

HOROWITZ PIANO SERIES

Boris Berman, *artistic director*

Hélène Grimaud

Wednesday, January 31, 2024 | 7:30 pm
Morse Recital Hall in Sprague Memorial Hall

Yale SCHOOL OF MUSIC

José García-León, Dean

Program

Ludwig van Beethoven
1770–1827

Piano Sonata No. 30, Op. 109

- I. Vivace ma non troppo – Adagio espressivo
- II. Prestissimo
- III. Gesangvoll, mit innigster Empfindung.
Andante molto cantabile ed espressivo

Johannes Brahms
1833–1897

Three Intermezzi for piano, Op. 117

- I. Andante moderato
- II. Andante non troppo e con molta espressione
- III. Andante con moto

INTERMISSION

Brahms

Fantasies, Op. 116

- I. Capriccio in D minor. Presto energico
- II. Intermezzo in A minor. Andante
- III. Capriccio in G minor. Allegro passionato
- IV. Intermezzo in E major. Adagio
- V. Intermezzo in E minor. Andante con grazia
ed intimissimo sentimento
- VI. Intermezzo in E major. Andantino
teneramente
- VII. Capriccio in D minor. Allegro agitato

Johann Sebastian Bach
1685–1750
arr. Ferruccio Busoni

Chaconne from Partita No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004

As a courtesy to others, please silence all devices. Photography and recording of any kind is strictly prohibited. Please do not leave the hall during musical selections. Thank you.

Artist Profile

Hélène Grimaud, *piano*

Renaissance woman Hélène Grimaud is more than a deeply passionate and committed musical artist: she 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.

Her recordings have been critically acclaimed and awarded numerous accolades, among them the *Choc du Monde de la musique*, Cannes Classical Recording of the Year, *Diapason d'or*, *Grand Prix du disque*, Record Academy Prize (Tokyo), Midem Classical Award, and the Echo Klassik Award. Her recordings include collaborations with the London Symphony, the Staatskapelle Dresden, Pierre Boulez, Claudio Abbado, Andris Nelsons, and many other prominent musicians. Her disc *Water* is a live recording of performances from *tears become... streams become...*, a genre-confounding immersive installation at New York's Park Avenue Armory in collaboration with Turner Prize-winning artist Douglas Gordon. Grimaud's most recent recording 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. *For Clara* revisits Robert Schumann's *Kreisleriana*, and pairs it with Brahms's Op. 117 *Intermezzi* and his Op. 32 set of songs, in which she is joined by baritone Konstantin Krimmel. She has been an

exclusive Deutsche Grammophon artist since 2002.

The 2023–2024 concert season includes a European tour with the London Philharmonic; a season-long residency at the Philharmonie Luxembourg; Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 20 with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Yannick Nézet-Séguin; recitals in Boston, Atlanta, Chicago, and Toronto; and performances with Camerata Salzburg of the Schumann Piano Concerto at the Vienna Konzerthaus, Dresden Music Festival, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Festival (together with Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto), and Évian Festival.

Hélène Grimaud was born in 1969 in Aix-en-Provence and began her piano studies at the local conservatory with Jacqueline Courtin before going on to work 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, 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. A committed chamber musician, she has also performed at the most prestigious festivals and cultural events with a wide range of musical collaborators, including Sol Gabetta, Rolando Villazón, Jan Vogler, Truls Mørk,

Artist Profile

Clemens Hagen, Gidon Kremer, Gil Shaham, and the Capuçon brothers.

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 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. 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, *Variations Sauvages*, *Leçons particulières*, and *Retour à Salem*.

It is, however, through her thoughtful and tenderly expressive music-making that Hélène Grimaud most deeply touches the emotions of audiences around the world. Fortunately, they have been able to enjoy her concerts worldwide, thanks to the extensive tours she undertakes as a soloist and recitalist. Her prodigious contribution to and impact on the world of classical music were 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).

Program Notes

Piano Sonata No. 30, Op. 109

BEETHOVEN

Patrick Campbell Jankowski

In 1824, a Berlin music critic wrote that Beethoven's Op. 109 sonata "will not become familiar until one has repeated it often out of some inner impulse. It begins in the manner of a prelude, as if one were testing a harp to see if it were in tune." As is often the case with Beethoven, what was seen as peculiar, radical, and without precedent later seems almost inevitable and, as the critic put it, "familiar." He begins with a fantasia-like first movement which, while in sonata form, seems improvised, floating freely between lively vivace and dramatic adagio sections seemingly at whim. The introductory movement sets a scene, with its rolling arpeggios that evoke the accompaniment to a recitative preceding an aria. One might expect a movement of a grand scale to follow this prelude, but Beethoven instead launches into a brisk and stormy prestissimo in E minor, a grounded and heavy weight to counterbalance the buoyant reverie of the introduction. Just as the composer allows time to absorb this dramatic shift, the movement swiftly comes to a close. As the final movement begins, the fragmentary, introductory nature of the preceding movements becomes more clear. In the finale, Beethoven at last completes his idea. The theme and variations had become one of Beethoven's more favored forms, and this songful theme with six configurations — all of which amount to twice the length of the first two movements combined — demonstrates the composer's mastery of transformation.

Three Intermezzi for piano, Op. 117

BRAHMS

Patrick Campbell Jankowski

Op. 117 is the smallest of the late sets, a triptych of pieces that are quietly introspective and gentle in mood. Each of the three pieces shares the character of a lullaby, and in fact the first piece, in E-flat major, expressly invokes a Scottish lullaby, an excerpt of which Brahms provides at the heading of the piece. The excerpt from the poem “Lady Anne Bothwell’s Lament” is translated as “Sleep softly, my child, sleep softly and well! — It breaks my heart to see you weep.” In German, the text almost perfectly synchronizes with the simple opening lullaby theme. The central section, darker in tone and more stirring in rhythmic activity, may point to the “weeping” of the child in question. The subsequent two intermezzi are equally evocative, although they share no poetic references. Though all three pieces are in ternary form — the same A-B-A form seen in the Op. 116 pieces — the second intermezzo, in B-flat minor, comes tantalizingly close to sonata form in its construction. It is important to remember that there are no rules or guidelines for the genres of these pieces, and Brahms’s experimentation with form, and with the mixing of forms, is partly what makes these pieces so fascinating.

Fantasies, Op. 116

BRAHMS

Boris Berman

Brahms’s Fantasies op. 116, written in 1892, is the first of several sets of short pieces for piano; the others were published as opp. 117, 118, and 119. These late compositions present an intimate, vulnerable side of the great composer that is often obscured in his monumental works, such as symphonies, concertos, or the German Requiem. In his late piano pieces Brahms increasingly moves away from imposing statements and sweeping Romantic lines in the effort to capture the elusive, ever-changing twilight melancholy, the muted anguish punctuated by outbursts of pain, bitterness that surfaces only to be suppressed again. The touching simplicity of these short pieces belies the complexity of the feelings that generated them.

Chaconne from Partita No. 2 in D minor,
BWV 1004

BACH / BUSONI

Patrick Campbell Jankowski

Transcription, the often overlooked companion to composition, is an art all its own. When done well, it can transform, strengthen, and even reinvigorate a piece, allowing us to hear it fresh. Ferruccio Busoni’s sensitive adaptation of the legendary chaconne from Bach’s D minor solo violin partita does just that. Busoni, a pianist-philosopher of sorts, wrote: “Every notation is, itself, the transcription of an abstract idea. The instant the pen seizes it, the idea loses its original form.”

Program Notes, *cont.*

Bach's composition was the first transcription. Busoni follows suit by transforming that "idea" in acclimatizing it to the piano. For Busoni, transcriptions come in two forms: *Bearbeitung* — by simple definition, an "arrangement" — and *Übertragung*, or "adaptation." The former reconfigures music for similar voices. The piano, a naturally decaying instrument, has more in common with plucked or struck instruments, facilitating translation between them. Adapting music originally for sustaining voices, violin included, calls for *Übertragung*, requiring careful alteration to achieve the same effect.

Busoni scores the opening of the funereal chaconne — a series of continuous variations on a repeated chord progression — in the left hand alone, several octaves lower in actual pitch than on the violin. Taken relatively, this range on the piano is similar to the equivalent point on the violin: in its resonant middle-low tessitura. Keeping the opening progression under one hand preserves the intimate configuration of the violin's four strings: the pianist's single hand is the violinist's single bow.

However, Busoni does not exclusively imitate the violin. Rather, he takes full advantage of the modern piano's polyphonic capabilities, and enhances them as only a pianist can. He doubles internal voices in octaves to draw them out of the texture, shedding light on Bach's complex counterpoint while broadening the sonic texture. What would occupy two-and-a-half octaves on the violin is broadened to

four octaves on the piano: violinist and pianist alike are stretched to full capacity. A pianist of Busoni's skill understood the instrument's capabilities, and when he marks "almost trombone-like" over a solemn voice in the middle to low register, he invokes an entirely new sound, an unimaginable kind of indication in Bach's time.

Alongside practical alterations, Busoni's *Übertragung* is as much modernization as transcription. The pages of his adaptation encapsulate performance practices of the post-Lisztian generation. At present, this chaconne has absorbed the aesthetic tastes and traditions of three centuries, while sounding vigorous and very much alive.

About the Horowitz Piano Series

The Horowitz Recital Series was established in 2000 to honor the artistry of the great Ukrainian-American pianist Vladimir Horowitz (1903–1989), who chose to leave his papers to Yale upon his death in 1989. Today, Yale honors his legacy through the Horowitz Piano Series, which brings many of the world's great keyboard artists to Yale and presents the distinguished pianists of the Yale faculty.

Emanuel Ax, Yefim Bronfman, and Radu Lupu are among the guest pianists who have performed at Yale. The series also presents pianists who are less known in the United States, such as Paul Lewis, Pierre Réach, and Mikhaïl Rudy.

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List as of December 6, 2023

Upcoming Events at YSM

- FEB 2** **Linda May Han Oh, *double bass***
Ellington Jazz Series
7:30 p.m. | Morse Recital Hall
Tickets start at \$26, Yale faculty/staff start at \$19, Students start at \$11
- FEB 4** **Frank Morelli, *bassoon* & Wei-Yi Yang, *piano***
Faculty Artist Series
3 p.m. | Morse Recital Hall
Free admission
- FEB 7** **Lunchtime Chamber Music**
12.30 p.m. | Morse Recital Hall
Free admission
- FEB 8** **Aaron Jay Kernis, *faculty composer***
New Music New Haven
7:30 p.m. | Morse Recital Hall
Free admission
- FEB 11** **Ettore Causa, *viola* & Boris Berman, *piano***
Faculty Artist Series
3 p.m. | Morse Recital Hall
Free admission
- FEB 11** **Music of José Maurício Nunes Garcia & Marianne Martínez**
Yale Camerata & Yale Glee Club
4 p.m. | Woolsey Hall
Free admission
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