

Concert Performance: A Piano Trio

On Friday, March 28th at 7pm, Maya French, violin, Nathaniel Taylor, cello, and Chris Staknys, piano, will perform at the First Parish UU Church of Kennebunk. The program will include selections by Brahms, Esmail, and Staknys. A \$25 donation is requested. Doors will open at 6:30.

Johannes Brahms' Piano Trio No. 1 in B Major was written in 1854, when the composer was twenty years old. Thirty-five years later, in 1889, he decided to republish the work with substantial revisions. Brahms wrote to his friend, pianist and composer Clara Schumann, "I have rewritten my B major Trio... It will not be so dreary as before- but will it be better?"

The trio will perform two compositions by Chris Staknys (b. 1996). 9/8 Groove is a rhythmic jazz-inspired piece, and The Pier is nostalgic and expressive. Both pieces were originally written for clarinet, violin (viola for The Pier), cello and piano, and were rearranged for Piano Trio specifically for this concert.

The daughter of Indian immigrants, Reena Esmail (b. 1983) is one of the most respected young composers in the US. She earned a BM degree at Juilliard and MM and DMA degrees at Yale. Esmail's music blends elements of Indian and Western classical music. In each movement of her Piano Trio, specific collections of tones appear, known in Indian music as "raags".



Maya French is a violinist, the Managing Director, and a Co-Artistic Director for Palaver Strings. She has spent the last decade helping the ensemble and organization increase equitable opportunities for string players and collaborators and has navigated Palaver's sustainable growth through the shared leadership model. Maya has had the opportunity to study and perform at Kronberg Academy, Tanglewood, Conservatorium van Amsterdam, Bay Chamber Concerts Screen Door Festival, Orford Music Academy, Manchester Music Festival, and Kinhaven Music School. Maya is a graduate of the Boston University School of Music and is certified as a teacher of the Suzuki Violin method and a method of early-childhood music education, Music Learning Theory. Currently she maintains a busy chamber music and chamber orchestra performance season, and a teaching studio through Palaver. Maya is dedicated to using classical music as a motive for social change and community building.



Nathaniel Taylor is establishing himself as a passionate and charismatic performer with a variety of Classical and Non-Classical engagements. He has appeared as soloist with the Lexington Symphony, Vista Philharmonic, and the Boston Conservatory Symphony Orchestra. In October 2020, Nathaniel collaborated with cellist Yo-Yo Ma on the IDAGIO network, performing a duet of the spiritual “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen”. Nathaniel is a member of Palaver Strings, a conductor-less string ensemble based in Portland, Maine. From 2022-2024, Nathaniel was the guest cellist for Sons of Serendip, a classical crossover quartet that won 4th prize at America's Got Talent. Nathaniel is an advocate for diversity and representation, and frequently works with/mentors the next generation to reach their potential. Nathaniel received an Artist Diploma from the Boston Conservatory at Berklee, where he studied with Rhonda Rider and Patrice Jackson.



Chris Staknys is a pianist and composer from Falmouth, ME. He graduated from Juilliard in 2018 with a B.M. in Piano Performance. Allan Kozinn, former music critic for the New York Times, praised his playing for its "dexterity and dramatic phrase shaping". In 2014, Chris was featured on NPR's “From The Top” radio show. As a member of contemporary ensembles including AXIOM and the New Juilliard Ensemble, he has performed at venues including Carnegie Hall and Alice Tully Hall. In 2021, Chris was selected as Vocal Accompanist for Juilliard’s Marcus Institute Fellowship. He is currently Music Director for First Parish UU Church in Kennebunk and Collaborative Pianist at USM.