**Bridge to Beethoven**

Bridge to Beethoven explores the impact and significance Beethoven has had on a diverse group of composers and musicians. By pairing Beethoven’s ten sonatas for violin and piano with new works over four programs, this project seeks to ignite creative conversations around his music not only as a cornerstone of classical music but as a universal, culture-crossing source of inspiration. Bridge to Beethoven I features a new commission from composer Vijay Iyer to be paired with Beethoven’s “Kreutzer” Sonata; Bridge to Beethoven II pairs Jörg Widmann’s 'Sommersonate’ with Beethoven’s “Spring” Sonata; Bridge to Beethoven III features newly commissioned, interweaving works by Andrew Norman throughout Beethoven’s Opus 30 Sonatas (Numbers 6,7, and 8); and Bridge to Beethoven IV pairs a new commission by Anthony Cheung to be paired with Beethoven’s final, tenth Sonata. We passionately believe in the constant evolution of classical music as a vital, living organism through its capacity to include a myriad of influences and hope to illustrate the sustained power of Beethoven's revolutionary voice in our present day community of artists and audiences.

Commissions for “Bridge to Beethoven” are funded by SF Performances, Laguna Beach Music Festival and arcoCollaborative.

**EXPLORES BEETHOVEN’S INFLUENCE ON CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS AND HOW HIS MUSIC HAS SHAPED THEIR CULTURAL IDENTITY**

The four recital series features music performed and composed by artists of diverse heritage with newly commissioned works by Vijay Iyer, Andrew Norman and Anthony Cheung.

Violinist Jennifer Koh and pianist Shai Wosner have come together to combine their personal and musical experiences in a collaborative project titled “Bridge to Beethoven” that explores the impact and significance Beethoven has had on a culturally diverse group of composers and musicians. The recital series pairs Beethoven's Complete Violin Sonatas with works by composers of diverse racial and ethnic lineage in four distinct programs featuring three works commissioned for the series by Vijay Iyer, Andrew Norman, and Anthony Cheung which serve as companion pieces to select sonatas, and Jörg Widmann’s Sommersonate.

“Shai and I created the project from different perspectives and directions, which will hopefully make the performance more interesting,” said Ms. Koh. For Mr. Wosner, the development of the series examines the music of Beethoven and the evolution of classical music through the present. “Beethoven was the first composer to write music in which the struggle of creativity is part of the piece,” he said. “And Beethoven was the first composer to do that consistently, the idea of the creative process is very much in the forefront of a lot of today's music and these new composers are all wildly different and exciting examples of that."

Ms. Koh’s approach to the project focuses on the cultural and social effect of classical music. “I wanted to create a project that explores diversity in a compelling way, where people can engage with different cultural voices in a musical conversation,” she said. This project is about including a wide range of voices that takes all of us on a journey that illustrates the evolving nature of classical music.”

To develop new works that propelled the vision of “Bridge to Beethoven,” Ms. Koh asked Mr. Norman, Mr. Iyer, and Mr. Cheung, all of whom she has worked with previously, to compose new works to act as companion pieces to the existing Beethoven violin sonatas. Mr. Wosner, who has previously worked with Mr. Widmann, introduced Sommersonate to the project.

**Bridge to Beethoven I** is comprised of two sonatas: Op. 12, No. 1 in D Major and Op. 47, Kreutzer in A Major, and Vijay Iyer’s Bridgetower Fantasy, a work influenced by the Kreutzer Sonata. The Kreutzer Sonata was originally dedicated to George Bridgetower, a famous 18th-century Afro-European violinist who performed the premiere of the sonata with Beethoven. However, after an argument over what Beethoven construed as Bridgetower’s insult of a female acquaintance, Beethoven rededicated the sonata to Rudolphe Kreutzer. “My piece is a collection of imaginings about George Bridgetower,” Mr. Iyer said. “It is not programmatic, but it takes on an episodic character, assembled from contrasting fragments. I am grateful to Jenny and Shai for involving me in their beautiful, virtuosic music making.”

**Bridge to Beethoven II** includes three sonatas: Op. 12, No. 2 in A Major, Op. 23 in A minor, Op. 24 Spring in F Major, and Jörg Widmann’s Sommersonate. Mr. Widmann’s work was premiered in the U.S. by Ms. Koh and Mr. Wosner in 2014. Mr. Wosner said, "Widmann likes to re-examine canonical works in his music, using their musical content and symbolic meaning as cultural references. Sommersonate ("Summer Sonata") poses a question: is the idea of the sonata itself – for centuries one of the most durable models of classical music – still relevant for our own century? Does it still last? As a consequence, the piece goes back and forth between quasi-Romantic fervor and abstract fragmentation.”

**Bridge to Beethoven III** includes sonatas Op. 30, No. 1 in A Major, Op. 30, No. 3 in G Major, Op. 30, No. 2 in C minor, and two short works composed by Andrew Norman to be interspersed with the three Op. 30 sonatas. “Jennifer and Shai are really thinking about what Beethoven means – not only in his own time, but what his work might mean for us today and I am interested in all of those questions myself,” Mr. Norman said. “This project is a perfect uniting of those things and it’s a chance for me to really think about a specific idea about a certain kind of music making and how I relate to that.”

Bridge to Beethoven IV, the final recital in the series, is comprised of sonatas Op. 12, No. 3 in E-flat Major and Op. 96 in G Major, and a new work by Anthony Cheung influence by the tenth sonata, Op. 96. “As a composer very much under the influence of Beethoven, I thought it was a great idea to create contemporary responses his music,” Mr. Cheung said.

“The traditions of classical music belongs to all of us,” Ms. Koh said. “and the future is about the energy that people from different places can bring to this music. What can actually make it more interesting and revitalize the musical performing tradition is adding more people.”

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