Friday, October 21, 2022, 8pm Zellerbach Hall

San Francisco Symphony Esa-Pekka Salonen, *music director* Bertrand Chamayou, *piano*

PROGRAM

Modest MUSSORGSKY (1839–1881) Night on Bald Mountain (1866–1867)

Franz LISZT (1811–1886) Totentanz (1849)

Bertrand Chamayou, piano

INTERMISSION

Hector BERLIOZ (1803–1869) Symphonie fantastique, Op. 14 (1830)

Reveries, Passions A Ball Scene in the Fields

March to the Scaffold

Dream of a Witches' Sabbath

This performance is made possible, in part, by Nadine Tang.

COVID-19: Masking is required inside the auditorium, and is strongly recommended, though not required, for indoor lobby/waiting areas as well as outdoor spaces. Up-to-date vaccination is strongly recommended, though not required for entry. The latest information on Cal Performances' COVID-19 safety policies is available at calperformances.org/safety.



Jeremy Geffen

Touldn't be happier to welcome you to this, one of the first programs of Cal Performances' remarkable 2022–23 season. This month, we look forward to visits from gifted classical artists like violinist Maxim Vengerov and pianist Polina Osetinskaya; Baroque violinist Rachell Ellen Wong and her partners, cellist Coleman Itzkoff and harpsichordist David Belkovski; and harpsichordist and fortepianist Kristian Bezuidenhout. We'll also welcome our own San Francisco Symphony back to UC Berkeley in a special concert especially appropriate for the Halloween season and featuring music director Esa-Pekka Salonen and piano soloist Bertrand Chamayou; as well as the brilliant Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan with its breathtaking production of 13 Tongues. I'm proud to launch the season with programming that represents the finest in dance and classical music.

But this is just the start! From now until May 2023—when we close our season with the Bay Area premiere of Octavia E. Butler's powerful folk opera *Parable of the Sower* and a highly anticipated recital with international dramatic soprano sensation **Nina Stemme**—we have a calendar packed with the very best in the live performing arts.

And what a schedule! More than 70 events, with highlights including the return of the legendary Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra under conductor Christian Thielemann (in his Bay Area debut); the beloved Mark Morris Dance Group in Morris' new *The Look of Love*: An Evening of Dance to the Music of Burt Bacharach; the US premiere of revered South African artist William Kentridge's astonishing new SIBYL; and a special concert with chamber music superstars pianist Emanuel Ax, violinist Leonidas Kavakos, and cellist Yo-Ma. And these are only a few of the amazing performances that await you!

Illuminations programming this season will take advantage of Cal Performances' unique positioning as a vital part of the world's top-ranked public university. In the coming months, we'll be engaging communities on and off campus to examine the evolution of tools such as musical instruments and electronics, the complex relationships between the creators and users of technology, the possibilities enabled by technology's impact on the creative process, and questions raised by the growing role of artificial intelligence in our society.

This concept of "Human and Machine" has never been so pertinent to so many. Particularly over the course of the pandemic, the rapid expansion of technology's role in improving communication and in helping us emotionally process unforeseen and, at times, extraordinarily difficult events has made a permanent mark on our human history. Throughout time, our reliance on technology to communicate has—for better and worse—influenced how we understand others as well as ourselves. During this *Illuminations* season, we will investigate how technology has contributed to our capacity for self-expression, as well as the potential dangers it may pose.

Some programs this season will bring joy and delight, and others will inspire reflection and stir debate. We are committed to presenting this wide range of artistic expression on our stages because of our faith in the performing arts' power to promote empathy. And it is because of our audiences' openness and curiosity that we have the privilege of bringing such thought-provoking, adventurous performances to our campus. The Cal Performances community wants the arts to engage in important conversations, and to bring us all together as we see and feel the world through the experiences of others.

Please make sure to check out our brochures and our website for complete information about upcoming events. We can't wait to share all the details with you, in print and online.

Welcome back to Cal Performances!

Jeremy Geffen Executive and Artistic Director, Cal Performances any a dark and stormy night thundered through the years of the Romantic era, which took form in the late 18th century in literature and painting and erupted in full force in the first half of the 19th. Among the Romantic obsessions were themes involving supernatural beings, unhinged psychologies, and imminent dread; think of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) at one end of the century and Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) at the other. Romantic composers added their voices to the aesthetic.

Modest Mussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain* depicts a witches' sabbath on St. John's Eve, the summer solstice celebrated in Slavic cultures, with deep roots in the pagan past. The piece was "civilized" in a heavy revision by Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov, but today we hear Mussorgsky's original, wilder intentions.

The Dies irae chant, which figures in the Roman Catholic liturgy of the Mass for the Dead, is used in both Franz Liszt's *Totentanz* and Hector Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*. Liszt attended that work's premiere in 1830 and encountering morbid frescoes in Italy added further impetus for him to write this Dance of Death, a virtuosic work for piano and orchestra that unrolls through variations on the haunting melody.

In the psychedelic expanses of *Symphonie fantastique*, Berlioz imagines being in love and poisoning himself with opium. He has a vision in which he kills his beloved, is sentenced to death, and then parties with witches and demons alongside the nowfallen girl.

Modest Mussorgsky Night on Bald Mountain

On September 25, 1860, the 21-year-old Modest Mussorgsky wrote to his mentor, the composer Mily Balakirev: "I have received an extremely interesting commission, which I must prepare for next summer. It is this: a whole act to take place on Bald Mountain...

a witches' Sabbath, separate episodes of sorcerers, a solemn march for all in this nastiness, a finale—the glorification of the sabbath."

Nothing came of this project until 1866, when Mussorgsky wrote to Balakirev, "I've begun to sketch the witches-am stuck at the devils—the procession of Satan doesn't satisfy me yet." But this time Mussorgsky persevered, and on July 12, 1867, he wrote to Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov: "On the 23rd day of June, on the eve of St. John's Day was written, with God's help, St. John's Night on Bald Mountain, a musical picture with the following program: (1) assembly of witches, their chatter and gossip, (2) procession of Satan, (3) vile glorification of Satan, and (4) sabbath. The full score was written directly in fair copy without rough drafts. I began on the 10th of June; there was joy and triumph on the 23rd."

REWRITES AND REDISCOVERY

For all his enthusiasm, Mussorgsky never tried very hard to get the piece played. In fact, he kept tinkering with it, creating first a revision with chorus in 1872 and then another for use as an intermezzo in his opera *Sorochintsï Fair*. It was not heard until 1886, five years after the composer's death, when it was given in a heavy revision prepared by Rimsky-Korsakov. For better or worse, this is the version of *Night on Bald Mountain* that has been most routinely presented over the years.

In fact, Mussorgsky's original fell completely from view for several decades. Only in the late 1920s was his manuscript uncovered in the Leningrad Conservatory's library, thanks to the inquisitiveness of the musicologist Gyorgii Orlov. Shortly thereafter, the Leningrad Philharmonic Society presented the original version on one occasion, after which it reverted to programming the familiar Rimsky-Korsakov version. Mussorgsky's original version of *Night on Bald Mountain* wasn't even published until 1968. But once it was, conductors found that it was a viable

piece of work, one that departed considerably from the typical sound of the orchestral writing of its time and place, but all the more interesting and appealing because of that fact. In recent decades, the tables have begun to turn, and Rimsky-Korsakov's revisions have come under criticism for "civilizing" the native vividness of Mussorgsky's style, which Rimsky feared other listeners would find as objectionably coarse as he did. But now their distinctive flavor is proving in no way offensive to modern ears.

-James M. Keller

James M. Keller, the longtime Program Annotator of the San Francisco Symphony, is the author of Chamber Music: A Listener's Guide (Oxford University Press) and is writing a sequel volume about piano music.

Franz Liszt Totentanz

A composer setting out to grapple with the theme of death could do no better than to engage the musical theme of the Dies irae, chanted when the narrative of the Requiem Mass describes the most terrifying aspects of the beyond: "Day of wrath and doom impending! / David's word with Sibyl's blending, / Heaven and earth in ashes ending!" Franz Liszt was up-front about what was in store when he unveiled his *Totentanz* (Dance of Death) with the subtitle "Paraphrase on the Dies irae."

As the most acclaimed piano virtuoso of his time, Liszt undertook a grueling concert schedule that took him throughout Europe, and he filled his free moments by writing exceptionally difficult—if sometimes shallow—pieces for his personal use. But in 1847, he decided to call it quits and the following February he was installed as music director at the Court of Weimar, where he would remain for 13 years composing, conducting, teaching, and leading the life of a cultural icon.

DANCE OF DEATH

Totentanz dates from that period of transition. He composed it in 1847, reportedly inspired by etchings of Hans Holbein and by frescoes of the Triumph of Death he had seen nearly a decade earlier at the Campo Santo di Pisa, works then attributed to the Florentine Andrea Orcagna (a pseudonym for Andrea di Cione) but no longer considered to be his. Liszt, however, gave up his concert career before he had an occasion to perform his new piece. After revising his composition apparently in 1853 and further in 1859, he returned to focus on the score in about 1862, just after the end of his tenure in Weimar. At that point he basically recomposed it. As with so many Liszt compositions, Totentanz therefore exists in multiple versions, but its final rendering, which the composer's piano pupil Hans von Bülow introduced in 1865 in the Hague (with Johannes Verhulst conducting), is the one normally heard today, as it is in this concert.

The piece unrolls as a series of continuous variations on the Dies irae melody, which the deep-voiced instruments of the orchestra articulate at the beginning, against low-pitched staccato figuration from the piano and timpani. Though Liszt did not refer to the work as a concerto, it boasts many trappings of one, including several dazzling piano cadenzas, a languorous expanse that serves as the piece's slow movement, and a diabolical fugato that in another context might be labeled a scherzo.

-J.M.K.

Hector Berlioz

Symphonie fantastique, Op. 14

Berlioz strove to write "new music." He succeeded. The *Fantastique*, that most amazing of first symphonies, sounds and behaves like nothing ever heard before.

On September 11, 1827, Berlioz went to the Paris Odeon for a performance of *Hamlet* by a company from London. The younger female roles were taken by Harriet Smithson, a 27-year-old actress who had been brought up in Ireland. Berlioz fell instantly and wildly in love with her. He spoke next to no English, and the violent effect upon him of that evening's performance was a combination of verbal music, his vivid recollection of the play from his reading of it in translation, and, as far as Ophelia was concerned, sheer Eros. He wrote to Smithson repeatedly, but they did not meet. He heard gossip about an affair between her and her manager. This hurt, but it also provided enough distance to enable him to plan and begin work on the symphony whose design he described in detail to his friend the poet Humbert Ferrand.

In brief, "an artist, gifted with a vivid imagination, [falls in love with] a woman who embodies the ideal of beauty and fascination that he has long been seeking.... In a fit of despair, he poisons himself with opium, but the narcotic, instead of killing him, induces a horrible vision" in which he believes that, having killed his beloved, he is condemned to death and witnesses his own execution. After death, he "sees himself surrounded by a foul assembly of sorcerers and devils.... [His beloved] is now only a prostitute, fit to take part in such an orgy."

The premiere of the *Fantastique* took place in the winter of 1830. Two years later, Berlioz introduced a revision, much sharpened and improved. He moved heaven and earth to get Harriet to his concert on December 9, 1832, though it seems that she went without at first realizing the nature of the event or even the identity of the composer.

The day after the *Fantastique*'s second premiere, Berlioz and Smithson finally met. Before long she had said the fatal "Berlioz, *je t'aime*," and on October 3, 1833, they were married. Her French was roughly like his English. It was all a disaster. They separated in the summer of 1844 and should have done so much sooner. Her career was long since over, and she died in 1854, suffering

from alcoholism and paralysis. Berlioz supported her until the end.

PASSIONS AND VISIONS

Berlioz wrote several programs for this autobiographical symphony of his, and it has been remarked that the differences between them serve as a barometer of his changing feelings for Harriet Smithson. What follows (interspersed with some commentary) is the note Berlioz published with the score in 1845 and described as "indispensable for a complete understanding of the dramatic outline of the work."

The composer's aim has been to develop, to the extent that they have musical possibilities, various situations in the life of an artist. The plan of the instrumental drama, which is deprived of the help of words, needs to be outlined in advance. The following program should therefore be thought of like the spoken text of an opera, serving to introduce the musical movements, whose character and expression it calls into being.

Part One: Reveries, Passions—The author imagines that a young musician, afflicted with that moral disease that a celebrated writer calls "the surge of passions," sees for the first time a woman who embodies all the charms of the ideal being of whom he has dreamed, and he falls hopelessly in love with her. Through a bizarre trick of fancy, the beloved image always appears in the mind's eye of the artist linked to a musical thought whose character, passionate but also noble and reticent, he finds similar to the one he attributes to his beloved.

The melodic image and its human model pursue him incessantly like a double *idée fixe*. This is the reason for the constant appearance, in every movement of the symphony, of the melody that begins the first allegro. The passage from this state of melancholic reverie, interrupted by a few fits of unmotivated joy, to one of delirious passion, with its movements of fury and jealousy, its return of tenderness, its tears, its religious consolation—all this is the subject of the first movement.

Even the first two preparatory measures for a few wind instruments are so unconventionally voiced that their authorship is unmistakable. But more remarkable still is what follows: the sound of the muted strings, the unmeasured pauses between phrases, the single pizzicato chord for violas and cellos, the two strange interventions (also pizzicato) for the basses, the mysterious cello triplets rocking back and forth at the first climax, the one appearance of flutes and clarinets with horns. What an amazing effect it is at the end of the slow introduction when the chord of winds with tremolando strings is hushed, then swells again, like music carried on the whim of capricious winds.

Part Two: A Ball—The artist finds himself in the most varied situations—in the midst of THE TUMULT OF A FESTIVITY, in the peaceful contemplation of the beauties of nature; but wherever he is, in the city, in the country, the beloved image appears before him and troubles his soul.

The first three dozen measures of the waltz paint for us the ballroom with its glitter and flicker, its swirling couples, the yards and yards of whispering silk. All this becomes gradually visible, like a new scene in the theater. This softly scintillating waltz is exquisitely scored.

Part Three: Scene in the Fields—Finding himself in the country at evening, he hears in the distance two shepherds piping a *ranz des vaches* in dialogue [a *ranz des vaches* is a tune sung or played by a Swiss herdsman]. This pastoral duet, the scenery, the quiet rustling of the trees gently disturbed by the wind, certain hopes he has recently found reason to entertain—all these come together in giving his heart an unaccustomed calm, and in giving a brighter color to his ideas. He reflects upon his isolation; he hopes that soon he will no longer be alone.... But what if she were deceiving

him!.... This mixture of hope and fear, these ideas of happiness disturbed by black presentiments, form the subject of the ADAGIO. At the end, one of the shepherds again takes up the *ranz des vaches*; the other no longer replies.... The distant sound of thunder... solitude... silence.

There is nothing in music before this, or since, like the pathos of the recapitulated conversation with one voice missing. As a picture of despairing loneliness it is without equal. And the thunder—mostly in piano and pianissimo—of chords for four kettledrums is the voice of a new orchestral imagination.

Part Four: March to the Scaffold-Having become certain that his love goes unrecognized, the artist poisons himself with opium. The dose of the narcotic, too weak to kill him, plunges him into a sleep accompanied by the most horrible visions. He dreams that he has killed the woman he had loved, that he is condemned, led to the scaffold, and that he is witnessing HIS OWN EXECUTION. The procession moves forward to the sounds of a march that is now somber and fierce, now brilliant and solemn, in which the muffled noise of heavy steps gives way without mediation to the most noisy clangor. At the end of the march, the first four measures of the IDÉE FIXE reappear like a last thought of love interrupted by the fatal blow.

Berlioz said he composed the March to the Scaffold in a single night. In this stunning march, an instant knockout, Berlioz's orchestral imagination—the hand-stopped horn sounds, the use of the bassoon quartet, the timpani writing—is astonishing in every way.

Part Five: Dream of a Witches' Sabbath— He sees himself at the sabbath, in the midst of a frightful assembly of ghosts, sorcerers, monsters of every kind, all come together for his funeral. Strange noises, groans, outbursts of laughter, distant cries which other cries seem to answer. The beloved melody appears again, but it has lost its character of nobility and reticence; now it is no more than the tune of an ignoble dance, trivial and grotesque: it is she, come to join the sabbath.... A roar of joy at her arrival.... She takes part in the devilish orgy.... Funeral knell, burlesque parody of the DIES IRAE, SABBATH ROUND-DANCE. The sabbath round and the Dies irae combined.

As we enter the final scene, with its trim thematic transformations, its bizarre sonorities—deep bells, squawking clarinet, the beating of violin and viola strings with the wooden stick of the bow, glissandos for wind instruments, violent alternations of *ff* with *pp*—its grotesque imagery, its wild and coruscating brilliance, we have left the Old World for good.

-Michael Steinberg

Michael Steinberg, the San Francisco Symphony's program annotator from 1979 to 1999 and a contributing writer until his death in 2009, was one of the nation's pre-eminent writers on music.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

The San Francisco Symphony is among the most adventurous and innovative arts institutions in the United States, celebrated for its artistic excellence, creative performance concepts, active touring, award-winning recordings, and standard-setting education programs. In the 2020-21 season, the San Francisco Symphony welcomed conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen as its twelfth Music Director, embarking on a new vision for the present and future of the orchestral landscape. In their inaugural season together, Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony introduced a groundbreaking artistic leadership model anchored by eight Collaborative Partners from a variety of cultural disciplines: Nicholas Britell, Julia Bullock, Claire Chase, Bryce Dessner, Pekka Kuusisto, Nico Muhly, Carol Reiley, and esperanza spalding. This group of visionary artists, thinkers, and doers, along with Salonen and the San Francisco Symphony, have set out to explore and develop new ideas inspired by the Partners' unique areas of expertise, including innovative digital projects, expansive and imaginative performance concepts in a variety of concert formats, commissions of new music, and projects that foster collaboration across artistic and administrative areas. Shaped by the dynamic partnership and shared vision of Salonen, the Collaborative Partners, and the Orchestra and Chorus, the San Francisco Symphony's 2022–23 season reflects a spirit of collaboration, experimentation, and renewed dialogue through live music.



Esa-Pekka Salonen (*music director*) Esa-Pekka Salonen is known as both a composer and conductor. He is currently the Music

Andrew E

Director of the San Francisco Symphony, where he works alongside eight Collaborative Partners from a variety of disciplines ranging from composers to roboticists. He is Conductor Laureate for London's Philharmonia Orchestra, where, as Principal Conductor & Artistic Advisor from 2008 until 2021, he spearheaded digital projects such as the award-winning RE-RITE and Universe of Sound installations and the muchhailed app for iPad, The Orchestra; the Los Angeles Philharmonic, where he was Music Director from 1992 until 2009, and was instrumental in opening the Frank Gehrydesigned Walt Disney Concert Hall; and the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra. He is currently in the midst of Multiverse Esa-Pekka Salonen, a two-season residency as both composer and conductor, at Elbphilharmonie Hamburg.

As a member of the faculty of Los Angeles' Colburn School, he develops, leads, and directs the pre-professional Negaunee Conducting Program. He is the co-founder and until 2018 served as Artistic Director of the annual Baltic Sea Festival, In 2015, he addressed the Apple Distinguished Educator conference on the uses of technology in music education, and his Violin Concerto was featured in an international campaign for iPad.

Born in Toulouse, Bertrand Chamayou's (piano) musical talent was noticed by pianist Jean-François Heisser, who later became his professor at the Paris Conservatory. He completed his training with Maria Curcio in London.

Chamayou has appeared with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, London Symphony, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Rotterdam Philharmonic, NHK Symphony Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic, Seattle Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, and Atlanta Symphony. This week's performances mark his San Francisco Symphony debut. His other engagements include the Mostly Mozart Festival, Lucerne Festival, Salzburg Festival, Edinburgh International Festival, Rheingau Musik Festival, and Beethovenfest Bonn, and he is a regular performer at Lincoln Center, Théâtre des Champs-Elysées,



Herkulessaal Munich, and London's Wigmore Hall. As a chamber musician, his frequent collaborators include Renaud Capuçon, Gautier Capuçon, Quatuor Ébène, Antoine Tamestit, and Sol Gabetta.

Chamayou's recording of Saint-Saëns' piano concertos won the Gramophone Recording of the Year Award in 2019 and he has been awarded France's Victoires de la Musique on four occasions. He has an exclusive recording contract with Warner/ Erato and was awarded the 2016 Echo Klassik for his recording of Ravel's complete works for solo piano. Last June, he released a new recording of Messiaen's Vingt Regards sur l'enfant-Jésus and performed it at Festival Ravel, a new series situated in France's Basque country of which Chamayou is coartistic director.

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Stage Manager

Michael "Barney" Barnard,

Stage Technician

Jon Johannsen, Recording

Engineer/Stage Technician Tim Wilson, Stage Technician

The San Francisco Symphony string section utilizes revolving seating on a systematic basis. Players listed in alphabetical

order change seats periodically. Second Century Chairs are supported in part by the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Foundation ensuring the ongoing artistic

excellence of the San Francisco

Symphony's string sections.