



Thursday October 9, 2025, 1:00pm

Beethoven—*Sturm und Drang*

Rolf Schulte, violin

Joseph Liccardo, piano

Sonata for Piano and Violin, op. 23 in A minor

Presto

Andante scherzoso, più allegretto

Allegro molto

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Herzgewächse op. 20 (arr. Randa Kirshbaum)

Arnold Schönberg
(1874-1951)

Sonata for Piano and Violin, op. 24 in F major

Allegro

Adagio molto espressivo

Scherzo. Allegro molto

Rondo. Allegro ma non troppo

Ludwig van Beethoven

Music in Midtown is a series of lunchtime concerts spotlighting the highly regarded musical performance program at the CUNY Graduate Center. Presented in the warm, intimate, acoustically rich Elebash Recital Hall, these performances feature the music program's renowned faculty, alumni, outstanding performers selected from students in the DMA program and noted guest artists. Norman Carey is Director and John Musto is Assistant Director.

Notes on the Program

Sturm und Drang first appeared as the title of Friedrich Maximilian Klinger's 1776 play *Der Wirtwarr, oder Sturm und Drang* (Disarray, or Storm and Stress). Of course, we mostly associate the term with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's novella *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (The Sorrows of Young Werther) (1774) or Friedrich Schiller's 1781 play *Die Räuber* (The Robbers). Musically, one could apply the term to Haydn's Symphonies No.44 (*Trauer* or mourning) and No. 49 (*La passione*) and Mozart's early Symphony K.183 and Piano Sonata K. 310, all in minor keys!

Beethoven - Sonata for Piano and Violin, op. 23 in A minor

In the broad evolution of Ludwig van Beethoven's career, the Sonata for Piano and Violin op. 23 (1801) has a unique place, in that it is the only one (apart from the first movement of the *Kreutzer Sonata* op.47) in A minor: among all 32 Piano Sonatas, 9 Symphonies, and 16 String Quartets, you will find only the late quartet op.132 in the same key!... (Among violinists, it is sometimes referred to as "the little Kreutzer"!)

It, and the ensuing Sonata op. 24, were dedicated to the philanthropist Count Moritz von Fries (1777-1826) to whom also the String Quintet op. 29 and the seventh symphony op. 92 were gifted!

Remarkably concise, yet passionate to the point of no return – notice the explosion toward the end of the last of the three movements. The opening motive of the Presto coincidentally serves as a premonition of Schubert's 1824 String Quartet D. 810 ("Death and the Maiden"): the descending five-note scale!

A "snaking" second theme in E minor, describing a fifth, only to descend again, follows, soon to erupt anew!... In its repeat of the second half it is also unique: development, introducing an octave leap to the descending scale, and climactic return/recapitulation, as is the hushed *perdendosi* ending!

The *Andante scherzoso, più Allegretto* so aptly describes the tempo to be chosen, and represents again an ascending four-, and descending five-note theme, so eminently witty (Haydn smiling mischievously over his shoulder...?), followed by a short fugato, and like the three Sonatas op. 30 of the next year, in full exploration and command of the interplay between the two protagonists! The concluding Allegro molto in cut time reminds me of the finale of the Piano Trio op. 70/1 (sometimes referred to as "The Ghost" – not Beethoven's title!): agitated from the very outset, it is a Rondo, with first a C major, then a tongue-in-cheek Rossini-esque interlude in A major (which reappears just before the end) and a broadly lyrical one in F major! Again, after two raucous episodes, the piece just slips away at the end, as though it had been just a dream.

Schönberg - *Herzgewächse* op. 20

No two artists could have been closer than Arnold Schönberg and Wassily Kandinsky for roughly 12 years: they met in Munich 1911 where Kandinsky heard a concert of Schönberg's music, and the impression that his op. 11 *Klavierstücke* and second String Quartet op. 10 made on the painter can only be described as indelible!

When Kandinsky, together with Franz Marc, started the group *Der blaue Reiter* (the Blue Rider), the former asked Schönberg to contribute an article to an almanac of one of their exhibitions, on German music and its relationship to literary texts. In the end, next to a tract on creativity, the facsimile to his freshly written short lied *Herzgewächse* op.20 for the unusual combination of high soprano, celeste, harmonium and harp, and two Lieder by his students Alban Berg (op. 2 No. 4 *Warm die Lüfte*) and Anton Webern (op. 4 No. 5 *Ihr tretet zu dem Herde*) were chosen.

Herzgewächse was set on a text by Maurice Maeterlinck, the Belgian symbolist playwright (Schönberg had already written a long symphonic poem on his *Pelleas et Mélisande* in 1903). Kandinsky was an admirer of Maeterlinck as well, particularly his *Serres chaudes* (Hothouses: notice the similarity to *Im Treibhaus* from Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder*) from which *Feuillages du coeur* (*Herzgewächse*) was excerpted!

Much has been said about the difficulty of the vocal part, ranging from a low G-sharp³ to F⁶ – in fact, two intended premières, in Berlin and Vienna, had to be cancelled because the vocalist, Martha Winternitz-Dorda, was struggling with her part!

Universal Edition engraved the score in 1914 and published it in 1920 (World War I intervened...), but the actual première did not take place until 1922 in Paris, conducted by Darius Milhaud, with Francis Poulenc playing the celeste! The U.S. première took place the following year (Eva Leonie singing, Carlos Salzedo conducting) at the International Composers Guild in New York. The first Vienna performance, authorized by Schönberg, sung by Marianne Rau-Hoeglauer and conducted by Webern, happened only in 1928!

With its glassy timbre and the reference to the color blue which represented for Kandinsky “veiled sorrow, but also desire for the infinite, the pure and the supernatural”: how close in aesthetic are we, indeed, to Stefan George's *Litanei* and *Entrückung* of Schönberg's String Quartet, op. 10!

Although Felix Greissle had already made a piano/vocal score, today's first performance of Randa Kirshbaum's arrangement for violin and piano, should avoid the navigation of the treacherous leaps in vocal tessitura, and make the dynamics of *ppp* on the high C and F infinitely more manageable on the violin!

HERZGEWÄCHSE

Meiner müden Sehnsucht blaues Glas
Deckt den alten unbestimmten Kummer,
Dessen ich genas,
Und der nun erstarrt in seinem Schlummer.

Sinnbildhaft ist seiner Blumen Zier:
Mancher Freuden düstre Wasserrose,
Palmen der Begier,
Weiche Schlinggewächse, kühle Moose.

Eine Lilie nur in all dem Flor,
Bleich und starr in ihrer Kränklichkeit,
Richtet sich empor
Über all dem blattgeword'nen Leid.

Licht sind ihre Blätter anzuschauen,
Weißen Mondesglanz sie um sich sät,
Zum Krystall dem blauen
Sendet sie ihr mystisches Gebet.

*translated from the French by Karl Anton Klammer and
Friedrich von Oppeln-Bronikowski*

HERZGEWÄCHSE - *Foliage of the Heart*

My weary melancholy's blue glass
Hides an old, undefined sorrow,
From which I recovered—
Now frozen in its slumber.

Its flowers' grace symbolic:
Manifold joys of gloomy water lily,
Palm trees of desire,
Softly climbing vines, cool mosses.

A solitary lily among enchanted foliage,
Pale and rigid in its sickliness,
Rises upwards
Above all sorrow, now turned verdant.

Its leaves, luminous to behold,
Sowing white moonglow all around,
To the crystal, the sapphire
She sends her mystical prayer.

translated by Rolf Schulte

Beethoven - Sonata for Piano and Violin op. 24 in F major

Contrary to the A minor Sonata op. 23, the following one in F major op. 24 (often referred to as the “Spring” Sonata— not Beethoven’s moniker) has many examples in this verdant key: the string quartets op. 18/1 and 59/1, plus the valedictory op. 135, Piano Sonatas op. 10/2 and 54, but most importantly, the Sixth Symphony op. 68, the bucolic “Pastorale”, and the Eighth Symphony op. 93!

In its generous lyricism it is the first of Beethoven’s Sonatas to give its opening to the violin! A second theme in C major, somewhat reminiscent of the “Waldstein” Sonata’s opening (op. 53) with its softly repeated closed-position chords in the piano, but also of the insistence of the early *Rondo e capriccio*, op. 129, follows. A thorough development leads to the magical return via a half-step murmur between the two instruments – this time the piano takes the theme first. The Coda is nothing short of an apotheosis of the material!

The Adagio molto espressivo with its moonlit atmosphere leads me to invoke *Die blaue Blume der Romantik* (the blue flower of Romanticism), a term coined in Novalis’s (1772-1801) posthumously published novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* in which the protagonist declaims “far be it from me to be covetous of earthly possessions, but the blue flower: I long to get a glance of!” Joseph von Eichendorff (1778-1857) also wrote a poem *Die blaue Blume*— it became the epitome of Romanticism in striving for self-knowledge and individualism! This completely otherworldly Cavatina in *bel canto* could have been penned by Vincenzo Bellini (1801-35), ending most affectionately in 32nd-notes — murmurs of the heart!

The merest of Scherzi follows, like one of the Bagatelles op. 33 No. II.

The concluding Rondo in cut time, again pouring forth in generous lyricism, reminds me somewhat of Mozart’s Sonata’s (K. 454) last movement in B-flat major — remarkable here: an extended section in D minor! Later on, by way of F minor, we briefly find ourselves in E-flat minor(!), from which by way of B major we are brought back to the sunny optimism of the opening. A heart-felt Epilogue (reminding me of Mozart’s lied *Das Veilchen* K. 476) concludes this work which soon would become a favorite of many concert programs.

About the Artists

German-born **Rolf Schulte**, whom The New Yorker has called “one of the most distinguished violinists of our day,” started playing the violin at age five under his father’s tutelage. He later studied with Kurt Schaffer at the Robert Schumann Institute in Dusseldorf, attended Yehudi Menuhin’s summer course in Gstaad, Switzerland, and studied with Franco Gulli at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena before moving to the United States to study with Ivan Galamian at The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. At age 16, he made his orchestral debut with the Philharmonia Hungarica in Cologne, playing Mendelssohn’s Concerto. Under the auspices of Young Concert Artists he gave his New York debut at Town Hall to great acclaim.

He has since performed with the Berlin Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic, Frankfurt Museums-Orchester, Stuttgart Staatsorchester, Bamberg Symphony, Orchestra del Teatro La Fenice in Venice (in Stravinsky’s Concerto under Robert Craft), RTE Irish National Symphony in Dublin, and the Radio Orchestras of Berlin (RSO), Cologne (WDR), and Stuttgart (SDR) under conductors Christoph von Dohnanyi, Gyorgy Lehel, Tamas Vasary, Max Rudolf, Dennis R. Davies, Daniel Nazareth, Alexander Lazarov, Guido Ajmone-Marsan, Hiroshi Wakasugi and many others. In 1990 he performed Roger Sessions’ Violin Concerto with the

Radio Orchestra of the USSR in Moscow under the direction of Lukas Foss and presented American music in recital.

After many years of collaborating with the leading composers of his time, such as Elliott Carter (whose *Fantasy* he premiered at Harvard), György Kurtág (whose *Kafka-Fragments* he gave the American première of at Tanglewood), Milton Babbitt (whose *The Joy of More Sextets* and *Little Goes a Long Way* he premiered at the Library of Congress and Harvard), Donald Martino (whose *Violin Concerto* and *Romanza* he premiered), Mario Davidovsky (whose *Synchronisms No.9* he premiered at MIT), Aaron Copland and John Cage, Rolf Schulte happily now returns to the repertoire of his early adulthood, applying the lessons learned from intensive work with living composers, to the music of Schumann, Beethoven, Schubert, Mozart, Brahms, Bartók, Janáček, Stravinsky, Debussy, Ravel, Webern, Schönberg, Berg, etc.

Mr. Schulte has appeared multiple times with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and their Columbia MD Festival of the Arts, as well as the 1990 Kuhmo Music Festival in Finland. His numerous recital performances include the cycle of ten Beethoven sonatas at Harvard, Dartmouth, and Middlebury Colleges, and the complete violin works of Igor Stravinsky at the 92nd St. Y and Berliner Festwochen, among other places. From 1999-2001 Rolf Schulte held a residency at Harvard University during which he presented new works by Carter, Donald Martino and Milton Babbitt. More recently, he performed two recitals in Tokyo and one at the Arnold Schönberg Center in Vienna.

His long and distinguished discography includes recordings of Arnold Schoenberg's *Violin Concerto* with the London Philharmonia (Naxos), Robert Schumann's *Works for Violin and Piano* (Centauro Records), and several pieces of Elliott Carter: *Violin Concerto* (with the Odense Symphony), *Four Lauds* and *Duo* (all on Bridge Records), Schönberg *Phantasy*, op. 47 and *String Trio* op.45 (Naxos, nominated for a 2010 Grammy award), *Violin Concerto No.1* by Paul Ruders (Bridge) and the *Concerti* of Roger Sessions and Donald Martino (available on iTunes). The most recent releases are *The Violin in Stravinsky's Life* on Aldilà Records and *American Violin Music 1947-2000* on Centaur Records.

Mr. Schulte performs on a 1780 violin by Lorenzo Storioni, Cremona.

Joseph Liccardo maintains an active career as a chamber musician, music educator, and music administrator. Recent performances include recitals at Carnegie Hall, Merkin Hall, Bargemusic, the Chicago Cultural Center, Rockefeller University, Union College, Peabody Conservatory, Jordan Hall, as well as several tours of China. During the summers of 2013-2016, he participated in the Yellow Barn chamber music festival in Putney, Vermont, where he performed a wide variety of repertoire ranging from standard classics to new 21st century works. Since July of 2017, he has worked each summer at the Ravinia Festival Steans Music Institute, in Highland Park, Illinois as a collaborative pianist. In addition, he has regularly collaborated with the Tom Gold Dance Company for their bi-annual productions in New York.

Joseph is on faculty at the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College, where he coordinates the piano repertoire class and teaches private piano lessons and chamber music. He is also on the faculty of the Eisman Center for Preparatory Studies in Music at the college, where he teaches private piano, chamber music, and group performance classes. In addition, he maintains a large private piano studio. He is the co-founder of Presto Arts, an organization based in China that promotes cross-cultural musical collaboration between China and the West, and helps Chinese music students who want to study abroad. Since August 2023, Presto has organized "The Art of Voice", a series of summer and winter masterclasses in Salzburg, Austria, in collaboration with the renowned soprano Barbara Bonney and other top international vocal artists.

Joseph holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the Eastman School of Music, and a Master of Music degree from The Juilliard School. His primary teachers include Donald Pirone, Douglas Humpherys, and Robert McDonald.