

PHOEBE WU & VANNESS YU

SAVORING THE SCORE



DEC. 12TH 2025 | 7:30 PM
BERKELEY HILLSIDE CLUB



ABOUT

Savoring the Score is an immersive event series created by Phoebe Wu that combines a multi-course tasting menu with a classical recital, crafting a multisensory experience centered around thematic storytelling. Each piece is paired with an original dish that translates musical elements into flavors, textures, interactive mediums, and sensory narratives. The theme of this edition explores love in its many dimensions, from longing and passion to grief and nostalgia.

MISSION

We believe that art should both stimulate and slow us down. In an age shaped by acceleration and short-form media, we aim to create immersive spaces that encourage presence and sensory connection. By weaving together classical music and culinary arts, we explore how these forms can evolve through various mediums, connect with new audiences, and become more playful, personal, and communal.

INSPIRATION

MUSIC & FOOD - SENSORY STORYTELLING

written by Phoebe Wu

ROMANCE - A. BEACH ~ *SPROUTED FROM A POT OF RECLAIMED SOIL*

No Carrot Left Behind: Curried Carrot Mousse / Pickled Carrot / Carrot Stem Salsa Macha / Fried Carrot Tops

The first bud of romance often rises from a swirl of yearning, restraint, doubt, and a sense of stubborn hope. Our “firsts” carry a quiet electricity: that moment when a voice begins to form even if the world hasn’t yet learned to hear it. Amy Beach’s Romance, an early work that marked a pivotal shift in her career, blooms from that very place. As a woman in a field that rarely granted her space, her beginnings were often overlooked, yet they held the essence of who she was becoming. This dish mirrors that emergence: a whole carrot with its roots, skins, stems, leaves pushing upward from a pot of “soil.” Textures swing from velvety with the tremble of budding hope to shatteringly vivid with the first crack of passion, and flavors deepen from zesty bright flickers of curiosity into rich, bold currents of longing. Together, these sensory dynamics unfold like the first stirrings beneath the soil, a tender sapling gathering strength to break the surface. As the opening to tonight’s journey, this dish becomes our point of emergence: the moment where desire germinates, a voice awakens, and everything still ahead begins to take root.

CARMEN FANTASIE - J. HUBAY ~ *DEVOURIED WITH A WHISPERED WISH*

Bread & Butter: Fermented Tofu & Caramelized Fennel Butter / Sesame Fennel Slaw

Bread and butter is often associated with survival, but that is bread. Bread and butter together is a livelihood: the alloy of hunger and heat, needs and wants, comfort and ambition. As Carmen herself lives as a paradox of freedom and fate, bread and butter becomes a symbol for both substance and desire, the material and the spiritual. Tonight, we reimagine individual desires as a collective fire, sharing a communal butter board that anchors the table. The butter carries deep, funky notes and a spark of piquancy; its richness hits first, then the heat unfurls, mirroring Carmen’s own feverish pull, and serves as a bold companion to a piece that dances on the edge of the virtuosic and the demonic. Fresh fennel slaw brightens with crisp clarity, a spark of freedom and youth, while caramelized fennel woven into the butter smolders with depth and heat. One raw and luminous, the other transformed by fire. Together they echo Carmen’s own polarity: tenderness and audacity, vulnerability and provocation. A bite holds the tension between what we yearn for and how we evolve through longing.

Our savoring vessel is an assortment of locally sourced breads, each with its own grain, fermentation, and story, just like the people gathered around it. Using surplus breads aligns with our sustainability values, reminding us that ambition doesn’t always rise from pristine beginnings. The most powerful desires often bloom from what’s left behind. Here, many breads with different “origins” meet at one table, just as our aspirations come from wildly different pasts, united by fire, hunger, and the will to transform. And as we write down our wishes on edible paper and savor them with bread and butter, each bite becomes a small, defiant act of claiming: this is what I want, this is what feeds me, this is where my ambition begins.

ROMANCE IN F MINOR – A. DVORAK ~ FORAGED FROM AN ENCHANTED WINTER FOREST

Bitter Roots: Roasted Beetroot in Sumac Honey Vinaigrette / Smoked Tofu Tahini Cream / Furikake Candied Pecans / Fried Kombu / Herb & Olive Oil Jelly

With ambitious flames often come the ashes and quiet ruins they leave behind. Fresh green leaves only push through after winter's carpet of fallen foliage. Light only returns after a full circle of dusk that deepens into darkness. Even ashes, though tinged with ache and the illusion of emptiness, allow what was loved settle into us in ways that endure quietly and forever. As the music unfolds from droplets of thawing icicles to long, aching arcs of melody, we're invited to sit with a kind of love shaped by loss, endurance, and the soft resilience that follows. Meanwhile, savor the earthy, full-bodied sweetness of beetroot grounded in bittersweet soil, and the smoked tofu whip that lingers like a low-voiced sigh. And when the radiance of hope finally peeks through the gloom, forage the shimmering herb jelly from the dark yet enchanted winter forest before you, adding your own flicker of brightness to the dish, just as Dvořák threads a final thread of warmth through the music.

THEME ET VARIATIONS – O. MESSIAEN ~ COMPOSED THROUGH SELECTED ESSENCES

Deviled Tea Egg / Spiced Kataifi / Pickled Mustard Greens / Assorted Infused Oils

A wedding gift is a symbol of blessing and heartfelt expression of love; Messiaen's wedding gift to his wife was a theme that holds the shape of root, promise, and foundation. Like an egg resting in its nest, the theme is not only an emblem of home, but also the fruit of love, carrying both origin and possibilities. Alongside, he wrote five variations that blossom into radiance, youthful passion, and trembling devotion. As a synesthetic composer, Messiaen translates color into sound, painting a magical spectrum with notes that shimmer and collide. Today, we get a glimpse into his world by painting vibrant colors onto our flavor canvas. As each variation carries its own emotional hue, we listen for echoes of our own senses. From tranquility to fierce intensity, each essence is transformed into relishable extracts that we paint onto our canvas of lush egg yolks. Even without synesthesia, we can still experience sensory crossing: emotion becomes the medium rather than direct perception, allowing ourselves to feel while connecting flavors, colors, and emotions into a holistic impression. And in that blurring lies the heart of this piece; not just marriage itself, but the deeper idea of love as an act of expansion. Love asks us to let our inner worlds open and resonate; to let something outside ourselves color the way we listen and feel. As we paint today, we take part in a small act of convergence, flavors meeting, intertwining, and transforming the same way our experiences and emotions braid together to make a life rich and whole.

MELODIE – P. TCHAIKOVSKY ~ COLLECTED FROM MEMORY DUSTS IN A SNOWGLOBE

Souvenir: Salted Yolk Squash Custard / Pepita Nori & Shallot Cookie Crumble

As we approach the end of our journey today, we arrive at Mélodie, a gentle miniature Tchaikovsky composed during his stay at Brailova. While the title Souvenir d'un lieu cher suggests a literal "beloved place," many scholars believe it references more than geography. Tchaikovsky was in Brailova during that period, and its tranquil safety likely held great significance for him in a volatile time. Yet in his letters, the "beloved place" often overlaps with the people who steadied him, especially his sister Alexandra. For him, Brailova was not just landscape; it was the quiet shelter of Alexandra's home, where he felt understood and held.

Mélodie thus becomes a soft remembrance of a place and a person who offered him the rare gift of peace. As we reach the end of tonight's journey, we savor that fleeting tenderness through a dish built entirely around memory. The glass becomes a vessel of recollection, like a snowglobe. The edible sand below is made of fragments, uneven and imperfect, mirroring the way our lived experience rarely forms a smooth surface yet still holds a story. Resting on top, the delicate shell echoes the fragility of love and care, thin, resonant, holding something precious for only a moment. And the custard cradled inside it is the melody itself: creamy, umami, and complex. Often, the sweetness of refuge lasts only for a trip, a visit, a single bite, but its imprint endures, held in the layers beneath. The whole landscape lives inside a snow globe, where we shake the world gently and watch the past drift around us like falling light. Just as Tchaikovsky's "beloved place" extends beyond geography and gestures toward the emotional landscapes shaped by people, a snowglobe may capture the scene, but it's the memories and the people who formed them that continue to glow long after the flakes settle. As we listen and are held by the enchanted nostalgia and bittersweet warmth of the music, let's allow ourselves to savor the purity of this moment, then gather its traces through the edible sand, a quiet act of remembering before the night closes

ESTRELLITA – M. PONCE (ARR. HEIFETZ) ~THREE ECHOES OF FAREWELL

Mignardise Trio: Sesame & Roses / Chai Bourbon Apple / Truffle Cocoa & Smoke

The song Estrellita (Little Star) is sung through the voice of unrequited love : a young heart lamenting to a star afar what was never returned. As we have progressed through an arc of searching tonight, however, Estrellita closes the program in a different light. What is perceived as rejection can also hold the seed of renewal, like a fallen fruit returning to the soil to nourish new growth. Estrellita is no longer only the girl calling to her star, aching for recognition, but also the grown woman remembering the turbulence of her journey. The theme repeats itself three times: first as a bud of curiosity and trembling unrequited love, then as lingering hope strained with tension, and finally a climax that dissolves into transcendence. Each stage of emotional maturation is echoed in three tastes of "fallen fruit reborn," traced through the life of the flower.

The first bite of sesame cornflake bark awakens the innocence of youth, its nutty warmth and floral whisper from rosewater signaling whimsicality that blossoms into rising questions and fluttering heartbeats. The second bite bursts with turbulence and passion: apple slices soaked in chai-spiced bourbon are rolled into the form of a rose: the flower no longer just flavor, but shape, presence, ache, yearning incarnate. The tipsy haze evokes emotions that ferment and deepen with time, sharpened by the warmth of chai spices. In the final bite, the rose returns to earth: a truffle cocoa custard tart layered with smoked salt, with petals resting delicately on top: a quiet offering to what once was, and what remains. As sorrow and heartbreak transform into bittersweet acceptance, we savor the kind of farewell that glows with memory, where the beauty lies not in a perfect ending, but in the nuances of longing, gratitude, and the quiet joy of having lived fully.

MUSIC & HISTORY

written by Vanness Yu

AMY BEACH OP. 23 – ROMANCE FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO (1893)

In all of the violin/piano repertoire, no piece encapsulates the unfiltered rawness of love quite as much as Amy Beach's Romance. The push and pull effect can be heard with the passing



back and forth of the main theme, and the emotional turbulence is heightened by Beach's post-romanticism harmonic language. She is part of what we call the "Second New England School" of composition, and was a pioneer for the American voice in classical music.

JENO HUBAY OP. 3 NO. 3 – CARMEN FANTAISIE BRILLIANTE (1876)

To look for a better description of this operatic transcription, look no further than the title: "Fantasie brillante" perfectly defines this fiery, flirtatious work. Carmen, always dazzling and seductive, is transfigured into the jewel of violin repertoire by the Hungarian composer Jeno Hubay. Themes include the infamous Habañera and the Toreador theme. Carmen is unyielding and fears nothing, except the technical extremities required to capture the piece.

ANTONIN DVORAK OP. 11 – ROMANCE IN F MINOR (1879)

A distant cousin to the Romance of Amy Beach, Dvorak's wintry Romance brings listeners to a darker place. The composer finds inspiration from within: taking a second movement of a previous string quartet of his own and reshaping it. A snowy forest of sound: portly pizzicatos are raindrop-esque, the melodies always yearning for warmth. Surging runs in the development section erupt explosively, until the snowstorm simmers back down to a gentle, pleasant, powdery fall. The piece ends in a peaceful major key, a gesture of resolution.

OLIVIER MESSIAEN – THEME ET VARIATIONS (1932)

A work composed for his first wife Claire Delbos, a violinist whom he would premiere and perform with publicly many times. Messiaen's music is heavily inspired by his chromesthesia, a condition in which sound would trigger the bearer to perceive certain colors. Combined with his devout Catholicism and love for nature and the tunes of birdsongs, five variations on a galactical and timeless theme were born.

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY – SOUVENIR D'UN LIEU CHER OP. 42 NO. 3 – MELODIE IN E-FLAT MAJOR (1878)

Tchaikovsky finished the *Souvenir d'un lieu cher* for piano and violin during a two-week vacation in Brailivo, Ukraine. Translated into English, the title states: *Memory of a dear place*. The final dedication was to Brailivo itself, so it is safe to say that he was inspired and wholly charmed by his visit. Melodie is the last of these short sweets, concluding the suite quite pleasantly.

MANUEL PONCE – ESTRELLITA ARR. HEIFETZ (1912)

While on tour, violinist Jascha Heifetz sat at a coffee shop in Mexico when he heard a singer perform the Manuel Ponce arrangement of the folk tune "Estrellita" for voice and piano. Ponce wrote many folk-tune transcriptions, Estrellita (translated into My Little Star) being one of the most famous. The singer serenades the little stars in the night sky, asking for their love. Heifetz's transcription shifts the piece into a different key, heightening the yearning desire. The harmonic language is stylish and chic, providing a groundedness for large interval leaps that search for answers, glancing up at the stars for assurance.

PERFORMERS' BIO



Phoebe Wu is a senior at UC Berkeley double majoring in Economics and Music. She studies with Antoine van Dongen and is a 1st violinist in the UC Berkeley Symphony Orchestra. She was a winner of the Annual Concerto Competition, and was awarded 1st prize in the 2024 International Schubert Competition Vienna, as well as the Eisner Prize in the Creative Arts. As a culinary enthusiast, she runs private chef events focused on plant-forward, zero-waste, and fusion fine dining. She enjoys incorporating various forms of art, visual arts, writing, and music, into her tastings, sharing immersive dining experiences with the community.

Vanessa Yu is a senior at UC

Berkeley double majoring in Music and English, and is currently studying the piano with Betty Woo. In the past, he has studied with Thomas Schultz, Gabriela Martinez and Daniel Shapiro, and has participated in various summer festivals and programs such as Montecito International Music Festival and the Brevard Music Center. He was awarded second at the USIMC Young Artists Piano Solo Division, and has played for pianists in masterclasses such as Leif Ove Andsnes, Michael Chertock, Helene Papadopoulos and Rodolfo Leone. Outside of music, he enjoys basketball, reading books, trying different types of food and meeting new friends.



Thank you

Berkeley Hillside Club
Will Rosenzweig

Instagram: @HERBAN.OMNIVORE | Website: WWW.HERBANOMNIVORE.COM | Email: HERBAMOMNIVORE@GMAIL.COM



CONTRIBUTION LINK



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