



Sunday, April 17, 2016, 3pm
Zellerbach Hall

Murray Perahia, *piano*

PROGRAM

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| Joseph HAYDN (1732–1809) | Variations in F minor, Hob. XVII:6 |
| Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756–1791) | Sonata No. 8 in A minor, K. 310 (K. 300d)
Allegro maestoso, common time
Andante cantabile con espressione
Presto |
| Johannes BRAHMS (1833–1897) | Late Piano Music
Ballade in G minor, Op. 118, No. 3
Intermezzo in C Major, Op. 119, No. 3
Intermezzo in E minor, Op. 119, No. 2
Intermezzo in A Major, Op. 118, No. 2
Capriccio in D minor, Op. 116, No. 1 |

INTERMISSION

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| Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770–1827) | Sonata No. 29 in B-flat Major, Op. 106,
<i>Hammerklavier</i>
Allegro
Scherzo: Assai vivace
Adagio sostenuto
Largo; Allegro; Allegro risoluto |
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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.

Cal Performances' 2015–2016 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

Variations in F minor, Hob. XVII:6**Joseph Haydn**

Haydn's first triumph in London ended in July 1792, and he promised the impresario Johann Peter Salomon that he would return several months hence for another series of concerts. Haydn spent the intervening time at home in Vienna recouping his strength after the rigors of the London trip and attending to domestic matters, especially seeing to the demand of his shrewish wife (whom he called, privately, the "House-Dragon") for new quarters. Anna Maria had discovered a house in the suburb of Gumpendorf that she thought would be perfect, she explained to her husband, when she was a widow. Haydn was understandably reluctant to see the place, but he found it pleasing, and bought it the next year. It was the home in which, in 1809, a decade after Anna Maria, he died. Among the works that he composed before returning to London in January 1794 (he left Anna Maria behind) was the Variations in F minor, apparently written for the talented Viennese pianist Barbara ("Babette") Ployer. Babette, a piano and theory student of Haydn's dear friend Wolfgang Mozart, was the daughter of Gottfried Ignaz von Ployer, the Viennese agent at the Habsburg court (today he would be called a lobbyist) for Mozart's old employer and nemesis, the Archbishop Hieronymous Colloredo of Salzburg. It was for Babette that Mozart had composed two piano concertos in 1784 (K. 449 and K. 453) for performance at the frequent soirées with which Herr Ployer entertained his fellow music connoisseurs. Mozart additionally wrote for her a little *Trauermarsch* (K. 453a) and a set of keyboard exercises (K. 453b); Haydn jotted a canon with the text of the First Commandment into her notebook with the inscription "from your worshipper and admirer." Little is known of Babette after 1793, except that she married one Herr von Buganovitz and died in Hungary sometime before 1820.

In his study of Haydn's piano music, A. Peter Brown suggested that the superb F-minor Variations "presents a microcosmic but complete view of Haydn's late keyboard style" by calling for the depth of emotion, sudden dynamic changes, precise figuration, delicacy of

articulation, and sustained tone that look forward to the encroaching Romantic age. Haydn originally titled the work "Sonata" in his manuscript, perhaps indicating that he at first regarded it as the opening movement of a larger cycle. On a later copy, however, he called it, rather curiously, "un piccolo [little] divertimento," and finally settled on "Variations pour le piano forte" when the piece was published by Artaria in 1799. The work comprises variations on two alternating themes—the first, melancholy and deeply expressive, is in the nominal tonality of F minor; the other turns to the brighter key of F Major. Each theme is explored through three variations before a coda of daring harmonic personality and marvelous motivic invention closes this masterwork of Haydn's maturity.

Sonata in A minor, K. 310 (K. 300d)**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

Mozart arrived in Paris, chaperoned by his mother, on March 23, 1778, hoping that the music lovers of the French capital would recognize his genius and reward him with an appropriate position. With the help of Baron Friedrich Grimm, whom he had met on his first trip to Paris as a *Wunderkind* of seven in 1763, he was introduced to several members of the aristocracy, though his treatment at their hands was something less than he had hoped for—his letters home often complain of being kept waiting in drafty anterooms and of having to perform on wretched harpsichords. In May, it appeared that his foray into Parisian cultural life might be rewarded. He reported to his father that he had been offered the post of organist at Versailles, a job with light duties, six months leave per year, and proximity to the royal family. His longing was not for the royal chapel, however, but for the opera house (and for a sweetheart, Aloysia Weber, whom he had met on the stop in Mannheim while journeying to Paris), and he refused the post. "After all, 2,000 *livres* is not such a big sum," he rationalized in a letter to his furious father. Mozart's stay in Paris grew sad. His mother fell ill in June, and she died the following month. He lingered in Paris, sorrowful and alone, until September 26th,



when, without the position he sought or the commissions he hoped to receive, he returned to Salzburg.

Mozart tailored most of the pieces composed during his Parisian visit to the local taste, i.e., music possessed of much surface glitter and showy technique but with little emotional depth. There are two notable exceptions—the E-minor Sonata for Violin and Piano (K. 304) and the A-minor Piano Sonata (K. 310). His motivation for composing the piano sonata is unknown. He seems to have had no immediate prospect for its publication or public performance, and may have written it to play at private homes in his search for new pupils, or to present at the occasional musical gatherings of his Mannheim friends in Paris. Papa Leopold chas-

tised him for “wasting” his time on such work when he should have been producing something that could earn some money. The sonata’s nature, “dramatic and full of unrelieved darkness,” according to Alfred Einstein, suggests that Mozart composed the piece for himself rather than for any applause-seeking situation.

The stormy opening movement of the A-minor Sonata revives the world of rich, proto-Romantic expression that Mozart first entered with the “little” G-minor symphony of 1773 (K. 183), and which was to inform some of the greatest works of his maturity—*Don Giovanni*, Symphony in G minor (K. 550), Quintet in G minor, *Requiem*. The movement’s pervading sense of drama—the dynamic contrasts, the unrelenting rhythms, the expressive harmonies—

mark an important advance in Mozart's musical language. The Andante opens in a bright major key, but soon shades into the minor, and in its middle section recalls the dramatic emotion of the preceding movement. The masterful alternation of major and minor, of light and shadow, of melancholy and hope pervades the gossamer textures of the concluding Presto.

Selected Late Piano Music

Johannes Brahms

It was Brahms' ability as a pianist that brought him his earliest fame. His father, Jakob, a double bass player of meager success in Hamburg, early recognized the boy's musical talents, and started him with piano lessons when he was seven. Just three years later, Johannes was playing well enough to be offered a tour of America as a child prodigy, but he was instead accepted for further training (at no cost) by Eduard Marxsen, a musician whose excellent taste and thorough discipline helped form his student's elevated view of the art. Marxsen guided Brahms' earliest attempts at composition, and prepared him for his first public recital, given in Hamburg in September 1848, when he was 15. Significantly, the program included a fugue by Bach. A year later, Brahms presented a second concert, which featured another selection by Bach as well as Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata.

Such high-minded music-making was, however, only one aspect of Brahms' life when he was a budding teenage pianist, since at the same time as he was studying the great classics with Marxsen, he was earning money for the always-pinched household budget by playing in what were euphemistically called "dance halls" in Hamburg's rough dock district, work he began when he was just 13. This exposure to the seediest elements of city life affected the young Brahms deeply, and may well have been the reason that he could not achieve a satisfactory relationship with any respectable woman later in his life. (He once vowed that there were two things he would never attempt: an opera and a marriage.) It is a tribute to the innate strength of his personality that he was able to absorb the amazing range of his experiences as a youth—from the transcendent to the unseemly—and

emerge only a few years later as one of the most significant artistic figures of his time.

In 1850, Brahms met Eduard Reményi, a violinist who had been driven to Hamburg by the civil uprisings in Hungary two years before. In 1853, the duo undertook a concert tour through Germany, a venture that not only allowed Brahms to extricate himself from the waterfront taverns, but also to meet Joseph Joachim, who, at 22, only two years his senior, was already regarded as one of the best violinists in Europe. Joachim introduced him to Robert and Clara Schumann, who were overwhelmed by Brahms' talent when he played them some of his own compositions, including his first published works—the C-Major (Op. 1) and F-sharp minor (Op. 2) piano sonatas. It was because of the Schumanns' encouragement that he began his Piano Concerto No. 1 in 1854; Brahms was soloist in the work's premiere on January 22, 1859 in Hanover.

Brahms toured and concertized extensively as a pianist in northern Europe for the next decade. 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 premiere 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' pianism was noted less for its flashy virtuosity than for its rich emotional expression, fluency, individuality, nearly orchestral sonority, and remarkable immediacy, especially in performances of his own music. The English pianist Florence May, who studied with him in the 1870s, reported, "Brahms' playing...was not [that] of a virtuoso, though he had a large amount of virtuosity (to put it mildly) at his command. He never aimed at mere effect, but seemed to plunge into the innermost meaning of whatever music he happened to be inter-

preting, exhibiting all its details, and expressing its very depths.” Richard Specht, an intimate of Brahms during his last decade, recalled in his biography of the pianist-composer, “His playing, for all its reticence, was filled with song, there was in it a searching, a gliding of light and flitting of shadows, a flaring and burning out, a restrained masculine feeling and a forgetful, romantic passion.... He always played as if he were alone; he forgot his public entirely, sank into himself, gained new knowledge of his own tones in re-creating them, was lost to himself.”

Brahms’ compositions for solo piano 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, 116, 117, 118, and 119. To these must be added the dance-inspired compositions of the late 1860s: a set of 16 waltzes (Op. 39) and the Hungarian Dances. Brahms’ 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.”

The march-like outer sections of the Ballade in G minor (Op. 118, No. 3) are balanced in

form and expression by an easily flowing central episode that refers to the earlier thematic material. The Intermezzo in C Major, the third, shortest, and happiest movement of the Op. 119 set (1893), is a modest rebuke to criticisms that Brahms could not write cheerful music in his later years. The agitated outer portions of the Intermezzo in E minor, Op. 119, No. 2 (1892) are perfectly balanced by the gentle waltz at the center not just in mood and style but also through the use of the same theme in different guises for both sections. The Intermezzo in A Major (1893, Op. 118, No. 2) is music of gentle lyricism. The Capriccio in D minor (1892, Op. 116, No. 1), with its powerful, syncopated rhythms, jagged contours, and chromatic harmonies, is turbulent and unsettled.

Sonata in B-flat Major, Op. 106,

Hammerklavier

Ludwig van Beethoven

Beethoven’s younger brother, Caspar Carl, a bank clerk of modest success in Vienna, died of tuberculosis on November 15, 1815. Though Caspar seems to have lived with her contentedly, his wife, Johanna, was a woman of sullied reputation whom the composer characterized as “wicked and vicious...The Queen of the Night.” Beethoven felt that she was unfit to raise the couple’s nine-year-old child, Karl, and he convinced his brother to name him as the boy’s guardian. Two days before he died, Caspar Carl included this provision in his will. During the following hours, however, he had misgivings about taking Karl from his mother, and added a codicil that, in effect, named his wife and brother as co-guardians, thereby contradicting the earlier provision.

There ensued nearly five years of bitter legal battles between Beethoven and Johanna over the custody of Karl, who was mired in misery all the while by the unsettled state of his young life. The case was first decided in Beethoven’s favor in February 1816. Various subsequent proceedings were instituted by Johanna (usually after Karl had fled to her from the smothering attentions of his uncle), and the courts again formally took up the matter in 1818. Litigation dragged on for the next two years.

The eventual settlement in 1820 was painful for Beethoven, not because he lost the suit (he won, but alienated the boy so thoroughly that six years later Karl tried to kill himself), but because the proceedings revealed that he was without noble ancestors, a life-long belief that he held tenaciously until it was publicly exploded in court. With declining health, shattered hearing, and family turmoil sapping so much of Beethoven's energy during that time (he turned 50 in 1820), it is little wonder that this half-decade was the least productive period of his creative life. Between the two cello sonatas, Op. 102, of 1815 and the Piano Sonata in E Major, Op. 109, of 1820, the only major works that he completed were the song cycle *An die ferne Geliebte* and the piano sonatas in A (Op. 101) and B-flat, the *Hammerklavier* (Op. 106).

It was during the summer of 1817 that Beethoven began his *Hammerklavier* Sonata (so-called because in 1816 the nation-proud composer instructed his publishers to henceforth use that German term for his keyboard works rather than the common Italian word “pianoforte”), when he had escaped from Vienna to rusticate in Heiligenstadt, Nussdorf, and Baden; it was completed late the following year. Upon its publication by Artaria in October 1819, the score was dedicated to the Archduke Rudolph, Beethoven's student and most dependable patron, who had been elected Archbishop of Olmütz a few months before. The *Hammerklavier* Sonata is among the first manifestations of Beethoven's “late style,” when he was simultaneously striving for both greater concentration and greater expansion than he had achieved in his earlier music. The major works of his last decade—*Missa Solemnis*, Ninth Symphony, the quartets and sonatas—evoke an unprecedented range of emotions and power of expression through the use of distant key relations, bold juxtapositions, vast formal proportions, muscular rhythms, and daring harmonies. The element of concentration, which at first seems inimical to that of expansion, is here actually inextricably allied with it, since Beethoven was able to increase the density of this music—its specific emotional gravity—

through complex counterpoint and exquisite control of motivic figuration at the same time that he increased its scope and duration. It is this joining of apparent antitheses—the extension of form alongside the heightening of measure-to-measure expressive intensity—that makes the late works of Beethoven the most profound and challenging in the entire realm of music. Martin Cooper, in his 1970 study of Beethoven's last decade, wrote that these works “concede nothing to the listener, no attempt is made to capture his attention or hold his interest. Instead the composer communes with himself or contemplates his vision of reality, thinking (as it were) aloud and concerned only with the pure essence of his own thoughts and with the musical processes from which that thought itself is often indistinguishable.”

The *Hammerklavier* Sonata is epic in scale yet inexhaustibly subtle in detail. Its four movements—a sonata-form Allegro with a *cantabile* second theme, the Scherzo, with its contrasting central trio in quick duple meter, an Adagio in sonata form of almost unparalleled sublimity, and a vast fugue that employs virtually every contrapuntal technique—encompass and bring into balance an enormous range of emotional states that find no counterpart in mere words. Opposites are here joined: the sonata contains the broadest slow movement that Beethoven ever wrote, as well as one of his most minutely realized fugues; the work is firmly rooted in traditional formal procedures, yet seeks constantly to break their fetters; those who perform the *Hammerklavier* must bring to it both the physical endurance of an athlete and the most exalted interpretative skills of the artist. The words of Artaria's notice in the *Wiener Zeitung* of September 15, 1819, announcing the publication of the sonata, still apply well to this extraordinary music: “We shall now put aside all the usual eulogies, which would in any case be superfluous for the admirers of Beethoven's great artistic talent. We note only that this work, which excels all this master's other creations in its rich and grand fantasy, artistic perfection, and sustained style, will mark a new period in Beethoven's piano compositions.”

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Murray Perahia (*piano*), over a career spanning more than 40 years, has become one of the most sought-after and cherished pianists of our time, performing in all of the major international music centers and with every leading orchestra. He is the principal guest conductor of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, with whom he has toured as conductor and pianist throughout the United States, Europe, Japan, and Southeast Asia.

Born in New York, Perahia started playing piano at the age of four and later attended Mannes College, where he majored in conducting and composition. His summers were spent at the Marlboro Festival, where he collaborated with such musicians as Rudolf Serkin, Pablo Casals, and the members of the Budapest String Quartet. During this time, he also studied with Mieczysław Horszowski. In subsequent years, he developed a close friendship with Vladimir Horowitz, whose perspective and personality were an enduring inspiration. In 1972, Perahia won the Leeds International Piano Competition, and in 1973, he gave his first concert at the Aldeburgh Festival, where he worked closely with Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears, accompanying the latter in many lieder recitals. Perahia was co-artistic director of the Aldeburgh Festival from 1981 to 1989.

Perahia's current season includes concerts in London and Japan, performing Mozart and Beethoven with the London Symphony Orchestra under Bernard Haitink. He undertakes a Beethoven project with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, play-conducting all five piano concertos. His current spring tour of North America includes performances with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Bernard Haitink and recitals in Portland, OR; Seattle;

La Jolla; Los Angeles' Walt Disney Concert Hall; Durham, NC; North Bethesda, MD; Montreal; and New York's Lincoln Center.

Perahia has a wide and varied discography. Sony Classical has issued a special boxed set edition of all his recordings including several DVDs entitled *The First 40 Years*. His recording of Brahms' Handel Variations, which won a Grammy Award in 2011, was described as "one of the most rewarding Brahms recitals currently available." Some of his previous solo performances can be heard on a 5-CD boxed set of his Chopin recordings, Bach's Partitas Nos. 1, 5, and 6, and Beethoven's Piano Sonatas, Opp. 14, 26, and 28. He is the recipient of two Grammy Awards for his recordings of Chopin's complete Études and Bach's English Suites Nos. 1, 3, and 6, and several *Gramophone* Awards, including the inaugural Piano Award in 2012.

Recently, Perahia embarked on an ambitious project to edit the complete Beethoven sonatas for the Henle Urtext Edition. He also produced and edited numerous hours of recordings of recently discovered master classes by the legendary pianist Alfred Cortot, which resulted in the highly acclaimed Sony CD release *Alfred Cortot: The Master Classes*.

Perahia is an honorary fellow of the Royal Academy of Music, and he holds honorary doctorates from The Juilliard School, Oxford University, the Royal College of Music, Leeds University, and Duke University. In 2004, he was awarded an honorary KBE by Her Majesty The Queen, in recognition of his outstanding service to music.

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