

February 6, 2020 at 8:00pm | **Richardson Auditorium in Alexander Hall**  
Pre-concert discussion between Scott Burnham and Elaine Pagels at 7:00pm

**ISABELLE FAUST** VIOLIN  
**JEAN-GUIHEN QUEYRAS** CELLO  
**ALEXANDER MELNIKOV** PIANO

**LUDWIG  
VAN  
BEETHOVEN**  
(1770–1827)

Variations in G Major, Op. 121a, on Wenzel Müller's  
"Ich bin der Schneider Kakadu"

Piano Trio in E-flat Major, Op. 70, No. 2

Poco sostenuto—Allegro ma non troppo  
Allegretto  
Allegretto ma non troppo  
Finale: Allegro

**INTERMISSION**

Piano Trio in B-flat Major, Op. 97 "Archduke"

Allegro moderato  
Scherzo: Allegro  
Andante cantabile, ma però con moto  
Allegro moderato. Presto

# About the Program

By Lucy Caplan, © 2020

## LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

### Variations in G Major, Op. 121a, on Wenzel Müller’s “Ich bin der Schneider Kakadu” (1824)

The thunder boomed, and the lightning flashed. The rain poured down as the dying man shook his fist at the sky. This highly dramatic, oft-repeated story of Beethoven’s final moments has become the stuff of legend. It may or may not be true (the thunderstorm can be confirmed; the rest cannot), but it captures a certain way of thinking about the composer and his godlike stature in classical music culture. In this anniversary year, 250 years after Beethoven’s birth, such myths are as omnipresent as they ever have been. Yet in sacralizing and deifying Beethoven, they risk obscuring the more interesting—and more human—dimensions of his life and work.

The “Kakadu” variations evoke a mood very different from that grim deathbed scene. The piece was published toward the end of Beethoven’s life, but its exact date of composition is unclear. As early as 1801, Beethoven crafted a set of variations on a cheery, buoyant song from *Die Schwestern von Prag* (1794), a light opera by the Austrian composer Wenzel Müller that was popular in Vienna at the time. When he returned to the piece years later, in 1816—cheekily assuring

his publisher that, although it was one of his early works, it was not among “the reprehensible ones”—he is thought to have made substantial revisions. Further revisions followed prior to the work’s publication in 1824, more than two decades after it was first begun. As such, the variations have a nostalgic cast: they suggest the older composer looking backward to an earlier time and his younger self, recapturing elements of the past before they disappeared entirely.

These qualities can be heard in the music itself. The variations are characterized by extreme contrast, even lopsidedness. The g-minor introduction is as serious as anything Beethoven ever wrote. (Musicologists speculate that it dates from one of Beethoven’s later revisions, not from the work’s initial composition.) Slowly paced, full of lugubrious chromatic melodies, and fantasy-like in structure, this opening movement offers little sense of the exuberance that is to follow. But follow it does: ten variations on Müller’s theme, many of which evoke the light-opera context from which that theme emerged. The first variation, presented by the piano alone, is simple, even conventional. The next two shift the spotlight to the violin and cello, respectively. Later variations increase in complexity with cascading runs in the piano, a playful duet between cello and violin, and even a brief return to the solemnity of the introduction. The piece

culminates with a joyful, contrapuntally complex coda. With abundant cheer and virtuosity, this music recalls not so much a thunderstorm as a cloudy day that finally gives way to sunshine.

### **Piano Trio in E-flat Major, Op. 70, No. 2 (1808)**

If you know four Beethovenian notes, they are probably the first four of the Fifth Symphony: dramatic, foreboding, monumental. After completing that symphony in the fall of 1807 and following it with the more bucolic yet equally large-scale Sixth Symphony, the composer turned, in 1808, to the more intimate realm of chamber music. The trio Op. 70, No. 2 (the nickname-less counterpart to the celebrated “Ghost” trio, Op. 70, No. 1) dates from that year. Decidedly un-symphonic in scale, it is mellow yet substantive. Like the “Kakadu” variations, the Op. 70, No. 2 trio looks backward—not to Beethoven’s own earlier work, *per se*, but rather to the elegant classicism of Haydn and Mozart. It is as if, having proven his ability to play a transformative role in music history, Beethoven also took care to pay homage to the past.

The trio’s opening gesture could hardly be more different from that of the Fifth Symphony. Rather than beginning with a fateful knock at the door, it invites the listener in with a downward-sliding melody in the cello, all connection and smoothness. As the violin and piano join in, the luxurious slowness of the introduction warms into a more spirited

mood, moving from earthbound 4/4 time to a lilting 6/8. The movement twists and turns, making excursions into faraway keys and allowing for the occasional return of the opening’s searching tones. In the second movement, Beethoven substitutes a comfortably paced, song-like movement for what would typically be a slower one. As in the earlier movements, the three instruments are equal partners, with no one voice dominating the conversation. The third movement makes a similarly understated rebuke to formal conventions with a not-too-fast, minuet-like Allegretto; lyricism takes precedence over sheer technical virtuosity. The final movement amps up the drama with quick changes of mood and key, flourishing chords, and rapid alteration between heroic runs and lyrical moments of respite—a richly layered conclusion to a work that draws audiences in with moments of subtlety rather than overt displays of force.

### **Piano Trio in B-flat Major, Op. 97 “Archduke” (1811)**

Expanse and breadth characterize Beethoven’s “Archduke” piano trio, a work of grand proportions and ambitious scope. But to describe it as such necessarily occludes other elements—its playfulness, its warmth, even its occasional silliness. This is, in fact, a problem that often arises when listening to Beethoven’s music, especially in hagiographic contexts: we are so enamored by its greatness that we lose sight of what makes it so pleasurable.

In the case of the “Archduke” trio, an elite reputation is bolstered by a noble provenance. Dedicated to Beethoven’s friend, pupil, and patron, Archduke Rudolph of Austria, it the final work that the composer wrote for piano trio. Composed in just a few weeks’ time, it likely was first performed at the nobleman’s palace. Its public premiere, in 1814, was a bittersweet occasion. It featured the composer at the piano in what would prove to be one of his final public appearances, due to hearing loss that made it difficult for him to continue performing in public.

The trio is a work of great musical generosity. Its opening theme sings out from the piano, unhurried and majestic. As the movement unfolds, its moderate pace encourages close listening. Audiences have the opportunity to savor its rhythmic variances, formal clarity, and nuanced

textures. The second movement, a scherzo, is similarly capacious in scale. Based upon a theme of almost disarming simplicity, it moves on to a technically and emotionally complex middle section, in which twisty fugal figures compete for space with a charming, tuneful waltz. In the third movement, Beethoven offers a set of variations on a theme of striking serenity. Increasingly elaborate in nature, they conclude with a restatement of the original theme and a corresponding return to tranquility. The final movement makes use of the rondo form to offer contrast and variety. Imposing passages alternate with carefree ones, and a giddy conclusion almost makes one forget the weighty music that preceded it. Or, perhaps, it asks the listener to think beyond the very concepts of weightiness and greatness—and, instead, to rejoice in sound for its own sake.



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## About the Artists



### ISABELLE FAUST *Violin*

Isabelle Faust won the prestigious Leopold Mozart and Paganini competitions and was soon invited to appear with the world's leading orchestras, including the Berlin Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, NHK Symphony Orchestra Tokyo, Freiburg Baroque Orchestra, and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. This led to close and sustained cooperation with conductors such as Claudio Abbado, Giovanni Antonini, Frans Brüggen, Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Bernard Haitink, Daniel Harding, Philippe Herreweghe, Andris Nelsons, and Robin Ticciati. Faust's vast artistic curiosity encompasses all eras and forms of instrumental collaboration, performing a wide-ranging repertoire from J. S. Bach to contemporary composers such as György Ligeti, Helmut Lachenmann, and Jörg Widmann. To highlight this versatility, in addition to her mastery of the great symphonic violin concertos, she also performs works such as György Kurtág's "Kafka Fragments" with soprano Anna Prohaska, Igor Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du soldat*, or Franz Schubert's octet on historical instruments, for instance. She will premiere several

new works for violin and orchestra in the coming seasons, including concertos by composers Péter Eötvös, Brett Dean, Ondrej Adámek, and Oscar Strasnoy. A prolific recording artist, Isabelle Faust has a large discography, and her critically acclaimed recordings have received the Gramophone award, the Diapason d'or, the Choc de l'année, and other prizes. Her most recent recordings include Bach's violin concertos with the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin and Felix Mendelssohn's violin concerto with the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra conducted by Pablo Heras-Casado. Her album of Bach's harpsichord sonatas with Kristian Bezuidenhout was released in March 2018. Faust shares a longstanding recital partnership with pianist Alexander Melnikov, with whom she has recorded many discs for harmonia mundi including sonatas for violin and piano by Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms, among other chamber recordings. During the 2019/20 season, Isabelle Faust is Artist-in-Residence at the Royal Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Philharmonie Essen, Centro Nacional de Difusión Musical Madrid, and Philharmonie Luxembourg.

Isabelle Faust made a stunning PUC debut in 2015 playing all of the sonatas and partitas of Bach in the Princeton University Chapel.

## JEAN-GUIHEN QUEYRAS Cello

Curiosity, diversity, and a firm focus on the music itself characterize the artistic work of Jean-Guihen Queyras. Whether on stage or on record, one experiences an artist dedicated completely and passionately to the music, whose treatment of the score reflects its clear, undistorted essence. The inner motivations of composer, performer, and audience must all be in tune with one another in order to bring about an outstanding concert experience: Jean-Guihen Queyras learned this interpretative approach from Pierre Boulez, with whom he established a long artistic partnership.

His approaches to early music—as in his collaborations with the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra, the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, and Concerto Köln—and to contemporary music are equally thorough. He has given world premieres of works by Ivan Fedele, Gilbert Amy, Bruno Mantovani, Michael Jarrell, Johannes-Maria Staud, and Thomas Larcher, among others. Conducted by the composer, he recorded Péter Eötvös' Cello Concerto to mark his 70th birthday in November 2014.

Jean-Guihen Queyras is a founding member of the Arcanto Quartet, who made its PUC debut in 2015. He has also collaborated with zarb specialists Bijan and Keyvan Chemirani on a Mediterranean program. The versatility in his music-

making has led to many concert halls, festivals, and orchestras inviting Jean-Guihen to be Artist-in-Residence, including the Royal Concertgebouw Amsterdam and the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Vredenburg Utrecht, De Bijloke Ghent, and Wigmore Hall London.

Jean-Guihen Queyras often appears with renowned orchestras such as the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, the Orchestre de Paris, London Symphony Orchestra, the Gewandhausorchester, and the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich, working with conductors such as Iván Fischer, Philippe Herreweghe, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, François-Xavier Roth, Sir John Eliot Gardiner, and Sir Roger Norrington.

Jean-Guihen Queyras' recordings of cello concertos by Sir Edward Elgar, Antonín Dvorák, Philippe Schøeller, and Gilbert Amy have been released to critical acclaim. As part of a *harmonia mundi* project dedicated to Robert Schumann, he has recorded the complete piano trios with Isabelle Faust and Alexander Melnikov and at the same time the Schumann cello concerto with the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra under Pablo Heras-Casado. The recording *THRACE—Sunday Morning Sessions* explores, in collaboration with the Chemirani brothers and Sokratis Sinopoulos, the intersections of contemporary music, improvisation, and Mediterranean traditions. In 2018, two highly acclaimed recordings with

works by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and Antonio Vivaldi were released.

Highlights of the 2019/20 season include concerts with the Munich Philharmonic, Danish National Orchestra, Orchestre de chambre de Paris, and Mozarteum Orchestra, as well as performances of "Mitten wir im Leben sind" with choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, the opening of Beethoven Week in Bonn, the Beethoven String Trio cycle with violist Tabea Zimmermann and violinist Daniel Sepec, and—last but not least—solo recitals in Buenos Aires, Riga, Taipei, Prague, Freiburg, Leipzig, London, and New York City.

Jean-Guihen Queyras holds a professorship at the University of Music Freiburg and is Artistic Director of the Rencontres Musicales de Haute-Provence festival in Forcalquier. He plays a 1696 instrument by Gioffredo Cappa, made available to him by the Mécénat Musical Société Générale.

## ALEXANDER MELNIKOV Piano

Alexander Melnikov graduated from the Moscow Conservatory under Lev Naumov. His most formative musical moments in Moscow include an early encounter with Svyatoslav Richter, who thereafter regularly invited him to festivals in Russia and France. He was awarded important prizes at eminent competitions such

as the International Robert Schumann Competition in Zwickau (1989) and the Concours Musical Reine Elisabeth in Brussels (1991).

Known for his unusual programmatic decisions, Alexander Melnikov developed his career-long interest in historically informed performance practice early on. His major influences in this field include Andreas Staier and Alexei Lubimov. Melnikov performs regularly with distinguished period ensembles including the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra Musica Aeterna, and Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin.

As a soloist, Alexander Melnikov has performed with orchestras including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Philadelphia Orchestra, NDR Sinfonieorchester, HR-Sinfonieorchester, Russian National Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic, Rotterdam Philharmonic, BBC Philharmonic, Orchestre des Champs-Élysées, and the NHK Symphony and under conductors such as Mikhail Pletnev, Teodor Currentzis, Charles Dutoit, Paavo Järvi, and Valery Gergiev.

Together with Andreas Staier, Alexander Melnikov developed a program that sets excerpts from J. S. Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* (Andreas Staier, harpsichord) in musical dialogue with Dmitri Shostakovich's 24 Preludes and Fugues (Alexander Melnikov, piano). Additionally, the artists recently recorded a unique all-Schubert program of four-hand pieces, which they have also performed in concert,

including on the PUC series last season. An essential part of Melnikov's work is intensive chamber music collaboration with partners including cellist Jean-Guihen Queyras and violinist Isabelle Faust.

Alexander Melnikov's association with the label harmonia mundi arose through his regular recital partner, Isabelle Faust, and in 2010 their complete recording of the Ludwig van Beethoven sonatas for violin and piano won a Gramophone Award. This album, which has become a landmark recording for these works, was also nominated for a Grammy. Their most recent release features the Johannes Brahms sonatas for violin and piano.

Melnikov's recording of the Preludes and Fugues by Shostakovich was awarded the *BBC Music Magazine* Award, Choc de classica and the Jahrespreis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik. In 2011, it was also named by the BBC Music Magazine as one of the "50 Greatest Recordings of All Time." Additionally, his discography features works by Brahms, Sergei Rachmaninov, Shostakovich, and Alexander Scriabin. Joined by Isabelle Faust, Jean-Guihen Queyras, conductor Pablo Heras-Casado, and the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra, Melnikov recorded a trilogy of albums featuring the Robert Schumann Concertos and Trios; the second installment, featuring the Piano Concerto and the Piano Trio No. 2, was released in September 2015. Other releases include a 2016 recording featuring works of Sergei Prokofiev, a recording released in June 2017 with Ernest Chausson and César Franck repertoire, and his most recent



release, *Four Pieces, Four Pianos*, which was released in February 2018 and has since been highly acclaimed by critics.

In the 2019/20 season Alexander Melnikov will tour his project "Many Pianos," where he performs a solo recital on different instruments reflecting the periods in which the works were written, and which will take him to Tokyo and Vienna, among others. In addition to concerts with Ensemble Resonanz, Gewandhaus Orchestra Leipzig and Basel Symphony Orchestra, he continues

his close collaboration with Tapiola Sinfonietta. Further highlights include performances in the Chamber Music Hall of the Philharmonie Berlin, in Wigmore Hall, at the Beethoven Week in Bonn, in São Paulo, as well as concert tours with Isabelle Faust to North America and Asia.

Alexander Melnikov has appeared on the PUC series two other times, with pianist Andreas Staier in 2019 and playing the complete Preludes and Fugues of Shostakovich in 2016. We are happy to welcome him back!

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