

## TO TELL A STORY

### 2018-19 CAFÉ LUDWIG SERIES

Orli Shaham, piano and narrator  
Kirstin Chávez, mezzo-soprano  
Dennis Kim, violin  
Meredith Crawford, viola  
Joseph Morris, clarinet

Ridout	<b>FERDINAND THE BULL FOR SOLO VIOLIN AND NARRATOR</b> Dennis Kim Orli Shaham
Brahms	<b>TWO SONGS FOR VOICE, VIOLA, AND PIANO</b> <i>Gestillte Sehnsucht</i> <i>Geistliches Wiegenlied</i> Meredith Crawford Orli Shaham Kirstin Chávez
Intermission	
Britten	<b>A CHARM OF LULLABIES</b> Kirstin Chávez Orli Shaham
Stravinsky	<b>L'HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT (THE SOLDIER'S TALE), FOR VIOLIN, CLARINET AND PIANO</b> Dennis Kim Joseph Morris Orli Shaham

Sunday, May 19, 2019 @ 3 p.m.  
Seegerstrom Center for the Arts  
Renée and Henry Seegerstrom Concert Hall  
Samueli Theater

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This concert is generously sponsored by  
**Sandra Smart-Ashburn and Harry Ashburn,**  
and **Dot and Rick Nelson.**

# PROGRAM NOTES

Alan Ridout:

## **Ferdinand the Bull for Solo Violin and Narrator**



In 1750, when Bach died at age 65, that was a ripe old age, and today we celebrate his longevity. But by 1996, when Alan Ridout died at 61, that was a tragically young age to end the

life and career of one of Britain's most admired composers. Fortunately, Ridout was incredibly prolific from an early age—deeply intelligent and almost feverishly creative. It was said that the music in his head started early, before he could talk, and did not stop until his heart stopped beating. He imagined new musical ideas before he knew there were “composers” who did that, and by the time he was 12 had composed more than 100 original works of his own.

Born in the London suburb of West Wickham, Ridout studied briefly at the Guildhall School of Music and then at the Royal College of Music, where his instructors included Herbert Howells and Gordon Jacob. His later composition teachers included the revered British composer Michael Tippett. But while Tippett was a major influence, Ridout's feelings about him were said to be ambivalent, and his own style was far more accessible than Tippett's uncompromising, spiky modernism. Throughout his career, Ridout maintained his concern for bringing music of the highest quality to the broadest possible audiences as an educator and broadcaster as well as a composer.

Composed in 1971, *Ferdinand the Bull* demonstrates Ridout's deftness with narrative, his understanding of instrumental voices—the violin seems to come alive as we listen—and his humor. Tone poem? Wordless song with spoken narration? Whatever we call this unique work, it delights us, and it delivers an antiwar message that is hard to resist. It is based on “Ferdinand the Bull,” Munro Leaf's book for children about a bull who would rather smell the flowers than fight with other bulls. Ridout elicits a whole menagerie of animals from the violin—from a bumblebee to a wise mother cow

to the almost incongruous sweetness of Ferdinand himself.

As we enjoy *Ferdinand's* charm and good humor, it's worth remembering that Munro's book, written in 1936, was banned in Spain and burned in Nazi Germany. Written in 1936, it is no less timely today.

Johannes Brahms:

## **Two Songs for Voice, Viola and Piano, Op. 91**



Brahms was unerringly creative in scoring his chamber works, creating maximum intensity of mood and texture with a minimum of instrumentation. The combination of viola, piano

and alto voice lends depth and poignance to the songs that comprise his Op. 91. He composed them for two close friends, the great violin and viola soloist Joseph Joachim, and Joachim's wife, Amalie. Both songs have an inward, contemplative quality. The singing lines of voice and viola, together with the gently contrasting articulation of the piano, cast a spell.

Brahms published these songs together in 1884. Since then, the ravishing “Geistliches Wiegenlied,” a “holy lullaby” sometimes translated as “Mary's Cradle Song,” has taken on a life of its own as a Christmas favorite and as one of the Lieder selections that became a signature piece for the great American contralto Marian Anderson. Its tenderness is almost heartbreaking as Mary tells the winds to be calm because her baby is sleeping. The song's rocking quality, so evocative of an infant's cradle, comes from the viola line, which is based on a medieval German Christmas carol about Mary rocking the infant Jesus.

The equally gentle “Gestillte Sehnsucht,” or “Longing at Rest,” was composed much later than the *Wiegenlied*, although it is generally performed first more rarely heard. It is Brahms' setting of an 1884 meditation by Friedrich Rückert, a German poet and scholar who died in 1866, more than two decades before Brahms set his moody poem to music. In the wistful “*Sehnsucht*,” Rückert, like many German poets before him, contemplates the beauties of nature he finds in the forest as a way to find meaning in his own life.

Benjamin Britten:

## **A Charm of Lullabies**



Considering the richness of English lyric poetry, one might reasonably expect the English-language art song tradition to be gloriously abundant; instead, good examples are scintillating rarities.

Frankly, German-language composers such as Schubert, Schumann, Mahler and Hugo Wolf did more with poetry of lesser quality, and—shockingly—there is no English setting of a Shakespearean song lyric to rival Schubert's version of “Who Is Sylvia?” in German. Among the best British practitioners of the form, including Gerald Finzi, Frederick Delius and Ralph Vaughan Williams, Benjamin Britten is unmatched in skill and variety. His vocal music is unique in its feeling for both the human voice as an expressive instrument and the power of English poetry.

Britten composed vocal music in every classical form imaginable: chamber songs, operas, even cabaret songs. His *War Requiem* is one of the towering oratorios of the 20th century. His powers as a composer of vocal music were certainly deepened by having the remarkable tenor Peter Pears as his muse and partner in life; Pears created the title role of *Peter Grimes*, a tragic opera of astounding originality that announced its composer's greatness to the world when it premiered in 1945. And we can't take the measure of Britten's affinity for verse without considering his six “Cabaret Songs,” a product of his earlier (and stormier) relationship with the brilliant poet W.H. Auden. Composed in the 1930s, these songs range from wry humor to the wrathful “Funeral Blues” famously recited in the film *Four Weddings and a Funeral*.

Britten composed “A Charm of Lullabies” in 1947, two years after the premiere of *Peter Grimes* had made him an international celebrity. It is dedicated to the English mezzo-soprano Nancy Evans, a friend and colleague on whom he created the role of Nancy in his affectionate comedy of village life, *Albert Herring*, that same year. The cycle's settings of five poems are of brief duration but artistically meaty, varying widely in style and mood. Two giants of British literature are represented in the cycle: William Blake (“A Cradle Song”) and Robert Burns (“A Highland Balou”). Two of the poets represented are 16th century: Robert Greene (poet of

“Sephestia’s Lullaby”) and John Phillip (“The Nurse’s Song”). Choristers who have had the pleasure of singing Britten’s *Ceremony of Carols* at yuletide will be well acquainted with his flair for setting ancient verses. In Greene’s lyric, we detect the kind of ironic humor embedded in many lullabies, as it seems to gently threaten the baby with various torments. Lullabies from Yiddish to African to the familiar “Rock-a-bye Baby” all do the same thing, relying on the fact that the baby can’t understand a word of it.

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## Igor Stravinsky: *L’Histoire du soldat*



From its title, we might guess Stravinsky’s *L’Histoire du soldat* to be one of those charming Russian picaresque tales about a soldier tweaking the bureaucracy in the manner of

*Lieutenant Kije* or Gogol’s *The Inspector General*, which both found success in musical and movie settings as comic sendups of the military. But *L’Histoire* is something quite different from anything else in the repertory. Combining elements of tone poem, ballet and narration, this work—now generally performed as a chamber septet—is based on a charming Russian folk tale with elements common to every culture. It tells the story of an impoverished soldier who encounters the devil on the road and succumbs to his temptations. In the course of the story, our soldier gains wealth, but loses the things he truly values; tricks the devil to regain his former life; and finally loses it all again.

Like Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky gained prominence as a composer through the success of his early ballet scores, and the world was already on notice regarding the magnitude of his genius by the time *L’Histoire* was premiered in Switzerland in 1918. *Rite of Spring* was enough to do that. In one of the strangest sequences in all of cultural history, the *Rite*’s unfamiliar sound so enraged listeners at its Paris premiere in 1913 that the audience became a violent mob, endangering Stravinsky’s life. Within a year, it was fully accepted as a masterpiece.

If the artistic community in Europe and America knew that the young Stravinsky was already a composer of historic importance, they also knew that the new war in Europe was one like the world had never seen before. Stravinsky composed *L’Histoire du soldat* as the war’s devastation revealed itself. It was another innovative theater piece involving ballet along with acting, narration, and innovative music, but he knew the war would limit the resources available for its production, and—eager to maintain the impetus of *Rite of Spring*—scaled down the resources needed for *L’Histoire* in the hopes it could be performed more widely. If the strategy did not succeed in making the work more successful at the time of its composition, it did result in a unique sound and character, combining three actors, a narrator, a dancer, and a septet comprised of violin, double bass, clarinet, bassoon, cornet (or trumpet), trombone and percussion—a precisely chosen chamber ensemble proving Stravinsky was not only an innovator in compositional technique, but also a colorist who was the equal of his predecessor, Rimsky-Korsakov. *L’Histoire* also exists in evocative arrangements for piano and for piano, violin and clarinet.

Though rarely performed in its fully dramatized form, which lasts about an hour, *L’Histoire* is fascinating theater, tracing a story that is often compared to *Faust*. But while it does entail a deal with the devil, it is not at all like Goethe’s Germanic tale of a disillusioned scholar, weary and regretful; rather, it is much more in the mold of European folktales about an unfortunate fool who encounters the devil and, in the course of many reversals of fortune, eventually outwits him—only to be outwitted himself in the end.

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*Michael Clive is a cultural reporter living in the Litchfield Hills of Connecticut. He is program annotator for Pacific Symphony and Louisiana Philharmonic, and editor-in-chief for The Santa Fe Opera.*

## THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS:

### SANDRA SMART-ASHBURN AND HARRY ASHBURN

We extend our sincere gratitude to Sandy and Harry for their sponsorship of this Café Ludwig performance. Sandy and Harry are enthusiastic supporters of classical music; they are an important part of our Pacific Symphony family. Sandy serves on the Governing Committee of the Board of Counselors. In addition, over the last several years, Sandy has been the volunteer liaison with AT&T, which provides a large contingent of employee volunteers for our Spring Class Act Youth Concerts at the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Hall. We extend our sincere appreciation to Sandy Smart-Ashburn and Harry Ashburn for all they do for Pacific Symphony.

### DOT AND RICK NELSON

The Nelsons are passionate supporters of Pacific Symphony and we are very grateful for their sponsorship of this Café Ludwig performance. Dot and Rich are avid supporters of Classical music for all generations and they have a real love of the Café Ludwig Series. In support of Pacific Symphony, Dot serves on the Youth Ensembles Board as well as on the Governing Committee of the Board of Counselors and she is a member of Symphony 100. We extend our deepest appreciation to Dot and Rick Nelson for their tremendous support of Pacific Symphony.

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## ORLI SHAHAM

pianist, narrator



A consummate musician recognized for her grace and vitality, Orli Shaham has established an impressive international reputation as one of today's most gifted pianists. Hailed by critics on four continents, Shaham is in demand for her prodigious skills

and admired for her interpretations of both standard and modern repertoire. *The New York Times* called her a "brilliant pianist," *The Chicago Tribune* recently referred to her as "a first-rate Mozartean" in a performance with the Chicago Symphony and London's *Guardian* said Shaham's playing at the Proms was "perfection."

Shaham has performed with nearly every major American orchestra, as well as many in Europe, Asia and Australia. A frequent guest at summer festivals, her appearances include Tanglewood, Ravinia, Verbier, Mostly Mozart, La Jolla, Music Academy of the West and Aspen. Shaham's acclaimed 2015 recording, "Brahms Inspired," is a collection of new compositions alongside works by Brahms and his compositional forefathers.

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## KIRSTIN CHÁVEZ

mezzo-soprano



Chávez has captured attention and acclaim in her signature roles and is recognized as one of the definitive Carmens of today, creating her Carmen in nearly 40 different productions throughout the United

States and around the globe. *Opera News* reported that her Carmen in Graz, Austria was "the Carmen of a lifetime. With her dark, generous mezzo, earthy eroticism, volcanic spontaneity and smoldering charisma, Chávez has it all, including a superb command of French and a sense of humor." Chávez has also shown great success in various pants roles, including Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel* and Orfeo in Gluck's *Orfeo*.

Kirstin Chávez has earned praise for her performances in modern operas, as well, with her Jo in Adamo's *Little Women* (Opera Pacific), Thérèse in Tobias Picker's *Thérèse Raquin* (San Diego Opera) and Sondra Finchley in Picker's *An American Tragedy*, which was her Metropolitan Opera principal debut in 2005.

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## DENNIS KIM

concertmaster



Dennis Kim is the new concertmaster of Pacific Symphony. A citizen of the world, Kim was born in Korea, raised in Canada and educated in the United States. He has spent more than a

decade leading orchestras in the United States, Europe and Asia. Most recently, he was concertmaster of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra in New York. He was first appointed concertmaster of the Tucson Symphony Orchestra at the age of 22. He then served as the youngest concertmaster in the history of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, before going on to lead the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra and the Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra in Finland.

After making his solo debut at the age of 14 with the Toronto Philharmonic Orchestra, Kim has gone on to perform as a soloist with many of the most important orchestras in China and Korea. A graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music and Yale School of Music, Kim's teachers include Jaime Laredo, Aaron Rosand, Peter Oundjian, Paul Kantor, Victor Danchenko and Yumi Ninomiya Scott. He plays the 1701 ex-Dushkin Stradivarius, on permanent loan from a generous donor.

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## MEREDITH CRAWFORD

viola



Violist Meredith Crawford, a Maine native, studied under the tutelage of Professor Peter Slowik at Oberlin College and Conservatory. She graduated in 2009 after completing Oberlin's

double-degree program with both a B.M. in Viola Performance and a B.A. in English Literature. After being inducted into the Pi Kappa Lambda honor society, she received the prestigious Prize for Musicianship, awarded to students judged to be "the most outstanding of those elected to Pi Kappa Lambda." Crawford was the first-prize winner of the Ohio Viola Society's annual competition in 2007, the 2009 Skokie Valley Symphony Annual Young Artist Competition and the 2009-10 Oberlin Conservatory Competition—the first win for a violist in over a decade.

At the age of 22—before the completion of her senior year at Oberlin Conservatory—she won her first orchestral audition and a seat with Pacific Symphony. In September 2012, she was awarded the position of assistant principal viola and five years later, she won her current position with the orchestra as principal viola, Catherine and James Emmi Chair.

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## JOSEPH MORRIS

clarinet



Joseph Morris is the principal clarinet of Pacific Symphony. Previously, he has held the positions of principal clarinet with the Sarasota Opera Orchestra and the Madison Symphony

Orchestra, where he was featured as soloist in performances of Copland's Clarinet Concerto in September 2015. Morris has appeared as guest principal clarinet with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and the Sarasota Orchestra. Morris has participated in festivals including the Token Creek Chamber Music Festival, Aspen Music Festival and School, Music Academy of the West, National Orchestral Institute and the National Repertory Orchestra.

Recent engagements as soloist include performances with the Burbank Philharmonic, Downey Symphony Orchestra, West Los Angeles Symphony and with the Colburn Orchestra in a performance of John Adams' *Gnarly Buttons* directed by the composer. A laureate of numerous competitions, Morris has been awarded first prize in the Pasadena Showcase House for the Arts Competition, the Hennings-Fischer Foundation Competition, the Downey Symphony Young Artist Competition, the Music Teacher's National Association Solo Competition and concerto competitions at the Music Academy of the West, the Thornton School of Music and the National Repertory Orchestra.