

Yefim Bronfman, *piano*

Sunday, February 22, 3 pm, 2004  
Zellerbach Hall

PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven    Sonata No. 7 in D major, Op. 10, No. 3  
Presto  
Largo e mesto  
Menuetto: Allegro  
Rondo: Allegro

Beethoven    Sonata No. 32 in C minor, Op. 111  
Maestoso – Allegro con brio ed appassionato  
Arietta: Adagio molto semplice e cantabile

INTERMISSION

Sergei Prokofiev    Sonata No. 2 in D minor, Op. 14  
Allegro, ma non troppo  
Scherzo: Allegro marcato  
Andante  
Vivace

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky    *Dumka* (Russian Rustic Scene), Op. 59

Sergei Rachmaninoff    Three Preludes from Op. 23 (1903–4)  
No. 1 in F-sharp minor  
No. 5 in G minor  
No. 2 in B-flat major

Mr. Bronfman records exclusively for Sony Classical.

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**Sonata No. 7 in D major, Op. 10, No. 3  
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)**

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 sizeable 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.

Among the nobles who served as Beethoven's patrons after his arrival in Vienna 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 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 Piano Sonata in B-flat (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

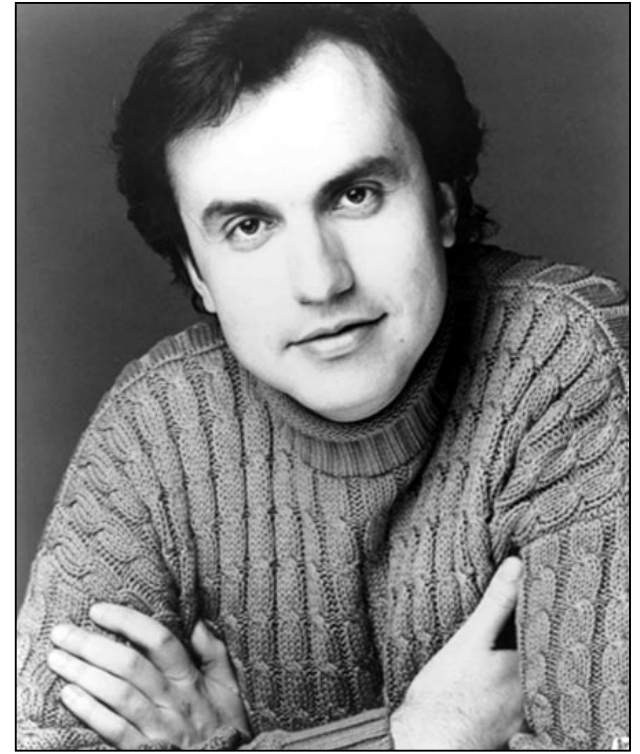
July 1798, when the Viennese publisher Joseph Eder issued them as a set. The largest in scale and the most prophetic in expression is the D-major Sonata, Op. 10, No. 3, which the eminent British musicologist Sir Donald Tovey saw as one of the early documents of Beethovenian Romanticism: "In the D-major Sonata, Beethoven's power appears with an intensity which must have come more as a shock than as a revelation to his contemporaries. It is doubtful whether any part of it except the exquisite *Minuet* would have been acceptable to orthodox musicians in 1798." The sonata-form first movement opens with a pregnant unison gesture forged from equal parts mystery, promise, and forceful energy barely contained. Explosive dynamic eruptions are balanced by a quiet, pathos-filled melody in a minor key. A dainty second theme is proposed for formal contrast, but the complex emotional state of the opening resumes before the end of the exposition. The development section expounds upon the mutability of the main theme's materials before a full recapitulation rounds out the movement. The lamenting second movement, marked *Largo e mesto* ("sad"), is one of Beethoven's most profound statements from his early years, "his first essay in tragedy" according to Tovey. The Menuetto, "a riot of blossoming tunefulness" wrote Eric Blom, provides a sunny foil to the preceding movement. The jolly rondo-finale is based on a humorous theme of off-beat motives and bemused silences.

**Sonata No. 32 in C minor, Op. 111  
Beethoven**

Beethoven's painful five-year court battle to secure custody of his nephew Karl from his brother Caspar's dissolute widow (whom the composer disparaged as the "Queen of the Night") finally came to an end early in 1820. He won the case, but lost the boy's affection (Karl, half crazed from his uncle's overbearing attention, tried, unsuccessfully, to kill himself); the trial also exploded the composer's own pretension that he was of noble blood. Beethoven was further troubled in 1820 by deteriorating health and a certain financial distress (he needed a loan from his brother Johann, a prosperous apothecary in Vienna, to

tide him over that difficult period), so it is not surprising that he composed little during that time. With the resolution of his custody suit, however, he returned to creative work, and began anew the titanic struggle to embody his transcendent thoughts in musical tones. In no apparent hurry to dispel the rumors in gossipy Vienna that he was "written out," he produced just one composition in 1820, the Piano Sonata in E major, Op. 109, but followed that quickly with the A-flat Sonata, Op. 110, dated on Christmas Day, 1821, and the Sonata in C minor, Op. 111, finished just three weeks later, on January 13, 1822. The C-minor Sonata was his last such work, followed in his output for piano only by the *Diabelli Variations* and the two late sets of Bagatelles (Op. 119 and Op. 126). Upon its publication in April 1823 by the Parisian firm of Maurice Schlesinger, the Op. 111 sonata was dedicated to the Archduke Rudolph, youngest son of Emperor Leopold II and brother of Emperor Franz, who had been Beethoven's student of piano and composition for 20 years. Rudolph received altogether the dedications of 15 of Beethoven's most important works, including the *Missa Solemnis*, the Fourth and Fifth Piano Concertos, the Op. 97 piano trio ("Archduke"), the Piano Sonata in B-flat (Op. 106, "Hammerklavier"), and the *Grosse Fuge* (Op. 133). (An edition of the sonata published in London by Muzio Clementi was dedicated to Antonie Brentano, whom the composer's recent biographer Maynard Solomon convincingly identified as the long-mysterious "Immortal Beloved.")

Beethoven chose for the Sonata in C minor the unusual structure of two vast movements—a tempestuous essay in sonata form followed by a lofty set of variations of ethereal character—which are contrasted at almost



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every level: tonality (C minor, C major); rhythm (fiery, placid); melody (craggy and filled with dramatic leaps, hymnal and smoothly flowing); harmony (chromatic and bold, pure and introspective); texture (contrapuntal, chordal). Beethoven drew criticism when the sonata was new from some who felt that the work was incomplete, lacking a spirited rondo to bring it to a brilliant close. When Anton Schindler, Beethoven's amanuensis and eventual biographer and one of those who felt cheated of a proper finale, asked the composer why he had included just two movements, Beethoven answered facetiously that he did not have time to write a third one because of the press of his work on the Ninth Symphony. Despite Schindler's misgivings, the C-minor Sonata is not only complete as it stands, but occupies the very pinnacle of Beethoven's writing for the piano, the culmination of his lifetime of creative thought and first-hand experience as pianist and composer for the keyboard.

This music is not only the product of the obsession of his last years with motivic development, fugue, variation, and the very essence of musical form, but it also embodies the potent emotional-philosophical progression of darkness-to-light, struggle-to-transcendence, minor-to-major that makes the Fifth and Ninth Symphonies such powerful utterances.

In his *Doctor Faustus*, the author Thomas Mann had the character Wendell Kretschmar, a highly trained and deeply thoughtful pianist, comment on the C-minor Sonata and on the Classical tradition that it brought to an end: “In a few words, Kretschmar closed his lecture on why Beethoven had not written a third movement to Op. 111. We only needed, he said, to hear the piece to answer the question ourselves. A third movement? A new approach? A return after this parting—impossible! It had happened that the Sonata had come, in the second, enormous movement, to an end, an end without any return. And when Kretschmar said ‘the sonata,’ he meant not only this one in C minor, but the sonata in general, as a species, as traditional art-form; it itself was here at an end, brought to an end, it had fulfilled its destiny, reached its goal, beyond which there was no going, it cancelled and resolved itself, it took leave. Its closing gesture of farewell was a leave-taking in this sense too, great as the whole piece itself, the farewell of the sonata form.”

### Sonata No. 2 in D minor, Op. 14 Serge Prokofiev (1891–1953)

By 1912, two years before he completed his formal studies at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, Serge Prokofiev had established himself as a formidable prodigy of both piano and composition and as the leading *enfant terrible* of Russian music. The first work that he ennobled with an opus number, the Piano Sonata No. 1 of 1907 (he was 16 years old), was good enough to win him an association with the prestigious publisher (of Tchaikovsky, among others) Jurgenson. Other compositions for solo piano, voice, and orchestra quickly followed the First Sonata, and Prokofiev’s performance of his own keyboard works established his reputation as a brilliant and powerful virtuoso and a compos-

er in the most daring styles of the day, qualities matched by a fearsome egotism that enabled him to batter his way to critical and public recognition. The most important of Prokofiev’s pre-graduation creations was the Piano Concerto No. 1, which stirred spirited comment, pro and con, when he premiered it in Moscow on July 25, 1912. After playing the concerto again in Pavlovsk, he joined his mother at the Caucasian resort of Kislovodsk, where he balanced a rigorous schedule of composition with hiking in the mountains and reading. It was at Kislovodsk in August that he completed the Piano Sonata No. 2, begun the previous March. He sent the manuscript to Jurgenson with a note stating that, in view of the interest excited by his recent appearances in Moscow and Pavlovsk, a new, higher scale of fees should be instituted. Two hundred rubles, he said, was his price for the new sonata, and he would accept nothing less. Jurgenson met his demand. Upon its publication, the score was dedicated to the composer’s friend Maximilian Schmidthof, a fellow student at the Conservatory and a pianist of sensitive temperament and intellectual precocity. Prokofiev was stunned when, in April 1913, shortly after Schmidthof’s 22nd birthday, he received a note from Max which read, “I am writing to tell you the latest news—I have shot myself. The causes are unimportant.” This grim announcement, which Schmidthof did indeed put fatally into effect before Prokofiev received the letter, affected him more deeply than had the death of his father three years before, and he dedicated four compositions to the memory of Max: the Second and Fourth Piano Sonatas, the Second Piano Concerto, and the *Allemande* from the Op. 12 Piano Pieces.

Prokofiev gave the premiere of his Piano Sonata No. 2 on January 23, 1914, in Moscow as one of the series of “Evenings of Modern Music,” a concert that also included his *Ballad* for Cello and Piano and Op. 12 Piano Pieces. Though opinion was mixed, with the young iconoclast’s modernity eliciting strong comments, the prominent critic Y. Engel noted “the Sonata’s powerful play of musical ideas, the energy of the creative will; it has a kind of angularity, harshness and coldness, but at the

same time a genuine freshness.” Prokofiev performed the piece frequently in recital, and chose it for his New York debut at Town Hall on November 20, 1918, which was attended by many prominent musicians, including Rachmaninoff. Though there was a predictable quantity of critical carping (the Second Sonata represented “a charge of mammoths across some vast immemorial Asiatic plateau,” according to the reviewer for *Musical America*), the recital was generally greeted with approving astonishment. “His fingers are steel, his wrists steel, his biceps and triceps steel,” wrote *The New York Times*. “A parterre of pianists greeted the newcomer with dynamic applause. Of his instant success, there can be no doubt.”

Though early listeners were quick to point out the harmonic piquancies and motoric rhythms of Prokofiev’s compositions, what has maintained them in the repertory is their wealth of expertly crafted melody, brilliant sonorities, lucid and logical forms, and, above all, their expressive power. “The Second Piano Sonata presents a world of romantic transits, seething energy and live and saucy laughter,” according to the composer’s biographer Israel V. Nestyev, to which Lawrence and Elisabeth Hanson added, “One does not know which to admire more—the freshness of the themes or the endlessly ingenious manipulation of them.” The work opens with a precisely regulated sonata form that traverses a superbly built main theme of high rhythmic tension that rises through a step-wise pattern, a transition of quiet intensity, and a contrasting second subject in the style of a *valse triste*. A development built from motives of the earlier themes is followed by a full recapitulation. The compact Scherzo, with its central section of ostinato-like octave figurations, is a reworking of a piece that Prokofiev wrote in 1908 for Anatoly Liadov’s composition class at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. The Andante, whose depth of emotion masterfully balances the wit and verve of the surrounding music, is based on two themes. The first, presented after a gently rocking introduction, is a smoothly contoured melody of quiet motion; the second is more animated and wide-ranging. A repeated-note motive is introduced in the movement’s

central portion, and serves as the underpinning for the varied repetitions of the two themes that occupy the closing section. The finale is another sonata form (the main theme is impetuous and leaping; the second theme is built from short phrases in longer note values), which recalls the *valse triste* theme of the opening movement at the beginning of the development section to strengthen the sonata’s overall formal unity.

### Dumka (Russian Rustic Scene), Op. 59 Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)

The *dumka* (pl. *dumky*) was a peasant folk ballad or poem of Slavic, most likely Ukrainian, origin whose subject was the heroic deeds of legendary figures. The word implies a meditation or reflection (one translation renders the term as “a passing thought”), and the musical idioms bearing the title are generally marked by quick shifts from melancholy to exuberance, with a mood of sadness pervading the whole. The term is most familiar from Dvořák’s “Dumky” Trio (Op. 90) of 1891, which consists of a series of six movements of varying character. Dvořák had earlier explored the form in two piano works—the elegiac *Dumka* (Op. 35) of 1876 and the *Furiant and Dumka* (Op. 12) of 1884—though even after consulting the linguist and expert on Slavic folk music Ludvik Kuba on the etymology and musical style denoted by the word, he remained, except for the residual state of melancholy inherent in all the realizations of the *dumka*, unsettled as to its exact definition. Tchaikovsky was hardly more clear on the specifics of the form when he wrote his brief *Dumka* for piano between February 27 and March 5, 1886. Like Dvořák’s trio, the work consists of a number of short, contrasting sections unified by little more than a general state of melancholy. The form of Tchaikovsky’s work is a fantasia launched and concluded by a doleful tune, perhaps an authentic Russian folksong, that is first cousin to the familiar *Volga Boatmen*. (Tchaikovsky was long interested in his country’s indigenous music: he arranged *Fifty Russian Folk Songs* for piano duet in 1868–1869, and appropriated a Ukrainian melody for the variations that close his Symphony No. 2 of 1872.) The *Dumka*

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was written at his new country home at Maidanovo near Klin, a small village easily accessible to both Moscow and St. Petersburg, which afforded him the privacy and quiet he demanded when composing. The score was dedicated to Antoine-François Marmontel, the virtuoso pianist and director of the Paris Conservatoire, who feted Tchaikovsky at an elaborate banquet during his visit to that city in May 1886. Marmontel also figures peripherally in Tchaikovsky's biography for having recommended a young French student of his to the composer's patroness, Nadejda von Meck, to serve as her summer household pianist from 1879 to 1882. The musician, who played for her dinners, joined her in duets and chamber music, and arranged for keyboard a few of her favorite selections from Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*, was later to win his own portion of fame—Claude Debussy.

### Three Preludes from Op. 23 Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873–1943)

The C-sharp minor Prelude, the second of the five *Morceaux de Fantaisie* (Op. 3) of 1892, was the most popular piece that Rachmaninoff ever wrote. It was played constantly during his lifetime in its piano original, as well as in versions for full orchestra, jazz band, and chamber ensembles. The number was requested so methodically on his recitals that he claimed to loath the piece, though he never

refused to play it. In 1942, the Walt Disney studio in Hollywood featured it in *Mickey's Opry House*, in which the immortal mouse was seen as a concert pianist performing the famous Prelude. "I have heard my inescapable piece done marvelously by some of the best pianists, and murdered cruelly by amateurs," the composer confided to the animator, "but never was I more stirred than by the performance of the great Maestro Mouse." Encouraged by the continuing popularity of the C-sharp minor Prelude, Rachmaninoff returned to the form in 1901, and over the next two years produced the set of 10 preludes that were published in 1904 as his Op. 23. The model for these pieces was the 24 Preludes (Op. 28) of Chopin, a composer whose music was an integral part of Rachmaninoff's concertizing and creative inspiration throughout his career. In 1910, Rachmaninoff completed the cycle of two-dozen pieces, one in each major and minor key (as were Chopin's), with the 13 Preludes, Op. 32. These compact movements—Oskar von Riesemann called them "magnificently planned tone-pictures"—contain the full range of piano expression available to the vast resources of Rachmaninoff's playing and compositional technique, from lyrical to dramatic, from martial to tender, from tragic to triumphant.

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## ABOUT THE ARTIST

**Yefim Bronfman** (*piano*) is widely regarded as one of the most talented virtuoso pianists performing today. His commanding technique and exceptional lyrical gifts have won him consistent critical acclaim and enthusiastic audiences worldwide, whether for his solo recitals, his orchestral engagements, or his rapidly growing catalogue of recordings.

During the 2003–04 season Bronfman will perform with the symphony orchestras of Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Dallas, Detroit, Montreal and San Francisco, as well as with the Vienna Philharmonic, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam and the Lucerne

Festival, the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Philharmonia Orchestra, and the Pittsburgh Symphony (at Heinz Hall and Carnegie Hall). He will make two appearances at Carnegie's new Zankel Hall, in October with Elena Bashkurova and the Jerusalem International Chamber Music Festival, and in April with Emanuel Ax and artists of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. Additionally, he will perform as guest soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic in the closing week of the inaugural season at Walt Disney Concert Hall.

In previous seasons, Bronfman has appeared with such celebrated ensembles as

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

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the Berlin Philharmonic, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Dresden Staatskapelle, the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, the London Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the New York Philharmonic, the Orchestre de Paris, and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. He has worked with an equally illustrious group of conductors, including Daniel Barenboim, Herbert Blomstedt, Christoph von Dohnányi, Charles Dutoit, Christoph Eschenbach, Valery Gergiev, Mariss Jansons, Lorin Maazel, Kurt Masur, Zubin Mehta, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Yuri Temirkanov, Franz Welser-Möst, and David Zinman. Summer engagements have regularly taken him to the Aspen, Bad Kissingen, Blossom, Hollywood Bowl, Lucerne, Mann Music Center, Mostly Mozart, Ravinia, Salzburg, Saratoga, Tanglewood, and Verbier festivals.

Bronfman has also given numerous solo recitals in the leading halls of North America, Europe, and the Far East, including acclaimed debuts at Carnegie Hall in 1989 and Avery Fisher Hall in 1993. In 1991, he gave a series of joint recitals with Isaac Stern in Russia, marking Bronfman's first public performances there since his emigration to Israel at age 15. That same year, he was awarded the prestigious Avery Fisher Prize, one of the highest honors given to American instrumentalists.

An exclusive Sony Classical recording artist, Bronfman has won widespread praise for his solo, chamber, and orchestral recordings. He won a Grammy Award in 1997 for his recording of the three Bartók piano concertos with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. His discography also includes the complete Prokofiev piano sonatas; all five of the Prokofiev piano concertos, (nominated for both Grammy and *Gramophone* awards); Rachmaninoff's Piano Concertos Nos. 2 and 3; recital albums featuring Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and Stravinsky's *Three Scenes from Petrouchka*, and Tchaikovsky's *The Seasons* paired with

Balakirev's *Islamey*; and the Tchaikovsky and Arensky piano trios with Cho-Liang Lin and Gary Hoffman.

His recordings with Isaac Stern include the Brahms violin sonatas from their aforementioned Russian tour, a cycle of the Mozart sonatas for violin and piano, and the Bartók violin sonatas. Coinciding with the release of the *Fantasia 2000* soundtrack, Bronfman was featured on his own Shostakovich album, performing the two piano concertos and the piano quintet. In 2002, Sony Classical released his two-piano recital (with Emanuel Ax) of works by Rachmaninoff.

A devoted chamber music performer, Bronfman has collaborated with the Emerson, Cleveland, Guarneri and Juilliard quartets, as well as the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. He has also played chamber music with Yo-Yo Ma, Joshua Bell, Lynn Harrell, Shlomo Mintz, Jean-Pierre Rampal, Pinchas Zukerman, and many other artists.

Yefim Bronfman immigrated to Israel with his family in 1973, and made his international debut two years later with Zubin Mehta and the Montreal Symphony. He made his New York Philharmonic debut in May 1978, his Washington recital debut in March 1981 at the Kennedy Center, and his New York recital debut in January 1982 at the 92nd Street Y.

Bronfman was born in Tashkent, in the Soviet Union, on April 10, 1958. In Israel, he studied with pianist Arie Vardi, head of the Rubin Academy of Music at Tel Aviv University. In the United States, he studied at The Juilliard School, Marlboro, and the Curtis Institute, and with Rudolf Firkusny, Leon Fleisher, and Rudolf Serkin.

Yefim Bronfman became an American citizen in July 1989. He is a Steinway artist.

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