

Brad
MEHLDAU

PIANO

Thursday, February 1, 2024 | 7:30PM



STEINWAY & SONS

2023/24 SEASON



Dear Friends,

Thank you for choosing to spend your precious time listening to the magic of Brad Mehldau with us tonight. I was 23 years old when I first heard Brad play and that experience forever changed my life. Having proudly grown up as a classical music nerd, I had no idea what to expect when my soon-to-be husband first introduced me to him. What I discovered was music unlike anything I had heard before—music that transcended genre, performed by an artist who poured every bit of his generous soul and brilliant mind into every note that he offered. His music embodied what it felt like to be in love and made me fall more deeply in love with music.

For 129 years, Princeton University Concerts has presented the world's greatest classical musicians. One of the traits making tonight such a special event within this history is a program that allows us to witness in real time the creation of new directions for these traditions. Whether or not this is your first time hearing Brad play, we are about to experience something timeless together. I am so grateful to share in that with you as collectively we fall in love, again and again, with Music.

Enjoy!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dasha Koltunyyuk". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping underline.

Dasha Koltunyyuk
Marketing and Outreach Manager of Princeton University Concerts

Thursday, February 1, 2024 at 7:30PM • Richardson Auditorium, Alexander Hall

BRAD MEHLDAU Piano

BRAD MEHLDAU (b. 1970)

Fourteen Reveries (2023)

*This work was co-commissioned by Wigmore Hall, Cal Performances at
University of California, Berkeley, 21C Music Festival at
The Royal Conservatory, and Carnegie Hall*

INTERMISSION

L.A. Pastorale (2019)

Selections from *Suite: April 2020* (2020)

- I. waking up
- II. stepping outside
- III. keeping distance
- IV. stopping, listening: hearing
- V. remembering before all this
- VI. uncertainty
- VII. - the day moves by -
- IX. waiting
- X. in the kitchen
- XII. lullaby

Songs from Elliott Smith, Radiohead, and others to be announced from stage

About the Program

By Brad Mehldau

Fourteen Reveries (2023)

Fourteen Reveries came from a similar impulse as the suite from four years ago, *April 2020*, to write shorter pieces. In both sets, I have eschewed larger-scale development, opting for brevity. Each piece is more like a distillation of emotion. If there is one link of mood here in this set, it is that of reverie. The music might accompany those moments during waking hours, when we withdraw from our exterior environment.

Reverie can be welcome, perhaps as a diversion from the banality of one's surroundings. At other times, it is an involuntary flight into melancholy. In all cases, it is an interior experience, exclusive to our own consciousness, independent from others. The music here accordingly expresses solitude—at turns enraptured, placid, nervous, lonely, or ecstatic.

Reverie is not so much an emotional state itself, but the interior frame in which those emotions knock around. There is often an element of quiet in these pieces—not necessarily in dynamic volume, but the quietude of passivity, as one allows those feelings to wash over them, without broadcasting them to anyone else. Outward quietude masks a flow of inner action. The music is less a willful display and more like peeling back a curtain to reveal something.

Each piece is self-contained, and while there are no overt melodic themes or motifs which bind them together, they flow into each other, often *attacca*, with no pause, often connecting through their shared tonal center. The first five, thus, make up a group in C major; #7-9 move between G major and G minor. Metric connections appear as well, as in #2 and #9, which share the same placid 5/8 meter.

There are several pianistic obsessions I have wrestled with as a player and composer through the years, which play out in some of the pieces. One is to place a melody within its accompanying figuration, so that even as it takes center stage, it remains part of an undulating texture. One can hear that feature in the first, second, and ninth pieces. Another compositional approach in the seventh piece was to avoid indicating the shifting time signatures in the written music, visually emphasizing for the player the fluid, gridless kind of state of the music. In the final more extended piece, as in 'waiting,' the ninth piece from *April 2020*, the music has a clear pulse but no bar lines at all, like a paragraph made up of one long sentence.

The more I have studied the masters over the years, the more I have been fascinated by what the composer “tells” the pianist in the score—or does not tell—sometimes overtly, sometimes obliquely; concerning dynamics, articulation, tempi, pedaling, and emotional direction. There is usually some balance of specificity and open-endedness. A composer like Brahms in his *Klavierstücke* gives the player everything they need to let the beauty and sublimity of the music reveal itself but also leaves things to be discovered: there are all sorts of countermelodies hiding between the hands which are not marked with accents. This is part of the reason for the longevity of that music—in its multi-dimensionality, it gives the players choices and invites them to interpret it differently from one performance to another.

In some of the pieces here, I have exploited those kinds of hidden currents and made them more explicit, marking them with accents and *tenutos*. At other times, I have followed my master Brahms and written only the notes. For the final 14th piece, there is the following direction on the top of the page:

Dynamics have not been given; the player is free to choose and is encouraged to find melodies within the figuration and bring them out as they wish, through louder dynamic, marcato touch, and perhaps finger-pedaling. Time signature and bar lines not given; each system traces a possible phrase length, sometimes obvious, but they are only guidelines, allowing the player to feel the piece as a continuous stream.

The strongest model for open-endedness in many respects is Bach, who left us with little to no indications for tempo, articulation, and dynamics. The listener can hear the inspiration I have drawn from many of his preludes in the *Well-Tempered Clavier* in the last piece here. Like one long wave from beginning to end, it nevertheless invites the performer to draw out a more segmented story with their own sentences, paragraphs, and chapter, if they wish. In this regard, finally, the music I have written is not only inspired by composers but by the great interpreters who have shaped their music.

L.A. Pastorale

Pastoral: having the simplicity, charm, serenity, or other characteristics generally attributed to rural areas

How would that sentiment apply to Los Angeles, a metropolis of concrete, cars, and freeways? Although I think of Bob Hurwitz, President of Nonesuch Records, as a New Yorker—he is part and parcel of my New York City experience in all the time I’ve known him—Los Angeles is his city of origin. It’s a place I know as well, having lived there for five years. A few years ago, Bob showed me a collection of photographs he made in L.A.

that speak of something particular to that city: Amidst the urban facades, the brash advertisements that promise impossible salvation, and the ceaseless flow of humans, there is a quiet flow, and there are pockets of beauty if you take the time to look. It's the L.A. pastorale.

Suite: April 2020

While sheltering at home with my family in the Netherlands during the COVID-19 pandemic, I wrote 12 new songs about what I was experiencing; I was able to record them safely in an Amsterdam studio, along with tunes by Neil Young, Billy Joel, and Jerome Kern, for the album *Suite: April 2020*.

Suite: April 2020 is a musical snapshot of life the last month in the world in which we've all found ourselves. I've tried to portray on the piano some experiences and feelings that are both new and common to many of us. In "keeping distance," for example, I traced the experience of two people social distancing, represented by the left and right hand—how they are unnaturally drawn apart, yet remain linked in some unexplainable and perhaps illuminating way. As difficult as COVID-19 has been for many of us, there have been moments of revelation along the way. "stopping, listening: hearing" highlights that moment as well.

I've pointed to some of the strong feelings that have arisen the past month or more: "remembering before all this" expresses a bittersweet gut-pain that has hit me several times out of the blue, when I think back on how things were even just a few months ago and how long ago and far away that seems now; "uncertainty" hits on the feeling that can follow right after that—a hollow fear of an unknown future.

About *the* Artist



BRAD MEHLDAU, Piano

Grammy Award winning jazz pianist Brad Mehldau has recorded and performed extensively since the early 1990s. Mehldau's most consistent output over the years has taken place in the trio format. Starting in 1996, his group released a series of five records on Warner Bros. entitled *The Art of the Trio* (re-packaged and re-released as a 5-disc box set by Nonesuch in late 2011). During that same period, Mehldau also released a solo piano recording entitled *Elegiac Cycle* and a record called *Places* that included both solo piano and trio songs. *Elegiac Cycle* and *Places* might be called "concept" albums made up exclusively of original material with central themes that hover over the compositions. Other Mehldau recordings include *Largo*, a collaborative effort with the innovative musician and producer Jon Brion, and *Anything Goes*—a trio outing with bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jorge Rossy. His first record for Nonesuch, *Brad Mehldau Live in Tokyo*, was released in September 2004. In 2018, Nonesuch Records released *After Bach*, an album that paired improvisations on Bach and Mehldau's previously commissioned solo piece *Three Pieces After Bach*.

Mehldau's musical personality forms a dichotomy. He is first and foremost an improviser and greatly cherishes the surprise and wonder that can occur from a spontaneous musical idea that is expressed directly, in real time. But he also has a deep fascination for the formal architecture of music, and it informs everything he plays. In his most inspired playing, the actual structure of his musical thought serves as an expressive device. As he plays, he listens to how ideas unwind and the order in which they reveal themselves. Each tune has a strongly felt narrative arch, whether it expresses itself in a beginning, an end, or something left

intentionally open-ended. The two sides of Mehldau's personality—the improviser and the formalist—play off each other, and the effect is often something like controlled chaos.

In addition to his trio and solo projects, Mehldau has worked with a number of great jazz musicians, including with saxophonist Joshua Redman's band for two years, recordings and concerts with Pat Metheny, Charlie Haden, and Lee Konitz, and recording as a sideman with the likes of Michael Brecker, Wayne Shorter, John Scofield, and Charles Lloyd. For more than a decade, he has collaborated with several musicians and peers whom he respects greatly, including the guitarists Peter Bernstein and Kurt Rosenwinkel and tenor saxophonist Mark Turner. His music has appeared in several movies, including Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* and Wim Wender's *Million Dollar Hotel*. In 2019, Mehldau premiered his song cycle, *The Folly of Desire*, with tenor Ian Bostridge, including on our stage in his Princeton University Concerts debut.

Mehldau was appointed as curator of an annual four-concert jazz series at London's prestigious Wigmore Hall during its 2009-10 and 2010-11 seasons, with Mehldau appearing in at least two of the four annual concerts. In late January 2010 Carnegie Hall announced the 2010-11 season-long residency by Mehldau as holder of the Richard and Barbara Debs Composer's Chair at Carnegie Hall—the first jazz artist to hold this position since it was established in 1995.



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For more information visit:
puc.princeton.edu/students

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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.

THANK YOU!

We are deeply grateful for the support we have received and thank all of our donors and volunteers. The list below acknowledges gifts of \$100 or more, received between May 1, 2023 and January 15, 2024. If you see an error or would like to make a change in your listing, please contact the Concert Office at 609-258-2800.

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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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PRINCETON
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CONCERTS

23/24

SEASON



◀ **GOLDA SCHULTZ**
Soprano

CONCERT CLASSICS

Thursday, October 12, 2023 | 7:30PM
CHANTICLEER VOCAL ENSEMBLE*

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

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

Thursday, February 15, 2024 | 7:30PM
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*

PERFORMANCES UP CLOSE

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
MAHLER CHAMBER ORCHESTRA in virtual reality

RICHARDSON CHAMBER PLAYERS

Sunday, February 22, 2024 | 3PM: *Les Six*
Sunday, March 24, 2024 | 3PM: *A French Afternoon*

SPECIAL EVENTS

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 | 7:30PM
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 Parkinson's Disease.

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

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Featuring **The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center**

Saturday, October 14, 2023 | 1PM & 3PM
CMS KIDS sensory-friendly program for ages 3–6

Saturday, March 16, 2024 | 1PM
ADVENTURES IN CHAMBER MUSIC for ages 6–12

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