

Saturday, March 22, 2008, 8pm  
Hertz Hall

# Rudolf Buchbinder, *piano*

## PROGRAM

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|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) | Piano Sonata No. 9 in E major, Op. 14, No. 1 (1798)<br><br>Allegro<br>Allegretto<br>Rondo: Allegro commodo |
| Beethoven                        | Piano Sonata No. 10 in G major, Op. 14, No. 2 (1798)<br><br>Allegro<br>Andante<br>Scherzo: Allegro assai   |

## INTERMISSION

- |           |                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Beethoven | Piano Sonata No. 15 in D major, Op. 28, “Pastorale” (1801)<br><br>Allegro<br>Andante<br>Scherzo: Allegro vivace<br>Rondo: Allegro ma non troppo |
| Beethoven | Piano Sonata No. 8 in C minor, Op. 13, “Pathétique” (1799)<br><br>Grave — Allegro di molto e con brio<br>Adagio cantabile<br>Rondo: Allegro     |

*This performance is made possible, in part, through the generosity of The Hon. Kathryn Walt Hall and Craig Hall.*

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## Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

**Piano Sonata No. 9 in E major, Op. 14, No. 1**  
**Piano Sonata No. 10 in G major, Op. 14, No. 2**

*Composed in 1798.*

Beethoven, aged 22, arrived in Vienna in 1792 from his native Bonn and during the next few years established a brilliant reputation as a pianist and composer with two piano concertos, several songs, a number of chamber works, and sonatas, variations and some smaller pieces for solo piano. By the end of the decade, however, his ambition and his rapidly maturing creative genius had led him to attempt the most challenging, and most public, of instrumental forms—a symphony. He had begun sketching the Symphony in C major as early as 1795, and by 1799, as the score neared completion, he needed to start planning for its performance, preferably in one of the two court theaters, the Burgtheater or the Kärntertortheater. Both halls were then under the management of Baron Peter von Braun, who had made enough money in manufacturing and banking, and curried enough favor at court, to be ennobled in 1795. Just a year earlier, Braun had become a force in Viennese cultural life when he was put in charge of the imperial theaters, where he was responsible not only for producing plays, operas and ballets to satisfy the court’s demands but also for choosing which performers had access to the halls on their free dates (usually during Lent, when theatrical performances were then forbidden in Catholic countries). One of the most effective ways an 18th-century musician could win the attention of a potential noble patron was through the dedication of a new work, so for the publication of his two most recent piano sonatas in December 1799—Op. 14, Nos. 1 and 2—Beethoven inscribed the scores to Braun’s wife, Baroness Josefina von Braun. (Beethoven was pretty slick about such matters, and his dedications consistently show true political acumen.) The tactic worked, and Beethoven was allowed to premiere his Symphony No. 1 at the Burgtheater on April 2, 1800. In appreciation, he also dedicated the Sonata for Horn and Piano, Op. 17, to the Baroness von Braun after he premiered the work with the touring virtuoso Giovanni Punto at the Burgtheater just two weeks later. (The Brauns were so partial to mu-

sic for winds that they hosted weekly wind ensemble concerts at their home.) Braun and Beethoven had further dealings—Braun denied him the use of the theaters in 1802, but in November 1805 he staged the premiere of *Fidelio* at the Theater-ander-Wien, a commercial house established in 1801 by Emanuel Schickaneder, the librettist and first Papageno for Mozart’s *The Magic Flute* and a jack-of-all-theatrical-trades, whose management Braun had taken over in 1803.

The main theme of the E major Sonata’s first movement is a smooth, expressive melody of rising intervals accompanied by insistent repeated chords. Its gentle progress is ruffled by a brief rhythmic eruption traded between the two hands and a few darker harmonic progressions as it approaches the second theme, which comprises five falling scale notes followed by a chromatic ascent. The exposition closes with some dramatic gestures and a recall of the rising main theme. The development section treats a new melody given in octaves over an agitated background before taking up the main theme just in time to launch the recapitulation. The events of the exposition are heard again before the movement closes with a final reminiscence of the main theme. The *Allegretto* stands at the threshold of the Romantic Age, borrowing its form and style from the waning minuet but investing that old dance type with a more muscular sensibility and with what the eminent English musicologist Sir Donald Tovey called “the hollow kind of mirth...the mordant humour...we find in Beethoven’s work again and again.” The central trio turns to a brighter key but cannot fully escape the expressive shadow of the music that surrounds it. The finale, a compact rondo organized around the returns of the urgent opening theme, includes one powerful episode that looks forward to the “heroic” style which was to feature so prominently in Beethoven’s masterworks of the ensuing decade.

The first movement of the G major Sonata, called “an idyll of spring” by the distinguished German-American musicologist Hugo Leichtentritt, follows a relaxed sonata form that takes as its main theme a wide-ranging but fluid motive floated upon a luminous chordal accompaniment and a subsidiary subject of Italianate sweetness in close, parallel harmonies. These two ideas are filtered through some stronger sentiments in the development section, but regain their original demeanors

in the recapitulation that brings formal and expressive closure to the movement. The *Andante* is a set of three simply constructed variations on a melody of almost folkish naïveté. The finale, with its dynamic surprises, sudden stops and starts, rhythmic dislocations and unexpected changes of register, is a *scherzo*—literally, “joke” or “jest” in Italian—not just in name and style but also in spirit.

## Piano Sonata No. 15 in D major, Op. 28, “Pastorale”

*Composed in 1801.*

The year of the completion of the Op. 28 Piano Sonata—1801—was an important time in Beethoven’s creative development. He had achieved a success good enough to write from Vienna 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 talents, 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. The following year, 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. “I shall grapple with fate; it shall never pull me down,” he resolved, and then told his friend Wenzel Krumpholtz, “I am dissatisfied with the works I have written so far. From now on I want to strike out along a new road.” The next five years were the most productive he ever knew. “I live only in my music,” he explained, “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. 28 Sonata of 1801, composed immediately after the formal experiments of Op. 27, No. 1, and Op. 27, No. 2 (“Moonlight”), was Beethoven’s last such work in

the traditional four movements and his farewell to conventional Classicism, the closing utterance of his stylistic “first period.” Maynard Solomon, in his study of the composer, wrote, “Like so many of Beethoven’s works that follow hard upon a dramatic achievement, Op. 28 celebrates the peace that comes from fulfillment of a difficult creative effort and withdraws to a relative traditionalism, from which Beethoven will gain strength for a new creative surge.”

The Op. 28 Sonata was first published in August 1802 by the Bureau des Arts et l’Industrie in Vienna without a sobriquet, but Broderip & Wilkinson issued the score in London three years later as the “*Sonata Pastorale*.” Beethoven apparently did not object to the title, and it seems especially well suited to both the halcyon music that opens the work and to the rustic movement, with its skipping rhythms and its bagpipe-like drone in the bass, that serves as its finale. The Sonata was dedicated to Joseph Edler von Sonnenfels, an adviser to Emperor Joseph II, secretary of Vienna’s Academie des Beaux Arts and a leading Freemason whose writings about the lodge’s ideals of equality, freedom and universal brotherhood resonated powerfully with the fiercely libertarian Beethoven.

Gently pulsing repeated notes in the bass give a certain urgency to the graceful main theme of the opening movement. Ribbons of scales provide a transition to the long melodic arches of the second theme, which proves to be not in the expected major key but in a shaded minor one, a forward-looking technique that shows Beethoven stretching the bounds of musical expression even in a movement as conventionally constructed as this one. The development section, largely based on permutations of the main theme, passes through some dramatic moments before quieting for a few broken phrases that return the music, through some subtle harmonic alchemy, to the home key for the start of the recapitulation of the exposition’s materials. The *Andante*, one of Beethoven’s favorite movements according to his student Carl Czerny, is in a three-part form (A–B–A) that contrasts a somber processional melody in its outer sections with the bright, delicate arabesques of its central episode. The brief Scherzo, a lesson in musical economy, is built entirely from two four-measure motives, one of falling octaves, the other of descending arpeggios; a restless trio provides contrast. The finale is

a rondo that takes a sweetly flowing strain as its returning theme.

## Piano Sonata No. 8 in C minor, Op. 13, “Pathétique”

*Composed in 1799.*

Among the earliest evidences of Beethoven’s uniquely powerful and daring genius is the Sonata in C minor, Op. 13, which the composer himself nicknamed “*Pathétique*” upon its publication in Vienna by Hoffmeister late in 1799. (The only other piano sonata to which he gave a sobriquet was the “*Lebewohl*” Sonata, Op. 81a, of 1810.) Beethoven’s music confirms that he used the word to connote something grander, craggier, more majestic than the submissive, melancholy meaning of the English “*pathetic*.” Indeed, the opening movement of this Sonata, with its symphonic breadth of expression, its hammer-blow ferocity and its shock-cut contrasts, is musical Romanticism already made manifest, a Herculean blow to the fading elegance of the fading 18th century. That Beethoven could serve up such bold iconoclasm to the Viennese nobility speaks not only of his artistic courage and self-confidence, but also of the sophistication of his listeners. The “*Pathétique*” was popular immediately—it quickly appeared in multiple published editions and was arranged for a variety of ensembles—but it was also unsettling to conservative tastes. The budding virtuoso Ignaz Moscheles, when he was 10 years old, in 1804, went to the library in his native Prague to search out scores by “a young composer who had appeared in Vienna, and wrote the oddest stuff possible—such as no one could either play or understand; crazy music, in opposition to all rule; and that composer’s name was *Beethoven*.” On repairing to the library to satisfy my curiosity as to this so-called eccentric genius, I found there Beethoven’s Sonata ‘*Pathétique*.’ My money would not suffice to purchase it, so I secretly copied it. When I mentioned my new acquisition to my teacher [Dionysius Weber, founder and director of the Prague Conservatory], he warned me that I should neither play nor study such eccentric productions. Without, however, minding his injunctions, I

seized upon the pianoforte works of Beethoven as they appeared, and in them found a solace and a delight such as no other composer afforded me.” Such controversy—confusion and repugnance from some, enlightenment and emotional and intellectual stimulation from many—was the lot of Beethoven’s works throughout his career.

The primary emotion of the opening movement of the “*Pathétique*,” like Athena springing fully armed from the head of Zeus, is inherent in its first gesture—a thunderbolt of C minor, whose tragedy is enhanced by the somber dotted-rhythm chords, the stark contrasts and the dramatic gestures that follow. The exposition is driven by a barely contained turbulence that rockets its main theme upward through the piano’s register and forces its second theme out of the expected major key into a troubled minor mode. The scalar closing theme—whose downward direction balances the main theme’s rising rocket—carries the expressive intensity to the end of the exposition. The music pauses on an unsettled harmony which leads (after the exposition’s repeat) to the amazing audacity of bridging to the development section by the recall of the powerful music of the introduction. The development section proper, compact and dramatic, refers mostly to a scrap of transitional material rather than to either of the two principal motives, and drives with irresistible force to the recapitulation and the return of the earlier themes. The introduction is once again invoked as the gateway to the coda. The movement ends with a final furious statement of the main theme.

The central *Adagio* (A-flat major) is from another expressive world. In form, it is a rondo (A–B–A–C–A), and “in poetic content,” according to Marion M. Scott in her study of Beethoven, “it is tragedy as the young feel it, with the glamour, urgency, even exaltation, of a *Romeo and Juliet*. And few southern love-scenes could be more softly glowing than Beethoven’s slow movement, with its almost unbelievable melodic loveliness and velvety tone.” The rondo-form finale returns to the first movement’s quick pace and C minor key, but it is more genteelly melancholy than passionately turbulent.

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Sunday, March 23, 2008, 3pm  
Hertz Hall

# Rudolf Buchbinder, *piano*

## PROGRAM

- Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) Piano Sonata No. 2 in A major, Op. 2, No. 2 (1795)  
Allegro vivace  
Largo appassionato  
Scherzo: Allegretto  
Rondo: Grazioso
- Beethoven Piano Sonata No. 16 in G major, Op. 31, No. 1 (1802)  
Allegro vivace  
Adagio grazioso  
Rondo: Allegretto

## INTERMISSION

- Beethoven Piano Sonata No. 27 in E minor, Op. 90 (1814)  
Mit Lebhaftigkeit und durchaus mit Empfindung und Ausdruck  
Nicht zu geschwind und sehr singbar vorgetragen
- Beethoven Piano Sonata No. 21 in C major, Op. 53, “Waldstein” (1804)  
Allegro con brio  
Introduzione: Adagio molto —  
Rondo: Allegretto moderato

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## Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

### Piano Sonata No. 2 in A major, Op. 2, No. 2

*Composed in 1795.*

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.

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 he was busy completing fugal exercises and practicing 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 Wölfl, 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.”

With the success of Beethoven’s three Op. 1 Piano Trios of 1793, the publisher Artaria was eager to issue additional music by the young celebrity, and in March 1796 announced in the *Wiener Zeitung* the publication of three sonatas for solo piano as the composer’s Op. 2. The works were written well before that time, however (No. 1, in F minor, may date from as early as 1793), and had been widely circulated in manuscript copies. A report in the *Jahrbuch der Tonkunst für Wien und Prag* (“Musical Yearbook for Vienna and Prague”) written no later than the spring of 1795 spoke of “a number of beautiful sonatas by [Beethoven] which...particularly distinguish themselves”; the composer himself played them at a Friday concert at Prince Lichnowsky’s palace in honor of Haydn’s return from London on August 30, 1795. The sonatas were dedicated to “Mr. Haydn, Doctor of Music of Oxford University” upon their publication, and are often cited as Beethoven’s admiring homage to his distinguished older colleague. Beethoven, however, declined to list himself as a pupil of Haydn in Artaria’s edition, a common custom for emerging professionals of the day, and he once told Ferdinand Ries that “though he had taken some lessons from Haydn, he had never learned anything from him.” Though they were slipping apart personally by the time of the Op. 2 sonatas, the two composers maintained a mutual respect—Haydn invited Beethoven to play one of his own concertos at his concert of December 18, 1795, a sign that Haydn still considered him his protégé; Beethoven always admitted an indebtedness to Haydn’s music and in his later years acquired and carefully preserved an autograph of one of the “London” symphonies.

The second Sonata, in A major, is the sunniest work of the Op. 2 set, though even here Beethoven’s

quintessentially dramatic expression is much in evidence. The opening movement's principal theme contains an entire storehouse of pregnant motives: two falling figures, one based on an arpeggio in even notes, the other, a fragment of a scale, passes by in a flash; an arch-shaped lyrical phase; long staccato scales, both rising and falling; and scurrying ribbons of triplets. After this cache of A major materials to open the Sonata, the movement takes an extraordinary detour for the second theme into the stormy region of E minor, just the sort daring expressive and structural iconoclasm that made Beethoven's works such powerful engines of the burgeoning musical Romanticism. The development section manages to treat all of the main theme motives, save the ribbons of triplets. The recapitulation provides a no-nonsense reiteration of the exposition's music in appropriately adjusted keys. The *Largo*, based on a hymnal strain buoyed upon a lovely staccato bass line, looks forward to the peerless slow movements of Beethoven's full maturity in its serenity and floating timelessness. The *Scherzo*, delicate and witty, is nicely juxtaposed with the legato, minor-mode music of its central trio. The finale is a spacious rondo that achieves a fine tension between the impetuous mood of the rocket-arpeggio that occupies its first two beats and the controlled, elegant music that immediately follows. The movement never settles unequivocally for one expressive state or the other, exhibiting the balance of ambiguity and fulfillment that often marks the finest works of art.

## Piano Sonata No. 16 in G major, Op. 31, No. 1

*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 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 (the thought of Beethoven as a husband threatens the moorings of one's presence of mind!), 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 three Piano Sonatas of Op. 31 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 first entry in the set, in G major, is a compendium of old and new techniques, conservative in its overall form and florid figuration, but progressive in the restless nature of much of its expressive language. This dichotomy of Classic and Romantic is heard in the Sonata's opening measures, which comprise the traditional gestures of a simple tonic chord followed, in good Mozartian fashion, by a quick downward flourish and some harmonies confirming the principal tonality. The iconoclastic seeds planted within this old-fashioned formula, however, are its rhythmic ambiguity (the right hand anxiously anticipates the main beats), its aphoristic construction (it is more a thematic fragment than a discernible melody), and its soft, tentative dynamic level. The tension between the clear, simple statement of the movement's harmonic structure and the restive nature of its rhythm is the emotional engine that drives this music. The second theme, more broadly syncopated than the first, is arrived at with surprising suddenness, and remains stubbornly in the decidedly Romantic tonality of B minor for its entire length. The development section makes much use of the anticipatory main theme, which is balanced by octave figurations that touch on some darker moods. The recapitulation offers a truncated version of the main theme and a complete one (in G major) of the subsidiary subject before the movement is rounded

off by a rather quizzical coda, which is quiet, fragmentary and ambiguous in its temperament.

Classical convention is more fully observed in the last two movements than in the first. The opulently decorated three-part form (A–B–A) of the *Adagio*, with its almost Rococo grace and leisure, recalled to the eminent Swiss pianist, conductor and pedagogue Edwin Fischer, "a world long since vanished—a world of faded carpets, furniture of all periods, with an old spinet and a smell of withered rose-leaves. The atmosphere of such an old house fills one with nostalgia for a past in which there was still time to exchange sweet secrets with the flowers and listen to bird-song at eventide." The reverie of the slow movement is countered by the finale, a sprightly but elegant rondo based on a precisely molded Classical theme, which occasionally ventures through episodes of heightened chromatic expression. The finale's coda, like that of the first movement, is fragmentary rather than assertive, and draws the Sonata to an equivocal close.

## Piano Sonata No. 27 in E minor, Op. 90

*Composed in 1814.*

Though 1814 was one of the most successful years of Beethoven's life as a public figure—the revival of *Fidelio* was a resounding success, the Seventh Symphony was premiered to general acclaim, his occasional pieces for concerts given in association with the Congress of Vienna that year were applauded by some of Europe's noblest personages, his arrangements of Welsh and Irish melodies appeared in Edinburgh, the clangorous *Wellington's Victory* became an overnight hit—he produced little in the way of important new compositions during that time: the cantata *Der Glorreiche Augenblick*, the *Elegiac Song* for Four Voices and Strings, the Polonaise for Piano and the E minor Piano Sonata were the only pieces from 1814 deemed worthy of opus numbers. After experiencing a miraculous burst of creativity during the first decade of the century—the first six symphonies, the last three piano concertos, the Violin Concerto, *Fidelio*, the Triple Concerto, 10 string quartets, nine sonatas

for violin and 17 for solo piano, a ballet, an oratorio, a Mass and an additional wealth of songs, piano pieces and chamber scores—the flood of masterpieces had begun to abate by 1809. French troops invaded Vienna in May (the rigors of their occupation finally broke the fragile health of the aged Franz Joseph Haydn, who died on May 31), and Beethoven frequently complained that the resultant social, political and economic turmoil disturbed his concentration—and then went ahead and wrote his “Emperor” Concerto. His life, though, remained difficult, so much so that his American biographer Alexander Wheelock Thayer called 1810 “a disastrous year.” A pledge made during the previous year by the Princes Lobkowitz and Kinsky and the Archduke Rudolph to provide him with a guaranteed annual wage had been diluted by the inflation caused by the French invasion and the inability of Kinsky to uphold his part of the bargain. Money from the English publisher Clementi was long delayed because of Napoleon’s restrictions on international exchange. Beethoven’s deafness was nearly complete, his health was increasingly troublesome, his family seemed to bring him only grief. In a letter of April 1814 written during a fit of despondency to his old friend Dr. Franz Wegeler, he confessed, “If I had not read somewhere that no one should quit life voluntarily while he could still do something worthwhile, I would have been dead long ago and certainly by my own hand. Oh, life is so beautiful, but for me it is poisoned forever.” Looking for domestic comfort, he thought seriously of marriage for the first time in 15 years, but his proposal to Therese Malfatti, then not even half of his 40 years, was rejected.

A period of what critic and commentator Michael Steinberg called “postscripts to the heroic decade, postscripts of enormous potency” occurred between 1810 and 1812—*Egmont*, the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies, the “Archduke” Trio, the Op. 95 Quartet, the song cycle *An die Ferne Geliebte*, the final violin sonata—followed by an almost complete creative silence in 1813. Like silence in a piece of music, however, this was a moment of great significance in Beethoven’s artistic evolution, a juncture that would later be seen as the turning point in his compositional career that led to the in-

comparable series of towering masterworks he created during his last decade. The Piano Sonata in E minor, Op. 90, his first work in the genre since his Op. 81a (“Les Adieux”) of 1809, is one of the earliest evidences that this transformation was nearing completion.

The E minor Sonata was composed in the late summer of 1814, between the revival of *Fidelio* in May and the convening of the Congress of Vienna in September. The work was dedicated to Count Moritz Lichnowsky, younger brother of Prince Karl Lichnowsky, Beethoven’s first Viennese patron, and seems to have been occasioned by the Count’s engagement to one Fräulein Stummer, a singer at the Court Theater. (The noble Lichnowsky family disapproved of this match with a mere thespian, however, and it took Moritz two more years to bring about the marriage.) Beethoven cast the Sonata in two contrasting, and fully satisfying, movements, which, he wrote to the Count, depict “a struggle between head and heart” and “a conversation with the beloved.” Perhaps so. But, more significantly, the unconventional two-movement form, juxtaposition of grandeur and intimacy, harmonic originality, fluency and cogency of thematic development, terseness of expression, lack of overt virtuosity, poignant lyricism, seamless absorption of contrapuntal textures and German-language performance rubrics mark this Sonata as an entry point into the remarkable period of creative renewal and discovery that Beethoven enjoyed during his last decade.

The main theme group of the Sonata’s opening movement (*Mit Lebhaftigkeit und durchaus mit Empfindung und Ausdruck*—“With liveliness and with feeling and expression throughout”) comprises several germ cells: a broken-off, two-measure fragment that hints of a dance; a quietly flowing phrase; a bold unison motive in rising open intervals; and a downward sweeping scale. The second subject (in the darkly expressive key of B minor), more agitated because of its broken-chord accompaniment, shadows the open-interval motive of the main theme, but in inversion. The development section superimposes variants of the first two motives of the main theme upon the broken-chord accompaniment of the second before a full recapit-

ulation of the exposition’s materials brings formal balance and expressive closure to the movement. The second movement is headed “*Nicht zu geschwind und sehr singbar vorgetragen*” (“To be performed not too quickly and very songfully”), and Hans von Bülow, the eminent 19th-century pianist, conductor and editor of Beethoven’s sonatas, thought that this poetic music perfectly balanced the “prose” of the opening movement. The movement is a rondo structured around what British composer and musicologist Sir Hubert Parry described as “the frequent and desirable returns of a melody of great beauty.”

### Piano Sonata No. 21 in C major, Op. 53, “Waldstein”

*Composed in 1804.*

Beethoven’s father, a singer at the Electoral court in Bonn, was an alcoholic, and much of the responsi-

bility for supporting his family rested on Ludwig’s shoulders by the time he was a teenager. The young musician, already bursting with promise and ambition, found understanding and encouragement from the family of Emanuel von Breuning, Court Councilor to the Elector Maximilian Franz. At the Breuning household, probably in 1788 (Beethoven was 18), he met Count Ferdinand von Waldstein, a close friend of the Elector, an amateur composer, a dedicated patron of the arts and eight years Beethoven’s senior. Waldstein, descendent of one of Austria’s noblest families, became Beethoven’s most important early patron, regularly encouraging Maximilian Franz to make improvements in his working conditions as organist at the Electoral court, discreetly granting some small financial aid (Beethoven, even at that tender age, would have rebelled at outright charity), making available to him a fine fortepiano, and commissioning the music for a *Ritterballet* (“Knight’s Ballet”) for the Bonn Carnival season of 1791. When Beethoven moved to Vienna for good in 1792 (he had made

an earlier foray in 1787, but had to hurry back to Bonn when he learned of the mortal illness of his mother), it was Waldstein who financed the venture. He sent the young composer off with an admonition to “receive the spirit of Mozart [who had died just months before] from the hands of Haydn,” which Beethoven did in a series of lessons with the recently retired Esterházy Kapellmeister. As a farewell memento, Beethoven wrote a set of variations for piano duet on a theme by Waldstein. Waldstein spent the years from 1795 to 1809 traveling, and had little personal contact with his protégé, though he was instrumental in opening many doors of the Viennese aristocracy to Beethoven. Waldstein’s story ended sadly. A gambler and speculator, he ventured into dubious business dealings, was swindled, and lost his fortune. In 1816, he was forced to petition for bankruptcy and died seven years later, a pauper. Beethoven’s feelings for his Bonn Maecenas remained strong and positive throughout his life, however, and he immortalized Waldstein’s name by inscribing the dedication of one of his greatest creations to him.

Beethoven composed the “Waldstein” Sonata during 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), the F major Piano Sonata (Op. 54), the “Eroica” Symphony (Op. 55), the Triple Concerto (Op. 56), the “Appassionata” Sonata (Op. 57), the Fourth

Piano Concerto (Op. 58), the three “Razumovsky” Quartets (Op. 59), the Fourth Symphony (Op. 60), the Violin Concerto (Op. 61) and the *Coriolan Overture* (Op. 62). The “Waldstein” was exactly contemporary with the completion of the “Eroica” Symphony, and shares with that revolutionary work the breadth of expression, emotional power and supreme craftsmanship that launched the art of music into the Romantic age.

One of the characteristics of Beethoven’s artistic maturation was an increasing concern with the overall proportions of his musical forms, a careful calculation of the relation, balance and proportion of one movement to the next. He had originally composed a large set of variations to occupy the center of the “Waldstein” Sonata, but decided that the halcyon delicacy of that music diminished the vaulting heroism of the outer movements that he intended to be the essence of the work. He excised the movement, issued it separately as the *Andante Favorsi* in F major (WoO 57), and replaced it with a short, moody, harmonically advanced paragraph that is the perfect foil to the vigor and exultation of the surrounding movements. “If mountains, cliffs and forests could sing,” wrote Hugo Leichtentritt of the opening *Allegro*, “they would praise their Creator in such tones as these.” The C-major movement is in an extraordinary and daring sonata form which explores far-flung, emotionally expressive tonalities for its hymnal second theme (E major in the exposition and A major in the recapitulation) so dramatically that the German scholar Paul Bekker noted that “a hitherto unknown world of sound was revealed” by this Sonata. The following *Adagio* proceeds without pause to the finale, a vast rondo built on a superb diatonic theme which is expounded with grandeur, confidence and triumph.

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Pianist **Rudolf Buchbinder**, at five years of age the youngest student ever to be admitted to the Vienna Musik Hochschule, began his comprehensive musical career as chamber musician. He has performed as soloist with the great orchestras and conductors of the world and is a regular guest at the Salzburger Festspiele and all other major festivals.

Mr. Buchbinder’s repertoire is extensive and includes numerous 20th-century compositions. He attaches considerable importance to the meticulous work of the study of sources. His extensive collection contains in excess of 18 complete editions of Beethoven’s sonatas, as well as first editions and original documents. Moreover, he possesses autograph copies of the piano parts and scores of the two piano concertos by Brahms. He devotes himself not only to Classical and Romantic music, but he has recorded such rarely performed pieces as the collection of “Diabelli” Variations composed by 50 Austrian musicians. His catalog of more than 100 records provides proof

of the extent and abundance of Mr. Buchbinder’s repertoire. For his outstanding recordings of the complete piano works of Joseph Haydn, he received the Grand Prix du Disque. Nevertheless, he prefers live recordings. Mr. Buchbinder’s cycle of Mozart’s complete piano concertos with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, recorded live at the Vienna Konzerthaus, was acclaimed by the renowned critic Joachim Kaiser as CD of the year for 1998. In the Johann Strauss Year of 1999, Mr. Buchbinder released an exceptional CD of piano transcriptions entitled *Waltzing Strauss*. Mr. Buchbinder’s latest live recordings include both Brahms piano concertos with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra under the direction of Nikolaus Harnoncourt and the five Beethoven piano concertos with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra as soloist and conductor on the occasion of the 2003 Wiener Festwochen.

One of Mr. Buchbinder’s major concerns is the interpretation of the “New Testament” of piano repertoire, the cyclic performance of all 32 piano sonatas by Beethoven, which he has performed in more than 30 cities, including Munich, Vienna, Hamburg, Zurich and Buenos Aires. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* praised him for his complete recording of the sonatas as “one of today’s most important and competent Beethoven performers.” Concerts with the Vienna Philharmonic on the occasion of the Wiener Festwochen were a highlight of the 2005–2006 season; the programs, consisting of the 12 Mozart piano concertos, have been recorded on DVD.

In his spare time, Mr. Buchbinder is interested in literature and the fine arts, and whenever there is an opportunity between rehearsals and concert tours, he enjoys himself as an impassioned amateur painter.

Rudolf Buchbinder is the artistic director of the Grafenegg Music Festival, a new major international Austrian festival for classical music close to Vienna.