Emanuel Ax, piano
Anne Sofie von Otter, mezzo-soprano

PROGRAM

Brahms and Beyond

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)
Erlaube mir, feins Mädchen,
WoO33, No. 2 (1893–1894)
Es wohnet ein Fiedler, WoO33, No. 36
(1893–1894)
Ach, und du mein kühles Wasser!,
Op. 85, No. 3 (1878)

Tor Aulin (1866–1914)
Til en ros (1903)

Brahms
Da unten im Tale, WoO33, No. 6 (1893–1894)

Brahms
Intermezzo in A major, Op. 118, No. 2 (1893)

Brahms
Auf dem Kirchhofe, Op. 105, No. 4 (1888)
Es schauen die Blumen alle,
Op. 96, No. 3 (1885)
Sommerabend, Op. 85, No. 1 (1878)
Juchhe!, Op. 6, No. 4 (1852)
Von ewiger Liebe, Op. 43, No. 1 (1864)
Ständchen, Op. 106, No. 1 (1888)

INTERMISSION

Missy Mazzoli (b. 1980) Bolts of Loving Thunder (2013)*

* Commissioned by Cal Performances; the Los Angeles Philharmonic;
Symphony Center Presents, Chicago; and Carnegie Hall.

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Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

**Songs**

Though Brahms is most widely famed as an instrumental composer, more than half of his opus numbers are devoted to vocal works—solo songs, song cycles, duets, quartets, cantatas, folksong arrangements, canons, psalms, and choral pieces, both accompanied and unaccompanied. He was greatly experienced regarding vocal performance, appearing frequently as piano accompanist in song recitals and conducting choruses in Germany and in Vienna with great success, and his texted music is rooted directly in the sound and nature of the human voice. (Choral conducting was the only vocation at which he ever held a regular job.) Brahms’s output of original solo songs totaled nearly 200 separate items to texts by some 60 authors; his folksong arrangements add half again that number of pieces to his catalog. These compositions span his career, from the early Op. 6 Songs, created when he was only 20, to the final set of folksongs, issued three years before his death. Though these songs cover a wide stylistic and expressive spectrum, they have in common several characteristics: the primacy of the voice and the melodic line, a quality grown from Brahms’s lifelong infatuation with the directness and lyricism of folksong; the use of the piano to provide a richly harmonized counterpoint to the melody; clarity of form; integration of lyricism of folksong; the use of the piano to provide a richly harmonized counterpoint to the melody; integration of vocal and accompaniment; and a generally conservative idiom. As may be surmised from this stylistic litany, Brahms’s chief concern in his songs was musical and expressive, not poetic or philosophical. He held that the more perfect the poem, the less chance there was for music to enhance it. The literary quality of the verses that he chose was therefore less important to him than their ability to inspire music, and the names of Goethe, Eichendorff, Rückert, and Mörike fare poorly numerically against those of Geibel, Daumer, Hebbel, and Flemming among his works. Still, Brahms is among the most highly regarded practitioners of the 19th-century Lied, equaled in this genre only by Schubert, Schumann, and Wolf. “While Brahms does not contribute markedly to intensifying the ideals of musico-poetic relationships in the Romantic era,” summarized Donald Ivey in his survey of the art song, “he most assuredly does make a significant contribution to the repertory of song.”

Tor Aulin (1866–1914)

**Til en ros**

*Composed in 1903.*

Tor Aulin, one of Sweden’s leading violinists, conductors and composers in the decades surrounding the turn of the 20th century, was born in Stockholm in 1866 and studied at the Swedish Royal Academy of Music from 1877 to 1883 (violin with C. J. Lindberg and theory with Conrad Nordqvist) and in Berlin from 1884 to 1886 (violin with Émile Sauret, composition with Philipp Scharwenka). Aulin worked as an orchestral violinist upon his return to Sweden, and in 1887 he founded the Aulin Quartet, which for the next 25 years toured Scandinavia and northern Europe playing not only the established string quartet repertory (especially the works of Beethoven) but also compositions by Berwald, Grieg, Sjögren, Stenhammar, and other Scandinavian composers. (Stenhammar was often a guest pianist with the quartet.) In 1889, Aulin was appointed concertmaster of the Swedish Royal Orchestra, a position he occupied until 1902, when he left to devote himself to conducting and composition. From 1902 to 1909, he was conductor of the Stockholm Concert Society, which he helped found, and then served as music director of the Göteborg Orchestra for three years. He died in the Stockholm suburb of Saltsjöbaden in March 1914.

*Til en ros* (“To a Rose”) is one of the *Fyra serbiska folksånger* (“Four Serbian Folk Songs”) of 1903 that Aulin based on texts from a collection of *Songs of the Serbs*, published by the Bohemian-born Austrian writer Siegfried Kapper in 1852.

Brahms

**Piano Works, Opp. 117 and 118**

*Composed in 1892–1893.*

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 première 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, nearly 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; the Scherzo in E-flat minor, Op. 4; and the 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 116–119. 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.”

Missy Mazzoli (b. 1980)

**Bolts of Loving Thunder**

*Composed in 2013. Premiered on January 5, 2014, at the University of Denver by Emanuel Ax.*

Missy Mazzoli is a gifted artist of wide-ranging talents whose works, according to her publisher, the distinguished New York firm of G. Schirmer, “reflect a trend among composers of her generation to combine styles, writing music for the omnivorous audiences of the 21st century.” Mazzoli was born in 1980 in the Philadelphia suburb of Abington, and studied at Boston University, Yale University School of Music, and Royal Conservatory of the Hague; her composition teachers included Louis Andriessen, Martijn Padding, Richard Ayres, David Lang, Martin Bresnick, Aaron Jay Kernis, Charles Fussell, Richard Cornell, Martin Amlin, and John Harbison. Mazzoli taught composition at Yale in 2006 before serving for the next three years as Executive Director of the MATA Festival in New York, an organization dedicated to promoting the work of young composers; in 2010, she was appointed to the faculty of New York’s Mannes College of Music. She was a Composer-Educator Partner with the Albany Symphony in 2011–2012 and currently holds residencies with Opera Philadelphia, Gotham Chamber Opera and Music Theatre Group. She is also active internationally as a pianist, and often performs with...
There are many other Brahmsian allusions as well. Brilliantly activated arpeggios and widely spaced chords (with some hand-crossing) accompany the sensuous reverie of the first lyric. Muhly supports the longer quasi-strophic poem with an ostinato bass and prominent three-against-two cross rhythms. Cross-relations abound in the ghastly, fluttering introduction to the final lyric, which gives the work its title and reconnects with the opening in sound and attitude, while pressing its harmonically-modal ambiguities to a faded conclusion at once logical, surprising, and utterly apt.

Brahms

Zigeunerlieder, Op. 103


According to an old Hungarian saying, “Give a Magyar peasant a glass of water and a Gypsy fiddler, and he will become completely drunk.” So it is not surprising that when Kossuth and his Hungarian forces rose up in 1848 against the domination of their homeland by Austria, their ardor was reinforced by the sound of fiery Gypsy music played by Ede Reményi, a young violinist whose politics were as radical as his performances were inspired. Reményi was exiled for his participation in that unsuccessful coup, and he packed his fiddle and his chauvinism off to America for a time.

Returning to Europe in 1852, Reményi met a young pianist in Hamburg named Johannes Brahms, and the two lit out on foot to dazzle the world with their music. The hit of their programs was the traditional Magyar music that Reményi played “with a fire and abandon that excited his hearers to a wild enthusiasm,” according to one contemporary report. Brahms took part by improvising the accompaniments. They traveled mostly through villages and byways, where they added to their repertory by watching the peasants sing and dance. Despite a certain success as a team, however, the differences between the quiet, conservative Brahms and the flamboyant, revolutionary Reményi drove the two apart less than three months after they started their tour.

The seed planted by Reményi’s playing and the enthusiastic music-making of the country villagers, however, stayed firmly rooted in Brahms’s mind, and it later bloomed in such Gypsy-inspired compositions as the finale of the Violin Concerto, the closing movement of the G minor Piano Quartet (Op. 25), the Hungarian Dances, and the eleven Zigeunerlieder for Vocal Quartet and Piano—“Gypsy Songs”—that he wrote during the winter of 1887–1888. The music of the Zigeunerlieder is original with Brahms, but the texts were derived from Hungarian folk songs polished into rhyming German by the Viennese businessman and journalist Hugo Conrat, who frequently hosted the composer at his household musical soirées; Conrat based his finished versions on translations done by the Hungarian-born governess of his three daughters, one Fräulein Witzl. The Zigeunerlieder were introduced informally at one of Conrat’s gatherings (before the performance began, Brahms led the modest Fräulein Witzl into the room, announced that she was the “originator” of the songs, and invited her to listen), and given their public première on October 31, 1888, at the Berlin Singakademie; Simrock published the score that same month. Brahms was pleased with what he termed “this excessively gay stuff,” and he immediately sent a copy of the score to Clara Schumann, his lifelong friend and confidante, who replied, “I am quite delighted with them. How original they are, how full of freshness, charm and passion.... Let me press your hand, dear giver of joys.” Clara’s comments echoed public sentiment, and the popularity of the Zigeunerlieder encouraged Brahms to make a version of eight of them for solo voice and piano in 1889 (he omitted Nos. 8–10), and to write four more such numbers for quartet in 1892, which he included in his Op. 112 Six Quartets.
Born in Lvov, Poland, Emanuel Ax moved to Winnipeg, Canada, with his family when he was a young boy. His studies at the Juilliard School were supported by the sponsorship of the Epstein Scholarship Program of the Boys Clubs of America, and he subsequently won the Young Concert Artists Award. Additionally, he attended Columbia University, where he majored in French. Mr. Ax captured public attention in 1974 when he won the first Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Competition in Tel Aviv. In 1975, he won the Michaels Award of Young Concert Artists, followed four years later by the coveted Avery Fisher Prize.

Mr. Ax’s 2013–2014 season began with appearances at the Barbican Centre and Lincoln Center with the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Bernard Haitink, as well as collaborations with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and Mariiss Jansons in Amsterdam, Bucharest, China, and Japan during their worldwide centenary celebrations. The second half of the season sees the realization of a project inspired by Brahms, which includes new pieces from composers Missy Mazzoli, Nico Muhly, Brett Dean, and Anders Hillborg all producing works linked to Brahms and commissioned jointly between the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Cal Performances, the Chicago Symphony, and Carnegie Hall, with the participation of collaborators Anne Sophie von Otter and Yo-Yo Ma. To conclude the season, Mr. Ax travels to Hong Kong and Australia for a complete cycle of Beethoven concertos with incoming chief conductor David Robertson in Sydney and with Sir Andrew Davis in Melbourne.

In conjunction with Mr. Ax’s multiple weeks as Artist in Residence with the New York Philharmonic during the 2012–2013 season, Sony Classical released his latest recital disc of works from Haydn to Schumann to Copland reflecting their different uses of the “variation” concept. In the spring, he joined that orchestra on their European tour conducted by Alan Gilbert. He returned to the orchestras in Los Angeles, St. Louis, Atlanta, Detroit, Washington, and Pittsburgh, where he is a beloved regular.

Highlights of the 2011–2012 season included return visits to the symphonies of Boston, Houston, Toronto, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Cincinnati; the New York and Los Angeles philharmonics; and the San Francisco Symphony, with whom he collaborated in the “American Mavericks” festival presented in San Francisco, Ann Arbor, and at Carnegie Hall. As curator and participant with the Chicago Symphony for “Keys to the City,” a two-week spring residency, he performed multiple rôles as leader and collaborator in a festival celebrating the many varied facets of the piano.

Mr. Ax has been an exclusive Sony Classical recording artist since 1987. His recent releases include Mendelssohn trios with Mr. Ma and Itzhak Perlman, Strauss’s Enoch Arden narrated by Patrick Stewart, and discs of two-piano music by Brahms and Rachmaninoff with Yefim Bronfman. Mr. Ax received Grammy Awards for the second and third volumes of his cycle of Haydn’s piano sonatas. He has also made a series of Grammy-winning recordings with Mr. Ma of the Beethoven and Brahms sonatas for cello and piano. His other recordings include the concertos of Liszt and Schoenberg, three solo Brahms albums, an album of tangos by Ástor Piazzolla, and the première recording of John Adams’s Century Rolls with the Cleveland Orchestra for Nonesuch. In the 2004–2005 season, Mr. Ax also contributed to an International Emmy Award-winning BBC documentary commemorating the Holocaust that aired on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

In recent years, Mr. Ax has turned his attention toward the music of 20th-century composers, premiering works by John Adams, Christopher Rouse, Krzysztof Penderecki, Bright Sheng, and Melinda Wagner. Mr. Ax is also devoted to chamber music, and has worked regularly with such artists as Young Uck Kim, Cho-Liang Lin, Mr. Ma, Edgar Meyer, Peter Serkin, Jaime Laredo, and the late Isaac Stern.

Mr. Ax resides in New York City with his wife, pianist Yoko Nozaki. They have two children together, Joseph and Sarah. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and holds honorary doctorates of music from Yale and Columbia universities.

Mr. Ax is managed exclusively by Opus 3 Artists, 470 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016, www.opus3artists.com. He plays the Steinway piano. For more information, please visit www.emanuelax.com.
Opera House, Bayerische Staatsoper, Opéra National de Paris, and the Wiener Staatsoper. She also performed the role as part of a series of engagements with James Levine and the Metropolitan Opera, and in Japan under Carlos Kleiber (available on DVD). Other seminal opera recordings include Le nozze di Figaro under Mr. Levine; Idomeneo, La clemenza di Tito, and Orfeo ed Euridice under John Eliot Gardiner; Handel’s Ariodante and Hercules under Marc Minkowski; and Ariadne auf Naxos under Giuseppe Sinopoli.

Recent opera highlights have included Clytemnestre (Iphigenie en Aulide) in Pierre Audi’s production for De Nederlandse Opera, conducted by Mr. Minkowski (available on DVD); Geneviève (Pelléas et Mélisande) under Philippe Jordan for Opéra National de Paris (available on DVD); Countess Geschwitz (Lulu) at the Metropolitan Opera, conducted by Fabio Luisi; and her role début in Charpentier’s Médée for Oper Frankfurt. She appeared in Giulio Cesare at the 2012 Salzburg Festival with an all-star cast that included Cecilia Bartoli and Andreas Scholl. This season, she appears in Christoph Marthaler’s production of Les contes d’Hoffmann at Madrid’s Teatro Real, in Götterdämmerung at Deutsche Oper Berlin under Sir Simon Rattle, and in The Rake’s Progress at Theater an der Wien under Michael Boder. The diversity of this ever-evolving repertoire has played a key role in sustaining her international reputation as an operatic force.

A busy concert schedule takes Ms. von Otter to all corners of the globe. Last season, she appeared with the Berlin Philharmonic under Sir Simon Rattle, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra under David Robertson, the New York Philharmonic under Alan Gilbert, the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Daniele Gatti, Washington’s National Symphony Orchestra under Christoph Eschenbach, and the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra under Sakari Oramo. She performed Wesendonck Lieder with Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse under Mr. Minkowski and with the hr-Sinfonieorchester Frankfurt under Paavo Järvi, as part of the Wagner bicentenary. In 2011, she appeared with Jonas Kaufmann and the Berlin Philharmonic conducted by Claudio Abbado for a televised performance of Das Lied von der Erde on the 100th anniversary of Mahler’s death.

Current season concert highlights include a European recital tour to accompany the release of Douce France and a U.S. recital tour with Emanuel Ax performing Brahms plus a new work by Nico Muhly. She performs Sibelius songs with the Minnesota Orchestra under Osmo Vänskä, Die sieben Todsünden and songs by Weill with Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France with HK Gruber, and she gives a special New Year’s Eve performance with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin at the Tempodrom in Berlin.

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