



FACULTY RECITAL

**Wael Farouk,  
Joanne Polk, and  
William Wolfram, piano**

SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 2026 | 2 PM  
GORDON K. AND HARRIET GREENFIELD HALL



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PROGRAM

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF  
(1873–1943)

Suite No. 2 For Two Pianos, Op. 17

*Introduction (Alla marcia)*

*Valse*

*Romance*

*Tarantella*

Wael Farouk and William Wolfram, piano

*Intermission*

ANTON ARENSKY  
(1861–1906)

Suite No. 1 for Two Pianos, Op. 15

*Romance*

*Waltz*

*Polonaise*

Wael Farouk and Joanne Polk, piano

AMR OKBA  
(b. 1972)

*One Coin and Two Sides* (World Premiere)

Dedicated to Wael Farouk and Joanne Polk

Wael Farouk and Joanne Polk, piano

GIOACHINO ROSSINI  
(1792–1868)

*Barber of Seville* Fantasie for Six Hands

Wael Farouk, Joanne Polk, and

William Wolfram, piano

Bryce Cox, flute, Guest Artist

(Arr. Czerny)

# PROGRAM NOTES

## *One Coin and Two Sides* (World Premiere)

### **Amr Okba**

*One Coin and Two Sides* reflects the inescapable duality embedded in all aspects of human experience. It draws from the ancient recognition that opposites define one another—light has no meaning without darkness, joy no depth without sorrow. In both Eastern and Western thought, duality is not contradiction, but coexistence. The coin becomes a metaphor for unity that holds tension: two sides, inseparable, yet never visible at once.

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

### **Amr Okba, Composer**

Amr Okba is an Egyptian-Austrian composer, born in 1972. His journey into the world of music commenced with piano and music theory lessons at the Institute of Arabic Music and the Faculty of Music Education. In 1993, Amr achieved a Bachelor's degree in Management and Business Administration in Egypt. His passion for music led him to the Cairo Conservatoire, where he pursued a path of distinction in the Department of Composition and Conducting. In 1998, Amr received his Bachelor's degree in Composition and was honored with the Rome Prize-State Prize for Artistic Creation (Composition). This prestigious award facilitated a remarkable year and a half in Italy, where he embraced the rich tapestry of European culture while studying under the guidance of Professor Mauro Burtolotti.

In 2003, Amr embarked on a new chapter through the Egyptian-Austrian Cultural Exchange Programme (ÖAD), securing a scholarship that would propel his musical career forward. In Austria, he delved into Composition at both the Universität Mozarteum Salzburg and the Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Wien. He was mentored by Reinhard Febel (Composition) and Dieter Kaufmann (Electronic and Experimental Composition).

In 2006, Amr achieved a significant milestone by premiering his inaugural opera, *The Book of Going Forth by Day*, commissioned by Musik der Jahrhunderte for the ISCM opening concert in Stuttgart. This momentous event catapulted him into the international spotlight, marking the beginning of a prolific career filled with engagements, projects, commissions, and performances at renowned festivals and institutions such as the Salzburg Biennale (2009), Ars Electronica Festival (2012), Bregenzer Festspiele, and Salzburger Festspiele (2014), among others.

Throughout his journey, Amr's contributions to music have been acknowledged with prestigious awards, including the Austrian State Stipend for Composition (2008), the Salzburg Annual Stipend for Music (2009), and a second Austrian State Stipend for Composition in 2016.

Amr's compositions have graced the repertoire of esteemed orchestras and ensembles, including the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra (Conducted by Lukas Vis at the ISCM Festival 2006), the Mozarteum University Orchestra (Conducted by Dennis Russell Davies), the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Cairo Symphony Orchestra, the Bruckner Orchester-Linz (Conducted by Dennis Russell Davies at Ars Electronica 2012), the Wiener Collage Ensemble, the OENM Ensemble (Conducted by Johannes Kalitzke and Arturo Tamayo), the Composer Ensemble, the London Sinfonietta (Conducted by Diego Masson at Queen Elizabeth Hall), the Ensemble Resonanz, and the Neue Vocalsolisten Stuttgart, among others. Furthermore, Amr's musical compositions have been broadcasted across European radio stations, including SWR (Germany), ORF/Ö1 (Austria), Radio Clásica (Spain), Radio Denmark, and more.

In 2011, Amr was granted Austrian citizenship, further deepening his connection to the musical traditions of his adopted homeland. Since 2023, his compositions have been published by Universal Edition publisher, solidifying his place in the global musical landscape.

## Wael Farouk, piano

Egyptian-American pianist Wael Farouk has performed internationally in such venues as the White Hall in St. Petersburg, Schumann's House in Leipzig, and Carnegie Hall in New York, where his solo debut in 2013 was described as "absolutely masterful."

Praised as a "formidable and magnificent pianist" by the *New York Concert Review*, Dr. Farouk is known for his groundbreaking performance projects.

In the spring of 2021, he gave a performance of Rachmaninoff's concerti Nos. 1, 2, and 3 in a single evening with the New Philharmonic Orchestra and Conductor Kirk Muspratt, which the *Chicago Tribune* music critic described as a "history-making concert." The entirety of the performance was also broadcast on WFMT, Chicago's Classical Music station. In the 2023-2024 season, Dr. Farouk performed the two Brahms piano concerti in one evening with the New Philharmonic Orchestra and Conductor Kirk Muspratt.

For the 2025-27 season Dr. Farouk will perform the complete piano sonatas of Schumann, Chopin, Liszt, Grieg, Scriabin, Prokofiev and Bartok n 8 recital programs, as well as Bartok's 2nd piano concerto.

Between 2014-2018, Dr. Farouk has performed 30 different recital programs featuring the complete solo piano works of Rachmaninoff and Brahms, as well as Brahms's complete piano chamber music. Other programs included works by Chopin, Stravinsky, Tchaikovsky, Debussy, Ravel, Bolcom, Busoni, and Godowsky; the complete Transcendental Etudes by Liszt; and *Bach's The Art of Fugue* and Beethoven's *Hammerklavier*. He has also performed the complete piano concertos of Rachmaninoff, Brahms, and Beethoven (including all five Beethoven concertos in a single concert). In 2017, he gave the African premiere of the monumental Busoni piano concerto with the Cairo Symphony Orchestra.

Dr. Farouk commands a vast repertoire of more than 70 concertos and 60 solo programs, spanning from Scarlatti to Bolcom and including the complete piano works of J.S. Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Chopin, and Rachmaninoff, 10 solo recitals of Franz Liszt's music, as well as the complete sonatas of Prokofiev, Scriabin, and Schubert. He has appeared as a soloist with such orchestras as the North Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, the Saint-Etienne National Orchestra, the Academy of the Arts Orchestra, the Manhattan Symphony, and the Cairo Symphony Orchestra, led by Christoph Mueller, Steven Lloyd, Patrick Fournilier, and Philippe Entremont, among others.

David Dubal described his 2013 debut solo album *Russian Portraits* (Carlock Records) as "piano playing that brings chills to the flesh, performed with a rare virtuoso technique."

Dr. Farouk is on the piano faculty at Manhattan School of Music in New York since 2021. Prior to that, Dr. Farouk was on the piano faculty at the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University in Chicago from 2012-2022.

Dr. Farouk is author of *The Complete Pianist: Advanced Virtuoso Technical Exercises*. This five-volume collection provides professional pianists with the technical apparatus to master the most challenging repertoire as well as achieve and sustain pianistic health.

Dr. Farouk received his Bachelor of Music degree at the Cairo Conservatory as a student of Samir Aziz, Edgar Davelienadze, and Vsevolod Demidov, then came to the United States on a Fulbright Fellowship to study with Marilyn Neeley at the Catholic University of America. After receiving a Master of Music degree from Converse College as a student of Douglas Weeks, he continued his studies with Solomon Mikowsky at the Manhattan School of Music and the Chicago College of Performing Arts. He completed his studies with Daniel Epstein, receiving a DMA degree from Rutgers University.

## Joanne Polk, piano

Pianist Joanne Polk was catapulted into the public eye with her recordings of the complete piano works of American composer Amy Beach (1867-1944) on the Arabesque Recordings label. Ms. Polk celebrated the centennial of Beach's Piano Concerto by giving the work its London premiere with the English Chamber Orchestra at the Barbican Center under the baton of Paul Goodwin. A few days later, Ms. Polk performed the Piano Concerto with the Women's Philharmonic in San Francisco with conductor Apo Hsu in a performance described as "brilliant" by critic Joshua Kosman of the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

The first recording in the Beach series, by the still waters, received the 1998 INDIE award for best solo recording. *Empress of Night*, the fifth volume of Ms. Polk's survey of Beach's piano works, includes the Piano Concerto with the English Chamber Orchestra, Paul Goodwin conducting. The sixth volume of the series, *Morning Glories*, joins Ms. Polk with the Lark Quartet in three outstanding chamber music works by Amy Beach. Two all-Beach performances at Merkin Concert Hall in New York City, which featured Joanne Polk and the Lark Quartet, were applauded by the *New York Times*, as they deemed Polk's performances "polished and assured." *American Record Guide* reported, "Polk and the Larks played their hearts out. We in the audience shouted ourselves hoarse with gratitude."

Prior to recording the complete piano music of Amy Beach, Ms. Polk recorded *Completely Clara: Lieder by Clara Wieck Schumann*, her debut CD for Arabesque Recording, featuring Metropolitan Opera soprano Korliss Uecker. This CD was selected as a "Best of the Year" recording by *The Seattle Times* and was featured on *Performance Today* on New York Public Radio. Ms. Polk's CD for Albany Records, *Callisto*, features the solo piano music of Judith Lang Zaimont. Her CD titled *Songs of Amy Beach*, recorded with baritone Patrick Mason for Bridge Records, was nominated for a Grammy Award. Ms. Polk's two-CD set of solo piano music by Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel, *Songs for Pianoforte*, was released on the Newport Classic label. Ms. Polk's solo piano CD, titled *Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn*, was released on the Bridge Records label.

In 2014, Ms. Polk's CD titled *The Flatterer, solo piano music of French Romantic composer Cécile Chaminade*, was released on the Steinway & Sons Label. The CD was a "Pick of the Week" on New York's classical radio station WQXR and debuted at #1 on the *Classical Billboard Chart*. In 2017, Joanne Polk's CD, *Gershwin & Wild*, was released on the Steinway & Sons Label and features Earl Wild's transcriptions of Gershwin songs, as well as Wild's Piano Sonata. *American Record Guide* called Ms. Polk's playing on this CD, "plush and dreamily attractive..."

In 2014, Joanne Polk was named one of Musical America's Top 30 Professionals of the Year in an article titled, *Profiles in Courage*. Ms. Polk's profile focused on

her work promoting the music of women composers.

Ms. Polk received her Bachelor of Music and Master of Music Degrees from The Juilliard School, and her Doctor of Musical Arts Degree from Manhattan School of Music. She has given master classes at many summer festivals and universities across the country, and in 2018 completed a five-city, three-week concert and master class tour of Taiwan and China.

In 2019, two of Ms. Polk's CDs, *Felix and Fanny Mendelssohn* and *The Flatterer: Solo Piano Music by Cécile Chaminade*, were included on New York City's classical radio station WQXR's Essential Piano Recordings.

In February 2020, Ms. Polk's CD *Louise Farrenc Etudes and Variations for Solo Piano*, was released on the Steinway & Sons Label. In December 2020, Ms. Polk's Farrenc CD was on the *New York Times* "Best Classical Music of 2020" list:

*"The music of Louise Farrenc, professor of piano at the Paris Conservatory for three decades after 1842, has been taped before, but never quite so well as in Joanne Polk's sample of her solo piano music..."* –*New York Times* [Best Classical Music of 2020]

Ms. Polk's 2023 recording titled *The Silence Between the Notes: Louise Farrenc Solo Piano Music Volume 2*, was released on September 1, 2023, on the Steinway & Sons Label.

In December 2023 and January 2024, Ms. Polk traveled to China on an 8-city concert and master class tour. In July 2024, Ms. Polk performed recitals and masterclasses at the University of Guadalajara in Mexico.

In September 2024, Ms. Polk's second volume of solo piano music by Cécile Chaminade, titled *Nostalgia*, was released on the Steinway & Sons Label.

American Record Guide January/February 2025 review of *Nostalgia*:

*"Polk has championed female composers all through her admirable discography. She has brought a wealth of great and enjoyable music to our attention, most of which has lived in relative obscurity since it was written. It would all be for naught if not for the exceptional musical insight and flawless piano technique she brings to these works.*

*It is so good to hear world-class pianists like Polk choose a recital of Chaminade music and play it with all of the seriousness one would expect if the program were music by European male composers of the time."*

Polk's third CD of solo piano music by Cécile Chaminade will be released later in 2026. Upcoming performances include solo and chamber music concerts featuring the music Amy Beach (1867-1944), in celebration of the 250th anniversary of America and the first successful female American composer.

To find out more about Ms. Polk, please visit her website at [www.joanepolkpianist.com](http://www.joanepolkpianist.com).

Ms. Polk is a member of the piano faculty of Manhattan School of Music and is an exclusive Steinway artist.

## **William Wolfram, piano**

American pianist William Wolfram was a silver medalist at both the William Kapell and the Naumburg International Piano Competitions and a bronze medalist at the prestigious Tchaikovsky Piano Competition in Moscow.

Wolfram has appeared with many of the greatest orchestras of the world and has developed a special reputation as the rare concerto soloist who is also equally versatile and adept as a recitalist, accompanist, and chamber musician. In all of these genres, he is highly sought after for his special focus on the music of Franz Liszt and Beethoven and is a special champion for the music of modernist 20th-century American composers.

His concerto debut with the Pittsburgh Symphony under the baton of Leonard Slatkin was the first in a long succession of appearances and career relationships with numerous American conductors and orchestras. He has also appeared with the San Francisco, Saint Louis, Indianapolis, Seattle and New Jersey symphonies, the Buffalo Philharmonic, the National Symphony Orchestra (Washington D.C.), the Baltimore Symphony, the Colorado Symphony, the Rochester Philharmonic, the Nashville Symphony, the Oregon Symphony, the Utah Symphony, the San Diego Symphony, the Edmonton Symphony, the Columbus Symphony, the Florida Orchestra, and the Grand Teton and San Luis Obispo Mozart festival orchestras, among many others. He enjoys regular and ongoing close associations with the Dallas Symphony, the Milwaukee Symphony, the Phoenix Symphony, and the Minnesota Orchestra as well as the musicians of the New York Philharmonic for chamber concerts in the United States.

Internationally recognized conductors with whom he has worked include Osmo Vanska, Andrew Litton, Jerzy Semkow, Mark Wigglesworth, Jeffrey Tate, Vladimir Spivakov, Michael Christie, Gerard Schwarz, Carlos Miguel Prieto, Jeffrey Kahane, James Judd, Roberto Minczuk, Stefan Sanderling, JoAnn Falletta, James Paul, Carlos Kalmar, Hans Vonk, Joseph Silverstein, Jens Nygaard, Yan Pascal Tortelier and Vasily Petrenko. Abroad, Wolfram has appeared with the BBC Symphony Orchestra of London, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the RTE Symphony Orchestra of Ireland (Dublin), the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, the Bergen Philharmonic (Norway), the Beethovenhalle Orchestra Bonn, the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, and many others.

An enthusiastic supporter of new music, he has collaborated with and performed music by composers such as Aaron Jay Kernis, Kenneth Frazelle, Marc Andre Dalbavie, Kenji Bunch, and Paul Chihara. His world premiere

performance of the Chihara re-orchestration of Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 1, with the Milwaukee Symphony under the baton of Andreas Delfs, was met with great critical attention and acclaim.

Other highlights include several chamber music collaborations, including recitals and recordings with Oscar Shumsky, recitals with Harvey Shapiro, and numerous collaborations with Leonard Rose. He also performed Richard Strauss's setting of the Tennyson poem *Enoch Arden* with the Oscar-winning actress Louise Rainer, and with actor Jeff Steitzer.

Wolfram has also performed as a guest artist with prominent ballet companies including ABT, Pittsburgh Ballet, Miami City Ballet, Carolina Ballet, and Boston Ballet, working with noted choreographers including Jiri Kylian, Edward Villella, Robert Weiss, and Agnes De Mille.

Wolfram has extensive experience in the recording studio. He has recorded four titles on the Naxos label in his series of Franz Liszt Opera Transcriptions and two other chamber music titles for Naxos with violinist Philippe Quint (music of Miklos Rosza and John Corigliano). Also for Naxos, he has recorded the music of Earl Kim with piano and orchestra - the RTE National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland behind him. For the Albany label, he recorded the piano concertos of Edward Collins with Marin Alsop and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. He most recently recorded the Bach *Goldberg Variations* on the PlayClassics label.

As an educator and teacher, Mr. Wolfram is a long-standing member of the piano faculty of the Eastern Music Festival in North Carolina, and a regular featured guest at the Colorado College Music Festival in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He is also a member of the piano faculty at the acclaimed Manhattan School of Music.

In print and other media, Wolfram was the focus of a full chapter in Joseph Horowitz's book *The Ivory Trade: Music and the Business of Music at the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition*. On television, he was a featured pianist in the documentary of the 1986 Tchaikovsky International Piano Competition.

# ABOUT MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Founded as a community music school by Janet Daniels Schenck in 1918, today MSM is recognized for its 1,025 superbly talented undergraduate and graduate students who come from 54 countries and nearly all 50 states; its innovative curricula and world-renowned artist-teacher faculty that includes musicians from the New York Philharmonic, the Met Orchestra, and the top ranks of the jazz and Broadway communities; and a distinguished community of accomplished, award-winning alumni working at the highest levels of the musical, educational, cultural, and professional worlds.

The School is dedicated to the personal, artistic, and intellectual development of aspiring musicians, from its Precollege students through those pursuing doctoral studies. Offering classical, jazz, and musical theatre training, MSM grants a range of undergraduate and graduate degrees. True to MSM's origins as a music school for children, the Precollege Division is a professionally oriented Saturday music program dedicated to the musical and personal growth of talented young musicians ages 5 to 18. The School also serves some 2,000 New York City schoolchildren through its Arts-in-Education Program, and another 2,000 students through its critically acclaimed Distance Learning Program.

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## Land Acknowledgment

We want to acknowledge that we gather as Manhattan School of Music on the traditional land of the Lenape and Wappinger past and present, and honor with gratitude the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations. This calls us to commit to continuing to learn how to be better stewards of the land we inhabit as well.



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