

## **Marc-André Hamelin with Charles Richard-Hamelin**

**Sunday, March 29, 2026 at 3pm**

This is the 1,516<sup>th</sup> concert in Koerner Hall

**Marc-André Hamelin**, piano

**Charles Richard-Hamelin**, piano

### **PROGRAM**

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Sonata for Two Pianos in D Major, K. 448

I. Allegro con spirito

II. Andante

III. Allegro molto

Fryderyk Chopin: Rondo in C Major for Two Pianos, op. 73 (op. posth.)

### INTERMISSION

Cécile Chaminade: *Pas des Cymbales*, op. 36, no. 2

Nikolai Medtner: Two Pieces for Two Pianos, op. 58

Russian Round-Dance (A Tale): Allegro vivace

Knight Errant: Andante

George Gershwin: *Fantasy on Porgy and Bess* (arr. P. Grainger)

### **THE MICHAEL AND SONJA KOERNER FUND FOR CLASSICAL PROGRAMMING**

The Royal Conservatory's mission to develop future generations of musicians and to bring the world's greatest performers to Toronto has been made possible, in large part, due to the generosity of Michael and Sonja Koerner. In 2022, the Koerners invested \$10 million to create The Michael and Sonja Koerner Fund for Classical Programming, securing the future of the finest classical music concerts at Koerner Hall and our other performance venues. This latest investment, along with the naming of Michael and Sonja Koerner Hall, support of Glenn Gould School students through The Michael & Sonja Koerner Scholarships, the donation of The Michael and Sonja Koerner Early Instrument Collection, the naming of The Alexandra Koerner Yeo Cello Program and The Alexandra Koerner Yeo Chair in Cello, and support of the annual 21C Music Festival, underscores the Koerner family's dedication to music and to the RCM.

## Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Born in Salzburg, Austria, January 27, 1756; died in Vienna, Austria, December 5, 1791

### **Sonata for Two Pianos in D Major, K. 448 (1781)**

“The young lady is a monster! (‘ein Scheusel’). But she plays enchantingly.” That was the 25-year-old Mozart’s blunt assessment of his pupil Josepha von Auernhammer, the only daughter of the socially prominent Viennese Economic Councillor Johann Michael von Auernhammer. When she became “*sérieusement* in love” with her teacher, Mozart felt compelled “to tell her the truth very politely.”

But, writing to his father, he confessed: “A single look is a whole day’s punishment!” Yet irritation did not prevent collaboration. The two pianists performed together publicly no fewer than six times in the early 1780s, and Josepha even oversaw the engraving of several of Mozart’s works. His first Viennese publication – a set of six violin sonatas – was also dedicated to her.

Mozart wrote the Sonata in D Major, K. 448 – arguably the earliest masterpiece in the two-piano repertoire – specifically for Josepha. They gave its first performance at her father’s house on November 23, 1781. While most fortepianos of the time extended only to a high F, Mozart includes an F sharp in the finale – a knowing flourish for Josepha, who owned one of the newer instruments.

The sonata itself is perfectly proportioned – a characteristically judicious Mozartian marriage of form and content. The opening Allegro con spirito is compact, brilliant, and propulsive; Alfred Einstein called it an ideal sinfonia for an opera buffa. The slow movement unfolds with extraordinary poise, as melodies pass seamlessly between the two instruments. A good-humoured, galant rondo brings this buoyant, assured work to a close.

## Fryderyk Chopin

Born in Żelazowa Wola, nr. Warsaw, Poland, March 1, 1810; died in Paris, France, October 17, 1849

### **Rondo in C Major for Two Pianos, op. 73 (op. posth.) (1828)**

Already by the age of 17, known in Warsaw as ‘the Paganini of the piano,’ Fryderyk Chopin concluded his second year at the High School for Music with a circumspect report from his teacher, Józef Elsner: “Instruction in Composition. Chopin, Fryderyk: Special ability, second year, gone away for the improvement of his health.”

Over the previous year, Chopin had witnessed the death from tuberculosis of his sister Emilia and two close family friends. He may well have already suspected that he carried the same disease. He accepted the invitation of a fellow student to escape the city for Sanniki, a rural estate west of Warsaw. This was the summer home of the wealthy Pruszyński family and time there offered fresh air, quiet, and freedom from academic and social routine. Here, Chopin could compose and practise with freedom and even visit local villages in search of Polish folk music. Letters from the period describe long days at the piano, evenings of music-making, and a sense of creative ease. It was in Sanniki that he wrote the Rondo in C, op. 73 – music that wears its brilliance lightly, but is already unmistakably his.

The Rondo began life as a solo concert piece – a calling card designed to show off sparkle, wit, and command of the most popular form of the day. Almost immediately, Chopin arranged it for two pianos, turning technically dazzling display into no less dazzling dialogue. Just weeks earlier, Chopin had heard and met the 50-year-old Hummel, then at the height of his fame, renowned for his command of the glittering, technically immaculate style brillante. In his Rondo, the 18-year-old Chopin pays homage to Hummel, adding humour and a playful challenge as the piano lines of his Rondo constantly interweave and exchange roles.

## Cécile Chaminade

Born in Paris, France, August 8, 1857; died in Monte Carlo, Monaco, April 13, 1944

### **Pas des Cymbales, op. 36, no. 2 (c. 1888)**

The Chaminade Music Club in Yonkers, NY is one of three survivors from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when over 100 – in some accounts closer to 200 – ‘Chaminade Clubs’ sprang up across the United States, devoted to performing and enjoying the music of French composer-pianist Cécile Chaminade.

Bizet, a close neighbour, famously called the young Chaminade his ‘little Mozart’ and helped her secure a solid musical education. Her mother, an amateur pianist, encouraged her ambitions. Her father, an insurance

executive, believed marriage and motherhood should be her destiny. Nevertheless, her career unfolded in full view of the French musical establishment – and often in resistance to it.

Before she was 30, Chaminade had already produced a well-received Piano Trio, op. 11, an Orchestral Suite, op. 20, and the highly successful Concertstück for piano and orchestra, op. 40 – premiered in Antwerp alongside her *Symphonie dramatique Les Amazones*. Two later works – the Piano Sonata, op. 21 (1895) and the Concertino, op. 107 (1902) – stand as landmarks within an output of some 400 pieces, largely piano music and songs. “I ask of music first of all that it be sincere and melodious,” she said – a credo that set her apart as European music edged toward harmonic experiment and abstraction.

Chaminade promoted her music tirelessly through concert tours. England, and its royal court, proved especially welcoming; the United States, with its flourishing Chaminade clubs, followed close behind. In 1913, she became the first female composer admitted to the Légion d’Honneur. Her ballet *Callirhoë* premiered in Marseilles in 1888 and enjoyed more than 200 performances, many at the Metropolitan Opera. *Pas des Cymbales* is the finale from its orchestral and the subsequent two-piano *Ballet Suite*. This is music by a performer who knew the keyboard intimately – brilliant, direct, and designed to delight, without apology.

## Nikolai Medtner

Born in Moscow, Russia, December 24, 1879/January 5, 1880; died in London, UK, November 13, 1951

### **Two Pieces for Two Pianos, op. 58 (c. 1941-2)**

Moscow born and bred, Nikolai Medtner clung stubbornly to the idiom of the Romantic virtuoso composer-pianist long after much of 20<sup>th</sup> century music had moved on. The piano sat at the centre of his creative life. Despite winning a gold medal as the Moscow Conservatory’s outstanding pianist and earning honours at the Rubinstein Competition in Vienna in 1900, Medtner made a firm decision – composition would come first.

His 14 piano sonatas form the backbone of a catalogue that also includes three concertos, chamber works, and songs – every piece involving the piano. He studied keyboard with the legendary Vasily Safonov, and Russian audiences remembered his formidable pianism long after he left the country following the Revolution. In the West, matters were tougher. Medtner refused to perform anything but his own music and held fast to conservative musical ideals at a time of rapid stylistic change – a combination that brought financial hardship. Later support from patrons – notably Rachmaninov and the Maharajah of Mysore – enabled him, despite chronic ill health, to record many key works on 78s for the Medtner Society.

The Two Pieces, op. 58 – Medtner’s only works for two pianos – were published in 1946 and likely date from wartime England in the early 1940s. The subtitle (*A Tale*) of the Russian Round-Dance remains unexplained, but the music vividly evokes a traditional khorovod – villagers linked in a singing circle. Medtner does not quote folk tunes, preferring distilled gesture and motion. He often played the piece privately with its dedicatee, Edna Iles, though his 1946 recording pairs him with Benno Moiseiwitsch.

The Knight Errant moves into darker, more urgent territory. Cast in C minor, it unfolds within a tightly argued sonata design, its interwoven themes and central fugato driven by contrapuntal force and long-range harmonic tension.

## George Gershwin

Born in Brooklyn, NY, September 26, 1898; died in Hollywood, CA, July 11, 1937

### **Fantasy on George Gershwin's Porgy and Bess (arr. P. Grainger) (1935, arr. 1951)**

Less than a year before George Gershwin died from a brain tumour in 1937, *Porgy and Bess* had run for 124 performances on Broadway. It was still far from universally acclaimed, and audiences were seeing only around three quarters of the folk-opera Gershwin had carefully conceived with his brother Ira and novelist DuBose Heyward. *Porgy and Bess* had to wait until 1976 to reveal its full operatic stature as an American classic, set in Catfish Row, Charleston, in the late 1920s.

Australian by birth and cultural identity, American by citizenship, and fiercely independent in outlook, Percy Aldridge Grainger offered no polite arrangement with his *Fantasy on George Gershwin's Porgy and Bess*. Instead, he produced an exuberant, full-blooded reimagining, treating Gershwin’s melodies as raw material – recognisable and intact, yet constantly reshaped through harmonic elasticity, rhythmic freedom, contrapuntal play, and pianistic flair.

The tunes are unmistakably Gershwin: “Summertime,” “I Loves You, Porgy,” “It Ain’t Necessarily So,” and many others emerge clearly, their lyrical outlines preserved. What belongs to Grainger is everything around them – the transitions, the piling up of textures, the dramatic pacing, and the sheer physicality of the two-piano medium. He thickens harmony, sharpens contrast, and pushes the music decisively toward fantasy, far removed from literal transcription.

“I do not believe in arrangements that merely copy,” Grainger wrote. “I want them to be recreations – new works growing out of old ones.” (*Self-Portrait of Percy Grainger*, ed. Gillies). The result balances homage with assertion: Gershwin supplies the melodic soul; Grainger supplies the architecture, propulsion, and audacious personality.

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## **Marc-André Hamelin**

### **Piano**

Pianist Marc-André Hamelin, a “performer of near-superhuman technical prowess” (*The New York Times*), is acclaimed worldwide for his unrivalled consummate musicianship. He continues to amass praise for his brilliant pianism in the great works of the repertoire, and for his intrepid exploration of the rarities of the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. He regularly performs around the globe with the leading orchestras and conductors of our time, and gives recitals at major concert venues and festivals worldwide.

Recent highlights include concerto performances with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Montreal Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, San Diego Symphony, LA Chamber Orchestra, Sydney Symphony, as well as recitals for Chicago Symphony Presents, San Francisco Symphony, Carnegie Hall, Wigmore Hall, and Elbphilharmonie, among others.

An exclusive recording artist for Hyperion Records, Hamelin has released 92 notable recordings of a broad range of solo, orchestral, and chamber repertoire. In October 2025, Hyperion released *Found Objects / Sound Objects*, a recording of contemporary works. Hamelin’s 2024 album *New Piano Works* is a survey of his own recent works, exhibiting his formidable skill as a composer-pianist. “His previous offerings of his own music were rich, but his latest self-portrait album is on another level,” wrote *The New York Times*.

Also a noted composer, Hamelin has written more than 30 works. Many, including his Études and Toccata on “L’homme armé” are published by Edition Peters. His most recent composition, Mazurka, was commissioned by the Library of Congress to celebrate 100 years of concerts and premiered in April 2024.

Hamelin is the recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award from the German Record Critics’ Association. Hamelin is an Officer of the Order of Canada, a Chevalier de l’Ordre national du Québec, and a member of the Royal Society of Canada. Born in Montreal, Hamelin lives in the Boston area with his wife.

## **Charles Richard-Hamelin**

### **Piano**

Silver medalist and winner of the Krystian Zimerman Prize at the 2015 International Chopin Piano Competition, Charles Richard-Hamelin has established himself as one of the most important pianists of his generation. Celebrated for the depth of his interpretations, refined sound, and exceptional affinity with Chopin’s music, he enjoys a flourishing international career as both soloist and chamber musician.

A recipient of the Ordre des arts et des lettres du Québec and the prestigious Career Development Award from the Women’s Musical Club of Toronto, he was awarded the Prix Denise-Pelletier in November 2022, becoming the youngest recipient in the history of the Prix du Québec.

Charles Richard-Hamelin has been invited to many major festivals such as La Roque d’Anthéron and the Nohant Festival in France, the Prague Spring Festival, the Chopin and His Europe Festival in Warsaw, the Lanaudière Festival, and the George Enescu Festival in Bucharest. As a soloist, he has performed with many ensembles including the major Canadian symphony orchestras (Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa, Métropolitain, Quebec City, Edmonton, Calgary, etc.) as well as the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, Sinfonia Varsovia, the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, Les Violons du Roy, and I Musici de Montréal. He has worked with renowned conductors such as Kent Nagano, Rafael Payare, Yannick Nézet-Séguin,

Vasily Petrenko, Bernard Labadie, Jonathan Cohen, Antoni Wit, Jacek Kasprzyk, Giancarlo Guerrero, John Storgårds, and many others.

An active chamber musician, he has shared the stage with artists such as Andrew Wan, James Ehnes, Marie-Nicole Lemieux, Marc-André Hamelin, and ensembles including the Dover Quartet, the New Orford Quartet, and the Apollon Musagète Quartet.

Charles Richard-Hamelin has recorded 12 albums on the Analekta label, including one recorded in Koerner Hall. His discography includes five albums devoted to Chopin, several chamber recordings, and acclaimed concerto recordings featuring Chopin and Mozart. These releases have earned six Félix Awards and a Juno Award, receiving widespread international critical acclaim.

*Marc-André Hamelin made his Royal Conservatory debut on November 10, 2012. Charles Richard-Hamelin made his Conservatory debut on January 15, 2016, and his Koerner Hall debut on November 10, 2016. Both artists are making their sixth appearances in Koerner Hall.*