

Sunday, December 12, 2010, 3pm
Hertz Hall

Nicolas Hodges, *piano*

PROGRAM

Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928–2007) Klavierstück X (1954–1961)

INTERMISSION

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) Piano Sonata No. 29 in B-flat major, Op. 106,
“Hammerklavier” (1817–1818)

Allegro
Scherzo: Assai vivace
Adagio sostenuto
Introduzione: Largo — Fuga: Allegro risoluto

*Funded by the Koret Foundation, this performance is part of Cal Performances’
2010–2011 Koret Recital Series, which brings world-class artists to our community.*

Cal Performances’ 2010–2011 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

Q & A with NICOLAS HODGES

TO HEAR CLASSICAL AND MODERN masterpieces performed together on single program is a way to gain special insights into both, and the idea of the mixed recital is important to Cal Performances’ programming philosophy. Nicolas Hodges’s recital pairs Stockhausen’s *Klavierstück X* (“Piano Piece No. 10,” 1954–1961) with Beethoven’s Piano Sonata No. 29 in B-flat major, Op. 106 (1817–1818), known colloquially as the “Hammerklavier.” This concert is the second mixed recital on our season, after pianist Jeremy Denk’s juxtaposition of Ligeti’s *Études* and Bach’s “Goldberg” Variations (October 24). Later in the season, we feature concerts pairing works old and new by the Scharoun Ensemble Berlin (March 6) and pianist Joyce Yang (March 20).

We spoke with Nicolas Hodges about the works on this afternoon’s program, how he chose them, and his collaboration with Stockhausen.

Q. Karlheinz Stockhausen’s Piano Piece No. 10 and Beethoven’s “Hammerklavier” Sonata are among the most formidable compositions for piano. What about these monumental works appeals to you most, and why have you chosen to present them together this afternoon?

A. I guess I am quite unusual in discovering such works of the modern and classical eras at the same time, but for some reason that’s how it always happened. I first discovered Stockhausen—his Piano Piece No. 9—before my tenth birthday, not long after I played my first Beethoven Sonata. The “Hammerklavier” and Stockhausen’s Piano Piece No. 10 I discovered some years later, in my teens. I remember the visceral excitement that resulted from my first hearings at that time, and the deepening fascination borne of studying the works at the piano as a student a few years later. Both are passionate, complex, complicated and infinitely rich works, with deep roots in the instrument’s sound and possibilities. I love them both.

Q. The “Hammerklavier” is often considered to be Beethoven’s most difficult sonata to perform, and Piano Piece No. 10—like all of Stockhausen’s

works for piano—contains some of the most demanding music written for the instrument. What special interpretive challenges, if any, are presented by such technically exacting works as these?

A. Difficulty is overrated. The idea that by having a lot of notes in it a piece gains significance is obviously erroneous. In fact, I am convinced more and more as I get older that *all* music (all *great* music, I mean) is equally difficult—regardless of whether it is the simplicity of Mozart, the perfume of Debussy, the counterpoint of Schoenberg or the *cantabile* of Schubert. The area of difficulty moves, perhaps, to somewhere less obvious—but it is all equally difficult, if it is worth playing at all.

The challenges of this afternoon’s pieces are not really unique in their nature, only in their scale—and by that I mean not just size but also range. The range of emotions in the “Hammerklavier” Sonata is huge, and to balance the exuberance of the opening movement, intensity of the slow movement, and the rigor and nobility of the last movement—with Scherzo as “joker”—is to balance a handful of hugely varied movements. Likewise, the explosive opening of the Stockhausen leads to many varied byways, pools of resonance, florid melodic figures and brutal put-downs, which all have to be woven together and balanced—from the inside out. The joy of this extreme range is that the alchemical result of this experiment—and both pieces are, at heart, very modern and experimental works—is so satisfying and at the same time so open.

Q. In the course of your work with Stockhausen, did you have an opportunity to discuss this particular piece with him, and did he offer direction in its interpretation?

A. The last time I saw Stockhausen, at a concert in London, he urged me to perform Piano Piece No. 10 in public. I wish I had been able to work with him on it first, but he passed away before that was possible. My performances now have ended up, therefore, as a sort of tribute to him—as a person, and as the genius on the cover of *Sgt. Pepper’s*.

PIANIST NICOLAS HODGES was born in London in 1970. One of the most exciting performers of his generation, Mr. Hodges has captivated audiences worldwide with his interpretations of classical, romantic, 20th century and contemporary repertoire, leading *The Guardian* to comment, “Hodges’s recitals always boldly go where few other pianists dare...with an energy that sometimes defies belief.”

Mr. Hodges’s concerto engagements have included performances with the Chicago Symphony, MET Orchestra, BBC Symphony, BBC Scottish Symphony, Philharmonia of London, City of Birmingham Symphony, Bamberger Symphoniker, WDR Symphony, SWR Symphony Freiburg/Baden-Baden, Helsinki Philharmonic, Tokyo Philharmonic, London Sinfonietta, Basel Sinfonietta and ASKO/Schoenberg Ensemble Amsterdam, under such conductors as Daniel Barenboim, Martyn Brabbins, Hans Graf, Oliver Knussen, James Levine, Diego Masson, Jonathan Nott, David Robertson, Pascal Rophé, Peter Rundel, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Leonard Slatkin, Tadaaki Otaka, Pierre-André Valade and Hans Zender. He has been featured at many European festivals, including Witten, Darmstadt, Berlin, Luzern, Paris (Festival d’Automne), Innsbruck (Klangspuren), Brussels (Ars Musica), Zurich (Tage für Neue Musik) and Vienna (Wien Modern); at all the major UK festivals, including the BBC PROMS; in Scandinavia, Japan (Suntory Hall) and the United States, including Carnegie and Alice Tully halls in New York and Orchestra Hall in Chicago.

Recent and upcoming highlights include his recital debut at Carnegie Hall; his critically acclaimed debut with the New York Philharmonic under David Robertson; and subscription debuts with the Boston Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the San Francisco Symphony. Mr. Hodges has also recently performed with the St. Louis Symphony, the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, the London Philharmonic, the Orquesta y Coro Nacionales de España, the Philharmonie Luxembourg and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. He will premiere Thomas Adès’s *Concerto in Seven Days* at the Royal Festival Hall in London, subsequently



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performing it in the Los Angeles Philharmonic’s “Green Umbrella” series and with the Netherlands Radio Symphony, all under the composer’s direction. He also continues to appear at music festivals throughout the world, including Tanglewood, Edinburgh, the Dialogues Festival in Salzburg and the Melbourne International Arts Festival.

In addition to his performances of the standard repertoire, exemplified both in concerto and mixed recital programs (such as this afternoon’s pairing of Beethoven and Stockhausen), Mr. Hodges’s commitment to contemporary music is second to none. Elliott Carter’s concerto *Dialogues*, commissioned by the BBC, was written for Mr. Hodges. After its premiere with the London Sinfonietta under Knussen, Mr. Hodges recorded the concerto for Bridge Records. He subsequently gave the U.S. premiere with the Chicago Symphony under Barenboim and returned to give the New York premiere with the MET Chamber Ensemble under Levine (followed the next season by a repeat with the MET Orchestra and Levine at Carnegie Hall). His many other performances of the work, with numerous orchestras and conductors, have included the French, Japan, Spanish, Portuguese and Netherlands premieres. As *The Financial Times* put it, “Hodges virtually owns the piece.”

Mr. Hodges maintains close relationships with many of today’s most important composers.

Those who have written works for him include Harrison Birtwistle, Wolfgang Rihm, Salvatore Sciarrino and Beat Furrer, and he also had close working relationships with John Adams, Brian Ferneyhough, Jonathan Harvey, Oliver Knussen, Helmut Lachenmann, Olga Neuwirth, Per Nørgård and the late Mauricio Kagel and Karlheinz Stockhausen. A committed teacher, he educates young pianists particularly in the relationship between the performance of standard repertoire and contemporary works; he also works with young composers, attempting to demystify the complexities of writing for the piano.

An energetic recording artist, Mr. Hodges has released more than 20 CDs to wide critical acclaim, including works of Adams on Nonesuch, Carter on Bridge and Gershwin on Metronome.

Nicolas Hodges is represented by Opus 3 Artists. This afternoon’s concert is his West Coast recital debut.