

## Invesco Piano Concerts

### Richard Goode

Sunday, April 7, 2019 at 3:00pm

This is the 931<sup>st</sup> concert in Koerner Hall

#### ALL LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN PROGRAM

Piano Sonata No. 27 in E Minor, op. 90

- I. Mit Lebhaftigkeit und durchaus mit Empfindung und Ausdruck
- II. Nicht zu geschwind und sehr singbar vorzutragen

Piano Sonata No. 26 in E flat Major, op. 81a ("Les adieux")

- I. Das Lebewohl: Adagio – Allegro
- II. Abwesenheit: Andante espressivo
- III. Das Wiedersehen: Vivacissimamente

Piano Sonata No. 28 in A Major, op. 101

- I. Etwas lebhaft und mit der innigsten Empfindung (Allegretto, ma non troppo)
- II. Lebhaft. Marschmässig (Vivace alla Marcia)
- III. Langsam und sehnsuchtsvoll (Adagio, ma non troppo, con affetto) –
- IV. Geschwind, doch nicht zu sehr, und mit Entschlossenheit (Allegro)

#### INTERMISSION

11 Bagatelles, op. 119

- No. 6 in G Major (Andante. Allegretto)
- No. 7 in C Major (Allegro ma non troppo)
- No. 8 in C Major (Moderato cantabile)
- No. 9 in A Minor (Vivace moderato)
- No. 10 in A Major (Allegramente)
- No. 11 in B flat Major (Andante ma non troppo)

Piano Sonata No. 32 in C Minor, op. 111

- I. Maestoso: Allegro con brio ed appassionato
- II. Arietta: Adagio molto semplice e cantabile

## Ludwig van Beethoven

Born in Bonn, Germany, baptised December 17, 1770; died in Vienna, Austria, March 26, 1827

There was something elemental about Beethoven's piano playing. He broke all the rules and followed no particular school or style. Indeed, he was largely self-taught as a pianist. Listeners were struck by the power of his playing and its dynamism rather than its technical facility. The piano was central to Beethoven's development as a composer. His 32 piano sonatas, of which we are to hear a cross-section this evening, chart an unprecedented journey, from early virtuoso to late philosopher. They often act as a blueprint for Beethoven's artistic and spiritual growth. The arguments posed and solutions discovered frequently find further exploration in his other music. Beethoven wrote solo sonatas throughout most of his life, composing half of them by his 31<sup>st</sup> year. As time went on, he said more with less.

### **Piano Sonata No. 27 in E Minor, op. 90 (1814)**

Beethoven composed this E Minor Sonata while suffering in occupied Vienna, as total deafness drew relentlessly closer. His first piano sonata for five years became a work of contrasts and compressed musical thought whose two movements have more in common with his final period of composition than with earlier music. Like the closing sonata

on Mr. Goode's recital, op. 90 balances a minor-key first movement against a major-key second. The 19<sup>th</sup> century pianist Hans von Bülow saw it as a contrast of speech to song. Beethoven asks that the first movement be played "with liveliness and with feeling and expression throughout." It basically sticks to one theme, heard right at the beginning, with a descending semitone (G to F sharp) at its core. These two notes essentially fuel the development of the entire movement, taking on a surprisingly wide range of emotions, now yearning, now assertive, rhetorical at times, even combative. As the second movement opens with a smile, Beethoven turns this terse musical motif on its head and transforms it into the ascending major-key melody that opens the gentle movement. Beethoven's performance instruction "not too quickly and in a singing manner" suggests the kind of movement that Mendelssohn, who admired this sonata, might have called a 'Song Without Words.' Schubert modelled his A Major Rondo for Piano Duet on its structure.

### **Piano Sonata No. 26 in E flat Major, op. 81a ("Les adieux") (1809-10)**

Beethoven portrays feelings rather than narrative in his 1810 sonata, often known today by its French title "Les adieux." But it is the German original ('Le-be-wohl') that he writes over the three slow hunting horn calls that open the sonata. The word means 'farewell' and the movement marks the departure and temporary exile of a friend and patron, the Archduke Rudolph, from war-torn Vienna, then under siege by Napoleon. The sonata deals in human terms with (as the movement headings indicate) the departure of, absence from, and reunion with a friend. It is 'more feeling than painting,' as Beethoven said of the program to his "Pastoral" Symphony. Many of the themes of the three movements spring from the opening horn call, including the distantly echoing horn calls in the closing measures of the first movement – a picture of the young Archduke's coach and horses receding into the distance, perhaps. 'Absence' and 'The Reunion' lead Beethoven to the minor and then major keys, the latter bursting out of the restless, shifting harmonies of the slow movement as a shout of joy.

### **Piano Sonata No. 28 in A Major, op. 101 (1816)**

Op. 101 is one of the last five great piano sonatas, a substantial work that opens the door into the philosophical revelations of Beethoven's late sound world. Coming immediately before the "Hammerklavier," it shares that sonata's physical and technical demands. Indeed, its title page includes both the German word 'Hammerklavier' and the Italian 'Pianoforte,' as though Beethoven were reminding us that the piano is, after all, a percussion instrument with hammers. Unlike the opening of the "Hammerklavier," however, we have to wait for the fire and the drama. The A major sonata begins at the opposite end of the dynamic spectrum. Gently, conversationally, its opening phrase unfolds, as though in mid-sentence. Beethoven asks that it be played 'with innermost expressiveness.' The music has an enigmatic quality. Phrases seldom come to a full close and the melodic line is unbroken. Structurally, the outlines of sonata form are present but blurred and without the traditional contrast in the seamless flow of the music. Then, the second movement is a vigorous march, usurping the scherzo and in the unexpected key of F major. Beethoven feels no need to follow any established formal scheme for any of his late sonatas. The slow movement is of great beauty and as quiet as a mouse. The soft pedal is depressed throughout, giving a veiled quality to the timbre. The music, with Beethoven's direction 'slow and full of yearning,' probes deeply towards a searching cadenza which, in turn, resolves into a striking reminiscence of the conversational questioning with which the sonata opens. All movements lead towards the towering finale, the most fully developed movement of the sonata and its cornerstone. In it, Beethoven relishes his skill in counterpoint, driving an assertive theme cumulatively towards an affirmative conclusion.

### **11 Bagatelles, op. 119 (completed 1820-2)**

Beethoven's bagatelles are short, lyrical, often whimsical miniatures which he viewed as occasional pieces, almost aphorisms. In spirit, they are the direct ancestors of the hugely popular 19<sup>th</sup> century character piece – Schubert's Moments musicaux, Mendelssohn's Songs Without Words at best, with thousands of Albumblätter littering the forest floor. Beethoven wrote a total of 26 bagatelles, with the A minor *Für Elise* the best known of all. Most of the bagatelles are grouped into three sets, with the 11 of op. 119 falling in the middle. At the time he gathered this set together, writing some new ones, completing and polishing others for publication (1820-2), Beethoven was at work on his final two sonatas. The first six bagatelles were published under the title *Kleinigkeiten*, meaning, literally, 'little things' or 'trifles.' Still, being Beethoven, there is more to be found in his occasional music than there is in many another composer's carefully pondered and grandly titled utterances. Whether it is the longest of the collection at 74 measures or the shortest, at just 13 measures (No. 10), Beethoven's invention becomes focused on the task in hand, inviting us on a wide-ranging emotional journey, leaving us hanging just as we begin to feel secure. The abrupt

changes of mood give a glimpse, perhaps, of Beethoven's volatile daily mood swings – irascible one moment, tenderly gentle the next.

### **Piano Sonata No. 32 in C Minor, op. 111 (1821-2)**

By the time that the public was coming to terms with the revolutionary aspect of Beethoven, the composer had begun to look inward. In his late music, private thoughts and personal agony find their way into public discussion. The profound and the trivial rub shoulders. Expansiveness and compression of thought co-exist. Extremes of despair and sublimity find expression within the same piece, notably in his final piano sonata, opus 111. The music charts a characteristic Beethoven journey from darkness to light. It eschews the triumph and flag waving of a similar C minor to C major progression found in the Fifth Symphony. Beethoven casts his final sonata in just two movements that both contrast with and complement one another.

The C minor mood of the opening movement is vintage Beethoven, with its brusque dramatic gestures, terse octave statements, downward plunging sequences, and extremes of register. Technically, it grapples with the huge challenge of combining a sonata-form first movement with the fugue, in music that is fundamentally tragic in tone. The second movement enters another sound world, altogether calmer, more reflective, and serene. Its sudden entry into C major is startling and the hymn-like theme with which it opens is one of the most sublime of a series that Beethoven used as the basis of his slow movements. Structurally, the condensed theme leads to a seamless sequence of three variations, a double variation (where the two halves of the theme continue to become even more varied, rather than literally repeated) and an extended coda. The movement is a meditation on this theme, evolving as its rhythmic note values shrink and the texture becomes increasingly dense. Trills add to the intricacy of the music as it becomes ever more transfigured and ethereal, concluding with a simple pianissimo chord.

*- Program notes © 2019 Keith Horner*

## **Richard Goode**

### **Piano**

Richard Goode has been hailed for music-making of tremendous emotional power, depth, and expressiveness, and has been acknowledged worldwide as one of today's leading interpreters. In regular performances with the major orchestras, recitals in the world's music capitals, and through his extensive and acclaimed Nonesuch recordings, he has won a large and devoted following.

One of today's most revered recitalists, he is heard this season in New York, London, Paris, Philadelphia, Kansas City, Detroit, Montreal, Toronto, and at colleges and universities around the country.

Among highlights of recent seasons have been the recitals in which, for the first time in his career, Mr. Goode performed the last three Beethoven Sonatas in one program, drawing capacity audiences and raves in such cities as New York, London, and Berlin. He was also heard as soloist with Andris Nelsons in his first season as Music Director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and at Carnegie Hall, where Goode was featured in two chamber music concerts with young artists from the Marlboro Music Festival, in a master class on Debussy, and in a Main Hall recital.

An exclusive Nonesuch recording artist, Goode has made more than two dozen recordings over the years, ranging from solo and chamber works to lieder and concertos. His recording of the five Beethoven concertos with the Budapest Festival Orchestra and Iván Fischer was released in 2009 to exceptional critical acclaim and was nominated for a Grammy Award. His 10-CD set of the complete Beethoven sonatas cycle was nominated for a Grammy and has been ranked among the most distinguished recordings of this repertoire. Other recording highlights include a series of Bach Partitas, a duo recording with Dawn Upshaw, and Mozart piano concertos with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra.

A native of New York, Richard Goode studied with Elvira Szigeti and Claude Frank, with Nadia Reisenberg at the Mannes College of Music, and with Rudolf Serkin at the Curtis Institute. His numerous prizes over the years include the Young Concert Artists Award, First Prize in the Clara Haskil Competition, the Avery Fisher Prize, and a Grammy Award for his recording of the Brahms Sonatas with clarinetist Richard Stoltzman. His first public performances of the complete cycle of Beethoven sonatas at Kansas City's Folly Theater and New York's 92Y in 1987-88 brought him to international attention.

Mr. Goode served, together with Mitsuko Uchida, as co-Artistic Director of the Marlboro Music School and Festival in Marlboro, Vermont, from 1999 through 2013. Participating initially at the age of 14, he has made a notable

contribution to this unique community over the 28 summers he has spent there. He is married to the violinist Marcia Weinfeld and, when the Goodes are not on tour, they and their collection of some 5,000 volumes live in New York City.

*Richard Goode made his Royal Conservatory debut on November 16, 2014.*