

# RICHARD GOODE

## PIANO

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TUE 7:30 PM  
MARCH 23

Stude Concert Hall,  
Rice University

**Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) Piano Sonata No. 15 in D Major, Op. 28, "Pastoral" (1801)**

Allegro  
Andante  
Scherzo. Allegro vivace  
Rondo. Allegro ma non troppo

**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

**Piano Sonata No. 26 in E-flat Major, Op. 81a, "Lebewohl" (1810)**

Das Lebewohl: Adagio–Allegro  
Abwesenheit: Andante espressivo  
Das Wiedersehen: Vivacissimamente

*INTERMISSION*

**11 Bagatelles, Op. 119 (1822)**

6. Andante–Allegretto  
7. Allegro, ma non troppo  
8. Moderato cantabile  
9. Vivace moderato  
10. Allegramente  
11. Andante, ma non troppo

**Piano Sonata No. 32 in C Minor, Op. 111 (1822)**

Maestoso–Allegro con brio ed appassionato  
Arietta. Adagio molto, semplice e cantabile

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CLAUDIA AND DAVID HATCHER

Anyone who knows even no more than a handful of Beethoven's works must be struck by how different each piece is from the next, not only in mood and character, but also in outward form. Beethoven, it seems, was a composer who felt the need—and, more importantly, had the ability—to reinvent himself with each new work he composed. Richard Goode's program this evening contains sonatas in two movements, three movements telescoped into two, and four movements; and their character ranges from the bucolic calm of the "Pastoral" Sonata Op. 28, through the tender lyricism of the rondo from the Sonata Op. 90, to the intense drama of the first movement of Op. 111 and the other-worldly serenity of its second movement.

The rustic nature of the **Sonata in D Major Op. 28** was recognised at an early stage, and the first English edition, issued in 1804–05, bore a title page proclaiming it as a "Sonate Pastorale." The adjective, which has remained attached to the work ever since, is particularly apt in relation to the musette-like theme of its finale.

The first movement also begins with a 'drone' bass initially heard on its own—a reiterated note D, after which the first harmony we hear is a discord, as though the work had begun in midstream. The piece ends inconclusively, too, fading away into the distance with scraps of the main melody floating above the bass line.

The slow movement, in the minor, is like some processional march. As he so often liked to do, Beethoven has its melody given out smoothly by the right hand, above a staccato accompaniment in the left; and the theme's second half, featuring an obstinately repeated pungent dissonance, unfolds over a repeated note which recalls the opening movement's reiterated bass. After the more rustic-sounding middle section in the major, Beethoven writes his reprise in the form of a variation, before adding a coda which draws the piece to a close in a haze of nostalgia.

Following the scherzo, the final rondo returns to the pastoral charm of the sonata's opening movement. But this time, rather than allow the movement to sink to a resigned ending, Beethoven appends a 'presto' coda, bringing the sonata to a dizzying conclusion.

The **Sonata in E Minor Op. 90** was the only important new work Beethoven composed in 1814—a year that was otherwise taken up with the revision of his opera, *Fidelio*, and with occasional pieces such as the cantata *Der glorreiche Augenblick*. Beethoven's pupil Carl Czerny described the opening movement of the Op. 90 Sonata as a "conflict between the head and the heart", and the finale as a "conversation with the beloved." Certainly, it would be difficult to imagine a juxtaposition of two

more strongly contrasted pieces—the first, melodically fragmented and harmonically unstable; the second, in the major, pure song from beginning to end. The first movement owes its intensity not only to its extreme concentration (despite its brevity, Beethoven does not ask for its first half to be repeated), but also to its retention of the minor throughout. The latter feature is one that Beethoven had tried out on a few previous occasions (notably, the finale of the 'Moonlight' Sonata Op. 27 No. 2, and the outer movements of the 'Tempest' Op. 31 No. 2), but never quite so unsettlingly as here. The relaxed second movement, in the major, is a piece that exerted a considerable influence on Schubert, who took it as the model not only in his own early E minor Sonata D. 566, but also for the fine piano duet Rondo in A major written in the last year of his life.

On 9 April 1809, Austria declared war on France. Less than a month later, as the threat of an invasion of Vienna by Napoleon's troops grew ever stronger, the Empress Maria Ludovica withdrew from the city, together with other members of the Imperial family. Among them was Beethoven's friend, pupil and principal patron, Archduke Rudolph, the Emperor's youngest brother. When the bombardment of Vienna began, on the night of May 11<sup>th</sup>, Beethoven took refuge in the cellar of his brother's house, his head covered with pillows in order to protect his fragile hearing from the noise of cannon fire.

The Imperial entourage was absent for the best part of a year, and Beethoven commemorated the occasion with the **Sonata Op. 81a**, to which he gave the title of 'The Farewell. Vienna, 4 May 1809. On the departure of His Imperial Highness the esteemed Archduke Rudolph.' However, when the sonata was published, in 1811, it appeared in two editions, bearing title pages in German and French, respectively; and by the time a second edition was issued, six years later, the German version had been dropped altogether.

The French title by which Beethoven's sonata has become known was used much against his wishes. As he told the publishers, Breitkopf & Härtel, "Lebewohl" is something quite different from 'les adieux.' The first is said sincerely to one person alone, the latter to whole gatherings, whole towns."

Semantics—not to mention unwanted political associations—apart, there was a purely musical reason why the French title was inappropriate: the horn-call with which the sonata begins was designed to fit the three syllables of the word 'Lebewohl,' and Beethoven wrote them above the opening bars in his autograph. His full title for the work was 'Lebewohl, Abwesenheit und Wiedersehen'. ('Farewell, Absence and Reunion'—

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though the original edition rendered the last movement inaccurately as ‘Le retour’.)

Like Bach, in his piece called ‘Capriccio on the Departure of a Beloved Brother’, the central musical metaphor Beethoven uses is the sound of a post-horn, evoking a departing carriage. The horn call which begins the sonata’s slow introduction seems like a deep sigh of regret, and its sound is recalled in the following Allegro—most noticeably in its second subject. It returns, too, in the coda, where overlapping horn calls charmingly suggest the echoing of a coach receding through the valley and into the distance.

The melancholy ‘Abwesenheit’ functions as an interlude between the outer movements, though the ‘dragging’ character of its main theme gives the impression of time passing slowly. The finale is a piece whose exuberance confronts the pianist with considerable technical difficulties if he or she wants to combine a feeling of carefree abandon, with keyboard accuracy. Despite the speed at which the music unfolds (‘Vivacissimamente’ is Beethoven’s unusual marking), its concluding page still finds room to transform the main theme into a further nostalgic evocation of the post-horn sounds.

When, early in 1823, Beethoven sent six of his **Bagatelles Op. 119** to the Leipzig firm of C.F. Peters for their consideration, he received a curtly dismissive response. “Your pieces are not worth the price,” the publishers told him, “and you should consider it beneath your dignity to waste time with such trifles that anyone could write.” Others, while recognising that Beethoven was essentially a master of large-scale symphonic forms, did not fail to appreciate the beauty of his miniatures. Beethoven had, in fact, been composing what he called *Kleinigkeiten*, or trifles, throughout his life, and the description that appeared at the head of his Op. 119 collection, promising ‘Eleven New Bagatelles’, was not strictly accurate. The first five pieces had been composed at various times from the mid-1790s onwards, and only the remaining six numbers were of recent vintage: Beethoven had composed them for inclusion in the third volume of the *Wiener Piano-Forte-Schule* issued in 1821 by the horn player and publisher Friedrich Starke. Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that Beethoven removed an additional piece originally destined for Starke, and used it instead to form the opening movement of his Piano Sonata Op. 109.

Two C Major pieces written for Starke, and included as the seventh and eighth pieces in the Op. 119 collection, are related to Beethoven’s work on the ‘Diabelli’ Variations Op. 120. The first of the pair is a study in trills (they are actually more awkward to bring off than the famous trills found in the variation finales of the Sonatas Opp. 109 & 111). At the end of the piece the pianist’s right hand climbs upwards in a continually accelerating spiral, above a rumbling trill in the bass, until it propels a *fortissimo* arpeggio that sweeps down the keyboard to bridge the gap in registers between the two hands.

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No. 9 is a panting piece in A Minor whose curious tempo marking of ‘Vivace moderato’ is not found in Beethoven’s autograph, which has instead ‘Vivace assai ed un poco sentimentale.’ However compressed it may be, it is surpassed in brevity by the following number, which must be the most aphoristic piece Beethoven ever published. Its mere thirteen bars (the first eight are repeated) of lively staccato played above a syncopated bass line go by in a flash. The last number in the collection is a miniature, too, though its theme, and the manner in which the melody finds itself transported to the top of the keyboard for its continuation, breathes an air of spaciousness that belies the music’s brief time-span.

Beethoven composed his final group of three piano sonatas, Opp. 109–111, during the period when he was also working on his *Missa solemnis*. All three sonatas find him exploring a radically new approach to the sonata design, with the main weight of the argument placed firmly on the finale. In the first two works the shift in traditional emphasis is ensured by deliberately scaling down the dimensions of the opening movement, and by casting the central movement as a scherzo. The **Sonata in C Minor Op. 111** has only two movements, of which the second—like the finale of Op. 109—is an extended and largely serene set of variations on a song-like theme. The theme in this case bears the title of ‘Arietta’.

Unlike its two predecessors Op. 111 begins in an atmosphere of high drama. The brutal octaves hurled forth at the beginning of its introduction are no mere theatrical gesture: they anticipate the falling melodic interval which characterises the main subject of the following Allegro. Beethoven is, moreover, careful to engineer a smooth transition between the introduction and the main body of the movement: a rumbling trill deep in the bass at the end of the introduction continues beneath the start of the Allegro in notes of twice the previous value (i.e. 16<sup>th</sup>-notes instead of 32<sup>nd</sup>-notes), suggesting that the tempo is more or less doubled at this moment.

The Allegro, with its qualification ‘con brio ed appassionato’, is a piece of extraordinary intensity, and one that gives the illusion of having been composed at white heat. The term ‘appassionato’ is one Beethoven seldom used (it is conspicuously absent from the so-called ‘Appassionata’ Sonata Op. 57), and so determined is he to maintain the atmosphere of highly-strung tension that he limits the consolatory second subject to a mere half-dozen bars, before a cascading arpeggio leads back to the turbulence of the main subject, whose transmutation from minor to major has done nothing to rob it of its former violence.



Beethoven originally drafted the Allegro’s main theme some twenty years earlier in the form of a fugue subject, and in the central development section he treats it in the form of a double fugue whose two strands are derived from the main subject itself, and from a freely expanded version of the subject’s initial three notes. The development is, however, unusually brief, and the recapitulation sets in at the apex of a rising harmonic sequence. At the end, the piece sinks to an exhausted close in the major, and the unexpectedly calm conclusion forms a natural bridge to the serene ‘Arietta’ theme that follows.

The variations that constitute the sonata’s finale unfold at the same basic pulse, though their progressively diminishing note-values give the impression of a gradual acceleration. At the same time, by decreasing the music’s rate of harmonic change Beethoven is paradoxically able to create the effect of an increase in serenity. Thus, the third, and most agitated, of the variations is followed by a ‘double’ variation whose quasi-repeats unfold in a wholly different sonority. While the first statement of each half is heard deep in the bass, underpinned by a ‘rocking’ accompaniment which remains obstinately static, the quasi-repeats transport us to the top of the keyboard, where the theme’s outline is traced out in an ethereal latticework whose effect is one of profound calm. Eventually, the music dissolves in a long-sustained trill, before the work comes to a close with a reminiscence of the theme’s original rhythm. Although Beethoven does not provide a reprise of the theme itself at this point, as he had done in the Sonata Op. 109, the closing bars seem to round the melody out, answering its ‘open-ended’ character with a gentle but firm conclusion.

Misha Donat