

**HAMILTON  
COLLEGE  
DEPARTMENT OF  
MUSIC  
PRESENTS**

**Lucas Jonathan Wang Zheng**

*Piano*

Saturday, April 1, 2023, 7:30 pm

Wellin Hall, Schambach Center for Music and the Performing Arts  
Clinton, New York

## **WELCOME**

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It is a great thrill for me to sit in the audience today and hear this recital, which is the first full student recital since February of 2020. The months and years which followed have caused great disruption to the lives of each of us in some way. As John Lennon wrote “Life is what happens to you while you’re busy making other plans.” For Lucas to be performing this challenging program today is proof of his resilience and determination to overcome the challenges which life has posed to him, just as many of the students and faculty at Hamilton have done. May this continue to remind everyone in the audience today to pursue your dream, even though there may be detours along the way.

### **Sar-Shalom Strong**

Lecturer in Music (Piano)  
Coordinator of Staff Pianists  
Hamilton College

Good evening and welcome. It is an absolute pleasure to perform for you this evening in what is my very first full recital. As a musician, there is no greater joy than sharing my passion with an audience. I have spent countless hours preparing for this recital, selecting the perfect pieces that I believe will resonate with you. While every piece in the program represents a different facet of my musical personality, I hope that you will also find something of yourselves in the music. So, as I take the stage, I invite you to sit back, unwind, and connect with the music in a way that only live performance can offer. Thanks for joining me tonight. Without further ado I am going to let the music speak to you.

### **Lucas Jonathan Wang Zheng**

## PROGRAM

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*Le tombeau de Couperin* Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)  
I. Prelude  
II. Fugue  
III. Forlane  
IV. Rigaudon  
V. Menuet  
VI. Toccata

*A Song My Mother Taught Me* (premiere) Chris Cresswell (b. 1988)

### INTERMISSION

Prelude in F-sharp minor, Op. 28, No. 8 Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)  
Barcarolle in F-sharp major, Op. 60

*Danzas argentinas, Op. 2* Alberto Ginastera (1916-1983)  
I. *Danza del viejo boyero*  
II. *Danza de la moza donosa*  
III. *Danza del gaucho matrero*

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*Late arrivals will be seated at appropriate intervals. Food and beverages are not allowed in Wellin Hall. This recital is being recorded. Please silence all devices and hold applause until the end of each complete work. Schambach Center is a smoke-free building.*

## PROGRAM NOTES BY THE PIANIST

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*The dead are sad enough, in their eternal silence.*

—Maurice Ravel

### **Maurice Ravel**

Born March 7, 1875, Ciboure, France

Died December 28, 1937, Paris, France

### ***Le tombeau de Couperin***

Composed 1914-1917

Ravel's *Le tombeau de Couperin* (*The Grave of Couperin*) is a six-movement suite for solo piano. The work pays homage to the French composer François Couperin and to the sensibilities of the French Baroque style in general. Through his distinct use of ornamentation and modal harmonies, Ravel revives the Baroque style and brings it to life once again. The piece is a stunning tribute to the beauty and complexity of Baroque music, showcasing Ravel's masterful ability to blend the old with the new and create a truly timeless work of art.

Each movement is dedicated to a friend who had died fighting in World War I. The suite begins with a lively and whimsical prelude that sets the tone for the rest of the suite. It is a perpetuum mobile characterized by its playful rhythms and ornamentation.

The second movement of the suite is an intricate and jewellike fugue packed with familiar fugal techniques. The almost minimalist subject and its countersubject are passed between the three parts, weaving a tapestry of sound that is both beautiful and reserved.

The third movement, Forlane, is a lively dance. The Forlane is a type of Italian folk dance that was popular in the seventeenth century, and Ravel's composition captures the elegance and grace of this dance form perfectly. The music is lighthearted but unhurried, with swinging melodies, wry dissonances, and archaic cadences that evoke a sense of joy and mystery.

What follows is an effervescent Rigaudon. It opens with an energetic and playful section characterized by its bouncy feel and a faster pace. The middle section provides a moment of contrast, as Ravel shifts the music to a more introspective and reflective mood.

The fifth movement is a graceful Menuet. Ravel plays with subtle harmonies and various textures, giving the music a modern twist. He also makes masterful use of the piano's different registers to create a rich and complex soundscape. Notably, the melody of the musette starts out in one hand and becomes shared by two. One particularly wondrous moment occurs at the return of the menuet, where the musette seamlessly continues in the left hand.

The Toccata serves as a thrilling conclusion to the suite. Ravel draws on the tradition of the keyboard toccata, which was often used as a showpiece to display virtuosity. The rhythm intensity creates a sense of restlessness, and the music builds to a frenzied climax. Despite its virtuosic demands, the Toccata is also a piece of great musical depth. Ravel explores a wide range of tonalities and textures, introducing unexpected dissonances that keep the listener engaged. Recurring motifs and themes tie the movement together.

I am drawn to *Le tombeau de Couperin* for its sophisticated yet accessible nature. What impresses me the most is how Ravel displays incredible nuance while also maintaining remarkable clarity and transparency throughout the suite.

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## **Chris Cresswell**

A composer, singer/songwriter, educator, guitarist, and sound artist, Chris Cresswell is a curious musician whose work betrays his affection for sonic wanderlust. With an ear that incorporates all sorts of sounds, from field recordings to a singer/songwriter at an open mic night, Cresswell's music "... blurs the boundaries between industrial and organic, soothing and suspenseful, and introspective and anxious" (International Clarinet Association) and creates "a truly immersive, dreamlike atmosphere" (PopMatters). He has shared the stage with a Pulitzer Prize winning poet and a Top 40 country star (two different occasions) and his music has been heard in coffee shops, concert halls, and venues around the world, from chic Brooklyn spots like Areté Venue and Gallery and The Firehouse Space, to Birmingham, England's renown Symphony Hall and the Paleis voor Schone Kunsten in Brussels.

## **A Song My Mother Taught Me**

Composed 2023

Sar-Shalom Strong, an avid supporter of new music, approached Chris in January with a commission to compose a piece for me to premiere on my recital. I spoke with Chris and requested that the piece be based on the theme of motherhood. Sar and I received the completed piece on March 1. Here is what Chris had to say:

*This work represents a welcome return to the world of purely acoustic composition, after spending several years writing electro-acoustic music. It also represents a shift in harmonic language as I continue to incorporate elements of my “other” musical life as a singer/songwriter into my “serious” compositions. (Distinctions I have discovered live only in my head.)*

*The material of this work is the direct result of my initial conversation with Lucas. He wanted to celebrate his mother’s birthday, April 1, which also happened to be the date of his recital. In response, I interpolated the opening fragments of the vocal melody from Antonín Dvořák’s “Songs My Mother Taught Me” and set it in a harmonic and gestural world that reveals my love of Debussy’s writing for the piano.* The piece’s improvisatory character, combined with its resonant sounds, creates a dreamy and nostalgic atmosphere. When I asked Chris to explain the ending, he discussed the harmonic relationships in the piece and how they relate to the final F-major chords, but he wrote that “none of that analysis stuff really matters, what matters is the feeling of a gentle arrival in an unexpected place.”

Before taking on this piece, I anticipated that this would take me out of my comfort zone since I have never before performed contemporary music like this. One of the things that made this opportunity particularly valuable was the chance to collaborate with the composer. This is not something that I typically get to do with the rest of my repertoire, and it was a great learning experience.

I feel honored to premiere the piece this evening, and I am dedicating this performance to my mother. Through this piece, I hope to celebrate the enduring power of maternal love and the profound impact that mothers have on our lives.

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## **Frédéric Chopin**

Born March 1, 1810, Żelazowa Wola, Poland

Died October 17, 1849, Paris, France

### **Prelude in F-sharp minor, Op. 28, No. 8**

Composed 1835-1839

The opening melody, accompanied by rapid figurations in both hands, sets the tone for the piece's hauntingly beautiful character. As the music unfolds, subtle shifts in tonality create a sense of yearning. Chopin's skillful use of rubato creates a sense of ebb and flow, allowing the music to rise, fall, and breathe. Dramatic contrasts between loud and soft passages add to the emotional impact.

There was a deliberate reason behind the choice of this particular prelude. As it comes to an end with a poignant, rolled F-minor chord, the deep and sonorous C-sharp takes over and initiates the Barcarolle, which is in F-sharp major—the relative major key.

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*In the Barcarolle glowing harmonies clothe the subject, flexible and subtle in thirds. The melodic line is constant. In one moment, the 'melopoeia' disappears, it is suspended and then re-created delicately, softly, tempted by magical accords. The intensity increases. The new subject erupts, full of splendid lyricism, thoroughly Italian. Everything calms down. From the depth, a quick luminous trail rises and floats shimmering above the refined and tender chords. Some mysterious apotheosis comes to mind.*

—Maurice Ravel

### **Barcarolle in F-sharp major, Op. 60**

Composed 1846

The rippling waves of the Venetian canals come to life in Chopin's Barcarolle. The music flows with a fluidity that echoes the water's undulating motion, creating a sense of weightlessness and ease. Chopin's mastery of melodic and harmonic writing leads us through a landscape of shifting moods, at times sweeping us up in a lively dance with melodies that sparkle like sunlight on the water's

surface, and at other times enveloping us in a dreamy, contemplative haze as if time has come to a halt. Throughout the piece, the gondola sways gently, its movements weaving seamlessly with the music, while the gondolier's presence is felt, guiding us along on our journey with a sure and steady hand. As we near the end of our voyage, the music swells with a sense of joyful anticipation, as if we are approaching a long-awaited destination. The final flourish glistens like shimmering waves at sunset, taking my breath away every time I play it—both figuratively and literally.

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### **Alberto Ginastera**

Born: April 11, 1916, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Died: June 25, 1983, Geneva, Switzerland

### ***Danzas argentinas*, Op. 2**

Composed 1937

*Danzas argentinas* (*Argentine Dances*) is a striking set of three dance pieces for solo piano.

The first dance, *Danza del viejo boyero* ("Dance of the Old Herdsman"), is a vibrant yet light piece that features driving ostinatos and the distinctive use of a hemiola (a rhythmic alteration in which six equal notes may be heard as two groups of three or three groups of two) that creates a feeling of displacement and tension.

In contrast, the second dance, *Danza de la moza donosa* ("Dance of the Graceful Girl"), is a lyrical and atmospheric piece structured in ternary form. The expansive middle section stands in contrast to the meandering melody heard in the first section. The piece concludes with an unexpected atonal chord.

The third dance, *Danza del gaucho matrero* ("Dance of the Outlaw Cowboy"), is a rhythmic tour de force marked by its driving energy and explosive climaxes. The use of syncopation, polymeter, and fiercely percussive texture capture the raw power and jubilation of the Argentine gaucho. The coda unleashes a triumphant glissando of otherworldly enchantment. A final hit resounds with thunderous force, filling the concert hall with an electrifying energy.

## BIOGRAPHY

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Lucas Jonathan Wang Zheng was born to Chinese parents in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He returned to Shanghai, China with his family shortly after and had lived there until he graduated from Shanghai High School International Division (SHSID) in 2019 and enrolled at Hamilton College, where he is currently a senior Music major and German Studies minor. During the 2021-22 academic year, he studied abroad at the University of Oxford.

Lucas began playing the piano at the age of 4. He had previously studied under the tutelage of Enquan Xue, a former professor at the Xinghai Conservatory of Music. At Hamilton he is in the studio of Sar-Shalom Strong. At Oxford he worked with British pianist Jonathan Powell and was tutored by Martyn Harry and John Truill.

While in Shanghai, Lucas performed on numerous occasions at the Music and Drama Center of SHSID. At Hamilton he serves as a Staff Pianist and frequently performs as a soloist. At Oxford he appeared in three concerts at the Mary Ogilvie Lecture Theatre. In April, he will be playing the first movement of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 with Hamilton College Orchestra under the direction of Heather Buchman.

As a student composer, Lucas workshopped with Yarn/Wire, a new music quartet, on *Conception/Pregnancy* (2021), a piece for crotales, marimba, and two pianos. At Oxford he wrote *Letters from Afar* (2022), a quintet for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, and piano, for CHROMA, an acclaimed, London-based chamber ensemble.

Apart from performance and composition, Lucas has a keen interest in musicological research, particularly in the interplay between music and politics, with a focus on non-democratic regimes. In 2022 he received the Madeleine Wild Bristol Scholarship and the Emerson Foundation Grant from Hamilton. The latter supported his archival research at the Royal College of Music in London. Supervised by Alex Bádue, he is currently completing his senior project on East and Southeast Asian national anthems. Part of his research was done at the Asia Library at the University of Michigan.

Lucas has recently been awarded the Eckstein Scholarship by Northwestern University. Upon graduating from Hamilton College in May, he plans to pursue graduate study in Musicology.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I would like to thank everyone who made this recital possible. First and foremost, I cannot thank Sar enough, for everything he has done for me. Without him, I simply would not be standing here tonight. Chris, thank you for sharing with us such a wonderful piece. I am also grateful to those who advised me on the pieces I performed. Jonathan Powell coached me on the Forlane, Rigaudon, and Menuet, and Zhu Wang on the Toccata. Sue Beevers and Tina Toglia, who served on my jury, were incredibly helpful as well.

I wish to thank Professor Hamessley and Professor Bádúe, who have always been my best mentors. To my mother, who is watching remotely, happy birthday, and thank you for everything. Special thanks go to Jingyang, whose support sustained me throughout the preparation for this recital. She simply makes every day better. My thanks also go to Michelle Reiser-Memmer and the members of the production team, including the technicians and front-of-house staff.

Finally, thank you, dear audience, for supporting live music.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

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### **Mivos Quartet**

Friday, April 7, 7:30 p.m.

Hailed as “One of America’s most daring and ferocious new-music ensembles” (*The Chicago Reader*), Mivos Quartet is devoted to performing works of contemporary composers and presenting diverse new music to international audiences.

### **David de Frutos Ostrander, horn**

Saturday, April 8, 7:30 pm

David de Frutos Ostrander, horn, presents a student recital featuring works by Alan Abbott, Josef Strauss, and Mozart.

### **Jake Blount, Nic Gareiss and Laurel Premo**

Saturday, April 15, 7:30 p.m.

Fiddler and banjoist Jake Blount is joined by percussive dancer Nic Gareiss and multi-instrumentalist (fiddle, guitar, and vocals) Laurel Premo to present an evening of traditional songs ranging from the familiar to the arcane.