

Tuesday, March 25, 2014, 8pm

Hertz Hall

## Mitsuko Uchida, *piano*

### PROGRAM

Franz Schubert (1797–1828) Sonata in G major, Op. 78, D. 894 (1826)  
Molto moderato e cantabile  
Andante  
Menuetto: Allegro moderato — Trio  
Allegretto

### INTERMISSION

*Funded, in part, by the Koret Foundation, this performance is part of Cal Performances' 2013–2014 Koret Recital Series, which brings world-class artists to our community.*

*This performance is made possible, in part, by Patron Sponsors Deborah and Bob Van Nest.*

*Cal Performances' 2013–2014 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.*

PROGRAM

---

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) | Thirty-three Variations on a Waltz by Anton Diabelli, Op. 120 (1819; 1822–1823) |
| Thema & Variation I              | Vivace. Alla marcia maestoso  |
| Variation II                     | Poco allegro  |
| Variation III                    | L'istesso tempo   |
| Variation IV                     | Un poco più vivace  |
| Variation V                      | Allegro vivace  |
| Variation VI                     | Allegro ma non troppo   |
| Variation VII                    | Un poco più allegro   |
| Variation VIII                   | Poco vivace   |
| Variation IX                     | Allegro pesante e risoluto  |
| Variation X                      | Presto  |
| Variation XI                     | Allegretto  |
| Variation XII                    | Un poco più moto  |
| Variation XIII                   | Vivace  |
| Variation XIV                    | Grave e maestoso  |
| Variation XV                     | Presto scherzando   |
| Variation XVI                    | Allegro   |
| Variation XVII                   | Allegro   |
| Variation XVIII                  | Poco moderato   |
| Variation XIX                    | Presto  |
| Variation XX                     | Andante   |
| Variation XXI                    | Allegro con brio — Meno allegro — Tempo primo                                   |
| Variation XXII                   | Allegro molto, alla “Notte e giorno faticar” di Mozart                          |
| Variation XXIII                  | Allegro assai   |
| Variation XXIV                   | Fughetta (andante)  |
| Variation XXV                    | Allegro   |
| Variation XXVI                   | (Piacevole)   |
| Variation XXVII                  | Vivace  |
| Variation XXVIII                 | Allegro   |
| Variation XXVIX                  | Adagio ma non troppo  |
| Variation XXX                    | Andante, sempre cantabile   |
| Variation XXXI                   | Largo, molto espressivo   |
| Variation XXXII                  | Fuga. Allegro   |
| Variation XXXIII                 | Tempo di Menuetto moderato  |

## GEMÜTLICHKEIT AND ITS DISCONTENTS

It must have been uncomfortable in Vienna. Beethoven was a looming presence, not always popular, not always explicable, but inescapable. Franz Schubert may have suffered most: “After Beethoven, who can achieve anything more?”

Schubert’s plaintive cry feeds into a well-worn cliché of the composer striving, often in vain, to channel his inborn lyricism into the heroic mold of his hero. There is certainly a “Beethovenian” quality to many of Schubert’s more ambitious instrumental works, but he could also be critical of the composer’s “eccentricities” and was probably less drawn to a work like the *Eroica* than to its sunnier predecessors. It is in any event the Beethoven of the G major piano sonatas from Opp. 14 and 49 that echoes in Schubert’s Sonata in G major, Op. 78.

The choice of key was not fortuitous. A contemporary theorist, Christian Schubart, described G major as “everything rustic, idyllic and lyrical, every calm and satisfied passion, . . . every gentle and peaceful emotion of the heart.” These are certainly the prevailing qualities of Schubert’s sonata, written in October 1826. The opening movement—*Molto moderato e cantabile*—flows at such a dreamy 12/8 that Schubert’s publisher saw fit to label it “fantasia,” perhaps to explain—or excuse—its languid lyricism. The first theme is quiescent, reluctant to venture far from its cozy home. At a faster tempo the second theme might soar; here it merely glides, and when adorned by treble figuration, becomes a ballet of swallows in slow-motion flight. The texture, predominantly two-voiced, thickens in the development, where there are momentary flashes of drama before the recapitulation returns us to serene tranquility.

The tone of the *Andante* is likewise gentle, even fustily genteel, which makes the ill-tempered outbursts that follow all the more shocking. The ensuing intercession pleads indulgence and the frilly ornamentation subsequently visited on the main theme counsels us to ignore the whole episode. It all has the feel of an oft-repeated domestic drama and we are grateful when the *Menuetto* whisks us into the

country for some fresh air and a bit of three-quarter time stomping.

One could well imagine a livelier finale—say a saucy tarantella—but Schubert is resolute in maintaining the relaxed pace of the previous movements. This *Allegretto* is a largely stress-free rondo and from the hint of an open-fifths drone in the initial bars we are still in the country. Indeed, the ritornello and the two contrasting episodes conjure up rustic dances, albeit with detours into other musical realms, both lyric and dramatic. This wonderfully even-tempered movement takes its leave with the utmost discretion, a fitting conclusion to a sonata that Robert Schumann once called “perfect in form and spirit.”

There is a story that Schubert, together with his publisher Anton Diabelli, once visited Beethoven to proffer a set of piano variations dedicated to the master. When Beethoven, score in hand, gently pointed out a harmonic error, Schubert fled in flustered panic. The story may be apocryphal but the dedication is not, which suggests at least a measure of chutzpah on Schubert’s part. Beethoven owned the variation form. It had been his calling card as a pianist and was a preoccupation throughout his compositional career, so when Anton Diabelli asked him—along with 50 other composers—to contribute a single variation to a patriotic album one can well imagine Beethoven’s response. (Schubert, let it be noted, was also asked—along with Czerny, Hummel, Moscheles, and the eleven-year-old Franz Liszt—and was the first to meet the deadline.) Beethoven eventually relented, but instead of writing one variation he wrote 33.

In Beethoven’s day, variations usually involved ornamenting the theme, improvising upon its underlying structure, or submitting it to a bit of flashy cross-dressing in styles past or present. The point—and part of the fun—was recognizing the original subject behind every disguise. This posed a problem for Beethoven who ridiculed Diabelli’s little waltz as a “cobbler’s patch” for its indifferent melody, clunky rhythm, crude repetitions, and simple-minded sequences. Consequently his variations

are less about disguising than demolishing the theme in order to point up its multiple deficiencies. It was a mission Beethoven took up with gusto.

First the theme: a perky little grace-note turn, a graceless melody (whose chief inspiration are falling intervals of a fourth or fifth), and hammering chords that precede the aforementioned sequences. The exaggerated off-beat *sforzandos* indicate that Diabelli didn't take this theme very seriously either, and that is part of the joke of Variation I, in which the knock-kneed waltz becomes a mock-heroic march. In subsequent variations the theme often disappears, as if to stress that the whole is significantly less than its parts. In Variation IX, for instance, the opening grace-note turn generates a snappy little *étude* that flits about the keyboard; in XVIII that same turn spawns a rather precious moment musical. In XXII, the falling fourth and fifths, already pilloried in the opening march, morph into Leporello's aria, "Notte e giorno faticar," from *Don Giovanni*, and those annoying repeated chords, deafening in I, are replaced in XIII by deafening silence.

There is no consensus about the overall structure of these variations, but there are

clear points of climax, reflection, or redirection. Variation X is a dazzling display of technical virtuosity, whereas the glacially slow variation XX is a moment of exquisite repose. Variations XXIX–XXXI are an island of C minor in this C major work. Here we are entering the transcendent realm of the late piano sonatas: a solemn lament, a lofty meditation, and a miracle that hovers between an ornate Baroque aria and a Chopin nocturne; Diabelli's theme is a distant memory. Beethoven has made use of contrapuntal forms in XIX, a lively canon, and XXIV, a *fughetta* that has the texture of a Bach chorale *prélude*, but nothing prepares us for the grandiose Handelian fugue of variation XXXII, whose splendor is underscored by a shift to the heroic key of E-flat major. With a flourish of arpeggios, we are ushered into the final variation, a Mozartian minuet of supreme beauty, a sublime conclusion to this monumental work. And with that, Vienna became just a tad less *gemütlich* for Franz Schubert—and 49 other colleagues.

© Christopher Hailey



Richard Avedon

**M**ITSUKO UCHIDA is a performer who brings a deep insight into the music she plays through her own search for truth and beauty. She is renowned for her interpretations of Mozart, Schubert, and Beethoven, both in the concert hall and on CD, but she has also illuminated the music of Berg, Schoenberg, Webern, and Boulez for a new generation of listeners. Her recording of the Schoenberg Piano Concerto with Pierre Boulez and the Cleveland Orchestra won four awards, including the Gramophone Award for Best Concerto recording. Among many current projects, Ms. Uchida has recently been recording a selection of Mozart's piano concertos with the Cleveland Orchestra, directing from the piano: all of the discs in this series have received critical acclaim, and one won a Grammy Award in 2011.

Highlights this season include performances with the Berlin Philharmonic and Sir Simon Rattle, Cleveland Orchestra and Leon Fleisher, Chicago Symphony and Riccardo Muti, Bayerischer Rundfunk and Mariss Jansons, London Philharmonic and Vladimir Jurowski, and Tonhalle Orchestra with David Zinman. She will undertake a recital tour, with venues including Paris's Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Vienna's Musikverein, Chicago's Symphony Center, New York's Carnegie Hall, and Cal Performances; and a tour of Japan.

Ms. Uchida performs with the world's finest orchestras and musicians. Some recent highlights have been her Artist-in-Residency at the Cleveland Orchestra, where she directed all the Mozart concertos from the keyboard over a number of seasons. She has also been the focus of a Carnegie Hall Perspectives series entitled "Mitsuko Uchida: Vienna Revisited." She has featured in the Concertgebouw's Carte Blanche series, where she collaborated with Ian Bostridge, the Hagen Quartet, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, as well as directing from the piano a performance of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*. Ms. Uchida has also been Artist-in-Residence at the Vienna Konzerthaus, Salzburg Mozartwoche, Lucerne Festival, and with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, where she performed a series of chamber music concerts and a Beethoven piano concerto cycle with Sir Simon Rattle.

Ms. Uchida records exclusively for Decca, and her recordings include the complete Mozart piano sonatas and piano concertos; the complete Schubert piano sonatas; Debussy's *Études*; the five Beethoven piano concertos with Kurt Sanderling; a CD of Mozart sonatas for violin and piano with Mark Steinberg; *Die Schöne Müllerin* with Ian Bostridge for EMI; the final five Beethoven piano sonatas; and the 2008 recording of Berg's Chamber Concerto with the Ensemble Intercontemporain, Pierre Boulez, and Christian Tetzlaff. Ms. Uchida's most recent releases are CDs of Mozart's concertos K. 488 and K. 491, a second disc of K. 466 and K. 595, and a third disc of K. 271 and K. 467, all with Ms. Uchida directing the Cleveland Orchestra from the piano; and two acclaimed discs of Schumann's solo piano music. A DVD featuring a live performance of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* from the Salzburg Festival and an accompanying documentary was released last season by Bel Air Classiques and film+co, in the centenary year of this pivotal work.

Ms. Uchida has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to aiding the development of young musicians and is a trustee of the Borletti-Buitoni Trust. She is also Director of the Marlboro Music Festival. In May 2012, she was awarded the Royal Philharmonic Society's Gold Medal. In June 2009, she was made a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire.