

Mondavi Center
UC DAVIS



Ray Chen, violin

Julio Elizalde, piano

Sunday, October 26, 2025 | 2:00 pm
Jackson Hall

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As we head into a new season of performances at the Mondavi Center, I'm feeling nostalgic and deeply grateful about some very good friends.

Before the Mondavi Center was even a glimmer in the

eyes of those that made it real, there was UC Davis Presents, and its volunteer support group, Friends of UC Davis Presents (now known as Friends of Mondavi Center). Then, as now, the Friends supported our work in a variety of ways. Over the years, their contributions have included fundraising, ushering our K-12 School Matinees, providing Mondavi Center tours, driving artists to classroom activities, helping us with our UC Davis student recognition days and, before the digital era, even helping us stuff envelopes. Just to name a few of the ways they have helped us meet our mission.

Much has changed since the Mondavi Center opened in 2002. Before the Center was built, UC Davis Presents was for decades an itinerant presenting program that utilized venues on campus, in the City of Davis, and Sacramento. For most of that pre-Mondavi Center era, the entire staff of UC Davis Presents was less than 10 people. The Friends helped make it possible to do a lot of good work with a very small staff. Today, we're a team of over 130 full-time, part-time, and student staff, plus hundreds of

volunteers. Together, we now operate what has become an important venue for West Coast tours and a major force in the performing arts, on campus and off.

What has not changed in all these years is the unwavering support of Friends of Mondavi Center. They may be a volunteer support group, but they are as much a part of our team as anyone. They are accomplished people with a passion for the performing arts, and they believe in the power of arts education and arts engagement. For that, I and my Mondavi Center colleagues are extremely grateful.

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Learn more at mondaviarts.org/friends

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Executive Director

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Ray Chen, violin Julio Elizalde, piano

PROGRAM

Violin Sonata No. 8 in G Major, op. 30 No. 3

Allegro assai

Tempo di minuetto, ma molto moderato e grazioso

Allegro vivace

Ludwig van Beethoven

(1770–1827)

Violin Sonata No. 1 in D Minor, op. 75

Allegro agitato (attacca)

Adagio

Allegretto moderato (attacca)

Allegro molto

Camille Saint-Saëns

(1835–1921)

INTERMISSION

Chaconne from Partita No. 2 in D Minor for Solo Violin, BWV 1004

Allemande

Courante

Sarabande

Gigue

Chaconne

Johann Sebastian Bach

(1685–1750)

La ronde des Lutins, op. 25

Antonio Bazzini

(1818–1897)

Slavonic Dance No. 2 in E Minor, op. 72

Antonín Dvořák

(1841–1904)

Spain

Chick Corea

(1941–2021)

Land Acknowledgement

We should take a moment to acknowledge the land on which we are gathered. For thousands of years, this land has been the home of Patwin people. Today, there are three federally recognized Patwin tribes: Cachil DeHe Band of Wintun Indians of the Colusa Indian Community, Kletsel Dehe Wintun Nation, and Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation.

The Patwin people have remained committed to the stewardship of this land over many centuries. It has been cherished and protected, as elders have instructed the young through generations. We are honored and grateful to be here today on their traditional lands.

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Program Notes

Violin Sonata No. 8 in G Major, op. 30, No. 3 (1802)

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: December, 1770, Bonn, Germany

Died: March 26, 1827, Vienna, Austria

It's easily the most famous country retreat in the history of music, a farmhouse in the village of Heiligenstadt where Beethoven lived for half of 1802. It was there that he wrote a long letter, never sent, addressed to his brother Carl. Either a last will and testament, or perhaps even a suicide note, it documents Beethoven's despair over his growing deafness. Raw, uninhibited, and intimate, the so-called 'Heiligenstadt Testament' was found in a concealed compartment in Beethoven's desk a few days after his death.

Beethoven the man might have been in despair, but Beethoven the composer was anything but. Consider Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 8 in G Major, Op. 30 No. 3, written in Heiligenstadt. Nowhere is Beethoven's unquenchable vitality on greater display than here, as breathtaking optimism shines forth amidst his personal melancholy and anguish. Beethoven fashions a light-filled space, richly painted in primary colors, shot through with flashes of energy. Shadows are conspicuously absent; even the sonata's 'slow' movement isn't particularly slow. Considering that the slightly earlier F Major Op. 24 sonata is nicknamed "Spring," perhaps "Summer" would be an appropriate tag for this one.

The *Allegro assai* kicks off with a whirl and a skyrocketing arpeggio, and with that the game is on. The movement positively teems with happy rhythmic energy, anticipating the supercharged sprint of the "Kreutzer" Op. 47 violin sonata. Moments of relaxation are few and fleeting during this frisky galop, all high spirits and athletic enthusiasm. The second-place *Tempo di Minuetto* recalls those extended Minuet movements of the Viennese Classical, but very much in the courtly, rather than country, mode; Beethoven stipulates *ma molto moderato e grazioso* – very moderate and gracious – just to make sure. And what a charmer of a Minuet it is, altogether comfortable in its own skin and in no hurry whatsoever to get on with anything else. Beethoven eschews the usual thicket of repeat signs in favor of written-out, varied repeats, perhaps as an admonishment to performers: *don't you dare skip any repeats*. Passages featuring Beethoven's signature off-beat accents throw just a bit of grit into the works, but otherwise it's a silken journey, elegant and appealing.

For the finale Beethoven conjures up an all-stops-out virtuosic showpiece, a dazzling *modo perpetuo* carrying the marking *leggermente* (lightly), clearly applicable to the movement as a whole. Such movements run a danger of falling victim to their own cleverness, but not when they're by Beethoven: darting forays into alternate keys, unexpected phrase extensions, and fleeting shifts of mood within all that jollity keep it on the edge, from the suppressed chuckle of the opening to a rollicking conclusion that teeters on the edge of silliness but never falls in.

Violin Sonata No. 1 in D Minor, op. 75 (1884)

Camille Saint-Saëns

Born: October 9, 1853, Paris, France

Died: December 16, 1921, Algiers, Algeria

"He knows everything, but lacks inexperience." That's the Oscar Wilde of music criticism Hector Berlioz, ever handy with the pithy put-down. His victim was Camille Saint-Saëns, who after a start as a dazzling child prodigy during Mendelssohn's heyday sustained a lengthy career capped off by golden years as a revered master whose students included Maurice Ravel and Gabriel Fauré. Berlioz's snipe reflected the common charge that the deeply conservative Saint-Saëns tended to elevate technique over inspiration. (Certainly nobody would ever say that about Berlioz.)

It's true enough that much of his compositional output has faded, but those works that have stayed the course have remained audience favorites and repertory standards: *Carnival of the Animals*, the Third "Organ" Symphony, several of the piano concertos, a violin concerto, *Danse macabre*, *Samson et Delilah*. And there's Violin Sonata No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 75, a dazzling showcase for both violin and piano that has taken its rightful place among the worthies of late Romantic chamber music.

The piece got off to a rocky start, however. Its supercharged propulsiveness and ferocious technical demands got the better of many of its early performers – a feature it shares with its spiritual ancestor, Beethoven's Op. 47 "Kreutzer" violin sonata, rejected for performance by its namesake Rodolphe Kreutzer. But just as the "Kreutzer" sonata found its performers, thus the Saint-Saëns D Minor. Dedicatee Martin Marsick was initially flummoxed by the finale's shattering difficulties but rallied sufficiently to give the work a worthy 1885 premiere, with the über-virtuoso Saint-Saëns himself on the piano. Performing the sonata is no casual undertaking, but the piece is most indubitably playable and just as indubitably effective in concert, provided the performers have the technical wherewithal to meet its daunting requirements.

Whether it's a two- or four-movement sonata is a matter of interpretation. The first and second movements form one nonstop unit; the third and fourth movements ditto. Befitting the craftsmanship for which Saint-Saëns is celebrated, the sonata makes careful use of a limited number of themes, each incorporated, disassembled, reassembled, and reprised throughout. The unsettled first movement lives up to its *Allegro agitato* marking with its short themes and frequent outbursts, but a reserved secondary theme in longer notes, against beautiful ripples in the piano, will make a triumphant return in the finale as the climax of the entire sonata. (*Nota bene*: Marcel Proust claimed this movement, and that secondary theme, to have provided the model for Vinteuil's sonata in *Swann's Way*.)

The second-place *Adagio* movement follows the first without a break. It might appear to have stepped out of a work by Gabriel Fauré, with its ethereal quality and shimmering blanket of fragrant harmonies, although a distinctly more

robust middle section points clearly to Saint-Saëns in its etched classicism and harmonic poise. The second half of the sonata opens with an *Allegretto moderato* scherzo that trips the light fantastic in a quick triple meter, almost Mendelssohnian in its grace, ending in a chorale-like passage that provides a moment of repose before the forthcoming torrent.

That torrent, *Allegro molto*, stands as one of the supreme finger-benders in the literature for both instruments; it was not for nothing that Saint-Saëns referred to it as music playable only by a mythical creature such as a hippogriff. From time to time the pyrotechnics cool off by a few degrees, but soon enough it all heats up again, eventually culminating in several pages of ear-melting splendor as the two instruments sizzle through uninterrupted *moto perpetuo* scales and arpeggios in lightspeed unisons, ending in a conflagration of octaves in the piano with superheated eruptions in the violin.

Chaconne from Partita No. 2 in D Minor for Solo Violin, BWV 1004

Johann Sebastian Bach

Born: March 31, 1685, Eisenach, Germany

Died: July 28, 1750, Leipzig, Germany

A bit of explanation is in order regarding a *chaconne*. Technically it's a variation form, but it doesn't do quite what one might expect, which is to ring changes on a tune of some sort. Instead, it organizes its materials via a short, constantly repeated pattern in the bass, thus establishing a cyclic harmonic progression around which just about everything else is in a state of flux. This technique, likely evolving out of methods for imparting order to improvised dance music, is variably dubbed *ostinato*, *ground bass*, *chaconne*, or *passacaglia*, and any attempt to settle the distinction between those last two is doomed to shipwreck on the rocks of contradiction and confirmation bias. (No doubt there was a difference between them at some point, probably concerning their dance steps more than their musical characteristics.) Thus Bach's *Goldberg Variations* fall into this general category, as does Dido's lament "When I am Laid in Earth" at the conclusion of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, as does that Everest of the violin repertory, the *Chaconne* of the D Minor Partita.

There is nothing like it in any of Bach's other suites, nor in anyone else's for that matter. "On one stave, for a small instrument, the man writes a whole world of the deepest thoughts and most powerful feelings." Thus Johannes Brahms in a letter to Clara Schumann, as he contemplated the majesty of the work he was transcribing for piano left hand. David Ledbetter, in his fine study of Bach's unaccompanied violin works, sums up the commentator's dilemma when facing an artistic creation of this magnitude: "There is no point in trying to match it in words," he says. Sage advice, indeed.

La Ronde des Lutins, Op. 25 (1852)

Antonio Bazzini

Born: March 11, 1818, Brescia, Italy

Died: February 10, 1897, Milan, Italy

"It is years since a virtuoso has given me such deep joy and such delightful moments as Antonio Bazzini. I believe that he is still little known, and even here has not been given the degree of appreciation that he deserves... he seems to come not from a land on this earth but from a land of song, from an unknown, eternally serene land: this was the impression I had at times listening to his music."

That's Robert Schumann in 1843 regarding Antonio Bazzini, who at the time was all of 25 years old. Schumann wasn't the only discerning critic to be bowled over by this supremely gifted young man; Felix Mendelssohn also thought the world of him.

Bazzini pursued a brilliant career first as a barnstorming violin virtuoso, then as a superlative late-Romantic composer and teacher whose students included Puccini, Mascagni, and Catalani. Bazzini's immortality was assured by his *La Ronde des Lutins* (Goblin's Dance), irresistible catnip for virtuoso violinists. And what with its fusillades of double stops, harmonics, and left-hand *pizzicato*, it's a dandy romp for listeners as well.

Slavonic Dance No. 2 in E Minor, Op. 72

(1886, arr. Kreisler)

Antonin Dvořák

Born: September 8, 1841, Nelahozeves, Czechia

Died: May 1, 1904, Prague, Czechia

The two sets of *Slavonic Dances* put Dvořák on the map as an up-and-coming composer. Influential critic Eduard Hanslick, impressed with Dvořák's having won the Austrian State Music Prize four years in a row, facilitated an 1878 meeting between Dvořák and Johannes Brahms, who was so impressed by what he heard that he prevailed on his own composer, Fritz Simrock, to publish several of Dvořák's vocal duets. Not long after, Simrock commissioned the *Slavonic Dances*, and once the original Opus 46 set had become a smash hit, talked Dvořák into writing the second Opus 72 set of 1886. Although Dvořák originally wrote the dances for piano duet, Simrock prevailed on him to provide the glittering orchestrations that have cemented their permanent place in the repertory. The E Minor dance from the second set is a *dumka*, a popular Czech folk idiom in which slow, almost melancholic passages alternate with faster material – although in this case introversion prevails. In addition to their four-hand and orchestral guises, the *Dances* have appeared in numerous arrangements, such as here for violin and piano by legendary violinist Fritz Kreisler.

Spain (1971, arr. Elizalde & Chen)

Chick Corea

Born: June 12, 1941, Chelsea, Massachusetts

Died: February 9, 2021, Tampa, Florida

Spain, Chick Corea's remarkable fusion of a beloved guitar concerto with modern jazz and Latin American music, made its first appearance on the 1971 album *Light as a Feather* with Corea's band Return to Forever. In Corea's original version, *Spain* begins with a ruminative solo based on the exquisite slow movement of Joaquín Rodrigo's 1939 *Concierto de Aranjuez* for guitar and orchestra. The introspective affect gives way to a breezy up-tempo series of improvisations that are firmly based on Rodrigo's original chord progression, a careful underpinning that perhaps reflects Corea's thorough training at New York's Juilliard School. *Spain* has been a jazz standard ever since, covered more than 30 times by artists varying from Al Jarreau to Stevie Wonder; Corea himself recorded it a dozen times. (In 2022 it was even the subject of an extensive analysis by a professor at Romania's University of Braşov.)

Here we have a cover by the dynamic team of Ray Chen and Julio Elizalde. Like Corea's original, it opens with a meditative piano solo, soon joined by the violin for an elaborate fantasy on the haunting Rodrigo melody. Then it all heats up into a dazzling showpiece that always honors its dual origins – Rodrigo and Corea – no matter how scintillating the fireworks become.

—SCOTT FOGLESONG

Scott Foglesong is the Chair of Music Theory and Musicianship at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. A Contributing Writer and Pre-Concert Lecturer for the San Francisco Symphony, he also writes program notes for the California Symphony, Oregon Symphony, and Grand Teton Music Festival, among other groups. As a pianist, he studied at the Peabody Conservatory and SFCM.

About the Artists

Ray Chen

Violin

Violinist and online personality, Ray Chen redefines what it means to be a classical musician in the 21st century. With a global reach that enhances and inspires a new classical audience, Ray Chen's remarkable musicianship transmits to millions around the world, reflected through his engagements both online and with the foremost orchestras and concert halls around the world. Beyond the performing arts, his work has also contributed to philanthropy, popular culture and educational technology.



Initially coming to attention via the Yehudi Menuhin (2008) and Queen Elizabeth (2009) Competitions, of which he was First Prize winner, he has built a profile in Europe, Asia, and the USA as well as his native Australia both live and on disc. Signed in 2017 to Decca Classics, the summer of 2017 has seen the recording of the first album of this partnership with the London Philharmonic as a succession to his previous three critically acclaimed albums on SONY, the first of which ("Virtuoso") received an ECHO Klassik Award. Profiled as "one to watch" by the *Strad* and *Gramophone* magazines, his profile has grown to encompass his featuring in the *Forbes* list of 30 most influential Asians under 30, appearing in major online TV series "Mozart in the Jungle", a multi-year partnership with Giorgio Armani (who designed the cover of his Mozart album with Christoph Eschenbach) and performing at major media events such as France's Bastille Day (live to 800,000 people), the Nobel Prize Concert in Stockholm (telecast across Europe), and the BBC Proms.

He has appeared with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, Leipzig Gewandhausorchester, Munich Philharmonic, Filarmonica della Scala, Orchestra Nazionale della Santa Cecilia, Los Angeles Philharmonic, SWR Symphony, New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Berlin Radio Symphony, and Bavarian Radio Chamber Orchestra. He works with conductors such as Riccardo Chailly, Vladimir Jurowski, Sakari Oramo, Manfred Honeck, Daniele Gatti, Kirill Petrenko, Krystof Urbanski, and Juraj Valcuha.

More recently, Ray Chen co-founded Tonic, an independent startup that aims to motivate musicians and learners around the world to practice their craft together. Although new, the innovative app has cultivated a highly engaged and supportive community and is available to download on iOS and Android today. Ray Chen's presence on social media makes him a pioneer in an artist's interaction with their audience, utilizing

the new opportunities of modern technology. His appearances and interactions with music and musicians are instantly disseminated to a new public in a contemporary and relatable way. He is an ambassador for SONY Electronics, a music consultant for Riot Games – the leading esports company best known for League of Legends and has been featured in Vogue magazine. He released his own design of a violin case for the industry manufacturer GEWA and proudly plays Thomastik Infeld strings. His commitment to music education is paramount and inspires the younger generation of music students with his series of self-produced videos combining comedy, education and music. Through his online promotions his appearances regularly sell out and draw an entirely new demographic to the concert hall.

Born in Taiwan and raised in Australia, Ray was accepted to the Curtis Institute of Music at age 15, where he studied with Aaron Rosand and was supported by Young Concert Artists. He plays the 1714 “Dolphin” Stradivarius violin on loan from the Nippon Music Foundation. This instrument was once owned by the famed violinist, Jascha Heifetz.

Julio Elizalde

Piano

Praised as a musician of “compelling artistry and power” by The Seattle Times, the gifted Hispanic-American pianist Julio Elizalde is a multifaceted artist who enjoys a unique career as soloist, collaborator, curator, and educator. Julio has performed at many of the world’s major music



centers including Walt Disney Concert Hall (Los Angeles), Davies Symphony Hall (San Francisco), Koerner Hall (Toronto), Alice Tully Hall (New York), Kioi Hall (Tokyo), Tokyo Opera City Concert Hall, Seoul Arts Center, Teatro Colón (Buenos Aires), St. Paul’s Knightsbridge (London), National Centre for the Performing Arts (Beijing), Shanghai Oriental Arts Center, Palacio de Bellas Artes (Mexico City), National Concert Hall (Taipei), and the Esplanade Concert Hall (Singapore), among many others.

For nearly a decade, he has appeared as recital partner to famed violinists Ray Chen and Sarah Chang, and has collaborated with renowned artists such as Pablo Ferrández, Kian Soltani, Pamela Frank, Robert McDonald, and members of the Juilliard, Cleveland, Takács, Kronos, Brentano, St. Lawrence, and Dover string quartets. As a founding member of the N-E-W Trio with violinist Andrew Wan and cellist Gal Nyska, he won the grand prize at the Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition and received the Harvard Musical Association’s prestigious Arthur W. Foote Prize. As part of the Trio, he performed for notable American politicians including President Bill Clinton and Secretaries of State

Condoleeza Rice and Henry Kissinger.

A champion of new music, Julio has collaborated with composers such as Osvaldo Golijov, Stephen Hough, Adolphus Hailstork, and Michael Stephen Brown. In 2013, Julio was a featured artist on the soundtrack composed by Academy Award-winner Howard Shore for the film Jimmy P, starring Benicio Del Toro.

Originally from the San Francisco Bay Area, Julio received a bachelor of music degree with honors from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where he studied with Paul Hersh. He holds master’s and doctor of musical arts degrees from the Juilliard School in New York City, where he studied with Jerome Lowenthal, Joseph Kalichstein, and Robert McDonald. He currently serves on the faculty at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

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