

presents...

Gala Performance

JEAN-GUIHEN QUEYRAS | Cello
ALEXANDRE THARAUD | Piano

Thursday, October 29, 2026 | 7:00pm
Herbst Theatre

JOHANNES BRAHMS **Cello Sonata No. 1 in E Minor, Op. 38**
Allegro non troppo
Allegretto quasi menuetto
Allegro

ALBAN BERG **Vier Stücke, Op. 5**
Massig
Sehr langsam
Sehr rasch
Langsam

FRANZ SCHUBERT **Adagio from Sonata in A Minor, D. 821 “Arpeggione”**

BENJAMIN BRITTEN **Movements 1 and 5 from Cello Sonata in C Major, Op. 65**
Dialogo. Allegro
Moto perpetuo, Presto

MARIN MARAIS **Prélude and Sarabande**
(from *Pièces de Viole*, 2nd Book, Suite No. 1 in D Minor)

CLAUDE DEBUSSY **from *Sonate*, L. 135**
Prologue: Lent, sostenuto e molto risoluto



GABRIEL FAURÉ

Sicilienne, Op. 78
Papillon, Op. 77

JOHANNES BRAHMS
(arr. Queyras/Tharaud)

Hungarian Dances (selected)
No. 1 in G Minor
No. 7 in A Major
No. 5 in G Minor

**This program is made possible in part by the generous support of
Martin and Kathleen Cohn**

Jean-Guihen Queyras is represented in North America by Arts Management Group, Inc., 130 W. 57th St.,
NY, NY 10019.

Jean-Guihen Queyras records for Harmonia Mundi

Alexandre Tharaud is represented by Askonas Holt, New Wing, Somerset House, Strand,
London WC2R 1LA.

Alexandre Tharaud records for Harmonia Mundi, Naxos, Alpha Classics, and Erato Classics

Steinway Model D, Pro Piano, San Francisco.

ARTISTS PROFILES

San Francisco Performances presents Jean-Guihen Queyras for the third time. He made his SF Performances debut in October 2018.

Alexandre Tharaud makes his SF Performances debut.



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 humble and quite unpretentious treatment of the score reflects its clear, undistorted essence.

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 Concertgebouw Amsterdam and the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Vredenburg Utrecht, De Bijloke Ghent and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg.

Jean-Guihen Queyras often appears with renowned orchestras such as the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, the Orchestre de Paris, the Residentie Orkest Den Haag, the London Symphony Orchestra, the Gewandhausorchester and the Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich, 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' discography is impressive. For Harmonia Mundi's project dedicated to 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 *THRA-CE—Sunday Morning Sessions* explores, in collaboration with the Chemirani brothers and Sokratis Sinopoulos, the intersections of contemporary music, improvisation and Mediterranean traditions.

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 on the "Kaiser" Stradivarius made in Cremona in 1707, kindly provided by Canimex, Inc. of Drummondville (Quebec), Canada.



Alexandre Tharaud's extraordinary discography of over 25 solo albums, most of which received major awards from the music press, features repertoire ranging from Couperin, Bach and Scarlatti, through Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, Brahms, and Rachmaninov to the major 20th century French composers. The breadth of his artistic endeavours is also reflected in collaborations with theatre makers, dancers, choreographers, writers and film makers, as well as with singer-songwriters and musicians outside the realm of classical music

A highly sought-after soloist, Alexandre performs regularly with many of the world's leading orchestras. This season, he appears with the Orchestre Symphonique de Québec and the Slovenian Philharmonic in performances of Beethoven, makes his debut with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra playing Ravel, collaborates with Angélique Kidjo at the London Jazz Festival, and embarks on a European and Asian tour with long-time musical part-

ner Jean-Guihen Queyras, celebrating 30 years of their collaboration. The duo will also give a premiere of the Oscar Strassnoid Double Concerto with Orchestre Philharmonique du Strasbourg in the Spring, followed by further performances with PhilZuid.

As a recitalist, Alexandre is a frequent guest at the world's most prestigious venues. Highlights of the current season include solo appearances at Wigmore Hall, Philharmonie de Paris, Musikverein Wien, Bozar Brussels, Concertgebouw Bruges, Salle Bourgie, and Opéra de Lyon, among others.

Alexandre is an exclusive recording artist with Warner Classics. His forthcoming album *Pianosong*, dedicated to the French chanson, is set for release later this year. Among his recent recordings is a critically acclaimed album of Ravel's Piano Concertos with the Orchestre National de France under Louis Langrée. Over the course of his career, he has recorded an extensive and diverse repertoire, including works by Rameau, Scarlatti, Bach's Goldberg Variations and Italian Concerto, Beethoven's final three sonatas, Chopin's 24 Preludes, and the complete piano works of Ravel.

In 2024, Alexandre Tharaud featured on the soundtrack of *Boléro*, a biopic about the creation of Maurice Ravel's celebrated work of the same name. For the film, which stars Raphaël Personnaz as Ravel, he recorded several of the composer's piano pieces and appeared on screen as music critic Pierre Lalo. He is also the subject of the documentary *Alexandre Tharaud, Le Temps Dérobé*, directed by Swiss filmmaker Raphaëlle Aellig-Régnier, and played the role of the pianist "Alexandre" in Michael Haneke's acclaimed 2012 film *Amour*.

PROGRAM NOTES

Sonata for Cello and Piano in E Minor, Opus 38

JOHANNES BRAHMS
(1833—1897)

Born in the slums of Hamburg, Brahms rose from that grim setting to become a brilliant success: the young man's piano-playing and compositions were quickly hailed throughout the German-speaking countries. Brahms had always assumed that he would make his career in Hamburg, but in 1862, when the 29-year-old composer visited Vienna for the first time and was

enthralled to walk the streets where Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, and Schubert, had lived and worked, and soon he decided to move to Vienna. Once established in his new city, Brahms wrote several compositions that he hoped would help establish his reputation there.

The *Cello Sonata in E Minor*, composed between 1862 and 1865, was one of these new works. The cello sings the noble opening theme of the *Allegro non troppo*, rising quietly from the depths over steady chordal accompaniment. Brahms is quite explicit in his instructions to the performers, reminding them throughout this movement that their playing should be *espressivo*, *legato*, and *dolce*. A second subject, announced first by the cello, is passionate and surging, and a lovely chorale for piano serves as a closing theme for the exposition. The development and recapitulation in this massive movement are dramatic, and Brahms winds all this turbulence down beautifully by closing out the movement with the chorale theme.

The haunting *Allegretto quasi Menuetto* is poised and delicate music, with the melodic line moving easily between the two instruments. The piano's first four notes, a sort of introductory tag, haunt the minuet and then—ingeniously—become the basis for the flowing trio section.

Many have felt the influence of Bach, one of Brahms' favorite composers, on the finale. It opens with a powerful fugue, and the fugue subject appears to have been derived from the Contrapunctus XIII of Bach's *The Art of the Fugue*. The piano has the first statement of this subject, which takes its energy from the powerful opening octave drop. But the structure in this movement is ingenious: that fugal beginning is only the exposition of the first theme, and the appearance of a second theme group—announced by the cello—sets the movement in a sort of modified sonata form. Much of the development, though, returns to the contrapuntal intricacies of the opening fugue, and this development is distinctive for its relentless logic and energy. A *Più presto* coda drives the sonata to its thunderous conclusion.

Four Pieces for Clarinet and Piano, Op. 5 (arr. for cello and piano)

ALBAN BERG
(1885–1935)

Alban Berg was only nineteen when he began to study with Arnold Schoenberg,

who thought the young man talented but completely untrained. Under Schoenberg's tutelage, Berg developed rapidly as a composer, producing two works that remain part of the repertory today: the *Piano Sonata* of 1908 and the *String Quartet* of 1910. Schoenberg left Vienna in 1911 to teach in Berlin, and in his absence Berg composed two sets of miniatures: the *Five Altenberg Songs*, which last a total of six minutes, and the *Four Pieces for Clarinet and Piano*, which last about eight. When Berg journeyed to Berlin and showed these works to his former teacher, Schoenberg exploded, saying that Berg had no business writing miniatures and should stick to large-scale works. Berg's confidence was shattered, and he never wrote this sort of miniature again.

Nevertheless, the *Four Pieces*—which are performed at this concert in an arrangement for cello and piano—demonstrate Berg's continuing progress at a composer. In the years before the war, Schoenberg, Webern, and Berg had pared their musical language down to its barest essentials: this meant the virtual elimination of theme, development, repetition, and even a harmonic foundation. Their works from these years tend to be very short, built on cells made up of intervals or rhythmic figures that do not have the opportunity to develop. The keynote throughout Berg's *Four Pieces* is compression: these four pieces span only 12, 9, 18, and 20 measures. These four miniatures almost by definition do not require detailed description. Berg requires a wide range of instrumental color here, and the sudden changes of mood rest on dynamic markings that extend from triple *forte* to quadruple *piano*.

The *Four Pieces* were not performed until October 17, 1919, at a concert of the Society for Private Musical Performances. At that point Berg was writing Act II of *Wozzeck* and had become a completely different composer, and so the *Four Pieces* bring us the work of a young composer still finding his way at a moment of enormous change in music.

Adagio from Sonata in A Minor for Cello and Piano, D.821 “Arpeggione”

FRANZ SCHUBERT
(1797–1828)

In 1823, the Viennese instrument maker Johann Georg Stauffer invented a new instrument, which he called the “guitar-vio-

loncello” or the “guitarre d'amour.” About the size of a cello, it had six strings and frets and was tuned like a guitar; unlike a guitar, however, it had a curved bridge and was played with a bow. The instrument never caught on. Performers did not take it up and few composers were interested, so the instrument quickly lapsed into the obscurity where it would have remained were it not for one piece of music composed for it.

A musician named Vincenz Schuster had learned to play the new instrument, and he asked his friend Franz Schubert to write a piece for him to play on it. In November 1824, Schubert composed a three-movement sonata for Schuster and in the process contributed a new name for the instrument—Schubert referred to it as an “arpeggione,” and that name has stuck to the now nearly-forgotten instrument. The instrument may have been relegated to the history books, but the music Schubert wrote for it is so good that it has refused to join the arpeggione in obscurity. A number of different musicians have wanted this sonata for their own instrument, and it has been transcribed for such instruments as cello, viola, violin, double bass, flute, clarinet, and guitar. On this program the central movement of the “*Arpeggione*” Sonata is heard in a transcription for cello. This *Adagio* is based on one subdued melody (pure Schubert!) that proceeds over steady accompaniment to a more intense restatement and quiet close.

Sonata for Cello and Piano, Opus 65 *Dialogo* *Moto perpetuo*

BENJAMIN BRITTEN
(1913–1976)

In 1960 Dmitri Shostakovich introduced two of his close friends, cellist Mstislav Rostropovich and composer Benjamin Britten. These two in turn became good friends, and theirs was a creative relationship: over the next few years the English composer wrote five works for the Russian cellist. The first of these was the *Sonata for Cello and Piano*, begun in December 1960 and completed the following month. It was scheduled for its premiere the following summer, and Britten and Rostropovich gathered to rehearse it.

As might be expected, the two new

friends—both creative artists—were a little nervous about the prospect of trying it out for the first time. Rostropovich later described the scene: “Ben said, ‘Well, Slava, do you think we have time for a drink first?’ I said, ‘Yes, yes,’ so we both drank a large whisky. Then Ben said: ‘Maybe we have time for another one?’ ‘Yes, yes,’ I said. Another large whisky. After four or five very large whiskies we finally sat down and played through the sonata. We played like pigs, but we were so happy.” The premiere performance—a great success—took place at the Aldeburgh Festival on July 7, 1961.

The sonata is in five movements, and this recital offers its first and final movements. Much of the sonata’s thematic material is based on the interval of a second, either rising or falling. The opening movement, *Dialogo*, begins with a tentative cello figure that revolves around this interval; Britten marks its first appearance *lusingando* (“intimate, coaxing”). The second subject, marked *dolce*, is a slow extension of that opening theme; the animated development leads to a close on fragments of the original theme. The finale is a *Moto perpetuo* movement based on the cello’s opening theme. Britten marks the theme *saltando*, which means “leaping”—that is, played with a springing bow. This opening subject will recur in a great range of moods, forms, and registers in the breathless finale.

Prélude and Sarande from *Suite in D Minor* (*Suites pour viole, Book II*)

MARIN MARAIS
(1656–1728)

Marin Marais was a virtuoso—perhaps the finest in the world—on the bass viol, or viola da gamba. He studied composition with Lully and the viol with Sainte-Colombe, but so quickly did he advance that the latter quit after six months, claiming that his pupil had already surpassed him. Between 1686 and 1725, Marais published five books of music for bass viol, consisting of about 550 individual pieces. These largely took the form of dances or descriptive movements, which Marais called *les pièces de caractère*: “character pieces.” In 1701 Marais published his *Deuxième livre de pièces de viol*, a collection of short pieces for bass viol; many of these were then collected into suites of varied numbers of movements. This recital offers the solemn *Prelude* and the *Sarabande*

from the *Suite in D Minor*, which was drawn from the *Deuxième livre*.

Sonata in D Minor for Cello and Piano *Prologue: Lent; sostenuto e molto risoluto*

CLAUDE DEBUSSY
(1862–1918)

Debussy’s final years were wretched. He developed colon cancer in 1909 and underwent a painful operation, radiation therapy, and drug treatment. It was all to no avail, and the disease took its steady course. The onslaught of World War I in 1914 further depressed him, but it also sparked a wave of nationalistic fervor, and he set about writing a set of six sonatas for different combinations of instruments. It may seem strange that the iconoclastic Debussy would return in his final years to so structured a form as the sonata, but he specified that his model was the French sonata of the eighteenth century and not the classical German sonata. To make his point—and his nationalistic sympathies—even more clear, Debussy signed the scores of these works “Claude Debussy, musicien français.”

Debussy lived to complete only three of the projected six sonatas: a *Cello Sonata* (1915); a *Sonata for Flute, Viola, and Harp* (1916); and the *Violin Sonata* (1917). This recital presents the first movement of the *Cello Sonata*. Debussy’s refusal to develop—or even to use—themes in a traditional sense intensifies the severity of this music: this is music not of fully-developed themes but of thematic fragments appearing in various forms and shapes. The opening *Prologue—Lent*, is only 51 measures long, but Debussy alters the tempo every few measures: the score is saturated with tempo changes and performance instructions. The piano’s opening three-measure phrase recurs throughout, contrasting with the cello’s *agitato* passages in the center section. At the end, the cello winds gradually into its highest register and concludes hauntingly on the interval of a perfect fifth, played in harmonics.

Sicilienne, Opus 78

GABRIEL FAURÉ
(1845–1924)

The *Sicilienne* has become familiar as part of Fauré’s incidental music for Maeterlinck’s mediaeval tragedy *Pelléas et Mélisande*, but

listeners may know this music in other forms, for it exists in a number of arrangements. This haunting music was originally written in 1893 as a part of Fauré’s incidental music for a production of Molière’s *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, and five years later—in 1898—the composer adapted it as the third entr’acte of his incidental music for *Pelléas et Mélisande*, as that play was making its heady way across Europe. A *sicilienne* was, as that title suggests, of Sicilian origin and was often somber in character and based on swaying rhythms. This music has become famous in its many arrangements, but it works its spell in whatever form it takes. Dark, somber, and poised, it is perfect music to set the scene as Maeterlinck’s grim play approaches the death of the lovers.

Papillon, Opus 77

GABRIEL FAURÉ

Papillon dates from 1884, as Fauré was approaching his fortieth birthday. Fauré’s *Elegy* for cello and piano had been published in 1883, and its success caused his publisher Hamelle to ask for another work for cello and piano, this one in a somewhat more virtuoso manner. Fauré responded with a brief work to which he gave a very functional title: *Pièce pour Violoncelle* (“Piece for Cello”). His editors at Hamelle wanted a title with a little more commercial appeal, so they suggested that it be called *Libellules* (“Dragonflies”). Fauré did not like this sort of contrived title and refused, and he and the publisher battled for a number of years over this piece. It was finally published in 1898 under the title *Papillon* (“Butterfly”), which Fauré also disliked.

And so audiences should not search for the musical depiction of butterflies in this music, but instead should approach it in the way Fauré wished, as simply a “piece for cello.” The work is sectional in construction, alternating a lively perpetual-motion-like beginning marked *Allegro vivo* with a more lyric second subject marked *espressivo*.

Hungarian Dances Nos. 1, 7, and 5

JOHANNES BRAHMS
(arr. Queyras-Tharaud)

As a very young man, Brahms fell in love with Hungarian music, which for him meant *Zigeuner* music. He was introduced

continued on page 6

to it when—at the age of 20—he went on tour with the Hungarian violinist Eduard Reményi, and Brahms immediately began his lifelong collection of Hungarian folk-tunes. Over a period of many years, he wrote twenty-one *Hungarian Dances* for piano four-hands and published them in two sets, in 1869 and 1880. The *Hungarian*

Dances are not transcriptions of *Zigeuner* tunes—they are original compositions by Brahms, based on authentic folk melodies. But Brahms very successfully assimilated that style, with its passionate melodies, quick key shifts, and exotic sounds, and it is no surprise that this music instantly became popular with audiences around the world.

The present program offers *Hungarian*

Dances Nos. 1, 7, and 5 in an arrangement for cello and piano made by this evening's performers. Audiences will discover that they already know much of this music, in particular the famous *Fifth*, but all three breathe the same captivating atmosphere, full of haunting tunes and fiery rhythms.

—Program notes by Eric Bromberger