



## SENIOR RECITAL SERIES | SPRING 2025

Sunday, April 27, 2025, 7PM

Taplin Auditorium, Fine Hall

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# Melody Gawon Choi '25

## Violin

*Studio of Eric Wyrick*

A senior recital presented in fulfillment of the Music Performance Minor featuring works by Beethoven, Ysaÿe, and more.

### Featuring:

Kasey Shao '25, *piano*

Karlo Andrei Antalan '25, *countertenor*

Yuri Lee '27, *composer and piano*

Otto Trueman '27, *piano*

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#### About the Department of Music:

The Department of Music at Princeton University provides its undergraduates—whether they major or minor in Music—the opportunity to learn from a world-renowned faculty of scholars and composers. Performance opportunities include student-led and departmental ensembles like symphony orchestras, multi-genre choruses, jazz, contemporary music, African music, steel band, laptop orchestra, and much more, and students have access to private instrumental and voice lessons from eminent performing artists. The graduate program offers two distinct and prestigious Ph.D. programs in composition or musicology; graduate students receive fully-funded, immersive experiences conducting research, advancing their craft, and collaborating with faculty within Princeton University's inspiring, interdisciplinary campus.

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## PROGRAM

### **LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN**

Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 1 in D Major, Op. 12  
*Kasey Shao '25, piano*

I. Allegro con brio  
II. Tema con variazioni: Andante con moto  
III. Rondo: Allegro

### **YURI LEE '27**

The Sirens  
*Karlo Andrei Antalan '25, countertenor*  
*Yuri Lee '27, piano*

## **— INTERMISSION —**

### **EUGÈNE YSAÏE**

Sonata for Solo Violin No. 4 in E minor, Op. 27  
*I. Allemande (Lento maestoso)*  
*II. Sarabande (Quasi lento)*  
*III. Finale (Presto ma non troppo)*

### **CHARMICHAEL GRAND CARTER**

Skylark  
Guess Who I Saw Today  
Tight  
*Otto Trueman '27, piano*

*The use of photographic, video, or audio equipment is strictly prohibited. Please turn off or mute electronic devices for the duration of the performance.*

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## PROGRAM NOTES

### **Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 1 in D Major, Op. 12, No. 1**

*Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)*

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Tema con variazioni: Andante con moto
- III. Rondo: Allegro

Beethoven's Violin Sonata No. 1 marks a starting point—not just historically as the first of his ten violin sonatas, but also thematically in this program as a piece of optimism and formal clarity. Written in 1798, the sonata belongs to Beethoven's early period and is imbued with the influence of Haydn and Mozart, along with flashes of his own emerging style. The interplay between violin and piano is particularly conversational, and I found it refreshing to work on a piece where both parts are so equally invested in the momentum and wit of the dialogue.

Structurally, the sonata embraces classical form, yet it brims with personality. The energetic first movement is bold and bright, giving way to a graceful theme and variations in the second that showcase Beethoven's inventiveness. The final rondo is full of playful turns and rhythmic surprises, embodying a youthful exuberance that makes the whole sonata feel less like a formal statement and more like a spirited exchange between friends.

### **The Sirens**

*Yuri Lee '27 (2004-)*

*Words by James Russell Lowell*

The Sirens is a haunting and imaginative setting of a poem by James Russell Lowell, commissioned for violin and countertenor—a combination that is both rare and striking. This music challenged the traditional role of the violin as a constant melodic voice: the violin often inhabits a more atmospheric role in this piece, creating textures that support or sometimes interject the voice.

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Performing alongside a countertenor also demanded a new kind of listening and responsiveness. The way the human voice interacts with the violin in this piece feels spectral, as if the two are echoes of one another... or possibly warnings from the same source. It has been an honor to bring this piece to life with Yuri and contribute to a growing tradition of student collaboration and new music at Princeton!

## **Sonata for Solo Violin No. 4 in E minor, Op. 27**

*Eugène Ysaÿe (1858-1931)*

- I. Allemande (Lento maestoso)
- II. Sarabande (Quasi lento)
- III. Finale (Presto ma non troppo)

Ysaÿe's Sonata No. 4 is the most physically and mentally demanding work on this program, but also one of the most rewarding to prepare. Dedicated to Fritz Kreisler, the piece channels the elegance and charm of its dedicatee while pushing the technical and emotional limits of the solo violin. Written in 1923 as part of Ysaÿe's set of six sonatas for solo violin, each tailored to a contemporary virtuoso, Sonata No. 4 pays homage to the Baroque tradition, particularly the style of J.S. Bach, while injecting it with Ysaÿe's own lush, late-Romantic voice.

The sonata begins with a poised *Allemande*, evoking a sense of quiet dignity. This is followed by a turbulent and improvisatory *Sarabande*, full of sweeping gestures and sudden shifts in character. The final movement is a virtuosic *Finale* that alternates between fiery outbursts and lyrical moments, blurring the lines between chaos and control.

What makes this piece especially compelling is how it demands both brilliance and introspection, calling not only on technical abilities, but also on a deep sense of personal conviction. Preparing this piece became an opportunity to explore what it means to stand alone on stage. It helped me discover a fearless vulnerability in being unaccompanied, and leaning into that solitude helped me discover new dimensions of expression in my sound.

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## **“Skylark”**

*Hoagy Carmichael • Lyrics by Johnny Mercer*

## **“Guess Who I Saw Today”**

*Murray Grand • Lyrics by Elisse Boyd*

## **“Tight”**

*Betty Carter*

In many ways, vocal performance has been my musical home throughout college. I chose to end my recital with these three songs not only because I love them, but also as a tribute to the many singing communities that have supported and embraced me like a second family during my four years at Princeton.

**“Skylark”** is a song of yearning and unanswered questions, a fitting counterpart to the searching quality of *The Sirens* earlier in the program. Initially made famous by Nancy Wilson, **“Guess Who I Saw Today”** is a monologue with music, full of restrained heartbreak and sharp lyrical twists. Singing this song has helped me reconnect with storytelling through jazz—how you pace a reveal, how you hold back emotion until it breaks through. **“Tight,”** by Betty Carter, is a totally different kind of energy—playful, rhythmically intricate, and full of vocal jumps and surprises. I wanted to end with this piece because it captures the feeling of joy and spontaneity that has kept me going through all the long practice hours and late-night rehearsals :)

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## ABOUT

Violinist **MELODY GAWON CHOI** is an undergraduate at Princeton University studying Computer Science with a certificate in Music Performance, under the tutelage of Eric Wyrick. She began studying violin at the age of five and is a graduate of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music's Pre-College Division, where she studied with Davis Law.

Melody has been recognized by the National YoungArts Foundation as a two-time winner and made her orchestral debut with the Peninsula Symphony in 2019. She has earned first prize at the Peninsula Symphony Young Musicians' Competition, the Valley Christian Conservatory Honors Scholarship Competition, and the DVC/HNU Young Artist String Competition. Additional accolades include awards from the Silicon Valley Youth Music Competition, KAMSA Young Artists' Competition, Palo Alto Philharmonic Concerto Competition, American Protege Competition, and the Junior Bach Festival.

A devoted orchestral musician, Melody has led numerous ensembles in concerts and tours. She has served as Concertmaster of the Princeton University Orchestra since her freshman year, as well as Concertmaster of the National Youth Orchestra of the USA (NYO-USA) in 2021 and NYO2 in 2019, where she led performances at the New World Center and Carnegie Hall under the baton of Carlos Miguel Prieto. She was also the Principal of the NAFME All-National Honor Symphony Orchestra in 2020 and the Assistant Concertmaster of the California All-State High School Symphony Orchestra in 2019. Melody also attended the Bowdoin International Music Festival over the summers of 2018 and 2019, and has worked with Maxim Vengerov, Itamar Zorman, Kurt Sassmannshaus, Robin Scott, Keiko Ying, Yu-Chien Tseng, and Ying Fu in masterclasses and festivals.

Beyond the violin, Melody is an active vocalist and performer on campus. She is a longtime member and former Music Director of the Princeton Roaring 20 a cappella group, sings with the Princeton Jazz Vocal Ensemble, and performs in musical theatre through the Princeton Triangle Club and Princeton University Players. In her free time, Melody also enjoys writing poetry and dilly dallying. After Princeton, she will be girlbossing (mostly just drinking espressos) as a software engineer in New York City and getting that bag so she can go cafe hopping with all her friends and eat at COTE and stuff.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

From the bottom of my heart, thank you so much to everyone who made this recital possible.

I would be nowhere without the music educators who have shaped and supported me over the years. My deepest thanks to my violin teacher, Eric Wyrick, for your patience, encouragement, and belief in me—even when I doubted myself. To Mr. Davis Law and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, thank you for guiding me throughout high school and helping me build the foundation that brought me here. I am deeply grateful to Maestro Michael Pratt for the opportunities he provided that helped me grow as a musician, and for the unforgettable symphonic music-making and artistic development I've experienced over these past four years.

To my vocal teachers—Michelle Lordi, Dr. Trineice Robinson-Martin, and Barbara Rearick—thank you so much for your generous mentorship and inspiration, both past and present.

To all the student performers featured tonight: pianist Kasey Shao '25, countertenor Karlo Andrei Antalan '25, composer Yuri Lee '27, and pianist Otto Trueman '27. You guys are all so amazing and I am endlessly awed by your musical gifts—thank you for making music with me.

To the Princeton University Orchestra, to OPUS Chamber Music, to the Princeton Jazz Vocal Ensemble, and most of all, to my forever family, the Princeton Roaring 20—for nurturing me as a musician in ways I never could have imagined before arriving at Princeton.

To Program Manager Katie Baltrush—thank you for your support with my MPP minor and for coordinating so many aspects of this recital. To Administrator Gregory D. Smith, and to the Taplin Auditorium staff—I'm deeply grateful for your help in bringing this performance to life, especially through all the behind-the-scenes technical details.

Finally—what could I possibly say to match the love and support I've received? An endless amount of gratitude to my parents, for standing by me through every step of my musical journey. Thank you for driving me to San Francisco every Saturday for lessons, for being active volunteers in all my musical communities throughout my childhood, for making sure I stayed healthy and well-fed, and most of all, for simply being my parents. This is for you.

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