



SAN FRANCISCO  
**PERFORMANCES**

# SUMMER MUSIC SESSIONS

**Marc-André Hamelin** | Piano  
Tuesday, July 20, 2021 | 7:30PM

# MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN

Piano

Tuesday, July 20, 2021 | 7:30pm

Herbst Theatre

**C.P.E. BACH**

**Rondo in C Minor, Wq. 59/4**

**BEETHOVEN**

**Piano Sonata in C Major,  
Opus 2, No. 3**

*Allegro con brio*

*Adagio*

*Scherzo: Allegro*

*Allegro assai*

**HAMELIN**

***Nowhere Fast* for Piano Quintet  
(World Premiere)**

**featuring the  
Alexander String Quartet**

*Zakarias Grafilo | Violin*

*Frederick Lifszitz | Violin*

*David Samuel | Viola*

*Sandy Wilson | Cello*

**BRIEF PAUSE**

**BEETHOVEN**

**Piano Sonata in B-flat Major,  
Opus 106 "Hammerklavier"**

*Allegro*

*Scherzo: Assai vivace*

*Adagio sostenuto*

*Largo; Allegro; Allegro risoluto*

**This program is made possible by the generous support of  
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Hamburg Steinway Model D, Pro Piano, San Francisco

## ARTIST PROFILES

*San Francisco Performances* presents Marc-André Hamelin for the 14th time. He made his SF Performances debut in December 2003.

“A performer of near-superhuman technical prowess” (*The New York Times*), pianist **Marc-André Hamelin** is known worldwide for his unrivalled blend of consummate musicianship and brilliant technique in the great works of established repertoire, as well as for his intrepid exploration of rarities, earning him legendary status as a true icon of the piano.

His concert appearances each year include recitals, orchestral engagements and chamber music collaborations with the leading arts organizations around the globe including a long and special relationship with San Francisco Performances, where he first appeared in 2003.

During the 2020–2021 season he appeared with the Cleveland Orchestra, the Montreal Symphony, the Detroit Symphony, and the Quebec Symphony in addition to online recitals for the Candlelight Concert Society in Maryland and Peoples’ Symphony Concerts in New York City. This summer his appearances will include Chamber Music Northwest, the Minnesota Beethoven Festival, San Francisco Performances, and Schubertiade.

An exclusive recording artist for Hyperion Records his impressive discography of more than 60 recordings includes concertos and solo piano works by such composers as Alkan, Brahms, Godowsky, Haydn, Medtner, Liszt, and Shostakovich has garnered 11 Grammy nominations. Upcoming releases in 2022 will feature discs of C.P.E. Bach and William Bolcom.

Mr. Hamelin has composed music throughout his career, with nearly 30 compositions to his name, including *Toccata on L’Homme armé*, which was performed by all 30 live competitors at the 2017 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition. The majority of his works are published by Edition Peters.

Mr. Hamelin makes his home in the Boston area with his wife, Cathy Fuller. Born in Montreal, Marc-André Hamelin is the recipient of a lifetime achievement award from the German Record Critics’ Association, the Paul de Hueck and Nor-

man Walford Career Achievement Award in Keyboard Artistry and has received seven Juno Awards. 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.

The **Alexander String Quartet** celebrates its 40th anniversary in 2021. The Quartet has been Ensemble-in-Residence since 1989 with San Francisco Performances, the result of a unique partnership between SF Performances and The Morrison Chamber Music Center at San Francisco State University. Starting in 1994, the Quartet joined with SF Performances' Music Historian-in-Residence, Robert Greenberg, to present the Saturday Morning Series exploring string quartet literature.

The Quartet has appeared on SF Performances' mainstage Chamber Series many times, collaborating with such artists as soprano Elly Ameling and mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato; clarinetists Richard Stoltzman, Joan Enric Lluna and Eli Eban; pianists James Tocco, Menahem Pressler, Jeremy Menuhin, and Joyce Yang; and composer Jake Heggie.

## PROGRAM NOTES

### **Rondo in C Minor, Wq.59/4**

#### **CARL PHILIPP EMANUEL BACH**

(1714–1788)

Like many parents who never went to college, Johann Sebastian Bach was anxious that his sons have a university training and the many opportunities he never had; while he gave his second son Carl Philipp Emanuel a thorough musical training, he sent the young man off to the University of Leipzig and the University of Frankfurt an der Oder to study law. But the lure of music proved too strong. Despite spending seven years in university study, Emanuel walked away from that training to devote himself to the keyboard and to composition, and in 1740 he was named court harpsichordist to Frederick the Great. He spent the next 27 years in Berlin and Potsdam in service to Frederick, an accomplished am-

ateur flute-player. In 1767 Emanuel succeeded Telemann as music director for the city of Hamburg, and he would remain in that city for the final two decades of his life.

Central to Emanuel's career were his many works for keyboard, which for him meant the clavichord (though he did play and compose for the fortepiano). Emanuel composed nearly 200 hundred keyboard sonatas, as well as a number of shorter works, including fantasias, rondos, and others. These were published in Hamburg in six volumes and intended, in Emanuel's words, "für Kenner und Liebhaber" ("for connoisseurs and amateurs").

The *Rondo in C Minor* dates from 1785. Short, pithy, and varied, it is full of those unexpected pauses and instant changes of mood that characterize so much of Emanuel's music for the keyboard.

## **Piano Sonata in C Major, Opus 2, No. 3**

### **LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN**

(1770–1827)

Haydn returned to Vienna in August 1795 after his second visit to England, and shortly thereafter—at one of Prince Lichnowsky's Friday morning concerts—the young Beethoven played three piano sonatas for him. These were Beethoven's first piano sonatas (they would eventually comprise his Opus 2), and evidence suggests that he had written them somewhat earlier and then performed them privately for friends and refined them over a period of time. When the sonatas were published in March 1796, they bore a dedication to Haydn, but Beethoven would not identify himself as a "Pupil of Haydn" on the title page, as the older composer wished him to do; he may have respected his former teacher, but he remained ambivalent as to how much he had learned from Haydn and refused to acknowledge the connection in the published score.

The three sonatas of Opus 2 have their roots in the classical piano sonata, but already Beethoven is willing to experiment with the form: these sonatas are in four movements rather than three, and the “extra” movement—the third—is in the second two sonatas a scherzo rather than the minuet of classical form. And beyond this the sonatas are notable for their scope and difficulty: the *Sonata in C Major* heard on this concert stretches out to nearly half an hour in length and is written in a virtuoso manner that almost tends toward concerto style at moments. These may be Beethoven’s first sonatas and he may still be working to master the form, but already he is willing to make it his own.

The *Allegro con brio* opens with a pregnant figure, full of pauses; this is soon succeeded by the flowing and aristocratic second subject, and Beethoven even hints at a third theme. The treatment of the opening material is virtuosic, and the music reaches an unexpected conclusion: Beethoven drives to a climax, then the music falls away into a series of filmy arpeggios. Gradually these accelerate in the manner of a cadenza and then crest in a great flourish before picking up the opening subject and driving to the close. This episode is very much like a cadenza in a concerto: it occupies the same position formally and requires the same sort of virtuosity.

The *Adagio* opens in E major with a noble but halting episode, full of stops between its brief phrases. Beethoven soon modulates to E minor for a quiet interlude that might almost be described as moonlit in its silvery, subdued expressiveness. Soon there are outbursts, and the opening material returns and threatens to become violent; Beethoven combines these two themes over the second half of the movement before it trails off into silence.

The *Scherzo*, with its neatly-terraced entrances, is attractive, but the real surprise comes at the trio section, which is brilliant: triplet runs rip stormily across the range of the keyboard. This episode is very exciting—and over almost too quickly. The *Allegro assai* finale dances agreeably. The surprise here is that much of this graceful music is chordal and requires an accomplished touch to make it sound as ef-

fortless as it should. Beethoven concludes with a coda that seems suspended on a series of trills; gradually the opening rhythms assert themselves, and the sonata rushes to its vigorous close.

## ***Nowhere Fast* for Piano Quintet**

**MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN**

(B. 1961)

“Curiously, the piece is its own program note. Anything I could say about it would give everything away, and I certainly don’t want that!”

—*Marc-André Hamelin*

## **Piano Sonata in B-flat Major, Opus 106 “Hammerklavier”**

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN**

Beethoven spent the summer of 1817 in the small village of Mödling, about 12 miles south of Vienna. These were miserable times for the composer (he himself referred to this as a period of “oppressive circumstances”). He was in poor health, locked in a bitter legal struggle for custody of his nephew Karl, and sinking deeper into deafness. Worse, he found himself at a creative standstill. Since the dissolution of the Heroic Style five years earlier, he had fallen into a long silence as—from the depths of his illness and deafness—he searched for a new musical language. Yet Beethoven took pleasure in the village in the lovely valley of Brühl, where he would go for long walks. He was joined on one of these by the pianist Carl Czerny, who reported that Beethoven told him “I am writing a new sonata that will become my greatest.” But progress was slow. Beethoven began the sonata in the fall of 1817 and had only the first two movements completed by the

following April. He returned to Mödling for the summer of 1818 and had the sonata done by the end of that summer. It had taken a year of work.

Many would agree with Beethoven that this sonata is his greatest, and—at 45 minutes—it is certainly his longest. When it was published in September 1819, it acquired the nickname “*Hammerklavier*,” a nickname that originated—obliquely—with the composer himself. Beethoven in these years had become convinced that the piano was a German invention, and he did not want to use the Italian title *pianoforte* for the instrument (during this period he was also coming to prefer German performance markings to Italian). When this sonata and the *Sonata in A-flat Major, Opus 101* were published, Beethoven specified that they were “für das Hammerklavier,” which was simply the German word for piano (a piano with the strings struck by hammers). The title *Hammerklavier* has stuck only to the second of those sonatas, but that nickname—with its latent implication of vast power—is inextricably linked to our sense of this music. We never think of it as the *Sonata in B-flat Major*. We think of it only with one powerful word: *Hammerklavier*.

Coming as it does between the collapse of the Heroic Style and the arrival of the Late Style, the *Hammerklavier* is inevitably a transitional work, though that hardly need imply an inferior one. It is traditional in the sense that it retains the four-movement structure of the sonata: a sonata-form first movement, a scherzo, a lyric slow movement, and a powerful fast finale, yet in every other sense this music looks ahead, and Maynard Solomon is quite right when he describes the *Hammerklavier* as “the crystallization of the late style.” Those old forms may be present, but Beethoven is transforming them beyond recognition even as he holds onto them.

The *Allegro* opens with a powerful, almost defiant chordal gesture, yet Beethoven quickly follows this with a flowing, lyric idea and then brings the music to a brief pause—in those opening eight bars, he has provided enough material to fuel virtually the entire movement. There is a second theme, a quiet chorale set high in the pianist’s right hand



while the left accompanies this with swirling sextuplets; Beethoven marks this *cantabile dolce ed espressivo*, but it is really the sonata's opening that will dominate this movement—the chorale theme does not re-appear until almost the end of the exposition.

After that mighty first movement, which lasts a full dozen minutes, the *Scherzo* whips past in barely two. It is in standard ternary form, but Beethoven experiments with the whole notion of theme here: the outer section is built virtually on one rhythmic pattern, the dotted figure heard at the very beginning. The brief central episode, in D-flat major and written in octaves, leads to a dazzling return to the opening material.

The *Adagio sostenuto* is not just the longest movement in this sonata but one of the longest slow movements Beethoven ever wrote. He specifies that it should be *Appassionata e con molto sentimento*, and the simple, moving chordal melody at the beginning gradually expands across the long span of this movement, taking us through a range of experience, intense and heartfelt. The final movement opens with a long introduction marked *Largo*; some of this is unbarred and gives the impression of existing outside time, yet in the middle of this slow introduction the music suddenly rushes ahead on a five-measure *Allegro* that sounds as if it had come directly from Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. The *Largo* resumes, gathers power on a series of trills, and suddenly the main section—*Allegro risoluto*—bursts to life. This massive finale is one long fugue in three voices, which Beethoven then develops with great power and complexity; perhaps he saw in the fugue, with its combination of intellectual and emotional power, an ideal conclusion to so powerful a sonata. This finale makes fiendish demands on the pianist (it is scarcely easier for the listener), and it has produced some stunned reactions. Barry Cooper notes that “There is in this finale...an element of excessiveness...An instinct to push every component part of the music...not just to its logical conclusion but beyond.” And in fact, the sonata is so overwhelming—technically, musically, emotionally—that it has left all

who write about it gasping for language that might measure its stride. Paul Bekker calls the slow movement “the apotheosis of pain, of the deep sorrow for which there is no remedy...the immeasurable stillness of utter woe.” The pianist and pedagogue Ernest Hutcheson virtually concedes defeat: “The immensity of this composition cannot fail to strike us with awe. We gaze at its vast dome like pygmies from below, never feeling on an intellectual or moral level with it.”

Perhaps it is best to leave the last word to Beethoven himself, who mailed this music off to his publisher with a wry observation: “Now there you have a sonata that will keep the pianists busy 50 years hence.”

*Program Notes by Eric Bromberger*



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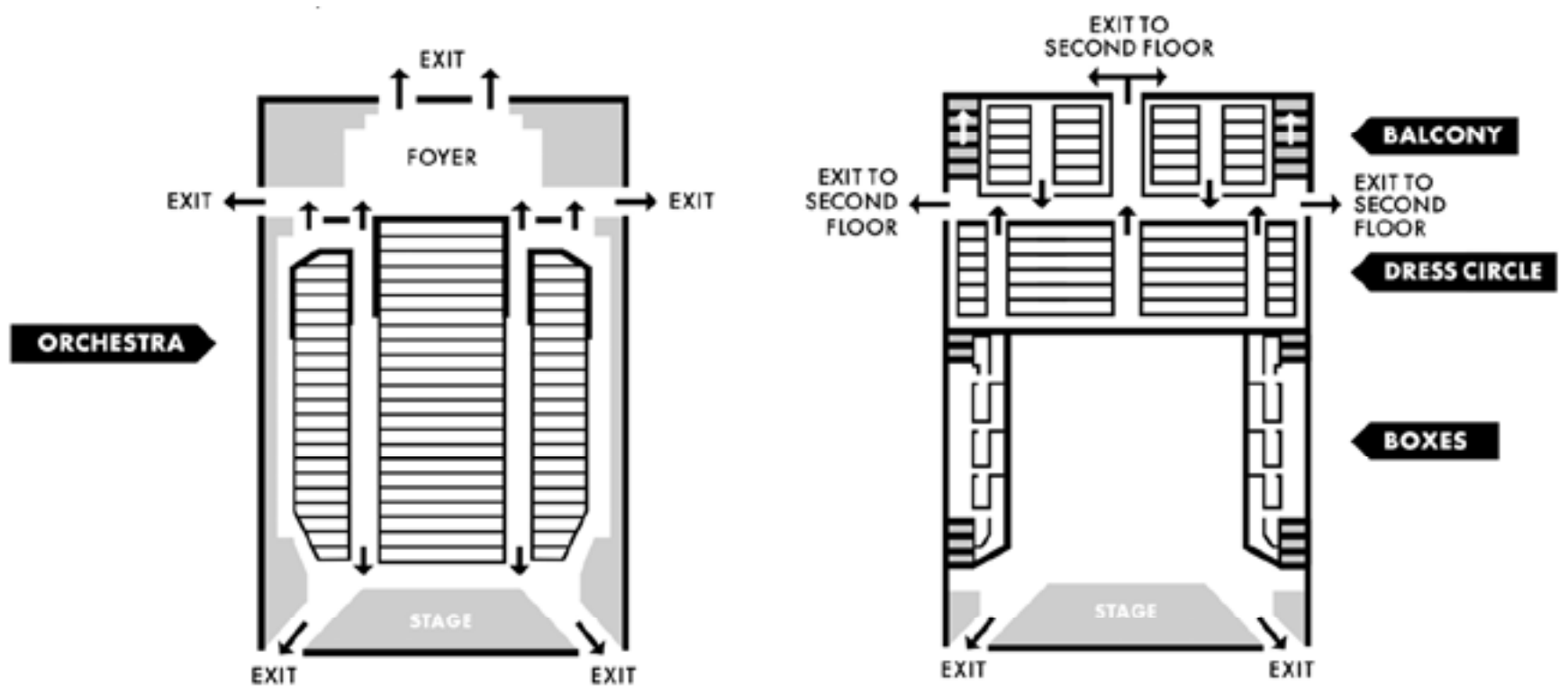
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