



Anna Huerta, piano
Maxwell Schultz, cello

Sunday, November 1, 2026 at 3pm

Foellinger Great Hall

Program

Robert Schumann ***Sonata No. 1 in F-sharp minor, Op. 11***

Ana Huerta, piano

INTERMISSION

Johannes Brahms ***Sonata in D Major for Cello and Piano, Op. 78***

Maxwell Schultz, cello

Chanmi Lee, piano

Ana Huerta is a Spanish pianist, collaborative artist, and scholar dedicated to creating musical experiences that foster connection, curiosity, and engagement. An award-winning soloist and active chamber musician, Ana is co-founder of the saxophone-piano ensembles Dúo Índice and Atlantic Duo, that have recently joined forces as the newly formed Triskelion Trio. Among other awards, Ana recently won 3rd prize in the Krannert Debut Artist Competition with a program centered around the influence and dedication of women pianists throughout the history of the instrument. Ana is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts in Piano Performance and Literature with a cognate in Instrumental Conducting at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, studying under Dr. Chi-Chen Wu and serving as a Graduate Teaching Assistant in Collaborative Piano.

Maxwell Schultz (he/him) is an emerging cellist from the Chicago area. In high school, Maxwell joined the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra and took lessons with Dr. Tanya Carey and CSO cellist, Richard Hirschl. Maxwell studied with Dmitry Kouzov at Oberlin Conservatory of Music and holds a master's in performance from the University of Illinois where he is currently pursuing his Artist Diploma under the instruction of Jupiter String Quartet cellist, Daniel McDonough. Maxwell recently won 2nd prize in the Krannert Debut Artist Competition for his program that centered musical reactions to devastation wrought by fascism and authoritarian power. He has performed as a featured soloist at festivals such as Domaine Forget de Charlevoix and Orford Musique, and was a 2026 Young Artist at the prestigious Kneisel Hall Chamber Music School and Festival.

Pianist **Chanmi Sarah Lee** maintains a vibrant international career as a soloist, collaborative artist, conductor, and educator. Her recent honors include the Grand Prize (Professional) at the Schubert International Music Competition UK, First Prize (Soloist) at the NY Classical Debut Awards, and First Prize at the OpusOne Music Festival Concerto Competition. As a collaborative pianist, she has performed with ensembles such as Sinfonia da Camera, the Illinois Modern Ensemble, and the UISO. She also currently serves as Conductor at the Korean Church of Champaign-Urbana. Dedicated to musical education, she received the Excellence in Teaching Award from the World Piano Teachers Association in 2025. She received her Bachelor of Music from Seoul National University and Master of Music from University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign as a Langford Fellow. She is currently a Doctoral Candidate in Piano Performance and Literature at UIUC under Timothy Ehlen, with a cognate in Choral Conducting.

PROGRAM NOTES: BRAHMS AND SCHUMANN

Songs Without Words

On a summer evening in 1837, a seventeen-year-old pianist walked onto the stage with a secret. Clara Wieck's father had separated her from the man she loved, Robert Schumann. He made her return his letters and would not let her answer him. So, she sent the one message no one could intercept. She played his f-sharp minor sonata in public, with Robert sitting in the audience.

"I might not do it [respond] in secret, so I did it in public," she later wrote to him. "Do you think my heart was not trembling?"

Robert had poured himself into that sonata, his first piece in this large form, and had published it without his name. The dedication read only "to Clara from Florestan and Eusebius." These were not characters in a story but the two halves of Schumann himself, names he gave to the opposing forces of his own restless and complex personality. Florestan was his impetuous, excitable, passionate self. Eusebius was the introvert: melancholy, inward, given to dreaming. He wrote his music criticism under these names, and few people, even among his friends, knew who they were. Clara knew.

You can hear both voices take turns in the sonata. Storms of passion give way to moments of hushed tenderness, and the whole work unfolds less like an argument than a journey through one heart. Robert called it "one long cry from the heart to you." Its center is a song. The slow movement, which Schumann called an "Aria," is a piano version of "An Anna," a song he wrote at eighteen. In the poem by Justinus Kerner that the song sets to music, a soldier carried pale from the battlefield thinks of his beloved as death comes to lead him home. Schumann lets this melody drift into the sonata's opening pages long before the Aria arrives, as if the music were already remembering it. Liszt praised the Aria as "a song of great passion, expressed with fullness and calm." Later come a mock-pompous polonaise marked alla burla ("as a joke") and a finale full of orchestral color that drives to a triumphant close. Three years after that concert, having taken her father to court, Robert and Clara married, one day before her 21st birthday.

Schumann never published "An Anna." It finally appeared in print decades after his death, when Johannes Brahms included it in a supplement to Schumann's collected works. Brahms had come into the Schumanns' lives as a young man and became Clara's closest friend for the rest of her life.

By the late 1870s, Clara, long since widowed, was carrying a heavy weight of grief. Her daughter Julie had died, her son Ludwig was losing his mind, and her youngest son Felix, a gifted young violinist and Brahms's godson, was dying of tuberculosis. Through those years she found comfort in two of Brahms's songs on poems by Klaus Groth. In "Regenlied" ("Rain Song"), the poet asks the rain to wake the dreams and wonder of his childhood. In "Nachklang" ("Distant Echo"), raindrops falling from the trees become tears.

When Clara wrote to Brahms early in 1879 about Felix's illness, he answered with music: a decorated page holding the opening of a slow movement he was writing. If she played it very slowly, he told her, it might say more clearly than he could what he felt. Felix died that February. That summer, in the Alpine village of Pörtschach, Brahms finished the sonata. It was his fifth attempt at a violin sonata, and the first he allowed to survive. We hear it tonight in the beautiful arrangement for cello by Paul Klengel.

When Clara played through the manuscript, she recognized the rain-song melody at once and was moved to tears. She wrote that she wished its finale could accompany her into the next world. The rain is everywhere in this music. A soft long-short-long rhythm on a single note, like drops against a window, sounds from the very first bars and runs through all three movements. In the finale, the melody of the rain songs comes forward, the instrument singing the voice's line while the piano patters as it did in the songs.

Two sonatas, two composers, one muse. In both, a song becomes a letter without words: one sent in secret by a young man in love, the other sent in sorrow by a friend who could not find words of his own.

—Ana Huerta