

Sunday, February 25, 2007, 3pm
Hertz Hall

Rudolf Buchbinder, *piano*

PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) Piano Sonata No. 9 in E major, Op. 14,
No. 1 (1798)
Allegro
Allegretto
Rondo: Allegro commodo

Beethoven Piano Sonata No. 10 in G major, Op. 14,
No. 2 (1798)
Allegro
Andante
Scherzo: Allegro assai

INTERMISSION

Beethoven Piano Sonata No. 15 in D major, Op. 28,
“Pastorale” (1801)
Allegro
Andante
Scherzo: Allegro vivace
Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo

Beethoven Piano Sonata No. 8 in C minor, Op. 13,
“Pathétique” (1799)
Grave—Allegro di molto e con brio—
Grave—Allegro di molto e con brio—
Grave—Allegro di molto e con brio
Adagio cantabile
Rondo: Allegro

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LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

Piano Sonata No. 9 in E major, Op. 14, No. 1

Piano Sonata No. 10 in G major, Op. 14, No. 2

Composed in 1798.

Beethoven, aged 22, arrived in Vienna in 1792 from his native Bonn and during the next few years established a brilliant reputation as a pianist and composer with two piano concertos, several songs, a number of chamber works, and sonatas, variations and some smaller pieces for solo piano. By the end of the decade, however, his ambition and his rapidly maturing creative genius had led him to attempt the most challenging, and most public, of instrumental forms—a symphony. He had begun sketching the Symphony in C major as early as 1795, and by 1799, as the score neared completion, he needed to start planning for its performance, preferably in one of the two court theaters, the Burgtheater or the Kärntertortheater. Both halls were then under the management of Baron Peter von Braun, who had made enough money in manufacturing and banking, and curried enough favor at court, to be ennobled in 1795. Just a year earlier, Braun had become a force in Viennese cultural life when he was put in charge of the imperial theaters, where he was responsible not only for producing plays, operas and ballets to satisfy the court's demands but also for choosing which performers had access to the halls on their free dates (usually during Lent, when theatrical performances were then forbidden in Catholic countries). One of the most effective ways an 18th-century musician could win the attention of a potential noble patron was through the dedication of a new work, so for the publication of his two most recent piano sonatas in December 1799—Op. 14, Nos. 1 and 2—Beethoven inscribed the scores to Braun's wife, Baroness Josefina von Braun. (Beethoven was pretty slick about such matters, and his dedications consistently show true political acumen.) The tactic worked, and Beethoven was allowed to

premiere his Symphony No. 1 at the Burgtheater on April 2, 1800. In appreciation, he also dedicated the Sonata for Horn and Piano, Op. 17 to the Baroness von Braun after he premiered the work with the touring virtuoso Giovanni Punto at the Burgtheater just two weeks later. (The Brauns were so partial to music for winds that they hosted weekly wind ensemble concerts at their home.) Braun and Beethoven had further dealings—Braun denied him the use of the theaters in 1802, but in November 1805 he staged the premiere of *Fidelio* at the Theater-an-der-Wien, a commercial house established in 1801 by Emanuel Schickaneder, the librettist and first Papageno for Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and a jack-of-all-theatrical-trades, whose management Braun had taken over in 1803.

The main theme of the E major Sonata's first movement is a smooth, expressive melody of rising intervals accompanied by insistent repeated chords. Its gentle progress is ruffled by a brief rhythmic eruption traded between the two hands and a few darker harmonic progressions as it approaches the second theme, which comprises five falling scale notes followed by a chromatic ascent. The exposition closes with some dramatic gestures and a recall of the rising main theme. The development section treats a new melody given in octaves over an agitated background before taking up the main theme just in time to launch the recapitulation. The events of the exposition are heard again before the movement closes with a final reminiscence of the main theme. The *Allegretto* stands at the threshold of the Romantic Age, borrowing its form and style from the waning minuet but investing that old dance type with a more muscular sensibility and with what the eminent English musicologist Sir Donald Tovey called “the hollow kind of mirth...the mordant humour...we find in Beethoven's work again and again.” The central trio turns to a brighter key but cannot fully escape the expressive shadow of the music that surrounds it. The finale, a compact rondo organized around the returns of the urgent opening theme, includes one powerful episode that looks forward to the “heroic” style which was to fea-

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ture so prominently in Beethoven's masterworks of the ensuing decade.

The first movement of the G major Sonata, called "an idyll of spring" by the distinguished German-American musicologist Hugo Leichtentritt, follows a relaxed sonata form that takes as its main theme a wide-ranging but fluid motive floated upon a luminous chordal accompaniment and a subsidiary subject of Italianate sweetness in close, parallel harmonies. These two ideas are filtered through some stronger sentiments in the development section, but regain their original demeanors in the recapitulation that brings formal and expressive closure to the movement. The *Andante* is a set of three simply constructed variations on a melody of almost folkish naïveté. The finale, with its dynamic surprises, sudden stops and starts, rhythmic dislocations and unexpected changes of register, is a *scherzo*—literally, "joke" or "jest" in Italian—not just in name and style but also in spirit.

Piano Sonata No. 15 in D major, Op. 28, "Pastorale"

Composed in 1801.

The year of the completion of the Op. 28 Piano Sonata—1801—was an important time in Beethoven's creative development. He had achieved a success good enough to write from Vienna to his old friend Franz Wegeler in Bonn, "My compositions bring me in a good deal, and may I say that I am offered more commissions than it is possible for me to carry out. Moreover, for every composition I can count on six or seven publishers and even more, if I want them. People no longer come to an arrangement with me. I state my price, and they pay." At the time of this gratifying recognition of his talents, however, the first signs of his fateful deafness appeared, and he began the titanic struggle that became one of the gravitational poles of his life. The following year, driven from the social contact on which he had flourished by the fear of discovery of his malady, he penned the "Heiligenstadt Testament," his

cri de cœur against this wicked trick of the gods. "I shall grapple with fate; it shall never pull me down," he resolved, and then told his friend Wenzel Krumpholz, "I am dissatisfied with the works I have written so far. From now on I want to strike out along a new road." The next five years were the most productive he ever knew. "I live only in my music," he explained, "and I have scarcely begun one thing when I start another." The Symphonies Nos. 2–5, a dozen piano sonatas, the Fourth Piano Concerto and the Triple Concerto, *Fidelio*, many songs, chamber works and keyboard compositions were all composed between 1802 and 1806. The Op. 28 Sonata of 1801, composed immediately after the formal experiments of Op. 27, No. 1, and Op. 27, No. 2 ("Moonlight"), was Beethoven's last such work in the traditional four movements and his farewell to conventional Classicism, the closing utterance of his stylistic "first period." Maynard Solomon, in his study of the composer, wrote, "Like so many of Beethoven's works that follow hard upon a dramatic achievement, Op. 28 celebrates the peace that comes from fulfillment of a difficult creative effort and withdraws to a relative traditionalism, from which Beethoven will gain strength for a new creative surge."

The Op. 28 Sonata was first published in August 1802 by the Bureau des Arts et l'Industrie in Vienna without a sobriquet, but Broderip & Wilkinson issued the score in London three years later as the "*Sonata Pastorale*." Beethoven apparently did not object to the title, and it seems especially well suited to both the halcyon music that opens the work and to the rustic movement, with its skipping rhythms and its bagpipe-like drone in the bass, that serves as its finale. The Sonata was dedicated to Joseph Edler von Sonnenfels, an adviser to Emperor Joseph II, secretary of Vienna's Academie des Beaux Arts and a leading Freemason whose writings about the lodge's ideals of equality, freedom and universal brotherhood resonated powerfully with the fiercely libertarian Beethoven.

Gently pulsing repeated notes in the bass give a certain urgency to the graceful main theme of the opening movement. Ribbons of scales pro-

vide a transition to the long melodic arches of the second theme, which proves to be not in the expected major key but in a shaded minor one, a forward-looking technique that shows Beethoven stretching the bounds of musical expression even in a movement as conventionally constructed as this one. The development section, largely based on permutations of the main theme, passes through some dramatic moments before quieting for a few broken phrases that return the music, through some subtle harmonic alchemy, to the home key for the start of the recapitulation of the exposition's materials. The *Andante*, one of Beethoven's favorite movements according to his student Carl Czerny, is in a three-part form (A–B–A) that contrasts a somber processional melody in its outer sections with the bright, delicate arabesques of its central episode. The brief Scherzo, a lesson in musical economy, is built entirely from two four-measure motives, one of falling octaves, the other of descending arpeggios; a restless trio provides contrast. The finale is a rondo that takes a sweetly flowing strain as its returning theme.

Piano Sonata No. 8 in C minor, Op. 13, “Pathétique”

Composed in 1799.

Among the earliest evidences of Beethoven's uniquely powerful and daring genius is the Sonata in C minor, Op. 13, which the composer himself nicknamed “Pathétique” upon its publication in Vienna by Hoffmeister late in 1799. (The only other piano sonata to which he gave a sobriquet was the “Lebewohl” Sonata, Op. 81a, of 1810.) Beethoven's music confirms that he used the word to connote something grander, craggier, more majestic than the submissive, melancholy meaning of the English “pathetic.” Indeed, the opening movement of this Sonata, with its symphonic breadth of expression, its hammer-blow ferocity and its shock-cut contrasts, is musical Romanticism already made manifest, a Herculean blow to the fading elegance of the

fading 18th century. That Beethoven could serve up such bold iconoclasm to the Viennese nobility speaks not only of his artistic courage and self-confidence, but also of the sophistication of his listeners. The “Pathétique” was popular immediately—it quickly appeared in multiple published editions and was arranged for a variety of ensembles—but it was also unsettling to conservative tastes. The budding virtuoso Ignaz Moscheles, when he was ten years old, in 1804, went to the library in his native Prague to search out scores by “a young composer who had appeared in Vienna, and wrote the oddest stuff possible—such as no one could either play or understand; crazy music, in opposition to all rule; and that composer's name was *Beethoven*.” On repairing to the library to satisfy my curiosity as to this so-called eccentric genius, I found there Beethoven's Sonata ‘Pathétique.’ My money would not suffice to purchase it, so I secretly copied it. When I mentioned my new acquisition to my teacher [Dionysius Weber, founder and director of the Prague Conservatory], he warned me that I should neither play nor study such eccentric productions. Without, however, minding his injunctions, I seized upon the pianoforte works of Beethoven as they appeared, and in them found a solace and a delight such as no other composer afforded me.” Such controversy—confusion and repugnance from some, enlightenment and emotional and intellectual stimulation from many—was the lot of Beethoven's works throughout his career.

The primary emotion of the opening movement of the “Pathétique,” like Athena springing fully armed from the head of Zeus, is inherent in its first gesture—a thunderbolt of C minor, whose tragedy is enhanced by the somber dotted-rhythm chords, the stark contrasts and the dramatic gestures that follow. The exposition is driven by a barely contained turbulence that rockets its main theme upward through the piano's register and forces its second theme out of the expected major key into a troubled minor mode. The scalar closing theme—whose downward direction balances the main theme's rising rocket—carries the expressive intensity

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to the end of the exposition. The music pauses on an unsettled harmony which leads (after the exposition's repeat) to the amazing audacity of bridging to the development section by the recall of the powerful music of the introduction. The development section proper, compact and dramatic, refers mostly to a scrap of transitional material rather than to either of the two principal motives, and drives with irresistible force to the recapitulation and the return of the earlier themes. The introduction is once again invoked as the gateway to the coda. The movement ends with a final furious statement of the main theme.

The central *Adagio* (A-flat major) is from another expressive world. In form, it is a rondo (A–B–A–C–A), and “in poetic content,” according to Marion M. Scott in her study of Beethoven, “it is tragedy as the young feel it, with the glamour, urgency, even exaltation, of a *Romeo and Juliet*. And few southern love-scenes could be more softly glowing than Beethoven’s slow movement, with its almost unbelievable melodic loveliness and velvety tone.” The rondo-form finale returns to the first movement’s quick pace and C minor key, but it is more genteelly melancholy than passionately turbulent.

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About the Artist



Rudolf Buchbinder

Firmly established as one of the most important pianists on the international scene, Rudolf Buchbinder is a regular guest of such renowned orchestras as the Berlin Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam, London Philharmonic, National Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Orchestre de Paris, Royal Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic and Vienna Symphony. He has collaborated with the world's most distinguished conductors, including Claudio Abbado, Christoph von Dohnányi, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, Carlo Maria Giulini, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Lorin Maazel, Zdeněk Macal, Kurt Masur, Zubin Mehta, Jukka-Pekka Saraste and Wolfgang Sawallisch.

Known as a powerful interpreter, particularly of the late Classical and early Romantic works, Mr. Buchbinder commands an extensive repertoire, including numerous 20th-century compositions. One of his major accomplishments was his cyclic performance of all 32 piano-sonatas by Beethoven, which he has played in more than 30 cities, including Munich, Vienna, Hamburg,

Zurich and Buenos Aires. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* praised Mr. Buchbinder, for his complete recording of the sonata cycle, as “one of today’s most important and competent Beethoven performers.”

He attaches considerable importance to the meticulous work of the study of sources. Mr. Buchbinder has more than 18 complete editions of Beethoven’s sonatas and has an extensive collection of first editions and original documents. Moreover, he owns the autographs of the piano parts and the scores of the two piano concertos by Brahms as copies.

Mr. Buchbinder has over 100 recordings to his credit, covering an enormous range of repertoire, including the cycle of Beethoven sonatas and an 18-disc set of Haydn’s complete works for piano, for which he was awarded the Grand Prix du Disque. He has also recorded rarely performed pieces such as the collection of *Diabelli Variations*. Mr. Buchbinder’s cycle of the complete Mozart piano concertos conducting and performing with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, recorded live at the Vienna Konzerthaus, was acclaimed by the famous critic Joachim Kaiser as the 1998 CD of the Year. In 1999, the 100th anniversary year of Johann Strauss’s death, he released an exceptional CD of piano transcriptions, entitled *Waltzing Strauss*. In 2000, his live recording of both Brahms piano concertos, with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra under the direction of Nikolaus Harnoncourt, was released.

In June 2003, in an unprecedented event on the occasion of the Wiener Festwochen, Mr. Buchbinder conducted and performed all five Beethoven concertos with the Vienna Symphony in one day to sold-out audiences at the Konzerthaus in Vienna, receiving extraordinary critical acclaim. His most recent release is a three-CD live recording of this event, which was released in 2003 on the ORF label.

He has recently performed with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Wolfgang Sawallisch in Philadelphia at the Kimmel Center and in

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New York's Carnegie Hall, and twice with the New York Philharmonic and Music Director Lorin Maazel in performances of Gershwin's Concerto in F and Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 2 at Avery Fisher Hall.

Upcoming performances include orchestra appearances with the Minnesota Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Tonhalle Orchestra Zürich and Budapest Festival Orchestra, and recitals in Salzburg, Vienna, Munich, Athens, Berlin, Stuttgart, Peking and Milan, among many others. Rudolf Buchbinder had the honor of opening and closing the Vienna Festwochen in 2006. Together with the Vienna Philharmonic, he played 12 of Mozart's piano concertos. Both the opening and closing galas were recorded live, and the first DVD, featuring Concertos Nos. 22, 23 and 24, was released by EuroArts in February. A second DVD, featuring Concertos Nos. 14, 20 and 25, will be released in March.

Born in 1946, Rudolf Buchbinder has lived his entire life in Vienna, where he began his piano studies at the age of five as the youngest student to ever be admitted to the Vienna Musik Hochschule. He first toured beyond Europe when he was 19 years old, visiting Japan, Central America and South America. In his spare time, Mr. Buchbinder is interested in literature as well as in fine arts and whenever there is an opportunity between rehearsals and concert tours, he enjoys himself as an impassioned amateur painter.

For more information, please visit www.buchbinder.net.