

THANK YOU

Pianist Alexandre Dossin concludes the “In Beall with Brahms” series with concert number eight. This ambitious concert cycle started in the Fall of 2014 and featured the complete chamber works with piano by Johannes Brahms, a first for the University of Oregon. Three times each year, once each academic term, Dossin joined his UO colleagues and guests for an evening of chamber music by the great German composer.

We would like to thank everyone who attended concerts in the series. If you are interested in owning a highlight CD of the performances, please fill out the donation insert and turn it into the box office with a check or credit card. Thank you again for your patronage.

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Season 116, Program 62



UNIVERSITY OF
OREGON

SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND DANCE

In Beall with **Brahms** concert eight

Jon Nakamatsu, piano
Alexandre Dossin, piano

Beall Concert Hall
Saturday, April 29, 2017 | 3 p.m.



J. Brahms (1833-1897)

Sonata for 2 pianos, Op. 34b (1864)

Allegro non troppo
Andante, un poco Adagio
Scherzo: Allegro molto
Finale: Poco sostenuto—Allegro non troppo

Alexandre Dossin, Piano I
Jon Nakamatsu, Piano II

INTERMISSION

Variations on a theme by Haydn, Op. 56b (1873)

Theme. Chorale St. Antoni. Andante
Variation I. Andante con moto
Variation II. Vivace
Variation III. Con moto
Variation IV. Andante
Variation V. Poco presto
Variation VI. Vivace
Variation VII. Grazioso
Variation VIII. Poco presto
Finale. Andante

Jon Nakamatsu, Piano I
Alexandre Dossin, Piano II

the other as inner-voice melodies emerge and then fade away; in the muted, Mendelssohnian scherzo of Variation VIII; and in the brilliant passacaglia finale, which gathers great momentum for the triumphant reprise of the main theme.

Sonata for two pianos is also a marvel of textual invention. Take the very opening of the first movement: it begins with a tentative theme played in octaves on both pianos, but the theme comes to rest on a dominant chord (and a fermata) after only four bars, as if unsure how to continue. There follows a surging transition, with sixteenth notes in piano I and crashing chords in piano II, which leads to an agitated restatement of the opening theme—it sounds in octaves yet again, but now at a double forte dynamic and amidst a tempest of activity. Listen, only a minute later, for yet another textural shift: a theme played in thirds in the highest reaches of piano I, accompanied by rumbling triplets in the depths of piano II. From start to finish, the first movement seesaws between forcefulness and fragility—without, however, losing a sense of direction. Equally stunning—though entirely different in affect—is the following slow movement, a subdued waltz whose melody is sung by piano II and accompanied by gentle octaves in piano I, like stars looking down on lovers in motion. Clara Schumann was particularly fond of this movement. In a letter to Brahms she wrote, “What an adagio! How rapturously it sings and rings from beginning to end! I keep on beginning it over and over again, and wished it would never stop.”

Reading a letter like this reminds us that composers like Brahms (and Clara Schumann) were not just creative minds, the great figures from so many music history textbooks, but real people who wrote music for one another, and who shaped and reshaped their works for particular audiences and particular performers. Brahms in fact turned his string quintet into a work for two pianos precisely because he needed something to play with his friend, the pianist Carl Tausig, for a concert in Vienna, in April 1864. And as for Clara—she premiered the two-piano version of the Haydn variations, at a private gathering in Bonn, Germany, in August 1873, with Brahms by her side.



In this final “In Beall with Brahms” concert you have the good fortune of hearing two works for piano duo that have unfortunately been overshadowed by later versions for larger forces. The Sonata for two pianos began its life in 1862 as a string quintet; Brahms reworked it two years later for two pianos and shortly thereafter transformed it again, recasting it as the Piano Quintet in F Minor (performed in the second concert of this series, on

March 2nd, 2015), a work that would become one of the pillars of Brahms’s chamber output. The Variations on a Theme by Haydn, composed in 1873, began as a piece for two pianos, and Brahms subsequently rewrote it for orchestra; as with the earlier work, the version in fuller instrumental dress has tended to reign supreme.

The two-piano versions of these pieces, however, are wonders of their own, and they deserve to be heard more often. Both works reveal the variety of textures that Brahms manages to elicit from 176 keys and 20 fingers. This is especially true of the Haydn variations (based on a theme that scholars now believe was not in fact written by Haydn but more likely by his student Ignaz Pleyel). The opening theme is a quiet and stately chorale, altogether unhurried and straightforward (not to mention almost entirely diatonic). But already by the first variation Brahms begins to weave a tapestry of different pianistic colors; listen for the many tolling Bbs (drawn from the close of the theme) that appear in different registers. Variation II turns the opening motive of the theme into what one writer has called a “loud bump”—the furthest thing from the quiet elegance of the first bars of the piece. Brahms has even more tricks up his sleeve in later variations: in the embellished repeats of Variation III, which create the feeling of a variation within a variation; in the highly contrapuntal, minor-mode Variation IV; in the lilting siciliana of Variation VII, which passes arpeggiations from one register and one piano to



Trotter Visiting Professor and American pianist **Jon Nakamatsu** continues to draw unanimous praise as a true aristocrat of the keyboard, whose playing combines elegance, clarity, and electrifying power. A native of California, Mr. Nakamatsu came to international attention in 1997 when he was named Gold Medalist of the Tenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, the only American to have achieved this distinction since 1981. Mr. Nakamatsu

has performed widely in North and South America, Europe, and the Far East, collaborating with such conductors as James Conlon, Marek Janowski, Raymond Leppard, Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, Osmo Vänskä and Hans Vonk. He also performed at a White House concert hosted by President and Mrs. Clinton.

Mr. Nakamatsu’s extensive recital tours throughout the U.S. and Europe have featured appearances in New York’s Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, Washington D.C.’s Kennedy Center, and in Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Paris, London and Milan. He has worked with various chamber ensembles - among them the Brentano, Tokyo, Kuss, Jupiter, Cypress, Prazak and Ying String Quartets - and has toured repeatedly with the Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet. Together with clarinetist Jon Manasse, Mr. Nakamatsu tours continually as a member of the Manasse/Nakamatsu Duo. The Duo also serves as Artistic Directors of the esteemed Cape Cod Chamber Music Festival in Massachusetts.

Mr. Nakamatsu records exclusively for harmonia mundi usa, which has released thirteen CDs to date. His all-Gershwin recording with Jeff Tyzik and the Rochester Philharmonic featuring Rhapsody in Blue and the Concerto in F rose to number three on Billboard’s classical music charts, earning extraordinary critical praise. Other

acclaimed releases include an all-Liszt disc featuring the “Dante Sonata”; a recording of Brahms’ Piano Sonata in F minor; and Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No. 3 and the Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini. Mr. Nakamatsu’s 2008 recording of Brahms’ Clarinet Sonatas with Jon Manasse was chosen by the New York Times as one of its top releases for the year; his latest disc with Mr. Manasse, released in August 2012, includes both the Brahms Clarinet Quintet and the Piano Quintet with the Tokyo String Quartet. Of his most recent release on the label, a 2014 solo disc of the piano works of Robert Schumann, BBC Music Magazine states that “Nakamatsu clarifies Schumann’s mid-range saturated textures to a remarkable degree, reveling in its fantastic imaginings with rapier-like precision and effortless command.”

Since 1997, Mr. Nakamatsu has served on multiple international piano competition juries and has also been invited as a guest speaker at numerous institutions including the Van Cliburn Foundation, Stanford University and the Juilliard School.

Mr. Nakamatsu studied privately with Marina Derryberry and has worked with Karl Ulrich Schnabel, son of the great pianist Artur Schnabel. He is a graduate of Stanford University with a bachelor’s degree in German Studies and a master’s degree in Education.



Considered by Martha Argerich an “extraordinary musician” and by the international critic a “phenomenon” and “a master of contrasts,” **Alexandre Dossin** keeps an active performing, recording and teaching careers.

Dossin received the First Prize and the Special Prize at the 2003 Martha Argerich International Piano Competition in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Other international awards include

the Silver Medal and second Honorable Mention in the Maria Callas Grand Prix, and Third Prize and Special Prize in the Mozart International Piano Competition, in addition to several prizes in Brazil.

An active recording artist, he has 15 CDs released with several labels, including 5 CDs with Naxos and 6 editions/recordings for Schirmer. His work was praised in reviews by Diapason, The Financial Times, Fanfare Magazine, American Record Guide, Clavier and other international publications.

Dossin is the Vice President of the American Liszt Society, the President of the Oregon Chapter of the American Liszt Society and is one of the recipients of the prestigious 2015-2016 Faculty Fund for Excellence at the University of Oregon.