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Trio Animoso
March 22, 2026 • Congregation Beth Shalom



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THE 2026 FENTON BROWN EMERGING ARTISTS CONCERT

"French Impressions, American Echoes"

Trio Animoso

Sophia Jean, *flute*
Julian Seney, *viola*
Subin Lee, *harp*

PROGRAM

<i>Pieces de Clavecin en Concerts</i>	Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764)
No. 5 in D Minor	
<i>La Forqueray</i>	
<i>La Cupis</i>	
<i>La Marais</i>	
	(arr. for flute, viola and harp)
<i>Hidden Grace</i>	Zhou Tian (b. 1981)
	(flute, viola and harp)
<i>Tombeau de Couperin</i>	Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
I. Prelude	
II. Fugue	
III. Forlane	
IV. Riguadon	
V. Menuet	
VI. Toccata	
	(arr. by Joycelyn Morlock — '25 flute, viola and harp)

~ INTERMISSION ~

Scènes de la forêt

Nocturne

À l'aube

Invocation

Pour Artémis

(arr. by Trio Animoso for flute, viola and harp | originally for flute, horn and piano)

Mother and Child

William Grant Still (1895-1978)

(arr. for flute, viola and harp by Brittney Benton and Trio Animoso)

Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

I. Pastorale

II. Interlude

III. Finale

Mel Bonis (1858-1937)

Program Notes

by Barbara Leish

Jean-Phillippe Rameau: *Pièces de Clavecin en Concerts* No. 5 in D Minor (1741)

There's a satisfying symmetry to today's program, beginning as it does with Rameau and ending with Debussy. Because when Debussy toward the end of his life was intent on establishing a distinctively French musical voice, the composer he turned to as a model and for inspiration was the Baroque composer Jean-Phillippe Rameau, whom Debussy honored with a piano piece titled "Hommage to Rameau."

Over the course of his long career Rameau wrote operas that delighted Paris and the court of Louis XV, and he also was a leading composer of works for the harpsichord (clavecin), the favorite household instrument of the French upper class. But his most enduring impact on future generations of composers resulted from two revolutionary treatises he wrote on the function of harmony and how tonal language works. In demonstrating mathematically how chords were the root of tonal harmony, Rameau laid the groundwork for the tonal system that would long dominate Western classical music. Not surprisingly, Rameau's own works were filled with harmonic riches. Between 1706 and 1741 he published numerous works for the harpsichord that transformed a refined salon instrument into a vehicle for imaginative pieces that one musicologist described as "a vibrant tapestry of imagination, technique, and emotion."

The five *Pièces de Clavecin en Concerts* were the last set of harpsichord suites that Rameau wrote and the only set that included other instruments. Rameau gave the performers options: the pieces could be played with a violin and a flute, or with a viola da gamba, or with two violins. In the arrangement of the Suite No. 5 on today's program, the keyboard part is given to the harp, an instrument well-suited to capture the music's songfulness and technical dazzle. Whatever the combination, Rameau wanted the players to be sure, as he wrote in an introduction, that "the harmony of the three instruments must not only be blended together, but also the performers understand each other."

The Suite No. 5 is in three movements, with each movement given the name of an acquaintance or a colleague of Rameau's – a characteristic feature of his compositions, and one that often inspired musical portraits. The first movement, *La Forqueray*, is a lively fugue named for a famous viola da gambist known for his dramatic style. Appropriately, Rameau's score is rich in virtuosic runs and arpeggios. The slow second movement, *La Cupis*, celebrates Marie Anne de Cupis de Camargo, a much-admired ballerina who, among other things, was the first to dance in slippers instead of heeled shoes. Her movement, a sarabande, evokes an elegant choreographed dance. The cheerful last movement, *La Marais*, is a buoyant, harmonically resonant tribute to the memory of another beloved viola da gambist, Marin Marais.



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Zhou Tian: *Hidden Grace* (2023)

Zhou Tian has emerged as a widely admired composer of colorful works that blend Eastern and Western musical influences, and that have been lauded as “sonic mosaics.” Born in Hangzhou, China, he moved to the US at 19, studied at Curtis, Juilliard, and University of Southern California, and launched a successful career as a composer who has won many commissions from major orchestras. His works include a Concerto for Orchestra that was nominated for a Grammy for best contemporary classical composition in 2018. He now teaches composition at Michigan State University.

Zhou speaks engagingly about how he got where he is today:

On what shaped him and his music: “I came of age in a new China marked by economic reforms and a rush of new sounds and visions, including all genres of Western music. . . . I grew up practicing Beethoven on piano as well as playing and arranging Jazz and Chinese folk tunes. The mixture of different genres of music, including the East/West combination, was embedded in my upbringing so early, that it became such a natural thing to do when I started composing.”

On his work: “In a way, I am a product of 21st-century global multiculturalism. As a composer, my goal is to seek inspiration from different cultures and strive to mix them seamlessly into a musically satisfying combination for performers and audiences alike. . . . Today, there are a million ways to create pieces that reflect our globalized world. To me, the key is always to put the music first and embrace my own cultural background and upbringing.”

And here he is on the inspiration for Hidden Grace: “*Hidden Grace* was inspired by a trip to Italy. Walking along the streets of Florence on a starry night, one discovers things not normally seen during the day: a dim back alley, an open window of a gallery, the reflection of the Arno. . . . I could almost hear the echoes of music from the Renaissance – Gabrieli, Gesualdo, and Monteverdi. . . . The piece seeks to capture those elusive memories, and I found no more fitting companions than the flute, viola, and harp to express both tenderness and sumptuous colors within the music. The work turned out to be a musical fusion of Chinese and Italian flavors from a composer who has lived in the US for more than 20 years.”

Hidden Grace isn’t a literal walking tour. What Zhou’s memories inspired was an impressionistic feast of colors and timbres. From the Chinese-flavored opening measures, where each instrument is introduced, to the cheerful, scampering, rhythmically offbeat conclusion, Zhou blends an Asian sound with Renaissance polyphony and Western classical harmonies, in an atmospheric work that luxuriates in the combined timbres of its three instruments.

Maurice Ravel: *Le Tombeau de Couperin* (1917)

Among other pleasures, today’s program offers a look at how composers from different eras approach similar subjects. There are musical portraits by Rameau and Still; expressionistic strolls with Zhou and Bonis; and two nods to the French Baroque, whose composers had a great influence on both Debussy and Ravel. All of these works are animated by the colors and timbres produced by the striking combination of flute, viola, and harp.

Jan Swafford calls Ravel’s music “a distillation of musical Frenchness” – classical, subtle, lyrical, restrained, a rebellion against late-Romantic extravagance. Ravel was particularly attracted to two popular 18th-century French forms: the tombeau, a memorial tribute to a distinguished person, and the Baroque suite. The French Baroque master François Couperin was renowned for his many keyboard pieces and dance suites, and Ravel admired his music, among other things transcribing for piano one of Couperin’s dances, a Forlane. In 1914 Ravel began work on his own dance suite for piano. But World War I intervened. Ravel, impatient to enlist in the fight against Germany but unable to join the army because of his age and small size, served as an ambulance driver. He survived the war, but many of his friends did not. Wanting to honor their memories, when the war ended he combined two forms – the tombeau and the dance suite – into a six-movement piano suite, with each of the dances commemorating another of his fallen friends.

Ravel described *Le Tombeau de Couperin* as an homage “directed less in fact to Couperin himself than to French music of the 18th century.” It is in fact an inventive synthesis of tradition and innovation, with the charm of the Baroque dance suite taking on a distinctively Ravelian sound. Ravel begins the suite with an effervescent Prelude, a perpetual-motion whirl that is followed by five dances: a tranquil three-voice Fugue; a lively Forlane (reflective of the Couperin dance that Ravel transcribed before the war); an exuberant Rigaudon with joyful leaping passages; a tender Menuet; and a closing brilliant Toccata. *Le Tombeau de Couperin* abounds in instrumental color, infectious rhythms, and impressionistic harmonies. Surprisingly, it is not a somber work. As the musicologist Gerard McBurney observed, the suite “does not talk directly about the war; it talks about eternal values: it talks about beauty and elegance, the things we want to preserve. . . . In other words, the opposite of war.”

In 1919 Ravel orchestrated four of the movements of the suite, omitting the Fugue and the Toccata. In the years since then, *Le Tombeau de Couperin* has been arranged for numerous combinations of instruments, a testament to its enduring appeal.

Mel Bonis: *Scènes de la forêt* (1928)

When Saint-Saëns heard a performance of Mel Bonis’s first piano quartet in 1901, he exclaimed, “I never imagined a woman could write such music!” A gifted, prize-winning composer, trained at the Paris Conservatoire (Debussy was a fellow student), Bonis spent her career fighting to establish herself in a world biased against women composers. An

early step was to change her professional name: on the manuscript of her first published work in 1881, she identified herself as Mel rather than Mélanie. For years she entered compositions and won prizes, maintained relations with leading composers, and established connections with publishers. In 1899 she joined the Société des Compositeurs de Musique, becoming its secretary in 1910 – an indication of the admiration her peers had for her work. But finding a larger public audience was another story.

The misogyny of the era wasn't the only headwind causing Bonis problems. Another was that turn-of-the-century Paris was awash in new musical ideas. Debussy, Ravel, Stravinsky, Satie, Poulenc and the rest of Les Six – they were some of the modernists exciting avant-garde Parisians. Bonis, on the other hand, wanted little to do with what she considered radical new ideas. She strongly believed that music should be rooted in traditional foundations. Franck, Fauré, and Saint-Saëns were the composers she admired. Her late-Romantic, tonal scores – some 300 works – were distinguished by what her great-granddaughter called “her original sense of harmony and rhythm and the vitality and sensuality of her discourse.”

You'll hear these qualities in abundance in *Scènes de la forêt* – along with some Debussy-like impressionism. In four movements, Bonis captures the sounds of nature during a magical 24 hours in the forest. Each movement is an atmospheric soundscape, beginning with the Nocturne, which features the flute singing an ethereal melody over the harp's ostinato and the viola's harmonic support. The second movement, *A l'aube* (at dawn), is rich in imagery that conjures an awakening forest. The harp glitters while the flute and the viola weave their melodies around each other in a harmonic progression that rises to greet the sunrise. The viola takes the lead in the beautiful Invocation, a serene movement distinguished by Bonis's deft melding of the three voices as the forest rests. And then it comes energetically to life in *Pour Artémis*, a movement that is rich in Bonis's colorful harmonies and rhythms. As one would expect from its title (Artemis is goddess of the hunt), it also includes hunting calls.

For many years after her death Bonis fell into obscurity, ignored by a public that considered her outdated. Not until years later did her descendants discover a trove of her manuscripts and arrange for their publication, resulting in the rediscovery of a vibrant and original musical voice.

William Grant Still: *Mother and Child* (1943)

William Grant Still, who was known as the “Dean of Afro-American composers,” had a rich, varied, and groundbreaking musical career. Born in Mississippi and reared in Little Rock, Arkansas, he was classically trained, studying composition first at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and then with George Whitfield Chadwick at the New England Conservatory and with the avant-garde French composer Edgard Varèse. But he also worked as an arranger for the bandleader Paul Whitman and the blues composer W.C. Handy, played in Broadway pit orchestras, and arranged music for classic films such as

Pennies from Heaven and *Lost Horizon*. His extensive oeuvre – which included five symphonies, nine operas, four ballets, and more than 30 choral works – reflects all these influences.

Still's career was a collection of “firsts”: In 1931 his blues-inspired *Afro-American Symphony* was performed by the Rochester Symphony under Howard Hanson. It was the first complete score of a work by an African American to be performed by a major orchestra. In 1936 he conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic in the Hollywood Bowl – the first African American to conduct a major orchestra in a performance of his own works. In 1949 his opera *The Troubled Island*, with a libretto by Langston Hughes, was performed by the New York City Opera – the first opera by an African American to be performed by a major opera company. In 1955 he became the first African American to conduct a major orchestra in the Deep South when he led the New Orleans Philharmonic.

Mother and Child, one of Still's best-loved works, is the middle movement of a three-movement suite inspired by artists and their work. As Still later explained, “I thought of three contemporary Negro artists whom I admire and resolved to try to catch in music my feeling for an outstanding work by each of them.” The inspiration for *Mother and Child* was a painting by the artist Sargent Johnson of a Black mother gently cradling her child while looking pensively away. Still captures the intimate mood of the painting and his own affectionate response to it, in a tender musical portrait that he builds from an opening four-note phrase. There is a more agitated, minor-key middle section that includes a short dramatic cadenza – the mother/child relationship is not without times of tension, children do sometimes misbehave, Still seems to be saying – before the music falls back to the calmness of the opening.

Written originally for violin and piano, *Mother and Child* was later adapted by Still for different instrumental combinations. Today's arrangement offers a fresh way to enjoy this quietly eloquent work.

Claude Debussy: Sonata for Flute, Viola, and Harp (1915)

Depressed by World War I and eager to contribute to the French war effort, Debussy turned to the only thing he had to offer: his music. “I want to work not so much for myself, but to give proof, however small it may be, that not even 30 million ‘boches’ can destroy French thought,” he said. In the sonatas that turned out to be his last compositions, Debussy sought to capture what he saw as the spirit of French tradition. As he told Stravinsky, his intent was to return to “pure music.” He planned to write six sonatas for different combinations of instruments: cello and piano; flute, viola, and harp; violin and piano; oboe, horn, and harpsichord; clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, and piano; and as a grand finale, a sixth sonata that would be scored for all those instruments plus a double bass. As it turned out, he wrote only the first three before succumbing to colon cancer.

In the Sonata for Flute, Viola, and Harp, Debussy wraps an 18th century French sensibility – elegant and uncluttered – in 20th century tonality. Debussy described this Sonata as “in the ancient, flexible mold with none of the grandiloquence of modern sonatas.” What is

immediately striking is the way in which, from the ethereal opening measures, Debussy exploits the distinct and contrasting timbres of his unusual combination of instruments. Striking too is the unconventional structure. Beginning with the flute's melancholy opening strain, the episodic Pastoral is made up of six brief motifs. After a lively middle section that is driven by dotted rhythms, these motifs recur without variation but in a different order. Throughout this sensuous movement and the two that follow, there are striking shifts in tempo and mood. And even with Debussy's new aesthetic, you'll hear a beguiling range of colors and textures that recall his earlier Impressionistic works, and suggestions of the Eastern influences so prominent in his compositions.

Debussy continues his homage to the past in the Interlude. Marked "Tempo de Minuetto," the movement with its carefree melody captures the spirit of the graceful, sunny Baroque dance. Vigorous rhythms propel the energetic Finale, with the viola's pizzicatos and the flute's arpeggios among the movement's driving forces. William Austin called the Sonata for Flute, Viola, and Harp "the last word in the vein of *Prelude to the Afternoon of the Faun* and *Syrinx*, with both the voluptuousness of the former and the austerity of the latter." Debussy's own assessment of the Sonata is intriguing. Looking back with seeming regret, he wrote to a friend that it was "the music of a Debussy whom I no longer know. It is frightfully melancholy and I don't know whether one should laugh or cry – perhaps both?"

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TRIO ANIMOSO

Trio Animoso is a virtuosic and innovative ensemble that combines the artistry of flutist Sophia Jean, violist Julian Seney, and harpist Subin Lee.

The Spanish word "Animoso" translates to "spirited or animated" which captures the essence of this dynamic ensemble, each member bringing a captivating artistic persona. The trio seeks to showcase the beauty of the historical Debussy trio while broadening the repertoire of this instrumentation by commissioning works by new composers and by presenting the lesser known but extraordinary works of underrepresented composers.

All students at the Yale School of Music, Trio Animoso is based in New Haven, CT, and regularly performs in the greater Connecticut and New England area. Trio was recently named 1st Place Winner of the International Harp Competition "Angel Padilla Crespo."



Sophia Jean (*flute*)

Sophia Jean is a Masters of Music candidate at the Yale School of Music, where she is a student of Tara Helen O'Connor. A passionate orchestral musician, Sophia has attended numerous festivals including the Music Academy of the West (2022 Flute Fellow), Aspen Music Festival (2024 Piccolo Fellow, 2023 New Horizons Fellow), and Kent Blossom Music Festival (2021 Fellow). This past year, Sophia has performed as a substitute musician with the New

York Philharmonic and the West Point Band.

Sophia is a laureate of numerous competitions and was recently named first place winner of the 2024 NFA Young Artist Competition, also receiving the Paul Taub Award for Best Performance of the Newly Commissioned Work. Previously, Sophia was named first place winner of both Chicago Flute Club's 2023 Kujala International Piccolo Competition and 2023 Donald Peck Flute Competition. Sophia also received honorable mention in the 2024 Sphinx Orchestral Partners Audition (SOPA) Competition, was a finalist for the 2023 Chicago Women's Club of Musicians Senior Nerenberg Competition and was a semifinalist for Music Academy's 2022 Duo Competition.

Sophia graduated from Northwestern University in December 2022, where she pursued a dual degree in Flute Performance and Cognitive Science. At Northwestern she studied flute with John Thorne, and piccolo with Jennifer Gunn and Alyce Johnson. Sophia is originally from Lakeland, Florida, where she attended Harrison School for the Arts and performed as principal in the Harrison Symphony Orchestra, studying with Barbara Jacobson.

Outside of performing, Sophia is a teaching artist for the Yale Music in Schools Initiative Program (MISI), where she regularly serves as a mentor for New Haven public school students. Her love of teaching continues from her time at Northwestern, where she was involved as a volunteer for the Academy of Music and Arts for Special Education (AMASE), eventually taking on roles as Co-Curriculum Director and Community Engagement Director.



Julian Seney (*viola*)

Julian has performed in venues such as the Walt Disney Concert Hall, Carnegie Hall, and Beijing Concert Hall, under conductors Susanna Mälkki, Michael Tilson Thomas, and George Benjamin, among others. He is an alumnus of the Perlman Music Program, National Youth Orchestra, and the Lucerne Festival Academy, and has participated in residencies through both Perlman Suncoast and the Lake Champlain Chamber Music Festival. He loves performing new

music, and has premiered many works of his peers and mentors — most recently with Yale's New Music series. As a teacher he has worked at New England Conservatory's preparatory school, and currently teaches through Yale's Music in Schools Initiative. He received a Bachelor's of Music from the New England Conservatory, having studied with Kim Kashkashian, and now is pursuing a Masters of Music at the Yale School of Music with Ettore Causa. In his free time, he loves to hike, take care of his two dogs, and bake.



Subin Lee (*harp*)

Harpist Subin Lee actively performs in both South Korea and the United States, having appeared in venues such as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Seoul Arts Center, and Kumho Art Center.

An award-winning harpist, Subin has won first prize at the Italy International Harp Competition, Lyon & Healy Awards, Fanny Mendelssohn International Music Competition, and Padova International Music Competition. She is also a prizewinner of the Hong

Kong International Harp Competition, Korea International Harp Competition, Szeged International Harp Competition, Germany International Harp Competition, and more. Subin is also an avid chamber musician and has been invited to perform with her trio at the Philadelphia Athenaeum, Yale Vista Concert Series, Whitney Center Concert Series, and more. She was also invited to perform at the Rendezvous de la Musique Chamber Music Festival in summer 2024 and was guest artist of the 2024-2025 season of the Dolce Suono Ensemble.

Subin has performed regular volunteer concerts in hospitals from a young age and continues to share her music in and out of the traditional concert hall setting. Her recent performances have taken place not only in professional venues but also in schools, children's shelters, and art galleries with interactive concerts designed for children and young adults.

Her efforts to expand boundaries of music and performance also include taking part in composition and performing new music. As part of the Marilyn Costello Composition Competition, Subin has worked with the winning composer to provide feedback on the commissioned work and performed the world premiere of *Blue, Vanishing*. She has also composed and premiered her own works for harp; some of her recent works including music based on literature by Richard Wright and William Shakespeare.

Subin began harp studies at the age of eleven in South Korea. She received her bachelor's degree at the Curtis Institute of Music as recipient of the Marilyn Costello Fellowship. During her undergraduate studies, she was awarded the Presser Undergraduate Scholar Award for musical and academic excellence, demonstrated leadership, and contribution to an inclusive community. She is currently a Master of Music candidate at the Yale School of Music.

