Sunday, January 24, 2016, 3pm
Hertz Hall

The Complete Piano Sonatas of Sergei Prokofiev
(1891–1953)

Yefim Bronfman
Piano

PROKOFIEV Sonata No. 1 in F minor, Op. 1
Allegro
Meno mosso
Piu mosso
Menu mosso

PROKOFIEV Sonata No. 2 in D minor, Op. 14
Allegro, ma non troppo
Scherzo: Allegro marcato
Andante
Vivace

PROKOFIEV Sonata No. 3 in A minor, Op. 28
Allegro tempestoso
Moderato
Allegro tempestoso
Moderato
Più lento
Più animato
Allegro I
Poco più mosso

Intermission

PROKOFIEV Sonata No. 4 in C minor, Op. 29
Allegro molto sostenuto
Andante assai
Allegro con brio, ma non leggiere

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Cal Performances

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

Friday, March 4, 2016, 8pm
Hertz Hall

The Complete Piano Sonatas of Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953)

Yefim Bronfman
Piano

PROKOFIEV Sonata No. 6 in A major, Op. 82

Allegro moderato
Allegretto
Tempo di valzer lentissimo
Vivace

Intermission

PROKOFIEV Sonata No. 5 in C major, Op. 38

Allegro tranquillo
Andantino
Un poco allegretto

PROKOFIEV Sonata No. 7 in B-flat major, Op. 83

Allegro inquieto
Andante caloroso
Precipitato

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Cal Performances

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

Sunday, March 6, 2016, 3pm
Hertz Hall

The Complete Piano Sonatas of Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953)

Yefim Bronfman
Piano

PROKOFIEV Sonata No. 9 in C major, Op. 103

Allegretto dolce
Allegro strepitoso
Andante tranquillo
Allegro con brio, ma non troppo presto

Intermission

PROKOFIEV Sonata No. 8 in B-flat major, Op. 84

Andante dolce
Andante sognando
Vivace

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Internationally recognized as one of today's most acclaimed and admired pianists, **Yefim Bronfman** stands among a handful of artists regularly sought by festivals, orchestras, conductors, and recital series. His commanding technique, power, and exceptional lyrical gifts are consistently acknowledged by the press and audiences alike. At the center of the current season is Mr. Bronfman's residency with the Staatskapelle Dresden which includes all the Beethoven concerti, conducted by Christian Thielemann, in Dresden and on tour in Europe. Mr. Bronfman will also be performing Bartok concerti with the London Symphony Orchestra and Valery Gergiev in Edinburgh, London, Vienna, Luxembourg, and New York. Recital performances will capture audiences with complete cycles of the daunting Prokofiev sonatas over three programs in Berlin, New York's Carnegie Hall, and Cal Performances, Berkeley.

As a regular guest, Mr. Bronfman will return to the Vienna, New York, and Los Angeles philharmonics; the Mariinsky, Cleveland, and Philadelphia orchestras; as well as the symphonies of Boston, Montreal, Toronto, San Francisco, and Seattle. Following the success of their first U.S. tour last spring, Mr. Bronfman will rejoin Anne-Sophie Mutter and Lynn Harrell in May for a European tour that takes them from Madrid to Berlin, Moscow, and Milan. Always keen to explore chamber music repertoire, Mr. Bronfman has collaborated with Martha Argerich, Magdalena Kožená, Emmanuel Pahud, and Pinchas Zukerman, among many other partners.

Mr. Bronfman works regularly with an illustrious group of conductors, including Daniel Barenboim, Herbert Blomstedt, Semyon Bychkov, Riccardo Chailly, Christoph von Dohnányi, Gustavo Dudamel, Charles Dutoit, Daniele Gatti, Valery Gergiev, Alan Gilbert, Mariss Jansons, Vladimir Jurowski, James Levine, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, Andris Nelsons, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Sir Simon Rattle, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Franz Welser-Möst, and David Zinman. Summer engagements have regularly taken him to the major festivals of Europe and the U.S.

He has also given numerous solo recitals in the leading halls of North America, Europe, and the Far East, including acclaimed debuts at Carnegie Hall in 1989 and Avery Fisher Hall in 1993. In 1991 he gave a series of joint recitals with Isaac Stern in Russia, marking Mr. Bronfman's first public performances there since his emigration to Israel at age 15. That same year he was awarded the prestigious Avery Fisher Prize, one of the highest honors given to American instrumentalists. In 2010 he was honored as the recipient of the Jean Gimbel Lane prize in piano performance from Northwestern University.

Widely praised for his solo, chamber, and orchestral recordings, Mr. Bronfman was nominated for a Grammy Award in 2009 for his Deutsche Grammophon recording of Esa-Pekka Salonen's piano concerto, with Salonen conducting; and in 1997 he won a Grammy Award, again with Salonen, for his recording of the three Bartók piano concerti with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. His prolific catalog of recordings includes works for two pianos by

Rachmaninoff and Brahms with Emanuel Ax, the complete Prokofiev concerti with the Israel Philharmonic and Zubin Mehta, a Schubert/Mozart disc with the Zukerman Chamber Players, and the soundtrack to Disney's *Fantasia 2000*. Mr. Bronfman's most recent CD releases are the 2014 Grammy-nominated Piano Concerto No. 2 by Magnus Lindberg, commissioned for him and performed by the New York Philharmonic under Alan Gilbert, on the Dacapo label; Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 with Mariss Jansons and the Bayerischer Rundfunk; a recital disc, *Perspectives*, complementing Mr. Bronfman's designation as a Carnegie Hall "Perspectives" artist for the 2007–08 season; and recordings of all the Beethoven piano concerti as well as the Triple Concerto, together with violinist Gil Shaham, cellist Truls Mørck, and the Tönhalle Orchestra Zürich under David Zinman, for the Arte Nova/BMG label.

Now available on DVD are Mr. Bronfman's 2010 performances of Liszt's second piano concerto with Franz Welser-Möst and the Vienna Philharmonic, from Schoenbrunn, on Deutsche Grammophon; Beethoven's fifth piano concerto with Andris Nelsons and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra from the 2011 Lucerne Festival, and Rachmaninoff's third concerto with the Berlin Philharmonic and Sir Simon Rattle, on the EuroArts label. Scheduled for DVD release later this year are both Brahms concerti with Franz Welser-Möst and The Cleveland Orchestra.

Born in Tashkent in the Soviet Union, Yefim Bronfman immigrated to Israel with his family in 1973, where he studied with pianist Arie Vardi, head of the Rubin Academy of Music at Tel Aviv University. In the United States, he studied at The Juilliard School, Marlboro School of Music, and the Curtis Institute of Music, under Rudolf Firkusny, Leon Fleisher, and Rudolf Serkin. He is a 2015 recipient of an honorary doctorate from the Manhattan School of Music.

Yefim Bronfman became an American citizen in July 1989.

Prokofiev made an immense, priceless contribution to the musical culture of Russia. A composer of genius, he has expanded the artistic heritage left to us by the great classical masters of the country's music — Glinka, Mussorgsky, Borodin, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff.

— Dmitri Shostakovich

Within the vast, virtually limitless piano repertoire, the piano sonatas of Sergei Prokofiev occupy a special place. Apart from Alexander Scriabin early in the century, Prokofiev was the only major twentieth-century composer to pay such consistent attention to the form.… They are a constant presence in concert programs and are considered an indispensable part of the repertoire by almost every serious concert pianist.

— Boris Berman

What struck me about Prokofiev's playing was its remarkable simplicity. Not a single superfluous gesture, not a single exaggerated expression of emotion, no striving for effect. There was a sort of inner purity of purpose behind his whole performance that made an unforgettable impression.… The tempestuous, defiant Prokofiev at [lyrical] moments became as touching as a child. The fact that he could be poetic and moving came as a surprise to many.

— David Oistrakh

Prokofiev played with his hands on a level with the keyboard, with extraordinary sureness of wrist, a marvelous staccato. He rarely attacked from on high; he wasn't at all the sort of pianist who throws himself from the fifth floor to produce the sound. He had a nervous power like steel, so that even though he played level with the keyboard he was capable of producing sonority of fantastic strength and intensity, and in addition, the tempo never, never varied.

— Francis Poulenc

While Stravinsky is much more tied to the Gods, Prokofiev is friendly with the Devils.

— Sergei Diaghilev

Sonata No. 1 in F minor, Op. 1
Composed in 1906 and 1909.
Premièred on March 6, 1910 in Moscow by the composer.

Prokofiev's appetite for music was first whetted by his mother, who played Beethoven sonatas to him while he huddled beneath the piano as a toddler in his home village of Sontsovka (today Krasnoye, Ukraine). He was soon playing Beethoven for himself and showing enough evidence of compositional talent that in 1902 Mme. Prokofiev displayed her son to the highly respected pianist, composer and Moscow Conservatory professor Sergei Taneyev, who was sufficiently impressed to arrange lessons for the boy with his gifted student Reinhold Glière. Two years later, at the ripe age of thirteen, Prokofiev was admitted to the St. Petersburg Conservatory to study piano with Alexander Winkler. He was also enrolled in the composition program at the school, where the brilliant but obstreperous youngster found his harmony classes with Liadov "extremely dull" and maintained that he "learned nothing" from his orchestration lessons with Rimsky-Korsakov, but still completed the curriculum in 1909, submitting as his graduation thesis a piano sonata (now lost) and an opera scene based on Pushkin's *A Feast in Time of Plague*. He remained at the Conservatory to study conducting with Alexander Tcherepnin ("a brilliant musician who played a very big role in my musical development") and piano with Anna Yesipova, both highly regarded disciplinarians who had taught a number of outstanding Russian musicians.

During his years at the Conservatory, Prokofiev developed a fearsome keyboard technique and composed industriously, sketching much of an opera (*Maddalena*), completing a symphony (never published but re-worked as the Sonata No. 4), a Sinfonietta, some songs and at least six piano sonatas (the F minor Sonata was published as his Op. 1 in 1911; the A minor Sonata was revised as the Sonata No. 3); he revived his own Piano Concerto No. 1, which premièred in Moscow in 1912, for his graduation examination in 1914. (He had already premièred his Concerto No. 2 at the resort town of Pavlovsk, outside St. Petersburg, the preceding summer.)

The work that became the Piano Sonata No. 1 in F minor originated during the summer of 1906 at the family estate at Sontsovka as the second of the half-dozen such works Prokofiev wrote during his Conservatory years. He was fifteen. Three years later, after consulting with his teachers Liadov and Yesipova, he discarded the last two of the F minor Sonata's original three movements, revised the opening *Allegro*, and included the work on his formal début recital, in Moscow on March 6, 1910. The score was published the following year by Pyotr Jurgenson's prestigious Moscow firm as his Opus 1. "I'm very fond of it," Prokofiev confided to his diary when he finished the piece in October 1909, "for the freshness of its themes, the absolute clarity of its part-writing, and the pianistic way it is laid out for the instrument." Then he added, perhaps a bit smugly, "It is a naïve and simple little piece and marked the end of my early period."

"Naïve and simple" the First Sonata may well have appeared to Prokofiev when he judged it against his later masterpieces, but it is a remarkable accomplishment for a fifteen-year-old — assured (if conventional) in form, virtuosic in technique, perfectly fitted to its instrumental medium, and immersed in the most advanced harmonic practices of the day. It is also prophetic of Prokofiev's dedication throughout his life to revitalizing the tradition of the sonata, both as a genre type and as a generator of structure. The main and second themes respectively pay homage to Alexander Scriabin and Sergei Rachmaninoff, the two pre-World War I titans of Russian pianism. The opening subject is agitated and impassioned, built from a three-note rising phrase whose repetitions work their way insistently down the keyboard. The transition begins skittishly but quickly accumulates energy to lead to the second theme, a romantic, lyrical, rising melody to which Rachmaninoff, and perhaps even Tchaikovsky, stood as godfather. Both ideas are

worked out confidently in the development section before being recapitulated in somewhat compressed form. The Sonata closes with a sonorous and flamboyant coda.

Sonata No. 2 in D minor, Op. 14
Composed in 1912.
Premièred on January 23, 1914 in Moscow by the composer.

By 1912, two years before he completed his formal studies at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, Sergei Prokofiev had established himself as a formidable prodigy of both piano and composition and as the leading *enfant terrible* of Russian music. The first work upon which he bestowed an opus number, the Piano Sonata No. 1 of 1907, was good enough to win him an association with the publisher (of Tchaikovsky, among others) Jurgenson. Other compositions for solo piano, voice, and orchestra quickly followed the First Sonata, and Prokofiev's performance of his own keyboard works established his reputation as a brilliant and powerful virtuoso and a composer in the most daring styles of the day, qualities matched by a fearsome egotism that enabled him to batter his way to critical and public recognition. The most important of Prokofiev's pre-graduation creations was the Piano Concerto No. 1, which stirred spirited comment, pro and con, when he premièred it in Moscow on July 25, 1912. After playing the Concerto again in Pavlovsk, he joined his mother at the Caucasian resort of Kislovodsk, where he balanced a rigorous schedule of composition with hiking in the mountains and reading. It was at Kislovodsk in August that he completed the Piano Sonata No. 2, begun the previous March. "Every morning I go to the local drugstore to work," he recorded at the time. "There is a good upright piano there, the room is comfortable, no one bothers me, and it doesn't smell of medicine." He sent the manuscript to Jurgenson with a note stating that, in view of the interest excited by his recent appearances in Moscow and Pavlovsk, a new, higher scale of fees should be instituted. Two hundred rubles, he said, was his price for the new Sonata, and he would accept nothing less. Jurgenson met his demand.

Prokofiev gave the première of his Second Piano Sonata on January 23, 1914 in Moscow at one of the series of Evenings of Modern Music, a concert that also included his Ballade for Cello and Piano and Op. 12 Piano Pieces. Though opinion was mixed, with the young iconoclast's modernity eliciting strong comments, the prominent critic Yuli Engel noted "the Sonata's powerful play of musical ideas, the energy of the creative will; it has a kind of angularity, harshness and coldness, but at the same time a genuine freshness." Prokofiev performed the piece frequently in recital, and chose it for his New York début at Town Hall on November 20, 1918, which was attended by many notable musicians, including Rachmaninoff. Though there was a predictable quantity of critical carping (the Second Sonata represented "a charge of mammoths across some vast immemorial Asiatic plateau," according to the reviewer for *Musical America*), the recital was generally greeted with approving astonishment. "His fingers are steel, his wrists steel, his biceps and triceps steel," wrote the *New York Times*. " A parterre of pianists greeted the newcomer with dynamic applause. Of his instant success, there can be no doubt." The continuing popularity of Prokofiev's music in this country dates from that event.

Though early listeners were quick to point out the harmonic piquancies and motoric rhythms of Prokofiev's compositions, what has maintained them in the repertory is their wealth of expertly crafted melody, brilliant sonorities, lucid and logical forms, and, above all, their expressive power. "The Second Piano Sonata presents a world of romantic transports, seething energy and live and saucy laughter," according to the composer 's biographer Israel V. Nestyev, to which Lawrence and Elisabeth Hanson added, "One does not know which to admire more — the freshness of the themes or the endlessly ingenious manipulation of them." The Sonata opens with a precisely regulated sonata form that traverses a superbly built main

theme of high rhythmic tension which rises through a step-wise pattern, a transition of quiet intensity, and a contrasting second subject in the style of a *valse triste*. A development built from motives of the earlier themes is followed by a full recapitulation. The compact *Scherzo*, with its central section of ostinato-like octave figurations, is a reworking of a piece that Prokofiev wrote in 1908 for Anatoly Liadov's composition class at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. The *Andante*, whose depth of emotion masterfully balances the wit and verve of the surrounding music, is based on two themes. The first, presented after a gently rocking introduction, is a smoothly contoured melody of quiet motion; the second is more animated and wide-ranging. A repeated-note motive is introduced in the movement's central portion, and serves as the underpinning for the varied repetitions of the two themes that occupy the closing section. The finale is another sonata form (the main theme is impetuous and leaping; the second theme is built from short phrases in longer note values) that recalls the *valse triste* theme of the opening movement at the beginning of the development section, to strengthen the Sonata's overall formal unity. "The Second Sonata charms listeners with its theatrical concreteness — its bold juxtaposition of youthful excitement, dreamy lyricism and infectious laughter," wrote Nestyev. "Unquestionably, it is the willful romantic impulse, the tireless force of life and youth that predominates here."

Sonata No. 3 in A minor, Op. 28, "From Old Notebooks"
Composed in 1917.
Premièred on April 15, 1918 in St. Petersburg by the composer.

Sonata No. 4 in C minor, Op. 29, "From Old Notebooks"
Composed in 1917.
Premièred on April 17, 1918 in St. Petersburg by the composer.

Prokofiev spent the early part of the summer of 1917 on the outskirts of St. Petersburg putting the finishing touches on his "Classical" Symphony, a work of happy countenance and bubbling spirits that, like most of his other music of the time, took little notice of the cataclysmic throes of war and revolution through which his native Russia was then passing. He went south in July to visit his mother, Maria, at the Caucasian resort town of Kislovodsk, where he played his First Piano Concerto and began the cantata *Seven, They Are Seven*, based on a poetic reworking of some ancient Chaldean cuneiform texts, a further evidence of the interest in primitive subjects that had burst forth with volcanic power in his 1915 ballet *Ala and Lolly* (transformed into the thunderous *Scythian Suite* for concert purposes).

Prokofiev was back in St. Petersburg by early September, but Lenin's faction had gained sufficient strength to threaten the Provisional Government, and violent confrontation in the city seemed inevitable. Maria convinced her son to join her again in the Caucasus, and he arrived back in Kislovodsk by the end of the month. Eager to continue his burgeoning concert career and pining for the stimulation of city life, he planned to return to St. Petersburg by November, but the Bolsheviks seized the Winter Palace on October 27th and Prokofiev was stuck in the provinces.

Despite the upheavals of 1917, those months encompassed one of the most productive periods of Prokofiev's career — the Third Piano Sonata dates from the spring, and it was followed later that year by the "Classical" Symphony, the First Violin Concerto, *Seven, They Are Seven*, the Fourth Sonata, and extensive plans for the Piano Concerto No. 3 and the opera *The Love for Three Oranges*. By March 1918, enough normalcy had been restored to the country to allow Prokofiev to travel north to Moscow, where he met the influential conductor Sergei Koussevitzky, who had recently taken over the publishing house of Gutheil. Prokofiev impressed Koussevitzky with both his galvanic pianism and his creative work, and the conductor-cum-publisher bought the rights to the *Scythian Suite*, the opera *The Gambler*, the ballet *The Buffoon* and the Third

and Fourth Sonatas for a sum sufficient to guarantee the tour to the United States that Prokofiev had been contemplating since the previous year. Prokofiev then went on to St. Petersburg, where he premièred both the Sonatas No. 3 (April 15) and No. 4 (April 17) and the "Classical" Symphony (April 21) with considerable success. Two weeks later, he was on a train across Siberia to catch a ship at Vladivostok bound for the American West Coast.

For the Third and Fourth Piano Sonatas of 1917, Prokofiev raided some pieces he had composed while studying at the St. Petersburg Conservatory a decade before — both compositions bear the subtitle "From Old Notebooks." The single-movement Sonata No. 3 was based on one of the half-dozen such works at which Prokofiev tried his hand at the academy, and in his memoirs he recorded an anecdote, a delightful sketch of mingled adolescence and artistic precocity, concerning the derivation of its lyrical second theme: "I had no acquaintances among the girls of the Conservatory, although there was no lack of them: there were lots of them walking through the corridors or sitting on window ledges.... I noticed several girls my own age and watched them during breaks between academic classes. One of them had a rather strange last name: Eshe. When I wrote her name in French, 'Eche,' I noticed that each letter stood for a note. [According to German notational convention, 'H' stands for B-natural.] Remembering that music had been written on themes derived from names (for example the variations on the theme B–A– C–H), I tried to write a theme based on E–C–H [B-natural]–E. And since it struck me as successful, I used it — with imitations at that — as the subordinate theme in my Third Sonata." Prokofiev retained the thematic material and basic shape of the 1907 Sonata in his 1917 revision, though the piano writing was cast in a more grand manner and the harmonic details were sharpened.

In its precisely controlled sonata structure, its abundance of melodic and harmonic invention, and its expressive ethos, Prokofiev's Third Sonata is a microcosm of the composer's creative personality during his early years, which Israel Nestyev summarized perceptively in the following manner: "Prokofiev's music is an unusual combination of the simple and the complex — simple, well-defined rhythms combined with fresh, pungent harmonies, impeccable classical form and texture with daring invention. In many respects, these stylistic features violated the aesthetic principles of the fashionable schools of impressionism and symbolism. In place of ultra-refined emotions and semi-mystical signs and portents, we find in Prokofiev a somewhat coarse dynamism; in place of deliberately enigmatic images and nebulous other-worldliness, a straightforward logic; in place of vague, diffuse forms, a classical precision and simplicity. This simplicity, however, was itself distinctly new. The young composer at times shied away from any easily recognized sort of simplicity, which he considered banal and too reminiscent of well-known, traditional music. He strove in every way possible to combine logic and clarity of form, texture and rhythm with harsh, unusual harmonies and timbres. He created his own distinctive melodic design, in which simplicity of line is combined with unusual twists and angularities, and his own harmonic idiom, in which transparently diatonic harmonies (much like old folk harmonies) alternate with sharp polytonality. Finally, he made great use of vigorous, clear-cut rhythms, inspired by elements of the march, the dance, and human gesture."

Among the emotional seeds from which sprang the Fourth Sonata, one of Prokofiev's most lyrical and life-affirming creations, was a dearly remembered personal friendship. During his years at the Conservatory, the composer's closest friend was Maksimilian Schmidthof, a fellow student and a pianist of sensitive temperament and intellectual

precocity. The teenagers were together constantly, sharing the experiences of school and growing up, and their relationship was intense. "At that time I was not always myself, but half-Max," Prokofiev later wrote to his friend's sister. "His influence on me was enormous." Prokofiev was stunned when, in April 1913, shortly after his 22nd birthday, he received a note from Max that read, "I am writing to tell you the latest news — I have shot myself. The causes are unimportant." This grim announcement, which Schmidthof did indeed put fatally into effect before Prokofiev received the letter, affected him more deeply than had the death of his father three years before, and he dedicated four compositions to Max in later years: the Second and Fourth Piano Sonatas, the Second Piano Concerto and the "Allemande" from the Op. 12 Piano Pieces.

Nestyev wrote, "The charm of the Fourth Piano Sonata lies in its thoughtful, restrained, narrative tone. Here we find neither mirthful gaiety nor nervous frenzy; although an agitated feeling prevails in the first movement, it is not intensely dramatic, but restrained. The melodic outline and harmony are austere and even, to some extent, in the Schumann–Brahms tradition. However, certain pungent details — notably, the novel part-writing, with its moving basses and countermelodies, and such distinctive harmonic devices as complex suspensions and clipped cadences — reveal the composer 's favorite style." The carefully sculpted sonata form of the first movement begins with a brooding main theme (announced quietly in the bass register) that is marked by a quick figure in sixteenth-notes. The subsidiary subject, more evenly paced in its rhythmic progress, is decorated with tiny, flashing arpeggios. The three-part *Andante*, the expressive heart of the Sonata, is one of Prokofiev's most moving and openly romantic creations. After the thoughtful introspection of the slow movement, the finale comes as a vibrant affirmation of the vital life spirit and a brilliant tour-de-force of keyboard virtuosity.

Sonata No. 5 in C major, Op. 38
Composed in 1923; revised in 1953.
Premièred in Paris on March 9, 1927 by the composer.

In March 1922, after four years of wandering around America and Europe composing, giving concerts, and overseeing performances of his works, Sergei Prokofiev retreated to the secluded village of Ettal in the Bavarian Alps, two miles from Oberammergau, site of the famous Passion Play. He pronounced Ettal "a picturesque and peaceful spot, ideal for work," and gathered into the modest house he rented there his fiancée, Lina Llubera, a talented singer of Russian-Spanish ancestry who was just then beginning to enjoy some European fame, and, from Russia, his mother, nearly blind and in failing health. Ettal and its beautiful mountain scenery offered Prokofiev not only an escape from the tumult of city life but also a chance to care for his own health, which had been seriously undermined by a bout of scarlet fever he had suffered in America. His principal creative project in Ettal was *The Flaming Angel*, which he hoped to have staged by the Chicago Opera, the company that had introduced *The Love for Three Oranges* in December 1921. He frequently had to interrupt composition, however, for concert appearances in various European cities, his main source of financial support during those years when he was still building his reputation as a composer. In order to add another entry to his recital repertory, in June 1923 he undertook the Sonata No. 5, the only major work for piano he composed between the *Tales of the Old Grandmother* (Op. 31) and the Four Pieces (Op. 32) of 1919 and the Two Sonatinas (Op. 54) of 1931. He worked on the opera and the Sonata during the summer, but much of his attention at that time was devoted to his upcoming wedding with Lina on September 29th. With a wife and mother to support and a child expected soon after the first of the year, Prokofiev decided to quit rural Bavaria to seek his fortune in the vibrant and lucrative artistic

milieu of France, so he moved the family to Paris in October. He finished the Sonata No. 5 there two months later, and gave its première in Paris on March 9, 1927.

The Sonata No. 5 was not only written during the time when Prokofiev relocated from America to Europe, but it also marked a shift in his compositional style from the Russian-influenced works of his early maturity to a more pronounced international modernity in the years before he was repatriated to the Soviet Union in 1933. This idiomatic evolution is evident in the Sonata itself. The opening movement, *Allegro tranquillo*, recalls Prokofiev's earlier keyboard style in its broadly lyrical thematic material, extended tonal harmony and precise formal structure. The central *Andantino* is more brazen in both its insouciant spirit and its harmonic acerbity. The finale, written in Paris, was thorny enough that Prokofiev classed it with the Quintet for Oboe, Clarinet, Violin, Viola and Double Bass (Op. 39) and the Second Symphony as among "the most chromatic works I have written. The chromaticism is largely due to the atmosphere of the musical world in Paris, where complex patterns and dissonances are the accepted thing. This tempted that side of me which hankers after complex thinking." In 1953, after twenty years of imbibing the Soviet artistic ethos of music for the masses, Prokofiev returned to the Sonata to smooth its angularity and soften its dissonances with a revision so thorough that he gave the result a new opus number, 135. It was the last work that he completed before his death on March 5, 1953.

The Sonata No. 5, the only one of his Sonatas that Prokofiev composed outside Russia, opens with a flowing melody of restrained emotion coaxed along by a rocking inner-voice accompaniment. The music becomes more active as it heads toward the second theme, a stream of parallel chords mounted upon an accompaniment of anxious rhythms. Both themes are intricately treated in the development section, which concludes with a sonorous false recapitulation (i.e., in the wrong key) of the main theme, a device much favored by Joseph Haydn. Realizing its mistake, the music quiets and recants through a series of tonally ambiguous arpeggios that lead to the proper recapitulation of the earlier themes. The *Andantino* is a sardonic waltz in three parts (A–B–A) that is unable to generate enough energy to dance. It tosses off all manner of cheeky comments and ambles along with a determined presumptuousness, but never shakes off its inherent lethargy, and simply gives up at the end with a grumbling complaint. The finale, the most energetic and virtuosic movement of the work, unfolds across a sonata form based on two themes: a repeated-note motive heard immediately at the outset and a wide- ranging melody whose lyricism is countered by its impertinent "wrong-note" harmonic implications.

Sonata No. 6 in A major, Op. 82
Composed in 1939-1940.
Premièred on April 8, 1940 by the composer on a broadcast from Moscow.

Prokofiev returned to Russia from his years in the West in 1933, and by 1939, when the Sixth Sonata was conceived, he had become the leading composer of his country with works written in what he called "a style in which one could speak of Soviet life." *Lieutenant Kijé*, *Peter and the Wolf*, and *Romeo and Juliet* are among the best-known realizations of that populist art. Many of Prokofiev's efforts during the early years of the Second World War tempered his earlier modernistic style with this new musical vein, including the Piano Sonatas Nos. 6, 7, and 8, all begun in 1939, but completed, respectively, in 1940, 1942, and 1944; inevitably, they were dubbed the "War Sonatas." These three works were his first contributions to the genre of the piano sonata in sixteen years, and the revitalization of his interest in the form may well have been inspired by his recently conceived love affair with Mira Abramovna Mendelson. Prokofiev first met Mira during the summer of 1939 while vacationing alone at Kislovodsk in the Caucasus. She was 24 at the time, just

completing her student work at the Moscow Institute of Literature, and he was exactly twice her age, 48. They first worked together on fashioning an opera libretto from Richard Brinsley Sheridan's comedy *The Duenna*, but something beyond just shared literary interests further drew them together, and during the following months they became more than just friends. Prokofiev, stealing time from his wife, Lina, and his two sons, sought out situations to meet Mira, and by the spring of 1940 he had fallen in love with her. A family friend of the Prokofievs reported at that time seeing the composer walking with a young woman she did not recognize. What surprised her more than the woman's presence, however, was the unfamiliar expression on Prokofiev's face— happy and relaxed and lighthearted. "He had always been rather grim and serious," she said, "but after meeting Mira, he became more affectionate and friendly. The change in him was very noticeable." By 1941, Prokofiev had left Lina and was living with Mira, who proved to be a devoted and caring companion until the composer died twelve years later. Lina, a French national, became caught up in Stalin's ghastly political machine and was arrested on trumped-up charges of espionage in 1948. (A year before, the Supreme Soviet issued a retroactive decree forbidding Soviet citizens to marry foreign nationals, thus suddenly annulling the Prokofievs' marriage. Mira and Sergei formalized their relationship with a civil ceremony on January 13, 1948.) Lina was released and returned to the West in 1972, always claiming to be the composer 's only legitimate wife. It was at the beginning of his new life with Mira that Prokofiev conceived his Sonatas Nos. 6, 7, and 8; he dedicated the Eighth Sonata to her.

Mira attributed the symphonic scale and dramatic demeanor of the Sixth Sonata to Prokofiev's recent reading of Romain Rolland's biography of Beethoven, though the music's attitude and style are distinctly those of its composer. The work was completed in Moscow on February 11, 1940 and first played by Prokofiev on a radio broadcast from the Composers' Union on April 8th; Sviatoslav Richter, in his formal début, gave the public première, on November 26th at the Small Hall of the Moscow Conservatory. The Sonata raised considerable enthusiasm when it was new. Dmitri Shostakovich, whose relationship with his colleague was distant and often critical, wrote to him from Leningrad, "The Sixth Sonata is magnificent, from beginning to end. I am happy that I had the opportunity to hear it two times, and regret that it was only two times." In their biography of Prokofiev, Lawrence and Elisabeth Hanson noted, "The composer's joyous, vigorous, intensely musical personality is expressed in every opus and in none more strikingly than the Sixth Sonata. It was one of the most extroverted sonatas he was to write, and one of the finest."

The opening sonata-form movement takes as its main theme an aggressive, three-note motive whose vehement rhythms recall the motoric idiom that fueled many of Prokofiev's early compositions. The lyrical second subject, with its arching melodic phrases, provides contrast. The development section first treats a repeated-note figure derived from the second theme, and then undertakes a concentrated consideration of the principal subject. A long passage of wavering thirds bridges to an altered and abbreviated recapitulation of the earlier thematic material. The *Allegretto* is a brittle march, carried along by fragments of a slightly blowsy melody in the bass. The central episode of the movement is slower in tempo and more expressive in content. The third movement is a modern reminiscence of the waltz, often spiky in its harmonies and jarring in its dynamic and thematic juxtapositions. The virtuosic finale is woven from four themes: a dance- like strain cobbled from a tiny circular pattern; a wide-ranging melody of dancing character; a motive of eight repeated notes followed by a quick flourish; and a lugubrious subject in slower tempo whose opening rhythmic gesture (short–short–long) is related to the main theme of the first movement.

These ideas are developed as the finale unfolds, and lead to a bold restatement of the first movement's principal subject to round out the Sonata.

Sonata No. 7 in B-flat major, Op. 83
Composed in 1939-1941.
Premièred on January 18, 1943 in Moscow by Sviatoslav Richter.

The Seventh Sonata was finished in May 1942 in Tbilisi, where Prokofiev was evacuated after the Germans had invaded Russia the preceding June. Sviatoslav Richter premièred the work in Moscow on January 18, 1943; two months later, Prokofiev received the Stalin Prize for the score. The Sonata's three movements, arranged in the Classical succession of fast–slow–fast, progress from the anxious, unsettled *Allegro inquieto*, through the lyrical slow movement (to be played "with warmth," according to the score), to the hammering motorism and emphatic B-flat tonality of the finale.

The opening movement juxtaposes two broad musical paragraphs: one, approximating a main theme, is given in pounding rhythms immediately at the outset; the other, a contrasting melody in slower tempo, springs from a motive reminiscent of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Once more, with developmental elaborations, these sections alternate, and the movement closes with a final return of the main theme to produce a five-part, symmetrical structure: A–B–A–B–A. The second movement follows a musical arch form, beginning and ending with a theme of surprising banality that utilizes some ripe, barbershop harmonies, while the middle portion rises to true passion. The finale, marked *Precipitato*, has been called, because of its vigorous and incessant rhythmic nature, a toccata, the modern scion of the *moto perpetuo* pieces of the Baroque that were designed to show off the keyboardist's digital dexterity. The old, virtuoso form is couched in Prokofiev's characteristic harmonic acerbity and percussive pianism.

Sonata No. 8 in B-flat major, Op. 84
Composed in 1939-1944.
Premièred on December 30, 1944 in Moscow by Emil Gilels.

Large parts of the Sonata No. 8 were sketched in 1939, but Prokofiev then set the score aside until the summer of 1944, when he completed it at the "Composers' Home" run by the Soviet government at Ivanovo, fifty miles west of Moscow. He tried out the new work for the Composers' Union that October, after returning to Moscow, but his previously fearsome piano technique had slipped badly into disrepair by that time, and he entrusted 28-year-old Emil Gilels with the public première, given in the Grand Hall of the Moscow Conservatory on December 30, 1944. The Sonata inspired considerable praise from press and public alike, and it was honored with a Stalin Prize, First Class the following year.

The Eighth Sonata is regarded as one of Prokofiev's greatest contributions to the genre, "the richest of all — an abundance of riches," according to the eminent Soviet pianist Sviatoslav Richter. Barbara Nissman, another of today's leading interpreters of Prokofiev's piano music, called the Sonata "a masterwork of the 20th-century keyboard literature; it expands the sonata, not only in terms of structure but as a total concept; it is the equivalent of a large-scale symphony for piano." The composer's claim that the work is "primarily lyrical in character" is borne out by the opening movement, which exhibits an abundance of fine melodies in rich polyphonic settings. Its sonata form rises to a level of considerable intensity in the development section, but the pervading nature of the movement's exposition and recapitulation is of a character that matches the music's performance instruction: *dolce* — "sweetly." The second movement, *Andante sognando* ("dreamily") is a lovely instrumental song with just enough prickly harmonic piquancies to keep it from lapsing into unabashed nostalgia. The finale is in a large three-part form, with two subjects in each of the outer portions (a rippling triplet strain and

an energetic passage seeded by a bounding octave motive) surrounding a central section that includes reminiscences of themes from the first movement.

Sonata No. 9 in C major, Op. 103
Composed in 1947.
Premièred on April 21, 1951 at the Composers' Union in Moscow by Sviatoslav Richter.

Israel Nestyev headed the chapter of his biography of Prokofiev dealing with the composer 's life from 1945 to 1948, "The Difficult Years." In January 1945, Prokofiev conducted the première of the Fifth Symphony with great success, and it seemed that, at age 53, he had many years of untroubled service to Soviet music in his future. Such was not to be the case. Two weeks after the Fifth Symphony was introduced, Prokofiev was leaving a friend's Moscow flat when he was suddenly stricken with a minor heart attack. He lost consciousness, fell down a flight of stairs, and was taken to the hospital, where a heart condition and a concussion were diagnosed. From that moment, his vigorous life style and busy social and musical schedules became things of the past. "Almost everything that made his life worth living was taken away," wrote Lawrence and Elisabeth Hanson in their study of the composer. "He was forbidden to smoke, to drink wine, to play chess, to drive a car, to walk fast or far, to play the piano in public, to conduct, to stay up late, to excite himself by much conversation, to travel more than a few miles." He spent the rest of his life — he died in 1953, on the same day as Joseph Stalin — in and out of hospitals, though he did continue to work despite medical warnings about its possible deleterious effect. One friend, for instance, reported that Prokofiev stationed him at his hospital door during his visits so he could warn the composer of any approaching nurses. While the coast was clear, Prokofiev scribbled a few notes on the pad he kept hidden beneath his pillow.

Diminished health was not Prokofiev's only concern when he wrote the Piano Sonata No. 9 in 1947, however, since that was also the time when Stalin's regime was clamping down ruthlessly on artistic freedoms and condemning those who did not toe the party line. The first part of Prokofiev's vast opera *War and Peace* had been premièred in June 1946 to such official criticism of its alleged "historical inaccuracies" that the staging of Part II, scheduled for the Maly Theater in Leningrad in July 1947, was summarily cancelled. The full fury of the political storm broke the following year, when there was a general purge of "formalistic" music by Soviet authorities that claimed such internationally known figures as Shostakovich, Khachaturian, and Prokofiev himself. Prokofiev responded to the rising threat in 1947 by composing two works, a *Festive Poem* for orchestra and a jingoistic cantata (*Flourish, O Mighty Land*), observing the thirtieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, but, perhaps to maintain some artistic and psychological balance in his creativity, he also wrote during that summer two abstract, "private" pieces — the Ninth Piano Sonata and the Sonata for Unison Violins. Both works got caught in the tumult of the following months, however, and their premières were greatly delayed: Sviatoslav Richter, for whom it had been written, finally managed to perform the Ninth Sonata in April 1951; the Sonata for Unison Violins was not heard until March 1960, seven years after the composer 's death.

"The Sonata No. 9 is radiant, simple and even intimate," said Richter, who welcomed the work's turn away from the aggressive qualities of the three preceding "War Sonatas" and played it frequently on his recitals. "It's a domestic Sonata — the more you hear it, the more you come to love it and feel its magnetism." The opening *Allegretto dolce ed espressivo* ("Moderately fast, sweet and expressive") eschews the muscularity, chromaticism, virtuosity, and febrile rhythms of much of Prokofiev's earlier piano writing in favor of a spacious movement that takes three melodies as its thematic substance: a warm main theme that could have been used for a love scene in his masterful 1935 ballet *Romeo and Juliet*; a quirky strain with little scalar runs; and a folkish tune of short, circling, repeated phrases. All three ideas figure in the development

section, which accumulates a certain intensity before calming itself for the recapitulation. An unexpected outburst of triplets in the bass just before the movement ends proves to be an ingenious foreshadowing of the *Allegro strepitoso* ("boisterously") that follows. The brief second movement, the Sonata's scherzo, takes up the rolling scales and mixes them with an ungainly, repeated-note figure. The center of the movement is an ascetic exercise in counterpoint that sounds like a 20th-century analog to Bach's two-part inventions.

In her liner notes for Anne-Marie McDermott's recording of the complete Prokofiev sonatas on the Bridge label, Lynne S. Mazza wrote that the theme which opens the *Andante tranquillo* is "purely luscious writing, with no hint of perversity." As an expressive and formal foil, bold, striding music twice interrupts this lovely, wordless song. "It feels like a final attempt," continued Mazza, "at concluding the emotional chaos of living through the times and travails of Prokofiev's life and era."

The sonata-form finale uses a buoyant, optimistic strain as its main theme and a slightly cockeyed march as its second. The development takes each motive up briefly but separates them with a contrasting *Andantino* section of unsettled emotion. After the exposition's themes are recapitulated in condensed form, the music becomes luminous when the "sweet and expressive" melody that opened the Sonata is brought back as an almost dreamy postlude.

WHY PROKOFIEV, WHY NOW?

by Anna Nisnevich

This season, Cal Performances features terabytes of music by the Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953). In October, the Mariinsky Ballet and Orchestra performed Prokofiev's ballet *Cinderella*, a tongue-in-cheek musical retelling of Charles Perrault's famous fairy tale of an ill-treated-yet-kind girl becoming a princess. In January and March, Yefim Bronfman plays all nine of Prokofiev's virtuosic piano sonatas, ranging from a brash take on the classical genre by the boney 16-year-old to the aging composer's somewhat bitter return to the classics. Also in March, the listeners are treated with one of Prokofiev's zestiest and most brilliant works: his Third Piano Concerto, a war horse of many world-class piano competitions.

All these opuses have persisted in the repertory ever since their premières. The recurrent supply suggests unremitting demand, an urge to engage with Prokofiev's distinctive sound. But what makes both performers and listeners want to return to Prokofiev again and again? Why Prokofiev, why then, and why now?

There are several ways to go about answering this question. We can ask diehard Prokofievites why they can't have enough of his music. We can turn to the composer's biography to discover a relatable individual. We can zoom in on his musical style to track the technical routes of his music's continued allure. Or, we can—and will here—try to briefly combine all of the above, in hopes of generating a multidimensional explanation.

Loving Prokofiev

Have you ever experienced a strong attraction growing out of a less-than-favorable first brush? This seems to have happened to Prokofiev's music more than once. As reminisced by the great Russian dancer Galina Ulanova, Prokofiev's first Cinderella, "at first we didn't understand Prokofiev's music. It seemed so strange, whimsical, nearly undanceable. But the more we worked and experimented with the vigorous, dynamic, truly visual sound, the better we were able to grasp its inner choreography, its psychological sway." And indeed, Ulanova's friend (and a future Nobel laureate) Boris Pasternak was so taken by the original *Cinderella*, whose première he attended in December 1945, that he rushed to write to Ulanova: "I spent all evening, my face wet with tears, being moved by something big, something that conveys so well the wondrous power of a childlike, unspoiled naivety. My old heart is with you."

Fast forward to the 21st century, and we find a similar sentiment voiced by today's stars and music lovers alike. Young piano virtuoso Yuja Wang has recently admitted to Euronews that, although she is intimidated by Prokofiev's demanding scores, she feels special affinity with his sometimes "very naughty, very sarcastic" yet always "emotional, intense and psychologically powerful" music. A brief glance at the customer reviews on amazon.com reveals that listeners, too, are ready to fall under the spell of this rather uncommon pair of childlike whimsy and psychological intensity. How often, for instance, do you hear someone publicly confessing that he had had "mixed feelings" and just hoped that Prokofiev's odd music "would grow" on him, but, once he started listening, he just set there, captivated, for "two hours and twenty minutes, the remote hanging from [his] hand"?

In a word, Prokofiev's magic seems to reside in his music's strange doubleness: its clashing novelty and yet the sureness (and thus predictability) of its effect. In what follows we will ponder the circumstances that may have contributed to this fortuitous blend.

Perpetual Émigré

There was a reason for both Prokofiev's brashness and his fidelity to the tried-and-true psychological pull that had to do with more than

his talent: ever since his mid-twenties the composer was constantly on the move. In 1918, running away from the Russian Revolution and the ensuing Civil War, he went on tour in the United States—embarking in San Francisco and progressively moving eastward—and remained in the West for nearly two decades. After America there was Europe, mainly France, and again move after move. Even when Prokofiev returned to Russia in the mid-1930s, he found a place vastly different from that of his youth: Stalin-era USSR. Changing places and changing times required constant adjustment—a challenging situation for this erstwhile prodigy who always strove to maintain a distinct and unparalleled artistic profile.

To face the challenge, Prokofiev stayed competitive with other composers by engaging with the latest trends, experimenting with pungent dissonances and other ways of modernist provocation. Just as eagerly he sought marketability—the success predicated on user-friendliness. But to his chagrin, in modern music both the most avant-garde and the easiest-to-adore slots had already been taken by his former countrymen, now also expats, Igor Stravinsky and Sergei Rachmaninoff. To gain and maintain fame, Prokofiev had to offer something these celebrities could not supply, a yet different, ingenious amalgam of new and old.

And he did—by melding a range of conventional musical forms with purposely unusual, one-of-a-kind melodic, harmonic and rhythmic material. If, unlike the gushing Rachmaninoff, Prokofiev welcomed brevity and even inelegance, he was just as far from the iconoclast Stravinsky concerned with reformatting the established system of musical expectations. If anything, Prokofiev needed time-proven effect for his innovations to work. His music thrived on familiar theatricality, building on the psychosomatic experience of a well-conditioned listener.

Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 3 (1921), for instance, duly fulfills the time-honored requirements of the genre, offering plenty of whistleable tunes and virtuosic exuberance. There is always a clear sense of form and tonal motion here—but the ever-surprising turns of musical phrase are unmistakably Prokofiev's own. Re-invigorating longstanding conventions, sometimes reaching as far back as the 18th century (with its mannerly minuets and gavottes), Prokofiev wins on two musical fronts at once. On the one hand, he secures a solid, well-tested experiential base for his acoustic experiments. On the other, he compels the listener to experience afresh familiar musical gestures and processes—to renew, via restored kinesthetic engagement, the emotional pact with classical music.

One such listener, Prokofiev's friend (and a fellow Russian émigré) symbolist poet Konstantin Balmont, couldn't help but respond with a poem to hearing the Third Concerto for the first time. To him, Prokofiev's music spoke to human imagination at large, outside any one particular time or place; it conjured a reliably vivid dreamscape, offering coherence in the era of crisis and uncertainty:

…Instances spin in a waltz. Centuries reel in a gavotte.
Suddenly, a tied-up wild bull
frees itself, its horns flashing threat.
But then again, a tender sound calls from afar…
Prokofiev!... In you the orchestra longs for a sonorous summer
And the invincible Scythian plays the Sun like a tambourine.
Modernist Romantic

The fresh familiarity of Prokofiev's music came in handy when the composer found himself firmly installed in the Stalinist Soviet Union. His homecoming coincided with the formation of the ultimate Soviet dreamscape: the vision of an ideal socialist individual as both a legatee and a purveyor of all that's best in European culture and art. It was in line with that vision that Prokofiev's first Soviet commissions would include musical remakes of

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Perrault's *Cinderella*, Sheridan's *Duenna*, Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*—and, to top it all, Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. In a way, the Stalin-era society reasserted itself in the same fashion as Prokofiev: by re-invigorating the classics.

Ironically, just as Prokofiev grew ever keener on renovation, the nation that he now served felt ever more self-assured in the safe harbors of reiteration. This, along with the conservative criticism of his work during the last, most paranoid years of Stalin's rule, factored into Prokofiev's eventual withdrawal from the Soviet musical mainstream. He died on the same day—some say, even in the same hour—as Stalin, his passing unnoticed by the press. But in another ironic twist of history, his posthumous fame was to reach the heights he had only dreamt of during his life—for his music worked on a different level than that of hard-and-fast political views and decrees.

This doesn't mean, of course, that Prokofiev's music is free of creed. For all their modernist classicism, his symphonies, operas, and ballets rely on sharp characterization and broad-stroke dramatic trajectory. They deal in intense emotions ranging from frenzy to longing to awe. And, perhaps most importantly, they perpetuate the definite, unquestionable reality of the wonder-worlds that human consciousness is able to both inhabit and generate. In a word, they continue the tradition of 19th-century romanticism, the domain of fairy tales and lyric poetry, originality and authenticity, bizarre transformations, and ultimate transcendences.

Prokofiev's romanticist belief in the generative power of wonderment can be clearly observed in his *Cinderella*, musically a tale of the triumph of dreaming over scheming. In this ballet, the wickedness of Cinderella's stepmother is conveyed not by the patently ugly music, but rather by an overdetermined, generically restricted sound. Cinderella, on the other hand, mostly daydreams, steered by the sinuous, drawn-out melodies that do not really end but are rather put on hold by various external activities. She is, as it were, lost in reverie, and so the whole story of her rise to princesshood might just as well be a fruit of her vivid imagination.

Prokofiev's self-assured promulgation of the inherent goodness and nearly limitless potential of creativity chimed well with the idealistic Stalinist stance of the 1930s and 1940s. In the absence of many basic everyday goods in the USSR, spiritual products did much more than provide surrogate valuables. They supplied confidence in the rightness—and righteousness—of the optimistic outlook, steering the inspired gaze toward the future yet to be realized. (Never mind that that future would never arrive.)

But the value of wonder is still high circa 2016, whether in the United States, Russia, or elsewhere. That value has been kept steady by the concerted effort of the latter-day wizards, Hollywood film folk. Herein lies perhaps the most evident explanation of Prokofiev's continuing sway. Even if you think that you haven't heard a single note by Prokofiev, chances are that you have. There are scores of Prokofievisms in *Star Wars*, *Jaws*, *Superman*—and of course don't forget the certifiably magical *Harry Potter*. Together with Wagner, Tchaikovsky, and other romantics, Prokofiev (once a film music guru himself) lives on in the opuses of our contemporaries John Williams, Hans Zimmer, Howard Shore, and many other composers who have embraced his approach. Thankfully, there are enough movies and no unrivaled autocrats in Hollywood: some more Prokofiev-esque sound is surely in the works.

Anna Nisnevich is an Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Pittsburgh and received her PhD at University of California, Berkeley in 2007. She appears in a symposium on Prokofiev on Sunday, March 6, 2016, from 12:30–2:30 in Wheeler Auditorium. Visit calperformances.org for more details.

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Ben Finane, Editor-in-Chief of *Listen: Life with Music & Culture,* shares excerpts from *Listen* magazine's interviews with distinguished artists. Visit ListenMusicMag.com.

The pianist **Paul Lewis** has given concert performances and made recordings of Ludwig van Beethoven's complete sonatas, concertos and the Diabelli Variations (Harmonia Mundi). Lewis recently completed a two-year project to perform all the mature piano works from the last six years of Franz Schubert's life.

Ben Finane: What were some discoveries you made that you hadn't anticipated after spending all this time with Beethoven and Schubert?
Paul Lewis: The main difference between the composers for me, that became more pronounced the more I played them, is that Beethoven always has an answer whereas Schubert almost never does. Schubert has this overriding sense of irresolution, that there's no resolution, just open-ended—

BF: —as opposed to the triumph of Beethoven.
PL: Yes: resolution; triumph in his middle period; later almost a sense of rising above everything. This feeling that you get in [Beethoven's] Opus 111. In some way Beethoven resolves; he has an answer. It's interesting to speculate as to what that tells you about the personalities of these two composers. [Laughs.]

BF: I'm reminded listening to these sonatas that Beethoven is always symphonic.
PL: Yes.

BF: How do you take that into account? Do you try to establish a symphonic sound from the keyboard?
PL: Absolutely. All the time. The greatest piano music requires thinking in terms of anything other than piano sound. [Laughs.] That's the great thing about the piano: it can be many things. If it's just a piano—a pure piano sound—I find it less interesting somehow. I think music that pushes you to think in terms of an orchestra or the more specific sounds of chamber music—like the slow movement of Opus 2, No. 2 could be a string quartet. Easily. And vocal as well: the last movement of Opus 90, it has a slightly Schubertian feel to it and you could imagine it sung. I think you have to be thinking consistently in these terms.

BF: Do you stay conscious to the point of 'Am I on a bass string right now?' Are you conscious of the orchestra in front of you?
PL: Yeah, even to the point where, when I play with rubato, I ask myself the question: 'If I were a conductor, could I indicate exactly how this rubato works?'

BF: Holding yourself responsible for the through line.
PL: Exactly. Would the orchestra be able to understand this rubato from my gestures? Because if not, I think it falls into a very free, more 'pianistic' territory. You know what I mean? [Laughs.]
BF: 'Self-indulgent' might be another word for it.
PL: You could put it like that. [Laughs.]

SOUNDBOARD

Hyou Vielz

Ben Finane, Editor-in-Chief of *Listen: Life with Music & Culture,* shares excerpts from *Listen* magazine's interviews with distinguished artists. Visit ListenMusicMag.com.

Born near Tokyo, raised in Vienna, and residing in London, pianist **Mitsuko Uchida** is one of the great pianists — equally at home speaking many languages and many composers: Bach, Berg, Beethoven,Chopin, Debussy, Mozart, Schumann, Schubert, Schoenberg, all played with romance and imagination, yet also with spine and verve.

Ben Finane: There are many pianists who find themselves, again and again, coming back to Bach. I feel that you find yourself coming back to Mozart.
Mitsuko Uchida: Yes. As well as Bach; as well as Beethoven; and I hope that one day I will go back to Chopin, whom I adore. But right now I am in a Germanic phase, and have been neglecting Chopin. When you neglect a composer, he pays you back. Right now, he is cross with me, and so I will need to give him a bit more time. Right now I am really immersed in the Diabelli Variations and some other Beethoven as well. There are so many Beethoven piano concerti, the Diabelli, and a number of Mozarts in my performance repertoire right now because I am still recording live with the Cleveland Orchestra.

BF: Right. And how's that going? You've known Mozart a long time; how has your relationship with him changed?
MU: It changes all the time. One discovers ever more, and with a composer like Mozart — as well as Bach and Beethoven, but specifically Mozart — the relationship has become more precise for me, and he has become more friendly towards me.

BF: What do you mean by 'more precise?'
MU: I can enjoy his genius more than I used to. It was a total mystery for years and years, even decades, I promise you. I remember playing as a child and I never understood what the heck was happening. I disliked what I was hearing from my hands and I disliked many other people as well; it was a difficult relationship.

BF: What wasn't gelling, if I may ask?
MU: So much wasn't gelling! He's so complicated; the great composers all are.

BF: The trick is to make them not sound complicated.
MU: They are so complex. You know who I could play quite decently at the age of thirteen? Debussy. And, at fifteen, Schoenberg.

BF: Did you just *think* you were playing them decently?
MU: No, I was actually doing it. I have even heard some tapes. That was okay! I knew I got Schoenberg Opus Eleven when I worked very hard. I thought, 'Gee, I'm getting it!' Did I ever think about Beethoven? No. Schubert? No. Mozart? Wow, no way! These days I can play these composers on stage and not feel completely desperate. And that is a real advantage of getting old and having spent all these years working.

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Harald Hoffman / DG

*Ever since her international debut at the Lucerne Festival in 1976, violinist **Anne-Sophie Mutter** has sustained an exceptional career in classical music. In 2008 the violinist established the Anne-Sophie Mutter Foundation to support promising young musicians worldwide.*

Ben Finane: I was enjoying your Stravinsky Concerto en ré [Philharmonia Orchestra, Deutsche Grammophon] in the office earlier today — from '88. It was very fresh, and reminded me that sometimes players can get stuck playing Stravinsky 'like Stravinsky' or 'Mozartean' Mozart, 'fiery Vivaldi,' 'pitiless Bach,' et cetera. Then these ostensibly 'authentic' interpretations not only become cliché but can also be a trap.

Anne-Sophie Mutter: I think once you think you have found a formula, then you are actually in a very fatal position; because it will almost, unavoidably so, numb your senses for reinvention, for reevaluation. I don't think there is such a thing as an 'authentic' interpretation because there are too many layers of importance in a musical piece. That you could possibly bring all of them to life at a given single moment or performance! I've learned quite a bit through talking and living with living composers, especially ones who are performers themselves, that they are astonishingly open-minded toward different viewpoints, different tempi. According to the musicians they are working with, the different skills of orchestras, there are particular characteristics of bringing out the narrative qualities of music or the more technical oriented skills, depending on acoustics in the hall…. So what I'm saying is the moment you think, 'This has worked yesterday, it has worked ten years ago, why shouldn't I repeat it from now on? This is my recipe,' it's deadly. It's too dogmatic. Music can only be an essay of reinvention and reassessing what you have done — why you have done it and why you want to have a different look at it.

BF: You have been focusing on the younger generation of strings soloists with the Anne-Sophie Mutter Foundation [which seeks to provide players with teachers, mentors and instruments].

ASM: What I try to encourage in the young generation is an idealistic thought process and the patience to think of a long life in music. Although our goal is to help the upcoming soloists, sometimes we have musicians who I happily have to reeducate in their understanding of the role of a musician. I would like to see a generation of soloists who see themselves as musicians. 'He is a soloist, ergo he is a great musician; and he is a chamber player, ergo he is second-rate' — that is a tragedy; it's such a false conception that will breed generations of unhappy violinists. We just have to fill the role that is given to us and make the best out of it.

Harald Hoffman / DG

Ben Finane, Editor-in-Chief of *Listen: Life with Music & Culture,* shares excerpts from *Listen* magazine's interviews with distinguished artists. Visit ListenMusicMag.com.

Avi Avital *was born in Be'er Sheva in southern Israel, where he began his mandolin studies at an early age and joined a mandolin youth orchestra. Avital went on to study at the Jerusalem Academy of Music and then the Cesare Pollini Conservatory of Music in Padua, Italy.*

Ben Finane: You're 'classically trained' in mandolin. What exactly does that mean?
Avi Avital: When I was a kid in Israel I went to the local conservatory — it was something to do after school when you are eight. I started to study the mandolin and only found out as an adult that my teacher had been a violin teacher, so he had really educated me and my class to play classical pieces, especially those written for violin. And that was my introduction to classical repertoire.

BF: Your album Between Worlds [(Deutsche Grammophon)] has you on the cover leaping between heaven and earth, straddling the yellow line of a road. It's clear that you're making a statement about crossing borders.
AA: It reflects the idea of playing with the border, the un-existing border, between folk music and classical music.

BF: There's an interesting bit of intentional phrasing. Tell me why you feel that border is so permeable.
AA: We consume entertainment — pop music, TV series, funny movies — because it's enjoyable. With art, there is an extra component, a spiritual component — extra value added. We all know the difference between a pop song and classical music, a movie and a film, going to the disco and going to the ballet. We need both entertainment and art in our lives. Although it's not a thick border, there is a functional difference: we all need that spiritual component in our lives, and art is one way to add that value. That's how I see my role when I play classical concerts. Folk music, traditional music, shares that same function in life. It was more obvious in the old days, in ancient history, when music was the spiritual component used in religious services: shamanic music in ceremonies to create ecstasy and uplifting effect. And later on, art music as we know it grew out of a religious function. That's why folk music/traditional music and art music/classical music share a lot in this sense. It's all music and it hopefully moves you in a spiritual way.