

THE ADKINS/NEWMAN DUO

Elisabeth Adkins, violin
Edward Newman, piano

Monday, February 9, 2026
7 p.m. PepsiCo Recital Hall

PROGRAM

Sonata for Violin and Piano, M. 77 (1923-27)

Allegretto

Blues

Perpetuum mobile (Allegro)

Maurice Ravel
(1875-1937)

Short Pause

Sonata for Violin and Piano, op. 36 (1900)

Allegretto

Allegretto tranquillo

Andante non troppo--Allegretto un poco agitato

Gabriel Pierné
(1863-1937)

Nocturne (1911)

Lili Boulanger
(1893-1918)

Program Notes

MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937) ***SONATA for Violin and Piano (1923-27)***

Maurice Ravel had avoided writing for violin and piano, finding an essential incompatibility in the two. When he did compose the *Sonata*, his final work of chamber music, it is the incongruities and different characteristics of each instrument he chose to highlight.

The opening *Allegretto* begins with a lean but sinuous melody in the piano; when the melody is taken up by the violin, the piano adds percussive commentary and a striking crystalline texture to set off the lyricism of the string line. The movement ends with the evolution of a beautiful long-breathed melody similar to the Fairy Garden movement of his earlier *Mother Goose Suite*. The melody begins unobtrusively in the piano, then the full version is sung by the violin; however, unlike in the earlier work, Ravel does not allow himself to enjoy the full romantic warmth of his melody--here it is punctuated by the return of the percussive and quirky elements presented earlier in the piece. The first movement is rounded out with the piano's reminiscence of the opening theme, which only settles harmonically to rest with the violin on the final note.

The second movement, entitled *Blues*, is Ravel's homage to American jazz. It features banjo-like chords and expressive slides, with syncopations and mis-direction in the meters, and a section where the two instruments are not even in the same key. It ends with a sultry yawn on the classic jazzy seventh chord.

The final movement, *Perpetuum mobile*, begins with one of the cheeky percussive figures featured in the first movement, lurches forward, gathering speed, then arrives at the virtuosic "perpetual motion" of the title. The piano has most of the thematic material, but the violin swoops in and out with its non-stop darting ornamentation.

--Elisabeth Adkins

GABRIEL PIERNÉ (1863-1937) ***SONATA FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO, OP. 36 (1900)***

Gabriel Pierné is not a household name in our time, but in his day he was generally ranked with his fellow pupils of César Franck--Vincent d'Indy and Ernest Chausson—as the great hope of French chamber music. Pierné had settled in Paris with his family at the age of seventeen, winning prizes at the Conservatory in solfège, piano, organ, and counterpoint, and then in 1882 the coveted Prix de Rome for a cantata he had composed. The strongest influences on young Pierné during these years were the religious idealism of his organ teacher Franck, whom he succeeded as organist at Ste. Clotilde in Paris, counterbalanced by his composition lessons with Jules Massenet, who introduced him to the more worldly delights of French opera. He expanded his musical activities in 1903, when he was appointed deputy conductor of the Concerts Colonne and then principal conductor in 1910, planning and conducting some forty-eight concerts a year. Later he became part of the directing committee of studies at the Conservatoire, and in 1925 was elected a

member of the Académie des Beaux-Arts. Among other significant honors was that of Chevalier of the Légion d' Honneur, awarded by the nation.

Given his heavy professional load, Pierné devoted a surprising amount of time to assisting the careers of his fellow composers, particularly through the presentation of their new works. In the judgment of the English musical writer David Cox:

It was sometimes said that his absorption in so much music of other composers adversely affected his personal style—his compositions do give the impression of a cultivated synthesis of many tendencies in the French music of his time. Technically his work is always completely assured: he wrote easily, with virtuosity, always stylishly, and his touch was light even when the subject was serious or tragic—a very French characteristic.

Pierné was perhaps one of the most "complete" of French composers, and there are two distinct sides to his personality. On the one hand can be seen the serious, solidly based Church musician, influenced by Franck. From this experience grew some important serious compositions. The other side relates to his studies with Massenet—the sensual, worldly, popular side, ever present but kept well in control.

The *Sonata for Violin and Piano* from 1900 was the first in a succession of fine chamber works—including the *Violoncello Sonata* and the *String Quintet*, both from 1919, and finally the *Piano Trio*. It was composed for the French violinist Jacques Thibaud, who as a teenager had already been featured more than fifty times as soloist with the Concerts Colonne. The work is cast in three movements—the first an agitated *Allegretto* with a soaring violin theme accompanied by sweeping piano arpeggios in octaves, the effect being perhaps most evocative of his better-known colleague Fauré. The middle movement is an *Allegretto tranquillo*, in which the charming violin melody is accompanied by the piano in broken chords that call to mind a delicate plucked instrument. Without a pause the final movement opens with an *Andante non troppo* in recitative style that introduces the main section, an *Allegro un poco agitato*. The performers are likely to find this movement rather more than "a little agitated," for it overflows with intriguing metrical devices, brilliant passage writing, and overall passion—indeed an exciting work for today's program.

--Alis Dickinson Adkins

LILI BOULANGER (1893-1918)
NOCTURNE for Violin and Piano (1911)

Lili Boulanger was a talented French composer, the younger sister of famous pedagogue Nadia Boulanger. A multi-instrumentalist, she was the first woman to win the prestigious composition prize, the *Prix de Rome*, in 1913. Despite her tragically short life (she died at 24 from Crohn's disease), she left behind marvelous music, including this miniature for violin and piano. The *Nocturne* was written in 1911, and shows characteristics of her style: a transparent simplicity that develops into rich emotional depth, with an enchanting range of colors and harmonies.

--Elisabeth Adkins