



presents...

The Shenson Great Artists & Ensemble Series

AUGUSTIN HADELICH | Violin
FRANCESCO PIEMONTESE | Piano

Friday, March 20, 2026 | 7:30pm

Herbst Theatre

NICOLAS DE GRIGNY **Récit du chant de l'hymne précédent**
(arr. Francesco Piemontesi)

CLAUDE DEBUSSY **Sonata for Violin and Piano in G Minor (1916/17)**
Allegro vivo
Intermède: Fantasque et léger
Finale: Très animé

JEAN PHILIPPE RAMEAU **Pièces de Clavecin en Concert:**
Second Concert in G Major, "La Boucon", RCT 8
(arr. Francesco Piemontesi)

FRANCIS POULENC **Sonata for Violin and Piano, FP 119 (1943—rev. 1949)**
"à la mémoire de Federico García Lorca"
Allegro con fuoco
Intermezzo
Presto tragico

INTERMISSION

GYÖRGY KURTÁG

Tre Pezzi, Op. 14e

Öd und Traurig

Vivo

Aus der Ferne

CÉSAR FRANCK

Sonata for Violin and Piano in A Major (1886)

Allegretto ben moderato

Allegro

Ben moderato: Recitativo-Fantasia

Allegretto poco mosso

**This series is made possible in part by the generous support of
Fred M. Levin, The Shenson Foundation.**

This performance is made possible in part by the generous support of James and Kathleen Leak.

Augustin Hadelich is represented by KD Schmid
459 Columbus Ave, Suite #4066, New York, NY 10024 kdschmid.com

Francesco Piemontesi is represented by Opus 3 Artists
250 West 34th Street, WorkLife Office, Suite 313, New York, NY 10119 opus3artists.com

Steinway Model D, Pro Piano, San Francisco.

ARTIST PROFILES

San Francisco Performances presents Augustin Hadelich for the first time.

San Francisco Performances presents Francesco Piemontesi for the second time. He first appeared in May 2019.



Augustin Hadelich is one of the great violinists of our time. Known for his phenomenal technique, insightful and persuasive interpretations, and ravishing tone, he appears extensively on the world's foremost concert stages. Hadelich has performed with all the major American orchestras as well as the Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, and many other eminent ensembles.

In the 2025–26 season, Hadelich will be the Artist in Residence with the Boston Symphony Orchestra where he will be featured in concerto, chamber music, and solo violin recital formats. He will also appear with the Chicago Symphony, The Cleveland Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, Houston Symphony, St. Louis Symphony, San Diego Symphony, and the New World Symphony.

Further invitations bring him to Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Amsterdam, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Staatskapelle Dresden, Munich Philharmonic, Tonhalle Orchestra Zürich, Festival Strings Lucerne, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia Rome, Czech Philharmonic, and Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra.

In 2016, Hadelich received a Grammy® Award for his recording of Dutilleux's *Violin Concerto "L'Arbre des songes"* with Seattle Symphony and Ludovic Morlot. A Warner Classics Artist, his most recent album *American Road Trip* with pianist Orion Weiss, was released in August 2024.

Hadelich is a dual American-German citizen born in Italy to German parents. In

2021, he was appointed to the violin faculty at Yale School of Music. He plays a 1744 violin by Giuseppe Guarneri del Gesù, known as "Leduc, ex Szeryng", on loan from the Tarisio Trust.



Francesco Piemontesi is a pianist of exceptional refinement of expression, which is allied to a consummate technical skill. Widely renowned for his interpretation of Mozart and the early Romantic repertoire, Piemontesi's pianism and sensibility have a close affinity, too, with the later 19th century and 20th century repertoire of Brahms, Liszt, Dvořák, Ravel, Debussy, Bartók, and beyond. Of one of his great teachers and mentors, Alfred Brendel, Piemontesi says that Brendel taught him, "to love the detail of things".

He appears alongside the world's leading orchestras from the Berliner Philharmoniker to the New York Philharmonic and from London to NHK Symphony Orchestras and is a regular guest at festivals such as the Salzburg, Lucerne, Schleswig-Holstein Musik festivals, as well as the BBC Proms.

Highlights of Piemontesi's 2025–26 season include the *Wizard of Sound* (Neue Zürcher Zeitung) returning to Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, where he was formerly Artist in Residence, for the world premiere of Beat Furrer's *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 2*, before joining the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks for subsequent performances. Additional returns include Leipzig Gewandhausorchester, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, Seoul Philharmonic, and tours with Royal Scottish National Orchestra, and Mahler Chamber Orchestra. He debuts with the Atlanta, Baltimore, and Detroit Symphony Orchestras.

In recital, Piemontesi delivers pure piano poetry to the Musikverein, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Wigmore Hall, Schuber-

tiade, Basel, Siena, and Alicante. He also collaborates with Augustin Hadelich in recitals across the United States, weaving the sonatas for violin and piano of Debussy, Poulenc, and Franck with works by de Grigny, Rameau, and Kurtág.

His discography with Pentatone includes recent Liszt (2023), Bach (2021) and Schubert (2019) albums. In fall 2025, Piemontesi released the first of two Brahms discs, featuring the composer's late solo piano works and concertos with Leipzig Gewandhausorchester and Manfred Honeck.

PROGRAM NOTES

Recit du Chant de l'hymne précédent

NICOLAS DE GRIGNY
(1672–1703)

Born into a family of organists, Nicolas de Grigny trained in Reims, worked briefly as an organist in Paris while in his early twenties, then returned to his native city, where he served as organist at the Notre-Dame de Reims. In 1699, when he was 27, de Grigny published his only work, *Premier livre d'orgue*, a collection of liturgical settings with organ accompaniment. De Grigny died at the age of only 31, and in 1711 his widow published a second edition, which proved extremely influential: J.S. Bach so admired it that he copied the entire book by hand.

The title *Recit du Chant de l'hymne précédent* translates "Recitative on the melody of the preceding hymn," which in this case was the *Pange, lingua*, a thirteenth-century hymn attributed to Saint Thomas Aquinas (that title is sometimes translated "Sing, tongue, the Savior's Glory"). De Grigny's piece, essentially an organ interlude based on that hymn, consists of two melodic lines—played by the two hands—above a steady bass accompaniment played by the feet. The present arrangement for violin and piano was made by Francesco Piemontesi, the pianist at this recital.

Sonata for Violin and Piano in G Minor

CLAUDE DEBUSSY
(1862–1918)

Debussy's final years were wretched. He developed colon cancer in 1909 and underwent a painful operation, radiation

therapy, and drug treatment. It was all to no avail, and the disease took its steady course. The onslaught of World War I in 1914 further depressed him, but it also sparked a wave of nationalistic fervor, and he set about writing a set of six sonatas for different combinations of instruments. It may seem strange that the iconoclastic Debussy would return in his final years to so structured a form as the sonata, but he specified that his model was the French sonata of the eighteenth century and not the classical German sonata. To make his point—and his nationalistic sympathies—even more clear, Debussy signed the scores of these works “Claude Debussy, musicien français.”

Debussy lived to complete only three of the projected six sonatas: the *Cello Sonata* (1915); *Sonata for Flute, Viola, and Harp* (1916); and the *Violin Sonata*, completed in April 1917. It was to be his final work, and it gave him a great deal of difficulty. From the depths of his gloom, he wrote to a friend: “This sonata will be interesting from a documentary viewpoint and as an example of what may be produced by a sick man in time of war.” Debussy played the piano at the premiere on May 5, 1917, and performed it again in September at what proved to be his final public appearance. His deteriorating health confined him to his room thereafter, and he died the following March.

For all Debussy’s dark comments, the *Violin Sonata* is a brilliant work, alternating fantastic and exotic outbursts with more somber and reflective moments. In three concise movements, the sonata lasts only about thirteen minutes. Debussy deliberately obscures both meter and key over the first few measures of the *Allegro vivo*, and only gradually does the music settle into G minor. The haunting beginning of the movement feels subdued, almost ascetic, but the dancing middle section in E major is more animated. Debussy brings back the opening material and rounds off the movement with a *con fuoco* coda.

The second movement brings a sharp change of mood after the brutal close of the first. Debussy marks it *fantasque et léger* (“Fantastic [or fanciful] and light”), and the violin opens with a series of leaps, swirls, and trills before settling into the near-hypnotic main idea. The second subject, marked “sweet and expressive,” slides languorously on glissandos and arpeggios, and the movement comes to a quiet close. Over rippling chords, the finale offers a quick reminiscence of the very opening

of the Sonata, and then this theme disappears for good and the finale’s real theme leaps to life. It is a shower of triplet sixteenths that rockets upward and comes swirling back down: the composer described it as “a theme turning back on itself like a serpent biting its own tail.” There are some sultry interludes along the way, full of glissandos, broken chords, rubato, and trills, but finally the swirling energy of the main theme drives the music to its animated close.

Debussy may have been unhappy about this music while working on it, but once done he felt more comfortable with it, writing to a friend: “In keeping with the contradictory spirit of human nature, it is full of joyous tumult...Beware in the future of works which appear to inhabit the skies; often they are the product of a dark, morose mind.”

Pièces de Clavecin en Concert: Second Concert in G Major, “La Boucon”, RCT 8

JEAN-PHILIPPE RAMEAU
(1683–1764)

Jean-Philippe Rameau wished above all else to succeed as a composer of opera, though his modern reputation rests largely on his harpsichord music. Rameau did not write in so disciplined a form as the keyboard sonata, but instead specialized in descriptive pieces, many with evocative titles. These pieces—short, lively, and beautifully written for the instrument—are often in dance forms, but Rameau also wrote a number of pieces to describe or evoke specific subjects. Some of the latter are descriptive music (he wrote pieces about knitters, a whirlwind, a person with a limp, chickens, Indians, and so on), and some suggest specific moods (triumph, indifference).

The present work sprang from a different inspiration entirely. One of Rameau’s harpsichord students was a young woman named Anne-Jeanne Boucon (1708–1780); she was a superb musician who later married the French composer Jean-Joseph Cassanéa de Mondonville. Rameau was not the only composer who admired the young woman, and several other composers wrote works dedicated to her. Rameau composed *La Boucon* about 1727, when Anne-Jeanne Boucon was 19, and he later included it in his *Pièces de clavecin en concert*, published in 1741. This affectionate portrait, which Rameau subtitled “Air gracieux” and which could be performed

by various combinations of instruments, is heard at this concert in Francesco Piemontesi’s arrangement for violin and piano.

Sonata for Violin and Piano

FRANCIS POULENC
(1899–1963)

Poulenc loved the sound of wind instruments. When he composed his *Sextet for Piano and Woodwind Quintet*, he referred to it as “an homage to the wind instruments I have loved from the moment I began composing,” and he wrote wonderfully for winds throughout his life. About stringed instruments, however, Poulenc was much less sure. In particular, the combination of a stringed instrument with piano—a combination that had seemed very natural to Beethoven and Brahms—gave Poulenc trouble. He noted that he did not like the sound of “the violin in the singular,” and he wrote only two string sonatas, the present violin sonata and one for cello. Yet both of these are impressive works.

A dark atmosphere hangs over the *Violin Sonata*. Poulenc composed it in Paris in 1942–43, during the German occupation, and dedicated it to the memory of the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca, who had been murdered by the Fascists during the Spanish Civil War. Poulenc was the pianist at the premiere of the *Violin Sonata*, and the violinist on that occasion was the young French violinist Ginette Neveu. When she was killed in an air crash in 1949, Poulenc went back and revised the last movement of this Sonata, which is pointedly marked *Presto tragico*.

One should not approach this Sonata thinking that it is all darkness and gloom, for it is not. The Sonata is in the expected three movements, and Poulenc treats the piano and violin as equals. The aptly-marked *Allegro con fuoco* is indeed full of fire. Poulenc marks the violin’s opening theme *Très violent*, and that marking will recur repeatedly throughout this sonata. The agitated beginning rides along a spiky energy that gives way to a more relaxed central episode, full of an unexpected sweetness; the opening material returns to drive the movement to a violent close. Poulenc attached a fragment of a quotation from Lorca to the slow movement—“The guitar makes dreams weep”—and we may hear something of the guitar, an instrument Lorca played, in the violin’s pizzicato strokes here. This music has an exotic character, its long lyric lines full of

dark swirls. The concluding *Presto tragico* returns to the manner of the opening movement, with a bristling energy and brilliant violin passages, including some for left-handed pizzicato. The ending is striking, and perhaps this is the section Poulenc re-fashioned after Neveu's death: the energy dissipates on a cadenza-like flourish for violin, and the Sonata vanishes on sharp strokes of sound.

Tre Pezzi, Opus 14e

GYÖRGY KURTÁG
(B. 1926)

György Kurtág, whose hundredth birthday took place last month, has composed with extraordinary economy and concentration. Most of his works are miniatures, complete compositions that sometimes pass by in a matter of seconds—one of his works consists of a total of seven notes. Kurtág also works very slowly: in *The New Grove Dictionary*, György Kroó notes that in the fourteen-year span 1959 to 1973, Kurtág wrote a total of ninety minutes of music.

In 1978 Kurtág, then 52 years old and teaching at the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest, traveled to Witten-Herdecke in western Germany for the premiere of one of his works. There he visited a Waldorf school and was impressed by their teaching methods, performances, and instruments. In response, Kurtág wrote a piece consisting of fifteen very brief movements that he titled *Herdecker Eurythmie, Opus 14b*. He scored it for the instruments on hand at the school—flute, violin, recitation, and lyre (or cimbalon)—and used those in various combinations across the span of the larger work.

The following year, in 1979, Kurtág pulled three movements scored for violin and piano (Nos. 7-8-9) out of the *Herdecker Eurythmie* and published them as his *Tre Pezzi, Opus 14e*. The three pieces are in a slow-fast-slow sequence and span about six minutes. The opening *Öd und traurig* (“desolate and sad”) features the violin playing doublestops without vibrato over quietly arpeggiated piano accompaniment. The static quality of this movement is underlined by the dynamic marking of triple *piano* and the instruction to both instruments to play with mute. The central *Vivo* is the shortest of the movements, lasting just over a minute. The violin's pointilistic harmonic E's give this music a spiky quality that suddenly turns violent. The *Tre Pezzi* conclude

with a movement marked *Aus der Ferne* (“from the distance”). This music, spectral and disembodied, grows gradually slower as it proceeds and finally fades into silence.

Sonata in A Major for Violin and Piano

CESAR FRANCK
(1822–1890)

Composed in 1886, the *Sonata in A Major* is one of the finest examples of Franck's use of cyclic form, a technique he had adapted from his friend Franz Liszt, in which themes from one movement are transformed and used over subsequent movements. The *Violin Sonata* is a particularly ingenious instance of this technique: virtually the entire sonata is derived from the quiet and unassuming opening of the first movement, which then evolves endlessly across the sonata. Even when a new theme seems to arrive, it will gradually be revealed as a subtle variant of one already heard.

The piano's quiet fragmented chords at the beginning of the *Allegretto ben moderato* suggest a theme-shape that the violin takes over as it enters: this will be the thematic cell of the entire Sonata. The piano has a more animated second subject (it takes on the shape of the germinal theme as it proceeds), but the gently-rocking violin figure from the opening dominates this movement, and Franck reminds the performers constantly to play *molto dolce, sempre dolce, dolcissimo*.

The mood changes completely at the fiery second movement, marked *passionato*, and some critics have gone so far as to claim that this *Allegro* is the true first movement and that the opening *Allegretto* should be regarded as an introduction to this movement. In any case, this movement contrasts its blazing opening with more lyric episodes, and listeners will detect the original theme-shape flowing through some of these.

The *Recitativo-Fantasia* is the most original movement in the Sonata. The piano's quiet introduction seems at first a re-visiting of the germinal theme, though it is ingeniously—a variant of the *passionato* opening of the second movement. The violin makes its entrance with an improvisation-like passage (this is the fantasia of the title), and the entire movement is quite free in both structure and expression: moments of whimsy alternate with passionate outbursts.

After the expressive freedom of the third movement, the finale restores order with pristine clarity: it is a canon in octaves, with one voice following the other at the interval of a measure. The stately canon theme, marked *dolce cantabile*, is a direct descendant of the Sonata's opening theme, and as this movement proceeds it recalls thematic material from earlier movements. Gradually, the music takes on unexpected power and drives to a massive coda and a thunderous close.

—Program notes by Eric Bromberger



ANTHONY MCGILL | Clarinet

GLORIA CHIEN | Piano

April 3 | 7:30pm | Herbst Theatre

Works by **DEBUSSY, MESSAGER, SAINT-SAËNS, SCHUMANN, and BRAHMS**

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