

Café Ludwig is sponsored by
Dot & Rick Nelson

DYNAMIC CONTRASTS

Sunday, Oct. 27, 2024 @ 3 p.m.

Orli Shaham, host and piano
Dennis Kim, violin
Madalyn Parnas Möller, violin
Meredith Crawford, viola
Victor de Almeida, viola
Warren Hagerty, cello
Benjamin Lash, cello
Richard Cassarino, bass
Tony L. Ellis, trumpet

AVNER DORMAN Sextet for Trumpet, Violin, Viola,
Cello, Bass, and Piano

Allegro

Andante

Hocket

Scherzo

Tony Ellis, trumpet

Dennis Kim, violin

Meredith Crawford, viola

Warren Hagerty, cello

Richard Cassarino, bass

Orli Shaham, piano

BRAHMS Variations and Fugue on a
Theme by Handel, Op. 24
Orli Shaham, piano

BRAHMS String Sextet No. 1 in B-flat Major, Op. 18

Allegro ma non troppo

Andante, ma moderato

Scherzo: Allegro molto

Rondo: Poco allegretto e grazioso

Dennis Kim, violin

Madalyn Parnas Möller, violin

Meredith Crawford, viola

Victor de Almeida, viola

Warren Hagerty, cello

Ben Lash, cello

Performance at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts
Samueli Theater



PROGRAM NOTES

Avner Dorman (b. 1975)

Sextet for Trumpet, Violin, Viola, Cello, Bass, and Piano



Avner Dorman's Sextet was commissioned for Pacific Symphony's Café Ludwig Series through the generosity of Dot and Rick Nelson. This layered, evocative work displays the strengths for which Dorman's work is noted: intricate craftsmanship and rigorous

technique expressed with a soulful and singular voice.

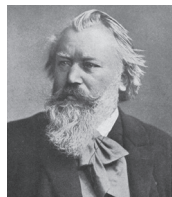
A native of Israel now living in the United States, Dorman draws on a variety of cultural and historical influences in composing. His music produces an emotional impact while exploring new territories, utilizing an exciting and complex rhythmic vocabulary as well as unique timbres and colors in orchestral, chamber, and solo settings.

Many of Dorman's compositions have become contemporary staples in the repertoire. His music is championed by conductors including Zubin Mehta, Christoph Eschenbach, Ricardo Chailly, and Andris Nelsons, and by soloists such as Pinchas Zukerman, Gil Shaham, Martin Grubinger, and Hilary Hahn. It has been commissioned by orchestras such as the Cleveland Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, LA Phil, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, and opera houses such as Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe, Theater Dortmund, Theater Bonn, and Deutsche Oper Am Rhein.

Dorman's music has garnered numerous awards and prizes, including the 2018 Azrieli Prize for Jewish Music. His debut opera, *Wahnfried*, was named a finalist in the category of World Premiere at the International Opera Awards. At the age of 25, Dorman became the youngest composer to win Israel's prestigious Prime Minister's Award for his *Ellef Symphony*. He has earned several international awards from ASCAP, ACUM, and the Asian Composers League. Dorman studied composition with John Corigliano and Josef Bardanshvili, and holds a doctorate in composition from the Juilliard School. He currently serves as Professor of Music Theory and Composition at the Sunderman Conservatory of Music at Gettysburg College.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel



Conveniently for us listeners, the form of a theme and variations explains itself right in the title. And the more we encounter this genre, the more we might come to expect certain conventions, such as variations of escalating difficulty that express highly elaborated restatements of

a theme, generally chosen to showcase the composer's ingenuity as well as the soloist's virtuosity. This is a classical form that often aims for simple amusement and even humor—as in American composer Charles Ives's riffs in *Variations on "America,"* which include a teetering, drunken-sounding waltz. But Brahms's Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel is something far different.

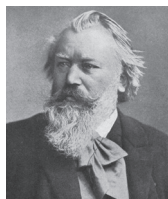
For Brahms, writing thematic variations was a matter of the greatest seriousness. He had been interested in the form from his earliest years as a composer, and wrote a number of shorter examples while still in his twenties. He composed this more ambitious set in 1861, when he was 28 and working as director of the Hamburg *Frauenchor*, a women's chorus. He dedicated the work to his friend Clara Schumann, and two months later composed a second set for piano four hands, his *Schumann Variations*. Both are masterworks; the eminent British music critic Donald Tovey, writing in the 1930s, ranked this composition as one of the greatest sets of variations ever written.

Brahms's seriousness of purpose here is evidenced by his choice of an innocuous theme by George Frideric Handel, the great Baroque master born in the same year as Johann Sebastian Bach, whose Goldberg Variations form the cornerstone of the genre. Brahms drew the theme from Handel's Harpsichord Suite No. 1 in B-flat Major. But Handel, writing for the less versatile harpsichord, limited himself to five variations in developing this third-movement theme; Brahms presents us with no fewer than 25 variations, including some in obscure Baroque dance forms that were no longer in the musical vocabulary of his contemporary listeners. While such formal elements reflect the depth of Brahms's study of Baroque style, we can fully enjoy the results without knowing that we are listening to a Siciliana, a minuet, or a canon fugue.

In at least one respect, the Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel conform to the standards typical of the genre: The music increases in tension as we listen, with melodic elements, figurative patterns and contrapuntal textures building upon each other with each succeeding variation. As Brahms biographer Jan Swafford has noted, it culminates in a rousingly virtuosic finale, "...a masterful unfolding of ideas concluding with an exuberant fugue with a finish designed to bring down the house."

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

String Sextet No. 1 in B-flat Major



In 1860, when Brahms composed his first of two string sextets, he scored it for two violins, two violas, and two cellos—making it something of an anomaly. To find earlier examples of the string sextet without piano, we must hark back to the days of Luigi Boccherini (1743 - 1805). Boccherini,

himself a cellist, showed his affinity for strings in a dozen such sextets published in 1776. From then until 1860, a scant half-dozen were published without piano parts.

PROGRAM NOTES

Yet Brahms's instrument was the piano. And as any pianist who has essayed his two formidable piano concertos will tell you, he was not averse to writing virtuosic piano parts to demonstrate his own keyboard artistry—as did Bach, Mozart and Beethoven before him. Why did he choose to write his two string sextets for bowed instruments alone, without piano? Though we can't read his mind or ask him directly, your intrepid annotator has some thoughts on the matter.

Despite his renown as a pianist, Brahms was first and foremost a composer of genius and consummate craft. As we listen to the timeless quality of his music, it's hard to imagine that his late-Romantic compositions were already considered retrograde by listeners who deemed Richard Wagner, some 20 years older than Brahms, to be the composer of the future. Brahms was 27 when this sextet premiered; a year earlier, Wagner had completed work on *Tristan und Isolde*, in which he seemed to declare that the traditional rules of harmonic theory and thematic development were obsolete.

By scoring his sextets without a piano—the “utility infielder” of chamber music—Brahms imposed an added layer of harmonic purity and compositional rigor on the work. His sextets not only affirmed centuries of musical tradition, but also seemed to assert that there was plenty of brilliant music yet to be written according to the rules. It didn't take long for fellow-composers to affirm his judgment: In the years immediately following the publication of his sextets, similarly scored examples were produced by Dvořák, Tchaikovsky, Reger, Schoenberg, and Korngold.

The admiration of Brahms's colleagues was echoed by the eminent music publisher Fritz Simrock, who published this sextet lavishly—providing the full score along with the individual parts—and called it one of the most beautiful compositions to date by an outstanding young composer. As with so many of Brahms's compositions, its beauty inheres not so much in the melodic themes themselves as in the skill in their development. In the course of its four movements, the opening theme, developed in a triple rhythm, is repeated in double rhythm in the final movement; similar reprises wend their way throughout the sextet. Despite the alternating rhythmic structure, Brahms makes the flow of the music seem natural and even inevitable.

Michael Clive is a cultural reporter living in the Litchfield Hills of Connecticut. He is program annotator for Pacific Symphony and has written numerous articles for magazines and newspapers in the U.S. and U.K. and hundreds of program notes for orchestras and opera companies. [Operahound.com](#)

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Orli Shaham, host and piano



Orli Shaham is an internationally acclaimed pianist, praised for her brilliance and mastery of both standard and modern repertoire. Described by *The New York Times* as a “brilliant pianist” and by *The Chicago Tribune* as “a first-rate Mozartean,” she has performed with major orchestras

worldwide, from Carnegie Hall to the Sydney Opera House. Shaham is Artistic Director of Pacific Symphony's chamber music series and founder of Orli Shaham's Bach Yard. She holds degrees from Columbia University, teaches at The Juilliard School, and is a Steinway Artist. **Scan for full bio.**



Dennis Kim, violin

Concertmaster, Eleanor and Michael Gordon Chair



Dennis Kim is an internationally renowned violinist who has led orchestras across the globe. At 22, he became concertmaster of the Tucson Symphony, followed by roles with the Hong Kong Philharmonic, Seoul Philharmonic, and Buffalo

Philharmonic. He has performed with prestigious orchestras like the BBC Symphony and London Philharmonic, and as a soloist since age 14. Kim is on the faculty at UC Irvine and the Orange County School of the Arts. He plays the 1701 ex-Dushkin Stradivarius. **Scan for full bio.**



Madalyn Parnas Möller, violin



Principal, Elizabeth and John Stahr Chair

Madalyn Parnas Möller debuted at age 12 and has since performed with the London Philharmonic, Albany Symphony, and Hudson Valley Philharmonic. A passionate chamber musician, she collaborates with

renowned artists like Peter Serkin and has won 1st Prize at Carnegie Hall's International Chamber Music Competition. Since moving to Los Angeles in 2016, Parnas Möller has pursued a diverse career, recently becoming Principal Second Violinist with Pacific Symphony. She holds degrees from UCLA, Indiana University, and the Royal Academy of Music, and plays a 2016 Andrew Ryan violin. **Scan for full bio.**



Meredith Crawford, viola



Principal, Catherine and James Emmi Chair

Meredith Crawford, a native of Maine, earned degrees in Viola Performance and English Literature from Oberlin College and Conservatory. She joined Pacific Symphony at 22, became

assistant principal viola in 2012, and principal in 2017. Crawford has performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Riverside Philharmonic, and Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. A dedicated chamber musician, she regularly collaborates with the Salastina Music Society and teaches at the Eastern Music Festival in North Carolina. **Scan for full bio.**



Victor de Almeida, viola



Assistant Principal

Victor de Almeida is Assistant Principal Viola of Pacific Symphony, previously serving as Principal Viola of the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal and Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. A soloist from age 15, he won prizes at

the Primrose International Viola Competition and is active in the Hollywood film and television industry. De Almeida is also known for transcribing works for viola, including a 16-year project arranging Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* for viola and piano. **Scan for full bio.**



Warren Hagerty, cello



Principal, Catherine and James Emmi Chair

Warren Hagerty, principal cellist of Pacific Symphony since 2019, was the founding cellist of the Verona Quartet, earning top prizes at international competitions such as Wigmore Hall

and Fischhoff. He has performed at venues like Carnegie Hall, Wigmore Hall, and the Kennedy Center, and collaborated with artists like Renée Fleming and David Shifrin. A champion of new music, Hagerty premiered works by Michael Gilbertson and Richard Danielpour. He teaches and directs Junior Chamber Music Los Angeles. **Scan for full bio.**



Benjamin Lash, cello



Assistant Principal

Benjamin Lash enjoys a diverse career as a soloist, chamber musician, and educator. He has won top prizes in the Washington International Competition and performed with orchestras in Chicago and Los Angeles. Lash is a

member of the SAKURA Cello Quintet and Assistant Principal of Pacific Symphony. He teaches at the Colburn Community School and frequently gives masterclasses. Lash holds degrees from the Colburn Conservatory and USC's Thornton School of Music. **Scan for full bio.**



Richard Cassarino, bass



Principal

Richard Cassarino, recently appointed principal bass of Pacific Symphony, began playing the double bass at age 15. He earned his Bachelor of Music degree from the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he studied under Neil

Garber. After moving to Los Angeles, he continued his studies with Nico Abondolo and Timothy Eckert. Cassarino later attended Indiana University to study with Bruce Bransby. In 2012, he auditioned successfully for the Alabama Symphony Orchestra (ASO) and joined the ensemble. In addition to his performances with the ASO, Cassarino also taught at Samford University and the Alabama School of Fine Arts.

Tony L. Ellis, trumpet



Tony L. Ellis has been second trumpet with Pacific Symphony since 1984 and has performed as principal trumpet in works like *Petrushka* and *Pictures at an Exhibition*. He regularly performs with groups like Mainly Mozart and LA Opera. Ellis has recorded with Southwest Chamber Music, earning

a GRAMMY for "Carlos Chavez: Complete Chamber Works, Volume 2." He holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees from California State University, Fullerton, and lives in Brea with his wife, flutist Cynthia Ellis. **Scan for full bio.**

