Sunday, March 4, 2007, 3pm
Hertz Hall

Rudolf Buchbinder, *piano*

PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) Piano Sonata No. 5 in C minor, Op. 10, No. 1 (1798)

Allegro molto con brio
Adagio molto
Finale: Prestissimo

Beethoven Piano Sonata No. 17 in D minor, Op. 31, No. 2, "Tempest" (1802)

Largo—Allegro
Adagio
Allegretto

INTERMISSION

Beethoven Piano Sonata No. 4 in E-flat major, Op. 7 (1797)

Allegro molto e con brio
Largo con gran espressione
Allegro
Rondo: Poco allegretto e grazioso

Beethoven Piano Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp minor (*Sonata quasi una Fantasia*), Op. 27, No. 2, "Moonlight" (1801)

Adagio sostenuto—
Allegretto—
Presto agitato

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

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770–1827)

Piano Sonata No. 5 in C minor, Op. 10, No. 1

Published in 1798.

Among the nobles who served as Beethoven's patrons after his arrival in Vienna in 1792 was one Count Johann Georg von Browne-Camus, a descendent of an old Irish family who was at that time fulfilling some ill-defined function in the Habsburg Imperial city on behalf of the Empress Catherine II of Russia. Little is known of Browne. His tutor, Johannes Büel, later an acquaintance of Beethoven, described him as "full of excellent talents and beautiful qualities of heart and spirit on the one hand, and on the other full of weakness and depravity." He is said to have squandered his fortune and ended his days in a public institution. In the mid-1790s, Beethoven received enough generous support from Browne, however, that he dedicated several of his works to him and his wife, Anne Margarete, including the Variations on *Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen* from Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* for Cello and Piano (WoO 46), the three Op. 10 Piano Sonatas, the B-flat Piano Sonata (Op. 22) and the three String Trios of Op. 9. In appreciation of these dedications, Browne presented Beethoven with a horse, which the preoccupied composer promptly forgot, thereby allowing his servant to rent out the beast and pocket the profits.

The three Sonatas of Op. 10 were begun during the summer of 1796 and completed by July 1798, when the Viennese publisher Joseph Eder issued them as a set. The first sonata of the set, in the tragic-heroic key of C minor epitomized by Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, opens with a craggy motive driven across much of the keyboard by violent dotted rhythms, which is immediately countered by a smooth, soothing idea of closely packed chords. The tension inherent between these sharply contrasted thematic cells is little exploited, however: most of the movement deals with the smooth shape and even rhythms of the second motive, with the craggy opening phrase reiterated only to mark the end of the exposition and the arrival at the development and the recapitulation. Indeed, even the movement's formal second theme is nothing more than a domesticated, major-key transformation of the opening motive. The *Adagio* is a slow rondo, with the two returns of the tender main theme separated by highly decorated episodes. The finale is a tightly compacted sonata form anchored by an agitated main subject with wide leaps and a perky second theme of scalar motion.

Piano Sonata No. 17 in D minor, Op. 31, No. 2, "Tempest"

Composed in 1802.

In the summer of 1802, Beethoven's physician ordered him to leave Vienna and take rooms in Heiligenstadt, today a friendly suburb at the northern terminus of the city's subway system, but two centuries ago a quiet village with a view of the Danube across the river's rich flood plain. It was three years earlier, in 1799, that Beethoven had first noticed a disturbing ringing and buzzing in his ears, and he sought medical attention for the problem soon thereafter. He tried numerous cures for his malady, as well as for his chronic colic, including oil of almonds, hot and cold baths, soaking in the Danube, pills and herbs. For a short time he even considered the modish treatment of electric shock. On the advice of his latest doctor, Beethoven left the noisy city for the quiet countryside with the assurance that the lack of stimulation would be beneficial to his hearing and his general health.

In Heiligenstadt, Beethoven virtually lived the life of a hermit, seeing only his doctor and a young student named Ferdinand Ries. In 1802, he was still a full decade from being totally deaf. The acuity of his hearing varied from day to day (sometimes governed by his interest—or lack thereof—in the surrounding conversation), but he had largely lost his ability to hear soft sounds by that time, and loud noises caused him pain. Of one of their walks in the country, Ries reported, "I called his attention to a shepherd who was piping very agreeably in the woods on a flute made of a twig of elder. For half an hour, Beethoven could hear nothing, and though I assured him that it was the same with me (which was not the case), he became extremely quiet and morose. When he occasionally seemed to be merry, it was generally to the extreme of boisterousness; but this happens seldom." In addition to the distress over

his health, Beethoven was also wounded in 1802 by the wreck of an affair of the heart. He had proposed marriage to Giulietta Guicciardi, but had been denied permission by the girl's father for the then perfectly valid reason that the young composer was without rank, position or fortune. Faced with the extinction of a musician's most precious faculty, fighting a constant digestive distress, and unsuccessful in love, it is little wonder that Beethoven was sorely vexed.

On October 6, 1802, following several months of wrestling with his misfortunes, Beethoven penned the most famous letter ever written by a musician—the "Heiligenstadt Testament." Intended as a will written to his brothers (it was never sent, though he kept it in his papers to be found after his death), it is a cry of despair over his fate, perhaps a necessary and self-induced soul-cleansing in those pre-Freudian days. "O Providence—grant me at last but one day of pure joy—it is so long since real joy echoed in my heart," he lamented. But—and this is the miracle—he not only poured his energy into self-pity, he also channeled it into music. "I shall grapple with fate; it shall never pull me down," he resolved. The next five years were the most productive he ever knew. "I live only in my music," Beethoven wrote, "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. 31 Piano Sonatas that Beethoven completed during the summer of 1802 in Heiligenstadt stand at the threshold of a new creative language, the dynamic and dramatic musical speech that characterizes the creations of his so-called "second period." The D minor Sonata, the second of the Op. 31 set, is one of the most personal works of that crucial time. When Anton Schindler asked him in later years about the "meaning" of the Sonata, he was told to "go and read Shakespeare's *Tempest*," a comment that has caused scholars to seek elaborate literary programs lurking among the notes. Though the work bursts with strong emotion and musical drama, there is no specific program here but rather the forceful and immediate communication of ineffable states of mind and feeling. "The Sonata *means* music," wrote Friedrich Kerst, "but it means music that is an expression of one of those psychological struggles that Beethoven felt called upon more and more to delineate as he was more and more shut out from the companionship of the external world. Such struggles are in the truest sense of the word 'tempests.'"

The struggle inherent in the D minor Sonata is joined immediately at the outset with a composite main theme that juxtaposes two starkly contrasted musical gestures: an arpeggio (on the dominant chord) that is almost motionless in its quiet stillness; and an agitated motive of swift melodic and harmonic rhythm. These two ideas are presented again in alternation before the swift motive and a secondary idea in longer rhythmic values achieve dominance during the remainder of the exposition. The slow arpeggio returns to serve as the gateway to both the development section and the recapitulation. Of the *Adagio* which follows, Harold Truscott noted, "There are few movements in the whole of Beethoven's piano music in which he employs so great a range of nuance, or where every note counts to such an extent." The movement, disposed in sonatina form (*i.e.*, sonata without a development section), is introspective and almost hymnal in its character, though there courses throughout an uneasiness, a certain nameless melancholy that invests the music with an expansiveness of expression such as few others than Beethoven could have achieved. The finale, yet another sonata form, is a *moto perpetuo* obsessed with the rippling figuration that opens the movement. "[The movement] is frozen in its grief," wrote Truscott, "and such grief is either incapable of thought at all or it revolves round one thing—as this movement does."

Piano Sonata No. 4 in E-flat major, Op. 7

Composed in 1797.

In November 1792, the 22-year-old Ludwig van Beethoven, bursting with talent and promise, arrived in Vienna. So undeniable was the genius he had already demonstrated in a sizable amount of piano music, numerous chamber works, cantatas on the death of Emperor Joseph II and the accession of Leopold II, and the score for a ballet that Maximilian Franz, the Elector of Bonn, his

hometown, underwrote the trip to the Habsburg Imperial city, then the musical capital of Europe, to help further the young musician's career (and the Elector's prestige). Despite the Elector's patronage, however, Beethoven's professional ambitions quickly consumed any thoughts of returning to the provincial city of his birth, and, when his alcoholic father died in December, he severed for good his ties with Bonn in favor of the stimulating artistic atmosphere of Vienna.

During his first years in Vienna, Beethoven was busy on several fronts. Initial encouragement for the Viennese junket came from the venerable Joseph Haydn, who had heard one of Beethoven's cantatas on a visit to Bonn earlier in the year and promised to take the young composer as a student if he came to see him. Beethoven, therefore, became a counterpoint pupil of Haydn immediately after his arrival late in 1792, but the two had difficulty getting along—Haydn was too busy, Beethoven was too bullish—and their association soon broke off. Several other teachers followed in short order—Schenk, Albrechtsberger, Förster, Salieri. While Beethoven practiced fugal exercises and setting Italian texts for his tutors, he continued to compose, producing works for solo piano, chamber ensembles and wind groups. It was as a pianist, however, that he gained his first fame among the Viennese. The untamed, passionate, original quality of his playing and his personality first intrigued and then captivated those who heard him. When he bested in competition Daniel Steibelt and Joseph Wölffl, two of the town's noted keyboard luminaries, he became all the rage among the gentry, who exhibited him in performance at the soirées in their elegant city palaces. In catering to the aristocratic audience, Beethoven took on the air of a dandy for a while, dressing in smart clothes, learning to dance (badly), buying a horse, and even sporting a powdered wig. This phase of his life did not outlast the 1790s, but in his biography of the composer, Peter Latham described Beethoven at the time as "a young giant exulting in his strength and his success, and youthful confidence gave him a buoyancy that was both attractive and infectious."

Ferdinand Ries, a close friend and sometime pupil of Beethoven, wrote that his mentor "was frequently in love [during his early years in Vienna], but generally only for a short period. Once he admitted that a pretty woman had held him in the strongest bonds for the longest time, that is, fully seven months." One young lady who caught Beethoven's attention at that time was Anna Louise Barbara Keglevics (nicknamed "Babette"), daughter of a noble Hungarian family living in Vienna, who was seventeen and accounted a beauty when he started giving her piano lessons in 1797; he was 27. Beethoven, who had an apartment directly across the street from the Keglevics, would sometimes appear on their doorstep "in morning gown, slippers and tasseled cap to give her lessons," according to a letter later written by Babette's nephew. It was to "Countess Babette von Keglevics" that Beethoven dedicated the E-flat Sonata, Op. 7 that he composed that year. His student Carl Czerny recorded that the piece was written in an "impassioned" state of mind and may well reflect some feelings for his teenage student, though a young composer without rank or position would have had little hope of any deeper relationship with a woman of such noble birth. Beethoven nevertheless also dedicated to Babette the Piano Concerto No. 1 in 1798, a set of variations on *La stessa, la stessissima* from Salieri's opera *Falstaff* (WoO 73) the following year, and even the Variations in F major (Op. 34) a year after she had married Prince Innocenza d'Erba-Odescalchi in 1801; he is known to have participated in musical soirées at the Odescalchi palace into 1802.

Some residue of Beethoven's sentiments may well have touched the E-flat major Sonata, which was known for a time after its publication in October 1797 as "*Die Verliebte*" ("*The Maiden in Love*"), but the work has also been judged to be "the richest, most mature and most original of the early sonatas" by the eminent German-American musicologist Hugo Leichtentritt. The opening movement embraces an almost Mozartian variety of motivic materials: a main theme group that includes sustained chords urged on by a repeated pitch in the left hand, ribbons of scales and a passage in jaunty, galloping rhythms, and a second theme comprising an upward-leaping figure wound about with the ribbons of scales and a few quiet phrases of simple, hymnal chords; some brilliant right-hand figurations above long bell-tones in the bass close the exposition. The development section is relatively brief and finds room

only for motives from the main theme, but all of the exposition's thematic materials, appropriately adjusted as to key, return in the recapitulation before the movement ends with a substantial coda based on main theme ideas.

"The second movement is one of those sublime hymn-like monologues of a depth and power of expression such as no later composer has achieved," wrote Leichtentritt of the eloquent *Largo*. "With its fear and sorrow, its defiant desire and ghostly visions, it is the deeply moving and uplifting confession of a great soul.... The devotional, serene first theme is the fixed point of this expressive fantasy. The music roams far afield from it and returns to it, and there at last finds peace and resignation." The third movement is musical evolution in the making, as the elegance and lyricism of the waning 18th-century minuet are infused with the quick tempo, dramatic contrasts and muscular vigor of the Romantic scherzo; the movement's forward-looking quality is enhanced by its haunted, minor-mode central trio. The finale is a finely crafted rondo that perfectly balances the grace and fluidity of its recurring theme with the agitated expression and harmonic adventuresomeness of its intervening episodes.

Piano Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp minor (*Sonata quasi una Fantasia*), Op. 27, No. 2, "Moonlight"

Composed in 1801.

Beethoven fell in love many times, but never married. (The thought of Beethoven as a husband threatens the moorings of one's presence of mind!) The source of his infatuation in 1801, when he was thirty and still in hope of finding a wife, was the Countess Giulietta Guicciardi, who was thirteen years his junior, rather spoiled and reportedly something of a vixen. She seems to have been flattered by the attentions of the famous musician, but probably never seriously considered his intimations of marriage; her social station would have made wedlock difficult with a commoner such as Beethoven. For his part, Beethoven was apparently thoroughly under her spell at the time, and he mentioned his love for her to a friend as late as 1823, though by then she had been married to Count Wenzel Robert Gallenberg, a prolific composer of ballet music, for two decades. A medallion portrait of her was found among Beethoven's effects after his death. The C-sharp minor Sonata was contemporary with the love affair with Giulietta and dedicated to her upon its publication in 1802, but the precise relationship of the music's nature and the state of Beethoven's heart must remain unknown; he never indicated that the piece had any programmatic intent. It was not until five years after his death that the work's passion and emotional intensity inspired the Romantic German poet and music critic Ludwig Rellstab (whose verses Schubert set in 1828 as the first seven numbers of his *Schwanengesang*) to describe the Sonata in terms of "a vision of a boat on Lake Lucerne by moonlight," a sobriquet that has since inextricably attached itself to the music.

In noting the experimental nature of the form of this work, Beethoven specified that it is a sonata "in the manner of a fantasy" ("*Sonata quasi una Fantasia*"). The Classical model for the instrumental sonata comprised three independent movements: a fast movement in sonata form; an *Adagio* or *Andante* arranged as a variations or a three-part structure; and a closing rondo in galloping meter. In the "Moonlight" Sonata, Beethoven altered the traditional fast–slow–fast sequence in favor of an innovative organization that shifts the expressive weight from the beginning to the end of the work, and made the cumulative effect evident by instructing that the movements be played without pause. Instead of opening with a large symphonic-style, sonata-form essay, the "Moonlight" initially falls upon the listener with a somber, minor-mode *Adagio* of the greatest introspection. Next comes a subdued scherzo and trio whose delicacy is undermined by its off-beat syncopations. The expressive goal of the Sonata is achieved with its closing movement, a powerful essay in full sonata form filled with tempestuous feeling and dramatic gesture about which John N. Burk wrote, "It is the first of the tumultuous outbursts of stormy passion which Beethoven was to let loose through the piano sonatas. It is music in which agitation and urgency never cease."

©2007 Dr. Richard E. Rodda

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

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 Philhadelphia 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.