

# Lincoln Center's 2018/19 GREAT PERFORMERS

The Program

Tuesday, April 30, 2019 at 7:30 pm

Joshua Bell, *Violin*  
Steven Isserlis, *Cello*  
Jeremy Denk, *Piano*

MENDELSSOHN **Piano Trio No. 2 in C minor (1845)**

Allegro energico e fuoco  
Andante espressivo  
Scherzo: Molto allegro quasi presto  
Finale: Allegro appassionato

SHOSTAKOVICH **Piano Trio No. 2 in E minor (1944)**

Andante  
Allegro con brio  
Largo  
Allegretto

*Intermission*

RACHMANINOFF **Trio élégiaque No. 1 in G minor (1892)**

RAVEL **Piano Trio (1914)**

Modéré  
Pantoum (Assez vif)  
Passacaille (Très large)  
Finale (Animé)

*Please make certain all your electronic devices are switched off.*

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**This performance is made possible in part by the Josie Robertson Fund for Lincoln Center.**

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*Steinway Piano*  
Alice Tully Hall, Starr Theater  
Adrienne Arsht Stage

## Great Performers

Support is provided by Rita E. and Gustave M. Hauser, The Shubert Foundation, The Katzenberger Foundation, Inc., Audrey Love Charitable Foundation, Great Performers Circle, Lincoln Center Spotlight, Chairman's Council, and Friends of Lincoln Center

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### UPCOMING GREAT PERFORMERS EVENTS:

*Sunday, May 19 at 11:00 am in the Walter Reade Theater*

**Francesco Piemontesi**, piano

BACH: Italian Concerto

DEBUSSY: Images, Book II

RACHMANINOFF: Piano Sonata No. 2

*Sunday, May 19 at 3:00 pm in David Geffen Hall*

**Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra**

**Manfred Honeck**, conductor

**Till Fellner**, piano

BEETHOVEN: Piano Concerto No. 5 ("Emperor")

MAHLER: Symphony No. 5

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*We would like to remind you that the sound of coughing and rustling paper might distract the performers and your fellow audience members.*

*In consideration of the performing artists and members of the audience, those who must leave before the end of the performance are asked to do so between pieces. The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not allowed in the building.*

## Snapshot

By David Wright

All four works on this evening's program have a "looking back" quality to them. The two in the middle represent the Russian tradition of "elegaic trio," whether composed in memory of a friend (as Shostakovich did with his Piano Trio No. 2) or in contemplation of death (as with Rachmaninoff, then just 18, in his G-minor Trio). Bookending the performance, Mendelssohn's Piano Trio No. 2 looks back a generation to Beethoven and the C-minor fire of his "Pathétique" Sonata and Fifth Symphony, while Ravel seeks refuge from the gathering storm of World War I in the orderly world of musical genres associated with Haydn (piano trio) and Bach (passacaglia).

Needless to say, these composers' distinctive personalities quickly outdistance any outside influences or earlier models. Mendelssohn's C-minor mood turns out to be entirely characteristic of him, by turns fleet, lyrical, fizzy, and fervent. Shostakovich's intense sympathy for human suffering—the trio is contemporary with his great wartime symphony, the Eighth—is evident in every bar. Young Rachmaninoff may be indebted to Tchaikovsky for the crescendos and emotional climaxes in his one-movement piece, but the rich and complex piano part is pure Rachmaninoff. And as brilliant and charming as Ravel is in his trio, he is also experimenting constantly with irregular or overlapping meters, adapting a Malayan verse form (pantoum) as a musical movement, and generally being as modern as he wants to be.

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## Timeframe

## ARTS

**1845****Mendelssohn's Piano Trio No. 2**

Correspondence begins between poets Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett.

**1914****Ravel's Piano Trio**

James Joyce's *The Dubliners*

**1944****Shostakovich's Piano Trio No. 2**

*On the Town*, with music by Leonard Bernstein, opens on Broadway.

## SCIENCE

**1845**

Willis Carrier of the journal *Scientific American*

**1914**

Willis Carrier, inventor of modern air conditioning, secures a U.S. patent.

**1944**

Austrian pediatrician Hans Asperger describes symptoms of what becomes known as Asperger's syndrome.

## IN NEW YORK

**1845**

*The New York Evening Mirror* publishes "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe.

**1914**

Construction of Manhattan's Municipal Building is completed.

**1944**

The USS Missouri, site of World War II's formal end, is launched from Brooklyn's Navy Yard.

By David Wright

**Piano Trio No. 2 in C minor, Op. 66 (1845)**

FELIX MENDELSSOHN

*Born February 3, 1809, in Hamburg*

*Died November 4, 1847, in Leipzig*

*Approximate length: 30 minutes*

By 1845 Felix Mendelssohn, who was never physically robust, was feeling the effects of years of touring, performing, organizing concerts, and administering the Leipzig Conservatory. That spring, he was relieved to settle in Frankfurt for a few months, work on his edition of Bach organ works, enjoy family life, and begin ambitious new compositions, including the Piano Trio in C minor. Although it's easy to read a composer's biography into the music, there is no denying that this trio, the product of a contented time, has trouble maintaining that "frown in C minor," à la Beethoven, with which it begins. The stormy opening bars are soon mollified by a fervent theme that brings out Mendelssohn's Keatsian, Romantic-poet side.

The *Andante espressivo* is a kind of late distillation of Mendelssohn's "song without words" style—tuneful and full of pretty gestures, but intriguingly open-ended and irregular, and finely worked as a duet for the two string instruments. No one has ever matched Mendelssohn for his alchemy of furious yet leggiero ("light") writing in scherzos. This one almost completely ignores the traditional ABA form and gives instead the impression of flying straight ahead from start to finish.

The marking *Allegro appassionato* accurately describes the trio's finale, but it is a Mendelssohnian kind of passion, spun out in a broad musical line, supported by fine rhythmic bones. The composer's fondness for old Lutheran chorale tunes is evident in this movement's second theme, which strongly resembles the hymn tune known in English churches as "Old Hundredth."

**Piano Trio No. 2 in E minor, Op. 67 (1944)**

DMITRY SHOSTAKOVICH

*Born September 25, 1906, in St. Petersburg*

*Died August 9, 1975, in Moscow*

*Approximate length: 26 minutes*

On November 4, 1943, Shostakovich's old friend, the prominent scholar and critic Ivanovich Sollertinsky, attended the premiere of the composer's tragic wartime piece, the Eighth Symphony. Three months later, Sollertinsky introduced another performance of that work with a brilliant lecture. Five days after that, he died suddenly of heart failure. "I cannot

express in words all the grief I felt when I received the news," wrote a stunned Shostakovich to his friend's widow. He continued:

Ivan Ivanovich and I talked a great deal about everything. We talked about that inevitable thing waiting for us at the end of our lives—about death. Both of us feared and dreaded it. We loved life, but knew that sooner or later we would have to leave it.

If the Trio in E minor, Op. 67, has a program, it is contained in those words. Composed in the spring of 1944 and dedicated "to the memory of I.I. Sollertinsky," the work addresses not great issues of war and peace but the individual experience of grief. The music begins in a condition of immobility and devastation, as a canon for icy cello harmonics, violin, and piano bass that twists aimlessly around itself. The introduction of a new theme in folk dance style signals the beginning of a typically Shostakovichian buildup of energy and momentum.

The seeming affirmation of the first movement is immediately negated by the bitter irony of the second, a scherzo in everything but name, whose theme is virtually identical to that of the scherzo in the Eighth Symphony. An infinitely sad progression of eight piano chords is the foundation of the *Largo*, which takes the form of a passacaglia: while the piano repeats the chord sequence six times, the strings intertwine in keening voices of lamentation. As this music sinks back in resignation, a macabre "dance of death" for pizzicato violin begins, and we are in the finale, which climaxes with a frenzy of terror in the spirit of Picasso's painting *Guernica*. After a long descent from that peak, one finds oneself among echoes and recollections of the piece, closing with those solemn passacaglia chords.

### **Trio élégiaque No. 1 in G minor (1892)**

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF

*Born April 1, 1873, in Oneg, Russia*

*Died March 28, 1943, in Beverly Hills*

*Approximate length: 14 minutes*

When the pianist and conductor Nicholas Rubinstein died unexpectedly in March 1881, Tchaikovsky composed his Piano Trio in A minor, Op. 50, as a memorial. Tchaikovsky was a model to his Russian successors in many ways, but the most distinctive—and the most Russian—thing he bequeathed to them was the genre of the "elegiac trio," which has been taken up by generations of composers from Rachmaninoff to Shostakovich to Schnittke.

In 1891 the 18-year-old Rachmaninoff composed his Piano Concerto No. 1, and soon his opera *Aleko* would be performed at the Bolshoi Theatre, to respectful reviews. Tchaikovsky himself watched the young composer's progress and promoted his works; Rachmaninoff, being Rachmaninoff, composed

an elegiac trio of his own, being drawn to meditations on death even at a time of youthful success.

Although it is an early work, the G-minor trio begins in Rachmaninoff territory that has become familiar: a long piano melody urged on by an agitated string accompaniment. Soon, however, the violin and cello take their turns, and a Tchaikovsky-like series of crescendos and climaxes takes over. The piece's clear sonata form, smooth in the first and last sections and agitated in the central development, recalls chamber music by Schumann, whose style was a major influence on the Russian Romantic composers.

### **Piano Trio (1914)**

MAURICE RAVEL

*Born March 7, 1875, in Ciboure, France*

*Died December 28, 1937, in Paris*

*Approximate length: 14 minutes*

When the clouds of the Great War began to gather in 1914, the progressive composers Debussy and Ravel both turned for solace to the classical forms they had once scorned. In an emotional letter to a friend, Ravel reported that he was working "with an insane certainty and lucidity" on a piano trio, the great genre of Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, and Brahms. He also admitted that, as he composed, "the blues are at work too, and suddenly I find myself sobbing over my sharps and flats!"

The trio's elegant opening theme is almost, but not quite, in the steady three-to-a-bar of a minuet; Ravel has divided a 4/4 bar into eighth notes, 3+2+3, putting his minuet rhythm just a little out of kilter, to delightful effect. Ravel called the work's scherzo a "Pantoum," denoting a form of Malayan poetry in which alternating lines develop different thoughts in parallel with each other. In the middle, themes in 3/4 meter overlap with piano chords in 4/2, a unique phenomenon in Ravel's scores.

The piece then shifts from the second movement's exotic concept to a venerable Baroque musical form, the passacaglia. Ravel introduces a twisty tune in the piano's bass register, then repeats it in ever-changing settings. Again for maximum contrast, Ravel follows this saturnine music with a finale theme made of sparkling string tremolos and an airy piano tune, recalling both the twisty shape of the passacaglia theme and the charmingly irregular meters of the first movement.

*David Wright, a music critic for New York Classical Review, has provided program notes for Lincoln Center since 1982.*



LISA-MARIE MAZZUCCO

## **Joshua Bell**

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With a career spanning more than 30 years as a soloist, chamber musician, recording artist, conductor, and director, Joshua Bell is one of the most celebrated violinists of his era. Since 2011 he has served as music director of the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, succeeding the orchestra's founder, Neville Marriner. Mr. Bell's interests range from the repertoire's hallmarks to commissioned works, including Nicholas Maw's Violin Concerto, for which he received a Grammy Award. Mr. Bell has also premiered works of John Corigliano, Edgar Meyer, Jay Greenberg, and Behzad Ranjbaran.

Committed to expanding classical music's social and cultural impact, Mr. Bell has collaborated with peers, including Chick Corea, Wynton Marsalis, Chris Botti, Anoushka Shankar, Frankie Moreno, Josh Groban, and Sting. This spring he joins longtime friends Steven Isserlis and Jeremy Denk for a ten-city American trio tour. Mr. Bell also maintains an avid interest in film music, commemorating the 20th anniversary of *The Red Violin*, for which he performed as soloist on the Oscar-winning soundtrack, in 2018–19.

Through music and technology, Mr. Bell further seeks to expand the boundaries of his instrument. He has partnered with Embertone on the Joshua Bell Virtual Violin, a sampler created for producers, engineers, and composers. Mr. Bell also collaborated with Sony on the Joshua Bell VR experience.

An exclusive Sony Classical artist, Mr. Bell has recorded more than 40 albums, garnering Grammy, Mercury, Gramophone, and ECHO Klassik awards. Sony Classical's 2018 release, with Mr. Bell and the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, features Bruch's *Scottish Fantasy* and G-minor Violin Concerto.

Mr. Bell received the 2007 Avery Fisher Prize and was named *Musical America's* 2010 Instrumentalist of the Year and an "Indiana Living Legend." He received the 2003 Indiana Governor's Arts Award and a 1991 Distinguished Alumni Service Award from his alma mater, the Jacobs School of Music. He performs on the 1713 Huberman Stradivarius violin, with a François Tourte 18th-century bow.

## Steven Isserlis



Acclaimed worldwide for his profound musicianship and technical mastery, British cellist Steven Isserlis enjoys a uniquely varied career as a soloist, chamber musician, educator, author, and broadcaster. He appears with the world's leading orchestras and conductors—including the Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig, the philharmonics of Berlin, Vienna, London, and Los Angeles, and Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra—and gives recitals every season in major musical centers.

As a chamber musician, he has curated concert series for prestigious venues including London's Wigmore Hall, New York's 92nd Street Y, and the Salzburg Festival. Unusually, he also directs chamber orchestras from the cello in classical programs.

Mr. Isserlis has a strong interest in historical performance, working with many period-instrument orchestras and giving recitals with harpsichord and fortepiano. He is also a keen exponent of contemporary music and has premiered many new works, including John Tavener's *The Protecting Veil*, Thomas Adès's *Lieux retrouvés*, and György Kurtag's *For Steven*.

Mr. Isserlis's award-winning discography includes Bach's Cello Suites for Hyperion (*Gramophone's* Instrumental Album of the Year); Beethoven's complete works for cello and piano with Robert Levin; and the Elgar and Walton concertos with the Philharmonia Orchestra/Paavo Järvi. Recent recordings include the Brahms Double Concerto with Joshua Bell and the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, a World War I-inspired disc with Connie Shih that includes pieces performed on a travel cello which was played in the trenches, and—as director and soloist—concertos by Haydn and C.P.E. Bach with the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, which was nominated for a Grammy Award. His latest release, *Shostakovich & Kabalevsky Cello Sonatas*, with pianist Olli Mustonen, entered the U.K. classical album chart at No.1.

Since 1997, Mr. Isserlis has been artistic director of the International Musicians Seminar at Prussia Cove in Cornwall, England. He enjoys playing for children, and has created three musical stories with the composer Anne Dudley. For Faber, he has written two books for children, and a commentary on Schumann's famous *Advice for Young Musicians*. Mr. Isserlis's honors include a CBE in recognition of his services to music, the Schumann Prize of the City of Zwickau, and the Piatigorsky Prize. He performs on the Marquis de Corberon (Nelsova) Stradivarius of 1726, kindly loaned to him by the Royal Academy of Music.

## Jeremy Denk



MICHAEL WILSON

Jeremy Denk is one of America's foremost pianists. Winner of a MacArthur Fellowship and the Avery Fisher Prize, Mr. Denk was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, returns frequently to Carnegie Hall, and in recent seasons has performed with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Cleveland Orchestra.

Abroad, recent appearances include London's Wigmore Hall and the BBC Proms, and multiple perfor-

mances presented by the Barbican. He also has recent and upcoming debuts with the City of Birmingham Symphony, London Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic. In recital Mr. Denk also made recent debuts at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Philharmonie in Cologne, and Klavier-Festival Ruhr. This season he appears on a three-week recital tour, including appearances in Washington, D.C., Seattle, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and New York. Other highlights include play-directing Mozart on tour with the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, and curating a series of Mozart Violin Sonatas (Denk & Friends) at Carnegie Hall. He also appears in recital in Europe, including his return to the Wigmore Hall as part of a three-year residency.

His recording *c.1300–c.2000* has just been released by Nonesuch Records, with music ranging from Guillaume de Machaut, Gilles Binchois, and Carlo Gesualdo, to Stockhausen, Ligeti, and Glass. Mr. Denk made his Nonesuch debut with a pairing of masterpieces old and new: Beethoven's final Piano Sonata, Op. 111, and Ligeti's *Études*. His account of the Beethoven sonata was selected by BBC Radio 3's *Building a Library* as the best available version recorded on modern piano. His recent disc of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* reached No. 1 on the Billboard Classical charts.

Mr. Denk is also known for his original and insightful writing on music. His writing appears in *The New Yorker* and the *New York Times*, and he is working on a book to be published by Random House.

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## **Lincoln Center's Great Performers**

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Initiated in 1965, Lincoln Center's Great Performers series offers classical and contemporary music performances from the world's outstanding symphony orchestras, vocalists, chamber ensembles, and recitalists. One of the most significant music presentation series in the world, Great Performers runs from October through June with offerings in Lincoln Center's David Geffen Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Walter Reade Theater, and other performance spaces around New York City. From symphonic masterworks, lieder recitals, and Sunday morning coffee concerts to films and groundbreaking productions specially commissioned by Lincoln Center, Great Performers offers a rich spectrum of programming throughout the season.

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Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) serves three primary roles: presenter of artistic programming, national leader in arts and education and community relations, and manager of the Lincoln Center campus. A presenter of more than 3,000 free and ticketed events, performances, tours, and educational activities annually, LCPA offers 15 programs, series, and festivals including American Songbook, Great Performers, Lincoln Center Out of Doors, Midsummer Night Swing, the Mostly Mozart Festival, and the White Light Festival, as well as the Emmy Award-winning *Live From Lincoln Center*, which airs nationally on PBS. As manager of the Lincoln Center campus, LCPA provides support and services for the Lincoln Center complex and the 11 resident organizations. In addition, LCPA led a \$1.2 billion campus renovation, completed in October 2012.

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