



SAN FRANCISCO
PERFORMANCES

Photo: Camilla Greenwell



ALEXI KENNEY | Violin
OWEN DALBY | Violin and Viola
CHRISTOPHER COSTANZA | Cello
AMY YANG | Piano

Sunday, February 16, 2025 | 3:00pm
Presidio Theatre

**THE BEISCHER FAMILY
SUNDAY STRINGS SERIES**

ELFMAN

Piano Quartet

Ein Ding
Kinderspott
Duett für Vier
Ruhig
Die Wolfsjungen

KORNGOLD

Suite for Two Violins, Cello, and Piano Left-Hand, Opus 23

Präludium und Fuge: Kräftig und bestimmt
Walzer: Nicht schnell, anmutig
Groteske: Möglich rasch
Lied: Schlicht und innig. Nicht zu langsam
Rondo-Finale (Variationen): Schnell, heftig

This program is made possible in part by the generous support of The Beischer Family.

Alexi Kenney is represented by Opus 3 Artists opus3artists.com

Owen Dalby owendalby.com

Christopher Costanza costanzacello.com

Amy Yang amyjyang.com

Steinway Model D, Pro Piano, San Francisco

ARTIST PROFILES

Today is the San Francisco Performances debut of Alexi Kenney, Owen Dalby, Christopher Costanza, and Amy Yang.

Violinist **Alexi Kenney** is forging a career that defies categorization, following his interests, intuition, and heart. He is equally at home creating experimental programs and commissioning new works, soloing with major orchestras around the world, and collaborating with some of the most celebrated musicians of our time. Alexi is the recipient of an Avery Fisher Career Grant and a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award.

Highlights of Alexi's 2023–24 season included appearing as soloist with the Dallas, Pittsburgh, and Milwaukee Symphonies, leading a program of his own creation with the New Century Chamber Orchestra, and debuting a new iteration of his project *Shifting Ground* at the Baryshnikov Arts Center and the Ojai Festival, in collaboration with the new media and video artist Xuan. *Shifting Ground* intersperses seminal works for solo violin by J.S. Bach with pieces by Matthew Burtner, Mario Davidovsky, Nicola Matteis, Kaija Saariaho, Paul Wiancko, and Du Yun, as well as new commissions by composers Salina Fisher and Angélica Negrón. The album version of *Shifting Ground* was released in June 2024.

In recent seasons, Alexi has soloed with the Cleveland Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, l'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Detroit Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, Indianapolis Symphony, Gulbenkian Orchestra, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Oregon Symphony, Louisville Orchestra, and l'Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, as well as in a play-conduct role as guest leader of the Mahler Chamber Orchestra. He has played recitals at Wigmore Hall, on Carnegie Hall's "Distinctive Debuts" series, Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, 92nd Street Y, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival, and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. Winner of the 2013 Concert Artists Guild Competition and laureate of the 2012 Menuhin Competition, Alexi has been profiled by *Musical America*, *Strings Magazine*, and *The New York Times*, and has written for *The Strad*.

Chamber music continues to be a major part of Alexi's life, regularly performing at festivals including Caramoor, ChamberFest Cleveland, Chamber Music Northwest, Kronberg, La Jolla, Ojai, Marlboro, Music@Menlo, Ravinia, Seattle, and Spoleto. He is a founding member of Owls—an inverted quartet hailed as a "dream group" by *The New York Times*—alongside violist Ayane Kozasa, cellist Gabe Cabezas, and cellist-composer Paul Wiancko. Alexi is also an alum of the Bowers Program (formerly CMS 2) at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center.

Born in Palo Alto, California in 1994, Alexi is a graduate of the New England Conservatory in Boston, where he received an Artist Diploma as a student of Miriam Fried and Donald Weilerstein. Previous mentors in the Bay Area include Wei He, Jenny Rudin, and Natasha Fong. He plays a violin made in London by Stefan-Peter Greiner in 2009 and a bow by François-Nicolas Voirin.

Outside of music, Alexi enjoys hojicha, modernist design and architecture, baking for friends, and walking for miles on end in whichever city he finds himself, and listening to podcasts and Bach on repeat.

Praised as "dazzling" (*The New York Times*), "expert and versatile" (*The New Yorker*), and "a fearless and inquisitive violinist" (*San Francisco Classical Voice*), **Owen Dalby** leads a rich musical life as a

soloist, chamber musician, new and early music expert, orchestral concertmaster, and educator. He is Artist-in-Residence at Stanford University and lives in San Francisco.

As a member of the St. Lawrence String Quartet from 2015 until the group's retirement in 2024, Owen toured all of the major chamber series in North America and Europe, and made solo appearances with the LA Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and the NHK Philharmonic (Tokyo). Acclaimed recordings include Haydn *Opus 20* (EASonus), as well as his *String Quartets Opus 76* and Korngold's *Piano Quintet Opus 15* with Stephen Prutsman (Phenotypic Recordings). SLSQ was a particularly beloved ensemble in the world of contemporary string quartets, performing many dozens of concerts each season, inspiring and nurturing communities of chamber music enthusiasts, and influencing generations of young artists.

Prior to joining the SLSQ, Owen lived in New York City where he co-founded Decoda, the affiliate ensemble of Carnegie Hall, and was also the concertmaster of Novus NY, the contemporary music orchestra of Trinity Wall Street. He was also a key member of the Trinity Baroque Orchestra, performing the complete cantatas and passions of JS Bach alongside other great 16th and 17th century repertoire. He made his Lincoln Center debut in 2010 with Lou Harrison's *Concerto for Violin and Percussion Orchestra* at Alice Tully Hall, and that same year gave the world premiere of *Look Around You*, a one-man double concerto by Timo Andres for solo violin and viola, with the Albany Symphony Orchestra.

In 2010 Owen completed a three-year tenure with Ensemble Connect (formerly known as Ensemble ACJW), a fellowship of Carnegie Hall and the Juilliard School that seeks to link a performer's life with advanced training in education and community engagement. In addition to co-directing the chamber music program and maintaining a violin studio at Stanford, Owen has taught music to students in masterclasses in Mexico, Iceland, at the Britten-Pears Young Artist Program in Aldeburgh, UK, the Eastman School of Music, the San Francisco Conservatory, Princeton University, Skidmore College, and the University of South Carolina, among many other places.

Owen is regularly invited to perform chamber music at festivals from Hamburg to Honolulu, and from Iceland to Mumbai. His many chamber music collaborators have included Stephen Prutsman, Inon Barnatan, Anne-Marie McDermott, the Danish String Quartet, Daniel Hope, Christian Tetzlaff, Dawn Upshaw, the Persian kamancheh virtuoso Kayhan Kalhor, and Simon Rattle.

Owen received early training with Anne Crowden at the Crowden School in Berkeley, CA and bachelor's and master's degrees from Yale University where he studied with Syoko Aki. With his wife, violist Meena Bhasin, Owen is co-Artistic and Executive Director of Noe Music, a chamber music series in San Francisco, where they make their home with their children Leila and Knight.

Owen performs on the "Fetzer" Stradivarius made in Cremona in 1694.

For nearly four decades, cellist **Christopher Costanza** has enjoyed a varied and exciting career as a soloist, chamber musician, and teacher. A winner of the Young Concert Artists International Auditions and a recipient of a prestigious Solo Recitalists Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, Mr. Costanza has performed to wide critical acclaim throughout the U.S., Canada, South

America, Australia, New Zealand, Asia, and Europe. “Mr. Costanza demonstrated an unaffected, graceful approach to phrasing, a rugged, fearless technique, and, when necessary, an energetic headlong approach,” proclaimed *The New York Times*. And, from the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, praise for a recent performance of Bach’s *Unaccompanied Suites*: “Costanza revealed himself to be a thoughtful interpreter as well as a technician of no small skill. Tempos were brisk but never rushed, and dynamics were carefully measured. In the *Courante*, Costanza demonstrated a nice continuity of bowing, while the *Sarabande* became in his hands an introspective but eloquent song. He used the lightest of touches in the subsequent *Minuets* and brought an infectious rhythmic impulse to the concluding *Gigue*.”

Mr. Costanza, a graduate of the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, actively toured as the cellist of the St. Lawrence String Quartet (SLSQ) from 2003–23, performing over one hundred concerts annually throughout North America and in Europe, Asia, South America, Australia, and New Zealand. Beginning with the 2023–24 concert season, Mr. Costanza began to refocus his performance activities on solo performances and varied chamber music collaborations, including cycles of the complete Bach *Unaccompanied Cello Suites* at the Phillips Collection in Washington, DC, at Stanford University, and other locations; the complete Britten *Cello Suites* presented as a cycle; a collaboration with the Stanford Chamber Chorale on tour in Hawaii; solo and chamber music performances at multiple California Bay Area venues; and a concerto tour of France with the Stanford Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Costanza recently has embraced additional opportunities to express his musical passions, through pre-concert lectures, informal concert/lecture presentations, and program note writing.

Mr. Costanza is a full-time Artist in Residence at Stanford University, where he teaches cello and chamber music, serves as the Associate Director of Music for the Stanford Medical Humanities and Arts program, and performs concerts and gives lectures across campus. A strong proponent of contemporary music, Mr. Costanza has worked extensively with the world’s most notable composers, such as John Adams, Jonathan Berger, Osvaldo Golijov, Mark Applebaum, Pierre Boulez, Roberto Sierra, R. Murray Schafer, William Bolcom, and John Corigliano. As a student, he had the honor of studying Olivier Messiaen’s *Quartet for the End of Time* under the guidance of the composer.

Mr. Costanza’s discography includes chamber music and solo recordings on the Nonesuch, EMI/Angel, Naxos, Innova, Albany, and Summit labels. In 2006, he received a Grammy® nomination for his recording of chamber works for winds and strings by Mozart. In 2012, Mr. Costanza recorded the *Six Suites for Solo Cello* by J.S. Bach at the beautiful Banff Centre in Canada; those recordings, along with his extensive commentary, are available for streaming on his website, *costanzacello.com*. In August 2019, the SLSQ released its recording of all six *Opus 20 String Quartets* of Haydn, and in the summer of 2023, the new recording label Phenotypic released the final two SLSQ recordings: two of the *Opus 76* quartets by Haydn, and the Korngold *Piano Quintet* with pianist Stephen Prutsman.

Mr. Costanza is frequently heard on radio broadcasts worldwide, including the CBC in Canada, NPR in the United States, and on various European broadcasting networks. He is privileged to perform on an early 18th-century Venetian cello, part of the Harry R. Lange Collection of Musical Instruments and Bows at Stanford.

In addition to his varied musical interests, Mr. Costanza is an avid runner and hiker. A train enthusiast, he enjoys riding and

exploring the passenger railways of the world. He is fascinated by architecture and seeks out innovative architectural offerings in his travels. At home in California, he is passionate about cooking, focusing his attention on new and creative dishes that take advantage of the abundance of remarkable organic local produce.

A “jaw-dropping pianist who steals the show...with effortless finesse” (*Washington Post*), pianist **Amy Yang** aspires to affirm and advance connections between the arts and its communities through committed expressions of musical leadership on and off stage.

In the recent past, she soloed with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra under Osmo Vänskä at Marian Anderson Hall at the Kimmel Center; recorded the complete Schumann Sonatas (on fortepiano) with violinist Alexi Kenney; played with saxophonist Valentin Kovalev at Carnegie Recital Hall; toured throughout the U.S. with Merz Trio; gave world premieres of pieces by Steve Mackey and Richard Danielpour; taught as faculty of New York Youth Symphony, Dallas Chamber Music Society, Chamber Music Athens, Norfolk, Borromeo and Olympic Music Festivals; played for patients at Penn Memory Center and the ICUs of UW Hospital; recorded for Curtis Studio’s new release—*A Century of New Sounds*—with David Shifrin and Patrick Williams; played solo recitals of Brahms, the Schumanns, Rorem, Ligeti; and appeared on series and festivals such as Spoleto, Chamberfest Cleveland, Texas Music Festival, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Seattle Chamber Music Series, Music Middays, Santa Fe Music Festival, Kingston Chamber Music Festival, and Bridgehampton, amongst others. At the Curtis Institute of Music, she serves as the Director of Chamber Music and Piano Studies.

In the height of the pandemic in 2020, she was invited by Anne-Marie McDermott to share a unique summer of 41 concerts with Yefim Bronfman, Paul Neubauer, and the Dover Quartet in a myriad of performances at Bravo! Vail. Additionally, she gave her debut solo recital as well as joined forces with the Jasper String Quartet in piano quintets by Tania Léon and Joan Tower for Philadelphia Chamber Music Society’s 35th season. She was also featured in a full episode with Emmy® Award-winning producer Jim Cotter of *Articulate*, aired on PBS in 2021. Collaborating with trailblazing musicians, Yang toured with Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Tito Muñoz and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, and premiered a large chamber work by Michael Hersch at Cal Performances, Ojai Music Festival and Aldeburgh Festival. She has had the privilege to share stages (and benches) with Richard Goode, Anne-Marie McDermott, Ida and Ani Kavafian, Miriam Fried, Hsin-Yun Huang, Paul Huang, Alexi Kenney, Bomsori Kim, Tessa Lark, Roberto Díaz, Kim Kashkashian, Paul Neubauer, Tara Helen O’Conor, David Shifrin, Joseph Silverstein, Philippe Tondre, Danbi Um, members of Guarneri String Quartet, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Dover Quartet, Aizuri String Quartet, Jasper String Quartet and A Far Cry. In addition to working with Dame Mitsuko Uchida at Marlboro School of Music, she was chosen to participate in her Carnegie Hall Workshop on Mozart’s *Piano Concerti*.

Yang’s energetic exploration of contemporary voices has brought forth giving world premieres of music by Caroline Shaw, Richard Danielpour, Avner Dorman, Michael Hersch, Ezra Laderman, Paul Wiancko, and commissions from Scott Ordway, Edward Babcock, Alistair Coleman, and Hua Yang.

Piano Quartet

DANNY ELFMAN

(B. 1953)

Audiences identify Danny Elfman as a film composer, and rightly so: he composed the scores for such films as *Beetlejuice*, *Batman*, *Edward Scissorhands*, *Good Will Hunting*, and *Men in Black* as well as the music for such television series as *Desperate Housewives* and *The Simpsons*. But like many film composers, Elfman is drawn to classical music, and he has composed concertos for violin, for cello, and for percussion, as well as a *Suite for String Orchestra*, which has been performed by the Orpheus and Los Angeles Chamber Orchestras.

Elfman's *Piano Quartet* was commissioned jointly by the Lied Center for Performing Arts University of Nebraska and the Berlin Philharmonic Piano Quartet. That ensemble gave the premiere performance in Lincoln, Nebraska, on February 6, 2018, and the piece has been widely performed since then. In a broadcast interview, Elfman confessed that when he accepted the commission, he was not entirely sure what a piano quartet was, and he was relieved to learn that it did not involve four pianos. The composer has prepared an introduction to this work:

"It was 2017 and I was travelling to Berlin to hear the Berlin Philharmonic perform. As usual it was a spectacular event. While there, I met Knut Weber, their principal cellist. He was the one who suggested the possibility of writing a piano quartet for his ensemble, The Berlin Philharmonic Piano Quartet. I was once again faced with something to explore that I knew absolutely nothing about, so of course I immediately agreed. Having only recently finished the violin concerto, I was much more relaxed with diving into what was, for me, more uncharted territory. The idea of writing a string quartet was intimidating, as I'm so infatuated by the string quartets of Shostakovich—but the presence of a piano gave me a bit more confidence, and I loved the freedom that the genre provides. For some strange reason, my first thematic thought going into it was doing variations on the familiar children's schoolyard taunt: 'Nya, nya, nya, nya nya...' I had no idea why but wasn't aware of anyone doing that before and thought it would be fun. It was. You can hear it in the second movement of the quartet, *Kinderspott*. It was a great pleasure writing my first quartet for such wonderful musicians." (*Danny Elfman*)

Suite for Two Violins, Cello, and Piano Left-Hand, Opus 23

ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD

(1897–1957)

Paul Wittgenstein (1887–1961) came from one of the most urbane families in turn-of-the-century Vienna: his brother was the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Paul studied piano with Theodore Leschetizky, teacher of Paderewski and Schnabel. The young pianist made his professional debut in Vienna in December 1913 and seemed on the verge of distinguished career. And then, disaster: World War I began eight months later, and Wittgenstein—serving on the eastern front—was wounded so badly during the first month of fighting that his right arm had to be amputated. He returned to Vienna after spending the war in a prisoner camp in Siberia.

A lesser man might have been crushed by such a fate, but Wittgenstein came home determined to create a piano repertory for the left hand. He turned the family fortune to the creation of such music, and the list of works he commissioned is distinguished. Most famous of these is Ravel's *Piano Concerto for the Left Hand*, and Strauss, Britten, Prokofiev, and others wrote works for Wittgenstein. One of the composers to whom Wittgenstein turned for a concerto was the prodigious Erich Wolfgang Korngold, whose opera *Die tote Stadt* had been premiered simultaneously in Hamburg and Cologne in 1920, when the composer was only 23. Korngold composed a massive and very difficult *Piano Concerto in C-sharp Minor* for Wittgenstein, who gave the premiere in 1923. The pianist was pleased with the concerto, and five years later he came back to Korngold and asked for a chamber piece. For this commission, Korngold composed an unusual work for unusual forces: a *Suite for Two Violins, Cello, and Piano Left-Hand*. Completed in the spring of 1930, it was first performed in Vienna on October 21, 1930, by Wittgenstein and members of the Rosé Quartet (led by Arnold Rosé, Mahler's brother-in-law). Wittgenstein liked the piece and performed it frequently on his tour of the western United States in 1934.

Wittgenstein had every reason to be pleased with this music. The suite is a large-scale work (its five movements span nearly 40 minutes), and the writing for the left hand is so brilliant and wide-ranging that anyone just hearing this music would imagine that it requires both hands. Further, Korngold's late-romantic idiom, which ranges from a Viennese elegance to a Mahlerian grotesquerie, makes for some very appealing music—only the unusual forces required have kept this music from being performed more often and so from being better-known.

The opening movement gets off to an aggressive start. Piano alone has the long opening statement (Korngold marks it "Powerful and determined") before the strings make their own decisive entrance. The main part of this extended movement is a fugue, introduced by the cello with successive entrances from piano and then the violins. Along the way come a rhapsodic interlude and a cadenza-like passage for solo piano before the movement drives to its soaring conclusion.

The next two movements are sharply contrasted. The second movement is a sequence of waltzes (filtered through a late-romantic perspective), while the aptly-named *Groteske* is a scherzo in ternary form—its skittering, nervous outer sections frame a somber central episode. The fourth movement, called *Lied*, is just that: Korngold based this movement on his song *Was du mir bist?*, which he had composed the year before. This movement is a lyric meditation on the song, and Korngold asks that the performance be "simple and expressive." The powerful finale is a rondo in the form of a set of variations. Korngold marks it "vehement," though the music feels more exuberant than violent. The basic theme-shape, an amiable subject announced by the cello at the beginning, evolves across the span of this movement, which drives to a sonorous close.

—Program notes by Eric Bromberger

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2024–25 Season Calendar

All performances at Herbst Theatre unless otherwise indicated

September 2024

Sat 28 7:30pm Hot Club of San Francisco
(Presidio Theatre)

October 2024

Fri 4 7:30pm *Gala Performance:*
Jake Heggie, piano
Nicholas Phan, tenor

Sat 12 7:30pm Karim Sulayman, tenor
Sean Shibe, guitar
(Presidio Theatre)

Sat 26 10:00am Alexander String Quartet with
Robert Greenberg

Sat 26 7:30pm Esmé Quartet

Sat 2 10:00am Alexander String Quartet with
Robert Greenberg

Thu 7 7:30pm Jerusalem Quartet
(Caroline H. Hume Concert Hall)

Wed 13 7:30pm Natasha Paremski, piano

Thu 14 7:30pm Caroline Shaw, viola/vocals
Gabriel Kahane, piano/vocals

Tue 19 7:30pm Anthony Roth Costanzo,
countertenor
Bryan Wagorn, piano

December 2024

Tue 3 7:30pm Anthony McGill, clarinet
Pacifica Quartet

January 2025

Sat 11 10:00am Alexander String Quartet with
Robert Greenberg

Sat 25 10:00am Alexander String Quartet with
Robert Greenberg

Sat 25 8:00pm MILOŠ, guitar*

Wed 29 7:30pm *PIVOT Festival:*
Gabriel Kahane, curator · conductor
Carla Kihlstedt, violin/vocals
Del Sol Quartet

Thu 30 7:30pm *PIVOT Festival:*
Gabriel Kahane, curator · host
Haley Heynderickx, guitar/vocals
The Westerlies

Fri 31 7:30pm *PIVOT Festival:*
Gabriel Kahane, curator · host
Sandbox Percussion

February 2025

Tue 4 7:30pm Sir Stephen Hough, piano

Sat 8 10:00am Alexander String Quartet with
Robert Greenberg

Sat 8 7:30pm Marc-André Hamelin, piano

Sat 15 7:30pm Steven Isserlis, cello
Connie Shih, piano

Sun 16 3:00pm Alexi Kenney, violin
Owen Dalby, violin & viola
Christopher Costanza, cello
Amy Yang, piano (Presidio Theatre)

Sat 22 7:30pm Amjad Ali Khan, sarod
Sharon Isbin, guitar
Amaan & Ayaan Ali Bangash, sarod*

Wed 26 7:30pm Fleur Barron, mezzo-soprano
Kunal Lahiry, piano

Thu 27 7:30pm Dreamers' Circus
(Presidio Theatre)

March 2025

Sat 8 7:30pm Calidore String Quartet

Tue 11 7:30pm Midori, violin
Özgür Aydin, piano

Fri 14 7:30pm Pavel Haas Quartet

Thu 20 7:30pm Jan Lisiecki, piano

Fri 21 7:30pm Tetzlaff Quartet

Tue 25 7:30pm Louis Lortie, piano

Fri 28 7:30pm Johan Dalene, violin
Sahun Sam Hong, piano

Sat 29 7:30pm Thomas Dunford, lute*
(St. Mark's Lutheran Church)

April 2025

Tue 1 7:30pm Joyce Yang, piano

Thu 3 7:30pm Randall Goosby, violin
Zhu Wang, piano

Sun 6 3:00pm Owen Dalby, violin
Geneva Lewis, violin
Masumi Per Rostad, viola
Hannah Collins, cello
(Presidio Theatre)

Wed 16 7:30pm Isidore String Quartet

May 2024

Sat 3 7:30pm Manuel Barrueco, guitar*

Sun 4 3:00pm Christopher Costanza, cello
(Presidio Theatre)

* Presented in association with OMNI Foundation for the Performing Arts