

March 8, 2020 at 3:00pm | **Richardson Auditorium in Alexander Hall**

RICHARDSON

CHAMBER PLAYERS

Jo-Ann Sternberg clarinet | **Robert Wagner** bassoon | **Eric Reed** horn | **Jacob Williams '20** horn | **Eric Wyrick** violin | **Hana Mundiya '20** violin | **Jessica Thompson** viola | **Na-Young Baek** cello | **Jack Hill** bass | **Geoffrey Burleson** piano

BEETHOVEN AT 250

**LUDWIG VAN
BEETHOVEN**
(1770–1827)

Sextet in E-flat Major, Op. 81b

Allegro con brio
Adagio
Rondo: Allegro

REED, WILLIAMS, WYRICK, MUNDIYA, THOMPSON, BAEK, HILL

Fantasia in G Minor, Op. 77
Bagatelle in B Minor, Op. 126, No. 4
Rondo a capriccio (“Rage Over a Lost Penny”), Op. 129

BURLESON

INTERMISSION

Septet in E-flat Major, Op. 20

Adagio—Allegro con brio
Adagio cantabile
Tempo di minuetto
Tema con variazioni: Andante
Scherzo: Allegro molto e vivace
Andante con moto alla marcia—Presto

STERNBERG, REED, WAGNER, WYRICK, THOMPSON, BAEK, HILL

About the Program

By Christopher Parton, ©2020

Scowling down from atop many a living room piano, busts of Beethoven have long looked, sometimes judgmentally, at those who perform his works. His furrowed brow and mess of unkempt hair remind us of his long-standing cultural legacy as the musical genius who refused to see himself as a servant to the aristocracy. This is the “heroic” Beethoven. The Beethoven of the Fifth and Ninth Symphonies. The Beethoven who captured in music the struggle and ultimate triumph of mankind over tyranny. Yet this image of Beethoven obscures not only the reality of his life and career but also the music that does not fit so easily with this legacy. As we celebrate his 250th birthday this year, we have the opportunity to (re)discover the wealth of his musical output and learn more about the human being behind the frown.

This concert provides one such opportunity. Here we meet the Beethoven trying to make a name for himself in Vienna, having moved to the city from Bonn in 1792. This is an affable and charming Beethoven—a Beethoven looking to please patrons, publishers, and the public alike. During these first years in Vienna, he composed dozens of light, accessible chamber pieces, suitable for salon performances and easily marketable for the music print market.

The **Sextet in E-flat Major, Op. 81b** is one such piece, likely written for a

salon performance in one of the many aristocratic homes in Vienna around 1795. Scored for two horns and string quartet, this three-movement divertimento is oozing with effortless charm that puts one in mind of Mozart’s chamber works. This is certainly evident in the first movement, with its even phrases, diatonic melodies, and perfectly balanced sonata form. Even in the development section, where we often hear a turn to the darker minor key, we get instead a sudden modulation to G-flat major. Nothing seems to blemish the genteel artifice and good manners of this sextet.

In all three movements the horns take the center stage. In doing so, Beethoven shows off the instruments’ incredible variety of colors and techniques. Perhaps the most impressive features are the cascading arpeggios and rapid scales heard in the first and last movements. When, in 1810, Beethoven sent the work to his friend and Bonn-based publisher Nicolas Simrock (himself a skilled horn player), he writes “the pupil had given his master a hard nut to crack”—indeed the horn parts are no walk in the park for the players. But Beethoven also demonstrates that the two horns can be gentle, lyrical, and expressive, especially in the Adagio. Accompanied only by the cello at the opening, we hear the sonorous and singing qualities of the two horns in harmony. This turns into a beautiful duet, as the players exchange melodies in the higher and brighter register of

the horn. The sextet concludes with a short rondo, bringing the whole work to a wholesome close.

Many critics similarly hear the **Septet in E-flat Major, Op. 20**, composed in 1799, as an agreeable and congenial work. Written for the unusual combination of clarinet, horn, bassoon, just one violin, viola, cello, and double bass, this septet also takes the form of a divertimento or serenade: genres largely considered background music. Despite that, Beethoven programmed the piece in the premiere concert of his first symphony in April 1800, alongside arias by Haydn and a Mozart symphony. While Beethoven’s symphony received a generally favorable response from audiences, for many this Septet was the star of the show. It went on to become one of Beethoven’s most popular works at the beginning of the nineteenth century. This soon began to annoy the now established Beethoven, who often dismissed the work as a mere trifle, particularly compared to the works that heralded the beginning of his “heroic” period like the Eroica Symphony. Friends knew not to mention the septet in conversations with the composer, lest they upset him.

As is often the case, artists are not always the best judge of their work. This piece is not only affable and appealing but also innovative in its instrumentation and adaptation of divertimento/serenade conventions. The six-movement structure was likely derived from Mozart’s 1788 String Trio (K. 563), which Beethoven modified by adding slow introductions

to the outer movements and turning the second minuet into a sprightly scherzo. For the first minuet, he borrowed the beginning of a melody from his 1795–6 Piano Sonata in G Major (Op. 49, No. 2) that was yet to be published. But it is perhaps the unique combination of instruments that sets this Septet apart from previous chamber works for wind and strings. Especially with the addition of a double bass, sections of this piece have an almost orchestral sound.

As the piece progresses, each instrument (with the exception of the double bass) has its moment to shine with solo passages that showcase their distinctive timbres and capabilities. The Andante variations exhibit this particularly well, as Beethoven cycles through different combinations of the seven instruments. Towards the end of the final movement, the violin launches into a dazzling and virtuosic cadenza, silencing all the other instruments. This is no background music, as such moments of musicianship demand our attention. This Septet thus does far more than provide an agreeable diversion; rather, it performs the congeniality and easy conversation of the well-heeled society for whom it was intended.

While pieces like the Sextet and Septet may have helped secure Beethoven’s place in Viennese musical society, his real fame was cultivated at the piano. The three piano pieces in this concert cover three very different approaches to the piano at different times in his life. We first get a glimpse of Beethoven as an improviser in the **Fantasia in G**

Minor, Op. 77. The keyboard fantasia, popularized in the latter half of the eighteenth century by C.P.E. Bach, was often a way for composers to record their improvisatory prowess in print. Many believe Beethoven's Fantasia to be a version of an improvisation performed during the famous concert in November 1808, which saw the premieres of the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, Fourth Piano Concerto, and the unusual Choral Fantasia, which similarly began with Beethoven improvising at the piano.

Unlike his early Viennese music, this piece makes no polite overtures to its audience. It begins with a rapid descending scale that seems untethered to any key, tempo, or pulse. Each time it occurs it is answered by a soft, placid phrase in the piano. This stark contrast of emotions carries on throughout the piece as it freely switches moods, keys, tempi, and themes. Around halfway through the fantasia, Beethoven settles on a set of variations in the remote key of B major. These variations seem to begin *in media res* with almost no thematic connection to the music preceding it, building to a virtuosic and grand finale. It is a full display of Beethoven's extempore powers at the piano that made him a fixture of the Viennese music scene.

We then encounter Beethoven at the piano towards the end of his life with the **Bagatelle in B Minor, Op. 126, No. 4**, the fourth of a set of six. He began composing this piece right after completing the Ninth Symphony, and it demonstrates a masterful command over his instrument. The piece begins with a stormy B minor

melody, which almost seems to derail itself as it builds. But before things get out of hand, two sudden jabs in the low range of the piano puts the piece back on track. In contrast to this angsty theme, Beethoven also provides moments of quiet reflection. Over a low pedal point we hear a simple, almost childlike melody in the higher register of the piano in B major. The storm has passed.

Given the high opus number of **Rondo a capriccio, Op. 129**, we might think that it also dates to the 1820s. It was actually posthumously published by Anton Diabelli, who found the manuscript among Beethoven's many sketches and unfinished pieces. It was around this time, too, that it acquired the title "Rage over a lost penny," despite the fact that this title never appeared on Beethoven's autographs, as well as an ending. Started around 1795 in the "Gypsy" or "Hungarian" style—these terms were interchangeable at the time—this rondo was never finished. It was perhaps, like the Fantasia, a record of an improvisation or show piece demonstrating his quick fingers and sense of humor. Indeed, the anger for the lost penny of the title is harmless and unserious. Each time the rondo melody returns, it is playfully varied in a new way. It brings us nicely back to the Beethoven of those early Vienna years in the Sextet and Septet. Such pieces remind us that Beethoven also knew how to smile and laugh as well as frown.

Christopher Parton is a graduate student in musicology at Princeton University.

About the Artists

Founded during the Princeton University Concerts 1994–1995 centennial season, the **Richardson Chamber Players** is our resident ensemble comprised of performance faculty, distinguished guest artists, and supremely talented students. The performance faculty share the artistic direction and seek to present repertoire of works for singular combinations of instruments and voices, which would otherwise remain unheard. Today's program was conceived and organized by bassoonist **Robert Wagner**.



Winner of the Philadelphia Orchestra Greenfield Competition, Korean-born cellist **Na-Young Baek** made her American debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra in 2000. She has appeared as soloist with the Hudson Valley Philharmonic, DuPage Symphony Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic, Korean Chamber Ensemble, Greenwich Village Orchestra, and Macau-Hong Kong-Taipei Symphony Orchestra. At age 13, Baek garnered the Virtuoso Prize at the first Tchaikovsky Competition for Young Musicians in Moscow and won first prize in Hudson Valley Philharmonic Competition and Holland-America Society Competition. She made her New York City debut at Carnegie Hall hosted by Korea Music Foundation and has played in the Kennedy Center, Salle Gaveau in Paris, and Cadogan Hall in London and toured nationally with Musicians From Marlboro. Baek studied at the Curtis Institute of Music, then received a master's at Yale University, Artist Diploma from The Juilliard School, and Doctor of Musical Arts degree at Stony Brook University. Currently, she is an Assistant Principal Cellist of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra and also a member of the Sejong Soloists and East Coast Chamber Orchestra (ECCO).



Geoffrey Burleson is equally active as a recitalist, concerto soloist, chamber musician, jazz performer, and pianist. Current recording projects include Camille Saint-Saëns complete piano works on 5 CDs for the new Naxos Grand Piano label. Several volumes have been released to high acclaim. Other noteworthy recordings by Burleson include Vincent Persichetti's Complete Piano Sonatas (New World Records), which received a BBC Music Choice award from the *BBC Music Magazine*, and a recording featuring Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* (Oxingale Records), for which Burleson was nominated for a 2015 JUNO Award for Classical Album of the Year. Mr. Burleson's concerto appearances include the Buffalo Philharmonic, Pioneer Valley Symphony, New England Philharmonic, Boston Musica Viva, Las Cruces Symphony Orchestra, and the Princeton University Orchestra. He is on the piano faculty at Princeton University and is Professor of Music and Director of Piano Studies at Hunter College-City University of New York.



Jack Hill performs with the New Jersey Capital Philharmonic and has served as principal bass for the Edison Symphony Orchestra and the American Repertory Ballet. He also plays in the Bay Atlantic Symphony Orchestra and Delaware Valley Philharmonic. In New England he was principal bass with the Boston Philharmonic and also performed with the Springfield Symphony Orchestra, Triptych Chamber Orchestra, and the Boston Civic Symphony. In 2000, he was an Artist-in-Residence at the American Academy in Rome. While in Rome, Mr. Hill performed with I Virtuosi di Roma and was solo bass with Opera Passione. He received his BM from New England Conservatory and has studied with Gary Karr and Henry Portnoi. Mr. Hill is on the performance faculty at Princeton University, teaches at The College of New Jersey, and maintains a teaching studio at home. He also works as a luthier and bow maker.



Hana Mundiya made her concerto debut with the New York Philharmonic at age 13 at David Geffen Hall in Lincoln Center. She is a prizewinner in the 2018 International Brahms Competition, 2016 Leopold Mozart Competition, Aspen Music Festival Concerto Competition and winner of the Princeton University Concerto Competition (2018 and 2020). Hana is a senior at Princeton University concentrating in Comparative Literature and pursuing a certificate in Music Performance and spent her first year at Juilliard. Her teachers include Eric Wyrick, Nancy Wilson, Naoko Tanaka, and Donald Weilerstein. She spent one term at the Royal College of Music in London with Detlef Hahn and Bojan Cicic on baroque violin. As a member of The Juilliard Orchestra, the Aspen Chamber Symphony, Aspen Festival Orchestra, Early Music Princeton, and Opus 21, she held concertmaster and principal positions and has appeared onstage with the English Concert and the Academy of Ancient Music. She is a violinist of the United Nations Chamber Music Society, with whom she has played at Carnegie Hall, the United Nations, and Lincoln Center. Hana is the Artist-in-Residence with the New York Piano Society. Her website is hanamundiaviolin.com.



Eric Reed is the newest member of the American Brass Quintet and serves on the horn and chamber music faculties of The Juilliard School. In addition to his work with the ABQ, Eric performs regularly with The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, and the Orchestra of St. Luke's. He is a former member of the Canadian Brass and Carnegie Hall's Ensemble Connect, as well as the Oregon, New World, and Harrisburg symphonies. Eric has performed with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, and International Contemporary Ensemble, as

Guest Associate Principal Horn with the Philadelphia Orchestra, and as Guest Principal Horn with the New Jersey Symphony, American Symphony Orchestra, American Composers Orchestra, and American Ballet Theater. He is a member of the newly formed Ensemble Échappé, a sinfonietta dedicated to music of the 21st century. Recent world premieres include works by John Zorn, Nina C. Young, Eric Ewazen, William Bolcom, Philip Lasser, Kenneth Fuchs, and Timo Andres. Mr. Reed is on the faculty of the Aspen Music Festival and School and Round Top Festival Institute and was appointed Guest French Horn Professor at the Middle School Affiliated with the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. His chamber music festival appearances include Bridgehampton, North Shore, Cape Cod, Steamboat Springs, and Mostly Mozart. Reed holds degrees from Rice University and The Juilliard School.



Clarinetist **Jo-Ann Sternberg** leads a diverse musical life in the New York area as a chamber musician, orchestral player, music educator, and interpreter of new music. Jo-Ann is a member of the Borealis Wind Quintet, Sequitur Ensemble, the Saratoga Chamber Players, Wind Soloists of New York, and the Riverside Symphony; principal clarinet of the orchestras of the Oratorio Society of New York, the New York Choral Society, and St John the Divine; and she also regularly performs and tours with Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, the American Composers Orchestra, Mark Morris Dance, the American Symphony, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and Musicians from Marlboro; and can often be heard playing in a number of different Broadway musicals. Following her undergraduate years in the combined Tufts University/New England Conservatory dual degree program (BA in English/BM in Clarinet Performance) where she was mentored by Peter Hadcock, Ms. Sternberg continued her studies at Yale University with David Shifrin and at The Juilliard School with Charles Neidich where she was awarded the William Kappell Memorial Award. Currently, Ms. Sternberg serves on the clarinet faculty at Princeton, is on the faculties of the Music Advancement Program at the Juilliard School and the Manhattan School of Music Pre-College, and maintains an active teaching studio from her New York City home. Additionally, she serves as a mentor for the Juilliard Mentoring Program and coaches chamber ensembles for the New York Youth Symphony. In the summer months, Ms. Sternberg lives in Maine where she is the Founder and Artistic Director of The Maine Chamber Music Seminar at Snow Pond, performs and teaches at the Chamber Music Conference & Composers' Forum of the East at Bennington College, and participates in numerous performance residencies throughout greater New England. From September through May, Ms. Sternberg resides in Manhattan with her husband and children. Ms. Sternberg is a Selmer Artist.



Violist **Jessica Thompson** performs regularly throughout the United States and abroad as a member of the Daedalus Quartet. The quartet, Grand Prize winner of the 2001 Banff International String Quartet Competition and resident quartet at Lincoln Center's Chamber Music Society Two from 2005–07, is currently in residence at the University of Pennsylvania. As a member of Daedalus, Ms. Thompson has premiered works by such composers as Fred Lerdahl, Joan Tower, Richard Wernick, and Lawrence Dillon. Ms. Thompson has also toured with Musicians from Marlboro and has performed at numerous festivals, including the Portland Chamber Music Festival, the Halcyon Music Festival (Portsmouth, NH), the Newport Music Festival, and the Charlottesville Chamber Music Festival. She performs often as a member of the East Coast Chamber Orchestra. Ms. Thompson has appeared as soloist with the Minnesota Orchestra and in recital in cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Minneapolis, and Washington, DC. She currently teaches at Princeton and Columbia Universities. She is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, where she studied with Karen Tuttle.



Robert Wagner is Principal Bassoonist of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra and a member of the New York Chamber Soloists. He began his studies with Simon Kovar and Norman Herzberg in Los Angeles and graduated from The Juilliard School, where he was a student of Stephen Maxym. He has been a featured performer at the Salzburg Mozarteum and soloist in Richard Wilson's Concerto for Bassoon and Chamber Orchestra on the CRI label. In March 2020, he will give the east coast premiere of Christopher Rouse's Bassoon Concerto with the NJSO. With the Boehm Quintette, Mr. Wagner can be heard on the New World and Premiere labels, with Orpheus on Deutsche Grammophon, and with the New Jersey Symphony on Delos and New World. He is currently on the Board of the NJSO, ArtPride New Jersey, the League of American Orchestras, and the NJ Intergenerational Orchestra. He is a member of the performance faculty at Princeton University.



Jacob Williams is currently a senior at Princeton University. He is majoring East Asian Studies and is pursuing a certificate in Horn Performance. He currently takes lessons from Chris Komer and has studied with Amy Sanchez, Dylan Hart, Jenny Kim, and Darren Mulder. His most memorable musical experience at Princeton thus far has been playing the Nocturne from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* under Gustavo Dudamel last spring. An aspiring academic of contemporary Japanese culture, he hopes to continue

playing horn in graduate school. When he isn't studying or making music, he enjoys running, composing haiku, and spending time outdoors.



Violinist **Eric Wyrick** has been concertmaster of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra since 1998. He is an established leader/member of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and is currently an Artistic Director with the ensemble. In addition to annual New Jersey Symphony solo appearances, Wyrick has appeared as a soloist with Danish Radio Orchestra, the Orchestre de Toulouse and solo television appearances in the Dance in America presentation of Chausson's *Poème* for American Ballet Theater on PBS, and as a featured soloist in the BBC's "Great Composers" series playing Mozart's Violin Concerto No. 5. He has collaborated as soloist with conductors Neeme Järvi, Jacques Lacombe, Zdenek Mácal, Michel Plasson, Gunther Schuller, and with Andrew Constantine. An active chamber musician, Wyrick can be heard frequently with the NJSO Chamber Players and, as he comes from a large family of musicians, performs regularly with the Wyrick Chamber Players. Mr. Wyrick is a member of the performance faculty at Princeton University.

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