

MacMillan

Korngold



Groteske

Jonathan Swartz *and* Mark Fewer *violins*

Andrés Díaz *cello*

Wendy Chen *piano*

Kieren MacMillan

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Erich Wolfgang Korngold

Suite Opus 23, for 2 violins, cello, and piano (left hand)

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Jonathan Swartz¹ and Mark Fewer² violins
Andrés Díaz cello Wendy Chen piano

¹First violin for MacMillan

²First violin for Korngold

Fantasy Variations on a Theme by Charpentier

When Jonathan Swartz commissioned me to write a quartet for two violins, cello, and piano — stipulating only that it should “feature the two violins equally” — my mind immediately went back almost eighteen years, to 1989 and the Interlochen Arts Camp. That summer, I accompanied Jonathan and another violinist in a performance of J.S. Bach’s *Concerto in D Minor for Two Violins*, an experience I’ve never forgotten.

Although I considered adopting the form of Bach’s masterpiece, I ultimately decided to write a theme and variations. It didn’t take long to choose the perfect subject: Marc-Antoine Charpentier’s exquisite Ritournelle from his cantata, *In Nativitatem D.N.J.C. Canticum*, a movement I’ve always greatly admired.

The piece first presents Charpentier’s theme in its original form, then freely varies the material in a set of eleven variations, concluding with a rondo-scherzo that further develops and recapitulates all of the music. The variations are grouped in a three-part arch structure (4-3-4), each part separated by a cadential break, while the variations within each part flow smoothly, one into the next. Like a “Fantasy,” the variations continuously reconsider Charpentier’s theme, often discovering worlds unrecognizable from its baroque origins: Variation I turns the opening violin melody into a short rocking gesture that later evolves into an impressionistic cascade; Variation II gives prominence to a cello gesture taken from the middle of the theme; Variation III develops one of Charpentier’s short canonic subjects into a pizzicato string accompaniment while the piano adds a rolled-chord melody drawn from a completely different part of the theme; and so on. The only clear unifying factor is that each variation borrows the ritournelle form of the original, with the two violins regularly switching parts to maintain equality and balance.

These Variations clearly reveal my eclectic musical influences: you’re bound to hear Ravel, Prokofiev, Morricone, Mozart, Reich, Barber, Messaien, Adams, Sondheim, Harbison, Tchaikovsky, Saint-Saëns, and even the Funk Brothers. Of course, you’ll also hear Bach – in perhaps the clearest and shortest homage – and Charpentier, from whose brilliant gem this whole piece emerged.

– Kieren MacMillan

Suite Opus 23, for 2 violins, cello, and piano (left hand)

A child prodigy named partly in homage to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, it is fitting that Erich Wolfgang Korngold found fame in Hollywood. Hailed as one of the great film composers of all time, the young Korngold – like Mozart – demonstrated a knack for musical drama through opera. Korngold's relocation to America because of the Nazi regime, along with the advent of the film industry, led to the symbiotic match that is ultimately responsible for his recognition today.

While Hollywood made the world aware of this brilliant composer, others trumpeted his gifts all along. Gustav Mahler declared Korngold a “genius,” and stories abound similar to Mozart of Korngold's compositional prowess, unparalleled ear and memory, and unique creativity. Many of Korngold's non-film compositions were rediscovered and explored upon his fame, uncovering the work of one of the most gifted classical composers of all time.

Suite Op. 23 is one of Korngold's masterworks that has yet to receive its deserved acclaim. Commissioned in 1928 by pianist Paul Wittgenstein – who had lost his right arm during World War I – and completed in 1930, *Op. 23* is a tour de force for the piano. It explores a range of sounds and virtuosity hardly imagined possible using only one hand. Korngold's compositional genius here extends beyond musical creativity, using arpeggiations, rolled chords, and grace notes in the piano – musically reminiscent of a Mahler symphony – to create an expansive range within its practical limitations.

Korngold relies on traditional forms in this composition, despite the innovative sounds. The opening movement is a Prelude and Fugue, with roots hearkening back to Bach while seemingly overturning the earth from which they emanate. The second movement is a charming Waltz, transporting the listener back to Korngold's hometown, Vienna. The third movement, *Groteske*, is a whirling Scherzo interrupted by a longing Trio, with a combined magnetic musical force, making it the title track of this recording. The fourth movement is a tender song – “*Was Du mir bist?*” (*What You Are to Me*) from Korngold's own *Op. 22* – that counters the previous movement's grotesque with the sublime. And the final movement is a set of variations, encompassing the entire work from simple to profound, while celebratory throughout.

– Jonathan Swartz

About the Artists

Jonathan Swartz — violinist

A native of Toronto, **Jonathan Swartz** has distinguished himself throughout North America both as a performer and pedagogue. While serving on the faculties at Arizona State University, the Rocky Mountain Summer Conservatory, and the Domaine Forget Academy, Mr. Swartz has maintained a prolific performing career. He has appeared at the Smithsonian Chamber Music Society, Colorado's Strings in the Mountains Chamber Festival, the Ottawa International Chamber Music Festival, the Mooredale Concert Series, and the Artists Series at Roy Thompson Hall, in addition to several venues under the auspices of Les Jeunesses Musicales du Canada. He is also a member of the Iris Orchestra under conductor Michael Stern, an ensemble that regularly performs with the world's leading artists.



Sought after as a master clinician, and frequent presenter at the American String Teachers' Association National Conferences, Mr. Swartz was interviewed by *STRINGS* magazine for an article in the October 2006 issue regarding his approach to bow technique. He has given master classes throughout North America, and has previously served on the faculties at the University of Texas at El Paso, the Interlochen Arts Camp, and the Innsbrook Institute.

Mr. Swartz is the founder and Artistic Director of the Visiting Quartet Residency Program

at Arizona State University, a chamber music program that integrates visiting resident artists with a comprehensive chamber music curriculum. Quartets in this residency have included the St. Lawrence, Juilliard, Brentano, Tokyo, and Orion String Quartets. Mr. Swartz is also co-founder of the Violinists' Seminar at Le Domaine Forget – a team-taught intensive training program for advanced violinists.

Mr. Swartz earned a Bachelor of Music *cum laude* from Rice University, a Master of Music from the Mannes College of Music, and a Doctor of Musical Arts from Rice University. His doctoral thesis is "Perspectives of Violin Pedagogy: A Study of the Treatises of Francesco Geminiani, Pierre Baillot, and Ivan Galamian, and a Working Manual by Jonathan Swartz."

For further information, visit jonathan-swartz.com



Mark Fewer — violinist

Born in St. John's, Newfoundland, **Mark Fewer** began playing piano at age 4, violin at 6, and alto saxophone at 10. He left home at 15 to pursue violin studies with David Zafer at the University of Toronto, followed by studies with Jose-Luis Garcia in London, and Ferenc Rados at the Liszt Academy in Budapest.

Mr. Fewer served as concertmaster of the Vancouver Symphony from 2004-2008. During his tenure, he gave the Canadian premiere performances

6-string electric violin and orchestra) and Ludwig van Beethoven (*The Unfinished Violin Concerto in C major, Wo05*).

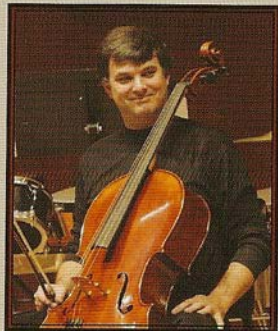
As soloist, Mr. Fewer has performed with groups as wide-ranging as the Fodens-Richardson Brass Band (UK), the Melbourne Symphony (Australia), the Zapp Quartet (Amsterdam), and the McGill Percussion Ensemble. He has also appeared as soloist/director with L'Orchestre Symphonique de Laval, 13 Strings of Ottawa, The McGill Baroque Orchestra, the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony Orchestra, the Newfoundland Sinfonia, and the Scotiafestival Strings. He is heard regularly on CBC (where he also frequently serves as guest commentator), RTVE, BBC Radio 3, ABC, and NPR.

As a chamber musician he is a founding member of the Duke Piano Trio and a member of Canada's SuperNova String Quartet. Mr. Fewer served as artistic director of the Scotia Festival of Music from 2004-2009, and is the founding director of the SweetWater Music Festival, which takes place in Owen Sound each September.

In 2009, Mr. Fewer's recording of *Nine Daies Wander* for violin and brass band (EGON), a work written for him by Bramwell Tovey, won two "record of the year" awards from brass societies in the UK. His other recordings include the complete sonatas of Brahms with pianist Peter Longworth (Azica), the sonatas of George Antheil with pianist John Novacek (Azica), and the complete baroque gypsy sonatas of Giovanni Pandolfi with harpsichordist Kenneth Slowik and cellist Myron Lutzke (Smithsonian's *Friends of Music*).

Mr. Fewer teaches at the Schulich School of Music at McGill University, where he also serves as Chair of the String Area.

For further information, visit **markfewer.com**



Andrés Díaz — cellist

A native of Santiago, Chile, **Andrés Díaz** began studying the cello at the age of five. He won First Prize in the 1986 Naumburg International Cello Competition, and received the Avery Fisher Career Grant and the Susan W. Rose Fund for Music in 1998. Mr. Díaz's numerous orchestral appearances have included performances with the Atlanta Symphony under Robert Shaw, the American Symphony at Carnegie Hall, the symphony orchestras of Milwaukee, Seattle, and Rochester under Christopher Seaman, the Boston Pops and Esplanade Orchestras, the Chicago Symphony with Edo de Waart, and the National Symphony Orchestra.

Mr. Díaz made his recital debut at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall in 1987. Other recital appearances have included the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., Jordan Hall and the Gardner Museum in Boston, the Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena and the San Francisco Performances Series in California. He frequently performed with the late pianist Samuel Sanders in recitals at New York's Carnegie Hall Weill Recital Hall, Merkin Concert Hall, the Philadelphia Arts Museum, Atlanta's Spivey Hall, Tokyo's Suntory Hall, and many other venues across the United States and abroad.

His debut solo recording on MusicMasters, with Samuel Sanders, of works by Manuel de Falla and Robert Schumann, was acclaimed by *The Boston Globe* as "strong and subtle; everything Díaz does has personality and, better than that, character." On Dorian, the two artists also released *Brahms' Sonatas for Piano and Cello*; *Russian Romantics*, a compilation of short Russian works; and *American Visions*, featuring works of Barber, Bernstein and

Foote. Mr. Díaz has also recorded the Villas-Lobos *Cello Concerto No. 2* with the Simon Bolivar Symphony Orchestra and conductor Enrique Diemecke, which won an Allegro Music Award for Best Orchestral Release. His recording in memory of his collaborator/pianist Mr. Sanders – featuring the works of Martinu, Lutoslawski, and Rachmaninoff – won The Classical Recording Foundation 2003 Award. Mr. Diaz's recording of the six Bach Suites was nominated for a Latin Grammy.

As a chamber musician, Mr. Díaz has appeared at the music festivals of Santa Fe, La Jolla, Marlboro, Ravinia, Bravo! Colorado, Spoleto, Saratoga, the Victoria (B.C.), Strings in the Mountains (Steamboat Springs, CO), Musicorda (MA), Rockport (MA) Cape & Islands, and Tanglewood. He is also a founding member of the Díaz String Trio.

For further information, visit andresdiaz.com



Wendy Chen — pianist

At the age of fifteen, **Wendy Chen** debuted with the Los Angeles Philharmonic under conductor André Previn. In 1990 she became the youngest winner ever of the National Chopin Competition, was one of the inaugural recipients of the Irving S. Gilmore Young Artists Award, and was named a Presidential Scholar by the National Foundation for the Arts. In the years since, her career has flourished, adding the Young Concert Artists International Auditions and Washington International Competition to her numerous awards.

Ms. Chen has garnered critical acclaim for her engagements with leading orchestras and

concert halls worldwide, with reviewers exclaiming that “having pianist Wendy Chen on the program is a guarantee that sparks will fly.” Her orchestral appearances have included the Boston Pops, New York Chamber Symphony, the Cincinnati Symphony and Chamber Orchestra, the Phoenix Symphony, the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra, the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, Uruguay’s Orquesta Sinfonica del Sodres, New Zealand’s Auckland Philharmonia and Wellington Sinfonia, Montreal’s I Musici and many others. *The Dominion of New Zealand* notes that “Chen possesses all the qualities of a modern musical star. Her playing was cuttngly virtuosic, had fantastic clarity and crispness, yet also plenty of sensitivity.” *The Boston Globe* writes, “Chen’s performance had stamina, chops, brilliance and sensitivity – a formidable combination.”

Ms. Chen has given recitals throughout the world, including appearances in Prague’s Philharmonic Hall, Poland’s Warsaw Philharmonic Hall, Korea’s Seoul Arts Center, Beijing’s Forbidden City Concert Hall, Tokyo’s Nexus Hall at CHANEL, New York City’s Alice Tully Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall, Washington D.C.’s John F. Kennedy Center, Toronto’s Glenn Gould Studio, and at the United States Supreme Court in a special evening presented by The Honorable Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Equally sought after as a chamber musician, Ms. Chen has appeared at the music festivals of Tanglewood, Boston Chamber Society, Montreal, Seattle, Spoleto, Amelia Island, Strings in the Mountains, Cartagena, St. Denis and Montreux.

Having studied with legendary pianists Aube Tzerko and Leon Fleisher, Ms. Chen is a dedicated pedagogue, frequently giving master classes throughout the world. She has been an artist in residence and guest teacher at many universities nationwide.

In 1998, her solo recording *BOLERO* featuring works by Chopin, was released on the RCM label. *American Record Guide* acclaims “it glitters and it is gold.”

For further information, visit **wendy-chen.com**

Kieren MacMillan — composer



Kieren MacMillan (b. 1969) is regularly commissioned by artists and organizations throughout North America. His catalog includes chamber music, pieces for solo instruments, vocal and choral works, spoken word compositions, film and theater scores, musicals, chamber operas, and multidisciplinary works. In addition to being included on regular programs worldwide, Mr. MacMillan's compositions and arrangements have been featured at choral conventions, international music festivals, professional sporting events, and on national, regional, and internet radio broadcasts.

As well as being perennial audience favorites, Mr. MacMillan's works have garnered significant critical acclaim. *Just Out of Reach*, co-created in 2008 with Kevin Noe, was hailed as "brilliant" (Mark Kanny, *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*) and a "new kind of musical theater [...] smart and moving" (Andy Druckenbrod, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*). It was ultimately selected as one of Pittsburgh's top ten concerts of 2008, and went on to receive seventeen performances at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Recordings of several of Mr. MacMillan's works are available on compact disc and as digital downloads, including *Wither's Carol* (Clarion), *Drunken Moon* (Lime Green Productions), and *Fairy Tale Ending* (Role Your Own Theatre).

When he's not writing music, Mr. MacMillan is also in demand as a performer, singer, lecturer, and musical director, often involved in more than a hundred performances and lectures per year. Highlights include music directing *West Side Story* for the Young Company at Toronto's Randolph Academy of Performing Arts, and being the inaugural

Keynote speaker at the University of Colorado's Entrepreneurship Center for Music.

Mr. MacMillan received his Master of Music in Composition from the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, where he studied with Paul Cooper and Samuel Jones. He now lives in Toronto, Canada, with his wife Lada Darewych, their daughter Marianna, and their cat (who has five Ukrainian names).

For further information, visit **kierenmacmillan.com**

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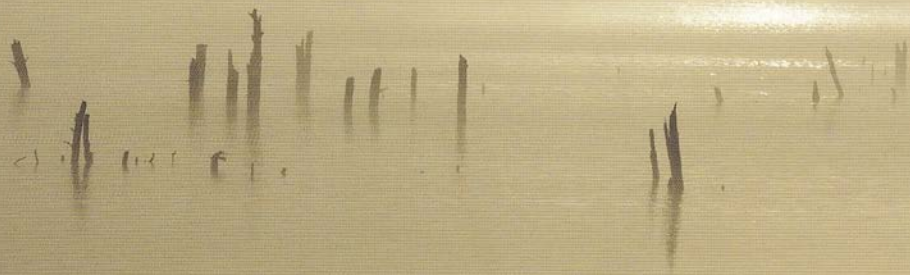
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Kieren MacMillan

Fantasy Variations on a Theme by Charpentier

Erich Wolfgang Korngold

Suite Opus 23, for two violins, cello, and piano (left hand)



As a means of contrast with the sublime,
the grotesque is the richest source that nature can offer art.

—Victor Hugo

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