

Robin Shoemaker & *In Real Time* Present
Henrique Eisenmann & Josh Halpern
Sunday, August 9, 2026 · 7 PM

Program:

Zurich Hermeto Pascoal (1936-2025)
transc. Henrique Eisenmann (b. 1988)

The Balloon Vendor Henrique Eisenmann
I. Moderato
II. Dorinda
III. Samba

Pina Henrique Eisenmann

Prelude, Op. 28, No. 15 in D-flat major, "Raindrops" Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)
recomposed Henrique Eisenmann

Cio da Terra Milton Nascimento (b. 1942)

intermission

Sacrum Convivium Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)
recomposed Henrique Eisenmann

Cello Sonata No. 2 (World Premiere) Henrique Eisenmann
I. Jengi: Spirit of the Forest
II. Canto de Iemanjá
III. Ngoma ya Shetani (The Devil's Dance)

Carinhoso Pixinguinha (1897-1973), João de Barro (1907-2006)

Abendlied Robert Schumann (1810-1856)
reharmonized Henrique Eisenmann

Program Note

When I first encountered Henrique's music more than six years ago, it was in a small gallery near Prospect Park in Brooklyn. Henrique sat down at the piano wordlessly and started to play. What followed was some of the most natural and entrancing music-making I have ever heard. All these years later, I still think about that evening regularly. This is to say two things: first, that this concert is a profoundly personal milestone in collaboration with a musical hero of mine; and second, as was my experience in Brooklyn in 2019, I don't think this music requires much context or introduction to be memorable and meaningful.

To understand Henrique's music, you just have to know that he is like a musical lint roller: no matter how foreign and unfamiliar—indeed, sometimes the more foreign and unfamiliar!—music just sticks to him. As I've inquired about the origins of his musical ideas for this program, he's shown me old archival recordings of African drum circles, Brazilian folk songs, modern dance choreography—the list could fill these pages. Henrique's genius lies in how he shapes his grab-bag of inspirations into a totally individual outpouring from someone who loves music like life itself.

I first approached Henrique about writing a work for the Caravan in September 2025. We began by meeting at his Park Slope studio, where we would freely improvise for hours; our recordings of those sessions became a musical mirepoix of disparate ingredients that only started to make sense as they simmered. He added Brazilian folk songs into the pot; I sprinkled in favorite cello sonatas by Benjamin Britten and Fazil Say; we dug German Romantic art songs from the pantry. There wasn't a lot of left-brain thinking involved in building this sauce; we were just listening to our palates.

I use this clumsy food metaphor because this concert feels like Henrique and I have invited you for a home-cooked meal. Imagine a potluck overloaded with our favorite foods. To be clear, Henrique is the head chef—this is, after all, the premiere of a piece *he* composed. I'm just an over-eager sous.

The sous...and also the maître d'. (This is turning into quite a fancy meal! What potluck has a maître d'?) So, while you may not *require* an explanation of the works on this program to enjoy them, some background surely benefits the experience.

We start with *Zurich*, a piece by Henrique's favorite composer, Hermeto Pascoal, evoking an energetic, chaotic, joyous celebration in a town square somewhere in Latin America. Underneath the melody is a relentless, daredevil ostinato (translation: repetitive) figure. This figure persists as the piano's right hand diverges in what we call "phasing"—the same music played at different speeds. At some point, the frenetic polytonal and polyrhythmic energy temporarily clears, making way for a simple song you may recognize: *Going Home*, by Antonín Dvořák.

When Henrique wrote *The Balloon Vendor* in 2012, it was his first foray into classical chamber music. It's an interesting inclusion of an early work (his *first* cello sonata) in the context of this program, and allows us perspective on Henrique's evolving musical style. This piece romps through a Parisian park where we meet a balloon vendor delighting young children with his colorful wares. You'll hear the clear influence of French impressionism, and I can't help but imagine folks like Georges Seurat, Édith Piaf, and Marcel Marceau lounging nearby.

Pina is Henrique's tribute to the German choreographer Pina Bausch. Bausch is Henrique's favorite choreographer, and the documentary about her (*Pina*) is his favorite film. The piece describes a ballerina meeting a nightingale. The song captures the melancholic conversation between the two, but it has always sounded to me like one mournful voice fighting its way through a mass of shadowy bodies in quiet, graceful agony.

Following that is a twist on Chopin's famous "Raindrop" Prelude. Henrique's recomposition faithfully represents Chopin's original while introducing a five-part Malawian groove and open improvisation.

Cio da Terra is an anthem of gratitude for the earth's fertility by the great Brazilian songwriter Milton Nascimento. The lyrics are:

Debulhar o trigo
Recolher cada bago do trigo
Forjar no trigo o milagre do pão
E se fartar de pão

To thresh the wheat
To gather every grain of wheat
To forge in the wheat the miracle of bread
And to fill oneself with bread

Decepar a cana
Recolher a garapa da cana
Roubar da cana a doçura do mel
Se lambuzar de mel

To cut the cane
To gather the juice of the cane
To steal from the cane the honey's sweetness
To smear oneself with honey

Afagar a terra
Conhecer os desejos da terra
Cio da terra, a propícia estação
E fecundar o chão

To caress the earth
To know the desires of the earth
Cio da terra, the propitious season
And to make the earth fruitful

Sacrum Convivium is a famous choral work by Olivier Messiaen. Against this, Henrique has layered a West African 12/8 groove most commonly found in Ghana, Togo, Benin, or Nigeria. The addition of this rhythmic motive lightens Messiaen's original chant and reinforces the idea of collectivity that is so essential to West African culture.

Finally, we reach Henrique's new composition, *Cello Sonata No. 2*. Each movement within this sonata draws on a distinct African tradition, further unspooling the long musical thread this program weaves through time and place.

The first movement is inspired by the Baka tradition, belonging to those who live in the Ituri Forest on the border of Cameroon and the Congo. Their spiritual messenger, *Jengi*, connects them with their religion and the meaning of the forest. This movement explores that mysterious jungle through a traditional 9/8 Baka groove plus a lyrical Schubertian touch.

Canto de Iemanjá is a song of devotion to the Yoruba goddess of the waters, whose influence runs deep through Afro-Brazilian spiritual tradition. Henrique imagines a deep-voiced old man singing the melody while children play in the distance, tender and oblivious.

Ngoma ya Shetani means "the Devil's Dance" in Swahili. These dances, in which the body is overtaken by demonic spirits, are common to the Tanzanian tradition. Henrique channels that possession through the influence of Shostakovich, while driving it with the quintuplet swing often found in Tanzanian and Malawian music.

We conclude with two small songs—one from Henrique, the other from me. *Carinhoso* is an unofficial Brazilian anthem, known and loved by all. *Abendlied* is the parting bite on the evening's menu. (We considered leaving it as an encore, but we didn't want to risk not playing it!) Pablo Casals' legendary 1920s recording was an early point of inspiration during this project; our version features some choice reharmonizations by Henrique.

I'm deeply grateful to Henrique for collaborating with me on this project, and to you for taking the time to listen!

— Josh Halpern

Henrique Eisenmann

New York-based Brazilian pianist Henrique Eisenmann creates an original musical universe drawing on classical music, jazz, and world folk traditions. Born in São Paulo, he has long been drawn to translating diverse musical sonorities to the piano, and his work extends beyond concert performance to collaborations with dancers, poets, and actors—including his *Notes for Pina Bausch* suite, which has been choreographed by international dance companies.

A member of the six-time Grammy-winning Paul Winter Consort, Eisenmann has performed with Steve Reich, Gunther Schuller, Luciana Souza, and the Brubeck Brothers, among many others, and has toured extensively across Europe, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. He holds a doctorate from New England Conservatory, where his thesis explored free improvisation as a universal phenomenon, and is currently on faculty at the Juilliard School, teaching creative improvisation. He has also been a guest artist at MIT, Brown, Yale, and the Manhattan School of Music.

Eisenmann serves as Artistic Director of Jazz Lab, a creative music festival in Massachusetts, and is currently composing for Flyways, a multinational project bringing together musicians from Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, and the Middle East.

To learn more about Henrique, visit henriqueeisenmann.com.

Josh Halpern

Josh Halpern has appeared on stages around the world as a soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral principal cellist. As a chamber musician, he has collaborated with artists including Jonathan Biss, Kim Kashkashian, Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Anthony McGill, and Itzhak Perlman, and appeared at festivals including Ravinia, Music@Menlo, La Jolla Summerfest, and Krzyzowa-Music. An advocate of contemporary music, he has worked personally with composers including Bruce Adolphe, Richard Danielpour, Henrique Eisenmann, Scott Ordway, Kevin Puts, and Kaija Saariaho. He has served as guest principal cello of the Rotterdam Philharmonic and Philharmonia Orchestra, and served as guest member of the Aeolus Quartet, Varian Fry Quartet, and the Banff Competition-winning Rolston Quartet. From 2021 to 2023, he was a member of the Karajan Akademie of the Berliner Philharmoniker, mentored by Ludwig Quandt.

Josh is the founder and artistic director of the Cultural Caravan, a Boulder-based performing arts organization presenting 35+ concerts per year in partnership with more than 70 local partners, reinvesting nearly \$1 million into the community to date.

Josh completed his Artist Diploma at the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied with Carter Brey and Peter Wiley, and his undergraduate degree at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, where he studied with Desmond Hoebig. He performs on a cello by Domenico

Busan, c. 1750, on generous long-term loan from a member of the Stretton Society. To learn more about Josh, visit [**joshuahalperncello.com**](http://joshuahalperncello.com).