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## THE PROGRAM

**June 27, 2016, Hillside Theater at Taliesin, 7:30 pm**

**Alex Ayers, violin      Steven Ayers, piano**

Beethoven: Violin Sonata No. 8 (Op. 30 No. 3)  
Allegro assai  
Tempo di Minuetto, ma molto moderato e grazioso  
Allegro vivace

Saint-Saens: Violin Sonata No. 1 (Op. 75)  
Allegro agitato - Adagio  
Allegretto moderato - Allegro molto

INTERMISSION

Ysaye: Sonata for Solo Violin  
(Op. 27, No. 2 "Jacques Thibaud")  
Obsession. Prelude: Poco vivace  
Malinconia. Poco Lento  
Danse des ombres. Sarabande (lento)  
Les Furies. Allegro furioso

Wieniawski: Fantasia on Themes from 'Faust' (Op. 20)

## ABOUT THE PERFORMER

A native of Waukesha, Wisconsin, **Alexander Ayers** joined the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra in 2013. He was previously a member of the Madison Symphony Orchestra. After studying nine years at the String Academy of Wisconsin-Milwaukee with Darcy Drexler, Alex studied at Indiana University under Mimi Zweig, Alex Kerr, and Jorja Fleezanis. While at IU, he was nominated for a Performer's Certificate and held the positions of principal second violin and concertmaster in the Concert and Symphony Orchestras. He has performed collaboratively with Joshua Bell, Alex Kerr, Jaime Laredo, Gilles Apap, and Soovin Kim at IU.

Alex was a member of the Indiana University String Academy's Violin Virtuosi ensemble for two years, performing in the group's concert tours to France and Argentina. He has attended several summer music festivals, including the IU Summer String Academy, Innsbrook Institute, and Madeline Island Chamber Music Camp. He enjoys playing string quartets, and has been influenced by ensembles including the Arianna, Jupiter, Enso, Shanghai, Fry Street, Orion, and Pacifica quartets. Alex's quartet from Madeline Island was invited to perform two consecutive years at the Landmark Center in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Alex was a semifinalist in both the 2010 WAMSO Young Artist Competition and the 2009 Lennox Young Artist Competition, and won the grand prize of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra's Stars of Tomorrow competition in 2006; this resulted in performances of Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 1 with the MSO.

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## ABOUT THE MUSIC

**Ludwig van Beethoven** (1770-1827) was a German composer crucial in the transition between the Classical and Romantic eras. He displayed musical talent from an early age and studied composition with Joseph Haydn in Vienna at the age of 21. By his late 20s his hearing began to deteriorate; by the last decade of his life, he was almost completely deaf. Beethoven wrote 10 sonatas for violin and piano. Sonata No. 8, composed between 1801 and 1802, is a light, humorous piece, characteristic of Beethoven's early works. The first movement is in standard sonata form and demonstrates Beethoven's adventurous use of off-beat accents. The second movement, marked Tempo di Minuetto, is unique in the violin sonatas as it is somewhere in between a slow, melodic movement and a true minuet-style dance. The sonata concludes with a folk-like tune reminiscent of Haydn.

**Camille Saint-Saens** (1835-1921) was a French composer and pianist of the Romantic era. A scholar of music history, his own compositions were rooted in conventional classical tradition as opposed to the modern developments made by Schumann, Liszt, and Wagner. His students included Gabriel Faure and Maurice Ravel, both of whom revered Saint-Saens as a genius. He wrote two sonatas for violin and piano. The first, composed in 1885, consists of two movements, each of which has two distinct sections. The first movement begins with a brooding, mysterious texture which gives way to the first statement of the main theme, marked dolce espressivo. A return to the opening texture is followed by a brief fugato and a second statement of the theme, this time marked sempre forte appassionato. Again, the opening material develops into a third statement of the theme, which transitions into an Adagio section thematically unrelated to the rest of the movement. The second movement begins with an intermezzo, which leads into the brilliant Allegro molto finale.

**Eugene Ysaye** (1858-1931) was a Belgian violinist and composer. He studied with Wieniawski and Vieuxtemps at the Royal Conservatory of Liege before becoming the principal violinist of the orchestra which would later become the Berlin Philharmonic. Ysaye also was a professor at the Brussels Conservatoire; his students include Josef Gingold, William Primrose, and Nathan Milstein. Many prominent composers dedicated major works to him, including Debussy, Saint-Saens, Franck, and Chausson. Ysaye's 6 Sonatas for solo violin, written in 1923, were each dedicated to a different famous violinist of the time; the second sonata is dedicated to Jacques Thibaud, a friend of Ysaye. The first movement begins with a quotation of the Prelude from J. S. Bach's Partita No. 3 in E Major, but it is interrupted and transitions into the "Dies Irae" theme, a plainchant from the Catholic Mass for the Dead. Direct quotes from Bach's prelude appear frequently, showing Ysaye's obsession with Bach's work. The Malinconia contrapuntally resembles the style of Bach and employs the siciliano rhythm, found in Bach's first solo violin sonata. The Danse des ombres (dance of the shadows) is a theme and variations with the theme itself based on Dies Irae. The Furies, also called Erinyes, are female deities of vengeance from the underworld in Greek mythology. The Dies Irae theme appears throughout the movement.

**Henryk Wieniawski** (1835-1880) was a Polish violinist and composer. He studied violin at the Paris Conservatoire where special exceptions were made to admit him, as he wasn't French and was only 9 years old. In 1860 he moved to St. Petersburg where he taught many violin students and led the Russian Musical Society's orchestra and string quartet. From 1872 to 1874 Wieniawski toured the United States with Anton Rubinstein, and in 1875 he replaced Henri Vieuxtemps as violin professor at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels. Wieniawski's compositions are generally technically demanding, including his Faust Fantasy (composed in 1865). The piece is a compilation of themes from Charles Gounod's opera, "Faust" (written 1859). Loosely based on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's tragic play, Faust, the opera tells the story of an aging scholar who makes a deal with the devil in order to become young again.