

PROGRAM NOTES by Stephen Rodgers

of the clarinet and piano sonata and your ears will be drawn back to this simple lullaby. The mood is a touch more melancholic here, but the sense of tranquility and sleep is similar—note especially the clarinet’s slowly drooping melodic line and, in the second section, the toy-box sound of the piano, with its arpeggiated major triads. The Adagio affettuoso of the cello and piano sonata is also spacious and tenderhearted—a movement that moves at such a slow tempo because to move any faster would risk breaking what is so beautiful and fragile. Slow movements are of course ubiquitous in classical music. But slow movements like these, and songs like the “Geistliches Wiegenlied,” which mix innocence and grandeur in equal measure, are rare.

In Beall with Brahms | Final Season, 2016-17

concert eight: April 29th, 2017
works for two pianos
Sonata for two pianos, op. 34 b
Variations on a Theme by Haydn, Op.56
Special Guest Artist: Jon Nakamatsu, piano



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Season 116, Program 36



UNIVERSITY OF
OREGON

SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND DANCE

In Beall with
Brahms
concert seven

Karen Esquivel, contralto
Leslie Straka, viola
Steven Pologe, cello
Michael Anderson, clarinet
Alexandre Dossin, piano

Beall Concert Hall
Monday, February 20, 2017 | 7:30 p.m.



2 Gesänge, Op.91
 Gestillte Sehnsucht
 Geistliches Wiegenlied

Karen Esquivel, contralto
 Leslie Straka, viola
 Alexandre Dossin, piano

Sonata for clarinet and piano in F Minor, Op.120 No.1
 Allegro appassionato
 Andante un poco adagio
 Allegretto grazioso
 Vivace

Michael Anderson, clarinet
 Alexandre Dossin, piano

INTERMISSION

Sonata for cello and piano F major, Op. 99
 Allegro vivace
 Adagio affettuoso
 Allegro passionato
 Allegro molto

Steve Pologe, cello
 Alexandre Dossin, piano

the cello and piano sonata, for example, the cello sounds at one moment like a boat being battered by the waves of the piano's tremolos and the next moment like a massive sea creature searching the depths. The outer sections of the third-movement scherzo, from the same work, feature an almost relentless torrent of eighth notes in a brisk 6/8 meter, passed from one instrument to the other and jostled by intermittent cross rhythms. (Some listeners found the jostling off-putting. Hugo Wolf, hardly a straitlaced composer himself, complained, "What is music, today, what is harmony, what is melody, what is rhythm, what is form if this total chaos is seriously accepted as music?") For all its concision and economy, the clarinet and piano sonata is also full of dazzling textures and surprisingly sudden shifts from tunefulness to turbulence, particularly in its F-minor first movement (a key often associated with turbulence in Brahms). The finale likewise lurches from a giddy rondo theme to faux-pathetic episodes in the minor mode and everywhere in between, interrupted now and then by a bell-like figure of three repeated notes. It's pure, boisterous fun.

Yet, what truly ties together the pieces on tonight's program is something much more muted and intimate: passages of childlike tenderness. You'll first hear this mode of expression in the second of the 2 Gesänge—the "Geistliches Wiegenlied." "In due course I shall send you a wonderful old Catholic song for singing at home," Brahms wrote to Joachim. "You will never discover a more beautiful lullaby." The "wonderful old Catholic song" is the fourteenth-century carol "Resonet in laudibus," known in its German version as "Joseph, lieber Joseph mein"—a lullaby that the Virgin Mary sings to the sleeping baby Jesus. Brahms begins the song in the simplest way possible: the carol is played on viola alone. The contralto then sings her own tune, recognizable only after the fact as a varied and elongated version of the carol's melody. Most striking is the long descending line at the end of each verse—a musical image of a child who drifts off to sleep. In the context of the entire program, this lullaby becomes a kind of center of gravity. Listen to the Andante

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.

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Tonight's program contains three exquisite chamber pieces that Brahms wrote relatively late in his life, in each case with specific performers in mind. He composed the Sonata for Clarinet and Piano in F Minor after a March 1891 visit to Meiningen, where he had heard the orchestra's principal clarinetist, Richard Mühlfeld, play one of the Weber clarinet concertos. The Sonata for Cello and Piano in F Major was written a few years earlier for the cellist Robert Hausmann. And the 2 Gesänge (for contralto, viola, and piano) were written for Joseph Joachim and Amalie Joachim, a world-class violinist and amateur singer; Brahms composed the second song to commemorate the birth of their child, and the first to celebrate their (alas unsuccessful) marital reconciliation.

Brahms's enthusiasm for these performers—not to mention his faith in their performing abilities—reveals itself in the variety of colors and textures that he is able to draw from these instruments, as well as in the inventive and sometimes startling ways that the instruments interact with the piano. In the first movement of



Contralto **Karen Esquivel** obtained her BME and Master's degree in Voice / Opera Theater at the University of Nebraska, a MM in Opera Production from Florida State University and her Doctorate in Voice Performance from the same institution. Esquivel has participated in the Apprenticeship Programs of the Des Moines Metro Opera and the Santa Fe Opera. Her experience covers performances in Music Theater to Opera to Oratorio. She has enjoyed performing and directing in stage productions, as well as creating costume and set designs. Esquivel's area of research is Spanish through-sung opera, an investigation that she has found rewarding and shares with with her husband, Costa Rican pianist/coach Gustavo Castro. Since 1997 she has formed a duo with her husband, performing numerous recitals in Costa Rica, Nicaragua and across the U.S.A. Esquivel currently teaches voice and directs the Opera Ensemble at the University of Oregon.

Leslie Straka joined the University of Oregon faculty in 1987, teaching viola and chamber music and performing regularly throughout the Pacific Northwest. She served as chair of the string department from 1993–2006. Prior to joining the University of Oregon faculty, Straka was on the faculty at the University of Miami. She received the BM, MM, and DMA degrees from Arizona State University. Straka has performed extensively as a soloist and chamber musician throughout the United States and Europe, collaborating with many outstanding musicians. With pianist



Walter Cosand, she recorded the Brahms viola sonatas, released in 2004. Straka has been a member of the Oregon String Quartet since 1987. The quartet has recorded two compact discs, both released by Koch International Classics.

Steven Pologe has performed as soloist and chamber musician throughout the United States, and in Italy, Sweden, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, New Zealand and Canada. His CDs include two with the Oregon String Quartet (quartets by William Grant Still and All That Jazz), works by Jon Deak for solo cello and piano trio, and the piano trio of Lev Abeliovich. Pologe is Professor of Cello at the University of Oregon School of Music and cellist in the Oregon String Quartet, Trio Pacifica and Chamber Music Amici. He also performs and teaches each summer at the Green Mountain Chamber Music Festival. In his earlier career, he performed for many years with the American Ballet Theater, Brooklyn Philharmonia, Grand Teton Music Festival and as principal cellist with the Honolulu Symphony and the Oregon Bach Festival.



Michael Anderson is currently Principal Clarinet of the Eugene Symphony and the Santa Fe Pro Musica Chamber Orchestra. He performed as Principal Clarinet of the Oregon Ballet Theater for 18 seasons, and was Principal Clarinet of the Oregon Bach Festival



Orchestra under Helmuth Rilling for 20 seasons. He has also performed in recent years with the Portland Baroque Orchestra, Chamber Music Northwest, Smithsonian Chamber Players and the Oregon Symphony.

Anderson has performed as concerto soloist with the Eugene Symphony, Portland Columbia Symphony, Oregon Coast Music Festival, Oregon Mozart Players, University of Oregon Symphony, Ernest Bloch Festival, and Santa Fe Pro Musica. Michael Anderson has taught clarinet at the University of Oregon, Lane Community College, Willamette University, and Woodwinds@Wallowa Lake. Mr. Anderson is Director of Artistic Administration and Interim Executive Director for the Oregon Bach Festival. He lives in Eugene with his violinist wife Alice Blankenship and his 11-year-old son Francis.

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

