

Sunday, February 16, 2014, 3pm

Hertz Hall

Jonathan Biss, *piano*

PROGRAM

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897) Klavierstücke, Op. 119 (1893)

- No. 1 Intermezzo in B minor
- No. 2 Intermezzo in E minor
- No. 3 Intermezzo in C major
- No. 4 Rhapsody in E-flat major

György Kurtág (b. 1926) Selections from *Játékok* (1979, 1997)

- Antiphony in F-sharp (Vol. 2, No. 34)
- Like the Flowers of the Field (Vol. 5, No. 20)
- Hommage à Jeney (Phone numbers of our loved ones 1) (Vol. 11, No. 2)
- Fanfare to Judit Maros' Wedding (Vol. V, No. 22)
- Hommage à Schubert (Vol. III, No. 23)
- (...and round and round it goes) (Vol. III, No. 19)
- Farewell, S.W. (Vol. V, No. 41)
- Birthday Elegy for Judith (for the Second Finger of Her Left Hand) (Vol. 6, No. 29)

Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849) Two Nocturnes, Op. 62 (1846)

No. 1 Nocturne in B major

No. 2 Nocturne in E major

Chopin Polonaise-Fantaisie in A-flat major, Op. 61
(1845–1846)

INTERMISSION

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) Sonata No. 27 in E minor, Op. 90 (1814)

Mit Lebhaftigkeit und durchaus mit
Empfindung und Ausdruck

Nicht zu geschwind und sehr singbar
vorgetragen

Beethoven Sonata No. 21 in C major, Op. 53,
“Waldstein” (1804)

Allegro con brio

Introduzione. Adagio molto

Rondo. Allegretto moderato

*Funded, in part, by the Koret Foundation, this performance is part of Cal Performances’
2013–2014 Koret Recital Series, which brings world-class artists to our community.*

Cal Performances’ 2013–2014 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)
Piano Pieces, Op. 119

Composed in 1893.

Brahms was a gifted pianist who toured and concertized extensively in northern Europe early in his career. He made his recital debut in Vienna in 1862, and returned there regularly until settling permanently in that city in 1869. By then, his reputation as a composer was well established, and he was devoting more time to creative work than to practicing piano. He continued to play, however, performing his own chamber music and solo pieces both in public and in private, and even serving as soloist in the premiere of his daunting Second Concerto on November 9, 1881, in Budapest. His last public appearance as a pianist was in Vienna on January 11, 1895, just two years before he died, in a performance of his Clarinet Sonatas with Richard Mühlfeld.

Brahms's pianism was noted less for its flashy virtuosity than for its rich emotional expression, fluency, individuality, orchestral sonority, and remarkable immediacy, and his compositions for the instrument are marked by the same introspection, seriousness of purpose, and deep musicality that characterized his playing. His keyboard output, though considerable, falls into three distinct periods: an early burst of large-scale works mostly in Classical forms (1851–1853: three Sonatas, Opp. 1, 2, and 5; *Scherzo* in E-flat minor, Op. 4; and *Four Ballades*, Op. 10); a flurry of imposing compositions in variations form from 1854 to 1863 on themes by Schumann, Haydn, Handel, and Paganini; and a late blossoming of 30 succinct *Capriccios*, *Intermezzos*, *Ballades*, and *Rhapsodies* from 1878–1879 and 1892–1893 issued as Opp. 76, 79, and 116–19. To these must be added the dance-inspired compositions of the late 1860s: the *Waltzes* (Op. 39) and the *Hungarian Dances*.

Brahms's late works, most notably those from 1892 and 1893, share the autumnal quality that marks much of the music of his ripest maturity. "It is wonderful how he

combines passion and tenderness in the smallest of spaces," said Clara Schumann of this music. To which William Murdoch added, "Brahms had begun his life as a pianist, and his first writing was only for the pianoforte. It was natural that at the end of his life he should return to playing this friend of his youth and writing for it. This picture should be kept in mind when thinking of these last sets. They contain some of the loveliest music ever written for the pianoforte. They are so personal, so introspective, so intimate that one feels that Brahms was exposing his very self. They are the mirror of his soul."

György Kurtág (b. 1926)
Selections from *Játékok* ("Games")

Composed in 1979 and 1997.

György Kurtág was born on February 19, 1926 in Lugoș, a town whose territory had been ceded to Romania by Hungary following World War I. Kurtág took piano and composition lessons in Timisoara before entering the Budapest Academy of Music in 1946, where he earned diplomas in composition (his teachers included Sándor Veress and Ferenc Farkas), piano (Pál Kadosa), and chamber music (Leo Weiner). He became a Hungarian citizen in 1948. In 1957–1958, Kurtág went to Paris to study with Messiaen and Milhaud, but an equally important influence on him at that time were his sessions with the psychologist Marianne Stein, whose deep understanding of the artistic temperament helped to unlock his creativity. He composed his Op. 1, the *String Quartet No. 1*, upon his return to Hungary and dedicated the score to her. From 1958 to 1963, Kurtág worked as a coach and tutor at the Bartók Secondary School of Music in Budapest, and occupied a similar position with the National Philharmonic from 1960 to 1968, helping to train such outstanding Hungarian musicians as Zoltán Kocsis, András Schiff, and the first Takács String Quartet. In 1967, Kurtág was appointed to the faculty of the

Budapest Academy of Music, where he taught piano and chamber music until his retirement in 1986; in 1993 he moved to southwestern France to be near his son's family. He has served as Composer-in-Residence with the Berlin Philharmonic (1993–1995) and with the Vienna Konzerthaus (1995–1996), and has been recognized with the Erkel Prize (1954, 1956, 1969), Kossuth Prize (1973), Order of the Star with the Golden Wreath from the Hungarian Government (1986), Monaco's Prix de Composition Musicale (1993), Austria's State Award for European Composers (1994), Kossuth Prize for Life's Work (1996), Munich's Siemens Music Award (1998), membership in the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts (1987) and West Berlin's Academy of Art (1987), and the prestigious Grawemeyer Award from the University of Louisville (2006).

The influence of Bartók and Kodály was strong in Kurtág's early works, but beginning with the String Quartet No. 1 of 1959 following his exposure to Webern's serialism during his two years in Paris, he adopted a more ascetic idiom, small in scale and meticulous in gesture but highly concentrated in expressive content. Kurtág said that the aim of his music is "to achieve such concision that every moment is fundamental and significant, and that together they fill out the form, without sacrificing the balance between too little and too much. Above all, everything superfluous should be omitted, i.e., the maximum of expression and content should be formulated with the fewest notes." He worked slowly and issued few compositions during the following two decades, most of those comprising sets of jewel-like instrumental micro-movements, but beginning with *Messages of the Late Miss R. V. Troussova* for Soprano and Orchestra (1981), Kurtág turned to larger-scale though still austere pieces, including impressive settings of texts by Kafka, Beckett, and the 16th-century Hungarian clergyman Péter Bornemisza.

Games (*Játékok* in Hungarian) is a still-growing collection of some 250 greatly varied

musical aphorisms for solo piano and piano duet that includes style studies, technical etudes, character pieces, homages to friends, colleagues, and other composers, and random musical thoughts. (The fifth, sixth, and seventh volumes, published in 1997, are subtitled, "Diary entries, personal messages." The first four volumes appeared in 1979.) The Japanese educator, conductor, and pianist Furiya Miyako, a student of Kurtág, reported that in 1994 he gave her the following explanation for composing *Games*: "In 1960, my son became six years old and he began to learn to play the piano. I composed for him 'five little piano pieces' that were eventually included in the first volume of *Games*. But his piano teacher was not interested in them, and my idea was not developed. In 1973, I composed the *Hommage à Kadosa—Twelve Microludes* in celebration of the birthday of my teacher, Pál Kadosa. These later appeared in volume two. In 1974, I traveled to Italy and other places, and received much inspiration and returned to Hungary with an impulse to compose something. At that time, Marianne Teoke, who is the 'Pedagogical Collaborator' of *Games*, asked me to write some pieces for children, and I began to compose at a stretch, and I still continue."

In its tiny echo-phrases, *Antiphony in F-sharp* (1979) recalls the Medieval practice of responsorial singing.

Like the Flowers of the Field (1997) is a tribute to Ilona Ligeti, György Ligeti's mother, who was a survivor of Auschwitz.

Hommage à Jeney (*Phone numbers of our loved ones 1* [1979]) is Kurtág's tribute to Hungarian composer Zoltán Jeney (b. 1943), longtime chairman of the composition department at the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest.

The bell tones and excited outbursts of *Fanfare to Judit Maros' Wedding* (1997) evoke the celebratory mood of a marriage ceremony.

Bálint András Varga, who published a book of interviews with Kurtág in 2009, wrote concerning *Hommage à Schubert* (1979), "Schubert is to Kurtág the unexcelled

and unachievable expression of beauty in all its differentiation, all its ambivalence, all its complexity, as well as in the articulation of sadness, the irredeemable and the unattainable.”

The miniscule (...and round and round it goes) (1979) seems to be the merest fragment from some unwritten hyperactive piece.

Farewell, S.W. (1997) is Kurtág’s memorial tribute to Hungarian poet Sándor Weöres (1913–1989).

Birthday Elegy for Judith (for the Second Finger of Her Left Hand) (1997) was written for Kurtág’s daughter, now a director, photographer, and visual artist working in Amsterdam and Paris.

Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849) **Two Nocturnes, Op. 62**

Composed in 1846.

Contemporary accounts of Chopin’s piano playing invariably refer to the extreme delicacy of his touch, the beauty of his tone, and the poetic quality of his expression. These characteristics are faithfully reflected in the 21 Nocturnes that he created between 1827 and 1846. Chopin derived the name and general style for these works from the Nocturnes of John Field, the Irish composer-pianist who spent most of his life in Moscow and Paris. Both composers were influenced in the rich harmonies and long melodic lines of their Nocturnes by the bel canto operatic style that was popular at the time, though Chopin’s examples exhibit a far greater depth of expression and a wider range of keyboard technique than do those of Field. The introspective moods of the Nocturnes pierced to the heart of the Romantic sensibility, and, along with the Waltzes, they were Chopin’s most popular works during his lifetime.

Chopin’s cycle of Nocturnes closes with the two numbers of Op. 62 that he wrote in the summer of 1846, during his last stay at Nohant, George Sand’s country house near Châteauroux, some distance south of Paris in the province of Berry. His relationship with the flamboyant Sand, who had been

lover, nurse, and muse to him for almost a decade, was then beginning to unravel, and their split the following year marked the virtual extinction of his creative career—he composed just three waltzes, three mazurkas, and a single song between the end of 1846 and his death three years later. The Op. 62 Nocturnes were published in Paris in September 1846 by Brandus et Compagnie and in December in Leipzig by Breitkopf und Härtel with a dedication to Mlle. R. von Könnertitz, a pupil of Chopin whose collection of early publications of her teacher’s works, corrected in his own hand, were later invaluable in preparing authentic editions of the music. The two Nocturnes, ripe in their dreamy nostalgic sentiment, exhibit the freedom of melodic line, the rich, sometimes unpredictable harmony, and the glowing keyboard sonority that mark the creations of Chopin’s last years.

Chopin **Polonaise-Fantaisie in A-flat major, Op. 61**

Composed in 1845–1846.

The polonaise, the Polish national dance, seems to have originated at the end of the 16th century as a grand measured processional for aristocratic ceremonies. In both danced and sung forms, its popularity spread throughout Poland, finding use at court and among the peasantry. By the 18th century, when Bach included examples of the genre in his Second Orchestral Suite and French Suite No. 6, it had acquired the characteristics of its classic form: moderate, stately triple meter; phrases begun without upbeat, and ended with a feminine cadence (i.e., on a non-stressed beat); a frequently used rhythmic pattern of 8th-16th-16th, 8th-8th, 8th-8th; and a form comprising short, repeated sections. Around 1800, such Polish composers as Kozłowski and Oginski created popular, stylized versions of the polonaise, and it was from their works that Chopin learned the dance. Chopin’s first published composition, written when he was seven, was the little Polonaise in

G minor. His 15 additional works in the form, written in Warsaw and later in Paris, raised the old dance to the status of a heroic symbol of his native Poland.

The Polonaise-Fantaisie in A-flat major, the last of Chopin's works in that form and his final large creation for piano, was begun in 1845 and completed during the following summer. Chopin's inability to compose easily during his last years because of his recently ended affair with George Sand and his steadily declining health is particularly unfortunate in view of the greatly expanded harmonic and formal vistas indicated by the Polonaise-Fantaisie. "Over this work lies the same historic glow of bright, unfulfilled promise that lights Schubert's great C major Symphony," wrote Herbert Weinstock. The Polonaise-Fantaisie moves considerably beyond the dance idioms of Chopin's earlier works in the form to become a sort of contemplative exploration of their characteristic rhythms and gestures, what Alan Rich called "a personal fantasizing on the essence of Polish-ness into which elements of the polonaise are woven." The work's unorthodox structure and bold harmonic and tonal audacities caused Chopin to hesitate over its precise designation (he told a friend during its composition that the piece was "something I don't know how to name") and even led such a staunch champion of his music as Franz Liszt to be puzzled by its "feverish and restless anxiety, [its] sudden alarms, disturbed rest, stifled sighs." The daring originality of the Polonaise-Fantaisie has been better understood in more recent times, and the work is now regarded as one of Chopin's finest creations, the unrealized harbinger of a unique strand of Romanticism stilled at its inception by his too-early death.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
Sonata No. 27 in E minor, Op. 90

Composed in 1814.

Though 1814 was one of the most successful years of Beethoven's life as a public figure—the revival of *Fidelio* was a resounding

success, the Seventh Symphony was premiered to general acclaim, his occasional pieces for concerts given in association with the Congress of Vienna that year were applauded by some of Europe's noblest personages, his arrangements of Welsh and Irish melodies appeared in Edinburgh, the clangorous *Wellington's Victory* became an overnight hit—he produced little in the way of important new compositions during that time: the cantata *Der Glorreiche Augenblick* ("The Glorious Moment"), the *Elegiac Song* for Four Voices and Strings, the Polonaise for Piano, and the E minor Piano Sonata were the only pieces from 1814 he deemed worthy of opus numbers. After experiencing a miraculous burst of creativity during the first decade of the century—the first six symphonies, last three piano concertos, Violin Concerto, *Fidelio*, Triple Concerto, ten string quartets, nine sonatas for violin, and 17 for solo piano, a ballet, an oratorio, a Mass, and an additional wealth of songs, piano pieces, and chamber scores—the flood of masterpieces had begun to abate by 1809. French troops invaded Vienna in May (the rigors of their occupation finally broke the fragile health of the aged Joseph Haydn, who died on May 31st), and Beethoven frequently complained that the resultant social, political, and economic turmoil disturbed his concentration—and then went ahead and wrote his "Emperor" Concerto. His life, though, remained difficult, so much so that his American biographer Alexander Wheelock Thayer called 1810 "a disastrous year." A pledge made during the previous year by the Princes Lobkowitz and Kinsky and the Archduke Rudolph to provide him with a guaranteed annual wage had been diluted by the inflation caused by the French invasion and the inability of Kinsky to uphold his part of the bargain. Money from the English publisher Clementi was long delayed because of Napoleon's restrictions on international exchange. Beethoven's deafness was nearly complete, his health was increasingly troublesome, his family seemed to bring him only grief. In a letter of April 1814 written during a fit of despondency to his old friend

Dr. Franz Wegeler, he confessed, “If I had not read somewhere that no one should quit life voluntarily while he could still do something worthwhile, I would have been dead long ago, and certainly by my own hand. Oh, life is so beautiful, but for me it is poisoned forever.” Looking for domestic comfort, he thought seriously of marriage for the first time in 15 years, but his proposal to Therese Malfatti, then not even half of his 40 years, was rejected.

A period of what critic and commentator Michael Steinberg called “postscripts to the heroic decade, postscripts of enormous potency” occurred between 1810 and 1812—Egmont, the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies, the “Archduke” Trio, the Op. 95 Quartet, the song cycle *An die Ferne Geliebte*, the final violin sonata—followed by an almost complete creative silence in 1813. Like silence in a piece of music, however, this was a moment of great significance in Beethoven’s artistic evolution, a juncture that would later be seen as the turning point in his compositional career that led to the incomparable series of towering masterworks he created during his last decade. The Piano Sonata in E minor, Op. 90, his first work in the genre since his Op. 81a (“Les Adieux”) of 1809, is one of the earliest evidences that this transformation was nearing completion.

The E minor Sonata was composed in the late summer of 1814, between the revival of *Fidelio* in May and the convening of the Congress of Vienna in September. The work was dedicated to Count Moritz Lichnowsky, younger brother of Prince Karl Lichnowsky, Beethoven’s first Viennese patron, and seems to have been occasioned by the Count’s engagement to one Fräulein Stummer, a singer at the Court Theater. (The noble Lichnowsky family disapproved of this match with a mere thespian, however, and it took Moritz two more years to bring about the marriage.) Beethoven cast the Sonata in two contrasting, and fully satisfying,

movements, which, he wrote to the Count, depict “a struggle between head and heart” and “a conversation with the beloved.” Perhaps so. But, more significantly, the unconventional two-movement form, juxtaposition of grandeur and intimacy, harmonic originality, fluency and cogency of thematic development, terseness of expression, lack of overt virtuosity, poignant lyricism, seamless absorption of contrapuntal textures and German-language performance rubrics mark this Sonata as an entry point into the remarkable period of creative renewal and discovery that Beethoven enjoyed during his last decade.

The main theme group of the Sonata’s opening movement (*Mit Lebhaftigkeit und durchaus mit Empfindung und Ausdruck*—“With liveliness and with feeling and expression throughout”) comprises several germ cells: a broken-off, two-measure fragment that hints of a dance; a quietly flowing phrase; a bold unison motive in rising open intervals; and a downward sweeping scale. The second subject (in the darkly expressive key of B minor), more agitated because of its broken-chord accompaniment, shadows the open-interval motive of the main theme, but in inversion. The development section superimposes variants of the first two motives of the main theme upon the broken-chord accompaniment of the second before a full recapitulation of the exposition’s materials brings formal balance and expressive closure to the movement. The second movement is headed “*Nicht zu geschwind und sehr singbar vorgetragen*” (“Not too quickly and very songfully”), and Hans von Bülow, the eminent 19th-century pianist, conductor and editor of Beethoven’s sonatas, thought that this poetic music perfectly balanced the “prose” of the opening movement. The movement is a rondo structured around what British composer and musicologist Sir Hubert Parry described as “the frequent and desirable returns of a melody of great beauty.”

Beethoven
Sonata No. 21 in C major, Op. 53,
“Waldstein”

Composed in 1804.

Beethoven's father, a singer at the Electoral court in Bonn, was an alcoholic, and much of the responsibility for supporting his family rested on Ludwig's shoulders by the time he was a teenager. The young musician, already bursting with promise and ambition, found understanding and encouragement from the family of Emanuel von Breuning, Court Councilor to the Elector Maximilian Franz. At the Breuning household, probably in 1788 (Beethoven was 18), he met Count Ferdinand von Waldstein, a close friend of the Elector, an amateur composer, a dedicated patron of the arts, and eight years Beethoven's senior. Waldstein, descendant of one of Austria's noblest families, became Beethoven's most important early patron, regularly encouraging Maximilian Franz to make improvements in his working conditions as organist at the Electoral court, discreetly granting some small financial aid (Beethoven, even at that tender age, would have rebelled at outright charity), making available to him a fine fortepiano, and commissioning the music for a Ritterballet (“Knight's Ballet”) for the Bonn Carnival season of 1791. When Beethoven moved to Vienna for good in 1792 (he had made an earlier foray in 1787, but had to hurry back to Bonn when he learned of the mortal illness of his mother), it was Waldstein who financed the venture. He sent the young composer off with an admonition to “receive the spirit of Mozart [who had died just months before] from the hands of Haydn,” which Beethoven did in a series of lessons with the recently retired Esterházy Kapellmeister. As a farewell memento, Beethoven wrote a set of variations for piano duet on a theme by Waldstein. Waldstein spent the years from 1795 to 1809 traveling and had little personal contact with his protégé, though he was instrumental in opening many doors of the

Viennese aristocracy to Beethoven. Waldstein's story ended sadly. A gambler and speculator, he ventured into dubious business dealings, was swindled, and lost his fortune. In 1816, he was forced to petition for bankruptcy, and died seven years later, a pauper. Beethoven's feelings for his Bonn Maecenas remained strong and positive throughout his life, however, and he immortalized Waldstein's name by inscribing the dedication of one of his greatest creations to him—the C major Piano Sonata he composed during the summer of 1804 in Döbling, an elegant suburb of Vienna nestled in the foothills of the Wienerwald north of the central city.

One of the characteristics of Beethoven's artistic maturation was an increasing concern with the overall proportions of his musical forms, a careful calculation of the relation, balance, and proportion of one movement to the next. He had originally composed a large set of variations to occupy the center of the “Waldstein” Sonata, but decided that the halcyon delicacy of that music diminished the vaulting heroism of the outer movements that he intended to be the essence of the work. He excised the movement, issued it separately as the *Andante Favori* in F major (WoO 57), and replaced it with a short, moody, harmonically advanced paragraph that is the perfect foil to the vigor and exultation of the surrounding movements. “If mountains, cliffs, and forests could sing,” wrote Hugo Leichtentritt of the opening *Allegro*, “they would praise their Creator in such tones as these.” The movement is in an extraordinary and daring sonata form that explores far-flung, emotionally expressive tonalities for its hymnal second theme so dramatically that the German scholar Paul Bekker noted that “a hitherto unknown world of sound was revealed” by this Sonata. The following *Adagio* proceeds without pause to the finale, a vast rondo built on a superb diatonic theme which is expounded with grandeur, confidence, and triumph.

© 2014 Dr. Richard E. Rodda

American pianist **Jonathan Biss** is widely regarded for his artistry, musical intelligence, and deeply felt interpretations, winning international recognition for his orchestral, recital, and chamber music performances and for his award-winning recordings. He performs a diverse repertoire ranging from Mozart and Beethoven, through the Romantics to Janáček and Schoenberg, as well as works by such contemporary composers as György Kurtág and including commissions from Leon Kirchner, Lewis Spratlan, Timo Andres, and Bernard Rands.

In the 2013–2014 season, Mr. Biss's orchestral engagements include the New York Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony, the Calgary Philharmonic, the San Antonio Symphony, the Rochester Philharmonic, the Seattle Symphony, NDR Hannover, the Swedish Chamber Orchestra, and Leipzig Gewandhaus, among others.

Mr. Biss continues to play in the major recital series in the United States and in Europe—he twice opened the Master Piano Series at the Concertgebouw, the Salzburg, Lucerne, and Edinburgh festivals, the Beethovenfest, Bonn, and the Mariinsky Concert Hall in St. Petersburg. Mr. Biss made his much anticipated Carnegie Hall recital début in January 2011 with a program of works by Beethoven, Schumann, Janáček, and a new work written for him by Bernard Rands. He continues to appear regularly at Carnegie Hall, and presented his second Stern Auditorium recital in January 2014.

In January 2012, Onyx Classics released the first CD in a nine-year, nine-disc recording cycle of Beethoven's complete sonatas. Mr. Biss wrote about this recording project and his relationship with Beethoven's music more generally in *Beethoven's Shadow*, an essay that was published electronically by RosettaBooks as a Kindle Single, available from Amazon.com. *Beethoven's Shadow* subsequently ranked as the bestselling music e-book title on Amazon in the United States and the United Kingdom. His next Kindle Single, *A*



Benjamin Edlovega

Pianist Under the Influence, was released shortly thereafter.

Mr. Biss's previous recordings include an album of Schubert's Sonatas in A major, D. 959, and C major, D. 840, and two short Kurtág pieces from *Játékok* that was released in October 2009 on the Wigmore Hall Live label and named by NPR Music as one of the best albums of the year. It follows four acclaimed recordings for EMI Classics, including an all-Schumann recital album, which won a Diapason d'Or de l'Année award, and a recital album of Beethoven Piano Sonatas Opp. 13, 28, 90, and 109, which received an Edison Award. With the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, he recorded Mozart's Piano Concertos Nos. 21 and 22 in a live performance. His first recording for EMI Classics was of works by Beethoven and Schumann in 2004 on EMI's Debut series.

At age 20, Mr. Biss made his New York recital début at the 92nd Street Y's Tisch Center for the Arts in 2000 and his New York Philharmonic debut under Kurt Masur that same season. Among the many conductors with whom he has worked are Marin Alsop, Daniel Barenboim, Herbert Blomstedt, James Conlon, Charles Dutoit, Bernard Haitink, James Levine, Lorin Maazel, Sir Neville Marriner, Andris

Nelsons, Antonio Pappano, Michael Tilson Thomas, Christoph von Dohnányi, Jirai Valcua, Ludovic Morlot, Robin Ticciati, and Pinchas Zukerman.

Mr. Biss represents the third generation in a family of professional musicians that includes his grandmother Raya Garbousova, one of the first well-known female cellists (for whom Samuel Barber composed his Cello Concerto), and his parents, violinist Miriam Fried and violist and violinist Paul Biss. Growing up surrounded by music, Mr. Biss began his piano studies at age six, and his first musical collaborations were with his mother and father. He studied at Indiana University with Evelyne Brancart and at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia with Leon Fleisher. In 2010 Mr. Biss was appointed to Curtis's piano faculty, and in September 2013 he and the Curtis Institute of Music partnered with Coursera—the leading provider of “massive online open

courses”—to offer a free, online course on Beethoven's piano sonatas. Over 30,000 people enrolled in the course, seven times the total number of students who have attended Curtis since the school opened its doors in October 1924.

Mr. Biss has been recognized with numerous awards, including the Leonard Bernstein Award presented at the 2005 Schleswig-Holstein Festival, Wolf Trap's Debut Artist Award, Lincoln Center's Martin E. Segal Award, an Avery Fisher Career Grant, the 2003 Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award, and the 2002 Gilmore Young Artist Award. He was an artist-in-residence on American Public Media's *Performance Today* and was the first American chosen to participate in the BBC's New Generation Artist program.

For more information about Mr. Biss and to read his blog about his life as a musician, go to www.jonathanbiss.com or visit his fan page on Facebook.