



Friday, February 9, 2018, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra

Joshua Weilerstein, *conductor*
Jonathan Biss, *director and piano*

PROGRAM

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770–1827) Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat Major, Op. 19
Allegro con brio
Adagio
Rondo: Molto allegro
Jonathan Biss, *director and piano*

Timo ANDRES (b. 1985) *The Blind Banister*,
Concerto for Piano and Orchestra
Sliding Scale
Ringing Weights
Coda
(performed without pause)
Joshua Weilerstein, *conductor*
Jonathan Biss, *piano*
Co-commissioned in 2015 by
the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra

INTERMISSION

Felix MENDELSSOHN (1809–1847) Symphony No. 4 in A Major, Op. 90, *Italian**
Allegro vivace
Andante con moto
Con moto moderato
Saltarello: Presto

* Visit the SPCO Concert Library to hear
a previous performance of this piece: THESPCO.ORG/MUSIC.

To learn more about the musicians performing
on this program, visit THESPCO.ORG/ROSTER.

Cal Performances' 2017–18 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.



Beethoven/5

The SPCO continues its Beethoven/5 project with celebrated pianist Jonathan Biss. Beethoven/5 features the SPCO leading an international collective of orchestras (including the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the Cleveland Orchestra) in commissioning five composers to write piano concertos for Biss, each inspired by one of Beethoven's five piano concertos. The project launched in November 2015, when Biss joined the SPCO to play Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 2 along with Timo Andres' *The Blind Banister*. In 2016–17, Sally Beamish composed her Piano Concerto No. 3, *City Stanzas*, which was paired with Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1. This season Salvatore Sciarrino composed a concerto that has been paired with Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4 (see Saturday's program).

Ludwig van Beethoven**Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat Major, Op. 19 (c. 1794, rev. 1798 and 1808)**

When Beethoven left his hometown of Bonn for Vienna at the age of 21, his patron Count Ferdinand von Waldstein sent him with this blessing: "May you receive Mozart's spirit from the hands of Haydn." Mozart had died a year earlier, but his spirit certainly still pervaded Vienna, especially for Beethoven, who entered the freelance scene as a keyboard virtuoso, just like Mozart had a decade earlier. Beethoven did get a chance to take some lessons from Haydn (who was back in Vienna briefly between his visits to London), and in his early symphonies Beethoven used Haydn as his clear model. For piano concertos, the line of inspiration went straight to Mozart, whose 27 examples set the standard for generations to come.

Beethoven's Piano Concerto in B-flat, published out of sequence as No. 2, was actually his first complete piano concerto. Fittingly, it shared the same key and instrumentation as Mozart's last piano concerto, K. 595. Beethoven began it as early as 1788 and reworked it in 1794 for a premiere the following spring, which marked his public debut in Vienna. Further revisions in 1798 and the addition of notated ca-

denzas around 1808 brought the work to its current form.

The concerto's opening measures demonstrate textbook contrast and balance between the two offsetting phrases: The first is loud, rhythmically robust, scored for the whole orchestra, and in the home key of B-flat; the second is soft, rhythmically smooth, scored just for strings, and in the contrasting key of F. These motives develop through a high-energy movement of brilliant piano figurations, surprising harmonic shifts, and galloping rhythms. The cadenza's stark counterpoint and insistent rhythmic repetitions introduce an extra note of firmness and drama, in line with the bolder strokes of Beethoven's "middle" period.

The central Adagio, after elaborating a gentle theme, adds its most striking detail at the point when the cadenza would normally appear. Instead of inserting a virtuosic flourish, Beethoven gives the soloist a single melodic line to convey "with great expression," alternating with comments from the orchestra as the movement draws to a close.

The Rondo finale especially benefited from the 1798 revision, which transformed the square rhythm of the original main theme to the punchy, syncopated motive we know today. Whether on purpose or as a copyist's error, one instance of the old rhythm remains in the piano's last solo statement of the theme.

—© 2017 Aaron Grad

Timo Andres***The Blind Banister*,****Concerto for Piano and Orchestra (2015)**

There's an interesting process of distancing that happens after I've written a piece; when it's brand new it feels like an extension of my body, but when a few years have passed, it begins to merge with other music I know well—I almost can't remember having written it myself. I'm fascinated by composers who feel compelled to revise their work years, or decades, after the fact. Ives did this constantly, returning to add layers of complexity in sedimentary fashion; the two versions of Brahms' Op. 8 trio encapsulate the difference between promising novice and master.

Beethoven gave his early second piano concerto (“not one of my best,” in his own estimation) a kind of renovation in the form of a new cadenza, 20 years down the line (around the time he was working on the *Emperor* concerto). It’s wonderfully jarring in that he makes no concessions to his earlier style; for a couple of minutes, we’re plucked from a world of conventional gestures into a future-world of obsessive fugues and spiraling modulations. Like any good cadenza, it’s made from those same simple gestures—an arpeggiated triad, a sequence of downward scales—but uses them as the basis for a miniature fantasia.

My third piano concerto, *The Blind Banister*, is a whole piece built over this fault line in Beethoven’s second, trying to peer into the gap. I tried as much as possible to start with those same extremely simple elements Beethoven uses; however, my piece is not a pastiche or an exercise in palimpsest. It doesn’t even directly quote Beethoven. There are some surface similarities to his concerto (a three-movement structure, a B-flat tonal center) but these are mostly red herrings. The best way I can describe my approach to writing the piece is: I started writing my own cadenza to Beethoven’s concerto, and ended up devouring it from the inside out.

Solo piano introduces the main theme of the piece—one of those slowly descending scales. It’s actually two scales, one the melody and the other (lagging behind) the accompaniment, creating little rubbing major-second suspensions against each other with every move. This idea is later splayed out and reversed in a rising sequence of loping, two-note phrases. This “Sliding Scale” is presented over and over, forming the basis for movement of continuous variations, constantly revising themselves. Orchestral layers pile up around the scale, building dissonant towers out of those major seconds. One last, long downward scale gathers enough momentum to launch the second movement scherzo, “Ringing Weights.”

Here, the downward scale is transformed into a propulsive motor in solo strings, driving bright cascades of chromatic chords in the solo part. This movement is also made from varying modules, each increasingly elaborate—

though this time, each successive module descends a step, the scale theme subverting the structure of the piece, trying to push it inexorably downwards.

The piano works hard to reverse this process in a trio section, trading a stumbling, step-wise melody with gentle orchestral echoes of the ringing chords from the scherzo. As the piano music lurches to its feet, it grows progressively more boisterous, and the steps move faster, whirling themselves into a return of the scherzo material, this time with full orchestra and pounding timpani.

Orchestra suddenly falls away, leaving the pianist to wrestle with the two basic elements of the piece—rising and falling. Arpeggios leap up and over each other, unbound to any meter, vaulting through the harmonic atmosphere before plunging down to the lowest E. As the arpeggios begin to trace more regular patterns, the orchestra drifts back in with another long scale, descending step by step, introducing a richly-harmonized Coda, really a super-compressed recapitulation of the first movement, the piano finally rushing off into an ambiguous future.

“Like when the light goes out on the stairs and the hand follows—with confidence—the blind banister that finds its way in the darkness.”

—Tomas Tranströmer, Schubertiana

—© 2015 Timo Andres

Felix Mendelssohn

Symphony No. 4 in A Major, Op. 90, *Italian* (1833–34)

At 20, Mendelssohn did what most young men from wealthy families did at the time: He embarked on a “grand tour” through Europe. Whereas Scotland inspired the stormy *Hebrides* Overture and the *Scottish* Symphony, a visit to sunny Italy sparked a symphony that, according to the composer, was “the jolliest piece I have ever done.”

Mendelssohn sketched part of that symphony while in Italy in 1830–31, and he completed the work in 1833, using it to fulfill a prestigious commission from the Philharmonic

Society of London, the same group that had commissioned Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Mendelssohn made substantial revisions to the symphony's final three movements in 1834, and he intended to revise the first movement, too, but he postponed that task and finally suppressed the symphony altogether. The work was published posthumously as the Symphony No. 4, although it was actually composed third.

Mendelssohn's bright impressions of Italy are borne out by the bouncing themes and running triplet pulse of the Allegro vivace that opens the symphony. Still, this is no mere musical "postcard"—just note the finely wrought development section, which shows the work of a composer equally fluent in Bach's formal counterpoint and Beethoven's obsessive manipulation of recurring themes. The Andante con moto may have been influenced by a religious

processional Mendelssohn witnessed in Naples, an image that fits with the movement's walking bass and grave harmonies.

The moderate pace and smooth flow of the third movement resemble the minuets native to the symphonies of Mozart and Haydn, as opposed to the more rambunctious scherzos popularized by Beethoven. In the contrasting trio section, the horns and bassoons indulge in spacious phrases that impart an outdoor quality, until the mood turns momentarily menacing with the interjection of trumpets, timpani, and a stern minor key.

For the symphony's whirlwind finale, Mendelssohn borrowed lively rhythmic patterns from Italian folk dancing. He named the movement after the *saltarello*, a dance from central Italy defined by its fast triplet pulse and its leaping movements.

—© 2017 Aaron Grad

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Renowned for its artistic excellence, remarkable versatility of musical styles, and adventurous programming, the **Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra** is widely regarded as one of the finest chamber orchestras in the world. Now in its 59th season, the SPCO has recently undergone transformational change with the opening of its new home, the Ordway Concert Hall, the addition of a new generation of players, and significant changes in its artistic vision. The SPCO is primarily an unconduted ensemble that performs a broad range of repertoire, from Baroque to new music, and works in close collaboration with a diverse series of artistic partners, including British Baroque specialist Jonathan Cohen, American pianist Jeremy Denk, Swedish clarinetist Martin Fröst, Moldovan violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja, and Finnish violinist Pekka Kuusisto. Past artistic partners include Roberto Abbado, Pierre-Laurent Aimard, Joshua Bell, Douglas Boyd, Nicholas McGegan, Stephen Prutsman, Dawn Upshaw, and Christian Zacharias.

The virtuoso musicians of the SPCO present more than 130 concerts and educational programs in the Twin Cities each year. The orches-

tra also reaches more than 250,000 listeners annually through its free online Concert Library, and has recently begun offering both live and on-demand videos of concerts that can be viewed anytime, anywhere, on any device, completely free of charge. The SPCO is regularly heard on public radio programs that reach more than 2 million listeners each week on over 300 stations. Additionally, the SPCO has released 67 recordings, commissioned 148 new works, and tours nationally and internationally, including performances in premier venues in Europe, Asia, and South America.

The SPCO is nationally recognized for its commitment to broad community accessibility, its innovative audience outreach efforts, and its educational and family programming. Regular subscription series are performed in a variety of different venues across the Twin Cities metropolitan area each season, a unique commitment to geographic accessibility for a major orchestra. The SPCO offers the most affordable tickets of any major orchestra in the United States, with over 50 percent of tickets available for \$15 or less, and has expanded accessibility even further by offering free tickets for children

and students starting in the 2016–17 season as a part of the New Generation Initiative. The orchestra also offers an innovative ticket membership model in which members pay \$7 per month to attend unlimited concerts. The SPCO's award-winning CONNECT education program reaches over 5,000 students and teachers annually in 12 Minneapolis and Saint Paul public schools, and its Target® Free Family Music program provides engaging and educational experiences for thousands of Twin Cities children and families each year. The SPCO's Liquid Music Series (named "Best of Classical" by the *New York Times*) develops innovative new projects with iconoclastic artists in unique presentation formats and invites adventurous audiences to discover the new and the fascinating within the flourishing landscape of contemporary chamber music.

Joshua Weilerstein (*conductor*) is the artistic director of the Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne. His clarity of musical expression, unforced manner, and deep natural musicianship connect him with orchestras and have led him to conduct extensively in Europe and the United States. His enthusiasm for a wide range of repertoire is combined with an ambition to bring new audiences to the concert hall.

Weilerstein's career was launched after winning both the First Prize and the Audience Prize at the 2009 Malko Competition for Young Conductors in Copenhagen. He then completed a three-year appointment as assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic. Since then, he has gained a growing profile in both North America and abroad, including recent guest conducting engagements with the symphony orchestras of Baltimore, Dallas, Detroit, Fort Worth, Milwaukee, San Diego, Calgary, Quebec, and Vancouver; the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra; the National Arts Centre Orchestra; and the Aspen Music Festival, among others. In Europe, he has established strong relationships with the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Stockholm Philharmonic, Oslo Philharmonic, and Swedish Chamber Orchestra. He has also conducted the Mel-

bourne Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, SWR Stuttgart, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Philharmonia, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, and Orchestre Philharmonique de Luxembourg.

Joshua Weilerstein believes passionately in programming both traditional and contemporary repertoire. He is committed to presenting, whenever possible, at least one piece by a living composer in each of his programs. Weilerstein also feels that it is essential to have an open communication between the stage and the audience and is always excited to hear from musicians and audiences alike. He is accessible on social media for conversation about the future of classical music, programming, and the experience of concert-going.

Jonathan Biss (*piano*), the world-renowned American pianist, shares his talent, passion, and deep musical curiosity with classical music lovers in the concert hall and beyond. Over nearly two decades on the concert stage, he has forged relationships with the New York Philharmonic; the Philadelphia, Cleveland, and Philharmonia orchestras; the Boston, Chicago, and Swedish Radio symphony orchestras; and the Leipzig Gewandhaus, Budapest Festival, and Royal Concertgebouw orchestras, among many others.

In addition to performing a full schedule of concerts, Biss has spent 10 summers at the Marlboro Music Festival and has written extensively about his relationships with the composers with whom he shares a stage. A member of the faculty of his *alma mater*, the Curtis Institute of Music, since 2010, Biss led the first massive open online course (MOOC) offered by a classical music conservatory, *Exploring Beethoven's Piano Sonatas*, which has reached more than 150,000 people in 185 countries.

This season Biss continues his latest Beethoven project, Beethoven/5, for which the SPCO is co-commissioning five composers to write new piano concertos, each inspired by one of Beethoven's. The five-year plan began in 2015 with Biss premiering Timo Andres' *The Blind Banister*, which was a finalist for the Pulitzer

Prize in Music. The next season he premiered Sally Beamish's concerto *City Stanzas*, paired with Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1. This year he premiered *Il sogno de Stradella (The Dream of Stradella)* by Salvatore Sciarrino paired with Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4. In the next two years, Biss will premiere concertos by Caroline Shaw and Brett Dean.

Biss performs a diverse and adventurous repertoire ranging from Mozart and Beethoven, through the Romantics, to Janáček and Schoenberg, as well as works by contemporary composer György Kurtág and commissions from David Ludwig, Leon Kirchner, Lewis Spratlan, and Bernard Rands.

Biss represents the third generation in a family of professional musicians that includes his grandmother, Raya Garbousova, one of the first well-known female cellists (for whom Samuel Barber composed his Cello Concerto), and his parents, violinist Miriam Fried and violist/violinist Paul Biss. Growing up surrounded by music, Biss began his piano studies at age six, and his first musical collaborations were with his mother and father. He studied at Indiana University with Evelyne Brancart and at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia with Leon Fleisher. At age 20, Biss made his New York recital debut at the 92nd Street Y's Tisch Center for the Arts and his New York Philharmonic debut under Kurt Masur.

Berkeley **RADICAL**

BLURRING BOUNDARIES

These performances are part of the 2017/18 Berkeley RADICAL *Blurring Boundaries* programming strand, which presents artists who are dissolving the very boundaries of their art forms and creating performances that cut across cultures and disciplines, accepted definitions of classical and contemporary, and even time and space. *Blurring Boundaries* continues this season with performances by Company Wang Ramirez with its acclaimed hip-hop-meets-tanztheater opus, *Borderline* (Feb 24–25); and soprano Julia Bullock and pianist John Arida (Mar 25). For more information, please visit calperformances.org.

The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra

Violin

Steven Copes,
concertmaster
John M. and Elizabeth
W. Musser Chair

Ruggero Alliffranchini,
associate concertmaster
John H. and Elizabeth
B. Myers Chair

Kyu-Young Kim,
principal violin
Bruce H. Coppock Chair

Francisco Fullana,
principal violin

Daria T. Adams

Nina Tso-Ning Fan

Eunice Kim

Maureen Nelson

Kayla Moffett

Rolf Haas

Tien-Hsin Cindy Wu

Viola

Maiya Papach,
principal
Alfred and Ingrid
Lenz Harrison Chair

Hyobi Sim
Alice Preves Viola Chair

Yoshihiko Nakano

Sabina Thatcher

Cello

Julie Albers,
principal
Bill and Hella Mears
Hueg Chair

Joshua Koestenbaum,
associate principal
Ruth and John Huss Chair

Sarah Lewis
John and Karen
Larsen Chair

Rebecca Merblum

Bass

Zachary Cohen,
principal

Elizabeth Burns

Flute

Julia Bogorad-Kogan,
principal

Alicia McQuerrey

Oboe

Kathryn Greenbank,
principal
Sewell Family Chair

Barbara Bishop

Clarinet

Christopher Pell

Rena Kraut

Bassoon

Mark Timmerman

Carole Mason Smith

Horn

Rene Pagen

Matthew Wilson

Trumpet

John Dent

Lynn Erickson

Trombone

Christopher Davis

Timpani

Alex Wadner

Percussion

Jared Solddiviero

Harp

Victoria Drake

*In addition to those listed
above, the SPCO extends
its deepest thanks to the
HRK Family for endowing
a position in the orchestra.*

Saturday, February 10, 2018, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra

Joshua Weilerstein, *conductor*

Jonathan Biss, *piano*

PROGRAM

Franz Joseph HAYDN (1732–1809) Symphony No. 49 in F minor, *La Passione**

Adagio
Allegro di molto
Menuet
Presto

Salvatore SCIARRINO (b. 1947) *Il sogno di Stradella (The Dream of Stradella)*
for Piano and Orchestra

Joshua Weilerstein, *conductor*
Jonathan Biss, *piano*

*Commissioned in 2017 by the Saint Paul
Chamber Orchestra; the Cleveland Orchestra,
Franz Welser-Möst, music director; and the
Ensemble intercontemporain*

INTERMISSION

Charles IVES (1874–1954) *The Unanswered Question**

Joshua Weilerstein, *conductor*

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770–1827) Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, Op. 58*

Allegro moderato
Andante con moto
Rondo: Vivace

Joshua Weilerstein, *conductor*
Jonathan Biss, *piano*

* Visit the SPCO Concert Library to hear
a previous performance of this piece: THESPCO.ORG/MUSIC.

To learn more about the musicians performing
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Franz Joseph Haydn
Symphony No. 49 in F minor, *La Passione*
(1768)

When Prince Nikolaus Esterházy completed a lavish country palace in 1766, the workload for his tireless *Kapellmeister*, Joseph Haydn, increased dramatically. The “summer” seasons at the estate stretched to be nearly year-round, and all the while Haydn had to produce operas, provide music for church services, mount concerts, and attend to any other musical needs for his insatiable patron. “In Eszterháza,” Haydn later acknowledged, “I was forced to become original.”

Some of Haydn’s most original efforts in the late 1760s and 1770s reflected an artistic trend that has been dubbed *Sturm und Drang* (“Storm and Stress”) after a play of the same name. From literature to painting to playwriting, artists dared to explore emotional extremes and dark discomfort; for Haydn, it led to his first symphonies constructed in minor keys.

The Symphony No. 49 was among Haydn’s earliest minor-key symphonies, and it is arguably his darkest. Instead of the usual order of movements, this F-minor symphony begins with a devastating Adagio in F minor, a practice in line with the older “church sonatas” that arranged the movements slow-fast-slow-fast. A rather fast second movement continues in the same key of F minor, its theme marked by aggressive leaps and driving counterpoint. The key persists for the Menuet third movement, at least until the contrasting trio section in F Major provides the symphony’s only substantial relief. The brisk, throbbing finale confirms this symphony’s F-minor fate.

This symphony’s nickname, “The Passion,” did not come from Haydn, and there is no indication that the symphony had any religious connection other than a performance during Holy Week in 1790 that advertised “La passione.” Another early source labels this symphony “Il quakuo di bel’humore” (“The Waggish Quaker”), which puts a completely different sheen on this symphony’s musical mood. If accurate, it suggests that Haydn may have originally created this music for the stage, to ac-

company a popular satire featuring a pious Quaker character. In that version of history, Haydn’s over-the-top emotions would have played as comedy, not tragedy!

—© 2017 Aaron Grad

Beethoven/5

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Salvatore Sciarrino

Il sogno di Stradella (The Dream of Stradella)
for Piano and Orchestra (2017)

Non un concerto di suoni, bensì di risonanze più o meno lontane.

Il solista si sottrae, nega la sua abituale supremazia, per riaffermarla su altri livelli. Non sembri questa un’idea strana, poiché sfiora e dichiara l’essenza trascendente del linguaggio/pensiero.

In quanto strumento di conoscenza l’arte ci può trasformare.

Così scrivevo anni addietro: “la musica è emanazione e ornamento del silenzio. La trasfigurazione sonora, l’avvicinarsi all’indistinto genera inquietudine: il non saper distinguere fra presenza e assenza.”

L’inquietudine dell’apprendimento è essenziale per la scoperta dell’universo, che di tutti noi è genitore.

—Salvatore Sciarrino

Not a concerto of sounds, but of resonances, near and distant.

The soloist withdraws, denies his usual superiority, to reaffirm it on other levels. This does not seem to be a strange idea, for it touches upon and speaks to the transcendent essence of language/thought.

As an instrument of consciousness, art can transform us.

As I wrote years ago: "Music is the emanation and ornamentation of silence. The transfiguration of sound, the approach of the obscure, causes anxiety: that of not knowing how to distinguish between presence and absence."

The anxiety of learning is essential for the discovery of the universe, which is parent to us all.

—Salvatore Sciarrino
(translation by the Cleveland Orchestra)

Charles Ives

The Unanswered Question (1906; rev. 1934)

Though much of Ives' music is modern and experimental in its harmony, texture, and melodic manipulations, it is solidly rooted in the Romantic notion that music *means* something—that the notes are more than simply abstract, fleeting vibrations that momentarily titillate the ear but ultimately leave the listener untouched. He was convinced that music "comes directly out of the heart of the experience of life and living life." Some of Ives' works are like pasted-up scrapbooks of the musical bits and pieces that had stuck in his mind since his childhood in Danbury, Connecticut, and which give shape to a sort of collective American nostalgia for the vanished sweetness and security of the "good old days." Others of his compositions treat philosophical topics: *The Unanswered Question* posits nothing less than "the perennial question of existence;" the Fourth Symphony probes "the searching questions of What? and Why? which the spirit of man asks of life;" and the *Universe Symphony*, of which only some 40 pages of disjoint and nearly illegible manuscript ever came into existence, sought to have all the people of

the world gather together to hear the work performed by orchestras on the mountain tops and choirs in the valleys. Ives was a true visionary; "a man of noble thoughts, a brave and original genius," according to American composer and critic Virgil Thomson. "The future of music may not lie entirely with music itself," Ives wrote, "but rather in the way it encourages and extends, rather than limits, the aspirations and ideas of the people, in the way it makes itself a part of the finer things that humanity does and dreams of."

The Unanswered Question, subtitled "A Contemplation of Something Serious," is one of Ives' most visionary and frequently heard works. It was written in 1906 along with a companion piece, *Central Park in the Dark in the Good Old Summer Time* ("A Contemplation of Nothing Serious"), when Ives was trying out all manner of sound combinations in his music. *The Unanswered Question* comprises three distinct kinds of music, superimposed: a string chorale, an unchanging trumpet phrase, and a chattering woodwind response. Ives assigned these unlikely partners the following philosophical roles: "The strings play *pianississimo* throughout with no change in tempo. They are to represent the 'Silence of the Druids—Who Know, See, and Hear Nothing.' The trumpet intones 'The Perennial Question of Existence,' and states it in the same tone of voice each time. But the hunt for 'The Invisible Answer' undertaken by the flutes and other human beings, becomes gradually more active, faster, and louder. ... 'The Fighting Answerers,' as the time goes on and after a 'secret conference,' seem to realize a futility, and begin to mock 'The Question'—the strife is over for the moment. After they disappear, 'The Question' is asked for the last time, and 'The Silences' are heard beyond in 'Undisturbed Solitude.'" *The Unanswered Question*, created well over a century ago, continues to be disturbing, challenging, and thought-provoking: "The world today makes us so aware of unanswered questions that the basic idea of the piece is easy to grasp," wrote musicologist Edward Downes.

—© 2018 Dr. Richard E. Rodda

Ludwig van Beethoven
Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, Op. 58
(1806)

On December 22, 1808, Beethoven presented a remarkable concert in Vienna. The four-hour extravaganza featured the public debuts of the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, the Fourth Piano Concerto, and the Choral Fantasy (composed as a showstopper for the occasion), as well as miscellaneous excerpts from the Mass in C, a rendition of the concert aria “Ah! Perfido,” and some piano improvisations. Reports from the concert bemoaned the glut of music, the hall’s frigid temperature, and a sloppy orchestra; the Choral Fantasy actually ground to a complete halt, at which point Beethoven returned to the beginning and prolonged the concert even further.

The Fourth Piano Concerto left spectators particularly baffled, and the work remained largely untouched until Felix Mendelssohn revived it in 1836. The mystery begins when the piano enters alone, spinning out a simple harmonic progression marked *piano dolce* (“quiet and sweet”). Then, after the piano leaves a chord hanging that by all expectations would resolve back to a stable point of arrival, the

soloist withdraws and the strings enter in a totally foreign and exotic new key. Unexpected harmonic transitions continue to crop up throughout the first movement, keeping with the quizzical mood established at the outset.

In the central *Andante con moto*, a single line, scored across several octaves in the strings, engages the piano in a halting tête-à-tête in E minor. The final cadence flows directly to the Rondo finale, which again starts with just a whisper. The strings take the lingering memory of the pitch E as the start of the galloping tune, stating the theme first and then passing it to the piano. The melody begins with a repeated tone and an ascending arpeggio that anchors our ears in C Major—except the actual destination of this concerto is to return to its starting key of G Major. Amazingly, this main theme of the finale never begins in the “proper” key, even when it appears moments from the end, adding to the sense of sleight-of-hand that defines this most elusive of Beethoven’s piano concertos.

—© 2017 Aaron Grad

For background on the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Joshua Weilerstein, and Jonathan Biss, please see pp. 17–18.



On behalf of the entire UC Berkeley community, Cal Performances’ board of trustees and staff dedicate the performance on February 10, 2018, to the memory of **Christopher Patti**, Chief Campus Counsel from 2010 to 2017, and a beloved friend and colleague. We warmly welcome Chris’ family and friends to this evening’s concert.

Patti, who brought a deep working knowledge of the University of California and UC Berkeley to his role, represented the campus in many high-profile matters, successfully spearheading litigation that has protected the interests of the campus. He worked extensively with federal, state, and local government agencies, the legislature, community organizations, and the media.

Chancellor Carol Christ remembered Patti as the model of professionalism and collegiality who represented the best of Berkeley: “He was an extraordinary colleague. He loved the university and he had a deep core of integrity that motivated everything he did. He was smart. He was compassionate. He was everything you wanted the counsel of the campus to be. We offer our sympathy to his family and his friends for this tragic loss.”





Sunday, February 11, 2018, 3pm
Zellerbach Hall

The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra

Jonathan Biss, *director and piano*

PROGRAM

Maurice RAVEL (1875–1937) *Le tombeau de Couperin*

Prélude
Forlane
Menuet
Rigaudon

George TSONTAKIS (b. 1951) *O Mikros, O Megas*
(*The small world, The huge world*)
for String Orchestra

Footprints
Shadows (Lullaby)
Orbiting (Heart and Soul)
Ruminating (dot dot dot)

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INTERMISSION

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770–1827) Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat Major,
Op. 73, *Emperor*

Allegro
Adagio un poco mosso
Rondo: Allegro

Jonathan Biss, *director and piano*

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Maurice Ravel***Le tombeau de Couperin* (1919)**

When World War I broke out in Europe, the 39-year-old Maurice Ravel volunteered as a truck and ambulance driver for the army. At the time, he was working on *Le tombeau de Couperin*, a solo piano work in the style of a French Baroque suite. In its initial conception, the work paid homage to François Couperin, the court composer for Louis XIV and a master of solo harpsichord music. (In French tradition, the word *tombeau*—literally “tomb”—was used to describe musical collections of a memorial nature.) Ravel did not finish the work until 1917, by which time it had acquired a more personal meaning, with each of six movements honoring friends killed in the war.

In 1919, the same year that the piano version of *Le tombeau de Couperin* received its first performance, Ravel transcribed four of the movements for chamber orchestra. The oboe, so prominent as a solo instrument in the Baroque era, has an outsized role in Ravel’s orchestration, starting with the fluid melody of the *Prélude*. Ravel dedicated this movement to Lieutenant Jacques Charlot (the godson of his music publisher), who died in battle in 1915.

The second movement, the *Forlane*, is based on a lively and flirtatious couple’s dance that entered the French court via northern Italy. Ravel sketched this movement before the war and subsequently dedicated it to the Basque painter Gabriel Deluc, who was killed in 1916.

The oboe returns to the fore in the *Menuet*, a French dance distinguished by its stately, three-beat pulse. Ravel dedicated this section to the memory of Jean Dreyfus, whose stepmother, Fernand Dreyfus, was one of Ravel’s closest confidantes during the war.

The *Rigaudon*, originally the fourth of six movements, serves as the finale of the orchestral suite. It pays tribute to two family friends of Ravel: Pierre and Pascal Gaudin, brothers killed by the same shell on their first day at the front in 1914. The *Rigaudon* is the most unabashedly upbeat movement of the four, with fast outer sections surrounding a more reflective melody introduced by the oboe. When faced with criticism that this memorial music was too cheer-

ful, Ravel purportedly responded, “The dead are sad enough, in their eternal silence.”

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George Tsontakis***O Mikros, O Megas* (*The small world, The huge world*) for String Orchestra (2016)**

My title, *O Mikros, O Megas*, was inspired by the opening lines of “*Axion Esti*,” by the great contemporary Greek poet, Odysseas Elytis: “*Aftos O Kosmos, O Mikros, O Megas*” (“This small world, this huge world”). There are no direct *literal* connections to the words, only the feeling of the intended ambiguity; certainly no superficial dynamic nor density parallels. In fact, it is to me that within the quietest and most inwardly moments of the work, the world seems to fully impose its power and enormity. At the same time, the figurative “flip-side” of my work’s title could well be “This tiny fleeting life, this huge eternal life”—a reflection on recent world circumstances including the tumbling world, loss of friends, and my own personal advancement into the foothills of an ageless maturity.

Thinking and hearing *into* the sonic qualities and potentials of the string orchestra, my creative and inward sensibilities seemed to eschew many “fast and loud” possibilities for those of quietude and grace. I fought with this tendency during the work’s composition, and in the end, textures of long, quietly flowing tensions won out for the most part. There are faster movements among the four and imploding episodes, but the heart and largeness of the work are made manifest in the second and last. All movements end quietly and the last, with my most preferred ending, a “dot dot dot” figure. In fact, in the score, the performers are given the option of repeating the final phrase for as long as desired, until the “end” of the work is felt.

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Ludwig van Beethoven**Piano Concerto No. 5 in E-flat Major, Op. 73, *Emperor* (1809)**

In the summer of 1809, Napoleon’s army occupied Vienna for the second time in four years. Beethoven, unlike most of his friends and patrons, remained in the city, and he passed the

miserable season with little contact with the outside world. He spent some of that time finishing the Fifth Piano Concerto, his final and most substantial work in the genre. It would also be the only concerto he did not perform himself, given the deteriorated state of his hearing by the time of the 1811 premiere in Leipzig.

Beethoven's early symphonies and concertos built upon the classical traditions of Haydn and Mozart. The work with which Beethoven eclipsed all symphonic precedents was the Symphony No. 3 in E-flat, from 1803, nicknamed "Eroica" (Italian for "heroic"). The Piano Concerto No. 5, also in the key of E-flat, is in many ways a sibling to the *Eroica* Symphony. In the case of the concerto, Beethoven had no part in the nickname—"Emperor" came later from an English publisher—but both works share a monumental posture and a triumphant spirit. Beethoven dedicated the concerto to the Archduke Rudolph, the youngest brother of the Austrian emperor Franz. More than just a patron, Rudolph was a piano student of Beethoven's and the two maintained a warm friendship until the composer's death.

The *Emperor* Concerto begins at a climax: The orchestra proclaims the home key with a single chord and the piano leaps in with a virtuosic cadenza. The ensemble holds back its traditional exposition until the pianist completes three of these fanciful solo flights, the last

connecting directly to the start of the movement's primary theme. It is a remarkable structure for a concerto, with an assurance of victory, as it were, before the battle lines have been drawn. Even once the piano returns, the movement continues in a symphonic demeanor, forgoing a standalone cadenza in favor of solo escapades that integrate deftly into the forward progress of the form.

The slow movement enters in the luminous and unexpected key of B Major with a simple theme, first stated as a chorale for muted strings. The piano plays a decorated version over pizzicato accompaniment, and woodwinds later intone the same theme, supported by piano filigree and off-beat string pulses.

The transition back to the home key for the finale is brilliantly understated, pivoting on a held note that drops a half-step to set up the piano's entrance. The upward arpeggio of the main theme generates extra propulsion through its unexpected climax on an accented off-beat, injecting a dash of Haydn's humor into a score that has all the power and majesty of Beethoven in his prime.

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For background on the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and pianist Jonathan Biss, please see pp. 17–18.

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