

The Ph.D./D.M.A. Programs in Music  
Faculty Recital

October 3, 2025 7:30 p.m.

*Baisley Powell Elebash Recital Hall*



*Day and Night*  
Thomas Sauer, piano

Sonata in F Major, KV 533/494 (1788)

Allegro

Andante

Rondo: Allegretto

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
(1756-1791)

from Piano Études

*Arc-en-ciel* (1985)

György Ligeti  
(1923-2006)

from Ten Studies (1998)

*For the Children*

*Arabeske*

Hans Abrahamsen  
(b. 1952)

from Piano Études

*Grains* (2000)

Unsuk Chin  
(b. 1961)

**intermission**

*Nachtstücke*, op. 23 (1839)

Mehr langsam, oft zurückhaltend

Markiert und lebhaft

Mit großer Lebhaftigkeit

Einfach

Robert Schumann  
(1810-1856)

Nocturnes, op. 62 (1846)

No. 1 in B Major

No. 2 in E Major

Frédéric Chopin  
(1810-1849)

Polonaise Fantaisie, op. 61 (1846)

Please switch off your cell phones and refrain from taking flash pictures.

## Program Notes

### Day and Night

‘They’re night and day,’ we say to denote opposite qualities in people or situations. “Day and Night,” I use here to suggest acuity, alertness and rationality on the one hand, and the intuitive and fantastical on the other. These opposites emerge, in broad outline, from music on the two halves of this program.

**Mozart’s** Sonata KV 533/494 embodies a state of high, cheerful alert above all in its first movement, with crystal-clear contrapuntal textures and an abundance of running notes. A beautifully poised Andante ventures briefly into the irrational in its development, ironically through its use of highly dissonant invertible counterpoint, which is here (as always) a product of clear musical thought. The Rondo, composed two years earlier, balances lyricism with moments of decorous display that approach, but never attain, a *concertante* character.

Upon their publication in 1986, **Ligeti’s** first book of Piano Études, like works of his such as *Atmosphères* and the Violin Concerto, became instant classics. *Arc-en-ciel* (Rainbow—who has ever seen a rainbow at night?) is pointedly chromatic, trading on the ancient meaning of *chroma* (color) to suggest a rainbow’s iridescence. Both **Hans Abrahamsen** and **Unsuk Chin** studied composition with Ligeti in Germany. Some of Abrahamsen’s Ten Studies have an epigrammatic quality, as *For the Children*—these are children seen in daylight, not those whose sleep is disrupted by illness or bad dreams—while others, such as *Arabesque*, explore an initial musical figure in the manner of a traditional étude. Unsuk Chin warns us, on the other hand, that her *Grains* “...is very distant from traditional piano music with regard to piano technique, and also to musical structure.” The title refers to digital sonic particles of a duration between one and fifty microseconds—musical quanta, if you will—used to construct longer tones in electro-acoustic music. She imports especially the registral discontinuities of early electronic music into a concert-étude setting.

**Schumann** planned the following descriptive titles for his four Night Pieces: *Trauerzug* (Funeral Procession); *Kuriose Gesellschaft* (Strange Company, or Society); *Nächtliches Gelage* (Nighttime Revelry); *Rundgesang mit Solostimmen* (Round Singing with Solo Parts). His fiancée, Clara Wieck, advised against them, afraid that they would sow confusion, and he dropped the idea. The inner movements traffic in the nights of early adulthood, times of freedom and frolic. The set opens with premonitions of a funeral and the unease associated with being in attendance, and closes with a song of communal consolation.

By the close of 1845, **Chopin** had begun his final large-scale works: the Barcarolle, Cello Sonata, and Polonaise Fantaisie. A split with George Sand, the consequent loss of his most productive work environment—her ancestral estate at Nohant—together with Chopin’s declining health, foretold the end of his creative work. A great pity it was, as these last works—including the two Nocturnes, op. 62, also from 1845-46—are among the most inspired and visionary of his entire output. He had long been one to synthesize disparate musical materials and procedures, for instance setting Italianate *bel canto* lines in a contrapuntal and harmonic web inspired by Bach and Mozart, and incorporating elements of Polish folk music into forms and textures associated with salon music. In opp. 61 and 62, he balances a sense of formal control with an improvisational spirit in a manner that utterly defies explication. To borrow a perhaps overly graphic phrase from Claude Lévi-Strauss’s *The Raw and the Cooked*, Chopin’s was one of the “...very few minds that secrete music...”

—Thomas Sauer

## Biography

American pianist **Thomas Sauer** performs regularly as soloist, chamber musician, and recital partner. His large and varied repertoire encompasses Bach to the present day. Audiences and critics alike praise his playing for its clarity, expressivity, and assured stylistic sense. Some of Mr. Sauer's recent solo appearances include concertos with the Quad-City and Tallahassee Symphonies and the Greenwich Village Orchestra, and recitals at Mannes, Simon's Rock, and Vassar Colleges, Merkin Concert Hall, Rockefeller University, and St. John's College, Oxford. With his long-time duo partner, English cellist Colin Carr, Mr. Sauer has appeared at the Wigmore Hall (London), the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and Muziekgebouw, and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (Boston). Other duo recitals include violinists Midori (Berlin Philharmonie and Brussels' Palais des Beaux Arts) and Jennifer Koh (Kennedy Center, Kimmel Center, Library of Congress, Princeton University). Among Mr. Sauer's numerous chamber music appearances are performances at the Chamber Music Societies of Lincoln Center, Boston and Philadelphia; and numerous concerts with the Brentano String Quartet. Mr. Sauer has performed at many of the leading festivals in the United States and abroad, including Marlboro, Caramoor, Music@Menlo, Chamber Music Northwest, El Paso Pro Musica, and the Chamber Music Festivals of Seattle, Taos, Four Seasons (North Carolina), Portland, and Salt Bay (Maine); as well as Lake District Summer Music (England) and Festival des Consonances (France). He has premiered works by Robert Cuckson, Sebastian Currier, Tania León, Donald Martino, Harold Meltzer, Ruth Schonthal, Nathan Shields, Suzanne Sorkin, and Richard Wilson, among many others. A committed teacher, with students at Mannes College, Vassar College, and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, Mr. Sauer was the founder and director of the Mannes Beethoven Institute, a highly-regarded week-long summer training program that ran for fifteen seasons in New York.