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PROGRAM

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Sonata quasi una Fantasia [Sonata No. 14] in C-sharp Minor,
Op. 27 No. 2, "Moonlight"

- I. Adagio sostenuto
- II. Allegretto - Trio
- III. Presto agitato

MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)

Gaspard de la nuit, M. 55

- I. Ondine
- II. Le gibet
- III. Scarbo

INTERMISSION

DOBRINKA TABAKOVA (b. 1980)

Nocturne

TABAKOVA

Halo

- I. From Darkness
- II. To Blinding Shine
- III. Calm and Settled Glow

BEETHOVEN

Piano Sonata No. 21 in C Major, Op. 53, "Waldstein"

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Introduzione: Adagio molto
- III. Rondo. Allegretto moderato - Prestissimo

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PROGRAM NOTES

by Laurie Shulman ©2026

***Sonata quasi una Fantasia* [Sonata No. 14] in C-sharp Minor, Op. 27, No. 2, “Moonlight”**

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Few sonatas are so well known as the “Moonlight”— or so misunderstood. Schoolchildren and adults alike too often think of this extraordinary work as synonymous with its ethereal first movement. The complete sonata consists of three movements, each of which breaks from tradition and builds tension, culminating in the veritable explosion of the finale. That wonderful opening Adagio sostenuto is a mood piece entirely different from what audiences of 1801 would have expected at the beginning of a sonata. It turns accompaniment into melody and places odd emphasis on the unfolding of arpeggiated chords.

The sobriquet “Moonlight” is not Beethoven’s, but is attributed to Ludwig Rellstab, a German music critic, poet, and novelist. He purportedly likened the opening movement to “a boat visiting, by moonlight, the primitive landscapes of Vierwaldstättersee in Switzerland.” Beethoven assigned this sonata the subtitle “*quasi una fantasia*,” indicating a freedom of approach and an improvisatory quality that was, effectively, an emancipation proclamation from the structural demands of the classical sonata.

Beethoven dedicated the “Moonlight” sonata to Giulietta Guicciardi, a beautiful young Italian woman who came to Vienna in 1800 and studied with him. The 30-year-old composer fell promptly and hopelessly in love with her. He seems to have felt that his feelings were reciprocated, but ultimately the difference in their societal standing precluded any alliance. Those of a romantic persuasion may infer that the melancholy of the famous first movement and the turbulent rage of the last are expressions of a rejected lover’s frustration and grief. Certainly Beethoven explores a wide gamut of emotions in this sonata, but he does so with a subtle unity. The mournful slow arpeggios of the opening, accelerated and telescoped, become the frenetic rockets of the finale.

Gaspard de la nuit

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

In a brief autobiographical sketch from 1928, Ravel wrote: “*Gaspard de la nuit*, piano pieces after Aloysius Bertrand, are three romantic poems of transcendental virtuosity.”

His pithy assessment was accurate. *Gaspard* remains one of the most demanding virtuoso works in the entire piano literature, presenting daunting technical and interpretive challenges. It is also among Ravel’s most stunning compositional achievements.

Aloysius Bertrand (1807-1841) was a minor French writer who influenced the Romantic poets Théophile Gautier and Charles Baudelaire. His major work was a series of prose-poems, *Gaspard de la nuit: fantaisies à la manière de Rembrandt et de Callot* (Callot was a 17th-century engraver who specialized in beggars and deformities). The collection was published posthumously in 1842, then reprinted in 1865. The French journal *La mercurie* reused Bertrand’s work in 1895, which was when Ravel’s friend Ricardo Viñes discovered them and introduced Ravel to *Gaspard*.

Thirteen years later, Ravel revisited Bertrand’s poems and found their grotesque, hallucinatory imagery a springboard for his evolving piano style. Declaring to his friend Maurice Delage that he wanted to write something more difficult than Balakirev’s notorious *Islamey*, he set to work in May 1908. Writing to Ida Godebski on 17 July 1908, Ravel reported:

At the moment, inspiration seems to have quickened. After all too many months of pregnancy, *Gaspard de la nuit* will perceive the light of day. As soon as these three pieces are finished, I shall do the corrections on my *L’heure espagnole* and complete the orchestration. As for *Gaspard*, the devil has had a hand in it. No wonder, for the devil himself is indeed the author of the poems.

His observation reveals a great deal about his reaction to Bertrand’s writing. Indeed, he reproduced the relevant poems from *Gaspard* in the printed score, and each movement takes its cue from the poetry.

In Central European legend, Ondine was a water sprite who fell in love with a mortal. The tale has inspired authors and composers from E.T.A. Hoffmann and Dvořák to Giraudoux and Henze. Ravel’s setting sparkles and shimmers. Water droplets spray the window of the man who has caught Ondine’s fancy. Whole tone scales mix with swirling arpeggios that suggest the nymph’s gracefulness. Ondine is the most melodic and tender of *Gaspard*’s three movements. Its final pages follow Bertrand closely, speaking in the voice of the man who rejects Ondine’s advances:

And when I replied that I loved a mortal, she, pouting, vexed, shed some tears, burst into laughter, and vanished in a sudden shower which trickled in white rivulets the length of my blue windowpanes.

Le gibet takes us to a decidedly darker world, the desolate music of death. “What is it I hear?” the poet asks. “Could it be the north wind howling in the night or the hanged man sighing on the gibbet?” The obsessive, hypnotic repetition of a B-flat in octaves is the sound of the church bell, answering the poem’s initial question. Bertrand’s last couplet tells us, “It is a bell ringing at the city walls, below the horizon, and the hanging carcass turned red by the sun.”

With *Scarbo*, Ravel moves from the macabre to the supernatural. Scarbo is a malevolent dwarf who haunts the poet’s dreams when he sleeps, and prevents him from slumber when he is awake. The music veers between impish playfulness and taunting cruelty. An infamous 20-bar passage requires the thumb to play major and minor seconds in rapid succession, one among many demands making this movement a Mount Everest of the repertoire. In the late 1920s, pianist Vlado Perlmutter worked with Ravel on this movement and later recalled, “He said to me, ‘I wanted to produce a caricature of romanticism,’ but he added under his breath, ‘Maybe I got carried away.’”

Nocturne

Halo

Dobrinka Tabakova (b.1980)

Bulgarian-born Dobrinka Tabakova moved to London when she was 11, and studied at the Royal Academy of Music and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. She subsequently earned a doctorate in composition from King’s College, London. Tabakova identifies as Bulgarian-British; she has a considerable reputation not only in the UK, but also on the continent. In Britain she has fulfilled commissions from the Royal Philharmonic, BBC Radio 3, Cheltenham Festival, Three Choirs Festival, and Wigmore Hall. Her music has been widely performed in Britain and Bulgaria, with additional performances in Russia, continental Europe, and the USA. Violinists Gidon Kremer and Janine Jansen have championed her music.

The two selections Ms. Kanneh-Mason performs are quite different from one another. Tabakova’s Nocturne is a dreamy, meditative

miniature that borrows consonant harmonies and repetitive figures from minimalism. Its soothing mood is like a lullaby. Tabakova remains in the piano’s central register for the entire 3-minute duration of the Nocturne.

Halo is both larger scale and widely varied in its harmonic vocabulary, textures, and moods. Tabakova’s composer’s note explains its genesis.

The inspiration for this suite came from a beautiful halo which had formed around the moon one summer’s night. Exploring a range of techniques for achieving harmonics on the piano, the piece describes a hypothetical life of a halo. The first movement sees its birth from darkness, in the second the full strength of light is evoked through rapid repetitive figures, and the extreme registers of the piano; and the final movement portrays a mature and settled halo.

As her description implies, the atmosphere shifts dramatically over the course of three movements. “From Darkness” has harsh tone clusters, jagged exclamations, and pregnant silences; only at the end does it subside into a kinder, gentler mode. A sense of vibrancy, shimmer, and sparkle emanate from “To Blinding Shine,” while “Calm and Settled Glow” takes us to a place of mystic serenity and contemplation.

Ms. Tabakova played the premiere of *Halo* on 19 January 2000, at London’s Queen Elizabeth Hall.

Piano Sonata No. 21 in C Major, Op. 53, “Waldstein” Ludwig van Beethoven

Count Ferdinand Ernst Joseph Gabriel Waldstein (1762-1823) was a Bohemian nobleman who joined the Teutonic Order in his twenties. He served the Grand Master of the Order, Elector Maximilian Franz, for much of his early career, working as a diplomatic envoy. Maximilian Franz was the youngest son of the Austrian Emperor Franz I and became Archbishop and Elector of Cologne and Bishop of Münster in 1784.

Beethoven met Count Waldstein in 1788, when the Elector summoned the Count to Bonn to be knighted. Both the Elector and the Count were cultured men and passionate about music. Waldstein was among the first to recognize the teenage Beethoven’s prodigious talent and potential. He and the young

composer socialized frequently in Bonn, and Beethoven wrote music for a ballet that the Count presented for Carnival season; Beethoven also composed variations for one piano, four hands on a theme by Waldstein, WoO 67.

When Beethoven moved to the Austrian capital in 1792 to study with Haydn, Waldstein famously wrote to him, “You are now going to Vienna in fulfilment of your long-held wish . . . As a result of unceasing effort, you will receive Mozart’s spirit from Haydn’s hands.”

Waldstein is best remembered today as the dedicatee of this C Major Piano Sonata, which is known universally by his surname. The dedication is something of a mystery in Beethoven scholarship, because Waldstein served in the British army from 1795 to 1805, and is not known to have had any contact with Beethoven in 1803 and 1804, the years when Beethoven composed his Opus 53.

The sonata is one of the triumphs of Beethoven’s so-called “heroic decade” and one of the great middle-period piano works. He was inspired in part by the gift of a new piano by the French maker Sebastian Erard in 1803, which had an extended upper range. Bold pianistic innovations in the “Waldstein” reflect his experimentation with that keyboard, particularly in the high register.

All three movements of the sonata open pianissimo, and the designation pp appears frequently throughout the score. The pulsing C Major chords that open the Allegro con brio are more gesture than melody; it is Beethoven’s subsequent little fillips of commentary—seemingly throwaway motives—that will provide essential material for his development section. The second theme is a grand, chorale-like idea in the distant key of E Major, rather than the conventional modulation to G Major one would expect in a sonata in C Major. He expands the chorale theme with triplets that usher in a series of closing themes organically related to the opening idea. Such ingenious surprises abound throughout the first movement.

Beethoven’s original slow movement was an Andante in F Major. He rethought the pacing and balance of the sonata and withdrew that movement, eventually publishing it independently as the popular Andante favori, WoO57. His replacement for the Waldstein is marked *Introduzione: Adagio molto*. It is the one of many middle period slow movements in which he proceeds directly to

the finale. (Connecting the last two movements became a favorite device. Beethoven would do the same in the “Appassionata” and “Les Adieux” sonatas, the A Major Cello Sonata, the Fifth Symphony, the Violin Concerto, and the Fourth and Fifth Piano Concertos.)

This *Introduzione* is shorter than the *Andante favori*, but has more emotional depth. The music asks profound questions, moving in spare textures through a series of startling modulations. We are not quite certain whether this is a free-standing slow movement or an eloquent preface to the finale: a bridge between two mighty C Major shores.

When the delicate arpeggios of the *Allegretto moderato* return us to the home tonality, Beethoven’s rondo theme feels like a ray of sunlight. His episodes introduce elaborate left hand passagework and extensive right-hand trills. The atmosphere is elated, even ecstatic, clearly foreshadowing the transcendent world of the late sonatas and quartets. A prestissimo coda in double time brings the “Waldstein” to a jubilant close.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

ISATA KANNEH-MASON

Pianist Isata Kanneh-Mason offers eclectic and stimulating recital programs with repertoire encompassing Haydn and Mozart, Fanny Mendelssohn and Clara Schumann, Chopin and Brahms to Gershwin and beyond. In concerto, she is equally at home in Felix Mendelssohn and Beethoven as in Prokofiev and Rachmaninoff.

Isata is in high demand from concert halls and orchestras worldwide. In July 2024, she was invited to perform at the First Night of the BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall with the BBC Symphony and conductor Elim Chan, a performance which resulted in stellar reviews in the mainstream press. Isata went on to appear as concerto soloist with the European Union Youth Orchestra and Iván Fischer in summer 2024 performing Dohnányi’s *Variations on a Nursery Tune* at New York’s Carnegie Hall.

Highlights of the 2025/26 season include Rachmaninoff’s third piano concerto with Bar Avni and the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, and with Petr Popelka with the Prague Radio Symphony at the Rudolfinum. Isata returns to the City of Birmingham Symphony and the BBC Scottish Symphony. She continues her collaboration with her brother,



Isata
Kanneh-Mason

Sheku, in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Montevideo. Isata also appears in solo recital and in chamber music at Wigmore Hall, with further solo recital appearances at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, the Brucknerhaus in Linz, Powell Hall in St Louis, De Bijloke in Ghent, the Howland Music Circle in New York, Norwegian National Opera in Oslo, and a return to the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, among others.

In 2024/25, Isata gave performances with bass-baritone Gerald Finley in the Czech Republic and Germany, appeared in solo recital at the Lucerne Festival, Piano aux Jacobins Toulouse, the Schumann-Haus Düsseldorf, PHIL Haarlem, and on tour across the USA, and performed with the London, Bergen, Bremen, and Duisburg philharmonics, the North Carolina Symphony, and on tour with the Staatskapelle Weimar, and the Residentie Orkest.

Isata is a Decca Classics artist and has recorded five solo albums for the label— *Romance* (2019), *Summertime* (2021), *Childhood Tales* (2023), *Mendelssohn* (2024), and *Prokofiev* (2026).

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Isata has received many awards, including the coveted Leonard Bernstein Award from the Schleswig-Holstein Festival and an Opus Klassik award for best young artist. She also enjoys composing and arranging and released two albums of her favorite works for intermediate and advanced piano students through ABRSM Publishing in 2023.

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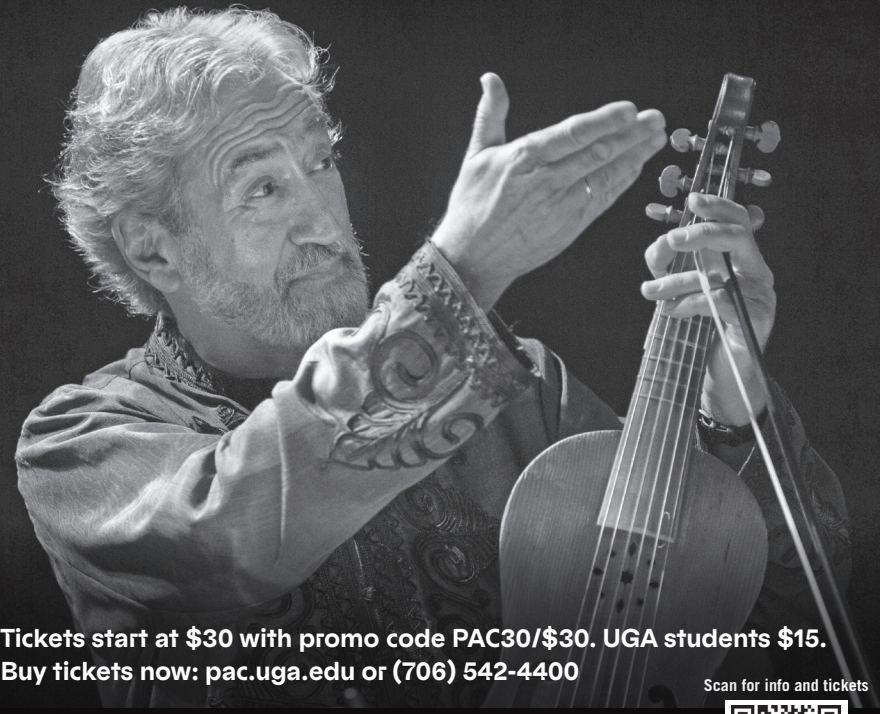
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Meet Malcolm and Priscilla Sumner. He is a retired UGA Regents' Professor of crop and soil sciences who did 20 years of international consulting. She is a former nurse and chair of the Athens Area Emergency Food Bank, where she volunteered for more than 30 years. They were at the PAC's opening gala performance by soprano Jessye Norman in 1996, and have now lived in Athens longer than in their native South Africa. This season they supported the November appearance by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO).

Malcolm Sumner: When we came here, this was a cultural desert. There was nothing here. We started supporting the music school. When the PAC started, we decided to contribute to it because we are both fans of classical music.

Priscilla Sumner: We are so lucky to have these artists come to Athens. For the size of this little town, it never ceases to amaze me. Yo-Yo Ma came to Athens! It's mind-boggling. And he's been here twice!

Malcolm: We love the ASO when they come to Athens. Oh, man. Sweet music! They love coming to Athens because of the acoustics.

Priscilla: The acoustics in the PAC are famous.

Malcolm: We've enjoyed every performance but maybe one or two in the period of 30 years. The quality has been excellent. The PAC is the best addition to Athens there's ever been, it's my humble opinion.



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Endowments

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Would you like to see your name on this page?
Contact our development coordinator, Carlton Bain,
at (706) 542-2031 or cbain@uga.edu.

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Tony Graves
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Pianos by Steinway & Sons,
New York and Hamburg

Paul Griffith
RECORDING ENGINEER

Eric Dluzniewski
RECORDING ENGINEER

HELPFUL INFORMATION

Guest artists, programs, dates, times, ticket prices, and service fees subject to change.

BOX OFFICE

Open Monday-Friday, 10:00 am-5:00 pm and one hour prior to performances. Tickets to all performances presented by UGA Presents, Hugh Hodgson School of Music, Dept. of Dance, and UGA Theatre are available in person at the UGA Performing Arts Center (PAC) Box Office, by calling (706) 542-4400, or online at pac.uga.edu. Tickets purchased from other outlets cannot be guaranteed and may not be honored. For exchange/refund policy, visit pac.uga.edu/policies.

WILL CALL

Tickets purchased in advance and left for collection at "will call" will be available for pick up at the PAC Box Office during regular business hours or beginning one hour prior to the start of the performance, including off-site locations.

FEES

Georgia 8% sales tax and restoration fees (PAC events only) are included in all ticket prices. Additional service fees for online or phone orders and ticket delivery apply.

PARKING

Through an arrangement with UGA Parking Services, complimentary parking for all UGA Presents performances is available in both the PAC surface lot and the PAC parking deck. For performances at the Fine Arts Theatre, please use the Hull Street Deck, the Tate Center Parking Deck (payment required), or other UGA surface lots in the area. For questions regarding parking, please call UGA Parking Services at (706) 542-7275. For information about parking at The Classic Center, please visit classiccenter.com.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND RECORDING

Unless noted otherwise, photography, video, and/or audio recording of any kind are strictly prohibited during all performances.

USE OF LIKENESS

Patrons may be photographed, filmed and/or recorded for archival, promotional, and/or other purposes. By entering any of our venues, you consent to such photography, filming and/or recording and to any use, in any and all media in perpetuity, of your appearance, voice, and name for any purpose whatsoever in connection with this venue. You understand that all photography, filming, and/or recording will be done in reliance on this consent given by you by entering this area. If you do not agree to this, please contact the house manager.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Please silence all mobile phones and other noisemaking devices. Texting during performances is prohibited.

LATE SEATING

Late seating is subject to the discretion of the house manager. Late patrons may be reseated in an alternate location.

CHILDREN

Children ages 6 and older are welcome to attend all performances, unless indicated otherwise for specific events. Children under age 6 and babies will not be admitted. Parents and guardians are encouraged to exercise judgement when determining if programs are appropriate for their children. Please contact the box office at (706) 542-4400 with questions about specific performances.

ACCESSIBILITY

Venues are accessible to people using wheelchairs or with restricted mobility. Please contact the box office to make advance arrangements if you require special assistance. Accessible parking spaces are located near the entrance to the PAC lobby.

LARGE-PRINT PROGRAMS

Large-print programs are available by calling the box office at least 72 hours before the performance.

ASSISTIVE LISTENING DEVICES

For individuals requiring hearing assistance, the Performing Arts Center offers Assistive Listening Devices that may be checked out at no cost to patrons with a photo ID at the coat check desk in the Performing Arts Center lobby. The photo ID will be returned in exchange for the device at the conclusion of the performance.

FOOD AND DRINK

Concessions are available for purchase in the PAC lobby for all UGA Presents performances and other selected events. Food and drink are prohibited inside the performance venues. Complimentary cough lozenges are available at the coat check desk. Please do not unwrap lozenges during performances.

VOLUNTEERS

We appreciate the dedicated service of the many community volunteers who serve at the Performing Arts Center. To inquire about joining our team, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator at (706) 542-2634. Training sessions are held each August.

RENTALS

Hodgson Concert Hall and Ramsey Concert Hall are available for rental. For information please call (706) 542-2290 or visit the rental page at pac.uga.edu/rentals. Rental inquiries for the Fine Arts Theatre should be directed to the UGA Dept. of Theatre and Film Studies.

STAY CONNECTED!

Follow us on our social media platforms for the latest news, updates, and behind-the-scenes information:



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UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



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the performing arts



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