





Hélène Grimaud Piano

2023/24 **SEASON**



Dear Friends,

Those of you who experienced the Mahler Chamber Orchestra in Virtual Reality with us last week witnessed our collective exploration into one exhilarating facet of music's future. Tonight's program breaks different ground, as trailblazer Hélène Grimaud makes her long-awaited PUC debut and breathes new life into timeless masterpieces that have resonated across centuries.

Tonight's concert also kicks off what our office has been affectionately and excitedly calling a three-week "piano-palooza." We have the distinct honor of hosting jazz legend Brad Mehldau, hailed by *The New York Times* as "one of the most influential jazz pianists of the last 20 years," in a rare solo recital on February 1. The following week, on February 8, we will celebrate the triumphant return of pianist Víkingur Ólafsson, playing Bach's endlessly inventive Goldberg Variations.

What a musical feast awaits! I find myself overwhelmed with a profound sense of gratitude, made all the more special by the prospect of sharing these extraordinary musical moments with each of you.

Enjoy!

Marna Seltzer

Director of Princeton University Concerts

Wednesday, January 24, 2024 at 7:30PM • Richardson Auditorium, Alexander Hall

PADEREWSKI MEMORIAL CONCERT

HÉLÈNE GRIMAUD Piano

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

(1770 - 1827)

Piano Sonata No. 30 in E Major, Op. 109

Vivace ma non troppo-Adagio espressivo

Prestissimo

Gesangvoll, mit innigster Empfindung.

Andante molto cantabile ed espressivo

JOHANNES BRAHMS

(1833-1897)

Three Intermezzi for Piano, Op. 117

No. 1 in E-flat Major No. 2 in B-flat Minor No. 3 in C-sharp Minor

INTERMISSION

BRAHMS

Fantasies for Piano, Op. 116

Capriccio in D Minor

Intermezzo in A Minor

Capriccio in G Minor

Intermezzo in E Major

Intermezzo in E Minor

Intermezzo in E Major

Capriccio in D Minor

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

(1685-1750)

Chaconne from Partita No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1004 Transcribed by Ferrucio Busoni (1866-1924)



About the Program

By Lucy Caplan © 2024 • Program Annotator

Lucy Caplan is Assistant Professor of Music at Worcester Polytechnic Institute and a winner of the Rubin Prize for Music Criticism.

Introduction

As a young man, the Italian composer and pianist Ferruccio Busoni bounced around the world, taking up teaching positions in Helsinki, Moscow, and Boston between 1888 and 1892. During these globe-trotting years, he became fascinated by Bach, whose music would come to be a lifelong focus. His arrangement of Bach's celebrated Chaconne for solo violin reflects the breadth of his experiences: It transplants Bach's music from its eighteenth-century origins, welcoming it into a modern, cosmopolitan age.

Johannes Brahms spent these same years between his well-loved Vienna, where he had resided since the 1860s, and the nearby resort town of Bad Ischl. Having reached the twilight of his career, he considered retirement before deciding to write a few more pieces of solo and chamber music, including the collections for solo piano Op. 116 and Op. 117. Composed in an atmosphere of comfort and reflection, his music from this period is as introspective and dense as Busoni's is exuberant and expansive.

On this evening's program, Hélène Grimaud prefaces these works—all composed within just a few years of one another—with Beethoven's Sonata Op. 109, which dates from 1820. Like many works that exemplify Beethoven's late style, it has a perpetually modern sound, which draws elegantly on the economy of earlier forms while also gesturing toward a wide-open musical horizon. This is music that seems almost ethereal, unmoored from any particular time or place.

Ludwig van Beethoven, Piano Sonata No. 30 in E Major, Op. 109 (1820)

Stereotypically stormy Beethoven seems to be at peace at the outset of his Sonata Op. 109, which opens with an organic, almost spontaneous-sounding melody. Each beat is given equal emphasis, with the occasional breakaway arpeggio or rapid swirl of broken thirds. A greater sense of urgency arises in the brief Prestissimo that follows, with its sudden dynamic shifts and prevailing feeling of unstoppable momentum.

The glorious third movement—which Beethoven indicated is to be played "songfully, with innermost feeling"—begins with a simply presented melody. The first variation introduces some elegant ornamentation, including a showering of subtly placed grace notes. The second, recalling the placidity of the sonata's first movement, moves like a gently flowing river; a

vigorous current courses through the third variation, which intensifies in vigor. There is a Baroque architecture to the next three variations, which feature complex counterpoint and knotty harmonies. The closing restatement of the theme returns to a mood of total calm. This convergence of backward glances toward an earlier musical era on the one hand, and forthright disregard for Classical-era conventions on the other, is characteristic of Beethoven's later works. The theme-and-variations format enables the composer to experiment, jumping almost cinematically from idea to idea within the scope of a single work.

Johannes Brahms, Three Intermezzi for Piano, Op. 117 (1892)

Brahms was active as a pianist throughout his career, playing in public from the time that he was ten years old. But he was an ambivalent performer; an introvert through and through, he declined to speak directly to the audience, and he had to be practically pushed back onstage to acknowledge applause. Nonetheless, it seems fitting that some of his final compositions were written for an instrument which had long been fundamental to his identity as a musician. Between 1892 and 1893, he composed four collections of piano pieces (Op. 116–119), which compressed enormous depths of feeling into



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About the Program

About the Program

brief works. Clara Schumann (whom Brahms likely had in mind as he composed them) exalted these pieces as "a true source of enjoyment, everything, poetry, passion, rapture, intimacy, full of the most marvelous effects...In these pieces I at last feel musical life re-enter my soul, and I play once more with true devotion."

The three intermezzi that comprise Op. 117 are poignantly melancholic, situated in the shadows between sweetness and despair. The first is preceded by a few lines, in German, from a Scots lullaby titled "Lady Bothwell's Lament;" its memorable opening melody, tucked into an inner voice in the piano's middle register, sways to the rhythm of those words. The second is structured like a sonata in miniature, with a wistful, arpeggio-laden first theme juxtaposed against a serene second theme. The third intermezzo begins with the spare sound of a melody presented in octaves, then gradually fills out its harmonies. Like the first two intermezzi, it introduces a brighter contrasting theme in its middle section before eventually returning to the more mournful tones of its beginning.

Johannes Brahms, Fantasies for Piano, Op. 116 (1892)

If Brahms' Op. 117 Intermezzi have an impressionistic quality, then the Op. 116 Fantasies are far more expressionist. The composer wears his heart on his sleeve, crafting dense works which traverse an immense emotional palette. The set opens with a brash Capriccio, whose thundering chords emerge from the lower reaches of the piano's register. The Intermezzo that follows is quieter, but equally anguished in its own way. Its sarabande-like rhythms, which emphasize the second beat of the bar, feel tentative and uncertain. The third piece, another Capriccio, begins tumultuously before settling into a more devotional mood in its chorale-like middle section.

The fourth piece in the collection, an Intermezzo, is an oasis. In the brightly lit key of E major, it intersperses gently downward-falling arpeggios with moments of aching chromaticism. The fifth Intermezzo, in the parallel key of E minor, starts in a halting manner, as if moving down a shadowy path, before relaxing into a more graceful, songlike mood. In the sixth piece of the set, another Intermezzo, Brahms bobs and weaves between major and minor keys, luxuriating in harmonic variety. The final piece, a Capriccio, returns to the intensity of the first, with similarly dense textures and an agitated mood. In its emotional depth, it feels like both a full-circle return to the collection's beginnings and a layered culmination of all that has transpired since.

J. S. Bach/Ferruccio Busoni, Chaconne from Partita No. 2 in D Minor, BWV 1004 (1893)

Arranging Bach's music was not an uncommon practice among nineteenth-century composers, who conveyed their admiration for this music not by attempting to recreate it exactly, but rather by reimagining it according to the aesthetic norms of their own era. Brahms, for instance, revered Bach's magisterial Chaconne for solo violin, once writing, "The Chaconne is, in my opinion, one of the most wonderful and most incomprehensible pieces of music. Using the technique adapted to a small instrument, the man writes whole world of the deepest thoughts and most powerful feelings. If I could picture myself writing, or even conceiving, such a piece, I am certain that the extreme excitement and emotional tension would have driven me mad." This did not stop him from taking matters into his own hands, and he arranged the piece for piano in the 1870s. Busoni, himself a virtuoso pianist and composer, shared Brahms's respect for this monumental work. His own transcription, created in the early 1890s, uses the full range of pianistic technique to celebrate the grandeur of Bach's musical imagination.

About *the*Paderewski Memorial Concert

The Paderewski Memorial Concert is funded in part by an endowment from The Paderewski Foundation founded by Edward and Jeannette Witkowski. It honors the memory of Ignacy Jan Paderewski: Polish pianist, composer, and statesman. Born in Poland in 1860, Paderewski was a student of Leschetizky, and rapidly rose to international fame—indeed, his name is still synonymous with virtuosity.

Following World War I, he laid aside his concert career, holding the offices of Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland. As such, he was a signer of the Treaty of Versailles, becoming friendly with President Woodrow Wilson whose support had been influential in the establishment of Poland as an independent state. On Tuesday, November 10, 1925, Paderewski performed here in Alexander Hall in tribute to Wilson, who had died the previous year.

Princeton University Concerts thanks The Paderewski Foundation for its generous support of tonight's concert.

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HÉLÈNE GRIMAUD, Piano

Renaissance woman Hélène Grimaud is not just a deeply passionate and committed musical artist whose pianistic accomplishments play a central role in her life. Her multiple talents extend far beyond the instrument she plays: Grimaud has established herself as a wildlife conservationist, a human rights activist, and a writer, her deep dedication to her musical career reflected in and amplified by the scope and depth of her environmental, literary, and artistic interests.

She has been an exclusive Deutsche Grammophon artist since 2002. Her recordings have been critically acclaimed and awarded numerous accolades, among them the Cannes Classical Recording of the Year, Choc du Monde de la musique, Diapason d'or, Grand Prix du disque, Record Academy Prize (Tokyo), Midem Classic Award, and Echo Klassik Award. Grimaud's early recordings include Credo and Reflection (both of which feature a number of thematically linked works); a Chopin and Rachmaninov Sonatas disc; and a Beethoven disc with the Staatskapelle Dresden and Vladimir Jurowski, which was chosen as one of history's greatest classical music albums in the iTunes "Classical Essentials" series, among others.

Other recording highlights include Water, a live recording of performances from tears become... streams become..., the critically-acclaimed large-scale immersive installation at New York's Park Avenue Armory created by Turner Prize-winning artist Douglas Gordon in collaboration with Grimaud; Perspectives, a two-disc personal selection of highlights from her DG catalogue; and Memory, exploring music's ability to bring the past back to life through a selection of evanescent miniatures by Chopin, Debussy, Satie, and Ukrainian composer Valentin Silvestrov. Her latest multi-disc project focuses on her long relationship with the German Romantics, and on the ties that bound both Robert Schumann and his protégé Brahms to pianist-composer Clara Schumann. You can hear Brahms' Op. 117 Intermezzi, played on tonight's recital, on a disc newly released this Fall 2023.

Highlights of Grimaud's schedule this year include performances of Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 1 with the London Philharmonic Orchestra across Europe and with the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg as part of her season-long residency at the Philharmonie Luxembourg; Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 20 with The Philadelphia Orchestra and Yannick Nézet-Séguin; and recitals in Boston, Atlanta, Chicago, and Toronto, in addition to Princeton; and performances with Camerata Salzburg (with whom she embarks on a new artistic partnership in the 2023-24 season) of the Schumann Piano Concerto at the Vienna Konzerthaus, Dresden Music Festival, Mecklenburg Vorpommern Festival, and Évian Festival.

Hélène Grimaud was born in 1969 in Aix-en-Provence, France and began her piano studies at the local conservatory with Jacqueline Courtin before working with Pierre Barbizet in Marseille. She was accepted into the Paris Conservatoire at just 13 and won first prize in piano performance a mere three years later. She continued to study with György Sándor and Leon Fleisher until, in 1987, she gave her well received debut recital in Tokyo. That same year, renowned conductor Daniel Barenboim invited her to perform with the Orchestre de Paris: This marked the launch of Grimaud's musical career, characterized ever since by concerts with most of the world's major orchestras and many celebrated conductors.



To be involved in direct conservation and being able to put animals back where they belong...there's just nothing more fulfilling."

-Hélène Grimaud, pianist

Between her debut in 1995 with the Berlin Philharmonic under Claudio Abbado and her first performance with the New York Philharmonic under Kurt Masur in 1999—just two of many notable musical milestones—Grimaud made a wholly different kind of debut: In upper

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New York State she established the Wolf Conservation Center. Her love for the endangered species was sparked by a chance encounter with a wolf in northern Florida; this led to her determination to open an environmental education center. "To be involved in direct conservation and being able to put animals back where they belong," she says, "there's just nothing more fulfilling." But Grimaud's engagement doesn't end there: She is also a member of the organization Musicians for Human Rights, a worldwide network of musicians and people working in the field of music to promote a culture of human rights and social change.

For a number of years she also found time to pursue a writing career, publishing three books that have appeared in various languages. Her first, Variations Sauvages, appeared in 2003. It was followed in 2005 by Leçons particulières, and in 2013 by Retour à Salem, both semiautobiographical novels. A committed chamber musician, she has also performed with a wide range of musical collaborators, including cellists Sol Gabetta, Jan Vogler, Truls Mørk, and Clemens Hagen; and violinists Gidon Kremer and Gil Shaham.

Her prodigious contribution to and impact on the world of classical music was recognized by the French government when she was admitted into the Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur (France's highest decoration) at the rank of Chevalier (Knight). This concert marks Hélène's long-awaited Princeton University Concerts debut.





Exploring the Intersection of Music, Dance, and Parkinson's

An experiential panel discussion featuring an adapted performance of Mark Morris' choreography by local Dance for Parkinson's Disease participants, performed to live music by cellist Joshua Roman

Sunday, March 3, 2024 • 3PM Richardson Auditorium, Alexander Hall

TICKETS: \$15 General \$10 Students, free to

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The first concert in what is known today as Princeton University Concerts was presented on October 29, 1894, thus establishing one of the oldest continuous series of musical events in the country. From 1894 to 1914, the "Ladies Musical Committee" presented concerts by the Kneisel Quartet. After 1914, the programs diversified. In 1929, the Ladies Committee became the Princeton University Concerts Committee—a town and gown group of interested and knowledgeable music lovers—which has guided the University Concerts to date.

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SUPPORT US

Supporting Princeton University Concerts is critical to our future. Ticket sales cover less than half of the cost of presenting the very best in world-class music. Remaining funds come, in part, from our generous endowment, left to PUC by the Ladies' Musical Committee in 1929. We remain eternally grateful for the support of the Philena Fobes Fine Memorial Fund and the Jesse Peabody Frothingham Fund.

Other support comes from donors like you. We are grateful to the individuals whose support at all levels ensures that musical performance remains a vital part of Princeton, the community, and the region.

If you wish to make a donation to Princeton University Concerts, please call us at 609-258-2800, visit puc.princeton.edu, or send a check payable to Princeton University Concerts to: Princeton University Concerts, Woolworth Center, Princeton, NJ 08544.

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Planned gifts made to Princeton University Concerts carry on the vision of an extraordinary group of ladies who founded the series. We are grateful to the individuals below who will continue this legacy and will help shape the series' future for years to come. To inquire about planned giving opportunities, or if you have already included Princeton University Concerts in your plans, please contact Marna Seltzer in the Princeton University Concert Office at 609-258-2800.

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Thursday, November 2, 2023 | 7:30PM DANISH STRING QUARTET

Wednesday, January 24, 2024 | 7:30PM HÉLÈNE GRIMAUD* Piano

Thursday, February 15, 2024 | 7:30 PM ISABELLE FAUST Violin JEAN-GUIHEN QUEYRAS Cello ALEXANDER MELNIKOV Piano

Thursday, March 7, 2024 | 7:30PM HAGEN STRING QUARTET

Wednesday, April 3, 2024 | 7:30PM JONATHAN BISS Piano MITSUKO UCHIDA Piano

Monday, April 8, 2024 | 7:30PM GOLDA SCHULTZ* Soprano JONATHAN WARE* Piano

Thursday, May 2, 2024 | 7:30PM DORIC STRING QUARTET*

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Sunday, October 8, 2023 | 3PM & 6PM DREAMERS' CIRCUS* Violin, Cittern, Accordion

Thursday, October 26, 2023 | 6PM & 9PM THÉOTIME LANGLOIS DE SWARTE* Baroque Violin JUSTIN TAYLOR* Harpsichord

Wednesday, November 8, 2023 | 6PM & 9PM JEAN RONDEAU* Harpsichord

Thursday-Sunday, January 18-21, 2024
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Sunday, February 22, 2024 | 3PM: Les Six Sunday, March 24, 2024 | 3PM: A French Afternoon

*Princeton University Concerts debut

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Thursday, February 1, 2024 | 7:30PM BRAD MEHLDAU Piano

Thursday, February 8, 2024 | 7:30PM VÍKINGUR ÓLAFSSON Piano

HEALING WITH MUSIC

Wednesday, November 15, 2023 | 7:30 PM SULEIKA JAOUAD* Writer JON BATISTE* Musician Healing from Cancer through Music

Sunday, March 3, 2024 | 3PM

DANCE FOR PD® A Mark Morris Dance Group Program

Exploring the intersection of music, dance, and

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Wednesday, April 24, 2024 | 7:30PM JONATHAN BISS Piano ADAM HASLETT* Writer Anxiety. Depression, and Music

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