

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2013 AT 8:00PM

Richardson Auditorium in Alexander Hall

Pre-concert Talk by Ruth Ochs at 7:00PM

BEHZOD ABDURAIMOV, Piano

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN

Sonata No. 12 in A-flat Major, Op. 26

Andante con Variazioni

Scherzo: Allegro molto

Marcia funebre sulla morte d'un Eroe

Allegro

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN

Sonata No. 23 in F Minor, Op. 57,

"Appassionata"

Allegro assai

Andante con moto —

Allegro ma non troppo

— INTERMISSION —

Frédéric CHOPIN

Fantasy in F Minor, Op. 49

Franz LISZT

Bénédiction de Dieu dans la Solitude
from *Harmonies Poétiques et Religieuses*

Moderato —

Andante —

Piu sostenuto quasi preludio—Andante semplice

SAINT-SAËNS
arr. Liszt/Horowitz

Danse Macabre, Op. 40

ABOUT BEHZOD ABDURAIMOV



Rip-roaringly exciting” and “a gift from God” are among the breathless reviews that 23-year-old Behzod Abduraimov, a native of Uzbekistan, has elicited. The *International Record Review* said “He has the neuro-motor responses of a jungle cat and the energy reserves of an Olympic athlete at peak form.” After achieving a sensational victory in the 2009 London International Piano Competition, winning first prize with a performance of Prokofiev’s Third Concerto, the young phenom toured with the Sydney Symphony under Vladimir Ashkenazy, a great pianist in his own right. Now, an exclusive artist with

Decca Records, Behzod Abduraimov’s performances are rapidly establishing him as one of the forerunners of his generation.

He has collaborated with conductors including Vladimir Ashkenazy, Krzysztof Urbanski, Vasily Petrenko, Charles Dutoit, Vladimir Jurowski, David Zinman, Andrey Boreyko and Pinchas Zukerman. This spring he will make his debut with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Lorin Maazel, which will be followed by a high profile tour of China. He will be returning to Japan for his debut with the NHK Symphony Orchestra having made his Japanese debut in 2012 with the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra. Elsewhere in North America he returns to the Kansas City Symphony and the Vancouver Recital Series and makes a debut appearance at The Phillips Collection in Washington, DC. He has recently worked with the Indianapolis and Atlanta Symphony Orchestras and National Arts Centre Orchestra Ottawa (as part of their Russian Festival) and appeared at the Ravinia Festival in Chicago, IL.

In Europe Behzod Abduraimov will be Artist-in-Residence with the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra (Marc Albrecht) and will also be working with orchestras such as Czech Philharmonic and London Philharmonic and Real Filharmonía de Galicia under Paul Daniel. Following his triumphant debut at Wigmore Hall in London, Abduraimov will make regular appearances there over the coming seasons. He returns to Milan’s *La Società dei Concerti* and makes his debut at the Louvre in Paris, in addition to a number of recitals in Italy and Spain. This concert marks Behzod Abduraimov’s Princeton debut.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

By Dr. Richard E. Rodda

The piano allows almost an unlimited range of expression and styles, and the gifted, young Uzbek virtuoso Behzod Abduraimov reveals several of them in this evening's recital. Beethoven's piano sonatas occupy the heart of the piano literature – the brilliant 19th-century German conductor-pianist Hans von Bülow called them “the New Testament of music” (Bach's ‘Well-Tempered Clavier’ was the “Old”) – and the two sonatas on this program, both composed when Beethoven was in his thirties, show him molding the form to be the bearer of the unprecedented range of emotion and technique that became the model and inspiration for following generations. Chopin's Fantasy in F Minor is not only a sterling example of his mastery of piano

sonority but also a virtual compendium of musical moods, from introspective to martial, from romantic to tempestuous, while Liszt's ‘Bénédiction de Dieu dans la Solitude’ offers an extended meditation that reveals the spiritual side of his personality. The piano can also carry the mind well away from the concert platform, suggesting even such fevered fantasies of the Romantic imagination as the unhallow midnight ritual of Saint-Saëns' ‘Danse Macabre’. “The pianoforte is the most important of all musical instruments,” wrote George Bernard Shaw, who worked as a music critic during his early days in London. “Its invention was to music what the invention of printing was to poetry.”

Sonata No. 12 in A-flat Major, Op. 26

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Composed in 1801

“He was short, about 5 feet, 4 inches, thickset and broad, with a massive head, a wildly luxuriant crop of hair, protruding teeth, a small rounded nose, and a habit of spitting whenever the notion took him. He was clumsy, and anything he touched was liable to be upset or broken. Badly coordinated, he could never learn to dance, and more often than not managed to cut himself while shaving. He was sullen and suspicious, touchy as a misanthropic cobra, believed that everybody was out to cheat him, had none of the social graces, was forgetful, and was prone to insensate rages.” Thus the late *New York Times* critic Harold Schonberg, in his book about *The Lives of the Great*

Composers, described Ludwig van Beethoven, the burly peasant with the unquenchable fire of genius who descended, aged 22, upon Vienna in 1792. Beethoven had been charged by his benefactor in his hometown of Bonn, Count Ferdinand von Waldstein, to go to the Austrian capital and "receive the spirit of Mozart from the hands of Haydn." He did study for a short time with Haydn, then universally regarded as the greatest living composer, but young Ludwig proved to be a recalcitrant student, and the sessions soon ended, though the two maintained a respectful, if cool, relationship until Haydn's death in 1809.

In a world still largely accustomed to the reserved, genteel musical style of pre-Revolutionary Classicism, Beethoven burst upon the scene like a fiery meteor. The Viennese aristocracy took this young lion to its bosom. Beethoven expected as much. Unlike his predecessors, he would not assume the servant's position traditionally accorded to a musician, refusing, for example, not only to eat in the kitchen, but becoming outspokenly hostile if he was not seated next to the master of the house at table. The more enlightened nobility, to

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its credit, recognized the genius of this gruff Rhinelander, and encouraged his work. Shortly after Beethoven's arrival, Prince Lichnowsky provided him with living quarters, treating him more like a son than a guest. Lichnowsky even instructed the servants to answer the musician's call before his own should both ring at the same time. In large part, such gestures provided for Beethoven's support during his early Viennese years. For most of the first decade after he arrived, he made some effort to follow the prevailing fashion in the sophisticated city, but, though he outfitted himself with good boots, a proper coat and the necessary accoutrements, and enjoyed the society of Vienna's best houses, there never ceased to roil within him the untamed energy of creativity. It was inevitably only a matter of time before the fancy clothes were discarded, as a bear would shred a paper bag.

The year of the Op. 26 Sonata — 1801 — was an important time in Beethoven's personal and artistic development. He had achieved a success good enough to write 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 talent, 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. Within two years, 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. The Op. 26 Sonata stands on the brink of that great crisis in Beethoven's life.

Beethoven dedicated his Op. 26 Piano Sonata to Prince Karl Lichnowsky, then 45 (he was born in 1756, the same year as Mozart) and a leader among Vienna's most dedicated patrons of music: Lichnowsky and his brother Moritz had studied with Mozart; Karl's wife, Christiane, the daughter of Countess Maria Wilhelmine Thun (a patron of Gluck, Haydn and Mozart), was an excellent pianist; Christiane's sister married Count Andreas Kyrillovitch Razumovsky, the Russian diplomat for whom Beethoven was to write the Op. 59 String Quartets in 1806. Lichnowsky's palace was the site of performances

almost daily (the prudent Christiane fretted that he would deplete the family fortune to satisfy his passion for music) at which he presented the city's finest musicians, most notably weekly concerts by a string quartet headed by the young Ignaz Schuppanzigh, who became Beethoven's lifelong friend and champion; the Prince was skilled enough as a violinist to sit in occasionally with Schuppanzigh's ensemble. Lichnowsky, until his death in 1814, remained devoted to Beethoven and provided him with financial support, underwriting for his performances, praise and encouragement. "He is really — probably a rare example among men of his standing — one of my most faithful friends and patrons of my art," said the composer, who in appreciation dedicated to him the Op. 1 Piano Trios (premiered at Lichnowsky's palace in 1793 in the presence of Haydn), the "Pathétique" Sonata, the Second Symphony and the Op. 26 Piano Sonata.

The A-flat Major Sonata is an anomaly among Beethoven's such works: it has no movement in sonata form. This composition is therefore something of an experiment, one of the earliest evidences of Beethoven's so-called "second period," during which he found new expressive potential in the Classical conventions that he had mastered since arriving in Vienna a decade before. The Sonata's first movement is a theme-and-variations in moderate tempo (*Andante con variazioni*, from "*andare*," Italian for "to walk") that is built on a genteel melody across whose middle phrases are cast some harmonic shadows. Four of the five variations that follow preserve the gracious mood of the theme, but they are provided with an emotional foil by the unsettled, minor-mode variation at the movement's center. The Scherzo, a muscular affair with a soft, smooth central trio, is placed second so as not to diminish the effect of the third movement, a *Marcia funebre sulla morte d'un Eroe* — "*Funeral march on the death of a hero*." This austere movement, whose hero was never specified, seems to have been modeled on a similar piece from the opera *Achilles*, which Beethoven heard at the Kärntnertor Theater at the invitation of its composer, Ferdinando Paër. (Beethoven originally called his only opera *Leonore*, but re-titled it *Fidelio* to avoid confusion with Paër's eponymous work.) Beethoven recycled the piece for the incidental music (WoO 96) that he composed in 1815 for an abandoned Viennese production of the tragedy *Leonore Prohaska* by Friedrich Duncker, secretary to King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia; the *Marcia*, played by a brass band,

accompanied the composer's funeral procession in 1827. The Sonata closes with a sunny rondo based around the returns of the genial theme set out at the start.

Sonata No. 23 in F Minor, Op. 57, "Appassionata"

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Composed 1804-1806

Beethoven spent the summer of 1804 in Döbling, an elegant suburb of Vienna nestled in the foothills of the Wienerwald north of the central city. He wrote to his brother Johann, a prosperous apothecary in Vienna, "Not on my life would I have believed that I could be so lazy as I am here. If it is followed by an outburst of industry, something worthwhile may be accomplished." The country air and fizzy *Heurigen* wine of Döbling must have been true inspiration to Beethoven, because during the following three years he produced a stunning series of masterpieces simply unmatched anywhere in the entire history of music: the "Waldstein" Sonata (Op. 53), F-Major Piano Sonata (Op. 54), "Eroica" Symphony (Op. 55), Triple Concerto (Op. 56), "Appassionata" Sonata (Op. 57), Fourth Piano Concerto (Op. 58), three "Razumovsky" Quartets (Op. 59), Fourth Symphony (Op. 60), Violin Concerto (Op. 61) and *Coriolan Overture* (Op. 62). The three piano sonatas were all apparently largely formed in Döbling, because Beethoven offered them on August 26th to Breitkopf und Härtel for publication as a set, but he was refused. The "Waldstein" and Op. 54 Sonatas were thereafter finished quickly, but the "Appassionata" was not completed until September 1806. Its sobriquet was applied not by the composer but by the Hamburg publisher Crazz when he issued a two-piano version of the work in 1838.

The F-Minor Sonata is in three movements: two massive sonata-form essays anchor it at beginning and end, and surround a short, rapt set of variations in which Beethoven tried to make time itself stand still. When Glenn Gould's recording of the "Appassionata" was issued in 1974, he provided for it a surprisingly curmudgeonly set of liner notes which, nevertheless, penetrate straight to the essence of Beethoven's creative procedure in the outer movements of this composition: "The 'Appassionata,' in common with most

of the works Beethoven wrote in the first decade of the 19th century, is a study in thematic tenacity. His conceit at this period was to create mammoth structures from material that, in lesser hands, would scarcely have afforded a good sixteen-bar introduction. The themes, as such, are usually of minimal interest but are often of such primal urgency that one wonders why it took a Beethoven to think them up." The eminent English musicologist Sir Donald Tovey noted exactly the same abundance of inspiration derived from a paucity of material in the nearly contemporary Symphony No. 5, about which he counseled the listener that the power of the music is not contained in its themes, but rather in the "long sentences" that Beethoven built from them. It is this sense of inexorable growth and change, of driving toward the next goal, of constantly seeking, that places the "Appassionata" Sonata upon the highest plateau of Beethoven's achievement.

Fantasy in F Minor, Op. 49 FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810-1849)

Composed in 1840-1841

The Fantasy in F Minor, Op. 49 was a product of 1840-1841, the years of Chopin's greatest happiness with George Sand, the time when he was at the height of his creative powers. The title "Fantasy" in the early 19th century usually indicated a piece in the nature of a written-down improvisation, something whose structural divisions did not follow one of the usual formal species, and whose character did not allow generic classification among the various dance or pedagogical types. As Chopin's F-Minor Fantasy makes abundantly clear, however, the name does not imply an amorphous meandering. Indeed, Herbert Weinstock called the piece "the crowning formal achievement of Romantic piano music...Chopin's greatest single composition." Though its structure is complex (Weinstock devoted five pages to its analysis), the work is a superb example of Chopin's unsurpassed ability to perfectly integrate the formal requirements of his materials with the emotional essence of his expression.

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Bénédiction de Dieu dans la Solitude
(“Benediction of God in Solitude”) from
Harmonies Poétiques et Religieuses, S. 173/3
FRANZ LISZT (1811-1886)

Composed in the early 1850s

Though the popular image of Franz Liszt is as a peerless virtuoso and a flamboyant showman, he was actually one of the best-rounded musicians of the 19th century, espousing the full spectrum of musical idioms: Beethoven sonatas and Bach fugues were given equal place on his recitals with dazzling *morceaux* and breathtaking fantasias on operatic themes, and his original compositions ranged from tumultuous tone poems to sensitive settings of items from the Catholic liturgy, from fiery Hungarian Rhapsodies to pieces of prayerful introspection. Among the earliest evidences of the meditative side of Liszt’s musical personality was the melancholy *Harmonies Poétiques et Religieuses*, composed in 1833, when his creative personality was just being formed, and named after a collection of poems by Lamartine. As a preface to the work, Liszt quoted lines from Lamartine that speak of his own philosophy concerning the transcendent power of music: “There are hearts broken with grief, rebuffed by the world, who seek refuge in the world of their thoughts, in the loneliness of their souls, to weep, to wait, or to worship; may they be visited by a Muse solitary like themselves, find sympathy in her harmonies, and sometimes say while listening to her: we pray with thy words, we weep with thy tears, we invoke with thy songs!” Between 1847 and 1852, during the time he was retiring from the public concert platform to take over direction of the musical establishment at Weimar, Liszt created a collection of ten piano pieces, some new, some reworkings of earlier compositions, grown from the impulse that had inspired his early *Harmonies Poétiques et Religieuses*. He thoroughly revised that piece, re-named it *Pensée des Morts* (“Thoughts of Death”), made it the fourth movement of the collection, and used its original title for the complete set, which was published in 1853. The third movement of the *Harmonies Poétiques et Religieuses* was the newly composed *Bénédiction de Dieu dans la Solitude* (“Benediction of God in Solitude”). It is one of Liszt’s masterpieces. The music’s atmosphere, serene, mystical, contemplative, evokes the lines from Lamartine that Liszt placed at the head of the score: “Whence



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comes, O God, this peace which overwhelms me?/Whence comes this faith with which my heart overflows?" *Bénédiction de Dieu dans la Solitude*, austere and glowing with spirituality, recalls the late music of Beethoven while looking forward to the visionary supplications of Franck and Messiaen.

Danse Macabre, Op. 40 **CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS (1835-1921)**

Arranged for Piano by Vladimir Horowitz, after Franz Liszt

Composed in 1874; arranged in 1876 and 1928

The catalyst for the best known of Camille Saint-Saëns' symphonic poems, *Danse Macabre* of 1874, was a verse of the same title by the French symbolist poet Jean Lahor (1840–1909), issued under the pseudonym of Henri Cazalis. The setting is a graveyard at midnight:

*Zig, zig, zig, Death, in tempo,
Kicks at the tombs with his heel,
Death at midnight plays a dance tune,
Zig, zig, zig, on his violin.*

Saint-Saëns first set this funereal ditty as a song with piano, but he decided that its theme was unsuited to vocal performance and used the melody as the thematic germ for a tone poem. The *Danse Macabre* was introduced at the Concert du Châtelet on January 24, 1875 by Édouard Colonne to such acclaim that it was immediately encored; the following year Franz Liszt made a flamboyant piano version of the piece that follows the work's formal progression and thematic essence but considerably elaborates its transitional materials through virtuosic flourishes. The dazzling 25-year-old Russian virtuoso Vladimir Horowitz included Liszt's arrangement of the *Danse Macabre* on his Carnegie Hall recital of March 23, 1928, two months after he had created a sensation at his American debut performing Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 with Sir Thomas Beecham and The New York Philharmonic. Horowitz had been making the *Danse* one of his trademark showpieces by adding his own embellishments to those of Liszt since taking it into his repertory two years before, and he recorded his version of the work in New York City for RCA Victor in the summer of 1928 and again in Hollywood in September 1942.

Danse Macabre opens with the distant tolling of the midnight bell, the signal for the appearance of the demonic fiddler, whose mistuned instrument emphasizes weird, suggestive harmonies. The two main themes of the work are presented in quick succession: a mercurial, staccato melody and a close-interval, harmonically unsettled tune. These two motives are elaborated and juxtaposed, and entwined with a parody of the *Dies Irae* ("Day of Wrath"), the ancient chant from the Requiem Mass. The dance becomes more frenzied as it proceeds, until the unhallow ritual is halted abruptly by the breaking of dawn and the crowing of the cock. The diabolical fiddler, defeated, for the moment at least, by the coming of day, whispers his final sentiments, and steals away.

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