Wednesday, February 28, 2018, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Emanuel Ax, *piano*
Leonidas Kavakos, *violin*
Yo-Yo Ma, *cello*

Franz SCHUBERT (1797–1828) Piano Trio No. 1 in B-flat Major, D. 898
Allegro moderato
Andante un poco mosso
Scherzo. Allegro
Rondo. Allegro vivace

INTERMISSION

Johannes BRAHMS (1833–1897) Piano Trio No.1 in B Major, Op. 8
Allegro con brio
Scherzo: Allegro molto
Adagio
Finale: Allegro

Cal Performances' 2017–18 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

Opposite: Leonidas Kavakos, Emanuel Ax, and Yo-Yo Ma.
Photo by Shane McCauley.

Piano Trio No. 1 in B-flat Major, D. 898
Franz Schubert

On January 31, 1827, Franz Schubert turned 30 years old. He had been following a bohemian existence in Vienna for over a decade, making barely more than a pittance from the sale and performance of his works, and living largely by the generosity of his friends, a devoted band of music-lovers who rallied around his convivial personality and extraordinary talent. The pattern of Schubert's daily life was firmly established by that time: composition in the morning; long walks or visits in the afternoon; companionship for wine and song in the evening. The routine was broken by occasional trips into the countryside to stay with friends or families of friends—he visited Dombach, near the Vienna Woods, for several weeks in the spring of 1827 and Graz in September. A curious dichotomy marked Schubert's personality during those final years of his life, one well suited to the Romantic image of the inspired artist, rapt out of quotidian experience to carry back to benighted humanity some transcendent vision. "Anyone who had seen him only in the morning, in the throes of composition, his eyes shining, speaking, even, another language, will never forget it—though in the afternoon, to be sure, he became another person," recorded one friend. The duality in Schubert's character was reflected in the sharp swings of mood marking both his psychological makeup and his creative work. "If there were times, both in his social relationships and his art, when the Austrian character appeared all too violently in the vigorous and pleasure-loving Schubert," wrote his friend the dramatist Eduard von Bauernfeld, "there were also times when a black-winged demon of sorrow and melancholy forced its way into his vicinity; not altogether an evil spirit, it is true, since, in the dark concentrated hours, it often brought out songs of the most agonizing beauty." The ability to mirror his own fluctuating feelings in his compositions—the darkening cloud momentarily obscuring the bright sunlight—is one of Schubert's most remarkable and characteristic achievements, and touches indelibly the incomparable series of works—*Winterreise*, the *Great* C-Major Symphony, the last three piano sonatas, the String Quintet, the two piano trios, the *Impromptus*—that he created during the last months of his brief life.

Though there exists no documentary evidence concerning the provenance or purpose of the Piano Trio No. 1 in B-flat, it was apparently composed during the summer or early autumn of 1827; its companion, the Trio No. 2 in E-flat, was written quickly during the following November. Schubert himself assigned the works the consecutive opus numbers 99 and 100. These compositions, like many of the creations that cluster around them, show Schubert turning away from the modest song and keyboard genres that had occupied the center of his early work in favor of the grander instrumental forms with which he hoped to expand his reputation. It is likely that the Trio No. 2 was conceived with the expectation of introducing it at a public concert entirely of his own music planned for the following spring, but Schubert seems to have had no similar plans for the B-flat Trio. The only time he is known to have heard the piece was at a private gathering on January 28, 1828 at the home of his old friend Josef von Spaun to celebrate Spaun's engagement. Three of the best players in Vienna, the same ones who were to perform the E-flat Trio to excellent acclaim at the concert in March, took part—pianist Carl Maria von Bocklet (to whom Schubert dedicated the D-Major Piano Sonata, D. 850 and the Fantasy for Violin and Piano, D. 934), violinist Ignaz Schuppanzigh (noted for his interpretations of the quartets of Beethoven, who had died just months before this trio was composed), and cellist Josef Linke (a member of Schuppanzigh's quartet). When the performance had ended, Bocklet fell upon the composer with embraces and congratulations, and told him that the Viennese little realized what a treasure they had in him. Though Schubert took much trouble to get the E-flat Trio published, there is no indication of similar efforts concerning the Trio No. 1. It was not until 1836, eight years after the composer's death, that Diabelli issued the parts in Vienna. One of Schubert's earliest and staunchest champions, Robert Schumann, in a review for his journal, the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, wrote glowingly

of the two trios: "One glance at them—and the troubles of our human existence disappear and all the world is fresh and bright again." The trios have remained among the most popular and beloved of Schubert's creations, "the purest blend of the 'sociable' spirit with that of true chamber music," according to the distinguished scholar Alfred Einstein.

As are many of Schubert's instrumental works, the B-flat Trio has been accused of being prolix and overly long. Yet there is in the music of Schubert, perhaps the most easily lovable of all the great composers, not so much the sense of *longueurs* in his lengthy flights of wordless song as one of generosity, of an unstinting gift of the tones that welled up, day and night for his entire life, in his fertile imagination. Indeed, these works have delighted generations of music lovers precisely because the qualities of abundance and friendship and *joie de vivre* overshadow any faults of form or technique. The sense of conviviality and expressive bounty floods from the opening theme of the B-flat Trio, a sweeping melody for the strings that paraphrases Schubert's song "Des Sängers Habe" ("The Singer's Possession") of February 1825, whose text virtually summarizes his music-bound existence: "Shatter all my happiness in pieces, take from me all my worldly wealth, yet leave me only my zither and I shall still be happy and rich!" The piano's dotted-rhythm accompaniment to this theme provides material for the transition to the subsidiary subject, a lyrical inspiration sung by the cello above rippling piano triplets. Both themes figure in the development section. One of the marks of Schubert's Romantic stylistic tendencies was his wide-ranging, sometimes daring, use of unexpected tonalities to extend his music's emotional expression. This adventurous quality is here apparent in the surprising areas that the main theme is made to traverse—G-flat Major (violin) and E-flat minor (cello)—before the piano finally achieves the "proper" recapitulatory tonality of B-flat. This technique allows both the exploration of a glowing range of harmonic colors as well as several additional opportunities for Schubert to share his lovely melody. The second theme is reiterated by the violin before the movement works itself up to a dramatic climax, which is brought into perfect emotional balance by a brief, quiet coda.

The Andante is one of those creations of ravishing lyrical beauty that could have been conceived by no one but Schubert. Its outer sections, calm and almost nocturnal in expression, take as their theme a flowing cello melody that may be the most gentle of all barcarolles. An agitated, minor-key central section provides formal and emotional contrast. The Scherzo and Trio comprising the third movement juxtapose the two most popular Viennese dances of the day—the *Ländler* and the waltz, just the sort of thing that Schubert loved to improvise to accompany the dancing of his friends at their soirées. Schubert called the finale a "Rondo," but its theme returns with such extensive alterations that the movement's formal type is closer to a developmental sonata form than to the traditional refrain-based rondo structure. Here, also, Schubert hinted at the main theme in an earlier song, "Skolie" (1815): "Let us, in the bright May morning, take delight in the brief life of the flower, before its fragrance disappears." Robert Schumann closed his review of the trios thusly: "Let us accept these works as a precious legacy. However many and excellent the seeds of time may be, they will not soon produce another Schubert."

Piano Trio No. 1 in B Major, Op. 8
Johannes Brahms

In April 1853, the 20-year-old Johannes Brahms set out from his native Hamburg for a concert tour of Germany with the Hungarian violinist Eduard Reményi. The following month in Hanover they met the violinist Joseph Joachim, whom Brahms had heard give an inspiring performance of the Beethoven Concerto five years before in Hamburg. That summer, Brahms and Joachim spent eight weeks together at Göttingen, discussing music, studying scores, playing chamber works, and setting the foundation for a creative friendship that lasted for almost half a century. Joachim learned of Brahms' desire to take a walking tour through the Rhine Valley, and he arranged a joint recital to raise enough money to finance the trip. Along with the pro-

ceeds of the gate, Joachim gave Brahms as a parting gift several letters of introduction, including one to Robert and Clara Schumann in Düsseldorf. On the last day of September 1853, Brahms met the Schumanns for the first time. "Here is one of those who comes as if sent straight from God," Clara recorded in her diary. The friendship was immediate and unstinting. Schumann hailed Brahms as "the new Orpheus" in his editorial for the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* in October, making the young composer a celebrity in the German musical community almost overnight. It was with immense pride that he displayed Schumann's article to family and friends upon his return to Hamburg for the Christmas holiday.

Filled with zeal and ideas by his soaring fortunes of 1853 (during which he also met Liszt, Berlioz, and Hans von Bülow), Brahms visited Joachim in Hanover to celebrate the New Year, and there he began the B-Major Trio for Piano, Violin, and Cello. When Clara and Robert arrived in town for some concert engagements at the end of January, Brahms said that that week consisted of "high festival days, which make you really live." The work was completed soon after the Schumanns went home to Düsseldorf. It was only shortly thereafter, however, on February 27th, that Robert, long troubled by severe nervous disorders, tried to drown himself in the River Rhine. Brahms rushed to Düsseldorf immediately, and a week later helped Clara admit him to the asylum at Endenich, near Bonn; Schumann never left the place, and died there on July 29, 1856. Amid such triumphs and tears began the complex relationship between Brahms and Clara that was the emotional core of their existence for the rest of their days. Despite the turmoil of her life during her husband's final months, Clara continued her professional career as one of the day's leading concert pianists (her appearances were the principal financial support for her six children), and acted as spur, confidante, and critic of Brahms' creative efforts. She judged the new trio worthy of her recommendation to Breitkopf und Härtel for their publication, and they issued the score in November 1854. It was the first chamber work of Brahms to appear in print (he had destroyed at least three earlier pieces in the form), and remained the only one until the String Sextet, Op. 18, was published eight years later. Though the work was well received and quickly became part of the German household musical literature, its formal premiere took place, surprisingly, at Dodsworth's Hall in New York City. The pianist William Mason, son of the American educationist Lowell Mason, was a student in Weimar at the time Brahms met Liszt there, and he followed the young composer's development with considerable interest. Mason obtained a copy of the B-Major Trio upon its publication, enlisted the assistance of violinist Theodore Thomas and cellist Carl Bergmann (both of whom were to leave indelible marks upon 19th-century American musical life as conductors), and, on November 27, 1855 gave the first important performance of music by Brahms in this country. According to Florence May, the composer's student and biographer, the European premiere was in Breslau three weeks later.

In its original form, the Trio in B Major is perhaps Brahms' most unabashedly Romantic creation, revealing, according to Richard Specht's voluptuous description, "the whole twenty-year-old composer with all his inner stress, his fullness of heart, his ardent longing; all the apprehension, pride, restraint, and expectation of a soul in flower." Brahms headed the manuscript "Kreisler junior," a reference to E.T.A. Hoffmann's quirky fictional *Kapellmeister*, whose unexpected turns of phrase and action and constitutional impetuosity were highly prized by the Schumann circle. (One of Schumann's best piano cycles, *Kreisleriana*, Op. 16, of 1838, was inspired by Hoffmann's character.) Half a life later, in 1889, Brahms re-evaluated the trio for a complete edition of his works then being contemplated by Simrock, and found that the prolixity and unbuttoned Romanticisms of his original no longer pleased him as they had in 1854, so he undertook a complete renovation of the score: second themes were rewritten, entire paragraphs were excised or abbreviated, formal structures were tightened. From his vacation retreat at Bad Ischl in the Austrian Salzkammergut, Brahms wrote to Clara on Sep-

tember 3, 1889, "With what childish amusement I whiled away the beautiful summer days you will never guess. I have rewritten my B-Major Trio…. It will not be as wild as before—but will it be better?" Simrock issued the revised score in February 1891, but Brahms did not formally withdraw the original, allowing both versions to exist, thereby providing a rare glimpse into the compositional workshop of this most secretive of the great composers.

A broad and stately piano melody opens the B-Major Trio. The cello and then the violin are drawn into the unfolding of this lyrical inspiration, which mounts to an almost orchestral climax before quieting to make way for the second theme, given in unison by the strings. A triplet motive, introduced as the transition linking the exposition's two themes, serves as the underpinning for much of the development section. A truncated recapitulation of the earlier thematic material rounds out the movement. The second movement is shadowy and mysterious and sometimes dramatic, a spiritual descendant of the Scherzo in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony; a central trio in warm, close harmonies provides contrast. The Adagio uses a hymnal dialogue between piano and strings as the main material of the outer sections of the movement, while the middle region is more intense and animated in expression and more complex in counterpoint. The finale juxtaposes a somber main theme, begun by the cello above the agitated accompaniment of the piano, with a brighter subsidiary subject, played by the piano while the cello contributes little off-beat punctuations. It is the unsettled, B-minor main theme rather than the more optimistic second subject that draws the work to its restless close.

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

EMANUEL AX, *piano*

Born in modern-day Lvov, Poland, Emanuel Ax moved to Winnipeg, Canada, with his family when he was a young boy. He is a winner of the Young Concert Artist Award, Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Competition, Michaels Award, and the Avery Fisher Prize.

In partnership with David Robertson, Ax began the current season with six Mozart concertos over two weeks in St. Louis, repeating the project in Sydney earlier this month. Following the gala opening of the Philadelphia Orchestra's season he returns to the orchestras in Cleveland, New York, San Francisco, Boston, Houston, Ottawa, Toronto, Indianapolis, and Pittsburgh, and to Carnegie Hall for a recital to conclude the season. In Europe he can be heard in Stockholm, Vienna, Paris, London, and on tour with the Budapest Festival Orchestra. His current tour of the US with colleagues Leonidas Kavakos and Yo-Yo Ma supports the recent release of their disc of Brahms Trios for SONY.

Always a committed exponent of contemporary composers, with works written for him by John Adams, Christopher Rouse, Krzysztof Penderecki, Bright Sheng, and Melinda Wagner already in his repertoire, Ax most recently has added HK Gruber's Piano Concerto and Samuel Adams' *Impromptus*. A frequent and committed partner for chamber music, he has worked regularly with such artists as Young Uck Kim, Cho-Liang Lin, Ma, Edgar Meyer, Peter Serkin, Jaime Laredo, and the late Isaac Stern.

Ax resides in New York City with his wife, pianist Yoko Nozaki, with whom he has two children. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and holds honorary doctorates of music from Yale and Columbia Universities.

LEONIDAS KAVAKOS, *violin*

Greek violinist Leonidas Kavakos is recognized as an artist of rare quality, known for his virtuosity, superb musicianship, and the integrity of his playing. By age 21, Kavakos had won three major competitions: the 1985 Sibelius Competition, and the 1988 Paganini and Naumburg competitions. He was the first to record the original Sibelius Violin Concerto (1903–04), which won the 1991 *Gramophone* Concerto of

the Year Award. Over the years Kavakos has developed close relationships with some of the most prestigious orchestras and conductors. This season, he is artist-in-residence at both the Concertgebouw and the Vienna Musikverein. Kavakos is an exclusive artist with Decca Classics. Recent recordings include *Virtuoso* (2016), Brahms Violin Sonatas with Yuja Wang (2014), the Brahms Violin Concerto with the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig and Riccardo Chailly (2013), and the complete Beethoven Violin Sonatas with Enrico Pace (2013). He recorded the Brahms Trios with Emanuel Ax and Yo-Yo Ma, released on Sony Classical in September 2017. Kavakos is the 2017 winner of the Léonie Sonning Music Prize, and *Gramophone* Artist of the Year 2014. He plays the 'Willemotte' Stradivarius violin of 1734.

YO-YO MA, *cello*

Yo-Yo Ma's multifaceted career is testament to his enduring belief in culture's power to generate trust and understanding. Whether performing new or familiar works from the cello repertoire, collaborating with communities and institutions to explore culture's social impact, or engaging unexpected musical forms, Ma strives to foster connections that stimulate the imagination and reinforce our humanity.

Ma founded Silkroad to promote cross-cultural performance and collaborations at the edge where education, business, and the arts come together to transform the world. He is a member of the Silkroad Ensemble, which tours annually and for whom more than 80 works have been specifically commissioned. Ma also serves as the Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Negaunee Music Institute. His work focuses on the transformative power music can have in individuals' lives, and on increasing the number and variety of opportunities audiences have to experience music in their communities.

Ma was born in Paris to Chinese parents who later moved the family to New York. He began to study cello at the age of four, attended the Juilliard School, and in 1976 graduated from Harvard University. He has received numerous awards, among them the Avery Fisher Prize (1978), the National Medal of Arts (2001), and the Presidential Medal of Freedom (2010). In 2011 Ma was recognized as a Kennedy Center Honoree. Most recently, he has joined the Aspen Institute Board of Trustees. Ma has performed for eight American presidents, most recently at the invitation of President Obama on the occasion of the 56th Inaugural Ceremony.

For more information, please visit www.yo-yoma.com, www.silkroad.org, and www.opus3-artists.com.

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