

Steven Schick, *Music Director*
David Chase, *Choral Director*

PASSION

Mandeville Auditorium, UCSD
Saturday, May 2, 2009, 8PM
Sunday, May 3, 2009, 3PM

Steven Schick conducting

BEETHOVEN

Elegiac Song, Opus 118

ELGAR

Cello Concerto in E Minor, Opus 85

Adagio; Moderato
Lento; Allegro molto
Adagio
Allegro; Moderato; Allegro, ma non troppo

Maya Beiser, cello

INTERMISSION

BEETHOVEN/GRIFFITHS **The General**

Philip Larson, narrator
Alexis Grenier, soprano



Major funding provided by the
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We gratefully acknowledge
Ida Houby & Bill Miller
for underwriting this concert.

FROM THE CONDUCTOR



The great French film director François Truffaut once said about Alfred Hitchcock that “he filmed his love scenes like murder scenes and his murder scenes like love scenes.” I

imagine that this accounts for the unnerving quality of much of Hitchcock, but I also believe that this odd cross-wiring produces the enormous energy and tension in his films. In this weekend’s concerts, called “Passion,” we are attempting a cross-wiring of our own as we present a new way to look at older music. The musical sounds themselves will be utterly classical, but by placing unusual combinations and contexts within a traditional sound world we hope to enliven the classical with the breath of the modern.

There are few more beloved works for cello and orchestra than Edward Elgar’s *concerto*. This piece marks the culmination of a tide of romanticism in music for cello and equally provides some of the most memorable and beautiful music to be found anywhere in compositions for orchestra. The straightforward beauty of the piece is made more poignant by its contradictions—its own brand of cross-wiring. Elgar doesn’t seem to be able to give himself over to the luxury of a simple statement. The “pretty” music in the *concerto* is often interrupted by melancholy; moments of playfulness seem to harbor dark secrets. Maybe this is because Elgar, writing at the end of World War I, saw the destruction not just of lives but of a way of life. It was as though cannons had destroyed canons. As a result any interpretation of this concerto must find both its beauty and its sadness; its roots in history and its eyes towards the future.

This foundational view of Elgar is underscored by our decision to ask the great cellist Maya Beiser to join us as soloist. Ms. Beiser is among the most sought after contemporary cellists working in the world today. Her own background is as embedded in contrasts as Elgar’s *concerto*. Growing up in a Kibbutz in Israel, she routinely heard the call to prayer from the

STEVEN SCHICK

conductor

Steven Schick was born in Iowa and raised in a farming family. For the past thirty years he has championed contemporary percussion music as a performer and teacher, by commissioning and premiering more than one hundred new works for percussion. Schick is Distinguished Professor of Music at the University of California, San Diego and a Consulting Artist in Percussion at the Manhattan School of Music. In 2008 Schick received the "Distinguished Teaching Award" from UCSD. He was the percussionist of the Bang on a Can All-Stars of New York City from 1992-2002, and from 2000 to 2004 served as Artistic Director of the Centre International de Percussion de Genève in Geneva, Switzerland. Schick is founder and Artistic Director of the percussion group, "red fish blue fish," and in 2007 assumed the post of Music Director and conductor of the La Jolla Symphony & Chorus.

Steven Schick recently released three important publications. His book on solo percussion music, "The Percussionist's Art: Same Bed, Different Dreams," was published by the University of Rochester Press; his recording of *The Mathematics of Resonant Bodies* by John Luther Adams was released by Cantaloupe Music; and, a 3 CD set of the complete percussion music of Iannis Xenakis, made in collaboration with red fish blue fish, was issued by Mode Records. Steven Schick has appeared as a percussion soloist in Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, The Royal Albert Hall (London), Centre Pompidou (Paris), The Sydney Opera House and Disney Hall (Los Angeles) among many other national and international venues.

Mosque in a nearby Arab village. She often practiced Bach accompanied by the strains of tango drifting from her Argentine father's record player. She is, more than any musician I know, capable of rendering the beauty, the intensity and the complexity of today's cultural mix. Furthermore by asking her to bring her contemporary, cross-cultural ears and musical orientation to Elgar, we hope to hear the piece for what it really is: not simply a standard of the repertoire but a great composer's valedictory essay on the past and his tentative first steps towards an uncertain future.

The General is like-wise a cross-wiring of the old and the new. There has been no tampering with the music of Beethoven. The passages from *Egmont*, *King Stephen* and others are rendered precisely as the composer wrote them. But they serve now as a setting for a text of searing and contemporary relevance. The words spoken by Philip Larson are drawn from "Shake Hands with the Devil," a book by General Roméo Dallaire, the Canadian leader of the UN peacekeeping mission in Rwanda in 1994. For 500 pages we read of General Dallaire's idealism and selflessness in the face of one of the most horrifying chapters in recent history. By creating a text drawn from a book about Rwanda and combining it with the music of Beethoven, author and critic Paul Griffiths has mated music of unassailable virtue with a story that plumbs the depths of human misery. *The General* leaves neither Beethoven nor Rwanda unaffected. We are asked to see that Beethoven was a product of the politics and problems of his time, and we are also asked to see nobility and even art in the least likely of places. A cross-wiring, indeed.

We are calling this concert "passion." And it is easy to see that as the title of a concert that would feature Maya Beiser playing Elgar or the stirring music of Beethoven. But inlaid here are also the seeds of doubt. Both Elgar and Griffiths (via Beethoven) speak of the dangers of misplaced passion, of unbridled, uncontained and irrational passion. I always imagined that this concert would offer us a way to think about passion, both as a statement of art and as a tool of war. But how were we to know when we programmed this concert 18 months ago that the passions and excesses of the financial world would also be on our minds now, and would provide yet another source of relevance? It is for relevance that we are searching in these concerts. We are used to seeing classical music as a lens directed towards the past, the cool, distant, barely relevant past. A past that Robert Penn Warren once described as "heat lightning": still in our mind's eye, but long absent of any real zap. What Griffiths and Beiser; Beethoven and Elgar show us is that the past often lurks just around the next corner. And it is as full of electricity as ever. ■



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PROGRAM NOTES

BY ERIC BROMBERGER

Elegiac Song, Opus 118

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born December 16, 1770, Bonn

Died March 26, 1827, Vienna



Beethoven was a difficult tenant, and he alienated many landlords. He would bang on the piano at any hour of the night or fly into rages about real or imagined slights, and it comes as no surprise to learn that he moved very often. One of Beethoven's friends noted: "Scarcely was he established in a new dwelling when something or other displeased him, and he walked himself footsore to find another." Given this, it is remarkable that Beethoven managed to stay at one address in Vienna for ten years: from 1804 to 1814 he rented rooms from Johann Baptist von Pasqualati, a physician and amateur musician, and the two men became friends.

Pasqualati's wife died in childbirth in 1811, and in 1814—on the third anniversary of her death—Beethoven wrote a setting for four voices and string quartet of an anonymous poem with a very simple text:

Sanft wie du lebstest

Hast du vollendet

Zu heilig für Schmerz!

Kein' Auge wein'

Ob des himmlischen Geistes Heimkehr.

Tender as thou lived,

So thou died,

Too holy for sorrow!

No eye can weep

At the homecoming of a heavenly soul.

The *Elegiac Song*—or *Elegy*, as it is sometimes called—can be presented by any multiple of the original forces, and at these concerts it is performed by full chorus and string section.

What makes this little-known music remarkable is that it shows so many elements of Beethoven's late style, a style that would not fully come together until about 1820. In fact, it sounds very much like a slow movement from one of the late quartets: it has the same heartfelt intensity, rhythmic complexity, prominence of the inner voices, sharp dynamic contrasts, and melodic lines sustained over long spans. It is too much to say that Beethoven's late style begins with the *Elegiac Song*, but this brief piece shows many features of the music that would come from his remarkable final years.

Beethoven and Pasqualati remained friends after the composer moved to different lodgings, and their friendship survived until the end. As Beethoven lay dying in 1827 and barely able to eat, Pasqualati came often to visit, bringing gifts of the food—stewed peaches and cherries—that were particular favorites of his longtime friend. ■

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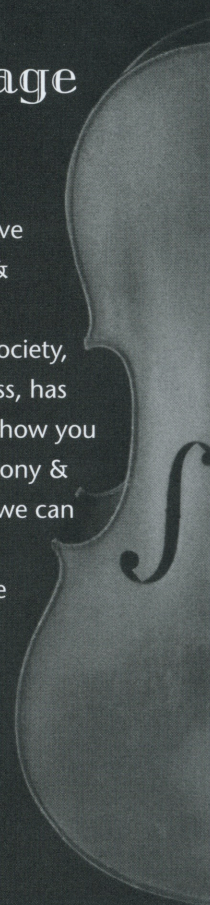
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Maya Beiser

cello

Maya Beiser has captivated audiences worldwide with her virtuosity, eclectic repertoire, and relentless quest to redefine her instrument's boundaries. Over the past decade, she has created

new repertoire for the cello, commissioning and performing many works written for her by today's leading composers. She has collaborated with composers Tan Dun, Brian Eno, Philip Glass, Osvaldo Golijov, Steve Reich, Louis Andriessen, and Mark O'Connor among many others.

Ms. Beiser is a featured performer on the world's most prestigious stages, having appeared recently at the Sydney Opera House, New York City's Lincoln Center, the World Expo in Nagoya, Japan, and in Barcelona, Paris, Tokyo, Shanghai, and San Francisco. She has drawn widespread acclaim for her multimedia concerts, including *World To Come*, presented as part of the inaugural season of Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall; *Almost Human*, chosen by *The New York Times* as among the "Best of 2006" musical events; and most recently, *Provenance*, a 70-minute presentation in which live music and original texts in Ladino, Arabic, Hebrew and Latin are woven together to create an all-encompassing musical tapestry.

Her recent appearances with orchestras have included the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Montreal Symphony, the Brooklyn Philharmonic, the Sydney Symphony, and the China Philharmonic. She has released four solo CDs with Koch Entertainment label including *Oblivion*, *Kinship*, *World To Come* and *Almost Human*.

Ms. Beiser was raised on a kibbutz in Israel by her French mother and Argentinean father; for her compulsory military service, she became a member of the Israeli Army String Quartet. A graduate of Yale University, Maya's major teachers were Aldo Parisot, Uzi Weizel, Alexander Schneider, and Isaac Stern. She was the founding cellist of the new music ensemble, the Bang on a Can All-Stars.

Accommodations for Ms. Beiser
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Cello Concerto in E Minor, Opus 85

SIR EDWARD ELGAR

Born June 2, 1857, Broadheath

Died February 23, 1934, Worcester



The period of World War I was extremely difficult for Elgar. The war was demoralizing, and Elgar—who turned 60 during its course—was further downcast by poor health and his own declining productivity. The war might seem the sort of occasion that should have roused his creative spirits, but Elgar had no appetite

for "war" music. After three years of war, he wrote to a friend while on a conducting tour: "I am not well and the place is so noisy & I do not sleep. The guns are the quietest things here. I long for the country... Everything good & nice & clean & fresh & sweet is far away—never to return." In the fall of 1917 he resolved to get away from London, and—after an operation to remove his tonsils—he rented a thatched two-story cottage outside Fittleworth, in the rolling countryside north of Chichester. The house had belonged to a painter, and now Elgar took over the painter's old studio in the garden. Delighted by the quiet and the surrounding woods, he felt his creative powers return. From the waning months of the war came a sudden surge of creativity: he wrote three chamber pieces—the *Violin Sonata*, *String Quartet*, and *Piano Quintet*—in 1918, and that August he set to work on a *Cello Concerto*, completing it in the early summer of 1919. It would be his final significant work. Though he planned several major compositions over the final fifteen years of his life, he was unable to complete any of them.

The *Cello Concerto* is a work of great beauty and great contradiction. Some of these contradictions rise from the sharp differences of style within the music: Elgar scores the concerto for a large orchestra, but then uses it with restraint—much of this music has a chamber-like delicacy. These contrasts point to sharp differences of mood within the music, which can move from a touching intimacy one moment to extroverted concerto style the next. We almost sense two completely different composers behind the concerto. One is the public Elgar—strong, confident, declarative—while the other is the private Elgar, torn by age, doubt, and the awful comprehension that all the certainties he had known—artistic, political, and social—had been obliterated. This strange division of mood lies at the heart of Elgar's *Cello Concerto*, which remains one of the most important written for the instrument.

We seem to hear the old confident Elgar in the cello's sturdy opening recitative, marked *nobilmente*, yet at the main body of the movement things change completely. Without any accompaniment, violas lay out the movement's haunting main theme, which rocks along wistfully on its 9/8 meter. This somber idea sets the mood for the entire opening movement—even the second subject, announced by pairs of woodwinds, is derived from this theme. Throughout, Elgar reminds the soloist to play *dolcissimo* and *espressivo*.

The first movement is joined to the second by a brief pizzicato reminiscence of the opening recitative, and the solo cello tenta-

tively outlines what will become the main theme of the second movement, a scherzo marked *Allegro molto*. Once this movement takes wing, it really flies—it is a sort of perpetual-motion movement, and Elgar marks the cello's part *leggierissimo*: "as light as possible." Tuneful interludes intrude momentarily on the busy progress, but the cello's breathless rush always returns, and the movement races to a sudden—and pleasing—close.

The *Adagio* returns to the mood of the opening movement. Metric units are short here (the marking is 3/8), but Elgar writes long, lyric lines for the soloist, who plays virtually without pause. There is a dreamy, almost disembodied quality to this music, and Donald Francis Tovey caught its mood perfectly when he described the *Adagio* as "a fairy tale." The finale has an extended introduction, combining orchestral flourishes, bits of the opening recitative, and a cadenza for the soloist, before plunging into the main part of the movement, marked *Allegro, ma non troppo*. This is launched with some of the old Elgarian swagger, and the music at first seems full of enough confidence to knit up the troubled edges of what has gone before. But this is only a first impression. Beneath the jaunty surface of this music, another mood—dark and uneasy—begins to intrude and finds its clearest expression in the extended *Poco più lento* section near the end of the music. Gone is the swagger, gone is the confident energy, and we sense that in place of the music Elgar wanted to write he is giving us the music he *had* to write. Wandering, pained, dis-eased, this music seems to speak directly from the heart, and even the vigorous concluding flourish does little to dispel the somber mood that has touched so much of this concerto. ■

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PAUL GRIFFITHS

Paul Griffiths was born in Bridgend, Wales, in 1947. He studied biochemistry at Oxford, and joined the editorial team of *The New Grove* in 1973. Around the same time he began writing on music for various London papers; he was chief critic of *The Times* of London (1982-92) and *The New Yorker* (1992-6), and wrote regularly for *The New York Times* (1996-2003). His first book, *A Concise History of Modern Music*, came out in 1978, and has been translated into several languages, including French, Dutch, Japanese, Portuguese, and Welsh. His other books on music include studies of Boulez, Cage, Messiaen, Ligeti, Davies, Bartók, Stravinsky, Barraqué, and the string quartet, as well as the *Penguin Companion to Classical Music* (2005) and *A Concise History of Western Music* (2006). Among his fictional writings are novels—*Myself and Marco Polo* (1989 Commonwealth Writer's Prize), *The Lay of Sir Tristram* (1991), *let me tell you* (2008)—and several librettos, among them *The Jewel Box* (Mozart, 1991), *Marco Polo* (Tan Dun, 1996), and *What Next?* (Elliott Carter, 1999), and *The General* (2007).

Griffiths has given lectures and courses on various musical topics and on libretto writing, invited by institutions ranging from the Munich Biennale to Harvard University. In 2002 he was made a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. He lives in Manorbier, Wales, and New York with his wife, and has two sons.

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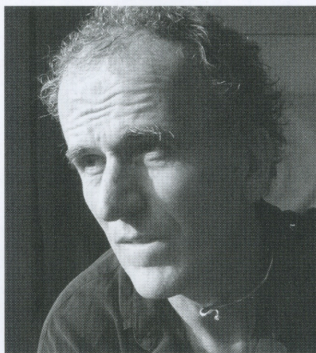
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The General (2007)

PAUL GRIFFITHS, libretto

Born 1947, Bridgend, Wales

Music by LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN



Paul Griffiths has supplied a program note:

In 1809, soon after the Austrian army had been defeated by Napoleon's forces at the Battle of Wagram, Beethoven accepted an invitation to write incidental music for a production of Goethe's heroic drama *Egmont* in Vienna, and produced his strongest work for the theatre after *Fidelio*:

a powerful overture, four symphonic movements as interludes, two songs and a threnody for the heroine Klärchen, and a melodrama (music to engage with the speaking voice) for *Egmont*. The incidental scores he wrote later are much less significant, though he did provide exceptional melodramas (among other pieces) for August von Kotzebue's *King Stephen* in 1811, and four years later orchestrated the slow movement of his *A flat piano sonata, Op.26*, for Johann Friedrich Duncker's *Leonore Prohaska*, which, like *Egmont*, concerns a war of liberation.

Goethe's *Egmont* is rarely presented now, these other plays probably never. Hence *The General*, an attempt to create a new context for Beethoven's contributions—many of them seldom heard in the concert hall—within a drama between actor and orchestra, a drama that will carry, for modern audiences, the weight of recent events. The protagonist is not a remote figure but a man of our own times: Roméo Dallaire, head of the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Rwanda in 1993-4, who could see catastrophe approaching, tried to prevent it, and was refused the means. He is the general. But his struggles—to support the endangered, to enlist the powers of the rich and privileged to protect the poor, not to ignore, by no means to ignore—are not his alone. These are our responsibilities, ours in general.

A project such as *The General* raises many questions. We may wonder how plausible it is to place Beethoven's music in a framework the composer could never have imagined—and how useful. Can this music speak to this story, and this story to this music? After all, Beethoven's *Egmont* music is powerful, progressive and massively optimistic, while the history of Rwanda fifteen years ago is one of brutality and indifference, and by no means only within the country's borders. Given such differences, we cannot end with the Victory Symphony Beethoven made to close *Egmont*, repeating the last, affirmative minute or so of the overture. Our conclusion has to be, rather, a choral hymn, a rarely performed late Beethoven piece for soprano, chorus and orchestra.

Other questions are voiced in the new words for this hymn, and still others in the music all through. For though Beethoven's *Egmont* score has triumph in its sights right from the overture, perhaps its overriding quality is that of hope, which is not only a consolation but also a challenge: hope that interrogates us, that makes its demands. Much has changed in the intervening two centuries, but not this hope, with which Beethoven so forcefully and so directly addresses us, his future—we who live, as he did, in a time of vast political disappointment, rapid technological advance, and incessant war. ■

Overture [from Egmont]

- No. 1 Song "A drum in the distance" (from *Egmont*)
- No. 2 Melodrama "One thing I learned" (from *King Stephen*)
- No. 3 Melodrama "Informants, spies" (from *King Stephen*)
- No. 4 Interlude 1 (from *Egmont*, Entr'acte 4)
- No. 5 Interlude 2 (from *Leonore Prohaska*, Funeral March)
- No. 6 Interlude 3/Melodrama "I could do something" (from *Egmont*, Entr'acte 1)
- No. 7 Interlude 4 (from *Egmont*, Entr'acte 2)
- No. 8 Interlude 5 (from *Egmont*, Clara's Death)
- No. 9 Melodrama (from *Egmont*, Melodrama)
- No.10 Song "Lost and despairing" (from *Egmont*)
- No. 11 Interlude 6 (from *Egmont*, Entr'acte 3)
- No. 12 Interlude 7 (from *King Stephen*, Solemn March)
- No. 13 Melodrama "I had nothing to say to these people" (from *King Stephen*)
- No. 14 Victory Symphony (from *Egmont*)
- No. 15 Finale (from *Opferlied*, *Op.121b*)

No.1 Song "A drum in the distance"

A drum in the distance,
A fife over here,
You're already moving
In tune with the war.
The centuries turn in
The grip of your fingers,
Your heart's beating fast,
Your blood's running hot:
A flood from the past has
You ready to act.

You know they're behind you,
An unending line,
Battalions marching
Through aeons of time.
The struggle, the combat
You see in each face,
But where will you find it:
The music of peace?

No.10 Song: "Lost and despairing"

Lost and despairing
And out on your own,
No-one to turn to,
You're spiralling down,

Sending out signals
And finding no help:
All you can ask
Is the bounty of hope.

No.15 Finale

The night is total, but be sure
A deeper darkness lies inside,
And when will come the morning?

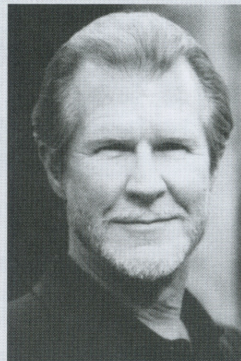
We are in peril; where's the cure?
And who will answer, who decide
To end the general mourning?

Yes, where's the light that will endure
To stop the species' suicide,
The beacon giving warning?

Can we still recognize the pure,
The uncorrupted hand to guide
More human ages dawning?

The LJS&C wishes to thank the
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Philip Larson
narrator

Philip Larson studied at the University of Illinois and received a degree in vocal performance. He was a founding member of the "Extended Vocal Techniques Ensemble," one of the first groups dedicated to the performance of vocal music featuring extended techniques. The quartet performed throughout the U.S., Europe and Canada. In 1977 Mr. Larson, with Edwin Harkins, founded [THE], a composing/performing duo that performed at Music Today in Tokyo, Paris Autumn Festival, the Darmstadt Ferienkurse, the Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts in Rotterdam, the Suzuki Theater Festival in Japan, the New Music America Festival in Chicago and PICA in Perth, Australia. They have collaborated with John Cage, Toru Takemitsu, Anthony Braxton, and media artist Vibeke Sorenson. As a concert soloist Mr. Larson has performed in New York, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Paris, Tokyo, Munich, Lisbon, Cleveland, Bukarest and Warsaw appearing with Ensemble Intercontemporain, Cleveland Chamber Symphony, Handel and Haydn Society, Metropolitan Chamber Orchestra, red fish blue fish percussion ensemble, and Speculum Musicae. In addition Mr. Larson has, for many years, sung early music and continues today in performances with the Early Music Ensemble of San Diego. Mr. Larson is professor of music at the University of California San Diego. His recordings include the works of Iannis Xenakis, Anthony Davis, Roger Reynolds, and Chaya Czernowin.



Alexis Grenier
soprano

Alexis Grenier, a San Diego native, graduated from Oberlin Conservatory of Music in 2008, receiving both her bachelor's and master's degrees in vocal performance and opera theatre. Her most recent roles have included Adina in *L'elisir d'amore*, Laetitia in *The Old Maid and the Thief*, and Mere Marie in *Dialogues des Carmelites*.

Ms. Grenier was a 2007 winner of the La Jolla Symphony & Chorus Young Artists Competition and a winner in the Carmel Music Society's biannual vocal competition. She is currently studying acting as well as singing in San Diego and recently starred in the internet show pilot, "Jenn 2.0."