

WEDNESDAY

**FEB
19**

7:30 PM

Harold J. Miossi CPAC,
Cuesta College

HÉLÈNE GRIMAUD PIANO RECITAL

BEETHOVEN / BRAHMS / BACH

ARTIST



Hélène Grimaud
piano



Concert Grand Piano
Sponsor

6:30 PM PRE-CONCERT LECTURE

with Dr. Alyson McLamore

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Piano Sonata No. 30 in E major, op. 109 (1820)

*Vivace, ma non troppo—Adagio espressivo
Prestissimo*

*Gesangvoll, mit innigster Empfindung (Theme): Andante
molto cantabile ed espressivo—*

Var. I: Molto espressivo

Var. II: Leggiermente—

Var. III: Allegro vivace—

Var. IV: Etwas langsamer als das Thema

Var. V: Allegro, ma non troppo—

Var. VI: Tempo I del tema, cantabile

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Drei Intermezzi, op. 117 (1892)

No. 1 in E-flat major (Andante moderato)

No. 2 in B-flat major (Andante non troppo e con molto espressione)

No. 3 in C-sharp minor (Andante con molto)

INTERMISSION

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Fantasies, op. 116 (1892)

No. 1: Capriccio (Presto energico)

No. 2: Intermezzo (Andante)

No. 3: Capriccio (Allegro passionato)

No. 4: Intermezzo (Adagio)

No. 5: Intermezzo (Andante con grazia ed intimissimo sentimento)

No. 6: Intermezzo (Andantino teneramente)

No. 7: Capriccio (Allegro agitato)

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

"Chaconne" from Partita No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004
(c. 1720; arr. 1892 by Ferruccio Busoni)

Generously underwritten by Shirley & Michael Ritter

PROGRAM NOTES

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

Piano Sonata No. 30 in E major, op. 109 (1820)



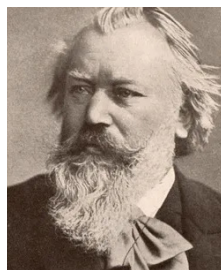
After twenty-nine previous sonatas, it seems that Beethoven was ready for some radical changes. Sure, Number 30 contains the conventional three movements—but unlike most previous sonatas, Beethoven’s central movement is the fastest of the three, instead of being the slowest. In the first movement, most listeners would expect to hear two contrasting melodies—but they would *not* expect to hear two contrasting speeds. Beethoven, however,

alternates between a lively tune that begins almost unobtrusively and a mysterious, almost rhapsodic passage; it makes use of the full width of the keyboard that was available on the pianos of Beethoven’s time (which must have added to the thrill factor). The rapid-fire central movement shifts to the minor mode and sustains a fierce intensity throughout, sounding almost thunderous at times.

Beethoven has yet another surprise in store for the finale of Opus 109. It had been the practice since the Baroque era to end multi-movement works with something fast, and thousands of pieces mimicked the bouncy dance called a jig (“gigue” in French). Although Beethoven also employs a dance-like finale, his model is the stately sarabande—which he stretches in all sorts of directions by means of six diverse variations.

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)

Drei Intermezzi, op. 117 (1892)



In 1890, Brahms announced that Opus 111 would be his last composition. In fact, he wrote his will after finishing it. To paraphrase Mark Twain, however, “the report of Brahms’s compositional ‘retirement’ was an exaggeration,” as testified by the presence of Opus 117 (and Opus 116) on tonight’s program. Brahms was spurred to pick up a pen once again after hearing the clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld in 1891; by 1892, he asked a

Viennese friend to ship some manuscript paper to the resort Bad Ischl. Brahms had decided to return to writing for the piano, which he had not done since 1879.

The Three Intermezzi (“interludes”), op. 117, were products of that fruitful summer in the resort. Brahms told a pianist friend that they were “three lullabies for his sorrows,” which accounts for their intermixing of comfort and grief. All three of the Intermezzi are in ternary form (A-B-A), and the first of the three borrows the melody of a Scottish cradle-song. The second Intermezzo opens in the minor mode, but shifts to the major mode in its flowing central section. The third Intermezzo may also derive from a folk-song, and although the mood grows quite dark at times, it remains compellingly beautiful.

BRAHMS

Fantasies, op. 116 (1892)

Pianists eagerly embraced Brahms’s two Rhapsodies, written in 1879 and published in 1880 as Opus 79. It is likely that there were many unhappy musicians a decade later, when word got out that when Brahms had mailed String Quintet No. 2 to his publisher in December 1890 along with a message: “With this slip, bid farewell to notes of mine.” Therefore, after two barren years had elapsed, there must have been considerable excitement when new keyboard works by Brahms started to appear, the first of which was the set of Fantasies, op. 116.

At first glance, the set’s seven pieces seem to be merely a series of separate character pieces, titled either “Intermezzo” or “Capriccio,” with most lasting between two and three minutes. Still, it becomes obvious that Brahms had designed a large-scale cycle out of these assorted miniatures, using various means—such as recurring motifs—to bind them together. Moreover, there is a logic to the sequence of harmonies from piece to piece. For example, the outer “Capriccios” are both set in D minor, thereby bookending the set. The No. 7 “Capriccio,” however, shifts to D major—a common concluding gesture that leads to a feeling of triumph.

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685–1750)

“Chaconne” from Partita No. 2 in D minor,
BWV 1004 (c. 1720; arr. 1892 by Ferruccio Busoni)



Some contractors focus on new homes, building from the ground up. Others see the potential in older structures, often re-imagining them dramatically during the remodeling process, yet sustaining the integrity of the original building. In the case of the “Chaconne,” which concludes Bach’s Second Partita in D minor for unaccompanied violin, the original building was pretty spectacular. Bach had written the piece while

working for the music-loving Prince Leopold of Cöthen. The premise was modest: the “Chaconne” consisted of the simplest descending line imaginable, but Bach elaborated that bare-bones foundation, over and over again, in increasingly virtuosic and fantastic ways. Simply put, Bach created thirty-two variations that demonstrated nearly everything that a violin can do.

Since 1720, some two hundred people have borrowed Bach’s “blueprint” to build structures for new media ranging from solo cello to full orchestra. Ferruccio Busoni’s 1892 arrangement for piano remains one of the most formidable keyboard adaptations. Busoni himself published three revised editions between 1902 and 1916, slightly reducing the complexity each time. Still, the Busoni version offers increasingly rich harmonies and textures, and just as Bach had done with the violin, Busoni lets the “Chaconne” demonstrate virtually everything that a piano has to offer.