

UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY

EMANUEL AX

Pianist

YO-YO MA

Cellist

Tuesday Evening, December 10, 1991, at 8:00
Hill Auditorium, Ann Arbor, Michigan

PROGRAM

- Sonata for Cello (Clarinet) and Piano (1942) Bernstein
(Transcribed for cello by Yo-Yo Ma)
Grazioso
Andantino
- Sonata No. 1 in E minor, Op. 38 Brahms
Allegro non troppo
Allegretto quasi Menuetto; Trio
Allegro

INTERMISSION

- *Sonata for Cello and Piano (1989) William Bolcom
Allegro inquieto
Adagio semplice
Allegro assai
- Sonata in G minor, Op. 65 Chopin
Allegro moderato
Scherzo
Largo
Finale: allegro

**The Ann Arbor premiere of a work commissioned for Yo-Yo Ma and Emanuel Ax by a consortium of six presenters that includes the University Musical Society. Special thanks to composer William Bolcom for sharing his insights in this evening's Philips Pre-concert Presentation.*

Emanuel Ax plays the Steinway piano available through Hammell Music, Inc., Livonia.
Yo-Yo Ma and Emanuel Ax record exclusively for Sony Classical.
Messrs. Ax and Ma are represented by ICM Artists, Ltd., New York City.
The box office in the outer lobby is open during intermission for tickets to upcoming Musical Society concerts.

Sonata for Cello (Clarinet) and Piano

LEONARD BERNSTEIN (1918-1990)

In 1941, Leonard Bernstein was a twenty-three-year-old musician who, in his two years out of Harvard, had studied piano and conducting at the Curtis Institute and had been in Koussevitzky's first two summer conducting classes at Tanglewood. He had little sense of the direction that his career would take in the future, and in the meantime, he was living in a studio building in Boston and was organizing concerts at the Institute of Modern Art there. He had acquired a second- or third-hand clarinet some time earlier and during a stay in Florida at the end of the Tanglewood season had begun to learn the instrument and to write the music that was to become this Sonata.

On April 21, 1942, at the Institute, the clarinetist David Glazer and Bernstein played it in public for the first time. In the next season, he played it in New York with David Oppenheim, who later became the head of Columbia Masterworks Records and then the Dean of the New York University School of the Arts. The Sonata was Bernstein's first published work, issued that year with a dedication to Oppenheim.

Bernstein has sometimes listed the Clarinet Sonata as his final *juvenilium*, and at other times as his earliest canonical composition. It is a short work in two movements, and the music has a kind of loose-jointed, easy flexibility and youth that is fresh and appealing. The brief opening *Grazioso* combines a fluent lyrical quality with a rhythmic pulse whose source lies in a neo-classicism somewhere between Stravinsky's and Hindemith's. In the second movement, he alternates between a melancholy *Andantino* and a lightly jazzy, Afro-Cuban manner, here *Vivace e leggiero*, that would long be one of Bernstein's favorites.

Yo-Yo Ma plays the Sonata in a graceful cello adaptation of the clarinet part.

—Leonard Burkat

Sonata No. 1 in E minor, Op. 38,
for Cello and Piano

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

During his long productive life, Brahms published two dozen pieces of chamber music, from duo-sonatas to sextets, but he may have written and destroyed two or three times as many. Musical ideas from those lost works probably found their way into the other compositions that he assembled, disassembled, and reassembled through the years, but no critic of the music he published was half as severe on his works in progress as he, himself, was. He published this Sonata in 1866, but it had changed radically since he had begun it in 1862.

Brahms' original intention was to write a four-movement cello sonata, with a central slow movement and scherzo, but he stopped after the second. He was dissatisfied with the direction in which he was taking the music, and he hesitated to show it even to such close friends as Clara Schumann, Robert Schumann's widow, and Josef Gänsbacher, a singing teacher at the Vienna Conservatory, who also played the cello and who had helped him get his job as conductor of a choral society there. In 1865, Brahms took up the Sonata again and converted it into a three-movement work by rewriting the first, discarding the second, and adding two new movements. It is dedicated to Gänsbacher.

The Sonata is a dark, solemn, and stately work, but, Brahms wrote to his publisher, "not too difficult to play, for either instrument." In the first movement, *Allegro non troppo*, the big wide-ranging melodies are broadly developed, and for contrast, the second is a gracious *Allegretto*, like a minuet. The finale, *Allegro*, is a vigorous and powerful fugue on a long subject that seems to have been borrowed, almost exactly, from Bach's *The Art of Fugue*.

The earliest known public concert performance of the Sonata was not given until four and half years after it was published, on January 14, 1871. The occasion was a chamber music concert in the Leipzig Gewandhaus; the cellist, Emil Hegar, and the pianist, the well known composer, Carl Reinecke.

—Leonard Burkat



Sonata for Cello and Piano (1989)

WILLIAM BOLCOM (b. 1938)

Ann Arbor Premiere

About four years ago, a group of presenters, including the Musical Society's executive director Kenneth Fischer, were discussing informally how they could introduce new works into the present-day concert scene, particularly for the recital repertoire. Though the idea of presenters being involved in the commissioning process was relatively new, the concept grew into a commissioning consortium of six presenters across the country. Yo-Yo Ma was the first artist to be approached by members of the consortium, and the cellist's enthusiasm then led to William Bolcom, one of today's most highly respected composers and, at the time, a recently named Pulitzer Prize winner. Bolcom accepted the commission and subsequently wrote his *Sonata for Cello and Piano* in 1989, the work that receives its Ann Arbor premiere tonight.

As agreed in advance, each presenter of the commissioning consortium has its turn to host a premiere in its own city, thus assuring at least six hearings across the country. The *Sonata* was first performed in the Bank of Boston Celebrity Series on May 3, 1990, followed closely on May 5 for the

Washington Performing Arts Society at the Kennedy Center and on May 6 in Lincoln Center's Great Performers Series at New York's Avery Fisher Hall. The two remaining members of the consortium are the UCLA Center for the Performing Arts and Houston's Society for the Performing Arts.

William Bolcom began his musical career as a child prodigy in Seattle, where he entered the University of Washington as a special student at age 11. He earned a master's degree from Mills College in Oakland, California, and a doctor of music degree at Stanford University. The pianist, composer, and teacher came to Ann Arbor in 1973 to join the University of Michigan faculty, where he has remained ever since. Equally accomplished as a pianist of popular music, he has performed everything from Joplin to Berlin on stages around the world with his wife, mezzo-soprano Joan Morris.

Now in the middle of a two-year leave of absence from the U-M, to devote full time to composing, Bolcom is finishing an opera based on Frank Norris' *McTeague* for the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Last March, Marilyn Horne and Martin Katz gave the world premiere of *I Breathed a Mountain*, a song cycle of eleven poems by women poets, a commission for Carnegie Hall's year-long Centennial Celebration. Also in March, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra performed his *Violin Concerto in D*, with Kurt Nikkanen, soloist, and Kenneth Jean, conductor. *The Mask*, a work for mixed chorus commissioned by The Philadelphia Singers, received its world premiere in October 1990. Elsewhere, Bolcom's compositions have been performed by the Louisville Orchestra, where his *First Symphony* received its first performance since the premiere at Aspen when the composer was 19 years old; the Louisville Orchestra will record this symphony on an all-Bolcom disc that will also include the composer's *Third Symphony* and *Seattle Slew*, an orchestral suite from his ballet music for the Pacific Northwest Ballet.

William Bolcom's honors include the 1988 Pulitzer Prize in Music for "Twelve New Etudes for Piano," as well as two other Pulitzer nominations; The Henry Russel Award in 1977, the University of Michigan's highest academic prize; and grants from the Rockefeller and Guggenheim Foundations.

"Mr. Bolcom has become perhaps our most admired post-modernist composer . . .

Bolcom composes music that audiences can like and critics can respect," wrote John Rockwell, *New York Times* reviewer.

The composer provides the following note for his Cello Sonata:

This sonata, written for and dedicated to the duo of Yo-Yo Ma, cellist, and Emanuel Ax, pianist, is firmly based on Classical and Romantic models; Schubert and Brahms were very much on my mind while writing it. Why, in 1989, write another sonata in the nineteenth-century mold? I suppose because it's what I heard the duo performing in my inner ear.

Nowadays there seems to be conflict about whether using classical forms, "functional" harmony, and whatnot, denotes some sort of political decision on the composer's part. To the implied question, "Does this piece mean I'm committed to facing toward the past rather than looking to the future?" I have always answered, "Not necessarily; it all depends on the *idea* of the piece." This Sonata showed its own climate, mood, and meaning to me as it unfolded, and to go against my — or the piece's — instinct for the sake of some artistic self-identification stamp seemed anathema. Not that there isn't piquant twentieth-century harmony throughout this work or greater compression than the earlier masters deemed necessary (despite the repeated exposition in the first movement). But this Sonata embraces earlier models without hesitation; it revels in the interplay between older music and modern sensibility, exactly as does the Ax-Ma Duo in my estimation.

I have jokingly told the Duo not to program this piece with the Brahms E-minor Sonata because of the opening two cello notes of both sonatas being identical — but the mood and weight of my sonata's first movement, particularly, recalls Schubert to me more than Brahms. As with classical models, the opening material gives way to a second group of themes in the relative major, followed by a development and recapitulation. The second movement, *Adagio semplice*, is the central movement in every sense of the word. Its juxtaposition of a peaceful E-major theme and intervening, conflicting material is the dramatic heart of the Sonata. Despite the E-minor main key of the Sonata, I feel it to recall the short A-minor early piano sonatas

of Schubert; unlike the famous late ones, these sonatas are terse and tragic in mood, with short last movements. The short final rondo, *Allegro assai*, is full of storm and stress, recalling the "midnight-rider" last movements of the early Romantic era.

—William Bolcom

Sonata in G minor, Op. 65, for Cello and Piano

FREDERIC CHOPIN (1810-1849)

In 1845, Chopin spent his summer as he usually had for some years, comfortably cared for by George Sand at her country estate. Sand described to friends how they passed the time: "We are busy from noon until six o'clock — long summer days during which we are shut up with our work like hermits. We arrange things so as not to bother our dear Chopin . . . Delacroix was with us and will be leaving in a few days. Chopin is still composing masterpieces, although he claims that nothing he is doing is worth anything." Delacroix, who enjoyed the company there, said, "Chopin played Beethoven for me, divinely. It is much better than a lot of talk about aesthetics."

Among the pieces Chopin was working on then was a Cello Sonata for his friend Auguste Franchomme (1808-1884), a busy Paris musician who also helped the composer in his business dealings with music publishers. Chopin once said that he loved him as a brother. Franchomme owned the Stradivarius cello of 1711 that had belonged to Duport and is now owned by Rostropovich, taught at the Conservatory, and was a well-known orchestral and chamber music player.

The Sonata was the last work that Chopin published, and it occupied him for a long time. "I am doing as well as I can," he once wrote to Franchomme, "but it's not good enough." They played through it in December 1845, and Chopin wrote that although he was making progress, it was far from ready for publication. The summer of 1846 was the last that Chopin spent with Sand, for her quiet refuge had turned into a violently troubled household. His work was not going well. "Sometimes I am satisfied with my Cello Sonata," he wrote in the autumn, "sometimes not. I toss it aside and then pick it up again." In 1847, he finally released the work for publication, dedicated, of course, to Franchomme. The first public performance

The two [Yo-Yo Ma and Emanuel Ax] have played together for many years, and it shows. For although the personalities differ, they always meet. Junctures between phrases, when movement either retreats or swells, have an unusual sense of mutual understanding. One looks for a less corny way to explain this musical relationship, but friendship seems the only apt one.

—Bernard Holland, *The New York Times*, May 1990

Yo-Yo Ma gave his first public recital at age five and by the time he was 19 was being compared with such masters as Rostropovich and Casals. One of the most sought-after cellists of our time, Mr. Ma has appeared with eminent conductors and orchestras in all the music capitals of the world.

Highly acclaimed for his ensemble playing, Mr. Ma is deeply committed to the vast chamber music literature. During the past two seasons, he joined several distinguished colleagues for performances and recordings of the Fauré and Brahms Piano Quartets (with Emanuel Ax, Isaac Stern, and Jaime Laredo) and the Brahms String Sextets (with Stern, Cho-Liang Lin, Laredo, Michael Tree, and Sharon Robinson). He will again collaborate with Messrs. Ax, Stern, and Laredo for quartet performances and recordings in 1991-92.

Yo-Yo Ma and Emanuel Ax regularly perform duo recitals, a partnership that has produced many recordings, including the complete cello sonatas of Beethoven and Brahms and, most recently, a record of the



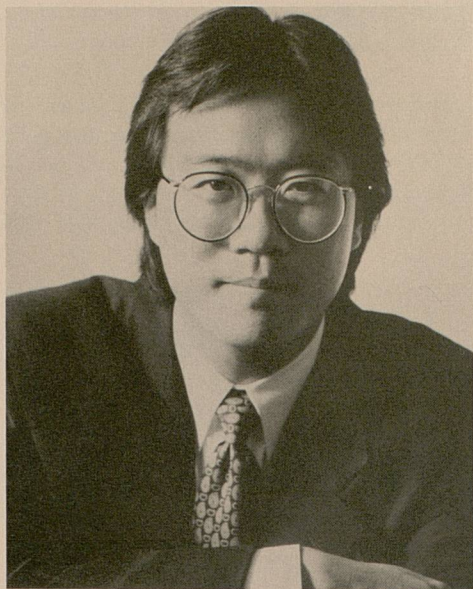
was given by the two friends on February 16, 1848, at Chopin's last concert in Paris. They omitted the first movement, which they thought too difficult for the audience.

The Sonata made its way slowly into the musical world. It was neither a brilliant showpiece nor vapid salon music, but it required that the performers possess great technical skills, and it posed complex problems in ensemble playing. In the Mendelssohn circle, Ignaz Moscheles, a confirmed classicist, found it too freely improvisatory and described it as "a wild overgrown forest." There are moments when the piano part almost seems orchestral, as though Chopin may at some time have been about to make it into a concerto. From a twentieth-century viewpoint, this is not quite a masterpiece of chamber music on the

level of the best sonatas of Beethoven and Brahms, yet it cannot be dismissed as a mere *pièce d'occasion*. Perhaps it is best heard simply as a work in which one of the greatest composers for the piano tried to provide a medium of expression for a close friend whose instrument was the cello.

Chopin was not altogether at ease with classical formal ideas, which he had used relatively little since his youth, and he found them a little difficult to discipline. Nevertheless, the first movement, *Allegro moderato*, and the brilliant Scherzo, *Allegro con brio*, are structurally regular presentations of his musical materials. The third movement is a slow Schumannesque miniature, *Largo*, and the Finale, *Allegro*, a brilliant dance.

—Leonard Burkat



Rachmaninoff and Prokofiev Sonatas. The two artists also play in trio performances with Isaac Stern, with whom they have recorded the Shostakovich Piano Trio No. 2. Ma's collaboration with Isaac Stern has further resulted in a recording of the Brahms Double Concerto with the Chicago Symphony.

An exclusive Sony Classical recording artist, Yo-Yo Ma earned his fifth Grammy award in 1990 for his record of the Barber Cello Concerto and the Britten Cello Symphony with David Zinman and the Baltimore Symphony. His recording plans, in addition to the aforementioned quartet projects, include the Brahms Sonatas with Emanuel Ax (the duo's second recording of those works) and a coupling of the Prokofiev *Sinfonia Concertante* and the Tchaikovsky *Rococo Variations* with the Pittsburgh Symphony under Lorin Maazel.

Alongside his extensive performing and recording, Yo-Yo Ma devotes time each season to work with student musicians. He spends part of each summer at Tanglewood, where in addition to playing with the Boston Symphony and in chamber ensembles, he works closely with students at the Tanglewood Festival School. His experiences at Tanglewood during the summer of 1989, both as teacher and performer, were chronicled in a two-part documentary seen on the Arts and Entertainment Network and BBC Television. In August 1991 at Tanglewood, he premiered a new electronic work by Tod Machover.

Highlighting the cellist's current season, in addition to his ongoing chamber music commitments, are tours of Europe and of the Northeastern United States with the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie, a tour of Japan for both recital and orchestral appearances, and concerts with the Cleveland Orchestra, the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Minnesota Orchestra, and the Vienna Philharmonic. In Munich, in the spring of 1992, he joins pianists Peter Serkin and Emanuel Ax in a project to include music of Peter Lieberson.

In September 1990, he gave a concert at Avery Fisher Hall that was broadcast nationwide on PBS's "Live From Lincoln Center." He also appeared last season in trio performances with Isaac Stern and Emanuel Ax to mark Mr. Stern's 70th birthday. He played a major role in celebrating the 100th anniversary of Carnegie Hall, performing the six Bach Suites for Unaccompanied Cello in a single evening, a concert that followed Mr. Ma's memorable January 10 Ann Arbor recital of three of these Suites. He also appeared in the Hall's gala anniversary concert itself. In December of 1990, he participated in a third musical celebration on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Tchaikovsky's birth, with a concert in Leningrad that was televised worldwide. The cellist's other engagements included performances with the Chicago Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, The Philadelphia Orchestra, the San Francisco Symphony and the Toronto Symphony.

Born in Paris in 1955 of Chinese parents, Yo-Yo Ma began cello studies with his father at age four. Later, he studied with Janos Scholz and in 1962 began his studies with Leonard Rose at The Juilliard School. A graduate of Harvard University, Mr. Ma resides near Boston with his wife, Jill, and their two children, Nicholas and Emily. This year, he was accorded by his *alma mater* the special distinction of an honorary doctorate in music.

He currently plays a Montagnana cello from Venice made in 1733 and a Davidoff Stradivarius made in 1712.

This evening's recital marks Yo-Yo Ma's sixth Ann Arbor appearance. As orchestral soloist, he performed with The Philadelphia Orchestra and Eugene Ormandy in the 1982 May Festival and with the Cracow Philharmonic in 1986, performing Penderecki's Cello Concerto No. 2 conducted by the composer.

Aclaimed for his poetic lyricism and brilliant technique, pianist Emanuel Ax is one of today's best known and most highly regarded musicians in the world. His distinguished career has encompassed many prestigious prizes, performances with virtually every major symphony orchestra, countless recitals in the greatest concert halls, and a catalogue of highly successful recordings. In addition, he appears regularly at the festivals of the BBC Proms, Blossom, Edinburgh, the Hollywood Bowl, Mostly Mozart, Ravinia, and Tanglewood.



Mr. Ax captured public attention in 1974 when, at age 25, he won the First Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Competition in Tel Aviv. In 1975, he won the Michaels Award of Young Concert Artists, and four years later, he took the coveted Avery Fisher Prize. An RCA recording contract followed, and many of his more than 20 albums became best sellers and won top honors. In 1987, he became an exclusive Sony Classical (formerly CBS Masterworks) recording artist, and his debut album on that label was a collection of Chopin scherzos and mazurkas. His recent releases have included a highly praised disc of solo works by Brahms, a recording of several Haydn sonatas — named among *Stereo Review's* "Records of the Year" in 1989 — and the cello sonatas of Britten and Richard Strauss with Yo-Yo Ma. His future solo projects include Haydn Concertos and both Shostakovich Concertos.

Devoted to chamber music literature, Mr. Ax performs duo recitals with Yo-Yo Ma each season, and their recordings of the Brahms and Beethoven sonatas earned Grammy Awards in 1985 and 1986. In recent seasons, Messrs. Ax and Ma have also collaborated with Isaac Stern for trio performances. Last season, they performed in Europe in celebration of Mr. Stern's 70th birthday and, in the United States, took part in Carnegie Hall's centennial celebration.

Recently, Emanuel Ax has turned his attention toward the music of twentieth-century composers, performing works Hans Werner Henze, André Previn, Aaron Copland, and Arnold Schoenberg. In the fall of 1991, he gave the world premiere of the Piano Concerto No. 2 by Ezra Laderman at Carnegie Hall. His other recent premieres include a Piano Concerto by Joseph Schwantner and William Bolcom's Cello Sonata with Yo-Yo Ma.

Highlighting Mr. Ax's current season are concerts with the orchestras of Cleveland, Houston, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, and St. Louis; an appearance with the New York Philharmonic at its annual New Year's Eve gala; a North American tour as soloist with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra; and several tours of Europe encompassing concerto, recital, and chamber music performances. He continues his collaboration, now in its third season, with Yo-Yo Ma, Isaac Stern, and Jaime Laredo. Together, they have performed a series of concerts each year, culminating in recordings for Sony Classical. Their set of the Brahms Piano Quartets was released last year to exceptional critical acclaim.

Born in Lvov, Poland, Emanuel Ax moved to Winnipeg, Canada, with his family when he was a young boy. His studies in the Pre-College Division of Juilliard were greatly supported by the sponsorship of the Epstein Scholarship Program of the Boys Clubs of America. His only piano teacher was Mieczylaw Munz.

Mr. Ax, a graduate of Columbia University where he majored in French, resides in New York City with his wife, Yoko Nozaki, their son, Joseph, and daughter, Sarah.

Emanuel Ax made his Ann Arbor debut in recital in 1978 and now returns for his second appearance.

In May, Detroit is Closer than You Think

For the first time in its 99-year history, the May Festival will be reached via Detroit — the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, that is.

Recently acclaimed in the New York Times as “a first-class ensemble with a sound that is impressively polished and warm,” Maestro Neeme Järvi and the DSO take up their first May Festival residency for the Musical Society’s 99th annual “rite of spring.”

The 99th Annual

MAY

F e s t i v a l

Ann Arbor

May 6–9, 1992

Hill Auditorium, 8:00 p.m.

The Detroit Symphony Orchestra
Neeme Järvi, conductor

Wednesday, May 6

Marilyn Horne, mezzo-soprano

Rossini: Overture to *Semiramide* (1822–3)

Mahler: *Rückert Lieder*, 5 songs (1901–2)

Holst: *The Planets* (1914–16)

Thursday, May 7

Barber: *Essay No. 1* (1937)

Ives: *Symphony No. 1* (1895–8)

Beethoven: *Symphony No. 5* (1807–8)

Friday, May 8

André Watts, pianist

Glazunov: *Morye (The Sea)* (1890)

Rachmaninoff: *Piano Concerto*

No. 2 (1900–01)

Rachmaninoff: *Symphonic Dances* (1940)

Saturday, May 9

The Festival Chorus

Cynthia Haymon, soprano

Craig Estep, tenor

Kevin McMillan, baritone

The Boychoir of Ann Arbor

Dvorák: *Symphony No. 6* (1880)

Orff: *Carmina Burana* (1937)

University Musical Society

of the University of Michigan

Ann Arbor

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