

Saturday, April 7, 2007, 8pm  
Zellerbach Hall

## Sarah Chang, *violin* Ashley Wass, *piano*

### PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) Sonata No. 9 in A major for Violin and Piano, Op. 47, “Kreutzer” (1803)  
Adagio sostenuto — Presto  
Andante con variazioni  
Finale: Presto

### INTERMISSION

Richard Danielpour (b. 1956) *River of Light*\* (2006)

Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953) Sonata No.2 in D major for Violin and Piano, Op. 94a (1944)  
Andantino  
Scherzo: Allegretto  
Andante  
Allegro con brio

*\* Commissioned by the Linda and Isaac Stern Charitable Foundation in memory of Isaac Stern with the cooperation of the Washington Performing Arts Society*

*Sarah Chang records exclusively for EMI Classics.*

*Ashley Wass records exclusively for Naxos.*

*Cal Performances' 2006–2007 Season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.*

**Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)**  
**Sonata No. 9 for Violin and Piano,**  
**Op. 47, “Kreutzer”**

*Composed in 1803.*

*Premiered on May 24, 1803 in Vienna by violinist George Bridgetower and the composer.*

George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower was born in Biala, Poland, on February 29, 1780; his mother was of Polish or German extraction, his father was Abyssinian. (Almost incredibly, his life ended in London exactly 80 years later, on February 29, 1860.) The mulatto Bridgetower proved to be a remarkable prodigy of the violin, and he was accepted into the musical establishment of the Prince of Wales at Brighton when he was just ten. The following year, he played in the violin section for the Haydn-Salomon concerts, and thereafter billed himself as “a student of Haydn.” In 1803, Bridgetower was granted a leave of absence to visit his mother in Dresden, take the waters at Teplitz and Carlsbad, and play some concerts en route. His public and private performances in Dresden created a sensation, and his arrival in Vienna in early May was awaited by the local music lovers there with a heady mixture of excitement and curiosity. Beethoven met the 23-year-old Bridgetower almost immediately, and the two got along famously—the composer praised him as “a very capable virtuoso who has a complete command of his instrument.” Beethoven proposed both to write a new piece for Bridgetower’s debut in the city on May 24 and to accompany him at the piano, and set to work immediately on a large Sonata in A major that would properly display the skills of the two executants. He worked tirelessly, but was able to complete only the first two movements in time for the performance. For the finale, he lifted the last movement of the Violin Sonata, Op. 30, No. 1, of the previous year, conveniently also in the key of A major, and later filled the gap in the earlier work with a set of variations. The premiere was a success (the second movement had to be encored), and Bridgetower remained

in Vienna until July, playing to considerable acclaim and spending many evenings with his new buddy, Ludwig van Beethoven.

By all rights, this work, published as Beethoven’s “Kreutzer” Sonata in 1805 by Simrock, should be called the “Bridgetower” Sonata, in honor of the performer for whom it was written. According to an interview Bridgetower granted when he visited Vienna in 1845, such was the composer’s original intention, but he added that they had a quarrel “over a girl,” and Beethoven denied him the dedication in recompense. Instead, the score was inscribed to the well-known French violinist and composer Rodolphe Kreutzer, whom Beethoven had met in 1798 in Vienna. Beethoven maintained an infrequent correspondence with Kreutzer thereafter, but apparently regarded him as a friend, calling him “a good, amiable man who during his stay here gave me much pleasure. His unaffectedness and natural manner are more to my taste than all *extérieur* or *intérieur* of most virtuosos.” Beethoven justified the transfer of the dedication by telling Simrock, “As the Sonata was written for a thoroughly capable violinist, the dedication to Kreutzer is all the more appropriate.” In 1801, four years before the publication appeared, Kreutzer had been appointed solo violin of the Paris Opéra and a year later he was named Chamber Musician to Napoleon, and Beethoven’s dedication seems to have been as much an attempt to insinuate his music with the leading violinist of France as a reward for any musical or personal empathy. Indeed, Kreutzer apparently had little liking for Beethoven’s then-avant-garde creations, demonstratively stomping out of the Parisian premiere of the Second Symphony with his hands clapped over his ears, and refusing to play in public the Sonata dedicated to him, accusing the music of being “utterly unintelligible.” For Beethoven, who was shrewd about using dedications for his own political and social advantage, Kreutzer’s rejection of his Sonata must have induced in him an almost wild frustration.

The “Kreutzer” Sonata was the ninth in a flurry of such works that Beethoven produced in just a half dozen years; he did not return to the genre again for a decade, composing his last work in the form, the Op. 96 Sonata in G major, in 1813. The “Kreutzer” is the most brilliant and overtly virtuosic of the 10 sonatas, written, according to the composer, “in the concertante style, almost like a concerto.” Beethoven did not mean by this comment that the piano was a sort of abbreviated instrumental ensemble accompanying the solo violin, but that the two were equals in what amounts to a virtual concerto without orchestra. The piano writing is comparable in its invention and richness of sonority to the contemporary “Waldstein” and “Appassionata” Sonatas, while the treatment of the violin passes well beyond the sweetness and elegance of the waning Classical manner to adopt an aggressive, fiery, declamatory style that characterizes Beethoven’s most advanced and audacious works of the time. (The “Eroica” Symphony also dates from 1803.) So strongly did this spirit of intense emotional display affect Leo Tolstoy that he wrote his novel *The Kreutzer Sonata* in 1889 under its spell. In the book, the main character’s mental instability, a condition Tolstoy attributes to hearing a performance of the Sonata, leads him to murder his wife. “It seemed that entirely new impulses, new possibilities, were revealed to me in myself, such as I had not dreamed of before,” says Tolstoy’s tragic hero. “Such works should be played only in grave, significant conditions, and only then when certain deeds corresponding to such music are to be accomplished.” Not all listeners are provoked to such extreme actions upon listening to the compositions of Beethoven, though this music’s expressive power and strength of utterance continue to move, delight and rejuvenate all whom it touches.

The first movement of the “Kreutzer” Sonata is a formal curiosity, beginning with a slow introduction in the nominal key of A major as preface to a large sonata structure in the parallel

minor mode. (The only precedent for this procedure that the immensely learned Sir Donald Tovey could find in the Classical literature was Mozart’s Violin Sonata in G, K. 379.) The main theme, given by the violin to begin the quicker tempo, is a dashing staccato phrase with a vaguely Turkish tint. The chorale-like subsidiary motive provides only a brief respite from the driving impetuosity of the music. There is considerable developmental dialogue between the instruments before the earlier themes are recapitulated. The *Andante* is a spacious set of variations on a long theme presented in alternation by the piano and violin. The flamboyant, *tarantella*-rhythm finale provides a suitably brilliant ending to one of the greatest of Beethoven’s instrumental duets.

## **Richard Danielpour (b. 1956)**

### ***River of Light***

*Composed in 2006.*

*Premiered on March 18, 2007, in La Jolla, California, by violinist Sarah Chang and pianist Ashley Wass.*

Richard Danielpour, one of America’s most gifted composers, was born in New York City on January 28, 1956. He completed his undergraduate education at the New England Conservatory in Boston (Bachelor of Music, 1980) and received his Master of Music (1982) and Doctor of Musical Arts (1986) degrees from The Juilliard School, where his principal teachers were Vincent Persichetti and Peter Mennin. He also studied composition with John Heiss, and conducting with Benjamin Zander and Jacques Monod. Danielpour trained as a pianist with Lorin Hollander, Veronica Jochum, Theodore Lettvin and Gabriel Chodos, and appeared as soloist in the premiere of his First Piano Concerto with the Caracas Philharmonic in 1981. From 1984 to 1988, he taught at the College of New Rochelle and Marymount Manhattan College; he is currently on the faculties of the Manhattan School of Music (since 1993) and the Curtis

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Institute of Music in Philadelphia (since 1997). At the invitation of Leonard Bernstein, Danielpour served as guest composer at both the 1989 Festival of the Academy of Santa Cecilia in Rome and the 1989 Schleswig-Holstein Festival in West Germany. He has subsequently fulfilled residencies with the Seattle Symphony (1991–1992) and the Pacific Symphony Orchestra (1998–2001); in 2002, he held the Alberto Vilar Fellowship and Residency at the Berlin Academy in Germany. Among Danielpour’s other distinctions are grants and fellowships from the Guggenheim, Rockefeller, Barlow, Vollmer, Astral and Djerassi foundations, the Bears Prize of Columbia University, the Charles Ives Fellowship, a Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, an ASCAP Award, residencies at the MacDowell Colony, Yaddo and the American Academy in Rome, a Jerome Foundation Award, and a Rockefeller Foundation grant for a 1988 residency in Bellagio, Italy.

Among the many organizations that have commissioned works from Richard Danielpour are the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra (*Celestial Nights*, written for the opening of Prudential Hall in Newark in October 1997, and *Apparitions*), New York Philharmonic (*Toward the Splendid City*), Philadelphia Orchestra (Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, “A Fool’s Paradise”), National Symphony (*Voices of Remembrance*), San Francisco Symphony (*Song of Remembrance*, Symphony No. 2 and Cello Concerto No. 1, for Yo-Yo Ma), New York Chamber Symphony (*Metamorphosis*), Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (*The Awakened Heart*), Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (Piano Quintet and *Sonnets to Orpheus Book I*), Absolut Vodka (Piano Concerto No. 2) and Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival (*Sonnets to Orpheus Book II*). He has also written music for Jessye Norman, John Aler, Emanuel Ax, Dawn Upshaw, Kurt Ollman, Christopher O’Riley, William Sharp, the Emerson and Muir quartets, and the Saturday Brass Quintet. In May 2005,

Detroit’s Michigan Opera Theatre premiered Danielpour’s *Margaret Garner*, starring Denyce Graves in the title role, with a libretto by Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winner Toni Morrison based on the same true story of a fugitive Kentucky slave who killed her infant daughter and then tried to kill herself when faced with the prospect of returning to slavery that Morrison recounted in her 1987 novel, *Beloved*. Margaret Garner received subsequent performances during the 2005–2006 season in Cincinnati, Philadelphia and Charlotte. Danielpour’s recent works include *Pastime* (commissioned jointly by the Pittsburgh Symphony, Brooklyn Philharmonic and Atlanta Symphony and inspired by the lives of baseball stars Josh Gibson, Jackie Robinson and Hank Aaron), *The Book of Hours* (for the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio, representing, the composer says, “the 24-hour cycle, beginning with morning or first light...that is a metaphor for the cycle of life”) and *Rocking the Cradle* (for the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, which “explores the issues of war...[and] involves both the cradle of civilization and the cradle representing what we are doing with our young people in Iraq. It’s a eulogy not only for the death of our young, but also for an America that may no longer exist—or perhaps may only be asleep.”)

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The compositions of Richard Danielpour grow from his conviction that music is able to communicate his deeply held beliefs in the value and sanctity of life, to renew the essential joy of what the late Joseph Campbell called “the rapture of being alive.” Concerning his attempt to touch the listener, Danielpour said, “I’ve always felt that music has to have an immediate visceral impact and elicit a visceral response. If that happens, I feel quite successful. I think that Stravinsky once said, when he was asked to give a detailed account of a particular work of his, ‘All I can tell you, gentlemen, is that music must sing and dance.’ I feel very much in sympathy with

that statement, that my music relies on those basic elements of singing and dancing. I don't like to think of myself as a composer of 'modern music' or a 'contemporary composer,' but as simply someone who writes music." The citation delivered when he received an award from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters described Danielpour's work as "music of large sweep and romantic expression [which] speaks to the heart as well as the mind."

Danielpour writes, "I composed *River of Light* with a metaphor in mind, that of 'crossing the river'—or, in more direct language, preparing to meet one's maker. The notion of the river as a symbolic boundary separating the here and the hereafter is as old as civilization itself. While crossing that river is for some a fearful idea, its peaceful passage requires a degree of trust and in some sense, preparation.

"Writing this work may have been a small step for me toward that 'trusting' and 'preparing'; and, although I hope to be here for many years to come, I know I must begin to practice, in simple ways, the art of dying—even as all of us practice the art of being alive.

"For me, part of the practice of living and dying is grappling with the fact that a loved one, family member or friend can be here one moment, and gone the next. I found this to be especially true of Isaac Stern, to whose memory this piece for violin and piano is dedicated. To me, Mr. Stern seemed to be the kind person who would never actually die. Obviously the memory of his work and life is still very much with us. My practice as a human being leads me to ask, 'Why do we have to die?' *River of Light*, if not an answer to that question, is my attempt to prepare for the inevitable."

**Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953)**  
**Sonata No.2 in D major for Violin and Piano, Op. 94a**

*Composed for flute in 1942–1943; arranged for violin in 1944.*

*Premiered on June 17, 1944, in Moscow by violinist David Oistrakh and pianist Lev Oborin.*

Prokofiev conceived a special fondness for the flute during his stay in the 1920s in the United States, where he encountered what he called the "heavenly sound" of the French virtuoso, Georges Barrère, solo flutist of the New York Symphony Orchestra and teacher at The Juilliard School. Two decades later, during some of the darkest days of World War II in the Soviet Union, Prokofiev turned to the flute as the inspiration for one of his most halcyon compositions. "I had long wished to write music for the flute," he said, "an instrument which I felt had been undeservedly neglected. I wanted to write a sonata in delicate, fluid Classical style." The Sonata for Flute and Piano in D major, his only such work for a wind instrument, was begun in September 1942 in Alma-Ata, where he and many other Russian artists had been evacuated as a precaution against the invading German armies. Indeed, the city served as an important movie production site for the country at that time, and Prokofiev worked there with director Sergei Eisenstein on their adaptation of the tale of *Ivan the Terrible* as a successor to their brilliant *Alexander Nevsky* of 1938. It was as something of a diversion from the rigors and subject matter of *Ivan* that Prokofiev undertook the Flute Sonata, telling his fellow composer Nikolai Miaskovsky that creating such a cheerful, abstract work during the uncertainties of war was "perhaps inappropriate at the moment, but pleasurable." Early in 1943, Prokofiev moved to Perm in the Urals, and it was in the relative calm of that city that the Sonata was completed during the summer. When the work was premiered in Moscow on December 7, 1943, by flutist Nikolai Kharkovsky and pianist Sviatoslav Richter, it drew as much attention from violinists as flutists, and David Oistrakh persuaded the composer to make an adaptation for violin, which that master string player and Lev Oborin introduced on June 17, 1944, as the Violin Sonata No. 2, Op. 94a.

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(Though Prokofiev's only other sonata for violin, begun in 1938, was not completed until 1946, he dubbed it No. 1.) The D major Sonata has since come to be regarded equally as the province of wind and string recitalists.

Israel Nestyev called this Sonata “the sunniest and most serene of [Prokofiev's] wartime compositions,” and Dmitri Shostakovich allowed that it was “a perfectly magnificent work.” The piece has frequently been compared in its formal lucidity and immediate appeal to the “Classical” Symphony, though the sly, youthful insouciance of the earlier work is here replaced by a mature, comfortably settled mode of expression. “The character of the Sonata's principal images,” Nestyev continued, “the quiet, gentle lyricism of the first and third movements, the capricious merriment of the second movement and the playful dance quality of the finale—suit the color of the instruments splendidly.” Each of the four movements is erected upon a Classical formal model. The main theme of the opening sonata-form *Andantino* is almost wistful in the simplicity with which it outlines the principal tonality of the work. A transition of greater animation leads to the subsidiary subject, whose wide range and dotted rhythms do not inhibit its lyricism. In typical Classical fashion, the exposition is marked to be repeated. The development elaborates both of the themes and adds to them a quick triplet figure played by the violin to begin the section. A full recapitulation, with appropriately adjusted keys, rounds out the movement. The second movement is a brilliantly virtuosic scherzo whose strongly contrasting trio is a lyrical strain in duple meter. The *Andante* follows a three-part form (A–B–A), with a skittering central section providing formal balance for the lovely song of the outer paragraphs. The finale is a joyous rondo based on the dancing melody given by the violin in the opening measures.

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## About the Artists

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Sheila Rock

Violinist **Sarah Chang** is recognized the world over as one of classical music's most captivating and gifted performers. One of the most remarkable prodigies of any generation, she has matured into a young artist whose musical insight, technical virtuosity and emotional range continue to astonish. Appearing in the music capitals of Asia, Europe and the Americas, she has collaborated with most major orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony, the Boston Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Berlin Philharmonic, the Vienna Philharmonic, the principal London orchestras and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam.

Among the esteemed conductors with whom she has worked are Daniel Barenboim, Sir Colin Davis, Charles Dutoit, Bernard Haitink, James Levine, Lorin Maazel, Kurt Masur, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, André Previn, Sir Simon Rattle, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Leonard Slatkin, Michael Tilson-Thomas and David Zinman. Notable recital engagements have included her Carnegie Hall debut and performances at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., Orchestra Hall in Chicago, Symphony Hall in Boston, the Barbican Centre in London, the Philharmonie in Berlin and the Concertgebouw

in Amsterdam. She has reached an even wider audience through her many television appearances, concert broadcasts and bestselling recordings for EMI Classics. The remarkable accomplishments of her career were recognized in 1999, when she received the Avery Fisher Prize, one of the most prestigious awards given to instrumentalists.

As a chamber musician, Ms. Chang has collaborated with such artists as Pinchas Zukerman, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Yefim Bronfman, Martha Argerich, Leif Ove Andsnes, Stephen Kovacevich, Yo-Yo Ma, Lynn Harrell, Lars Vogt and the late Isaac Stern.

Highlights of Ms. Chang's 2006–2007 season include a European tour with the Pittsburgh Symphony under Hans Graf and a North American tour with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Kurt Masur; appearances with the symphony orchestras of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Houston, Milwaukee and New Jersey, and Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra and Israel Philharmonic Orchestra; and an extensive U.S. and European recital tour in the spring.

Recent performance highlights include appearances with the San Francisco Symphony, New York and Los Angeles Philharmonics, Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, National Symphony, London Philharmonic, Orchestre National de France with Kurt Masur, and Orpheus on a tour that included Carnegie Hall. She toured Europe with the London Symphony and Sir Colin Davis (in addition to appearances at the Barbican), the United States with the Pittsburgh Symphony under Hans Graf, the Canary Islands with l'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande under Marek Janowski, and the Far East with the English Chamber Orchestra. She also performed in Berlin, Dresden, St. Petersburg and Vienna.

In the 2004–2005 season, Ms. Chang performed with the orchestras of Cincinnati, Dallas, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Toronto, among others. Other notable engagements in 2004–2005 included performances in Australia, Hong Kong, South Korea and Israel, as well as appearances with the Berlin Philharmonic, the

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London Symphony and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, plus a chamber music tour of Europe with members of the Berlin Philharmonic.

Ms. Chang records exclusively for EMI Classics. Her widely lauded recordings include *Fire and Ice*, an album of popular shorter works for violin and orchestra, with Plácido Domingo conducting the Berlin Philharmonic; a disc of chamber music for strings (Dvořák's Sextet and Tchaikovsky's *Souvenir de Florence*) with current and former members of the Berlin Philharmonic; a recording of the Dvořák Violin Concerto with the London Symphony and Sir Colin Davis along with the Dvořák Piano Quintet (with Leif Ove Andsnes, Alex Kerr, Georg Faust and Wolfram Christ); and a disc of French sonatas by Ravel, Saint-Saëns and Franck in collaboration with pianist Lars Vogt. Her most recent release is a live recording of the Shostakovich and Prokofiev violin concerti with the Berlin Philharmonic and Sir Simon Rattle.

Born in Philadelphia to Korean parents, Sarah Chang began her violin studies at age four and promptly enrolled in The Juilliard School, where she studied with the late Dorothy DeLay. Within a year, she had already performed with several orchestras in the Philadelphia area. Her early auditions, at age eight, for Zubin Mehta and Riccardo Muti led to immediate engagements with the New York Philharmonic and the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Ms. Chang has appeared on numerous television and radio programs throughout Europe, North America and the Far East. Along with Pete Sampras and Wynton Marsalis, she is a featured artist in Movado's global advertising campaign, "The Art of Time."

In 2005, Yale University dedicated a chair in Sprague Hall in Ms. Chang's name. For the June 2004 Olympic games, she was given the honor of running with the Olympic Torch in New York, and that same month became the youngest person ever to receive the Hollywood Bowl's Hall of Fame award. Also in 2004, Ms. Chang was awarded the Internazionale Accademia Musicale Chigiana Prize in Sienna, Italy. She

is a past recipient of the Avery Fisher Career Grant, *Gramophone's* "Young Artist of the Year" award, Germany's "Echo" Schallplattenpreis, "Newcomer of the Year" honors at the International Classical Music Awards in London and Korea's "Nan Pa" award.

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Described by *Gramophone* as a "thoroughbred who possesses the enviable gift to turn almost anything he plays into pure gold," pianist **Ashley Wass** is firmly established as one of the most sought-after performers of his generation. Only the second British pianist in 20 years to reach the finals of the Leeds Piano Competition (in 2000), he was the first British pianist ever to win First Prize at the World Piano Competition in 1997. He appeared in the "Rising Stars" series at the 2001 Ravinia Festival and is also a former BBC New Generations Artist.

Ashley Wass studied at Chethams Music School and won a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music to study with Christopher Elton and Hamish Milne. In 2002, he was made

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an Associate of the Royal Academy. He has spent three summers as a participant at the Marlboro Music Festival, playing chamber music with musicians such as Mitsuko Uchida, Richard Goode and members of the Guarneri Quartet and Beaux Arts Trio.

Mr. Wass has given recitals at most of the United Kingdom's major venues, including Wigmore Hall, Symphony Hall, the Purcell Room, LSO St. Luke's, Queen Elizabeth Hall, the Royal Festival Hall, the Sage, Bridgewater Hall and St. David's Hall, and at the festivals of Bath, Cheltenham, Brighton and the City of London. His concerto performances have included Beethoven and Brahms with the Philharmonia, Mendelssohn and Beethoven with the Orchestre National de Lille and Mozart with the Vienna Chamber Orchestra at the Vienna Konzerthaus. Mr. Wass has also worked with Sir Simon Rattle and the CBSO, the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the London Mozart Players.

In recent seasons, Mr. Wass has appeared with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and the BBC Philharmonic. He has also recorded the Poulenc Piano Concerto with the BBC Concert Orchestra and Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto with the BBC Philharmonic and Vassily Sinaisky. In June 2002, he appeared in a gala concert at Buckingham Palace to mark the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II, a performance broadcast live to millions of viewers around the world. Other notable engagements have included several return visits to the BBC Scottish Symphony and the Philharmonia, successful debuts with the Hong Kong Philharmonic, Bournemouth Symphony, BBC National Orchestra of Wales (a performance of Brahms First Concerto that was voted "Best of 2004—BBC Radio 3 Performance") and the BBC Symphony, and acclaimed debuts in Germany, France, Finland, Sweden, Portugal, Israel, Germany, Switzerland, the United States and Cuba.

His future engagements include return visits to the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and the London Mozart Players, and recitals in Amsterdam, Lisbon, Cyprus, Bordeaux, Spain, Istanbul, Chicago, St. John's Smith Square, Wigmore Hall, the Sage, St. David's Hall, LSO St. Luke's and Bridgewater Hall. Mr. Wass is also much in demand as a chamber musician and in 2007 tours the United States and Europe with violinist Sarah Chang, appearing at venues such as Philadelphia's Kimmel Center and Carnegie Hall in New York.

Ashley Wass's recording of Beethoven Third Piano Concerto with the BBC Philharmonic has been issued as a *BBC Music Magazine* cover CD, and he has also recorded Chopin for an EMI disc, *In Tune with the Piano*. He made his debut recording in 1999 with a solo recital disc of works by César Franck for Naxos. *Diapason* commented, "The quality and height of inspiration of his playing makes this disc a revelation." Ashley's recent surveys of piano music by Bridge and Bax have been heralded as "remarkable" and "the yardstick against which all future recordings will be judged." Selected as an "Editor's Choice" CD in *Gramophone* and later nominated in the "Best Instrumental Disc" category of the Gramophone Awards, volume one of his Bax series was hailed as "without a shadow of a doubt the best recorded and best played Bax piano CD to come before the public," while volume two is described as "unmissable at any price." As Naxos's first-ever exclusively contracted solo artist, Wass's future recording plans include recitals of Elgar and Alwyn, Liszt's *Album d'un Voyager* and the arrangement for two pianos of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (with Leon McCawley).

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