a *cobla* wind band comprising a high-whistling *flaviol* (wooden fipple flute), double-reed shawms and various brass instruments.



The opening, played entirely in harmonics, imitates the high whistling sound of the *flaviol* summoning the dancers to the town square. The *sardana* is a dance in three parts, the middle section being more lyrical and in a minor key. The frequent changes in register on the cello imitate the way that various sections of the band interact.



The last movement is the one in which the spirit of the dance is most evident, with the snap of castanets imitated in sharp, abrupt rhythms, the strumming of the guitar in flamboyant arpeggio patterns, and the harmonies of Spanish folk music in the distinctive pattern of the four-note descending bass line.

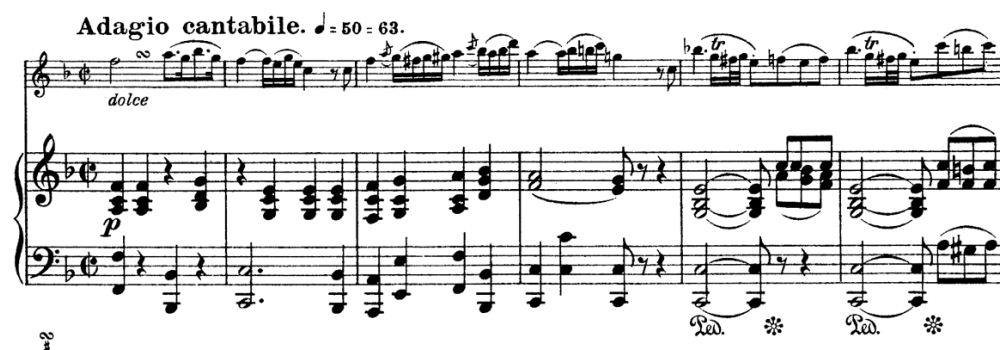
Ludwig van Beethoven

Romance No. 2 in F major Op. 50

Beethoven's *Romance in F major*, originally for violin and orchestra, was composed in 1798 and is thought perhaps to be the slow movement from an uncompleted violin concerto that Beethoven was known to be working on at the time.

The term 'romance' as an instrumental genre was a relatively new coinage, having previously been most often applied to vocal music. As an instrumental piece it implied a tender and innocently sentimental melody performed in a lyrical songful style.

Beethoven delivers on both counts in this work, which he structures as a rondo comprised of three statements of the opening refrain and two contrasting episodes. His opening melody sees the violin playing high above a discreet background accompaniment of simple chords set in a lower register in order to spotlight the violin's singing tone and bright timbre.



The gracious quality of this melody is projected in the many small embellishments – turns, crush notes and trills – with which it is bejeweled on its first appearance. Subsequent statements will emphasize elaborate decoration of its underlying harmonies in smaller note values while the contrasting episodes will introduce an eye-brow-knitting shadow of minor-mode harmony, easily dispelled by the return of the opening theme.

Felix Mendelssohn

Scherzo from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (arr. Rachmaninoff)

Mendelssohn is known for his fleet-footed scherzos, and the Scherzo from his incidental music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, composed in 1842, is bang-on brand given that its subject is the mischievous race of light-as-a-feather fairies that inhabit the woodland setting of Shakespeare's play.

But structuring Mendelssohn's picturesque orchestration in a classical sonata form, with the opening hop-skip-and-jump motive in G minor as a first theme:



and a happy-go-lucky melody – cleverly hidden by the transcriber in the alto voice – as a second theme in B flat.



That transcriber is none other than Sergei Rachmaninoff, who in the 1930s, after writing his last work for solo piano – the Corelli Variations Op. 42 – created a series of transcriptions of other composers' works to use as 'toss-off' encore pieces at his own recitals. Mendelssohn's *Scherzo* is one of his most brilliant creations, forging an ingenious synthesis of Mendelssohnian scamper and Rachmaninoffian pianistic fireworks.

The late scholar and pianist Charles Rosen (1927-2012) believed that among the many transcriptions of this work, Rachmaninoff's shines far above the rest:

The sonorities seem to make their own accents, the arrangement between the hands seems to create the phrasing, and the orchestra is almost forgotten in the pianistic re-creation.

Pablo de Sarasate

Zigeunerweisen Op. 20

The 19th century was an era that exalted national musical styles with exotic tonal flavourings and, in this regard, the music of the Romani of the Austro-Hungarian Empire attracted composers as far apart aesthetically as Johannes Brahms, who wrote Hungarian Dances, and Franz Liszt, famous for his Hungarian Rhapsodies.

In 1877 it was the turn of Spanish virtuoso violinist Pablo de Sarasate, who visited Budapest and by his own account heard Hungarian Gypsy music there that he was inspired to incorporate into his soulful and dazzling *Zigeunerweisen* ("Gypsy Airs") for violin and piano – later elaborated into an orchestral version that has become a staple of the violin repertoire.

The melodies used were for the most part not authentic folk tunes but rather established Hungarian musical works that Sarasate mistook – perhaps disingenuously – for genuine 'gypsy music.'

Sarasate's *Zigeunerweisen*, like the traditional *czardas* music of Hungary, is characterized by variations in tempo, evoking the whimsical caprices of the improvising musician. It features an opening slow section followed by a brisk acrobatic finale.

The work begins with a lugubriously paced introduction in which the violinist channels a Romani fiddler enrapturing his campfire audience by seductively pulling them in to each phrase and then astonishing them with various dazzling feats of virtuosity on his instrument, as in the opening phrase:



Stereotypical semantic signifiers of the gypsy flavour of the proceedings are the use of the so-called 'Hungarian' minor scale with its sharp 4th degree, and the cadencing rhythm (much used by Liszt in his Hungarian Rhapsodies) 'DAH-dum-dump, dah-DAH'.

This stop-and-go progress continues throughout the following section in which the soloist lays his heart on his sleeve in a series of tearful glissandos and bewildering runs.



More sustained lyricism characterizes the following *Lento*, in which the violinist shows his emotional side by singing out an elegiac melody encrusted with ‘reverse-dotted’ rhythms (appearing as 16th-8th instead of 8th-16th) in imitation of sobbing.



But all is well in the finale, which begins with the opening theme of the final section of Liszt’s 13th Hungarian Rhapsody, which in the original looks like this:



Sarasate’s *Zigeunerweisen* is the ultimate showpiece, one that shows off the capabilities of the violinist in passages of double stops, rapid-fire harmonics, left-hand pizzicato and other virtuoso techniques meant to leave audiences with their mouths agape.

Bob Marley

Redemption Song (arr. Kanneh-Masons)

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Bob Marley and the Wailers emerged as the authentic voice of Reggae, a genre of popular music that came to represent Jamaican musical culture on the global stage. Marley’s adherence to the religious and social movement known as Rastafarianism gave his music a spiritual edge that fit well with his unstinting advocacy of political and societal change.

‘Redemption Song’, which appeared on the Wailers’ album *Uprising* in 1980, best represents the activist commitment he felt towards the wider world. With its plangent chorus of *Won’t you help to sing / These songs of freedom*, Marley expressed the hope that those hearing and admiring his music would act to bring about a better world.

In this arrangement by the Kanneh-Mason family, Sheku takes the lead melody on cello while relaxed syncopations and counter-melodies in the accompanying instruments evoke a uniquely Jamaican optimism about music’s power to enact change in the world.

Vittorio Monti

Czárdás (arr. Kanneh-Masons)

The Italian composer, conductor and violinist Vittorio Monti was another musician captivated by the emotional appeal and liveliness of Gypsy music. His popular violin *Czárdás* written in 1904 is the main reason he is remembered today.

Like Sarasate's *Zigeunerweisen*, Monti's *Czárdás* is structured in a series of sections with varying tempos, alternating between slow and fast. It differs, however, in that it is more a character piece than a virtuoso display vehicle and its range of expression is more compressed.

Having acquired his musical taste in Naples, where he was born and educated, Monti views the slow and fast sections like the *cavatina* and *cabaletta* in the accelerating pace of a Rossini opera aria. In the slow sections he emphasizes sustained pathos rather than astonishing drama. And the fast sections which alternate with them emphasize the exhilaration of endless strings of running figuration, similar to that found in Sarasate's finale but lacking the extreme acrobatic verve that incentivized the Spanish violinist to write his own 'Hungarian' score.

Program notes by Donald G. Gíslason 2023