

Sunday, February 1, 2026

ROMUALD GRIMBERT-BARRÉ, VIOLIN TOMMY MESA, CELLO ALBERT CANO SMIT, PIANO

D'un soir triste (1917–18)

Lili Boulanger (1893–1918)

Sonata for Cello and Piano, L. 135 (1915)

Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

- I. Prologue
- II. Sérénade
- III. Finale

Duo for Violin and Cello (2015)

Jessie Montgomery

- I. Meandering
- II. Dirge
- III. Presto

INTERMISSION

3 Romances for Violin and Piano, Op. 22 (1853) Clara Schumann (1819–1896)

- I. Andante molto
- II. Allegretto: Mit zartem Vortrage
- III. Leidenschaftlich schnell

Piano Trio No. 3 in C minor, Op. 101 (1886)

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

- I. Allegro energico
- II. Presto non assai
- III. Andante grazioso
- IV. Allegro molto

ISABELIA
STEWART GARDNER
MUSEUM

NOTE FROM THE CURATOR

Violinist Romuald Grimbert-Barré comes from a family of very talented French/Caribbean musicians. He has built today's program of chamber music especially for the Gardner Museum, joined by two equally talented colleagues: the Spanish-Dutch pianist Albert Cano Smit, and Tommy Mesa, the Cuban-American cellist who won the 2025 Avery Fisher Career Grant on the heels of winning the 2023 Sphinx Competition. These are three terrific musicians to look out for.

—George Steel, Abrams Curator of Music

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Romuald Grimbert-Barré is a French violinist of Caribbean and Romanian origins, born into a musical family with whom he has regularly performed concerts since his childhood. A laureate of several international violin competitions, including the 2014 China International Violin Competition and the 2013 Moscow International David Oistrakh Violin Competition, he was the 2012 winner of the prestigious sponsorship from Fondation d'entreprise Banque Populaire. In 2011, he was one of the four young musicians named Révélation Classique from the French ADAMI Society, which has allowed him to perform in some of the most prestigious venues in France and abroad. Recently he was a recipient of the Talents de l'Outre-mer award bestowed by the Ministre des Outre-mer in Paris.

Grimbert-Barré regularly performs as a soloist across Europe, America, and Asia. He has performed with Orchestre National de France at Radio France Auditorium; Orchestre de chambre Nouvelle Europe across China, South Korea, and France; Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory Orchestra at the Great Tchaikovsky Hall; and Orchestre de la Garde républicaine (Paris), Qingdao Symphony (China), and Duisburg Philharmonic (Germany), among others.

Other performance venues include Yamaha Hall in Tokyo, Carnegie Hall in New York City, Albert Long Hall in Istanbul, Shanghai Symphony Hall, Dubai Opera, Lotte Concert Hall in Seoul, Charleston Gaillard Center (South Carolina), Pierre Boulez Saal in Berlin, Philharmonie de Paris, French Parliament in Paris, Festival de Prades Pablo Casals (France), Roque d'Anthéron, Chaise-Dieu, and Folle Journée de Nantes.

Grimbert-Barré is a graduate of Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University with Mauricio Fuks. He also studied in Switzerland with Mihaela Martin and at the Paris Conservatoire.

Grimbert-Barré actively works for the rediscovery of composer Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges. He recently participated in the documentary dedicated to Saint-Georges, *Nieuwe blik terug*, on the Dutch public channel NPO 2, and he also appeared on this channel performing some of his works in the music show *Podium Klassiek*. Several of his performances of Saint-Georges's concertos in the United States have been broadcast on NPR and the most popular classical music program, *Performance Today*.

Grimbert-Barré has been the solo violinist of Ensemble Variances, founded by French composer Thierry Pécou,

since 2020. He is also one of the main guest soloists of the Colour of Music Festival.

Grimbert-Barré recorded two albums with Ensemble Grimbert-Barré and one recently with Ensemble Variances. An upcoming recording featuring two Saint-Georges concertos and a new violin concerto by Thierry Pécou will be released in 2026.

Romuald Grimbert-Barré currently lives in Paris and plays a Matteo Goffriller violin from Venice, Italy, 1715.

Cuban-American cellist **Dr. Tommy Mesa** has established himself as one of the most charismatic, innovative, and engaging performers of his generation. The recipient of Lincoln Center's 2025 Avery Fisher Career Grant and the Sphinx Organization's 2023 Medal of Excellence—its highest honor—Mesa has appeared as soloist at the Supreme Court of the United States on four occasions and with major orchestras including the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl, the Cleveland Orchestra, and the Philadelphia Orchestra, among many others. Mesa gave the world premiere of Jessie Montgomery's cello concerto, *Divided*, in 2022 and was the exclusive soloist for the work for three seasons, performing at major halls across the United States and Brazil, including Miami's New World Center, Nashville's Schermerhorn Center, and Carnegie Hall. His orchestral recording debut of the work was released in July 2023 on Deutsche Grammophon. In the fall of 2025, Mesa also began serving on the cello faculty of the esteemed Manhattan School of Music.

Orchestral and ensemble highlights of the 2025–26 season include performances with the Greenville Symphony, Hartford Symphony, and San Antonio Philharmonic; giving the New York premiere of Sofia Gubaidulina's *Canticle of the Sun* with Voices of Ascension; and renewed collaborations with the multiple GRAMMY® Award-winning vocal ensemble The Crossing. In the recital sphere, Mesa will perform with pianists Olga Kern, Michelle Cann, and Ilya Yakushev, including performance debuts at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, the Bender JCC of Greater Washington, Cleveland Institute of Music, and New Orleans Friends of Music, among others.

In recent seasons, Mesa served as Artist-in-Residence with the Tucson Symphony and debuted with orchestras including the Calgary Philharmonic, Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, and the Ann Arbor, Columbus, Delaware, Greenwich, Quad City, and Rogue Valley symphony orchestras. Last season he also gave debuts at leading series, including University of Vermont's Lane Series, the Phillips Collection, Key West Impromptu Classical Concerts, Chamber Music Pittsburgh, Linton Chamber Music in Cincinnati, and the Schubert Club in St. Paul. Other past performance features include recitals at the Academy of Arts and Letters, Bay Chamber Concerts, California Center for the Arts, Columbia University, Flagler Museum, the Heifetz Institute, International Beethoven Project, Kaufman Music Center, Meadowmount School of Music, University of Miami's Signature Series, Newport Classical, Perlman Music Program Alumni Recital Series, Strad for Lunch Series, Virginia Arts Festival, and major universities across the United States.

Mesa recently celebrated several releases, including a recording of tango works for cello and bandoneon with performer-composer JP Jofre and an album of world-premiere recordings by Black and Latinx composers with pianist Michelle Cann, which was featured in an exclusive showcase on NYC's classical station WQXR.

Upcoming albums include collaborations with the iconic pianist Olga Kern and The Crossing.

Mesa's first solo album, *Division of Memory*, on the PARMA Recordings label, received rave reviews, such as in *Pianomania*: "Do not hold your breath for Yo-Yo Ma to record this repertoire, for the just-as-excellent Mesa has the field entirely to himself." Mesa was featured on the GRAMMY® Award-nominated album *Bonhoeffer* with The Crossing. He has appeared with them as soloist at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NYC, Longwood Gardens, the Winter Garden Theatre, and the Theological Seminary in NYC. Mesa and The Crossing also collaborated on the US premiere of *Astralis* for choir and solo cello by renowned composer Wolfgang Rihm and have more collaborations and premieres scheduled for future seasons.

As an ensemble musician, Mesa has been on tours with Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and is the principal cellist of Sphinx Virtuosi, who play every year on tour at almost every major venue across the United States. He also collaborates with Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players and has toured with Itzhak Perlman both nationally and internationally.

In September 2025, Mesa joined the performance faculty of the Manhattan School of Music. He has given masterclasses at institutions such as UC Berkeley, Boston Conservatory, the Colburn School, DePaul University, Meadowmount School of Music, University of Miami, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Northwestern University, and Walnut Hill School. Previously, he held faculty positions at SUNY Purchase, Sphinx Performance Academy, the Heifetz Institute's PEG Program, Music Mountain Festival and School, Brooklyn Conservatory of Music, Montecito International Music Festival, St. Petersburg International Music Academy, and the Mozart Academy at John Jay College in New York City.

Mesa's career launched after becoming the First Prize winner in the 2016 Sphinx Competition and a winner of the 2017 Astral Artists National Auditions. He received his BM from the Juilliard School, MM from Northwestern University, and his DMA from the Manhattan School of Music. His principal teachers were Timothy Eddy, Julia Lichten, Hans Jørgen Jensen, Mark Churchill, Ross Harbaugh, and Wells Cunningham. Mesa performs on a Nicolò Gagliano cello made in 1767 and a bow by André Richaume, both generously loaned to him by Canimex, Inc., in Drummondville, Canada.

Praised as "a moving young poet" (*Le Devoir*), Spanish-Dutch pianist **Albert Cano Smit** is building a rapidly growing international career on the orchestral, recital, and chamber music stages. Winner of the 2019 YCA Susan Wadsworth International Auditions, Cano Smit is renowned for his captivating performances, storytelling artistry, and nuanced musicality.

He has appeared as a soloist with the Las Vegas Philharmonic, San Diego Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Montreal Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, Colorado Music Festival Orchestra, Elgin Symphony, Aiken Symphony, Chamber Orchestra of the Triangle, Orquesta Filarmónica de Boca del Río, Barcelona Symphony, Catalonia National Orchestra, Manchester Camerata, Nottingham Youth Orchestra, and the American Youth Symphony, with upcoming performances with the Colorado and Virginia symphonies. His collaborations have included work with conductors such as Andrew Grams, Katharina Wincor, Pablo Rus Broseta, Ryan Bancroft, and Stephanie Childress.

Recital highlights include his Carnegie Hall debut, presented by the Naumburg Foundation; his Merkin Hall debut, presented by Young Concert Artists; and appearances at San Francisco's Herbst Theatre, Paris's Fondation Louis Vuitton (streamed live globally), the Kennedy Center's Terrace Theater in Washington, D.C., Germany's Rheingau Musik Festival, Barcelona's Palau de la Música Catalana Auditorium, Madrid's Auditorio Nacional de Música (Sala de Cámara), and return engagements with the Steinway Society in San Jose and the Miami International Piano Festival. He has also been presented by Festival Bach Montréal, the Cosmos Club in Washington, D.C., University of Florida Performing Arts, the Krannert Center in Urbana, and Matinée Musicale in Cincinnati. In addition, he has held a seven-year residency at France's Festival de Musique de Wissembourg; served as a piano fellow at the Bravo! Vail Music Festival and Tippet Rise Art Center; and made his recital debut in Asia at Xiamen's Banlam Grand Theater.

A devoted chamber musician, Cano Smit performs regularly with flutist Anthony Trionfo and has partnered with violinists Paul Huang and William Hagen, with whom he recorded the album *Danse Russe*. His recordings also include an album of Austrian viola music with Emma Wernig for Champs Hill Records. He has performed four-hand repertoire with Jean-Yves Thibaudet at the Wallis Annenberg Center and Zipper Hall; appeared with the Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players in New York and the Bridgehampton Chamber Festival; and collaborated with distinguished artists including Gary Hoffman, Andrej Bielow, Tommy Mesa, and Lev Sivkov. His ensemble work includes performances with leading string quartets such as the Ébène, Szymanowski, Casals, Cosmos, Gerhard, Verona, and Viano quartets. Upcoming chamber engagements include a performance for Manchester Friends of Music.

Cano Smit made his debut solo recording of J.S. Bach's *Art of the Fugue* on the French label Aparté. Released in March 2025, the album received critical acclaim, earning the top rating of five Diapasons from Diapason magazine.

An advocate for new music, he has premiered numerous solo works written for him by Stephen Hough, Miquel Oliu, and Katherine Balch. In addition to his YCA triumph, he won First Prize at the 2017 Walter W. Naumburg Piano Competition and received several special prizes at the 2019 YCA Auditions, including the Paul A. Fish Memorial Prize; the Alexander Kasza-Kasser Concert Prize supporting his Kennedy Center debut; the Friends of Music Concert Prize (NY); and the Sunday Musicale Prize (NJ).

Born in Geneva, Switzerland, Cano Smit began his musical training at Montserrat mountain's Escolania de Montserrat choir, where he sang as an alto, before pursuing piano studies with Graham Caskie, Marta Karbownicka, and Ory Shihor. He is an alumnus of the Verbier Festival Academy, holds a BA in Piano Performance from the Colburn School, and an MM from the Juilliard School, where he studied with Robert McDonald. At Juilliard, he received the 2020 Rubinstein Prize for Piano and recently completed an Artist Diploma. He currently resides in New York City.

UPCOMING PERFORMANCES:

CLAREMONT TRIO

Sunday, February 8

ATTACCA QUARTET

Sunday, February 22

THURSDAY NIGHT MUSIC: STEVE REICH'S MUSIC FOR 18 MUSICIANS

Ensemble Signal

Thursday, February 26, at 7 pm

GOLDMUND QUARTET WITH GLORIA CHIEN, PIANO

Sunday, March 1

HOPKINSON SMITH, LUTE

Sunday, March 8

BORROMEO STRING QUARTET

Sunday, March 15

CASTLE OF OUR SKINS WITH DANIEL BERNARD ROUMAIN, ELECTRIC VIOLIN, AND VAL-INC, SOUND CHEMIST

Sunday, March 29

PAUL GALBRAITH, GUITAR

Sunday, April 5

RANDALL GOOSBY, VIOLIN, WITH ZHU WANG, PIANO

Sunday, April 12

BOSTON CHILDREN'S CHORUS

Saturday, April 18, at 2 pm

IMANI WINDS

Sunday, April 19

BUTTER QUARTET

Sunday, April 26

ISATA KANNEH-MASON, PIANO

Sunday, May 10

RENAISSANCE STRING QUARTET

Sunday, May 17

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

Music at the Gardner is supported by 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, Joseph Mari, Sallie and Jim McGregor, Nicie and Jay Panetta, The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Inc., 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.