

The memorable concerts of 2013



courtesy of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music



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For those unaccustomed to my approach to reviewing the year, I should reemphasize that I have a strong **aversion to rank-ordering**. That aversion hits a peak during the month of December, when it seems as if everyone else feels obliged to make a “top ten” list of something or another. My own approach is to begin with the resources of my own memory while reviewing the list of all the events I covered over the course of the year. I then try to select what I feel was the most memorable experience for each of the twelve months of the year.

This method, of course, has flaws of its own, since memories of December are clearly far stronger than those of January. Nevertheless, I am always surprised that each month has at least one event that pops up as a salient memory with very little prompting. With that disclaimer, I now present my month-by-month review of my personal memories:

- January:** **The Salon Series recital given by the Cypress String Quartet.**
- February:** **Scott Sandmeier’s “audition” concert conducting the Conservatory Orchestra of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music (SFCM).**
- March:** **The American Bach Soloists performance of George Frideric Handel’s Dixit Dominus.**
- April:** **Richard Goode’s Beethoven: The Last Works piano recital.**
- May:** **Danny Clay’s Graduate Recital at SFCM.**
- June:** **The San Francisco Opera (SFO) production of Les Contes d’Hoffmann.**
- July:** **The final performance of The Gospel of Mary Magdalene.**

August: **Tien Hsieh’s performance of Beethoven at Noontime Concerts™.**

On the basis of my April selection, readers may assume that I cannot get enough of Beethoven’s Opus 111 sonata. It would be more accurate to say that I cannot get enough of imaginatively intelligent approaches to that sonata, particularly where the variations of the second movement are concerned. Hsieh’s approach to those variations was as compelling as Goode’s had been in April, perhaps because she introduced the sonata with shorter pieces by Franz Liszt and Frédéric Chopin. Thus, while Goode’s recital presented Opus 111 as “the end of a journey,” Hsieh prepared a program through which one could appreciate its reverberations into the later years of the nineteenth century.

September: **Jean-Michel Fonteneau’s performance of the two cello sonatas of Johannes Brahms with pianist Jeffrey Sykes.**

October: **The conclusion of András Schiff’s Bach Project.**

November: **Semyon Bychkov conducting Benjamin Britten’s “War Requiem.”**

December: **The recreation of a Venetian Christmas Mass service presented by the San Francisco Early Music Society.**