

*philharmonia*  
BAROQUE  
Nicholas McGegan • Music Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PHILHARMONIA BAROQUE ORCHESTRA MARCH PERFORMANCES  
FEATURE ENGLISH CELLO VIRTUOSO STEVEN ISSERLIS  
MARCH 9-13



February 16, 2012, **San Francisco, CA** – Music Director Nicholas McGegan and Philharmonia Baroque welcome the return of English cellist Steven Isserlis in four Bay Area concerts March 9 through 13. The concerts showcase repertoire from the 19th century featuring Schumann’s Cello Concerto in A Minor in addition to works by Brahms and Mendelssohn. (Pictured Left: Nicholas McGegan; Photo Credit: Randi Beach)

The *San Francisco Examiner* praised Isserlis’ September 2009 performance of Haydn’s Cello Concerto in C Major with Philharmonia Baroque, exclaiming “the most remarkable feature of Isserlis’s performance must have been his tone. It is the warmest cello sound I have ever heard. Isserlis seduces his audience from the very first note, vibrating sparingly so as not to obscure the simple beauty of his sound.” Acclaimed for his technique and musicianship, Isserlis is known throughout the world as a soloist, chamber musician and educator.

The program opens with Felix Mendelssohn’s *The Fair Melusine*, an ode composed in 1833 about a mythical maiden who was condemned to live one day each week as a mermaid in the Rhine. Robert Schumann composed his cello concerto in 1850, but there were no public performances during his lifetime – it was first performed at a posthumous celebration of his 50th birthday in 1860. (Pictured right: Steven Isserlis; Photo Credit: Kevin Davis)



Johannes Brahms was the famous protégée of Robert and Clara Schumann. His Serenade No. 2, composed in 1859, interestingly features an orchestra without violins so it is essentially a wind serenade with accompanying strings. Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra performed Brahms’ Serenade No. 1 in February 2010 with the *San Francisco Chronicle* praising the “verve and robustness” of this “splendid performance,” adding that “McGegan [gave] a fiercely engaged performance. Avoiding the sleek, sometimes impersonal quality that can often seep into modern renditions, he embraced every opportunity to give the music a musky physicality...”

Isserlis’ 2009 performance of Haydn’s Cello Concerto in C Major can be heard on KDFC-FM on Sunday, March 11 at 8 PM during the monthly program “Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra Live in Concert.” KDFC is the radio home of Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra.

For more information, visit [www.philharmonia.org](http://www.philharmonia.org) or call [\(415\) 252-1288](tel:4152521288).

**CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:**

## WHO

Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra  
Nicholas McGegan, *conductor*  
Steven Isserlis, *violoncello*

## WHAT

FELIX MENDELSSOHN  
(1809-1847)  
The Fair Melusine, Op. 32

ROBERT SCHUMANN  
(1810-1856)  
Concerto for Violoncello in A minor, Op. 129  
Nicht zu schnell  
*Langsam*  
*Sehr lebhaft*  
Steven Isserlis, *violoncello*

JOHANNES BRAHMS  
(1833-1897)  
Serenade No. 2 in A major, Op. 16  
Allegro moderato  
*Scherzo*  
*Adagio non troppo*  
*Quasi menuetto*  
*Rondo*

## WHEN/WHERE

Friday, March 9 at 8 PM  
San Francisco – Herbst Theatre (401 Van Ness Avenue)  
Saturday, March 10 at 8 PM  
Berkeley – First Congregational Church (2345 Channing Way)  
Sunday, March 11 at 7:30 PM  
Berkeley – First Congregational Church (2345 Channing Way)  
Tuesday, March 13 at 8 PM  
Palo Alto – First United Methodist Church (625 Hamilton Avenue)

## TICKETS

Tickets are priced at \$25 to \$95 and are available through City Box Office at [\(415\) 392-4400](tel:4153924400) or online at [www.cityboxoffice.com](http://www.cityboxoffice.com). If available, Student Rush tickets are \$10 and go on sale one hour before the start of the concerts.

To learn more about all of Philharmonia Baroque's concerts, visit the Orchestra's website at [www.philharmonia.org](http://www.philharmonia.org).

## ABOUT PHILHARMONIA BAROQUE ORCHESTRA

San Francisco's Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra has been dedicated to historically-informed performance of Baroque, Classical and early-Romantic music on original instruments since its inception in 1981. Under Music Director Nicholas McGegan, Philharmonia Baroque was named *Musical America's* 2004 Ensemble of the Year, and, according to *Los Angeles Times* critic Alan Rich, has become "an ensemble for early music as fine as any in the world today." The Orchestra performs an annual subscription season in the San Francisco Bay Area, and is regularly heard on tour in the United States and internationally. The Orchestra has its own

professional chorus, the Philharmonia Chorale, and welcomes such talented guest artists as mezzo-soprano Susan Graham, countertenor David Daniels, conductor Jordi Savall, violinist Monica Huggett, recorder player Marion Verbruggen and soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian.

The Orchestra has had numerous successful collaborations with celebrated musicians, composers, and choreographers. Philharmonia Baroque premiered its first commissioned work, a one-act opera by Jake Heggie entitled *To Hell and Back*, in November 2006. In collaboration with the Mark Morris Dance Group, Philharmonia Baroque gave the U.S. premieres of Morris' highly acclaimed productions of Henry Purcell's *King Arthur* and Jean-Philippe Rameau's ballet-opera *Platée*.

Among the most-recorded period-instrument orchestras in the United States or in Europe, Philharmonia has made thirty-two highly praised recordings - including its *Gramophone* award winning recording of Handel's *Susanna* - for harmonia mundi, Reference Recordings, and BMG. In 2011, the orchestra launched its own label, Philharmonia Baroque Productions, with an acclaimed recording of Berlioz' *Les Nuits d'été* and Handel arias featuring mezzo-soprano Lorraine Hunt Lieberson. The second CD release, Haydn: Symphonies No. 104 "London", No. 88, No. 101 "The Clock," has been nominated for a GRAMMY® Award for Best Orchestral Performance.

Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra was founded by harpsichordist and early music pioneer Laurette Goldberg.

#### **ABOUT NICHOLAS McGEGAN**

Nicholas McGegan is loved by audiences and orchestras for performances that match authority with enthusiasm, scholarship with joy, and curatorial responsibility with evangelical exuberance. The London *Independent* calls him "one of the finest baroque conductors of his generation" and *The New Yorker* lauds him as "an expert in 18th-century style."

Through twenty-five years as its music director, McGegan has established the San Francisco-based Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Philharmonia Chorale as the leading period performance ensemble in America - and at the forefront of the 'historical' movement worldwide thanks to appearances at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Ravinia, Tanglewood, the London Proms, and the International Handel Festival, Göttingen where he was artistic director from 1991 to 2011.

He has been a pioneer in the process of exporting historically informed practice beyond the small world of period instruments to the wider one of conventional symphonic forces, guest-conducting orchestras which include the Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra and Philadelphia Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony, Toronto Symphony, and Sydney Symphony, the New York, Los Angeles, and Hong Kong Philharmonics, the Northern Sinfonia and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, as well as opera companies including Covent Garden, San Francisco, Santa Fe and Washington.

Born in England, Nicholas McGegan was educated at Cambridge and Oxford and taught at the Royal College of Music, London. He was made an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) "for services to music overseas." His awards also include the Halle Handel Prize; the Order of Merit of the State of Lower Saxony (Germany); the Medal of Honour of the City of Göttingen, and an official Nicholas McGegan Day, declared by the Mayor of San Francisco in recognition of his distinguished work with the Philharmonia Baroque.

The most recent additions to his discography of more than 100 releases include three releases from Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra under their new label, Philharmonia Baroque Productions (PBP): Berlioz' *Les Nuits d'été* and selected Handel arias with the late Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, Haydn Symphonies nos. 88, 101 and 104, and Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* and other concerti with Elizabeth Blumenstock as violin soloist.

#### **PRESS AND MEDIA RELATIONS CONTACT**

Karen Ames Communications:  
Karen Ames or Cassandra McCook  
[\(415\) 641-7474](tel:4156417474)  
[karen@karenames.com](mailto:karen@karenames.com)  
[cassandra@karenames.com](mailto:cassandra@karenames.com)

John Tavenner, Director of Marketing and Public Relations, Philharmonia Baroque  
[\(415\) 252-1288](tel:4152521288)  
[jtavenner@philharmonia.org](mailto:jtavenner@philharmonia.org)

For a complete biography, visit [www.philharmonia.org/about/history/](http://www.philharmonia.org/about/history/).  
Press photos are available at [www.philharmonia.org/press-room/resources](http://www.philharmonia.org/press-room/resources).

###