

Lisa Batiashvili with Giorgi Gigashvili

Sunday, April 26, 2026 at 3pm

This is the 1,525th concert in Koerner Hall

Lisa Batiashvili, violin
Giorgi Gigashvili, piano

PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven: Violin Sonata No. 3 in E flat Major, op. 12, no. 3

- I. Allegro con spirito
- II. Adagio con molt' espressione
- III. Rondo: Allegro molto

Sergei Prokofiev: Violin Sonata No. 1 in F Minor, op. 80

- I. Andante assai
- II. Allegro brusco
- III. Andante
- IV. Allegrissimo

INTERMISSION

Ioseb Bardanashvili: *In Memory of Giya Kancheli*, for Violin and Piano (North American premiere)

César Franck: Sonata in A Major for Violin and Piano, M. 8

- I. Allegretto ben moderato
- II. Allegro
- III. Recitativo – Fantasia (Ben moderato)
- IV. Allegretto poco mosso

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.

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born in Bonn, Germany, baptized December 17, 1770; died in Vienna, Austria, March 26, 1827

Violin Sonata No. 3 in E flat Major, op. 12, no. 3 (1797-8)

Beethoven dedicated his three op. 12 sonatas to Antonio Salieri, the composer and Imperial Court Kapellmeister in Vienna, with whom he was studying at the time. They are the only music he dedicated to any of his teachers, likely because Salieri was the only teacher able to offer work or even a court position to his student. "Heaven help us!" Beethoven wrote mockingly to the publisher Franz Hoffmeister, "What appointment at the Imperial court could be given to such a mediocre talent as myself." (Salieri evidently agreed – or feared the competition – since no job offer was forthcoming).

Beethoven composed the three sonatas quickly. The E flat Sonata is the grandest of the three and the most purposeful. Its opening movement is a virtuoso vehicle for both violin and piano. The lyrical slow movement is one of Beethoven's finest to this point, designed to explore the ability of the violin to sustain a singing melody. The finale is another virtuoso movement in which an energetic theme – the only theme in the movement, after the manner of many a Haydn finale – is busily worked into a rondo, with a fugal conclusion.

Sergei Prokofiev

Born in Sontzovka, Russia, April 11/23, 1891; died in Moscow, Russia March 5, 1953

Violin Sonata No. 1 in F Minor, op. 80 (1938-46)

It took Prokofiev almost a decade to complete the F Minor Sonata. Its sombre, brooding first movement was already written as millions of his fellow artists and citizens were being sent to the Gulag and war was looming in Europe. The Sonata was completed only after the war had ended. Prokofiev initially had difficulty with the sonority of violin and piano. "I wonder how you are going to cope with the sonority of a violin sonata?" he later wrote to fellow composer and friend Nikolai Miaskovsky. "I started work on one long ago and could not continue – too difficult a task." When he did eventually resume work on the sonata, Prokofiev saw the first movement as an extended introduction to the second. It is severe in tone and generally slow moving. In the middle, the violin is asked to produce an extraordinary effect in a series of fast-moving, almost impressionistic scales. "It is like the wind howling in a cemetery," Prokofiev said. The second movement makes virtuoso demands on its performers. This is harsh, driving music with biting dissonances: 'vigorous and turbulent,' in Prokofiev's words, with a broad, heroic second theme. He describes the third movement as 'slow, gentle and tender,' while the fourth movement is "written in complicated rhythms and works to a frenzied pace." Towards the end, the 'wind howling in a cemetery' music returns and the movement closes quietly and tragically. Seven years after giving the premiere, October 23, 1946, Russian violinist David Oistrakh had the melancholy task of playing its most tragic, haunting movements – the first and the third – at the funeral of Prokofiev, his friend and long-time chess opponent.

Iosif Bardanashvili

Born in Batumi, Georgia, November 23, 1948

In Memory of Giya Kancheli, for Violin and Piano (2020, rev. 2025) (North American premiere)

Iosif Bardanashvili is a composer whose career spans late-Soviet Georgia and contemporary Israel, shaped by both institutional life and the concert stage. Early on, his professional life combined composition with cultural administration. Since settling in Israel in 1995, Bardanashvili has served as composer-in-residence for two chamber orchestras and as musical director of the Tel-Aviv contemporary-music biennial Tempus Fugit in addition to teaching at several Israeli universities and academies. His substantial catalogue – more than 100 works – ranges from symphonies and concertos to chamber music, vocal cycles, and large scale operas and ballets. Sacred and literary sources recur, often drawn from Jewish, Christian, and Islamic texts, reflecting a sustained interest in cultural memory and dialogue rather than stylistic allegiance. He has also written extensively for film and theatre, a parallel career that informs the dramatic pacing and directness of much of his concert music.

Iosif Bardanashvili writes: "In our lifetime, we meet a large number of people – human beings and faces who will pass away in the process of our lives. But the memory usually preserves the faces of loved and special ones. Among them, the mind separately picks out the precious faces that stay with us forever – deeply become part of us – and time does not affect this.

In Memory of Giya Kancheli is dedicated to such a look and was written to the memory of my close friend and famous Georgian composer, Giya Kancheli (1935-2019). The musical language of the work is very simple, but full of special inner light. Episodes are built according to the contrasting principle and create the illusion of eternal reincarnation in time."

César Franck

Born in Liège, Belgium, December 10, 1822; died in Paris, France, November 8, 1890

Sonata in A Major for Violin and Piano, M. 8 (1886)

Composed towards the end of the remarkable series of compositions for which he is now best remembered, Franck's only Violin Sonata dates from 1886. As in much of his time, Franck does not pursue traditional sonata procedures. Instead, he follows Franz Liszt's lead by transforming a thematic idea throughout the entire work, across movements, rather than developing different ideas movement by movement. There is a constant state of development in Franck's ideas, which often percolate beneath the surface as the sonata progresses. The expansively lyrical, gently undulating violin melody of the first movement is built out of a sequence of thirds – and this interval will feature prominently throughout.

In contrast to the serenity of the opening movement, the driving second has the momentum and scale of the opening movement of a more traditional sonata. The final two movements in Franck's innovative design contrast the rhapsodic freedom of a Recitativo – Fantasia, which replaces the traditional scherzo, with the discipline of a canonic finale, where the familiar theme is passed back and forth between the two instruments in a virtuoso way. Franck's heady, deeply emotional writing and piquant harmonic turns have their origins in the musical language of Wagner, particularly the harmonies of Tristan.

Franck's fellow-countryman, Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe, provided an incentive for the piece, which Franck wrote for his friend's wedding. Ysaÿe gave the premiere in December 1886 in the Musée Moderne de Peinture in Brussels during a festival of Franck's music. The sonata has never been out of the repertoire of violinists (and, by adoption, cellists, violists and flutists and others) since then.

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Lisa Batiashvili

Violin

Lisa Batiashvili is a Georgian-born German violinist, widely admired for her virtuosity, musical depth, and artistic integrity. An award-winning artist, she has built enduring relationships with many of the world's leading orchestras, conductors, and musicians, earning the respect of audiences and colleagues alike.

In 2021, she founded the Lisa Batiashvili Foundation, fulfilling a lifelong commitment to supporting exceptionally talented young Georgian musicians and helping them thrive in international musical careers. Advocacy and cultural responsibility are central to her artistic life.

Batiashvili's 2025-26 season began with a tour alongside the Munich Philharmonic under Lahav Shani, followed by continued collaborations with Yannick Nézet-Séguin in Montreal and Philadelphia. In early 2026, she tours with the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Klaus Mäkelä. Additional engagements include projects with the Filarmonica della Scala, Kammerakademie Potsdam, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and her passion project *City Lights* with the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra.

An active chamber musician, she tours extensively with Jean-Yves Thibaudet and Gautier Capuçon as a bespoke piano trio, and also performs with Georgian composer-pianist Giorgi Gigashvili, supported by her foundation, including this afternoon's concert.

Recording exclusively for Deutsche Grammophon, her recent releases include *Secret Love Letters* (2022) with Yannick Nézet-Séguin and The Philadelphia Orchestra, and earlier acclaimed albums such as *City Lights* and *Visions of Prokofiev*. Her discography has earned major awards including an Opus Klassik Award and international critical acclaim.

Lisa Batiashvili lives in Berlin and performs on a 1739 Joseph Guarneri "del Gesù," generously loaned by a private collector.

Giorgi Gigashvili

Piano

Born in Tbilisi, Georgia, Giorgi Gigashvili began studying piano without initially envisioning a professional performing career. Deeply connected to Georgian folk traditions, he has long been passionate about arranging and singing the folk songs of his homeland. At the age of 13, he gained national attention by winning the Georgian edition of “The Voice.” Alongside his broad creative pursuits, he studied at the Paliashvili Central Music School for Gifted Children and later entered the Tbilisi State Conservatory in the class of Revaz Tavadze.

Gigashvili’s international breakthrough came in 2019 when he won First Prize at the Vigo International Piano Competition, with Martha Argerich as president of the jury. Further major successes followed, including the Hortense Anda-Bührle Special Prize at the Géza Anda Competition in Zurich (2021), leading to First Prize and the Audience Prize at the KlavierOlymp in Bad Kissingen. In 2023, he was awarded Second Prize at the Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Master Competition, alongside multiple special and audience prizes. Recent honours include the Terrence Judd–Hallé Award (2024), the Musikpreis of the German Economy, and the Audience Prize of the Festspiele Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

His debut album *Meeting My Shadow* was released by Alpha Classics in 2023 to wide critical acclaim, featuring works by Scarlatti, Beethoven, Scriabin, and Messiaen. A second solo album devoted to Prokofiev was released in January 2026.

As an ECHO Rising Star for the 2025-26 season, Gigashvili appears at leading European venues, including the Barbican Centre, Philharmonie de Paris, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, and the Wiener Konzerthaus. He also collaborates with major orchestras and tours in recital with Lisa Batiashvili in Europe and North America in 2026. Gigashvili studied with Kirill Gerstein in Berlin and Nelson Goerner in Geneva, and is supported by the Lisa Batiashvili Foundation, Bayer Kultur’s stARTacademy, and the Orpheum Foundation.

Lisa Batiashvili made her Royal Conservatory debut on March 27, 2015, and Giorgi Gigashvili is making his Conservatory debut.