

Thursday, February 26, 2015 at 8:00PM

Pre-concert Talk by Ruth Ochs at 7:00 PM

Richardson Auditorium in Alexander Hall

PADEREWSKI MEMORIAL CONCERT

MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN, *Piano*

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)

Sonata No. 18 in D Major, K. 576

Allegro

Adagio

Allegretto

MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN (b. 1961)

Pavane Variée (2014)

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

Images, Book II

Cloches à travers les feuilles

Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut

Poissons d'or

—INTERMISSION—

FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

Sonata in B-flat Major, D. 960

Molto moderato

Andante sostenuto

Scherzo: Allegro vivace con delicatezza – Trio

Allegro ma non troppo – Presto

ABOUT MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN

Marc-André Hamelin began the 2014-15 season with a round of recitals in Aspen, New York, Verbier, La Roque d'Anthéron, the Duszniki Festival in Poland, Orford, and in the Montreal Symphony's Virée Classique. There, he also performed Mozart's Piano Concerto, No. 27, K. 595, with Kent Nagano and the Montreal Symphony, followed by performances of Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto at the Hollywood Bowl with Stéphane Denève and the Los Angeles Philharmonic.



This season he plays a pair of engagements with the Danish National Symphony Orchestra featuring Brahms Piano Concertos No. 1 and No. 2. In between, he plays with the Symphony Orchestras of Cleveland, New Jersey, Oregon, Seattle, Utah,

Vancouver and Philadelphia. At the last of these, he plays the American premiere of Mark Anthony Turnage's Piano Concerto with Music Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin, a work they launched together for its world premiere last season in Rotterdam. In the Spring of 2015, Hamelin plays the Haydn D Major Concerto from his award winning recording on a 10 concert North American tour with the period instrument orchestra Les Violons du Roy.

Engagements abroad include a tour in France with the Orchestre National d'Île de France (Mozart K. 453), Brahms Piano Concerto No. 2 in Turin with Gianandrea Noseda, Beethoven Concert No. 4 with the Orchestre National Bordeaux Aquitaine, Liszt Concerto No. 2 with

the Royal Philharmonic in London and Charles Dutoit, and recitals in Amsterdam, Berlin, Birmingham, Copenhagen, Lucerne, Moscow and Munich. In America, he plays the Franck Quintet on tour with the Takács String Quartet, and solo recitals at the 92nd St. Y in New York City, the Lied Center in Nebraska, Mills College in Oakland, and, in addition to tonight's recital, in Toronto, Philadelphia, and El Paso, Texas.

Last season San Francisco Performances celebrated Marc-André Hamelin, as did London's Wigmore Hall, Boston's Celebrity Series and Antwerp's deSingel where, in each city, he curated and performed a three part series of solo recitals and chamber music with partners including the Pacifica and Takács String Quartets, pianist Emanuel Ax, clarinetist Martin Fröst, and violinist Anthony Marwood. Hamelin also played recitals at Carnegie's Zankel Hall, the Muziekgebouw in Amsterdam, the Philharmonie in Berlin and the Herkulesaal in Munich; at the Kennedy Center for Washington Performing Arts Society, and the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris. With orchestra, he appeared with the Chicago Symphony, New York Philharmonic, London Philharmonic, the WDR Sinfonieorchester Cologne with Andris Nelsons, and with the Montreal Symphony at home and on tour in Europe.

Mr. Hamelin records exclusively for Hyperion Records. His most recent release is Debussy: *Images Books 1 & 2. Préludes, Book 2*. He was honored with the 2014 ECHO Klassik Instrumentalist of Year and Disc of the Year by *Diapason* magazine and *Classica* magazine for his three disc set of Busoni Late Piano Music. Other recent recordings include the late piano works of Schumann (*Waldszenen* and *Kinderszenen*) and Janáček's *On the Overgrown Path*, Haydn concertos with Les Violons du Roy and Bernard Labadie, three double-disc sets of Haydn sonatas; and an album of his own compositions, *Hamelin: Études*, which received a 2010 Grammy nomination (his ninth) and a first prize from the German Record Critics' Association. The Hamelin *Études* are published by Edition Peters.

His complete Hyperion discography includes concertos and works for solo piano by such composers as Alkan, Godowsky, and Medtner, as well as brilliantly received performances of Brahms, Chopin, Liszt, Schumann and Shostakovich.

Born in Montreal and a resident of Boston, Marc-André Hamelin is the recipient of a lifetime achievement award from the German Record Critic's Association. He is an Officer of the Order of Canada, a Chevalier de l'Ordre du Québec, and a member of the Royal Society of Canada.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

By Peter Laki, ©2015

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (Salzburg, 1756 – Vienna, 1791) Sonata in D Major, K. 576 (1789)

This is the last piano sonata Mozart ever wrote. It is a self-standing piece, rather than part of a set, like most sonatas in the 18th century. We don't know for what occasion it was written. Since Mozart mentioned in one of his letters that he was going to write six "easy sonatas" for Princess Friederike of Prussia, commentators used to hypothesize that this sonata could have been one of those six—the only one ever completed. This, however, is hard to believe, as the sonata is one of Mozart's most technically demanding keyboard works, with a great deal of fast passagework for both hands. The level of sophistication in the treatment of themes is also greater than usual, and counterpoint is used with great frequency. The development section of the first movement is particularly extensive; the lyrical second movement has a middle section surprising by its proto-Romantic intensity; and the final sonata-rondo is exceptionally brilliant and virtuosic. Written in close proximity of the last three string quartets and the Clarinet Quintet, this sonata belongs to the period in Mozart's life when the composer had truly reached the summit of his art.

MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN (b. 1961) Pavane Variée (2014)

Mr. Hamelin has offered the following comments on his composition, commissioned by the ARD International Music Competition as a required work for the semifinal round of the 2014 Piano Competition in Munich, where it was premiered on September 11, 2014.

This work is based on the pavane *Belle qui tiens ma vie*, attributed to Thoinot Arbeau (1519-1595). He included it in his book *Orchésographie*, which is an examination of the relationship between music and ballroom dance in the French Renaissance. It was published in 1589.

This pavane is a strikingly beautiful love song, and it has haunted me ever since

I heard it for the first time (sung by The King’s Singers, if I remember well.) Listeners may recall that Peter Warlock included an arrangement of it as part of his *Capriol Suite*.

I find it a little puzzling that it hasn’t inspired more composers to write variations on it; the one exception I’m aware of is a very short keyboard piece by Antonio de Cabezón. I’ve modified the melody and the harmony, just slightly. Just because.

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (St. Germain-en-Laye, nr. Paris, 1862 – Paris, 1918)
Images, Book II (1907)

The “images” that Debussy sought to transform into sound are no landscapes in the ordinary sense. He was more concerned with the imprints our experiences leave in our souls than with a naturalistic depiction of the experiences themselves. This is true even of later works such as the orchestral *Images* and the two books of piano preludes whose titles tend to be more concrete and descriptive. The two sets of *Images* for piano take us to a higher level of abstraction.

In the three pieces published as *Images*, Book II, one is reminded of this famous line from the poem *Ars poetica* by Paul Verlaine, one of Debussy’s favorite poets:

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où l'Indécis au Précis se joint (“where uncertainty joins precision”). The titles give a precise indication of the initial inspiration, but we see the images as if through a scrim.

The first piece of *Images II* makes this “uncertainty” apparent even with its title: *Cloches à travers les feuilles* (“Bells heard through the leaves”). Debussy superimposes two layers of sound here. One layer consists of simultaneous whole-tone segments moving up and down (or, rather, down and up), one slower and the other faster; to this is added a melodic fragment *un peu en dehors* (to be brought to prominence). In the more animated middle section, pentatonicism (a scale playable on the black keys alone) takes over. The unique soundscape of the piece results from the changing interactions of these layers, filtered through one another like the sound of distant bells is filtered through a dense foliage. In the poetic words of E. Robert Schmitz (1889-1949), a French pianist who knew Debussy personally:

To all those who love delicate perfumes—to all those who have religiously sipped an old brandy—to those whose eyes have become moist at the solitary contemplation of a peaceful...sunset—to all those who...have awakened senses, and can hear, this piece will bring the enraptured feeling of a gentle intoxication by sounds—by sounds alone, echoing the most subtle and refined moods of their vie intérieure (inner life).

The opening of the second piece, *Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut* (“And the Moon Descends upon the Temple that Is No More”), is often quoted as one of the most stunning examples of 20th-century harmony. A highly unconventional chord is displaced in parallel motion across many keys and tonal centers, to return to its initial focal point at the end of the first phrase. A second idea, in *staccato* (separated) triplet notes, provides a more “active” complement to the static chords of the beginning. An aura of mystery pervades the entire piece.

Poissons d'or (“Goldfish”) was inspired by a Japanese lacquer painting that Debussy owned. The movements of the fish and the reflections of the light on the water, represented in the painting, are evoked through an unceasing tremolo in thirty-second notes over which a graceful melody unfolds. In the central section, the fish almost jump out of the water: *capricieux et souple* (“capricious and supple”), says Debussy’s performance instruction. Then we hear an energetic,

rhythmically more regular section leading into the shimmering cadenza that brings the piece to its close.

FRANZ SCHUBERT (Himmelfortgrund [now part of Vienna], 1797 – Vienna, 1828)
Sonata in B-flat Major, D. 960 (1828)

This work is the last of three monumental piano sonatas Schubert wrote during the last months of his short life. It covers an enormous emotional ground from the contemplative opening to the exuberant close, and is without a doubt one of the peaks of the entire piano literature.

The first movement, significantly, is not marked *Allegro* but rather *Molto moderato*. The difference is an important one. Nothing must be rushed, so that one has sufficient time to savor the two things that make Schubert's mature works so special: his unique melodic writing, and the ingenuity with which he transforms his melodies and builds bridges between them. Schubert had learned from Beethoven the idea of a "three-key" exposition where the music proceeds from the home key to its goal, the dominant, by way of a detour, with the secondary theme appearing in a remote third key (as in Beethoven's *Waldstein* sonata for example). But Schubert's route—B-flat Major to F-sharp Minor to F Major—is more adventurous than Beethoven's. The words "route" and "adventurous" are used with good reason here: the initial melody is one of Schubert's great "wandering" themes, and it is indeed as if we were embarking on a journey that takes us to many wonderful landscapes before returning home for a rest. (In this, our journey differs from the one in *Winterreise*, where there is no home and no return.) At the crucial points of the journey—at the beginning, before the recapitulation, and at the end—an ominous trill on the low G-flat provides an atmosphere of suspense.

The key of the second-movement *Andante sostenuto*, C-sharp Minor, is extremely remote from the sonata's main key of B-flat Major. Its wistful melody, played in sweet parallel thirds, is surrounded by an accompaniment figure in the left hand that keeps crossing over above the right hand. A second melody, in A Major, serves as middle section. It gradually grows in intensity and reaches *forte*

dynamics after a series of striking modulations. The first theme then returns: the movement is crowned by one of those magical Schubertian minor-major shifts where the sudden tonal change carries a particularly strong emotional charge.

The third-movement Scherzo (*Allegro vivace con delicatezza*) has a simple melody but a very intricate harmonic scheme. Aside from a few strongly accented notes, the volume never rises above *mezzoforte*, and the scherzo retains its somewhat hushed quality throughout. The soft and understated Trio section (in B-flat Minor) has the same *delicatezza* as the scherzo itself.

The Finale combines sonata form with certain features of the rondo. Its main theme is reminiscent of that of Beethoven's last composition, the finale replacing the *Great Fugue* in the String Quartet Op. 130 (in the same key of B-flat Major). Both movements start with the same harmony, outside the key of B-flat, and both reach the home key gradually by the end of the first phrase. Schubert follows this theme with a lyrical secondary melody, suddenly interrupted by a rest and swept away by a sudden dramatic *fortissimo* that soon gives way in its turn to a lively *tarantella* dance. In the middle section, the playful first theme itself is subjected to some dramatic development; a literal recapitulation and a brief *Presto* coda concludes this great sonata.

Schubert had intended to dedicate his three sonatas from the year 1828 to the composer and piano virtuoso Johann Nepomuk Hummel, but the works were not published until 1838, ten years after Schubert's death. At that point, the publisher Diabelli dedicated them to Robert Schumann, whose enthusiastic review opened the door to the posthumous recognition of Schubert's music outside Vienna.

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