

Sunday, October 19, 2025

MIRANDA CUCKSON, VIOLIN BLAIR MCMILLEN, PIANO

Violin Sonata No. 8 in G major, Op. 30, No. 3 (1801–02)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

- I. Allegro assai
- II. Tempo di minuetto, ma molto moderato e grazioso
- III. Allegro vivace

Violin Sonata No. 1 in F minor, Op. 80 (1938–46)

Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953)

- I. Andante assai
- II. Allegro brusco
- III. Andante
- IV. Allegrissimo—Andante assai, come prima

INTERMISSION

The Wild Blue Yonder (1995)

Eleanor Alberga

D'un matin de printemps (1917–18)

Lili Boulanger (1893–1918)

Fiddle-doodle-ad: Eight American Folk Tunes for violin and piano (1946)

Ross Lee Finney (1906–1997)

- I. Rosin the Bow
- II. Rye Whiskey
- III. Wayfaring Stranger
- IV. Cotton Eye Joe
- V. Rippytoe Ray
- VI. The Nightingale
- VII. Oh, Lovely Appearance of Death
- VIII. Candy Girl

ISABELLA
STEWART GARDNER
MUSEUM

NOTE FROM THE CURATOR

I am delighted to welcome to Calderwood Hall two musicians whose work I have long admired. A musician's musician, the great violinist Miranda Cuckson can play anything—from the 16th century to the 21st. Her collaborator Blair McMillen is similarly an all-rounder. I look forward to hearing the magic these two of the country's finest chamber musicians make together.

—George Steel, *Abrams Curator of Music*

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Recently called a “fearless, visionary, and tremendously talented artist” (*Sequenza21*) and “a poetic soloist with a strong personality, yet unpretentious” (*Die Presse*, Vienna), **Miranda Cuckson** delights audiences with her performances of music ranging from older eras to the newest creations. An internationally active and acclaimed soloist and collaborator, violinist and violist, she enjoys performing at venues large and small, from concert halls to casual spaces. She has been a featured artist at the Berlin Philharmonie, Suntory Hall, Teatro Colón, Cleveland Museum, Art Institute of Chicago, San Francisco's Herbst Theater, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra's Liquid Music, 92nd Street Y, National Sawdust, and the Ojai, Bard, Marlboro, Portland, Music Mountain, West Cork, Grafenegg, Wien Modern, Frequency, and Le Guess Who? festivals.

Miranda made her Carnegie Hall debut playing Piston's Concerto No. 1 with the

American Symphony Orchestra. She recently premiered Georg Friedrich Haas's Violin Concerto No. 2 at the Vienna Musikverein with the Vienna Radio Symphony and with the Tokyo Symphony, Orchestra of Casa da Música in Porto, and SWR Symphonieorchester in Stuttgart. She also premiered the Violin Concerto by Marcela Rodríguez with the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de México at the Palacio de Bellas Artes.

Miranda is a member of interdisciplinary collective AMOC and director of the nonprofit Nunc. She has guest-curated at National Sawdust, the Contempo series in Chicago, and Miller Theatre in New York. Her many lauded albums include *Világ*, featuring the Bartók Solo Sonata with contemporary works; the Ligeti, Korngold, Ponce, and Piston concertos; music by 20th-century American composers; Bartók, Schnittke, and Lutoslawski sonatas; *Melting the Darkness*, an album of microtonal/electronic music; and Nono's *La lontananza nostalgica utopica futura*, named a Recording of the Year by the *New York Times*.

Miranda is an alumna of the Juilliard School and earned a doctorate degree there. She teaches violin and chamber music at Mannes School of Music, New School University, in the college and prep.

Hailed by the *New York Times* as “prodigiously accomplished and exciting” and as one of the piano's “brilliant stars,” pianist **Blair McMillen** has forged a musical life that is unbounded by convention. He is well known for his advocacy of living composers and contemporary music, as well as for championing very early keyboard music and more recent neglected masterpieces. For more than two decades, McMillen has divided his time as piano

soloist, chamber musician, music festival director, and educator/teacher.

McMillen has performed in major concert venues in New York, throughout the United States, and around the world. Recent appearances include concertos with the American Symphony Orchestra in Carnegie Hall, solo appearances with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and a three-week solo tour of Brazil sponsored by the U.S. State Department. He is a member of several prominent ensembles, including the American Modern Ensemble, the six-piano "supergroup" Grand Band, and the Perspectives Ensemble, among others. For 10 years he was pianist for the Naumburg Award-winning Da Capo Chamber Players. He has also performed with the International Contemporary Ensemble, the Knights, and the LPR Ensemble.

As a teacher and pedagogue, McMillen is in high demand. He has taught at Bard College and Conservatory since 2005, and he serves on the piano and collaborative piano faculty at Mannes at the New School in New York City. He regularly adjudicates at competitions and festivals throughout the United States and abroad. In past summers, McMillen has taught at the Elm City Chamber Festival, the Xi'an Festival, the Wellesley Composers Conference, the Samuel Barber Institute FEMUSC (Brazil), and the Bennington Chamber Music Festival, to name a few.

His first solo CD, *Soundings*, was released to critical acclaim in 2001. Since then, McMillen has been featured on dozens of commercially released solo, chamber, and orchestral recordings. An album of two-piano music with Stephen Gosling, *Powerhouse Pianists II*, was declared "one of the finest piano recordings of the year" by NPR. An ECM recording with violinist Miranda Cuckson was hailed by the

Guardian for "... playing that is frank and urgent, with powerfully stripped-back quiet passages and gritted-teeth ecstatic climaxes." McMillen was featured on a recent release, Harold Meltzer's GRAMMY® Award-nominated *Songs and Structures*. And in 2021, Naxos released McMillen's recording of Joan Tower's piano concerto *Still/Rapids* with the Albany Symphony Orchestra.

McMillen is the co-founder and co-director of the Rite of Summer Music Festival. Rite of Summer is a free, outdoor contemporary-music series held on New York City's Governors Island. The festival has presented boundary-pushing artists such as the JACK Quartet, Bang on a Can All-Stars, Tighe, Theo Bleckmann, Todd Reynolds, Contemporaneous, and Don Byron's New Gospel Quintet. Celebrating its 12th season in 2023, Rite of Summer is the only annual music festival on Governors Island, a place the *New Yorker* has called "an enormous playground for the arts."

McMillen holds degrees from Oberlin College, Manhattan School of Music, and the Juilliard School. While at Juilliard he was selected as concerto soloist on a tour of Japan with the Juilliard Orchestra. While there, he won the school's Gina Bachauer Competition and the Sony "Elevated Standards" Career Grant. McMillen's principal teachers have included Jerome Lowenthal, Robert McDonald, Sophia Rosoff, Joseph Kalichstein, and Byron Janis. He lives in New York with his wife, Kay, and son, Conor. In his spare time he enjoys biking, skiing, film, and the occasional semi-competitive game of table tennis.

UPCOMING PERFORMANCES:

**RACHEL BARTON PINE, VIOLIN
& VIOLA D'AMORE**

Sunday, October 26

**CLAIRE CHASE, FLUTES WITH
AISSLINN NOSKY, KATINKA KLEIJN,
& ALEX PEH**

Sunday, November 2

CLAYTON STEPHENSON, PIANO

Sunday, November 9

**SASHA COOKE, MEZZO-SOPRANO
WITH MYRA HUANG, PIANO**

Sunday, November 16

MICHELLE CANN, PIANO

Sunday, November 23

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum resides on the homelands of the Massachusetts Tribe, who belong to this place and continue to regard these lands and waters as sacred.

Music at the Gardner is supported by Nora McNeely Hurley / Manitou Fund. The Museum thanks its generous concert donors: The Coogan Concert in memory of Peter Weston Coogan; Fitzpatrick Family Concert; James Lawrence Memorial Concert; Alford P. Rudnick Memorial Concert; David Scudder in memory of his wife, Marie Louise Scudder; Wendy Shattuck Young Artist Concert; and Willona Sinclair Memorial Concert. The piano is dedicated as the Alex d'Arbeloff Steinway. The harpsichord was generously donated by Dr. Robert Barstow in memory of Marion Huse, and its care is endowed in memory of Dr. Barstow by The Barstow Fund. Music at the Gardner is also supported in part by Barbara and Amos Hostetter, Nicie and Jay Panetta, and the Massachusetts Cultural Council, which is supported by the state of Massachusetts and the National Endowment for the Arts.



Kindly turn off all electronic devices during the concert and refrain from any photography or filming in the hall. Also, please note the location of the emergency exit doors: across the hall from the doors through which you entered.