

2023–2024

Wednesday, May 15, at 8:00

Evgeny Kissin Piano

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

I. Mit Lebhaftigkeit und durchaus mit Empfindung und Ausdruck

II. Nicht zu geschwind und sehr singbar vorgetragen

Chopin Nocturne in F-sharp minor, Op. 48, No. 2

Chopin Fantaisie in F minor, Op. 49

Intermission

Brahms Four Ballades, Op. 10

I. Andante

II. Andante

III. Intermezzo: Allegro

IV. Andante con moto

Prokofiev Piano Sonata No. 2 in D minor, Op. 14

I. Allegro ma non troppo

II. Scherzo: Allegro marcato

III. Andante

IV. Vivace

This program runs approximately 2 hours.

This concert is funded, in part, by **Joan N. Stern**.

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Photos: Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Photo by Landon Nordeman; violinist Davyd Booth at Tattooed Mom. Photo by Jessica Griffin; Principal Tuba Carol Jantsch at Philadelphia's Magic Gardens. Photo by Neal Santos; Principal Bass Joseph Conyers at Cherry Street Pier. Photo by Kriston Jae Bethel; Principal Harp Elizabeth Hainen on Broad Street. Photo by Neal Santos.

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Soloist

Mascia Sargjevskaja



Pianist **Evgeny Kissin** is in demand the world over and has appeared with many of the world's great conductors and all the great orchestras. Born in Moscow in October 1971, he began to play by ear and improvise on the piano at the age of two. At age six he entered a special school for gifted children, the Moscow Gnessin School of Music, where he was a student of Anna Pavlovna Kantor, who has been his only teacher. He made his concerto debut at age 10

and gave his first solo recital in Moscow one year later. He came to international attention in March 1984 when, at the age of 12, he performed Chopin's piano concertos in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory with the Moscow State Philharmonic and Dmitri Kitaenko. This concert was recorded live by Melodia and a two-LP album was released the following year. Mr. Kissin's first appearances outside Russia were in 1985 in Eastern Europe. In 1988 he performed with Herbert von Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic in a New Year's concert broadcast internationally. In 1990 he made his North American debut with the New York Philharmonic and Zubin Mehta and the following week opened Carnegie Hall's Centennial season with a debut recital recorded live by BMG Classics.

Highlights of Mr. Kissin's 2023–24 season include a tour of the United States with a recital program that includes the works of his beloved Chopin, Beethoven, Brahms, and Prokofiev. He collaborates, for the very first time, with the baritone Matthias Goerne, touring both Europe and the United States with a program of Brahms songs and piano pieces and Schumann's song cycle *Dichterliebe*. He also appears in concert with major European orchestras including the Berlin Philharmonic, the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, and the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, among others.

Mr. Kissin's numerous awards and tributes include the Crystal Prize of the Osaka Symphony Hall; the Musician of the Year Prize from the Chigiana Academy of Music in Siena, Italy; and the Triumph Award for his outstanding contribution to Russia's culture, one of the highest cultural honors to be awarded in the Russian Republic. In 1995 he became *Musical America's* youngest Instrumentalist of the Year and in 2002 was named Echo Klassik Soloist of the Year. His most recent GRAMMY for Best Instrumental Soloist Performance (with orchestra) was awarded in 2010 for his recording of Prokofiev's Piano Concertos Nos. 2 and 3 with the Philharmonia Orchestra, conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy on EMI Classics. His newest release is an album featuring Beethoven sonatas on the Deutsche Grammophon label.

The Music

Despite obvious stylistic differences due to era and aesthetics, Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms, and Prokofiev were all virtuoso pianists who knew how to exploit fully the sonorous potential of their instrument. Of course, the pianos for which they composed were quite different. The fine Broadwood piano that Beethoven received toward the end of his life had a lighter tone and action than is common today. In Parisian salons, Chopin performed on elegant Pleyels and Erards that produced a crystalline sonority. Brahms owned a fine Streicher piano with a mellow sound, writing to Clara Schumann that with his instrument "I always know exactly what I write and why I write one way or another." In his later years, Brahms also played on the noble instruments made by the firms of Bechstein and Bösendorfer. Despite a mishap with a Steinway piano during one of his early American recitals, Prokofiev often played on them until his return to the Soviet Union in 1936. For all these composers, the piano—in whatever make or form—was an integral part of their creative habits, and all composed important and enduring works for the instrument.

Piano Sonata No. 27 in E minor, Op. 90 **Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)**

According to a note on the autograph score, Beethoven's Sonata No. 27 in E minor, Op. 90, was finished on August 16, 1814, just after he had completed a major revision of his only opera, *Fidelio*. This Janus-faced Sonata looks back to his innovative middle period and ahead to the sustained grandeur of his late works. Indeed, the Piano Sonata No. 28 in A major, Op. 101, widely regarded as his first "late" sonata, was written just two years later. This E-minor Sonata is cast in two movements, a formal design that Beethoven had used previously in both the Sonata No. 24 in F-sharp major, Op. 78 (1809), and the programmatic Sonata No. 26 in E-flat major, Op. 81a (1810), "Les Adieux" (The Farewell). Beethoven dedicated the Op. 90 Sonata to his friend and patron Count Moritz Lichnowsky, writing to him in 1815, "I must tell you that a sonata of mine is about to appear, dedicated to you. ... I wished to give you a surprise, as this publication has long been designated for you. ... I needed no further reason to attest publicly to my sense of your friendship and kindness."

This Sonata marks the first time that Beethoven eschews Italian tempo designations for German ones that denote both expression and pace. The first movement, *Mit Lebhaftigkeit und durchaus mit Empfindung und Ausdruck* (With liveliness and pervaded with feeling and expression), is terse but impassioned with a remarkable use of the piano's varied registers, sometimes within a single phrase. The lyrical second movement, *Nicht zu geschwind und sehr singbar vorgetragen* (Not too fast and to be performed in a very singing style), is a tender rondo

that musicologist Lewis Lockwood found reminiscent of Leonora's aria "Komm, Hoffnung" in *Fidelio*.

Nocturne in F-sharp minor, Op. 48, No. 2

Fantaisie in F minor, Op. 49

Frédéric Chopin (1810–49)

Chopin wrote 21 nocturnes, transforming a genre invented by the Irish composer and pianist John Field into a layered and introspective genre. His Nocturne in F-sharp minor, Op. 48, No. 2 (1841), dedicated to Mlle. Laure Duperré, is like an intimate confession. Chopin, who was an admirer of Bellini's operas, compared the middle section to an operatic recitative. The Fantaisie in F minor, Op. 49, written in the same year, shows the composer's epic and extroverted side. Ironically, Chopin announced the new work in a moody letter: "Today I finished the Fantaisie—and the sky is beautiful, my heart sad—but that doesn't matter whatsoever. If it were otherwise, my life would perhaps be of no consequence to anyone."

Four Ballades, Op. 10

Johannes Brahms (1833–97)

While there are four extended piano pieces titled "ballade" in Chopin's oeuvre, Brahms's Four Ballades, Op. 10, composed in 1854, are epigrammatic by comparison. Written in the wake of the tragedy of his mentor Robert Schumann's attempted suicide and incarceration in an asylum, these ballades demonstrate an advance over the three beautiful but discursive piano sonatas Brahms had written before them. The first ballade in the set was inspired by Brahms's reading of a German translation of the Scottish ballad *Edward*, a grim tale of patricide in which the protagonist implicates his mother in the murder. The other three ballades are not so explicit in their narratives—the mysterious third of the set is designated an intermezzo—but are nevertheless intensely expressive.

Piano Sonata No. 2 in D minor, Op. 14

Sergei Prokofiev (1891–1953)

Prokofiev composed his Piano Sonata No. 2 in D minor, Op. 14, in 1912. Due to an unusual sequence of events, however, the piece was published the next year but premiered by the composer in Moscow on February 4, 1914. This concert, designed to showcase Prokofiev as both composer and pianist, was sponsored by the prestigious organization "Evenings of Modern Music." The Moscow critics were divided sharply between partisans and detractors. Prokofiev dedicated this Sonata to the memory of Maximilian Schmidhof, a classmate at the St. Petersburg Conservatory who had committed suicide in 1913.

Prokofiev played this Sonata repeatedly, including at his American debut at New York's Town Hall on November 20, 1918, which took place before a glittering audience that included Rachmaninoff. As in Moscow, critical reaction to the work

was mixed. Richard Aldrich, the chief music critic of the *New York Times*, wrote, "His fingers are steel, his wrists steel, his biceps and triceps steel ... he has speed, surely, but a narrow gamut of dynamics." Aldrich clearly disliked the Sonata: "As a composer he is cerebral ... the sonata, a second one, contains no sustained musical development, the first allegro being a mosaic, violent in transitions, in moods rather monotonous."

Reviews like Aldrich's show just how challenging Prokofiev's Modernist style was in 1918, though one wonders why this critic did not deign to mention the lyricism that is threaded through the tapestry of this score. Furthermore, Aldrich also dismisses Prokofiev's grasp of form, oblivious to the Classical procedures that weld the first movement into a coherent whole. The exuberant Scherzo is followed by an Andante brimming with profound emotion. Like the opening movement, the athletic finale is cast as a balanced and convincing sonata form.

—Byron Adams

Musical Terms

GENERAL TERMS

Aria: An accompanied solo song (often in ternary form), usually in an opera or oratorio

Ballade: A term applied to an instrumental (normally piano) piece in a narrative style

Coda: A concluding section or passage added in order to confirm the impression of finality

Fantaisie: A composition free in form and more or less fantastic in character

Intermezzo: A short connecting instrumental movement in an opera or other musical work

Modernism: A consequence of the fundamental conviction among successive generations of composers since 1900 that the means of musical expression in the 20th century must be adequate to the unique and radical character of the age

Nocturne: A piece of a dreamily romantic or sentimental character, without a fixed form

Op.: Abbreviation for opus, a term used to indicate the chronological position of a composition within a composer's output. Opus numbers are not always reliable because they are often applied in the order of publication rather than composition.

Oratorio: Large-scale dramatic composition originating in the 16th century with text usually based on religious subjects. Oratorios are performed by choruses and solo voices with an instrumental accompaniment, and are similar to operas but without costumes, scenery, and actions.

Recitative: Declamatory singing, free in tempo and rhythm. Recitative has also sometimes been used to refer to parts of purely instrumental works that resemble vocal recitatives.

Rondo: A form frequently used in symphonies and concertos for the final movement. It consists of a main section that alternates with a variety of contrasting sections (A-B-A-C-A etc.).

Scherzo: Literally "a joke." An instrumental piece of a light, piquant, humorous character

Sonata: An instrumental composition in three or four extended movements contrasted in theme, tempo, and mood, usually for a solo instrument

Sonata form: The form in which the first movements (and sometimes others) of symphonies are usually cast. The sections are exposition, development, and recapitulation, the last sometimes followed by a coda. The exposition is the introduction of the musical ideas, which are then "developed." In the recapitulation, the exposition is repeated with modifications.

Ternary: A musical form in three sections, ABA, in which the middle section is different than the outer sections

THE SPEED OF MUSIC (Tempo)

Allegro: Bright, fast

Andante: Walking speed

Con moto: With motion

Marcato: Accented, stressed

Mit Lebhaftigkeit und durchaus mit Empfindung und Ausdruck: With liveliness and pervaded with feeling and expression

Nicht zu geschwind und sehr singbar vorgetragen: Not too fast and to be performed in a very singing style

Vivace: Lively

TEMPO MODIFIERS

Ma non troppo: But not too much

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