

Harmonia Chamber Players With Joseph Vaz

Saturday, April 1, 2023 • 2:30 p.m.

University Unitarian Church

Harmonia Chamber Players

Joseph Vaz, piano



KENJI BUNCH (*1973)

Summer Hours

Early calm —
Quick and lively —
Slow, simple —
With anticipation —
Sunny

Virginia Knight Janof, flute and piccolo • **Rebecca Salmon**, oboe • **Steven Noffsinger**, clarinet
Robin Stangland, horn • **Jeff Eldridge**, bassoon • **Joseph Vaz**, piano

WILLIAM C. WHITE (*1983)

Sonata, Op. 45 — WEST COAST PREMIERE

Introduction — Theme and Variations —
Intermezzo —
Rondo-Fantasia

Joseph Vaz, piano

— **intermission** —

ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810–1857)

Piano Quintet in E \flat major, Op. 44

Allegro brillante
In modo d'una marcia — *Un poco largamente*
Scherzo: Molto vivace
Allegro ma non troppo

Stephen Provine, violin • **June Spector**, violin • **Katherine McWilliams**, viola
Max Lieblich, cello • **Joseph Vaz**, piano

Please silence cell phones and other electronics, and refrain from the use of cameras and recording devices during the performance.

Mr. Vaz's appearance this afternoon is generously supported by the CUNY Graduate Center.

Please join us for complimentary refreshments following the performance.

Harmonia Orchestra and Chorus

William White, music director • George Shangrow, founder

1916 Pike Pl. Ste 12 #112, Seattle WA 98101 • 206-682-5208 • www.harmoniaseattle.org

Guest Artist

A “performer of complex repertoire” (Isle of Wight Arts League *Creative Voice*), pianist **Joseph Vaz** has performed internationally as a soloist and chamber musician in the United States, Canada, Austria and Italy, in venues from Carnegie Hall to the Arnold Schönberg Center in Vienna. Born in Faro, Portugal, Mr. Vaz now lives in New York and studies at the CUNY Graduate Center with the renowned pianist and pedagogue Julian Martin. He is a laureate of several national and international competitions since 2012, with recent performances at the Seattle International Piano Competition, Robert Beardsley Piano Prize Competition and the West Virginia International Piano Competition.

Mr. Vaz frequently performs at international festivals, including recent appearances at the Internationale Sommerakademie in Reichenau, Orford Music Academy, Bowdoin Music Festival and Chautauqua Piano Institute. He has played for several acclaimed artists and pedagogues, including Byron Janis, Jerome Lowenthal, Jon Nakamatsu, John Perry and Natalya Antonova. His orchestral debut came with the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra in 2015, and he has also performed as soloist with the Seven Hills Sinfonietta and other orchestral ensembles.

An active collaborative pianist, Mr. Vaz has worked with a diverse array of musicians in chamber music and with multiple orchestras and choirs for operas and concert programs. He is a proponent of new music, working closely with several composers on pieces for world premieres. Interested in many genres, he enjoys working in contemporary music ensembles, musical theater and popular music. Outside of music, Mr. Vaz holds a bachelor’s degree in mathematics and a minor in French from Indiana University, and can be found on the 6 train with his nose in a book.

Program Notes

Composer and violist **Kenji Bunch** is currently artistic director of Fear No Music in Portland, where he also teaches viola, composition and music theory at Portland State University and Reed College, and for the Portland Youth Philharmonic. *The Washington Post* describes his music as “clearly modern but deeply respectful of tradition and instantly enjoyable.” A native of the Pacific Northwest, Bunch received conservatory training at the Juilliard School. His compositions have been performed by over 60 American orchestras, including recent commissions and premieres from the Seattle Symphony and Oregon Symphony. His music has been recorded on the Sony/BMG, EMI Classics, Koch, RCA and Naxos labels, among others.

Summer Hours was commissioned by Ellen Marcus and Annalise Soros for the Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festival, where it received its premiere on August 5, 2018 (with an ensemble featuring pianist Ran Dank, a former teacher of Joseph Vaz). Kenji Bunch dedicated the work to Marya Martin, artistic director of the festival and the flutist at the premiere, calling it “a celebration of my favorite season,

one rich in memories of lazy childhood days in the sun, long car trips and, more recently, favorite spots to visit as a performing musician at summer festivals.” *Summer Hours* “is drenched in an open, Americana sound, with folk influences including a setting of a 19th century folk song, ‘Peg and Awl,’ in the middle movement.”

“Joseph Vaz was my student (on string bass!) in the Cincinnati Symphony Youth Orchestra for three years,” writes **William C. White** about the evolution of his piano sonata, “and since then, he and I have remained in touch and become good friends. His senior year of high school, we collaborated on two concerto performances, Mozart’s D minor and Gottschalk’s *Grand Tarantella*.

“Sometime during the first year of Joseph’s master’s degree program at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, we started discussing the idea of my writing a piece for him and eventually settled on the idea of a sonata. He gave me lots of listening homework to fill the gaps in my knowledge about the existing repertoire, which I diligently completed, sending him regular commentary and analysis as I listened through his list.

“I had not intended to compose the sonata until late 2020, but my work began ahead of schedule due to Covid. For very unfortunate reasons, Seattle had one of the earliest lockdowns and it quickly became apparent that we were in it for the long haul. I quickly pivoted to ‘composer mode’ and the sonata was the first major work of what turned out to be an abnormally prolific compositional period for me.

“Being thoroughly acquainted with Joseph’s virtuosity, I held nothing back, neither musically nor technically. I could not have asked for a more fulfilling collaboration, and I rank this piece among my most important instrumental works, along with my symphony and trio for horn, viola and piano.” The sonata, in three movements played without pause, was written during March and April of 2020 and received its first public performance (by its dedicatee, Joseph Vaz) at the Bowdoin Music Festival on August 3, 2021.

In modern parlance, **Robert Schumann** might be labeled a “binge-composer.” In 1840, the year he married 20-year-old Clara Wieck, he composed 140 songs. He turned to the orchestra in 1841, producing two symphonies, and in 1842 concentrated on chamber music, composing three string quartets, *Phantasiestücke* for piano trio, a piano quartet and this piano quintet (described by Clara as “splendid, full of vigor and freshness”). Prior to this time, piano quintets most often featured a single violin plus viola, cello and bass (as in Schubert’s “Trout”) but Schumann used a string quartet plus piano, writing the first work with this instrumentation in the standard repertoire.

Composed during September and October 1842, Robert Schumann’s quintet is in four movements. The second-movement funeral march is apparently modeled after the Piano Trio No. 2 of Franz Schubert (also in E♭ major). When Clara Schumann fell ill shortly before the work’s private premiere in December 1842, Felix Mendelssohn stepped in to play the piano part and subsequently suggested that Schumann add a second trio to the third movement.