

Sunday, December 6, 2015, 3pm
Zellerbach Hall

Garrick Ohlsson, *piano*

PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) Sonata No. 31 in A-flat major, Op. 110 (1821)

Moderato cantabile molto espressivo

Allegro molto

Adagio, ma non troppo — Arioso dolente —

Fuga: Allegro, ma non troppo — L'istesso
tempo di Arioso — L'istesso tempo della

Fuga poi a poi di nuovo vivente — Meno
allegro — Tempo primo

Franz Schubert (1797–1828) Fantasy in C major, D. 760, “Wanderer” (1822)

Allegro con fuoco ma non troppo

Adagio

Presto

Allegro

Played without pause

INTERMISSION

PROGRAM

Enrique Granados (1867–1916) Selections from *Goyescas, o Los majos enamorados* (1909–1911)

Los Requebros: Allegretto

El Fandango de Candil: Allegretto

Quejas, ó la Maja y el Ruiseñor:
Andante melancólico

Granados El Pelele: Brillante, andantino quasi
allegretto (1915)

Funded, in part, by the Koret Foundation, this performance is part of Cal Performances' 2015–2016 Koret Recital Series, which brings world-class artists to our community.

Hamburg Steinway piano provided by Steinway & Sons of San Francisco.

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Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
Sonata No. 31 in A-flat major, Op. 110

Composed in 1821.

Beethoven's painful five-year court battle to secure custody of his nephew Karl from his brother Caspar's dissolute widow (whom the composer disparaged as the "Queen of the Night") finally came to an end early in 1820. He "won," but lost the boy's affection (Karl, half crazed from his uncle's overbearing attention, tried, unsuccessfully, to kill himself); the case also exploded his pretension that he was of noble blood. Beethoven was further troubled by deteriorating health and a certain financial distress (he needed a loan from his brother Johann, a prosperous apothecary in Vienna, to tide him over that difficult period), so it is not surprising that he composed little during the time. With the resolution of his custody suit, however, he returned to creative work, and began anew the titanic struggle to embody his transcendent thoughts in musical tones. In no apparent hurry to dispel the rumors in gossipy Vienna that he was "written out," he produced just one work in 1820, the Piano Sonata in E major, Op. 109. The A-flat Sonata (Op. 110) was dated on Christmas Day 1821, and his last Piano Sonata, Op. 111, appeared just three weeks later. The year 1822 was the most productive he had known in a decade: the *Missa Solemnis* was completed, as were the "Consecration of the House" Overture, most of the "Diabelli" Variations, and a few smaller works, and substantial progress was made on the Ninth Symphony and the Op. 127 String Quartet. It was in the three piano sonatas which launched this burst of creativity that Beethoven first realized the essential technique—the complete fusion of sonata, variation, and fugue—that fueled the soaring masterpieces of his last period.

The Op. 110 Sonata, one of the very few of Beethoven's major works to have been published without a dedication (though Anton Schindler, the composer's companion and eventual biographer, claimed that the intended

inscription to Antonie Brentano, whom Maynard Solomon in his study of Beethoven convincingly identified as the "Immortal Beloved," was omitted through publisher's oversight), is one of the towering peaks of the piano literature. Or, perhaps more appropriately, one of its sublimely peaceful Alpine valleys, since its essence is halcyon rather than heaven-storming. In his fine book on Beethoven's last decade, Martin Cooper noted that in this music the composer moved away "from the dramatic principle of contrast with its implicit idea of struggle. In its place we find a unified vision where music borrows nothing from the theater...and aspires to its own unique condition.... The listener is taken as a friend whose interest and understanding can be taken for granted, rather than an audience to be captured, dazzled, touched, or excited. In this work, the rhetorical element is virtually non-existent." In place of the dramatic gesture, which he had used so successfully in his middle-period works, Beethoven here posited a language of pure music, one impenetrable by mere words and upon which even the most learned technical analysis seems little more than an inquisitive flea upon an elephant. Cooper: "However we regard it, we can hardly avoid the impression that Beethoven's [goal] is the contemplation of a harmonious world whose laws are absolute and objective, neither subject to human passion nor concerned with anything beyond themselves." The forms and balances of the movements of Beethoven's late works were no longer subject to the traditional Classical models, but grew inexorably from the unique qualities and potentials of each individual composition.

The opening movement of the Op. 110 Sonata is technically in sonata form, but one so seamlessly made and so consistently sun-bright in mood that unity rather than contrast is its dominant characteristic. Next comes an energetic movement in the spirit (though not the meter) of a scherzo whose thematic material was apparently inspired by two Austrian folksongs for which Beethoven had provided simple piano accompaniments in 1820.

Closing the Sonata is a musical essay whose lyricism and ultimate gentleness belie its stupendous formal concept. A mournful *scena*, an *arioso dolente*, is given as the opening chapter, and leads without pause to the life-confirming retort of a tightly argued fugue. This fugue is not, however, one of those mighty, gnarled constructions that Beethoven employed elsewhere in his last years, but a pellucid, songful, joyous example of the form. The *arioso*, with its thrumming, chordal accompaniment, intrudes itself upon the undulant flow of the fugue, and is again answered by Beethoven's celebratory counterpoint, marked, on this last appearance, to be infused by the pianist "more and more with new life."

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)
Fantasy in C major, D. 760, "Wanderer"

Composed in 1822.

Schubert wrote his Fantasy in C major in November 1822, immediately after he had broken off composition of the "Unfinished" Symphony. It was the first large instrumental work he had completed in two years, having abandoned two quartets and two symphonies during that time. As thematic material for the Fantasy, Schubert turned to his 1816 song titled *Der Wanderer* (D. 489, *Ich komme von Gebirge her*—"I Come Down from the Mountains"), and wove upon it a magnificent hybrid of sonata and variation forms that is the most virtuosic piano piece in his keyboard output. (The work's sobriquet did not originate with the composer, and he did not use it when referring to the piece.) The Fantasy was published in February 1823 by the Viennese firm of Cappi & Diabelli and immediately recognized as one of Schubert's greatest compositions, as a notice in the *Wiener Zeitung* on February 24th indicated: "The present Fantasy stands worthily side-by-side with similar

products by the foremost masters and therefore merits in every way the attention of all artists and lovers of art." Of the grand pianism and variety of moods in the "Wanderer" Fantasy, Robert Schumann said, "Schubert would like in this work to condense the whole orchestra into two hands. The enthusiastic beginning [movement] is a seraphic hymn to the Godhead; you can see the angels praying; the *Adagio* is a gentle meditation on life and removes the veil from it; then fugues thunder forth a song of endless humanity and music."

The "Wanderer" Fantasy is one of Schubert's most adventurous formal achievements. It is disposed in four continuous movements—*Allegro*, *Adagio*, *Scherzo*, and *Finale*—but rather than being independent essays, these sections are woven together by sharing thematic material. This structure of four-movements-in-one, enhanced by transformations of a motto theme, was influential on Liszt in his development of the symphonic poem. (Liszt transcribed the work for piano and orchestra in 1851.) The kernel from which the Fantasy grows is the dactylic rhythm (long–short–short) on a repeated pitch presented immediately at the beginning. Schubert borrowed this figure not from the vocal melody of the song *Der Wanderer* but from its accompaniment. The opening *Allegro* is an energetic working-out of this motive in alternation with a lyrical strain to provide contrast. The second movement is a series of richly elaborate variations on a fragment from the song's voice part, also initiated by a dactylic rhythm. The following *Presto* is a bounding scherzo (the long–short–short rhythm is heard after two brief introductory flourishes) whose trio derives from the contrasting, lyrical melody of the first movement. The finale opens with the intimation of a fugue, but the counterpoint eventually gives way to electrifying figuration and cadential transformations of the Fantasy's principal theme.

Enrique Granados (1867–1916)
Selections from *Goyescas*, o *Los majos enamorados*
El Pelele

Composed in 1909–1911 and 1915. Goyescas premiered on March 9, 1911, in Barcelona by the composer.

“I have fallen in love with Goya, with his palette,” Enrique Granados wrote to the pianist Joaquín Malats in 1896, during the 150th anniversary celebration of the great Spanish painter’s birth. “With him, with the Duchess of Alba; his mistresses, his models, his quarrels. That rose-white of the cheeks contrasting with the light and dark velvet trimmings; those supple waists, hands of mother-of-pearl, and jasmine resting on black marble—they intrigue me. I would like to combine the sentimental, the amorous, the passionate, the dramatic, and the tragic, as Goya did.” Several years later, between 1909 and 1911, Granados wrote a set of six piano pieces collectively titled *Goyescas*, o *Los majos enamorados* that were inspired by the paintings and tapestry cartoons of Goya. He premiered *Goyescas* with excellent success in Barcelona on March 9, 1911, and the work created such enthusiasm when he played it at the Salle Pleyel in Paris on April 4, 1914, that he was awarded the Légion d’honneur. The artistic wing of the Paris Opéra saw the makings of a stage work in Granados’s evocative piano suite, and he was awarded a contract to create an operatic version of his *Goyescas* for the coming season. The poet and Spanish cultural historian Fernando Periquet was engaged as librettist, and Granados settled in Switzerland to work on the score, adapting sections of the piano suite (to which Periquet had to fit words) and writing additional music to flesh out the newly devised story, set in Goya’s Madrid at the end of the 18th century. The outbreak of war in August stymied the promised production in Paris, however, and the Metropolitan Opera in New York offered to mount the new piece. Thereby hangs the tale of Granados’s sad fate.

Though he had once vowed never to visit the United States because of his fear of travel by water, Granados accepted the Met’s proposal, and he sailed for New York with his wife, Amparo, late in 1915. *Goyescas*, the first Spanish-language opera given by the Met, was hailed by press and public alike, and Granados found himself a celebrity. President Wilson requested a recital at the White House by the distinguished visitor before he returned home, an invitation that caused Granados and Amparo to miss their scheduled boat sailing directly to Spain. They were rerouted through Liverpool, where they boarded the *Sussex*, bound for Dieppe. The boat was torpedoed in the middle of the English Channel by a German submarine on March 24, 1916; Granados was picked up by a lifeboat but dived back into the frigid water to save his struggling wife. Both drowned. Six weeks later, the Metropolitan Opera staged an all-star benefit on behalf of the couple’s six orphaned children. Granados’s death at the age of 48 robbed Spain of one of its finest and most promising artists. “At last my dreams have become a reality,” he wrote to his friend Amadeo Vives after the premiere of *Goyescas*. “I am full of confidence and enthusiasm; I want to work more and more all the time. I am beginning. I am a Spaniard, and no Spaniard ever started early.... All my present happiness is based more on what is yet to come than on what I have done until now. I am dreaming of Paris, and I have a world of projects.”

Goyescas comprises six piano pieces that evoke both Goya’s world and the subtilized idioms of Spain’s indigenous music. “In *Goyescas*, I intended to give a personal note,” wrote Granados, “a mixture of bitterness and grace...rhythm, color, and life that are typically Spanish; a sentiment suddenly amorous and passionate, dramatic, and tragic, such as is seen in the works of Goya.” The set’s subtitle—*Los majos enamorados* (“The Majos in Love”)—and the movements’ contents and sequence imply a narrative about love and

death, which served as the basis for the subsequent opera's story. The first movement, *Los Requebros* ("Flatteries"), in the style of a *jota*, the lively dance that originated in the north-eastern region of Aragón, incorporates phrases from Blas de Laserna's *Tirana del Trípoli*, one of Spain's favorite songs during the 18th century. The music, by turns coquettish and imploring, depicts the first meeting of the lovers. *El Fandango de Candil* ("The Fandango by Lantern Light") alternates the sensuous, driving rhythms of the lovers' dance and their moments of passionate embrace. *Quejas, ó la*

Maja y el Ruiseñor ("Laments, or the Maja and the Nightingale"), dedicated by Granados to his wife, is the maiden's poignant nocturne to which a nightingale sings an ornate, cadenza-like response.

In 1915, Granados drew upon the inspiration of Goya once again for the independent piano piece *El Pelele* ("The Straw Man"), a strongly rhythmic number that portrays young men and women playfully tossing a manikin into the air from a blanket.

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Mark McBeth

SINCE HIS TRIUMPH as winner of the 1970 Chopin International Piano Competition, pianist Garrick Ohlsson has established himself worldwide as a musician of magisterial interpretive and technical prowess. Although long regarded as one of the world's leading exponents of the music of Fryderyk Chopin, Mr. Ohlsson commands an enormous repertoire, which ranges over the entire piano literature. A student of the late Claudio Arrau, Mr. Ohlsson has come to be noted for his masterly performances of the works of Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert, as well as the Romantic repertoire. To date, he has at his command more than 80 concertos, ranging from Haydn and Mozart to works of the 21st century, many commissioned for him.

His 2015–2016 season includes recitals in Berkeley, New York, Indianapolis, Brisbane, Seattle, La Jolla, Evanston, Forth Worth, Lincoln, and Costa Mesa. In return visits to Australia, he will appear in Perth, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide, and he appears for the first time with the New Zealand

Symphony in Wellington and Auckland. With concertos as diverse as Beethoven, Brahms, Barber, and Busoni he can be heard with orchestras in Boston, Los Angeles, Ottawa, Nashville, Indianapolis, Oregon, Warsaw, St. Petersburg, Manchester, and Lugano. In the fall he serves as a judge at the 17th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw, and in April he will join the Takács Quartet for a brief East Coast tour, culminating at Carnegie Hall.

Mr. Ohlsson brought Busoni's rarely programmed piano concerto to the National Symphony (Washington, D.C.) and London's Barbican with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in fall 2014. This year marked the centenary of the death of Aleksandr Skryabin, whose piano music Mr. Ohlsson presented in a series of recitals in London, San Francisco, Chicago, and New York. He also returned to the orchestras of San Francisco, Detroit, Dallas, Houston, Baltimore, Minnesota, BBC Scotland, and Prague, where he is a frequent guest.

An avid chamber musician, Mr. Ohlsson has collaborated with the Cleveland, Emerson, and Tokyo string quartets, among other ensembles. Together with violinist Jorja Fleezanis and cellist Michael Grebanier, he is a founding member of the San Francisco-based FOG Trio. Passionate about singing and singers, Mr. Ohlsson has appeared in recital with such legendary artists as Magda Olivero, Jessye Norman, and Ewa Podles.

Mr. Ohlsson can be heard on the Arabesque, RCA Victor Red Seal, Angel, BMG, Delos, Hänssler, Nonesuch, Telarc, Hyperion, and Virgin Classics labels. His ten-disc set of the complete Beethoven sonatas, for Bridge Records, has garnered critical acclaim, including a Grammy Award for Volume 3. His recording of Rachmaninoff's Concerto No. 3, with the Atlanta Symphony and Robert Spano, was released in 2011. In fall 2008, the English label Hyperion re-released his 16-disc set of the complete works of Chopin, followed in 2010 by all the Brahms piano variations, *Goyescas* by Enrique Granados, and music of Charles Tomlinson Griffes. Most recently on

that label are Skryabin's complete *Poèmes* and études by Debussy, Bartók, and Prokofiev. The latest CDs in his ongoing association with Bridge Records are *Close Connections*, a recital of 20th-century pieces, and two CDs of works by Liszt. In recognition of the Chopin bicentenary in 2010, Mr. Ohlsson was featured in a documentary, *The Art of Chopin*, co-produced by Polish, French, British, and Chinese television stations. Most recently, both Brahms concertos and Tchaikovsky's second piano concerto were released on "live" performance recordings with the Melbourne and Sydney symphonies on their own recording labels, and Mr. Ohlsson was featured on Dvořák's piano concerto in the Czech Philharmonic's live recordings of the composer's complete symphonies and concertos, released in July 2014 on the Decca label.

A native of White Plains, New York, Mr. Ohlsson began his piano studies at age eight, at the Westchester Conservatory of Music; at 13 he entered the Juilliard School in New York. His musical development has been

influenced in completely different ways by a succession of distinguished teachers, most notably Claudio Arrau, Olga Barabini, Tom Lishman, Sascha Gorodnitzki, Rosina Lhévinne, and Irma Wolpe. Although he won first prizes at the 1966 Busoni Competition in Italy and the 1968 Montréal Piano Competition, it was his 1970 triumph at the International Chopin Competition in Warsaw, where he won the Gold Medal (and remains the single American to have done so), that brought him worldwide recognition as one of the finest pianists of his generation. Since then, he has made nearly a dozen tours of Poland, where he retains immense personal popularity. Mr. Ohlsson was awarded the Avery Fisher Prize in 1994 and received the 1998 University Musical Society Distinguished Artist Award in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He is also the 2014 recipient of the Jean Gimbel Lane Prize in Piano Performance from the Northwestern University Bienen School of Music.

Mr. Ohlsson is managed exclusively by Opus 3 Artists (opus3artists.com). He makes his home in San Francisco.