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**BRAHMS AND BEYOND:
PIANIST EMANUEL AX CREATES CONCERT SERIES
INCLUDING FOUR BAY AREA PREMIERES
JANUARY 23 AND FEBRUARY 26 IN ZELLERBACH HALL**

**January concert features mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter
February date features cellist Yo-Yo Ma**

BERKELEY, December 20, 2013—The great pianist **Emanuel Ax** is the architect of the upcoming *Brahms and Beyond* concert series presented by [Cal Performances](http://calperformances.org). In two distinct concerts, Ax will collaborate with esteemed musicians **Anne Sofie von Otter** and **Yo-Yo Ma** and four contemporary composers to explore the music of Johannes Brahms along with new, related works, all Bay Area premieres. Ax is the ideal musician to construct such an ambitious, wide-ranging, yet cohesive series. He has spent decades performing the works of Brahms, and in recent years he has challenged new composers with daring commissions. “I have loved the music of Brahms since I was a teenager and have been studying and practicing his music for 40 years; I wish I had another 40 to understand it better,” Ax said. For this project, bridging Brahms’s time and present day, Ax has commissioned four composers—Missy Mazzoli, Nico Muhly, Anders Hillborg, and Brett Dean—for something a bit unusual.

Swedish mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter joins Emanuel Ax on Thursday, January 23 at 8:00 p.m. in Zellerbach Hall in a program of Brahms’ lieder, folksongs, and two new works. *So Many Things*, for mezzo-soprano and piano by Muhly, employs “a longer, more narrative poem by Joyce Carol Oates [and] is sandwiched between two of Daniel Mendelsohn's gorgeous translations of C.F. Cavafy,” said Muhly. The second work is titled *Bolts of Loving Thunder*, a solo piano work composed by New York-based composer Mazzoli.

Ax returns with his longtime musical partner, cellist Yo-Yo Ma, on February 26 at 8:00 p.m. in Zellerbach Hall, matching the first and second Brahms cello sonatas with two new works

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for piano and cello: *The MAX Duo* by Swedish composer Hillborg, and *Hommage à Brahms* by Australian-born composer and violist Dean.

A thread, both musical and historical, ties the four new compositions—all Bay Area premieres—to Brahms: The Romantic master adopted the phrase *Frei aber Froh* (“free but happy”) as his motto, and may have used the notes F-A-F to open his third symphony because of this motto. Ax, in commissioning new works for *Brahms and Beyond*, asked the composers to use F-A-F as a theme or motive in their new works. “We are hoping that this idea, far from being a restriction, will be an inspiring starting point for them,” Ax said. The pianist’s ability to craft a cohesive concert from seemingly disparate elements was noted by *The New York Times* as early as 1997, when a reviewer noted, “His choice of music made listeners think about every piece in relation to every other.” The Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and Carnegie Hall join Cal Performances in co-commissioning this new music.

THE PERFORMERS

Pianist [Emanuel Ax](#) has performed at major concert halls and with leading orchestras worldwide, served residencies with important orchestras and festivals, and frequently collaborates with his friend, cellist Yo-Yo Ma in concert halls and recording studios. Ax’s recordings, which range from Piazzolla tangos to Rachmaninoff piano duets, have earned multiple Grammy Awards. In recent years Ax has championed new works by 20th- and 21st-century composers.

Mezzo-soprano [Anne Sofie von Otter](#) has performed in opera houses, recital halls, and concert stages worldwide. She has appeared on nearly 50 recordings ranging from discs of Swedish songs (recorded with longtime accompanist [Bengt Forsberg](#)), to Italian Baroque arias, to pop music with [Elvis Costello](#), and earned Grammy Awards for classical vocal performances in 2000 and 2004.

[Yo-Yo Ma](#) is one of the world’s most sought-after recitalists, ensemble leaders, soloists, and recording artists. The cellist is co-creator of the Silk Road Project, which charts the musical territory of the historical trade route, and has collaborated with virtually every top orchestra,

conductor, and composer working today. He has earned countless awards, including the Avery Fisher Prize, Glenn Gould Prize, National Medal of the Arts, Presidential Medal of Freedom, and a Kennedy Center Honor.

THE COMPOSERS

Works by [Missy Mazzoli](#) have been performed by groups as diverse as The Kronos Quartet, Opera Philadelphia, and the Young People's Chorus of New York City. The Brooklyn-based Mazzoli has served as a composer-in-residence and visiting professor at several prestigious institutions, and has earned four ASCAP Young Composer Awards. She also performs her own works with her band, [Victoire](#).

[Nico Muhly](#) has composed works for ensembles, singers, solo instrumentalists, choruses, ballet companies and opera companies. More than 30 recordings of his choral, orchestral, soundtrack, and other music have been released. Muhly became the youngest composer to have a commissioned work performed at the Metropolitan Opera when his first full-scale opera, *Two Boys*, opened in October 2013. "The score, rich with intriguing harmonies and textural intricacy, shimmers in Mr. Muhly's vivid, subtle orchestration" (*The New York Times*).

Swedish composer [Anders Hillborg](#) began his musical training as a choral singer. He studied at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, and is now a full-time composer and occasional teacher. His compositions span the spectrum from chamber music to orchestral works, as well as film and TV scores, vocal music, and arrangements.

[Brett Dean](#) was born in Brisbane, Australia and moved to Germany in his early twenties as a professional violist. He began composing soon thereafter, and has created operas, chamber works, concerti, orchestral works, solo pieces, and other works. He now divides his time between Australia and Germany, continues to play viola as a soloist, and is also a sought-after conductor.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for *Brahms and Beyond*: Emanuel Ax and Anne Sofie von Otter on Thursday, January 23 range from \$30.00 to \$125.00 and are subject to change. Tickets for *Brahms and*

Beyond: Emanuel Ax and Yo-Yo Ma on Wednesday, February 26 range from \$30.00 to \$175.00 and are subject to change. Both concerts begin at 8:00 p.m. in Zellerbach Hall. Half-price tickets are available for UC Berkeley students. Tickets are available through the Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988; at <http://www.calperformances.org>; and at the door. For more information about discounts, go to <http://calperformances.org/buy/discounts.php>.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Thursday, January 23, at 8:00 p.m.

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at Dana Street, Berkeley

Special Event

Brahms and Beyond

Emanuel Ax, piano

Anne Sofie von Otter, mezzo-soprano

Program:

Brahms/Folksong Selections

Brahms/Lieder Selections

Mazzoli/*Bolts of Loving Thunder* (Cal Performances co-commission, Bay Area premiere)

Muhly/*So Many Things* (Cal Performances co-commission, Bay Area premiere)

Tickets range from \$30.00 to \$125.00 and are subject to change. They are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988; at calperformances.org; and at the door.

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Wednesday, February 26, at 8:00 p.m.

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at Dana Street, Berkeley

Special Event

Brahms and Beyond

Emanuel Ax, piano

Yo-Yo Ma, cello

Program:

Brahms/Cello Sonata No. 1 in E minor, Op. 38

Brahms/Cello Sonata No. 2 in F major, Op. 99

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Hillborg/*The MAX Duo* (Cal Performances co-commission, Bay Area premiere)

Dean/*Hommage à Brahms* (Cal Performances co-commission, Bay Area premiere)

Tickets range from \$30.00 to \$175.00 and are subject to change. They are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988; at calperformances.org; and at the door.

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