

BARD COLLEGE CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC
PRESENTS

SIGNS GAMES & MESSAGES 2025



Bard

BARD COLLEGE CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

Bard College Conservatory of Music expands Bard's spirit of innovation in arts and education. The Conservatory, which opened in 2005, offers a five-year, double-degree program at the undergraduate level and, at the graduate level, programs in vocal arts, conducting, and instrumental performance, as well as Chinese music and culture. Also at the graduate level, the Conservatory offers the Advanced Performance Studies Program and the two-year Postgraduate Collaborative Piano Fellowship. The US-China Music Institute of the Bard College Conservatory of Music, established in 2017, offers a unique degree program in Chinese instruments. The Bard Conservatory Orchestra has performed twice at Lincoln Center, and has completed three international concert tours: to China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan; Russia and six cities in Central and Eastern Europe; and three cities in Cuba. The orchestra also performs annually at area prisons.

This year, the Conservatory has enrolled more than 200 undergraduate and graduate students from 28 countries and 30 states. In recognition of their academic and musical excellence, many students hold named scholarships, including the Bettina Baruch Foundation Scholarship, Y. S. Liu Foundation Scholarship, Joan Tower Composition Scholarship, Borodin Scholarship in Music and Science, Dr. Ingrid A. Spatt '69 Memorial Flute Scholarship, and Stephen and Belinda Kaye Scholarship, among others.

The Preparatory Division offers music studies for students of all ages, including early childhood and elective classes, as well as ensembles. More than 200 students take private lessons in piano, voice, violin, viola, cello, double bass, flute, clarinet, saxophone, trombone, percussion, guitar, and composition. Lessons are matched with musicianship classes in which elements of music theory and ear training are taught with an emphasis on composition. Students have multiple recital performance opportunities each semester.

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BARD COLLEGE CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

Presents

SIGNS GAMES & MESSAGES 2025

SEASON VI

A Kurtág Festival

Curated by Benjamin Hochman

PROGRAM ONE

Bartók and Kurtág

Friday, February 28 at 7 pm

Conservatory Performance Space

PROGRAM TWO

Piano Marathon: Bartók's *Mikrokosmos* (Books 4, 5, and 6)

Saturday, March 1 at 2 pm

Conservatory Performance Space

PROGRAM THREE

Literary Inspirations I: Lichtenberg, Joyce, and Kurtág

Saturday, March 1 at 7 pm

Chapel of the Holy Innocents

PROGRAM FOUR

Literary Inspirations II: Beckett and Kurtág

Sunday, March 2 at 4 pm

Conservatory Performance Space

"Signs, Games & Messages" is an annual, three-day festival celebrating the music and musical artistry of the great Hungarian composer György Kurtág (b. 1926) alongside works by those who shaped or were shaped by his artistry. It fosters a timeless, open-ended dialogue between composers, musicians, and styles, with Kurtág's music as the focal point.

This festival has been permanently endowed through the generous support of the László Z. Bitó and Olivia Cariño Foundation.

PROGRAM ONE

Bartók and Kurtág

Friday, February 28 at 7 pm
Conservatory Performance Space

Hiroki Kikuchi, violin
Ken Hakii, viola

Béla Bartók (1881-1945) *Selections from 44 Duos for Two Violins*

- 15. Soldier's Song
- 8. Slovakian Song (2)
- 17. Hungarian March (1)
- 44. Transylvanian Dance

György Kurtág (b. 1926) *Hipartita (Hirominak), Op. 43*

- 1. ✱(sostenuto, doloroso)
- 2. Après une lecture de Rimbaud - To Anne Longuet-Marx
- 3. Oreibasias
- 4. In Memoriam György Gonda
- 5. Heraclitus: It Is Hard to Fight with Desires
- 6. Teneramente
- 7. Perpetuum Mobile
- 8. Heimweh - Hommage à Péter Eötvös

INTERMISSION

György Kurtág *Selections from Signs, Games and Messages*

- Hommage à J. S. B.
- Jelek 1
- Im Volkston
- The Carezza Jig
- Klagendes Lied
- Mijakonak
- Perpetuum Mobile
- Pizzicato

Béla Bartók *Selections from 44 Duos for Two Violins*

- 26. Teasing Song
- 28. Sorrow
- 14. Pillow Dance
- 21. New Year's Greeting (1)
- 43. Pizzicato
- 37. Prelude and Canon

PROGRAM TWO

Piano Marathon: Bartók's Mikrokosmos (Books 4, 5, and 6)

Saturday, March 1 at 2 pm
Conservatory Performance Space

Performed by students and faculty of the Bard Conservatory

Béla Bartók (1881-1945) *Selections from Mikrokosmos (Books 4, 5, and 6)*

Book 4

Notturmo
Honor Doran

Wrestling
Juliette Benveniste

Thumb Under
Hasti Safaei

From the Island of Bali
Alexandra Balog

Crossed Hands
Tianxiang (Tessa) Ni

Clashing Sounds
Oskar Baron

In the Style of a Folk Song
Hongfan Su

Intermezzo
Andrew Altruck

Diminished Fifth
Francis Huang

Variations on a Folk Tune
Chelsea Yang

Harmonics
Sophia Cornicello

Bulgarian Rhythm (1)
Xinri Zhang

Minor and Major
Linus Ramakrishnan

Theme and Inversion
Yujia Yang

Through the Keys
Playsong
Ivy Jiayun Chen

Bulgarian Rhythm (2)
Ivy Jiayun Chen

Song
Bourrée
Triplets in 9/8 Time
Marcos Castilla

Melody in the Mist
Marcos Castilla

Dance in 3/4 Time
Fifth Chords
Two-Part Study
Francis Huang

Book 5

Chords Together and Opposed
Staccato and Legato
Staccato
Juliette Benveniste

Boating
Fiona Boak-Kelly

Change of Time
Hasti Safaei

New Hungarian Folk Song
Hasti Safaei
Maggie Yang

Peasant Dance
Hasti Safaei

Alternating Thirds
Village Joke
Fourth
Andrew Altrick

Major Seconds Broken and Together
Syncopation
Tianxiang (Tessa) Ni

Studies in Double Notes
Perpetuum Mobile
Whole-tone Scale
Sophia Cornicello

Unison
Bagpipe
Merry Andrew
Ivy Jiayun Chen

Book 6

Free Variations
Xinri Zhang

Subject and Reflection
Chelsea Yang

From the Diary of a Fly
Alexandra Balog

Divided Arpeggios
Isabel Luzzi

Minor Seconds, Major Sevenths
Francis Huang

Chromatic Invention
Yujia Yang

Ostinato
Saoirse Doran

March
Hongfan Su

Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm
Terrence Wilson

PROGRAM THREE

Literary Inspirations I: Lichtenberg, Joyce, and Kurtág

Saturday, March 1 at 7 pm
Chapel of the Holy Innocents

Works by Kurtág, Bach, Gubaidulina, Purcell, Eötvös, Cage, and more

J. S. Bach (1685–1750)

arr. Mordechai Rechtman

Trio Sonata No. 1 in E-flat Major, BWV 525

Chloe Brill, bassoon
Liliána Szokol, flute
Jalen Mims, clarinet

Sofia Gubaidulina (b. 1931)**Quasi Hoquetus for Viola, Bassoon, and Piano**

Luosha Fang, viola
Blair McMillen, piano
Philip McNaughton, bassoon

György Kurtág (b. 1926)**Einige Sätze aus den Sudelbüchern
Georg Christoph Lichtenbergs, Op. 37a**

Lucy Fitz Gibbon, soprano
Will Langlie-Miletich, double bass

INTERMISSION

Henry Purcell (1659–95)

arr. Benjamin Britten

If Music Be the Food of Love, Z. 379C

Tim Widner, baritone

O Solitude, Z. 306**Man Is for the Woman Made, Z. 605**

Imani Oluoch, mezzo-soprano

What Can We Poor Females Do? Z. 518

Imani Oluoch, mezzo-soprano
Tim Widner, baritone

with Nomin Samdan, piano

- Amy Beth Kirsten (b. 1972)** **yes I said yes I will Yes.**
Lucy Fitz Gibbon, soprano
Will Langlie-Miletich, double bass
- Péter Eötvös (1944–2024)** **Joyce for Solo Clarinet**
Mohammad AbdNikfarjam, clarinet
- John Cage (1912–92)** **The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs**
Nowth upon Nacht
Madelin Morales, mezzo-soprano
Yi-Hsuan Hsia, piano
- Luciano Berio (1925–2003)** **Thema: Omaggio a Joyce (1958–59)**
Electronics
- Benjamin Britten (1913–76)** **Moore's Irish Melodies**
- Sail on, sail on**
Dear Harp of my Country!
Sam Warshauer, tenor
- Oft in the stilly night**
The last rose of summer
Benjamin Truncale, tenor
- with Kayo Iwama, piano*

PROGRAM FOUR

**Literary Inspirations II:
Beckett and Kurtág**

Sunday, March 2 at 4 pm
Conservatory Performance Space

Works by Kurtág, Schubert, and Beethoven

György Kurtág (b. 1926)

Hommage à Schubert (Book 3)
Lovely Greetings to Grete Spinnrad (Book 5)
Ryan McCullough, piano

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

Gretchen am Spinnrade, D. 118
Nacht und Träume, D. 827
Georgia Perdikoulis, soprano
Lara Saldanha, piano

György Kurtág

Samuel Beckett Sends Word through Ildikó
Monyók in the Translation of István Siklós
("Samuel Beckett: What is the word"),
Op. 30a
Sydney Cornett, mezzo-soprano
Ryan McCullough, piano

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Piano Trio, Op. 70, No. 1 ("Ghost")
Luosha Fang, violin
Benjamin Hochman, piano
Raman Ramakrishnan, cello

INTERMISSION

Franz Schubert

String Quartet in A Minor, D. 804
("Rosamunde")
Daniel Phillips, violin
Carmit Zori, violin
Melissa Reardon, viola
Raman Ramakrishnan, cello

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Bard Conservatory of Music's annual Kurtág Festival, now in its sixth season, celebrates the last surviving member of the great generation of composers who gave classical music a new direction in the years following World War II. György Kurtág's music has been performed all over the world; as a legendary teacher of chamber music, he has inspired many of the world's most prominent performers to delve deeper into the secrets of the classical masters.

Born in Romania to Hungarian-speaking parents, Kurtág moved to Hungary in 1945 to enroll at the Franz Liszt Academy (now University) in Budapest, where he later taught for decades. A study year in Paris from 1957 to 1958 proved decisive for his evolution as a composer but, due to Hungary's relative isolation behind the Iron Curtain, his international fame was slow to grow. His major breakthrough did not come until 1981, when his *Messages of the Late R. V. Trusova* was performed in Paris by the Ensemble Intercontemporain with Hungarian soprano Adrienne Csengery, for whom it had been written. (*Trusova* was performed at Bard during the 2023 Kurtág Festival.) In the last 40 years, Kurtág has been universally recognized as one of the greatest composers of our time; his first opera, *Fin de partie*, was premiered at Milan's La Scala in 2018. Between the 1990s and the early 2010s, Kurtág lived mostly in Western Europe. In 2015, he moved back to Hungary where, at age 99, he is still actively composing.

PROGRAM ONE

György Kurtág has repeatedly stated that the music of **Béla Bartók** is his "mother tongue," so it is appropriate that our festival should begin with selections from Bartók's *44 Duos for Two Violins* (1931). These duos, Bartók's only instructive works for an instrument other than the piano, were written at the request of Erich Doflein, a German musicologist and publisher who wanted to assemble a library of pedagogical works in a new spirit—technically accessible and, at the same time, of a high musical quality.

Like the six-volume *Mikrokosmos*, the violin duos are arranged in order of increasing technical difficulty. They are based on folk melodies from Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian, Serbian, and Ruthenian sources (the Ruthenians being a Ukrainian ethnic group from the Carpathian Mountains). The collection also includes the arrangement of an Arab melody that Bartók had recorded in Biskra, Algeria, in 1913, and two pieces whose themes are not authentic folk melodies but were written by Bartók in folk style. The two violin parts are equal in their level of difficulty; the two players normally take turns in playing melody and accompaniment.

At tonight's concert, we will hear 10 of the duos—four at the beginning, and six more at the end of the evening. Our selection reflects both the geographical and the functional diversity of the collection: love songs, marching songs, dances, and a *colinda*—an archaic Romanian Christmas carol with pre-Christian origins.

Kurtág's *Hipartita*, Op. 43, written for Hiromi Kikuchi between 2000 and 2004, is a journey in more ways than one. Externally, the violinist moves around the stage during the performance, passing from one music stand to the next in the course of the eight movements. The original idea behind this was simply to avoid the necessity of page-turning. Yet, during the recording session, the composer's son—composer and sound engineer György Kurtág Jr.—gave, as he related, "varying degrees and types of amplification" to the different stage positions, so that "the speakers and the hall acoustics caused every single note to move in space."

But if we look at the titles of the individual movements, we realize the work is a journey in an even deeper sense, as it contains a wide range of literary memories and offers an entire portrait gallery of friends honored or memorialized in the music. Five of the movements bear allusive titles, and several of these allusions have more than one layer. Thus, No. 2, "Après une lecture de Rimbaud" (After reading Rimbaud), does not only evoke the French poet Arthur Rimbaud but also Victor Hugo, who titled one of his poems "Après une lecture du Dante." Liszt's "Dante" Sonata was inspired both by the *Divine Comedy* and by Hugo's reading of it, and Kurtág had all of these antecedents in mind at once. Similarly, No. 3, "Oreibasía" (Mountain-treading), refers to a Bacchic ceremony in ancient Greece, but an additional remark in the score connects this tradition to an ancient Hungarian folk incantation. No. 4 pays tribute to Kurtág's friend György Gonda, a Hungarian politician and cultural leader—one of the founders of the International Bartók Seminar and Festival in Szombathely, where Kurtág taught for years. No. 5, "Heraclitus," is a reworking of an unpublished piece for unaccompanied voice, with the following fragment from the ancient Greek philosopher as its text: "It is hard to fight against passion; for whatever it wants it buys at the expense of soul." The final movement, "Heimweh" (Homesickness), is an homage to the extraordinary composer-conductor Péter Eötvös. Three movements without explicit extramusical associations round out the cycle: a "Sostenuto, doloroso" (Sustained, painful; No. 1), "Teneramente" (Tenderly, No. 6), and "Perpetuum Mobile" (Perpetual Motion, No. 8).

Giving a sign, playing a game, sending a message—these three actions sum up so much of what art is all about, and, indeed, what life is all about. Signs let the world know that we have been here on Earth; games are a fundamental need of the *homo ludens*; and messages connect us to those we love.

Kurtág has published volumes of *Signs, Games and Messages* for each one of the string instruments and for most wind instruments as well. There is a separate volume for string trio in which several pieces are dedicated to Hiromi Kikuchi, Ken Hakkii, and cellist Stefan Metz. (The violin volume also contains an "Antiphon for Hiromi.") In these volumes (as elsewhere in Kurtág's music), many pieces bear the names of people either in the title or in the dedication, with those people frequently evoking further thought associations. Thus, "Hommage à J. S. B." refers not only to Bach but also to Bartók, who wrote a piece with the same title (even referring to Bach by his initials) in *Mikrokosmos* (Book 3). Kurtág highlights the same characteristic of Bach's style (his fondness for melodies moving in equal note values) that Bartók had also focused on.

Another title borrowed from *Mikrokosmos* is “Népdalféle” (In the Style of a Folk Song, Book 4), which reproduces the symmetrical phrase structure of many Hungarian folk songs. Kurtág also employs a short-long rhythmic figure prominently that many people would know as “Scotch snap,” but that might just as well be called “Hungarian snap.”

Each sign, game, and message, then, is laden with personal significance. The pieces conceal many mysteries that will be revealed to someone *der heimlich lauschet* (“who listens secretly”). And herein lies another typical Kurtágian chain of associations: The German words come from the Romantic philosopher and poet Friedrich Schlegel; Robert Schumann used them as his motto for his Piano Fantasy in C; and Kurtág (whose *Hommage à R. Sch.* is one of his most important chamber pieces) took the quote as the title of a violin piece in *Signs, Games and Messages*.

PROGRAM TWO

Béla Bartók’s six-volume *Mikrokosmos* has long been the bible of piano students everywhere. Bartók, a concert pianist himself, started working on this pedagogical magnum opus in order to teach his young son Péter in 1926, and he completed the 153 pieces of the collection in 1939. Péter’s journey starts with the basics: the first pieces of Book 1 contain only five notes, one for each finger, and the two hands play first in unison before contrary motion is introduced. The last pieces of Book 6, the “Six Bulgarian Dances,” are quite demanding concert items. Bartók planned the gradual progression “from A to Z” with the greatest care. The individual pieces often target specific pianistic techniques, but each number is a well-formed, attractive composition—extremely instructive and, at the same time, a lot of fun to play. In addition, *Mikrokosmos* is also a primer for composition students, who are guided from the simple eight-bar period to more complex techniques of variation and development. Furthermore, the collection serves as an introduction to Bartók’s own unmistakable personal style, nourished in equal measure by folk music and by a novel approach to chromatic harmony.

This afternoon, we will hear the more advanced second half of *Mikrokosmos*. When the volumes are performed in their entirety, one marvels at the inexhaustible richness of musical ideas and the meticulous attention to detail. If we had to single out any pieces in particular, we might call attention to the “New Hungarian Folksong” (Book 5, No. 127), which is scored for voice and piano. In his preface to the score, Bartók wrote:

All instrumental study or training should really commence with the student singing. . . . Such pieces offer very useful practice in reading three staves instead of two, the student singing while playing the accompaniment at the same time.

Some pieces have thematic connections to larger works by Bartók, such as “Village Joke” (Book 5, No. 130), whose melody closely resembles the main theme of the second movement in *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*. “Minor Seconds, Major Sevenths” (Book 6, No. 144) could be placed next to the third movement of the same orchestral masterpiece. “From the Diary of a Fly” (Book 6, No. 142) is a delicious example of Bartók’s sense of humor (with a crucial moment in the piece marked: “Ouch! a cobweb!”), while “From the Island of Bali” (Book 4, No. 109) shows Bartók’s interest in non-Western musical cultures. The “Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm” end the collection with a cycle within the cycle. They bring students to a level of technical accomplishment where they are almost ready to tackle some of Bartók’s major piano works, like the Sonata or the suite *Out of Doors*.

PROGRAM THREE

One of the many remarkable things about **György Kurtág** is the way he embraces, and builds upon, the entire history of music, from Gregorian chant to the present day. He frequently surprises (and puzzles) his students by his highly original thought associations, creating connections between pieces written centuries apart that no one else would ever think about. Our program takes its inspiration from Kurtág’s catholic tastes in music and in literature, for, in the course of his long compositional career, he has drawn on poetic texts spanning millennia from ancient Greece to his own contemporaries. Therefore, there is something very Kurtágian about having J. S. Bach and Henry Purcell share a program with Luciano Berio and John Cage, and about bringing together such an unlikely pair of writers as Georg Christoph Lichtenberg and James Joyce.

The first two pieces on the program show how inspirational the juxtaposition of Bach and a contemporary composer can be. To Kurtág, **Johann Sebastian Bach** is a true *fons et origo* (source and origin) to whom he has frequently returned as a writer of transcriptions. No one who has ever heard Kurtág and his wife Márta perform the Sinfonia from Bach’s *Actus tragicus* on a specially muted upright piano can ever forget the experience. Kurtág has published several other Bach transcriptions, including one from the Organ Sonata in E-flat Major, BWV 525, whose first movement he arranged for piano three hands. Tonight we shall hear all three movements of that work in a version for flute, clarinet, and bassoon arranged by Mordechai Rechtman, longtime principal bassoonist of the Israel Philharmonic. Bach’s six organ sonatas are also sometimes called “trio sonatas” because they always maintain a strict three-voice texture. Their three movements (fast-slow-fast) follow the Italian concerto model, to which Bach applied his incomparable contrapuntal art, nourished by the German organ school. In Rechtman’s transcription, the sonata will sound somewhat like the organ piece it originally was—with three beautiful woodwind pipes to bring out all the intricacies of the polyphonic texture.

Among Kurtág's unpublished works preserved at the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel is a short duet for trombone and cello entitled "Sonia Gubaidulina–György Kurtág," which attests to the friendship between these two composers. **Sofia Gubaidulina**, now 93, has created a vast and diverse oeuvre that has put her at the forefront of the international music scene. A native of Tatarstan, a republic within the Russian Federation, she suffered under the repressive cultural policies of the Soviet regime, which barely tolerated the quest for new sounds pursued by Gubaidulina and some of her courageous colleagues. (Gubaidulina has lived in Germany since 1992.)

Quasi Hoquetus was written in 1984, five years after the composer—together with six others—was denounced by the Congress of the Composers' Union as producing "noisy mud instead of real musical innovation." This was an almost direct quote from the infamous 1936 *Pravda* editorial about the supposed "muddle instead of music" in the works of Dimitri Shostakovich. Gubaidulina was famously encouraged by Shostakovich to "continue going down [her] mistaken path," where the "mistaken" was of course meant sarcastically. In the present trio for viola, bassoon, and piano, we see Gubaidulina follow the older composer's advice, with astonishing results.

Hoquetus ("hocket") is a term from medieval music denoting a rapid alternation of two voices, where one voice has a note while the other rests, and then they switch. Gubaidulina enlarges upon the idea of the "hocket" to encompass the large-scale form of the piece, which involves alternating three basic types of musical material and often opposes the piano to the other two instruments. Analyst Sookyung Sul has used the terms "toccata-like," "chordal," and "contrapuntal" to describe the three main musical types employed—three vastly different kinds of motion that are combined and recombined throughout the composition. The voices of the viola and the bassoon (which plays frequent multiphonics) create an eerie background to the faster-moving piano part, but then the roles are reversed: now the piano plays a chorale-like chordal progression while the other two instruments are assigned more animated material. The music grows in intensity as the three instruments trade the three types of material back and forth amongst themselves. After a wild climax, a soft viola-bassoon duo followed by 13 ominous strokes in the lowest range of the piano becomes the point of departure for a new, final crescendo.

Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742–99) was a professor of physics at the University of Göttingen. He left a number of scrapbooks (*Sudelbücher*) in which he recorded life events, thoughts, and aphorisms. Published after his death, the scrapbooks have become famous for their acerbic wit and the author's taste for succinct, paradoxical formulations. Kurtág is particularly fond of Lichtenberg; years after composing the work on tonight's program, he is writing his second opera based on the German author.

Kurtág's musical settings of Lichtenberg's aphorisms were first published as a work for unaccompanied soprano (Op. 37, 1996), and later for soprano and double bass (Op. 37a, 1999). The solo version is now withdrawn. Some of the scrapbook entries consist of only a few words, and their settings are like miniature snapshots that amplify

the biting irony of the texts. The singer often has only seconds to sketch a certain character and to create an atmosphere. She receives help from the double bass player who pretends to doze off on the "fall-asleepy pew" ("ein einschläfriger Kirchstuhl"); illustrates a girl's "sinfully beautiful hands" with some rapid, "frisson"-like figures; and adds a *dúvő* rhythm borrowed from Romanian and Hungarian folk music to represent Benjamin Franklin's "disharmonica." The numerous virtuoso bass solos serve to give a little more space for these fleeting visions to unfold.

While Kurtág has not set any texts by **James Joyce** (1882–1941), we should remember that Samuel Beckett, with whose work he has been intimately involved for most of his career, had been mentored and profoundly influenced by his older Irish contemporary. An allusion to Joyce may be found in Kurtág's opera *Fin de partie* (Endgame) after Beckett, where one of the arias is marked "Poldy Bloom singing a Jewish-Irish-Scottish ballad"—Leopold Bloom being the protagonist of Joyce's novel *Ulysses*.

Among the many composers who have turned to Joyce as a literary source, no one did so more often, or with more radical results, than **John Cage**, who called the writer his "principle inspirator." The 27-year-old Cage bought a copy of *Finnegans Wake* as soon as it was published in 1939 and found its nonlinear construction, its sophisticated puns, and its many enigmas utterly liberating. In 1942, he composed his first Joyce setting, "The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs," for soprano, plus a piano with its lid closed and used only as a percussion instrument. Cage freely rearranged and condensed Joyce's text, reducing a long paragraph to just a few lines. The evocation of a beautiful girl (a saint? a nun? a sweetheart?) takes the musical form of a single melodic formula of only three notes, with a complex rhythmic accompaniment. Cage specified exactly which part of the piano has to be struck, and whether fingers or knuckles should be used to strike it.

Forty-two years later—after many major projects involving Joyce—Cage returned to where he had begun his Joycean adventures. "Nowth upon Nacht" (1984), which picks up the text of *Finnegans Wake* exactly where "The Wonderful Widow" left off, was intended to be performed together with the earlier song. The lines about the mysterious "Wachtman Havelook" making his rounds during the night are recited mostly on a single note, with the "percussion" intervening every once in a while.

"Nowth upon Nacht" was dedicated in memory of the great singer Cathy Berberian, for whom **Luciano Berio**, one of the leaders of the postwar avant-garde (and Berberian's husband), created "Thema: Omaggio a Joyce" in 1958–59. This electroacoustic composition, which combined Berberian's recorded voice with electronic sounds, was realized in collaboration with the celebrated writer and scholar Umberto Eco; a revised version was released in 1995. The work is based on the opening lines of episode 11 ("Sirens") from *Ulysses*, in which the individual words are largely detached from any conventional syntax and become, in effect, pure "music." As he manipulated Berberian's recitation of those lines in the studio, Berio matched Joyce's strategies of deconstructing language with various innovative musical strategies of his own.

“Sirens,” with its abundance of musical references, also inspired **Péter Eötvös** to conceive an ambitious *Sirens Cycle* (2015–16), in which he brought together Joyce’s sirens with the corresponding passage from Homer’s *Odyssey* as well as a related text by Franz Kafka. This 40-minute composition, in which Eötvös set the same words from “Sirens” that Berio had used in his “Omaggio,” was scored for soprano voice and string quartet. In 2017, Eötvös recast the Joyce sections for clarinet and string quartet. Here, the clarinet—as the composer put it—“renders the quite masculine protagonist Leopold Bloom’s musing over the attractive barmaids with befittingly vigorous musical gestures.” The clarinet part at the first performance was played by Jörg Widmann, who is a distinguished composer in his own right. Eötvös wrote:

[Widmann] convinced me that the clarinet part would also be eminently suitable as a solo piece. I subsequently made slight revisions in the approximately 10-minute-long clarinet part and added a few virtuoso soloistic gestures which are only intended to be performed in this solo version.

This new version of “Joyce” for solo clarinet was premiered by Widmann in Berlin on January 20, 2020.

The youngest composer on the program, **Amy Beth Kirsten**, acclaimed for her innovative theatrical pieces, has put the “bel canto” back into avant-garde music in her “yes I said yes I will Yes” (2012). These famous words, which come at the very end of *Ulysses*, are spoken by Molly Bloom as she realizes that she still loves her husband after having had sex with another man earlier in the day. The piece is a duet for soprano and double bass (originally cello), where the instrumentalist also sings (or hums) along with the soprano. The accompaniment begins with the instrumentalist hitting the body of the instrument (perhaps as a nod to Cage); except for a brief passage where the bass imitates the voice, the part is played pizzicato throughout.

The Joyce-inspired works on the second half of the program will be framed by two sets of songs from the British Isles—all arranged by **Benjamin Britten**, who had a lifelong devotion to folk and early music. Britten published no fewer than 45 so-called “realizations” of songs by Henry Purcell on the 250th anniversary of the Baroque composer’s death in 1945. The songs were taken from Purcell’s collections *Orpheus Britannicus* and *Harmonia Sacra*, with some highly expressive and demanding piano parts added by Britten, who also changed the harmonies at several points. Britten, who was a wonderful pianist, frequently performed many of these songs with his life partner, the great tenor Peter Pears.

Britten also published six volumes of folk song arrangements, mostly from the British Isles (there is also a French volume), with a seventh volume that appeared posthumously. Volume 4 (1960) was devoted to songs by Thomas Moore (1779–1852), Ireland’s “national bard.” More than a decade after the Purcell realizations, Britten’s piano parts have become even more radical harmonically and texturally. Tonight’s

selections will conclude with that most famous of Irish songs, “The last rose of summer,” which is referenced multiple times in *Ulysses* (and in the “Sirens” chapter, in particular). In his arrangement of the beloved melody, Britten introduced some elaborate ornaments in the vocal part that turn the “folk song” into a true art song in the classic sense of the word.

PROGRAM FOUR

Beethoven and Schubert have always been central points of reference for **György Kurtág**, who is particularly fond of working on their chamber works with the participants of his master classes. The two classic composers were equally important for **Samuel Beckett** (1906–89), the great Irish-French writer whose work has been Kurtág’s constant companion since the 1950s. Beckett was a great music lover and Schubert was one of his favorite composers.

Kurtág’s *Játékok* (“Games”) for piano, in 10 volumes and counting, is, in a way, the composer’s answer to Bartók’s *Mikrokosmos*. This monumental project, begun in the 1970s, started out as an instructive work introducing the young musician to the piano, although Kurtág’s approach was rather different from Bartók’s in that it allowed students a much higher degree of creative freedom. Later volumes in the collection are less pedagogical in nature and instead constitute an anthology of *hommages*, in memoriams, and other personal thoughts.

Our program opens with Kurtág’s homage to **Franz Schubert**, from the third volume (Book 3) of *Játékok*. Here, Kurtág alluded to the opening of the song “Death and the Maiden” and harmonized it in his own inimitable way. The subtitle “Consolation for Sarah” allows us to guess at the background: Could Sarah, perhaps, have lost a daughter? We don’t have to know for sure to feel the emotional depth of this short piece.

“Helyettem kis virág: Lovely Greetings to Grete Spinnrad” (Book 5) relates to Schubert only indirectly. The Hungarian words (“In my place, little flower”) were sung by Siebel in Charles Gounod’s *Faust* at a time when all operas were performed in translation at the Budapest Opera (the original French words are “Faites-lui mes aveux”). In the opera, the young Siebel is hopelessly in love with Marguerite (“Grete Spinnrad,” as Kurtág jokingly calls her) and leaves her a bouquet of flowers. Kurtág added only a few “marginal notes” to the main motif of Siebel’s song.

But, as we know, Gretchen—the female protagonist of Goethe’s *Faust* (on which Gounod’s opera was also based)—has been swept off her feet by the title character. Her tempestuous feelings were captured by a 17-year-old Schubert in “Gretchen am Spinnrade” (Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel) with a dramatic force that is still astonishing 211 years later. The movement of the spinning wheel is represented by the 16th-note figures in the accompaniment. When the wheel stops at the words “ach, sein Kuss!” (“ah, his kiss!”), it seems that all time stands still as well.

“Nacht und Träume” (Night and Dreams) is one of Schubert’s most magical songs, written at the ripe old age of 28 after a poem by Viennese poet Matthäus von Collin. It is a quintessentially Romantic hymn to the night, a time when people listen raptly to the secret world of their dreams. The crucial word *lauschen* (to listen), which Kurtág quoted from Friedrich Schlegel via Robert Schumann (see Program One), is emphasized by a breathtaking modulation in Schubert’s song.

The full title of Kurtág’s “Samuel Beckett: What is the word” (1990–91) includes, in English translation, “Samuel Beckett sends word by Ildikó Monyók in István Siklós’s translation.” It is another example of the multilayered associative chains that one finds so often in Kurtág. The work is based on the last text Beckett ever composed. In 1988, the 82-year-old writer suffered an injury that caused temporary aphasia. His poem, first written in French as “Comment dire” and subsequently translated as “What is the word,” appears to be capturing the struggle for the recovery of speech. It was the perfect text for Kurtág when he decided to write a piece for Monyók, a Hungarian actress and singer who had lost her ability to speak as a result of an accident and had to relearn to use her voice. The piece exists in two versions: Op. 30a for voice and piano, and Op. 30b for voice, chorus, and instrumental ensemble. In both versions, the soloist uses a Hungarian translation of Beckett’s text (in Op. 30b, the chorus sings in English).

“What is the word” was thus not only conceived for Monyók’s voice: it was conceived to represent her struggle to recover her speech. She went on to perform the work many times, and recorded it in the orchestral version under the direction of Claudio Abbado. In the words of the eminent British musicologist Paul Griffiths, it is as if the work was “enacting on stage one of her therapy sessions. With an intimacy for which there is no parallel, the work was thus tied to her voice, her person, her case, and, since her death in 2012, anyone performing the piece will have had to be performing her performing it.”

The music portrays this grasping for words and the occasional despair when all the efforts seem to be “in vain”—which is the exact meaning of the word *hiábavaló*, uttered several times in a frightening outburst of frustration. Yet, at the end, success seems within reach as the singer begins an *arioso* marked *omaggio a Bartók*. In fact, the melody comes from the slow movement from Bartók’s Violin Concerto No. 2, considered one of the most beautiful melodies written in the 20th century. At the end of his manuscript, Kurtág entered the following words (in Hungarian): “And now the word is yours.”

We don’t know whose idea it was to call **Ludwig van Beethoven**’s Trio in D Major (1808) the “Ghost,” but, as nicknames go, this one is singularly apt. There is something undoubtedly spooky about the work’s central Largo, and even though it is flanked by two cheerful fast movements, it is the memory of the Largo that lingers in most listeners’ minds as they leave the concert.

This trio and its companion work in E-flat were dedicated to the Hungarian Countess Anna Marie Erdődy, in whose Viennese palace they were first performed by violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh and cellist Joseph Linke, with Beethoven himself at the piano.

The unison melody at the beginning of the first movement explodes with uncommon energy, only to stop abruptly on a note outside the key of D major. A new, lyrical melody appears and picks up considerable momentum as it is developed. The recapitulation temporarily darkens the mood by an unexpected modulation from D major to D minor, but soon recaptures the upbeat energy of the opening.

The D minor that was only hinted at in that brief episode takes center stage in the famous “Largo assai ed espressivo.” Sketches to this movement were found on the same page in Beethoven’s notebook where the composer had also jotted down ideas for a projected *Macbeth* opera that was never written. We will never know whether there could be a connection between the Largo of the piano trio and Shakespeare’s tragedy. Yet the unusual harmonies, eerie tremolos, and sudden outbursts are indications that Beethoven had something extremely dramatic in mind.

The dark clouds vanish without a trace in the concluding Presto, a sparkling movement full of playful melodies and delicious harmonic surprises. At the same time, there is plenty of that Romantic fire that signaled a new era in the history of music.

On March 31, 1824, Schubert quoted the opening lines of “Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel” in a letter to his friend, painter Leopold Kupelwieser: “My peace is gone, my heart is sore, I shall find peace never and nevermore.” Schubert was suffering from loneliness and poor health, yet he had unprecedented success with his music precisely during this time. His String Quartet in A Minor had just been introduced on March 14 by the Schuppanzigh Quartet at the Society of Friends of Music in Vienna—by far the most prestigious venue at which his music had yet been presented. Still, the accompaniment figure played by the second violin at the beginning of the quartet is very similar to the motif of the spinning wheel (albeit in slower motion), as if to emphasize the connection between Gretchen’s restlessness and Schubert’s own depressive state of mind.

The “spinning-wheel” figure accompanies a melody beginning with a simple descending triad, which is subjected to an astonishing development in this poignant “Allegro ma non troppo.” The sadness of the music is periodically relieved by beautiful dreams, and the tension erupts in powerful, if brief, dramatic outbursts. Schubert ties all these emotional extremes together by the constant use of the first three notes of his main theme, rendering it capable of expressing a wide range of emotions.

The second movement is based on a melody from *Rosamunde*, the incidental music Schubert had composed to a soon-to-be-forgotten play by Helmina von Chézy. (This is why the whole work is sometimes referred to as the “Rosamunde” Quartet.) The melody, which mixes quiet serenity with deep nostalgia, later changes characters and becomes intensely dramatic, with some bold modulations and agitated rhythmic figures, before the idyll returns at the end.

The third-movement Minuet includes another self-quote, this time from the 1819 song “Die Götter Griechenlands” (The Gods of Greece), after a poem by Friedrich Schiller. The opening line of the poem, “Schöne Welt, wo bist du?” (Fair world, where are you?), struck a deep chord with Schubert. The dance character of the Minuet is considerably weakened by the long pedal notes of the cello and by the stubborn repetition of the “Schöne Welt” motif. The Trio section is launched by a variant of the same motif, but then takes a different turn and brings relief with some *ländler* strains. Even here, though, the music remains relatively subdued.

The final Rondo opens with a lighthearted melody, yet touches of sadness remain. The rondo theme includes a wistful ritardando in its middle, and, although the main key is A major, the minor mode is never far away, casting a dark shadow on the entire movement. The music goes through a few rather stormy moments before reaching its peaceful, if not exactly exuberant, conclusion.

Peter Laki, *Visiting Associate Professor of Music Emeritus*

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

Bard Conservatory Preparatory Division

Students: Oskar Baron, Fiona Boak-Kelly, Honor Doran, Saoirse Doran, Isabel Luzzi, Linus Ramakrishnan, Evie Tourtelot.

Iranian clarinetist **Mohammad AbdNikfarjam** is a first-year Graduate Instrumental Arts student at the Bard Conservatory. He studies clarinet with David Krakauer and Pascual Martinez.

Andrew Altrock is studying piano performance at the Bard Conservatory under Terrence Wilson. He is also pursuing a concurrent degree in German studies.

Alexandra Balog from Hungary is a first-year Graduate Advanced Performance Studies student, studying at the Bard Conservatory with Rieko Aizawa.

Pianist **Juliette Benveniste** is a second-year student from France, studying at the Bard Conservatory with Rieko Aizawa.

Bassoonist **Chloe Brill** is a graduate student at Bard Conservatory, where they study with Marc Goldberg.

Pianist **Marcos Castilla** is a first-year student from Spain, studying at the Bard Conservatory with Terrence Wilson.

Pianist **Ivy Jiayun Chen** is a second-year student from China, studying at the Bard Conservatory with Rieko Aizawa.

Mezzo-soprano **Sydney Cornett** from the Bard Conservatory is a member of the Graduate Vocal Arts Program, where she studies with Lucy Fitz Gibbon.

Sophia Cornicello is a third-year student at the Bard Conservatory, where she studies piano with Rieko Aizawa.

Violinist and violist **Luosha Fang** has performed with esteemed ensembles like the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Atlantic Symphony, and the Albany Symphony Orchestra, recording for Naxos Records. A winner of multiple international competitions, including the 2019 Classic Strings International and 2018 Tokyo International Viola Competitions, she has appeared at major festivals such as Marlboro, Ravinia, and ChamberFest West. Fang’s chamber

music collaborations include artists like Gidon Kremer and Christian Tetzlaff. A passionate educator, she serves as instructor of violin and viola at Bard College Conservatory of Music.

Praised by the *Boston Globe* for her “dazzling, virtuoso singing,” soprano **Lucy Fitz Gibbon** is renowned for exploring the full expressive range of the human voice. Her repertoire spans from Baroque masterpieces to contemporary gems, with a particular passion for resurrecting forgotten works. A sought-after collaborator with living composers, Lucy has received a 2024 fellowship from the Borletti-Buitoni Trust, which will support her upcoming commissioning, recording, and performance projects.

Ken Hakii studied violin at Tokyo University of the Arts and viola in graduate school. A winner of the Min-On Chamber Music Competition and the Kirishima International Music Festival Grand Prize, he has served as principal violist of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. He has performed as a soloist with leading conductors, including Wolfgang Sawallisch and Mariss Jansons, and appeared at major festivals such as Salzburg and the BBC Proms. György Kurtág composed *...concertante...* for him and his wife, violinist Hiromi Kikuchi. Their recording of *Signs, Games and Messages* won the German Critics’ and Dutch Edison Awards.

Benjamin Hochman is a pianist and conductor recognized for his insightful programming and artistic depth. A winner of Lincoln Center’s Avery Fisher Career Grant, he made his concerto debut with the Israel Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall and has since performed with major orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic and Prague Philharmonia, and at venues such as the Philharmonie in Berlin and the Louvre. He has conducted orchestras such as the English Chamber Orchestra and Santa Fe Pro Musica. He is the artistic director of the Kurtág Festival at Bard College Conservatory, and a lecturer at Bard College Berlin.

Yi-Hsuan Hsia is from Taiwan and is in his first-year as a Collaborative Piano Fellow.

Pianist **Francis Chung-Yang Huang** is a Bard Conservatory of Music alumnus who is a graduate student in the Bard Conservatory’s Instrumental Arts Program.

Pianist **Kayo Iwama** has performed extensively with renowned singers, including Stephanie Blythe, Dawn Upshaw, and Rufus Müller, in major venues such as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, and the Théâtre du Châtelet. Praised for her sensitivity and virtuosity (*Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*), she is associate director of Bard College's Graduate Vocal Arts Program. A longtime faculty member at Tanglewood, she has worked with James Levine, Seiji Ozawa, and Robert Spano. Her recordings include *Die Schöne Müllerin* with Christòpheren Nomura and works by John Harbison.

Violinist **Hiromi Kikuchi** has studied with Saschko Gawriloff, Henryk Szeryng, and Nathan Milstein. She has performed as a soloist worldwide and appeared at major festivals in Salzburg, Paris, Vienna, and beyond. György Kurtág composed several works for her, including *Hipartita* and *...concertante...*, which she performed with La Scala and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. A recipient of the Franco Abbiati Prize, German Critics' Award, and Dutch Edison Award, her recording of Kurtág's *Signs, Games and Messages* was named a *New York Times* Best Classical CD.

Double bassist and composer **Will Langlie-Miletich** began his musical journey on guitar before discovering the double bass at age 11. He joined the Seattle Symphony in 2019, becoming assistant principal in 2023, and has performed with the Philadelphia Orchestra. A Curtis Institute of Music graduate, he studied with Harold Robinson and Edgar Meyer and was the first double bassist to win a top prize at the Irving M. Klein International String Competition. An avid chamber musician, he has appeared at Marlboro, ChamberFest Cleveland, and the Seattle Chamber Music Society.

Pianist **Ryan MacEvoy McCullough** is a versatile soloist, collaborator, composer, and educator. He has premiered numerous works, with recordings on labels including Innova, Albany, and Parma, and is the founder of False Azure Records, dedicated to new and overlooked repertoire. He has appeared on PBS's *Great Performances* and NPR's *From the Top*, performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and collaborated with the Mark Morris Dance Group. A faculty member at Bard College Conservatory, he lives in Kingston, New York, with his wife, soprano Lucy Fitz Gibbon.

Blair McMillen, pianist, chamber musician, and improviser, has performed as a soloist at Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, and internationally. He has appeared with the American Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of St. Luke's, and on tour with the Juilliard Orchestra in Japan. A member of Da Capo Chamber Players and American Modern Ensemble, his recordings include *Soundings* and *Multiplicities*: '38. He is an artist in residence and visiting assistant professor of music at Bard College, teaching piano and chamber music at the Bard Conservatory. He holds degrees from Oberlin, Juilliard, and Manhattan School of Music.

Bassoonist **Philip McNaughton**, based in Kingston, New York, has performed across the United States, Canada, and Europe, including at festivals like the Bard Music Festival and Bard SummerScape Opera. His recordings appear on Naxos, Bridge, Avie, and Deutsche Grammophon, and he's featured in the Oscar-nominated film *Maestro*. Currently, he plays with the Glens Falls and Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestras. McNaughton holds degrees from The Hartt School, Yale School of Music, and Bard College.

Jalen Mims, clarinet, is a second-year Graduate Instrumental Arts student at the Bard Conservatory, where she studies with David Krakauer.

Mezzo-soprano **Madelin Morales** from the Bard Conservatory is a member of the Graduate Vocal Arts Program, where she studies with Lorraine Nubar.

Tianxiang (Tessa) Ni, from Beijing, China, is a second-year student at the Bard Conservatory in Rieko Aizawa's studio. She is a winner of the Conservatory's 2023 Concerto Competition.

Mezzo-soprano **Imani Oluoch** from the Bard Conservatory is a member of the Graduate Vocal Arts Program, where she studies with Richard Cox.

Soprano **Georgia Perdikoulis** from the Bard Conservatory is a member of the Graduate Vocal Arts Program, where she studies with Edith Bers.

Violinist **Daniel Phillips** is a founding member of the Orion String Quartet and a longtime artist member of The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. A graduate of Juilliard, he has performed with major orchestras, including Pittsburgh, Boston, and Houston, and has appeared at festivals such as Spoleto USA, Santa Fe, and Music@Menlo. Phillips teaches at Queens College, Mannes School of Music, the Bard College Conservatory, and Juilliard, and has served on faculty at the Heifetz Institute. He and his wife, flutist Tara Helen O'Connor, are artistic directors of Music from Angel Fire in New Mexico.

Raman Ramakrishnan, cellist of the Horszowski Trio, has performed across North America, Europe, and Asia, recording for Bridge and Avie Records. A founding member of the Daedalus Quartet, he toured internationally for eleven seasons. He is an artist member of the Boston Chamber Music Society and has performed with Yo-Yo Ma's Silkroad Ensemble. He is an artist in residence at Bard College, teaching cello and chamber music at the Bard Conservatory. He holds degrees from Harvard and Juilliard and plays an 1837 Vincenzo Jorio cello.

Grammy-nominated violist **Melissa Reardon** is an artist in residence at Bard College and the Bard College Conservatory, where she teaches viola and is a member of the Borromeo String Quartet. She serves as artistic director of the Portland Chamber Music Festival and executive director of the East Coast Chamber Orchestra. Formerly with the Ensō String Quartet, she toured internationally, performing at venues such as Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center. Reardon has also toured with Yo-Yo Ma's Silkroad Ensemble and Musicians from Marlboro. She earned degrees from the Curtis Institute of Music and New England Conservatory.

Pianist **Hasti Safaei** is a first-year Graduate Advanced Performance Studies student from Iran, studying at the Bard Conservatory with Rieko Aizawa.

Lara Saldanha, from Brooklyn, New York, is a first-year Collaborative Piano Fellow.

Pianist **Hongfan Su** is a first-year Graduate Instrumental Arts student from China, studying at the Bard Conservatory with Blair McMillen.

Liliána Szokol, flute, is a second-year student at the Bard Conservatory, where she studies with Tara O'Connor.

Tenor **Benjamin Truncale** from the Bard Conservatory is a member of the Graduate Vocal Arts Program, where he studies with Lorraine Nubar.

Tenor **Sam Warshauer** from the Bard Conservatory is a member of the Graduate Vocal Arts Program, where he studies with Richard Cox.

Baritone **Tim Widner** from the Bard Conservatory is a member of the Graduate Vocal Arts Program and studies with Lucy Fitz Gibbon.

Pianist **Terrence Wilson**, hailed by the *Baltimore Sun* as "one of the biggest pianistic talents to have emerged in this country in the last 25 years," has performed as a soloist with major orchestras including the National Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, and Philadelphia Orchestra. A frequent recitalist and chamber musician, he has appeared at venues such as Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, and the Verbier Festival. Wilson is on the faculty at Bard College Conservatory and the Brevard Music Center. He has received numerous awards, including an Avery Fisher Career Grant and a Grammy nomination.

Pianist **Chelsea Yang** is a first-year Graduate Instrumental Arts Program student from China, studying at the Bard Conservatory with Terrence Wilson.

Mezzo-soprano **Maggie Yang**, from Beijing, China, is an undergraduate voice student studying with Rufus Müller.

Pianist **Yujia Yang** is a first-year Graduate Instrumental Arts Program student from China, studying at the Bard Conservatory with Terrence Wilson.

Pianist **Xinri Zhang** is a first-year Graduate Instrumental Arts Program student from China, studying at the Bard Conservatory with Rieko Aizawa.

Violinist **Carmit Zori** has appeared as a soloist with the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, and Rochester Philharmonic, and has given solo recitals worldwide. A dedicated chamber musician, she has performed with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and at festivals including Marlboro, Santa Fe, and Peasmarsh. She serves on the faculty of the Bard Conservatory and is a professor of violin at Rutgers University and SUNY Purchase.

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