

Tuesday, November 13, 2012, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Emanuel Ax, *piano*

PROGRAM

- Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) Sonata in A major, Op. 2, No. 2 (1795)
- Allegro vivace
Largo appassionato
Scherzo: Allegretto
Rondo: Grazioso
- Beethoven Sonata in C minor, Op. 13, “Pathétique” (1799)
- Grave — Allegro di molto e con brio —
Grave —
Allegro di molto e con brio — Grave —
Allegro di molto e con brio
Adagio cantabile
Rondo: Allegro

INTERMISSION

- Franz Schubert (1797–1828) Sonata in B-flat major, D. 960 (1828)
- Molto moderato
Andante sostenuto
Scherzo: Allegro vivace con delicatezza
Allegro, ma non troppo

Funded by the Koret Foundation, this performance is part of Cal Performances' 2012–2013 Koret Recital Series, which brings world-class artists to our community. This performance is made possible, in part, by Patron Sponsors Margot and John Clements, and Françoise Stone.

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Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) Sonata 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.

Though the Op. 2 Sonatas are the first of his piano music that Beethoven deemed important enough to be awarded an opus number (three teenage sonatas and a half-dozen sets of variations had been issued without such designation during the previous decade), they demonstrate his stretching the boundaries of the traditional Classical modes of expression to incorporate his already well-developed sense of titanic passion and Romantic grandeur, musical qualities Haydn and Mozart seldom broached. The old formal molds are still sufficient to contain his thoughts, but they are treated with a concision and expressive weight that presage his mature masterworks. "[When one] listens," wrote George R. Marek, "one hears the new voice, though not yet speaking with its own full eloquence." It is indicative of the daring novelty of these works that Frau von Bernhard, in her memoirs of Beethoven, mentioned that the lady pianists of Vienna found them too difficult and incomprehensible for contented parlor-room performance. Though following the outline of typical Classical sonata form, this music, compressed, urgent, wildly restless, shows Beethoven, like a bear in a sack, verging on breaking out of his temporary confines and reshaping the world around him.

The Sonata No. 2 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.

Beethoven
Sonata in C minor, Op. 13, "Pathétique"

Composed in 1799.

In a world still largely accustomed to the reserved, genteel musical language of pre-Revolutionary Classicism, Beethoven burst upon the scene like a fiery meteor. The more enlightened nobility, to its credit, recognized the genius of this gruff Rhinelander, and encouraged his work. 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. Shortly after Beethoven's arrival, Prince Karl Lichnowsky took on the young composer as his protégé, and gave him room, board, encouragement and entrée to the aristocracy. Lichnowsky treated Beethoven more like a son than a guest, even instructing the servants to answer the musician's call before his own, should both ring at the same time. Beethoven was appreciative of Lichnowsky's kindnesses, and spoke gratefully

of the Prince: "He is really—probably a rare example among men of his standing—one of my most faithful friends and patrons of my art." In appreciation, he dedicated to Lichnowsky the Op. 1 Piano Trios, the Op. 13 and Op. 26 Piano Sonatas, and the Second Symphony.

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 waning 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 ten 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 that 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.

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)
Sonata in B-flat major, D. 960

Composed in 1828.

In the hall of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna on March 26, 1828, immediately after completing his magnificent C major Symphony (justifiably dubbed “The Great” by later generations), Franz Schubert gave the only public concert entirely of his works held during his lifetime. The event, prompted and sponsored by his circle of devoted friends, was a significant artistic and financial success, and he used the proceeds to celebrate the occasion at a local tavern, pay off some old debts, acquire a new piano, and buy tickets for Nicolò Paganini’s sensational debut in Vienna three days later. Despite the renewed enthusiasm for creative work that that concert inspired in him, and encouraging signs that his music was beginning to receive recognition outside of Vienna, Schubert’s spirits were dampened during the following months by the perilous state of his health. His constitution, never robust, had been undermined by syphilis, and by the summer of 1828, he was suffering from headaches, exhaustion and frequent digestive distress. In May, he received invitations from friends to summer in both Graz and Gmunden in order to refresh himself with the country air, but he had to refuse his hosts because he lacked money to pay for the transportation. He settled instead for a three-day excursion in early June with the composer-conductor Franz Lachner to nearby Baden, where he wrote a Fugue in E minor for organ, four hands (D. 952, his only work for organ), which he tried out with his companion on the instrument in the twelfth-century Cistercian abbey at neighboring Heiligenkreuz on June 4th. Between his return to the city a few days later and August, he composed the Mass in E-flat, made a setting in Hebrew of Psalm 92 for the City Synagogue of Vienna, created a number of short pieces for piano, wrote all but one of the 13 songs published after his death in the collection *Schwanengesang*, did extensive work on what proved to be his last three piano

sonatas (D. 958–60), and began his C major String Quintet.

At the end of August, Schubert felt unwell, complaining of dizziness and loss of appetite, and his physician advised that he move for a time to a new house outside the city recently acquired by the composer’s brother Ferdinand. Though Ferdinand’s dwelling was damp and uncomfortable and hardly conducive to his recovery, Franz felt better during the following days, and he was able to participate in an active social life and attend the premiere of a comedy by his friend Eduard von Bauernfeld on September 5th. Schubert also continued to compose incessantly, completing the three piano sonatas on the 26th, and performing them at the house of Dr. Ignaz Menz the following day. The C major Quintet was finished at that same time; it and the sonatas were the last instrumental works he completed. On October 31st, Schubert fell seriously ill, his syphilitic condition perhaps exacerbated by the typhus then epidemic in Vienna, and he died on November 19, 1828, at the age of 31. He had originally intended that the three sonatas be dedicated to Johann Hummel, a pianist, composer, student of Mozart and important supporter during his last years, but when Diabelli published them in 1838 as “Schubert’s Last Compositions: Three Grand Sonatas,” Hummel was already dead, so the pieces were instead inscribed to another champion of Schubert’s music, Robert Schumann.

“All three of the last sonatas are works in which meditation, charm, wistfulness, sadness and joy are housed in noble structures,” wrote George R. Marek in his study of the composer. Though each follows the traditional four-movement Classical pattern of opening sonata-allegro, lyrical slow movement, scherzo (minuet in the C minor Sonata), and lively finale, this is music less concerned with the titanic, visionary, long-range formal structures of Beethoven (whom Schubert idolized) than with the immediately perceived qualities of melody, harmonic color, piano sonority, and the subtle balancing of keys—what Hans Költzsch in his study of Schubert’s sonatas called “the nascent present.”

This characteristically Schubertian predilection is particularly evident in the development sections of the opening movements, which eschew the rigorous thematic working-out of the Beethovenian model in favor of a warm, even sometimes dreamy, lyricism whose principal aims are to examine fragments of the movement’s melodies in different harmonic lights and to extract the instrument’s most ingratiating sonorities. The B-flat Sonata, generally regarded as Schubert’s greatest achievement in the genre, opens with a movement of breadth and majesty based on one his most ravishing melodies. The *Andante*, music such as it is given to only the greatest masters to compose, seems almost freed from earthly bonds, rapt out of time. “It is,” concluded Alfred Einstein, “the climax and apotheosis of Schubert’s instrumental lyricism and his simplicity of form.” The playful *Scherzo* that follows serves as the perfect foil to the slow movement. The finale balances a certain seriousness of expression with exuberance and rhythmic energy.

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Sightlines

Emanuel Ax
 Tuesday, November 13, 2012, 7–7:30pm

Pre-performance talk by UC Berkeley
 musicologist Rachana Vajjhala.

Open to concert ticket holders only.



Tom Bachrell

BORN IN LVOV, POLAND, EMANUEL AX moved to Winnipeg, Canada, with his family when he was a young boy. His studies at the Juilliard School were supported by the sponsorship of the Epstein Scholarship Program of the Boys Clubs of America, and he subsequently won the Young Concert Artists Award. Additionally, he attended Columbia University, where he majored in French. Mr. Ax captured public attention in 1974, when he won the first Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Competition in Tel Aviv. In 1975, he won the Michaels Award of Young Concert Artists followed four years later by the coveted Avery Fisher Prize.

As Artist in Residence with the New York Philharmonic for the 2012–2013 season, he will appear in multiple weeks at Lincoln Center with repertoire ranging from Bach to Christopher Rouse, in addition to a spring tour with the orchestra to Europe. He will return to the orchestras in Los Angeles, St. Louis, Atlanta, Detroit, Washington, and Pittsburgh, where he is a beloved regular.

Highlights of the 2011–2012 season included return visits to the symphonies of Boston, Houston, Toronto, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Detroit, and Cincinnati; the New York and Los

Angeles philharmonics; and the San Francisco Symphony, with whom he collaborated in the “American Mavericks” festival presented in San Francisco, Ann Arbor, and at Carnegie Hall. As curator and participant with the Chicago Symphony for “Keys to the City,” a two-week spring residency, he performed multiple roles as leader and collaborator in a festival celebrating the many varied facets of the piano.

In recognition of the bicentenaries of Chopin and Schumann in 2010, and in partnership with London’s Barbican, Amsterdam’s Concertgebouw, New York’s Carnegie Hall, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the San Francisco Symphony, Mr. Ax commissioned new works from composers Thomas Adès, Peter Lieberson, and Stephen Prutsman for three recital programs presented in each of those cities with colleagues Yo-Yo Ma and Dawn Upshaw. In addition to this large-scale project, recent tours included performances in Asia with the New York Philharmonic on their first tour with Music Director Alan Gilbert, and European tours with both the Chamber Orchestra of Europe with James Conlon and the Pittsburgh Symphony with Manfred Honeck.

Mr. Ax has been an exclusive Sony Classical recording artist since 1987. Due for release later this year is a new recital disc of works from Haydn to Schumann to Copland, reflecting their different uses of the “variation” concept.

Recent releases include Mendelssohn trios with Yo-Yo Ma and Itzhak Perlman, Strauss’s *Enoch Arden* narrated by Patrick Stewart, and discs of two-piano music by Brahms and Rachmaninoff with Yefim Bronfman. Mr. Ax has received Grammy Awards for the second and third volumes of his cycle of Haydn’s piano sonatas. He has also made a series of Grammy-winning recordings with cellist Yo-Yo Ma of the Beethoven and Brahms sonatas for cello and piano. His other recordings include the concertos of Liszt and Schoenberg, three solo Brahms albums, an album of tangos by Astor Piazzolla, and the premiere recording of John Adams’s *Century Rolls* with the Cleveland Orchestra for Nonesuch. In the 2004–2005 season, Mr. Ax also contributed to an International Emmy

Award-winning BBC documentary commemorating the Holocaust that aired on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

In recent years, Mr. Ax has turned his attention toward the music of 20th-century composers, premiering works by John Adams, Christopher Rouse, Krzysztof Penderecki, Bright Sheng, and Melinda Wagner. He is also devoted to chamber music, and has worked regularly with such artists as Young Uck Kim, Cho-Liang Lin, Mr. Ma, Edgar Meyer, Peter Serkin, Jaime Laredo, and the late Isaac Stern.

Mr. Ax resides in New York City with his wife, pianist Yoko Nozaki. They have two children together, Joseph and Sarah. Mr. Ax is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and holds honorary doctorates of music from Yale and Columbia universities.

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