



music dance theater

Cal Performances

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY



Eric Lu, *piano*

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Jeremy Geffen

February marks the time each year when Cal Performances' programming shifts into high gear. From now through the beginning of May, the remainder of our 2021–22 season is packed with ambitious and adventurous programming. You won't want to miss...

- sensational dance performances like *Memphis Jookin': The Show*, featuring Lil Buck (Feb 25–26); The Joffrey Ballet (Mar 4–6); and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (Mar 29 – Apr 3)
- the West Coast premiere (Mar 12) of *Place*, Ted Hearne and Saul Williams' bold meditation on the topographies of gentrification and displacement, a Cal Performances *Illuminations* "Place and Displacement" event (see website for more details)

- the renowned **English Baroque Soloists** with conductor **Sir John Eliot Gardiner** in a transfixing program of works by Mozart and Haydn (Apr 10)
- the peerless **London Symphony Orchestra** (Mar 20), appearing under the direction of superstar conductor **Simon Rattle** in a program of orchestral masterworks
- pianist *extraordinaire* **Mitsuko Uchida** with the **Mahler Chamber Orchestra** (Mar 27)
- our 2021–22 artist-in-residence **Angélique Kidjo** in her brand new music-theater piece *Yemandjá* (a highly anticipated Cal Performances co-commission and *Illuminations* event, Apr 23).

Fasten your seatbelts; we have all of this—plus much more—in store for you!

While we at Cal Performances like to think of each of our programs as unique and remarkable, two February offerings, in particular, stand out as season highlights. On February 12 at 8pm at Zellerbach Hall, a living legend of jazz collaborates with one of the brightest lights of the younger generation in the West Coast premiere of **Wayne Shorter & esperanza spalding's ...(*Iphigenia*)**, a Cal Performances co-commission that reimagines what opera can be and asks us to reexamine the stories we have inherited and the choices we make as a society. Shorter has written the music and spalding is the librettist and appears in the title role in this radical new take on Euripides' ancient Greek play *Iphigenia in Aulis*. Seats for this highly anticipated performance sold out weeks ago, so congratulations to you lucky ticket holders! (To sign up for a waiting list for returned tickets, please visit the event page on our website.)

Then, just a few days later (Feb 17, Zellerbach Hall), co-producers and stars **Alicia Hall Moran** (mezzo-soprano) and **Jason Moran** (piano) arrive on campus for the West Coast premiere of their brilliant *Two Wings: The Music of Black America in Migration* (another Cal Performances *Illuminations* event), a series of "gripping portraits of a vast social upheaval" (*Chicago Tribune*) that explores the Great Migration of six million Black Americans from the rural South to northern cities, the West, and beyond. This ambitious production features a star-studded roster of guest performers, writers, and thinkers, headed by composer/conductor (and 2021 winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Music) Tania León, narrator Donna Jean Murch (author of *Living for the City*), and the Imani Winds chamber ensemble (to name just a few!). Together, these exceptional artists trace the Morans' family histories through the music that accompanied their brave antecedents throughout the 20th century, from Harlem Renaissance-era jazz, gospel hymns, and Broadway show tunes, to classical and chamber music and the artists' own compositions.

We're very proud of our new and updated winter brochure and know that a few minutes spent reviewing our schedule—in print or online—will reveal a wealth of options for your calendar; now is the perfect time to guarantee that you have the best seats for all the events you plan to attend.

I know you join us in looking forward to what lies ahead, to coming together once again to encounter the life-changing experiences that only the live performing arts deliver. We can't wait to share it all with you during the coming months.

Jeremy Geffen

Executive and Artistic Director, Cal Performances

Memphis Jookin': The Show featuring Lil Buck

West Coast Premiere

In the West Coast premiere of this dazzling show, Lil Buck—along with a DJ and an expert eight-dancer crew—transports us to the streets, the hallways, and the clubs where Memphis Jookin' was born.

"His agile physical instrument is astounding... [and] fueling it all is the emotion that drives his magnetic dancing. There is struggle and pain, joy and healing, and ultimately, a transformation."

—The New York Times

Feb 25 & 26
ZELLERBACH HALL



Sunday, February 6, 2022, 3pm
Hertz Hall

Eric Lu, *piano*

PROGRAM

- Frédéric CHOPIN (1810–1849) Nocturne C minor, Op. 48, No. 1
- Robert SCHUMANN (1810–1856) *Waldszenen*, Op. 82
Eintritt
Jäger auf der Lauer
Einsame Blumen
Verrufene Stelle
Freundliche Landschaft
Herberge
Vogel als Prophet
Jagdlied
Abschied
- Johannes BRAHMS (1833–1897) Theme and Variations in D minor, Op. 18b

INTERMISSION

- Franz SCHUBERT (1797–1828) Sonata in A major, D. 959
Allegro
Andantino
Scherzo: Allegro vivace – Trio: Un poco più lento
Rondo: Allegretto – Presto

This performance is made possible, in part, by Patron Sponsors Marian Lever & Art Berliner.



Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849)
Nocturne in C minor, Op. 48, No. 1 (1841)

He might seem like the ur-Romantic composer, but Frédéric Chopin didn't like Romanticism. He thought of himself as an heir to the Classical tradition and shunned the extra-musical associations so popular with his contemporaries. You will look in vain for a Chopin composition titled "In the garden" or "By a mountain brook."

Even the label "nocturne" is misleading, and only jejeune populist commentary associates it exclusively with the night. Romantic titles such as "nocturne," "prelude," "album leaf," or "impromptu" mean very little in and of themselves and serve mostly as flavorful stand-ins for the bland *Klavierstücke*, or "piano piece." Irish pianist-composer John Field is generally credited with the origination of the term "nocturne," via eponymous pieces that were celebrated for their evocation of mood without recourse to a specific program. Inspired by Field, Chopin created an epochal series of nocturnes that offer a wide spectrum of affects and moods, from blazing heroism to, yes, night-like shades.

Nowhere is Chopin's startling harmonic originality in greater relief than in the Nocturne in C minor, Op. 48, No. 1. It's sobering to consider that 1841, the year of its composition, is a mere 14 years after Beethoven's death, but what a world of difference distinguishes the evolved homophonic grammar of the late Viennese Classical from the sonic polychromaticism of this, in turn, operatic, dramatic, rhapsodic, and ecstatic composition. Grown from the seed of a deceptively modest syncopated melody—it is said that Chopin once spent an hour coaching a student to play the first phrase—it progresses on to a liquescent middle section in major mode before restating its opening materials in a richly consummated peroration.

Robert Schumann (1810–1856)
Waldszenen, Op. 82 (1849)

Into the woods: since antiquity European culture has maintained a strong connection to the forest as an idealized realm and a primal source of spiritual essence. Consider Shakespeare's forest of Arden in *As You Like It* or its cousins in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Two Gentlemen*

of *Verona*. The Germans, ever partial to forest idylls, refer to *Waldeinsamkeit*, alone time in the woods. It's not a coincidence that the first German Romantic opera, Carl Maria von Weber's *Der Freischütz*, takes place in a forest with all its allure, magic, and dark mystery.

Robert Schumann was at his best when channeling his surging emotional currents through his compositions, and nowhere does he do that more than in his works for solo piano. Personal, intimate, and confessional, they can seem well-nigh autobiographical or even psychotherapeutic. In the *Waldszenen* of 1849, Schumann allowed his imagination free rein in a series of contemplations about the woods as metaphor for our internal selves and our relationship with the larger world. The individual pieces may be short and made up of thematic fragments, but they pack a bevy of associations and resonances. This is no humdrum foray into the woods, in other words: it is a journey into the psyche, comforting and beautiful on the one hand, unknowable and mysterious on the other.

The nine *Waldszenen*, written over a mere three days, explore Romantic forest symbolism at its most evocative while often edging into chaotic disruptions, formal ambiguities, and seeming non-sequiturs. At first, all is peaceful with "Eintritt" ("Entry"), our first steps into the wood characterized by soothing harmonies and engaging melodies. But we're not alone: "Jäger auf der Lauer" ("Hunters Lying in Wait") pursue their prey with noisy enthusiasm. After all that excitement, a pair of flower pieces: "Einsame Blumen" ("Lonely Flowers"), disarmingly simple and yet occasionally jarred by fleeting wrong-note dissonances, followed by "Verrufene Stelle" ("Haunted Places"), in which we enter the realm of the Gothic via a poem by Friedrich Hebbel describing a dark red flower that takes its color not from the sun, but from the earth "which drank human blood." *Nota bene*: Clara Schumann refused to play "Verrufene Stelle" in public, finding it just too grim.

The darkness is dispelled soon in "Freundliche Landschaft" ("Friendly Landscape"), chummy and roly-poly, its aura of well-being only intensified by the well-cushioned coziness of "Herberge" ("Wayside Inn").

“Vogel als Prophet” (“Bird as Prophet”) encapsulates the essence of Schumann’s thoughts. To describe it as a mere imitation of birdsong (although Schumann does a pretty good job with that) is to ignore the apparent incongruity of the middle section, a gravely lovely chorale-like affair reminiscent of the lyric musings of *Dichterliebe*. Thus human consciousness is juxtaposed with a flittering aural fantasy, shunning both explanation and justification.

Apparently those hunters from the second piece had a good day, given their hunting song “Jagdlied,” all hail-fellow-well-met jollity and ruddy good cheer. Then it’s time to say farewell (“Abschied”) to the woods, hopefully renewed and reinvigorated by the experience, but perhaps a bit reluctant to return to the “real” world after the woodland realm’s enchantment.

Johannes Brahms

Theme and Variations in D minor, Op. 18b

Unlike most late Romantic composers, Johannes Brahms sustained a lifelong connection to his musical heritage. Thoroughly versed in the achievements of his predecessors, Brahms strove to cultivate a contemporary musical language while basing his practices on the solid foundation established by composers such as Palestrina, Bach, and—needless to say—that Titan of the immediate past, Beethoven.

Thus it makes sense that Brahms would ponder the nature and role of variations, not only in his own output but also in works by his colleagues. He had nothing but scorn for the facile embellishment practiced by fashionable salon pianist-composers such as Henri Herz or Sigismund Thalberg, whose variations were little more than sprayed-on musical glitter. After intensive study of such momentous works as Beethoven’s *Diabelli* Variations, Brahms wrote his close friend Joseph Joachim that “From time to time I reflect on variation form and find that it should be kept stricter, purer...With Beethoven the melody, harmony, and rhythm are so beautifully varied. I sometimes find, however, that the Moderns (both of us!) more often...worry the theme. We anxiously retain the entire melody, but we don’t manipulate it

freely. We don’t really create anything new out of it; on the contrary, we only burden it.”

Variations, or variation movements, feature in Brahms’ output from his earliest piano sonatas to the autumnal clarinet works of the 1890s. Following a period of evolution and growth during the 1850s, the second movement of the String Sextet in B-flat major, Op. 18 of 1860 marks Brahms’ coming of age as a variation writer. A solemn nobility characterizes the theme and its subsequent treatment that scrupulously retains the overall architecture of the melody, including its repeats. Such superficial rigidity can, in lesser hands, result in tedium, but the sheer richness of Brahms’ transformations and the rhetorical arc of their placement—the most dynamic variations come in the middle—transcend any such concerns.

Brahms’ friend-muse-interpreter Clara Schumann loved the Sextet and requested a transcription of the variation movement for solo piano. Brahms came through with the Theme and Variations in D minor, Op. 18b for her birthday on September 13, 1860. Brahms remained faithful to his original, adjusting what had to be adjusted to conform to a pianist’s anatomy, but nevertheless creating a fully effective piano composition and not a mere “short score” of the Sextet. For whatever reason, Brahms did not publish the transcription during his lifetime, although he thought quite highly of it. The Variations had to wait until 1927 to reach print, and even today the work dwells in the corners of Brahms’ catalog, overshadowed by its chamber original.

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

Piano Sonata in A major, D. 959 (1828)

On the face of it, Franz Schubert’s letter to the publisher Probst on October 2, 1828 reads as a humdrum business proposal from a composer seeking a sale: “I have composed, among other things, 3 sonatas for Pf. Solo, which I should like to dedicate to Hummel...I have played the sonatas in several places with much applause....If any of these compositions would perhaps suit you, let me know.” But read in context, the letter is shattering. Not only did

Schubert have only six weeks left to live, but he was offering Probst three supreme masterpieces of piano literature, no doubt for whatever modest fee might be offered. Schubert's sales pitch got him nowhere, and the three sonatas languished in manuscript until 1838, when Diabelli (whose little waltz tune had been the basis for Beethoven's eponymous variations) brought them out with a dedication to Robert Schumann.

That was 10 years after Schubert's death at the tender age of 31. He might have been infected with what was probably syphilis as early as November 1822, and despite occasional modest improvements, his health declined inexorably as the disease ran its terrible course. By the summer of 1828 he was desperately ill. The end came on November 19.

Yet up until the very final stages he was ablaze with creative energy. As astounding as it seems, the last three piano sonatas are products of that disease-wracked summer of 1828. All three carry a date of September 1828, although he had probably begun sketches several months earlier.

Each sonata is a world unto itself. While the first, in C minor, is turbulent and the third, in B-flat major, is magisterial, the middle Piano Sonata in A major, D. 959, is spun of warm lyricism and engaging charm. That isn't perhaps immediately apparent at the onset, given the declamatory nature of the primary theme, its stentorian repeated A-naturals in the soprano given rich life by inner voices imparting constant harmonic variety. The secondary theme partakes of that same tendency to glue itself to a single soprano note, albeit with less tenacity. There is no clear-cut closing theme; instead a modified statement of the secondary theme brings the exposition to a serene close.

The development presents a marvelous aural illusion: it might sound entirely new, but its ma-

terials had already appeared as a brief throwaway variation on the secondary theme. Now that throwaway variation steals the show as the most immediately recognizable of the development's melodic materials. The reprise arrives with a brilliant *fortissimo* statement of the primary theme, and after a fairly straightforward recapitulation the coda first liquifies the primary theme then evaporates it, ending the movement in a shimmering haze of A-major arpeggios.

The Andantino second movement's main theme could easily pass as one of Mendelssohn's signature Venetian gondola songs, so strongly does it partake of the rocking rhythm of the barcarolle. The third-place Scherzo is whimsical, jolly, effervescent, and insouciant. That sort of thing can turn saccharine in a heartbeat, but Schubert sidesteps kitsch via bracing flashes of irritability. The Trio, marked *Un poco più lento* (a little bit slower), just might refer slyly back to the primary theme of the first movement.

Schubert biographer Brian Newbould claims that "the bald facts about Schubert's finale read like a recipe for third-rate art." He points out that Schubert borrowed the theme from an earlier work and modeled his layout on the finale of a Beethoven piano sonata. But Schubert's inexhaustible invention easily surmounts such puny concerns: "The musical impression is, on the contrary, of fresh-minted inspiration carving out its own natural path as it goes." The Allegretto is an altogether entrancing creation that flows along with gracious amiability. It could have simply burbled itself away to a peaceful conclusion, but a sudden *fortissimo* reference back to the sonata's very beginning makes for an ending that blends surprise with radiance.

—Scott Foglesong

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Eric Lu won First Prize at the Leeds International Piano Competition in 2018, the first American to win the prestigious prize since Murray Perahia. He made his BBC Proms debut the following summer, and is currently a member of the BBC New Generation Artist

scheme. Lu is a recipient of the 2021 Avery Fisher Career Grant, and is an exclusive Warner Classics recording artist.

Forthcoming concerto highlights include debuts with the London Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Oslo Philharmonic,

Finnish Radio Symphony, St. Petersburg Philharmonic, and Kansas City Symphony. He will also give recitals at the Rockport Music Festival, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Cologne Philharmonie, Wigmore Hall, Bath Mozartfest and Chopin and his Europe Festival.

Lu has recently performed with the Seattle Symphony, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic, Detroit Symphony, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Sahanghai Symphony, Warsaw Philharmonic, BBC Philharmonic, Swedish Chamber Orchestra, and Singapore Symphony, among others. He has worked with conductors Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, Vasily Petrenko, Edward Gardner, Sir Mark Elder, Thomas Dausgaard, Martin Fröst, Alexander Bloch, and Long Yu.

He has appeared in recital at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, BOZAR Brussels, Wigmore Hall, Philharmonie Luxembourg, St. Petersburg Philharmonia, 92nd St Y, Fondation Louis Vuitton Paris, Seoul Arts Centre, Grand Theatre Shanghai, and Sala São Paulo. Lu went on tour with the Orchestre National de Lille in 2020, and in the prior year,

he replaced Martha Argerich in Singapore, and Nelson Freire in São Paulo.

In 2020, Warner Classics released Lu's first studio album, featuring Chopin's 24 Preludes, and Schumann's *Geistervariationen*. It was met with critical acclaim, including a citation as one of *BBC Music Magazine's* "Instrumental Records of the Year." In 2018, Lu's winning performances of Beethoven and Chopin from Leeds with the Hallé and Edward Gardner was released by Warner. He has also released a Mozart, Schubert and Brahms recital on Genuin Classics.

Born in Massachusetts in 1997, Eric Lu first came to international attention as a prize winner at the 2015 Chopin International Competition in Warsaw, aged just 17. He previously won the 2015 US National Chopin Competition and the 2017 International German Piano Award. He is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, studying with Robert McDonald and Jonathan Biss. Lu is also a pupil of Dang Thai Son. He is now based in Berlin and Boston.

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 Carol Nusinow Kurland and Duff Kurland
 Paul Kwak
 Sally Landis and Michael White
 Renee and Michael Lankford
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 Stanley and Judith Lubman
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 David Moore and Judy Lin
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 and Marion Brenner
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 Chalmers Smith
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 Katrina Russell
 Hideko Sakamoto and Vijay Tella
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 Dwight Tate
 Professor Jeremy Thorner
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 and Susanne Stolcke-Antonsen
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 Pamela L. Gordon and John S. Marvin
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 Ginny and Heinz Lackner
 Mimi Lou
 Richard McKee
 Dennis and Mary Montali
 Zeese Papanikolas and Ruth Fallenbaum
 Jackie Schmidt-Posner and Barry Posner
 Tobey, Julie and Lucy Roland
 Karl Ruddy
 Ron and Esther Schroeder
 Helen Schulak
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 Stephen Sugarman and Karen Carlson
 Myra Sutarso Shen
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 and Nancy Zellerbach Boschwitz
Thomas Bosserman
Carol Marie Bowen
 and Christopher R. Bowen
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James Joseph Patton
Neal and Suzanne Pierce
Leslie and Joellen Piskitel
Charles Pollack and Joanna Cooper
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 Amy and Tom Zellerbach
 Ming Zhao
 John Zimmermann and Diana Graham
 Donlyn Lyndon and Alice Wingwall
 Michael Condie

Honorary Gifts

Erik Hora in honor of
 Judge Peggy Fulton Hora
 Germaine LaBerge in honor of
 David McCauley
 Susan Pollack in honor of
 Susan Graham Harrison

Memorial Gifts

Anonymous in memory of Leon Bell
 Linh Do and Erno Pungor
 in memory of Julie Do
 Rossannah Reeves
 in memory of Alan Leslie Reeves
 Orville Schell in memory of Baifang Schell
 Max Vale in memory of Griffin Madden
 Helen Marcus
 in memory of David Williamson

COVID-19 Information

Proof of vaccination status, including booster, is required for entrance and masking is mandatory throughout the event. COVID-19 information is updated as necessary; please see Cal Performances' website for the most up-to-date policies and information.