HOROWITZ PIANO SERIES

Boris Berman, artistic director

 Hung-Kuan Chen

Wednesday, February 12, 2020 | 7:00 pm
Morse Recital Hall in Sprague Memorial Hall

Yale SCHOOL OF MUSIC
Robert Blocker, Dean
Program

Ludwig van Beethoven  
1770–1827

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

Piano Sonata No. 28 in A major, Op. 101
I. Etwas lebhaft und mit der innigsten Empfindung
II. Lebhaft, marschmäßig
III. Langsam und sehnsuchtsvoll
IV. Geschwind, doch nicht zu sehr, und mit Entschlossenheit

Piano Sonata No. 29 in B-flat major, Op. 106, “Hammerklavier”
I. Allegro
II. Scherzo. Assai vivace
III. Adagio sostenuto
IV. Introduzione. Largo – Fuga. Allegro risoluto

INTERMESSION

Piano Sonata No. 30 in E major, Op. 109
I. Vivace ma non troppo – Adagio espressivo
II. Prestissimo
III. Gesangvoll, mit innigster Empfindung

Piano Sonata No. 31 in A flat major, Op. 110
I. Moderato cantabile molto espressivo
II. Allegro molto
III. Adagio ma non troppo

INTERMESSION

Piano Sonata No. 32 in C minor, Op. 111
I. Maestoso – Allegro con brio ed appassionato
II. Arietta. Adagio molto semplice cantabile

As a courtesy to others, please silence all devices. Photography and recording of any kind is strictly prohibited. Please do not leave the hall during musical selections. Thank you.
Hung-Kuan Chen, piano

Born in Taipei and raised in Germany, Hung-Kuan Chen’s career was launched when he won First Prize at the Young Concert Artists’ Auditions, which presented him in his New York debut on the Young Concert Artists Series and followed that with a concert at Lincoln Center’s Alice Tully Hall. One of the most decorated pianists of his generation, Chen has won top prizes at the Arthur Rubinstein, Ferruccio Busoni, and Géza Anda international piano competitions, along with prizes at the Queen Elisabeth, Montreal, Van Cliburn, and Chopin international competitions. He is a recipient of the prestigious Avery Fisher Career Grant.

Chen has appeared in the music capitals of Asia, Europe, and the Americas and collaborated with many major orchestras. He has performed with such highly esteemed conductors as Hans Graf, Christoph Eschenbach, and Josef Silverstein; with colleagues Yo-Yo Ma, Cho-Liang Lin, David Shifrin, and others; and with pianists Tema Blackstone and Pi-hsien Chen.

Hung-Kuan Chen has served as the chair of the piano department of the Shanghai Conservatory and is Director of the International Piano Academy in Shanghai. In 2009, he was appointed to the piano faculty of the New England Conservatory. He is Visiting Professor of Piano at the Yale School of Music.

Horowitz Piano Series
Spring 2020

**MAR**  Lucille Chung and Alessio Bax
4  A performance of Stravinsky’s piano four-hands arrangement of *Petrushka*, Ravel’s piano four-hands arrangement of Debussy’s *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*, and music by Lutoslawski and Poulenc. Tickets start at $23, students $11

**MAR**  Wei-Yi Yang
25  A program that in part follows Chopin’s musical language and influence into the works of Debussy and Scriabin, including one set of pieces regarding ‘Night music’ and another focusing on aspects of ‘Etudes.’ Tickets start at $15, students $7

Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m.
Morse Recital Hall

Free Student Rush Tickets

For the Oneppo Chamber Music Series, Horowitz Piano Series, and Ellington Jazz Series, free student rush tickets will be offered at the box office for students with a valid ID. When available, tickets will be distributed starting thirty minutes before each concert. *One ticket per ID, subject to availability.*
This beguilingly strange, compactly emotive sonata came five years after its predecessor, “Les adieux,” and straddles the elemental and stylistic between those works rooted firmly in the “middle period” and the captivating “Late Sonatas,” 28-32. To hear it alongside these works allows us to recognize these similarities and evolutions. Dedicated to Beethoven's friend and benefactor Prince Lichnowsky, its oddness and ambiguity may reflect an underlying narrative or biographical theme. The prince was courting a woman at the time, and in dialogue with the composer during the episode. The working titles “A struggle between the head and heart” and “a conversation with the Beloved” were once attributed to the two respective movements, though they did not survive in most published editions. The first movement alternates unpredictably between grandiose gestures in a stately triple dance, tender, delicate moments, and impassioned climaxes. Despite its fluctuations of dynamic, rhythmic activity, and to some degree tempo, it is thematically cohesive, obsessing over the same few musical ideas throughout. Logic and emotion are indeed at play in these manipulations of an otherwise balanced form. The subsequent rondo consists of a gentle, arioso theme atop a tapestry of counterpoint. Restrained in emotion, and marked “Not too fast and highly songful,” the storminess of the preceding movement has faded, yet there are moments wherein passion churns beneath the surface, particularly in the contrasting episodes. One might imagine this subtle alternation as a conversation of sorts, perhaps with the so-called “beloved.”

The sonata begins in a pleasantly pastoral air, yet almost immediately reveals its restless impulses. Whenever he is given an opportunity to complete his melodic phrases, Beethoven seems to side-step and continue on; the “endless melodies” of later Romantic composers come to mind, yet it is all the more surprising to hear this nervous energy emerge from a place of such gentility. The development is eerily soft and misterioso, almost on the precipice of audibility, yet soon swells as its energy refuses to remain subdued. The recapitulation restates the opening pastoral theme, yet with a few surprising gestures, including the heart murmur of rolled chords. Its melody floats upwards into silence at the conclusion. The second movement is a robust march and trio, comprised of drumtap rhythms and hefty emphases of beats. The trio boasts expected diversions into tender, flowing material – weightlessness to counterbalance the grounded nature of the march. The third and fourth movements may be seen as one unit – a melancholy mood hovers over the brief introductory movement of the pair. Beginning in the minor mode, its austerity and sparse texture (with extreme highs and lows), are balanced by richly harmonized, warm chords in the piano’s middle register. Gaining momentum, it nearly spills into the subsequent section but is first interrupted by one brief recollection of the first movement’s opening theme, as though it were a passing thought. We might recall a similar, though far more overt, instance of this in the Ninth Symphony, before the declamation, “Not these sounds!”

The finale plays imitative polyphony
against lyricism. The seriousness of a grand, extensive fugue, is balanced by tones of humor and playfulness. Even here, Beethoven seems unable to fully take himself seriously. Hammer blows jolt us in moments of great tenderness, and the composer knew exactly what effect that would have.

Piano Sonata No. 29

The title of the famous “Hammerklavier” sonata refers simply to the German name for the pianoforte. Unlike the fortepiano which preceded it, this “modern” instrument for Beethoven’s time (and roughly the same instrument we call a piano today) had a larger range in terms of both pitch and dynamic, with greater possible extremes. It also had real carrying power and sustain. The composer makes use of all these features in his late sonatas, including this very one. The opening is a grand display of the instrument’s capacity to take up sonic space, while its broad strokes are balanced against quiet and intimate gestures. A great fugal section in the first movement gives us the pianistic equivalent of a grand pipe organ: worlds away from Beethoven’s delicate, twinkly passages elsewhere. A wild chromatic progression near the end leads to a softly burbling pedal point at the movement’s conclusion. The sonata’s scherzo is marked by hunting rhythms and lil. Playful at the outset, a serioso quality takes over, while a contrasting middle section moves in realms of fantasy. A mildly sinister tone and ambiguous chromatic wanderings close out the brief movement. Especially in his late sonatas, Beethoven placed increasingly substantive weight on his slow movements and finales. A prayer-like period of reflection at the massive slow movement’s opening, marked by immense stillness and intimacy, are in dialogue with gestures of warmth and even grandeur.

As with the first movement, Beethoven dedicates moments of his finale to a massive fugue, though it is preceded by some exploration. It begins with austere, ringing octaves which gradually grow into soft chords. A flowing melodic line emerges before fading into static chords. It builds yet again, only to return to stasis once more. Momentum seems be winning, but when will it? The tension between motion and stasis remains a constant “theme” of this finale, making it somewhat ungraspable and unpredictable, like the greatest Romantic works of art.

Piano Sonata No. 30

This sonata begins on stream-like flow of melody. A cascade is soon dammed by halts, sudden digressions into sweeping arpeggios and intimate adagios. The fantasy-like opening material, more a gesture than a melody, eventually fades over the horizon toward its last tributary, dissolving as it does into a whisper. The prestissimo charges violently in on the heels of this near-silence, while it is balanced by the response of a tender secondary theme. These two extremes lend this compact movement a nearly manic quality. With the scope and breadth of the closing movement, Beethoven reveals that the first two may have been merely preludes to it. A set of variations (a favored form of the composer’s, especially for final movements), this one seems aware of its own significance. A serious yet serene mood dominates – calm introspection imparted
with occasional revelations of sub-surface brooding and angst. Some instances of play and even exuberant joy emerge throughout the variations, including one energetic example with running scales that might remind us of some moments in Bach’s Goldberg Variations. However, serenity and resolve dominate, and the sonata ends on a note of quiet, noble calm.

Piano Sonata No. 31

This brilliant and highly varied sonata begins with an air of religiosity. Its chorale-like opening theme yields to a Mozartian, aria-like melody atop delicately pulsating chords. Few thematic or motivic ideas last for long before wandering to some other emotional landscape, distractedly or restlessly. The songful secondary theme takes a serioso turn in the development, atop spinning scales in the left hand. Bold upward reaches dissolve into focused intimacy, and a few dissonant harmonies impart the close with the subtlest hint of angst. The brief, wild storm of a central movement, despite its tempestuousness, is also an example of the composer’s sense of humor. He based this grimacing scherzo on a few melodies taken from bawdy German folk songs. The joke is on us. The storm, or whatever it is, fades into the low register, with one single pitch carrying us into the finale. In its dual structure, it broadly resembles a Baroque Prelude and Fugue, though its ‘prelude’ is actually a recitative and aria that turns out to not be a prelude at all... In other words, it is indefinable. He begins with a wordless recitative, leading to an arioso marked “dolente,” meaning “lamenting.” Indeed, this gratingly emotive song-like theme atop plucked chords is one of the most powerful passages in any of these late sonatas. He soon launches rather confidently and exultantly into a fugue (still tinged to some degree by sorrow), that seems worlds away from the arioso. Beethoven jolts between these extremes near the movement’s conclusion, when a powerful disruption of the aria-like passage (never far in the distance of our memory), attempts to halt the growing energy of the fugue. It is a moment to take your breath away.

Piano Sonata No. 32

A sense of weight hovers over this final sonata of Beethoven’s 32 published works in the genre. Any “last piece” is haunted to a degree by its own status, despite the fact that few final testaments are written with the composer knowing that they will be so. We cannot know what Beethoven may have given to the legacy of the piano sonata after this, but we can at least take this grand experiment at face value. A binary work, its first movement catches us from the outset, with its bold descending swipe and delicately unstable compliment. This ‘french overture’ stately beginning yields, naturally, to an active and contrapuntal second section. When the momentum builds, it is into a furious allegro that still wanders and pauses when we least expect it to. Rather than grow in energy to its conclusion, it spends it all, fading, exhaustedly, into the stoic opening theme of the second movement. Simple, homophonic, austere, and unhurried, this theme is touchingly innocent in its lack of ornament and bravura. Its simplicity also makes for a perfect thematic skeleton for the ensuing
variations, which grow more rhythmically active in an organic fashion. We hardly notice it happening until it has happened. The slightest of rhythmic drives propels us forward, into a famous ‘boogie-woogie’ passage with deliberately swung gestures, and eventually dissolves into a strange, glorious cloud of twinkling trills atop a bass line that seems miles beneath. In its pure sonic conception, such a moment would feel right at home in the modernist movement of the twentieth century and today. In this masterful movement alone, Beethoven continues to grow and explore an expanding musical world, and shows us what he finds.

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List as of February 11, 2020
## Upcoming Events

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<td>Yale Opera</td>
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<td>FEB 15</td>
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<td>MAR 6</td>
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### sprague concert

Yale Philharmonia

YSM conducting student Ryan Tani leads the Yale Philharmonia, percussionist Ji Su Jung, in works by Kevin Puts, Prokofiev, and Beethoven.

7:30 PM | Morse Recital Hall

Tickets start at $12, Yale faculty/staff $8, students FREE

### guitar extravaganza

YSM Special Events

A daylong immersion in the classical guitar, including concerts, workshops, demos, and more. Headline performance by David Russell. All-Day passes and 3-Concert passes available now.

[shubert.com](http://shubert.com)

### bernic williams collective

Ellington Jazz Series

The former New York Yankees center fielder is a musician “whose talent as a guitarist is evident” (The Washington Post) and whose album Moving Forward was nominated for a Latin Grammy Award.

7:30 PM | Morse Recital Hall

Tickets start at $22, students $10

### zukerman trio

Oneppo Chamber Music Series

Violinist Pinchas Zukerman, cellist Amanda Forsyth, and pianist Angela Cheng perform Beethoven’s “Kakadu” Variations, Arensky’s Piano Trio No. 1 in D minor, and Brahms’ Piano Trio No. 2 in C major.

7:30 PM | Morse Recital Hall

Tickets start at $28, students $13

### pamela frank and emanuel ax

Oneppo Chamber Music Series

Two of the most admired instrumentalists on the international chamber music scene perform Mozart’s Sonatas in G major, K. 379, and B-flat major, K. 454, and Beethoven’s Sonata No. 10, Op. 96.

7:30 PM | Morse Recital Hall

Tickets start at $28, students $13