

Hopkins Center for the Arts

at Dartmouth

presents

Sally Pinkas & Elise Kuder *Great in 'B'*

Sally Pinkas, piano
Elise Kuder, violin

Wednesday, February 19, 8 pm
Rollins Chapel • Dartmouth College • 2025

Funded in part by the David H. Hilton 1951 Fund No. 2, the Frank L. Harrington 1924 Fund No. 3 and the Sidney Stoneman 1933 Fund.

We thank Mrs. Selma Bornstein for her generous donation of the Petrof concert grand piano, given in loving memory of her husband Dr. Murray Bornstein and used for today's concert.

Program

Approximate duration: 60 minutes including a brief pause between the second and third piece

Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano

Grażyna Bacewicz (1909–1969)

- I. Allegro
- II. Andante
- III. Scherzo. Vivace
- IV. Finale. Allegro molto

Sonata No. 2 for Piano and Violin in A major, Op. 100

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

- I. Allegro amabile
- II. Andante tranquillo—Vivace
- III. Allegretto grazioso, quasi Andante

Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano, Sz. 76

Béla Bartók (1881–1945)

- I. Molto moderato
- II. Allegretto

Program Notes

Grażyna Bacewicz

Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano

Polish-Lithuanian composer, violinist and pianist Grażyna Bacewicz was born in Łódź, Poland, on February 5, 1909; she died in Warsaw on January 17, 1969. She wrote her second violin-piano sonata in 1946.

In 1946, as she approached middle age, Grażyna Bacewicz was finally reaping the long-delayed rewards of her promising youth. She had graduated *summa cum laude* from the Warsaw Conservatory in 1932, where she studied composition, violin, piano and (at the University) philosophy, furthering her studies in Paris with Nadia Boulanger and Carl Flesch. But just as her violin career was taking flight—she was concertmaster of the Polish Radio Orchestra till 1938, when she began touring as a soloist across Europe—Polish musical life collapsed with the Nazi-Soviet invasion.

Despite fleeing Warsaw twice, escaping the crushed 1944 uprising, living as a refugee, caring for a dying mother and a wounded sister, and raising an infant

daughter, Bacewicz remained active as a musician during the war. She composed in private; in the underground Warsaw concert scene (and its Secret Association of Musicians) she featured in clandestine performances beyond Nazi oversight.

After Germany's defeat, war-torn Europe was ready to embrace Bacewicz, who quickly earned national and international admiration. She is counted among the greatest Polish composers and women composers of the twentieth century.

Bacewicz's Violin Sonata No. 2 offers an efficient introduction to her musical persona: serious and somewhat difficult, neoclassical rather than nationalistic, individualistic rather than trendy. The brief opening *Allegro* packs the most drama with its tidy treatment of richly ringing themes (both featuring double stops in the violin), while the expressive *Andante* stretches a long-line song into yearning strains. The final two movements are all bright, whirling neoclassicism: Mozart for the twentieth century.

Johannes Brahms
Sonata No. 2 for Piano and Violin in A major,
Op. 100

Johannes Brahms was born in Hamburg on May 7, 1833, and died in Vienna on April 3, 1897. He composed his Violin Sonata No. 2 (nicknamed the “Thun” or “Meistersinger” Sonata) in 1886 and the work premiered on December 2 of that year in Vienna.

In contrast, here’s a work from a composer at the height of his career, written at a moment of carefree leisure. Brahms, decorated with awards and enjoying the fame and fortune of international stardom, spent the summer of 1886 on Lake Thun, hiking, rowing and courting. The Alpine Swiss landscape there, he later wrote, was “so full of melodies that one has to be careful not to step on any.” And the company was equally invigorating—a friendly love triangle bloomed that summer between Brahms and his visitors Klaus Groth (a poet) and Hermine Spies (a famous young contralto). These sunny months, as Brahms promised, produced a bouquet of chamber works: the Five Songs, Op. 105 (for Spies, one setting a poem by Groth), the Cello Sonata No. 2, the Piano Trio No. 3, and tonight’s Violin Sonata No. 2.

Appropriately, this is the warmest, briefest and most lyrical of Brahms’s violin sonatas. Flowing all around and through are references and quotations from those Five Songs. The charming second theme of the opening *Allegro amabile* is taken from the first song, Groth’s *Wie melodien zieht es mir* (“Like melodies it steals softly through my mind”), while two of the other songs make fleeting appearances in the final movement.

Béla Bartók
Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano, Sz. 76

Béla Bartók was born in Nagyszentmiklós, Hungary, on March 25, 1881, and died in New York on Sept. 26, 1945. He wrote his Violin Sonata No. 2 in 1922, dedicating the work to violinist Jelly d’Áranyi. Bartók and d’Áranyi gave the premiere of the sonata in May of 1923 in London.

With the end of the First World War and the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Béla Bartók found himself in a new, volatile Hungary. In less than two years, the nation saw two revolutions, a brutal right-wing counterrevolution, the restoration of the monarchy, and the dramatic shrinking of its borders. The new borders, as reparations to Hungary’s neighbors, slashed the kingdom to a quarter of its prewar extent and cut free (among other regions) Transylvania and the Slovak North—exactly the areas where Bartók had been collecting folk songs.

While he participated in the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic and clashed with the nationalist press after the restoration, Bartók seemed mostly unfazed by the turmoil. His focus was his ethnomusicological work: though political tensions prevented new fieldwork, Bartók spent the early 1920s analyzing and compiling his immense existing collection. And still he composed, embracing during these tumultuous years a radical expressionist style that sought to reconcile atonality and ultramodernism with music borrowed from old, rural singing traditions.

The Violin Sonata No. 2 is Bartók’s uncompromising assertion of that vision. Tonally, it’s relentlessly prickly; formally, it’s slippery; rhythmically, it’s dazzling. For the violinist, it’s extraordinarily virtuosic—among the most difficult in the whole repertoire. And it’s forcefully compelling, revealing a strange and enthralling world between its extremes of distressed passion and ethereal indifference.

The opening movement is a disturbed *doina*—a freely spinning fiddle improvisation on a knotted chain of grief-stricken motives, inspired by rural Romanian song. Without pause, the piano begins an earthy foursquare stomp: this *Allegretto* dance brings some rhythmic order but its character is just as mercurial. Moments of sudden, hushed introspection interrupt episodes of wild elation, sizzling fury, and some good old-fashioned showboating with a wink. In the final moments, the frenzy fades into a final *doina* that quickly evaporates into a hard-earned C-major shimmer.

About the Artist

Following her London debut at Wigmore Hall, pianist **Sally Pinkas** has garnered universal praise as an eloquent and versatile performer. Among career highlights are performances with the Boston Pops, the Aspen Philharmonia, New York's Jupiter Symphony and Indonesia's Bandung Symphony. Pinkas tours widely as a member of Ensemble Schumann and collaborates often with the Adaskin String Trio and the Apple Hill String Quartet. Pianist-in-residence at the Hopkins Center at Dartmouth College, she is Professor of Music at Dartmouth's Music Department, and a summer faculty at the Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music in New Hampshire.

Called "first-rate" by the Boston Globe, **Elise Kuder** is the first violinist in the Apple Hill String Quartet. A resident musician at the Apple Hill Center for Chamber Music since 2000, Elise serves as Co-Artistic Director of the organization and Co-Music Director of Apple Hill's Summer Chamber Music Workshop. Elise has performed in destinations from Aleppo to Baku to Beirut to Dublin to Jerusalem to Lima to Moscow to Yangon to Hanover, NH. Elise has collaborated with members of the Brentano and Attacca Quartets, Silkroad Ensemble, and Hirsch-Pinkas Duo, and received degrees from Oberlin Conservatory and the Juilliard School.

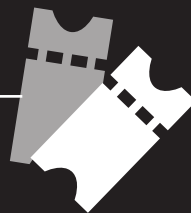
Arts in the Curriculum

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