Faculty Artist Series

Beethoven: Complete Piano Sonatas

Alexander Kobrin, piano

September 1, 2023—May 1, 2024
Hatch Recital Hall

EASTMAN
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER

Friday, September 1, 2023
Hatch Recital Hall
7:30 PM

Piano Sonata No. 1 in F Minor, Op. 2, No. 1 Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
Allegro
Adagio
Minuetto. Allegretto
Prestissimo

Piano Sonata No. 2 in A Major, Op. 2, No. 2
Allegro vivace
Largo appassionato
Scherzo. Allegretto
Rondo. Grazioso

Piano Sonata No. 3 in C Major, Op. 2, No. 3
Allegro con brio
Adagio
Scherzo. Allegro
Allegro assai

Alexander Kobrin, piano

PROGRAM

Sunday, October 1, 2023
Hatch Recital Hall
3:30 PM

Piano Sonata No. 4 in E-flat Major, Op. 7 — Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Allegro molto e con brio
Largo con gran espressione
Allegro
Rondo. Poco allegretto e grazioso

Piano Sonata No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 10, No. 1

Allegro molto e con brio
Adagio molto
Finale. Prestissimo

Piano Sonata No. 6 in F Major, Op. 10, No. 2

Allegro
Menuetto. Allegretto
Presto

Piano Sonata No. 7 in D Major, Op. 10, No. 3

Presto
Largo e mesto
Menuetto. Allegro
Rondo. Allegro

Alexander Kobrin, piano

Wednesday, November 1, 2023
Hatch Recital Hall
7:30 PM

Piano Sonata No. 8 in C Minor, Op. 13, "Pathétique" — Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Grave—Allegro di molto e con brio
Adagio cantabile
Rondo. Allegro

Piano Sonata No. 9 in E Major, Op. 14, No. 1

Allegro
Allegretto
Rondo. Allegro commodo

Piano Sonata No. 10 in G Major, Op. 14, No. 2

Allegro
Andante
Scherzo. Allegro assai

Piano Sonata No. 11 in B-flat Major, Op. 22

Allegro con brio
Adagio con molta espressione
Menuetto
Rondo. Allegretto

Alexander Kobrin, piano

Friday, December 1, 2023
Hatch Recital Hall
7:30 PM

Piano Sonata No. 12 in A-flat Major, Op. 26 Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Andante con variazioni
Scherzo. Allegro molto
Maestoso andate: Marcia funebre sulla morte d'un eroe
Allegro

Piano Sonata No. 13 in E-flat Major, Op. 27, No. 1

Andante—Allegro—Andante
Allegro molto e vivace
Adagio con espressione
Allegro vivace

Piano Sonata No. 14 in C-sharp Minor, Op. 27, No. 2

Adagio sostenuto
Allegretto
Presto agitato

Piano Sonata No. 15 in D Major, Op. 28, "Pastoral"

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

Alexander Kobrin, piano

Thursday, February 1, 2024
Hatch Recital Hall
7:30 PM

Piano Sonata No. 16 in G Major, Op. 31, No. 1 Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
Allegro vivace
Adagio grazioso
Rondo. Allegretto—Presto

Piano Sonata No. 17 in D Minor, Op. 31, No. 2, "Tempest"
Largo—Allegro
Adagio
Allegretto

Piano Sonata No. 18 in E-flat Major, Op. 31, No. 3
Allegro
Scherzo. Allegretto vivace
Menuetto. Moderato e grazioso
Presto con fuoco

Alexander Kobrin, piano

Friday, March 1, 2024
Hatch Recital Hall
7:30 PM

Piano Sonata No. 19 in G Minor, Op. 49, No. 1 Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
Andante
Rondo. Allegro

Piano Sonata No. 20 in G Major, Op. 49, No. 2
Allegro ma non troppo
Tempo di menuetto

Piano Sonata No. 21 in C Major, Op. 53, "Waldstein"
Allegro con brio
Introduzione. Adagio molto
Rondo. Allegretto moderato—Prestissimo

Piano Sonata No. 22 in F Major, Op. 54
In tempo d'un menuetto
Allegretto—Più allegro

Piano Sonata No. 23 in F Minor, Op. 57, "Appassionata"
Allegro assai
Andante con moto
Allegro ma non troppo—Presto

Alexander Kobrin, piano

Monday, April 1, 2024
Hatch Recital Hall
7:30 PM

Piano Sonata No. 24 in F-sharp Major, Op. 78 Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
Adagio cantabile—Allegro ma non troppo
Allegro vivace

Piano Sonata No. 25 in G Major, Op. 79
Presto alla tedesca
Andante
Vivace

Piano Sonata No. 26 in E-flat Major, Op. 81a
Das Lebewohl. Adagio—Allegro
Abwesenheit. Andante espressivo
Das Wiedersehen. Vivacissimamente

Piano Sonata No. 27 in E Minor, Op. 90
Mit Lebhaftigkeit und durchaus mit Empfindung und Ausdruck
Nicht zu geschwind und sehr singbar vorgetragen

Piano Sonata No. 28 in A Major, Op. 101
Etwas lebhaft, und mit der innigsten Empfindung. Allegro ma non troppo
Lebhaft, marschmäßig. Vivace alla Marcia
Langsam und sehnsuchtsvoll. Adagio ma non troppo con affetto
Geschwind, doch nicht zu sehr, und mit Entschlossenheit. Allegro

Alexander Kobrin, piano

Wednesday, May 1, 2024
Hatch Recital Hall
6:30 PM

Piano Sonata No. 29 in B Major, Op. 106, "Hammerklavier" — Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Allegro
Scherzo. Assai vivace
Adagio sostenuto
Introduzione. Largo—Allegro— Fuga: Allegro risoluto

Piano Sonata No. 30 in E Major, Op. 109

Vivace ma non troppo—Adagio espressivo
Prestissimo
Gesangvoll, mit innigster Empfindung. Andante molto cantabile ed espressivo

Piano Sonata No. 31 in A-flat Major, Op. 110

Moderato cantabile molto espressivo
Allegro molto
Adagio ma non troppo—Allegro ma non troppo

Piano Sonata No. 32 in C Minor, Op. 111

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

Alexander Kobrin, piano

A careful study of these works will transform us,
for Beethoven will become our teacher and
lead us to develop our own personalities and characters.
— Edwin Fischer

Piano Sonata No. 29 in B-flat Major, Op. 106, "Hammerklavier"

A private letter addressed to "lieutenant-general von Steiner" arrived at the publisher's house S.A. Steiner & Co. on January 23, 1817. Written by Beethoven, who signed "Generalissimus" to jokingly emphasize his rank in managing the publication of one of his works, the contents of the letter stated: "We have determined and decreed that henceforth on all our works published with German titles, the word Pianoforte is to be replaced by that of Hammer Clavier." The nationalist revival caused by the end of the Napoleonic era went so far as Beethoven wanted to find a new name for the instrument known as the Pianoforte. He even decided to consult the linguist Wilhelm Hebenstreit and, after discarding various hypotheses, the choice fell on "Hammer Clavier," literally a "keyboard instrument with hammers," the percussion hammers typical of the piano. The first Sonata on whose title page the words "Sonate für das Hammer-Klavier" stood out was *Op. 101*, to which precisely the words in the letter above refer. It was *Op. 106*, however, that remained inextricably linked to the words "für das Hammer-Klavier," so much so that it became famous as the *Hammerklavier Sonata*. As Piero Rattalino argues, "this majestic word, *Hammerklavier*, in and of itself generic, became [...] the magnificent portal of a majestic sonata."

The legend around the monumentality of this Sonata was fueled by stories that purported to trace back to Beethoven himself a certain awareness that he had created something beyond known technical and mental possibilities. In an 1853 article, French-Polish pianist H.L.S. Mortier de Fontaine claimed to have learned from Artaria publishers that Beethoven had written to them: "There you have a sonata that will tax the pianists and will be played in 50 years." The story was then quoted by Wilhelm von Lenz as authentic, fueling the myth. Myth that somehow became intertwined with the fulfillment of Beethoven's prophecy. Indeed, even today, it is complicated to understand who was the first to try a live performance of the *Hammerklavier*. Franz Liszt performed it in 1836 in a private concert at the Salle Pleyel in Paris, which led Berlioz to describe the work as "a sublime poem that until this day was but the riddle of the sphinx for nearly all pianists." Three years later, Moscheles proposed it for a matinée concert that caused a stir, so much so that on the pages of The Musical World appeared this comment: "the attention was frequently distracted by the wonderful difficulties of execution – extravagancies that out-heroded Herod [...] We can, however, say that if it is any test of excellence to preserve the sense of hearing, in an almost painful state of activity, from the commencement to the end - making everyone wonder

what would come next." Pianists such as Arabella Goddard and Hans von Bülow, however, made the work a true milestone in the piano repertoire, offering it several times in recitals throughout Europe beginning in the mid-1850s.

The passage that opens the *Hammerklavier* perfectly embodies the elements on which the entire work is based: risk, the courage to respond to that risk, and the triumph of urgency. This uncomfortable and unpredictable ascending leap in the left hand is not only a musical element, framed in its having to be perfect. Likewise, it is a theatrical gesture, which does not contain its meaning in the exactness of the execution but in the risk and courage of the momentum. From this catalyzing event comes a vast choral fantasy masterfully reimagined on the piano, an instrument pushed beyond its limits. Even in the most virtuosic and dense parts, throughout the first movement, Beethoven retains an inner vocal quality that probably ties in with the initial project from which the work derives, namely a vocal work dedicated to the archduke on the words "Vivat Rudolphus!" It is precisely with the vocal quality of the work that Beethoven is justified in calling the first movement only "*Allegro*" and not "*Allegro assai*:" a more incisive and triumphant tempo, which broadens the development fugue with a pervasiveness that amplifies the *grandeur* of this opening movement.

Placed in the second position as in the four-movement structure of the *Sonata Op. 101*, the *Scherzo* contrasts with the first movement with its brevity: the grandeur of the choral triumph is answered by the humor of an obstinate rhythmic cell built on a reworking of the opening cell of the *Allegro*. It appears as a sarcastic commentary on urgency, which nevertheless always remains present even in the stasis of the trio, which Beethoven recommends as *"semplice,"* until it explodes again in the Presto, with unpredictable and improvisational gestures.

The central and cathartic moment of the entire work is the *Adagio sostenuto*. Beethoven explores in a structure of extreme length the concept of artistic alienation. The succession of episodes is static, undefinable: we are in the space of an unexplored intimacy, an event that Giorgio Pestelli describes as "Stations of a Passion without an audience." In this expressive space, the listener loses perception of time, alienated by the lack of points of reference and the constant expansion of the expressive quest over the path of the variations.

From the high inner spheres, we move to the high spheres of sacred objectivity with the most radical shift in music: a descending semitone from the F-sharp of the *Adagio* opens the *Largo* with an F. Here begins an episode featuring what Busoni called "*Ur-Musik*," the primordial music from which a creating spirit moves. In this sense, Charles Rosen calls the episode "The Creation of a Fugue:" Beethoven explores possibilities, even introducing an Allegro with a possible fugue, which is interrupted,

however, because "The style of Bach is rejected: if there is to be counterpoint, it must be made new." Thus, after a further episode of waiting and tonal searching begins the *Allegro risoluto*, a "*fuga a tre voci, con alcune licenze*" that expands swirlingly, seeking the boundaries of a counterpoint that connects to the limits of the piano. Schoenberg argues that Beethoven's metronomic indications "are not to be taken literally; they merely give an indication of the tempo:" in this way, the prescribed rapid metronome becomes an indication of the resoluteness with which this Fugue develops rather than the need for fast execution. On the contrary, the rhythmic definition of a not too-quick tempo makes the long final episode even more resolute and incisive. It is transformed into a new image of alienation: just as in the *Adagio* we lose our perception of time and reality in an inner world, in the Fugue we enter the space of the celestial spheres, limited and unlimited at the same time.

Piano Sonata No. 30 in E Major, Op. 109

In March 1819, Archduke Rudolph was elected Cardinal Archbishop of Olmütz and in June he formally took the office after an official meeting with Pope Pius VII. For Beethoven, the investiture of his noble student was the impetus for the composition of the *Missa Solemnis*, *Op. 123*, a work that would have occupied him for five years, blending a new exploration of its musical principles with his Catholic Christian spirituality. This time of complicated rethinking of orchestral and vocal music also had a decisive impact on instrumental music, particularly on the last three Piano Sonatas. As argued by Anselm Cybinski, "when the Berlin-based publishing house of Adolph Martin Schlesinger approached Beethoven in the spring of 1820 and invited him to write three sonatas for the firm, the invitation proved opportune since it allowed him to address many of the compositional problems posed by the *Missa Solemnis*, on which he was already working, and to solve them on a smaller scale."

One of the consequences of this experimentation at the keyboard with voice-writing techniques and new compositional structures was the loss of the formal references typical of the piano sonata. Indeed, the *Sonata, Op. 109* presents an architecture that is no longer based on the linear balance between movements, but rather on what Carli Ballola calls "a brilliant asymmetry of resounding novelty," where the striking conciseness of both the *Vivace* and the *Prestissimo* is counterbalanced by the expansion of the *Theme and Variations*. In the face of such originality, the first reviewer wrote: "It cannot be denied that [Beethoven] is becoming more and more introverted, thus distancing himself more and more from the outside world and from what now occupies and interests other music lovers. He merely absorbs his subjectivity and ascribes always to his enthusiasm, without caring for others. The only state of mind he embraces with love seems to be nature, which is eternal, as his works will be."

When Beethoven received Schlesinger's request, he was working on a small piece at the request of his friend Friedrich Starke to be included in a collection called *Klavierschule*. According to William Meredith's reconstruction, this piece pinned among the sketches for the *Missa Solemnis* is what later became the first movement of the *Sonata, Op. 109*. This *Vivace, ma non troppo* best exemplifies a paradox: how to condense into a small space a modulating harmonic path without losing possibilities for development and broad scope. To do this, Beethoven cuts the piano writing to the bone, presenting the first idea in a simple preluding texture in which the chordal progression is limpid and defined. He follows this up with fantasy-like episodes in improvisational style, where the extemporaneous search for new harmonic paths is realized in the jarring juxtaposition of arpeggios of unresolved and distant harmonies. The return of the initial gesture, developed in harmonic texture and intensity, makes it clear how behind an apparent rhapsodic veil lies an actual sonata form, rethought, and brought to extreme conciseness and bare of material. This structural transfiguration makes even sharper the ethereal expressiveness of the episode, which blossoms seamlessly in the *Prestissimo*. The sudden change in character does not lose the foundation of the discourse: concision and expressive urgency. In contrast to the ethereal and indefinite variety, however, we find a structural definition of gesture, sound, and direction. The result is a balance between momentum and suspense, in a passionate density that will have much influence on Schumann.

The balance between the ethereal and incisive urgency of the first movements and their concision prepare the field for the *Andante molto cantabile ed espressivo,* a vast episode composed of a theme with six variations. The theme implies a sarabande rhythm with a regular and composed structure, whose simple harmonic language becomes the basis for a metaphor of deconstruction and transfiguration. Giovanni Carli Ballola's poetic description best renders the path that this theme faces: "Along its path open up gardens where the purest melodies blossom on the bare stem of sparse and elementary chords, as in the first variation; or paths already tried, but retraced with the enthusiasm of the pioneer, as in the third, much of the fourth and fifth variations, in which Beethoven rediscovers and makes his own the Bach of the Goldberg Variations." Then, the theme's path is not that of variation so much as that of asceticism: as the variations pass, it is increasingly stripped down and sublimated, moving from dimensions of radical contrapuntal complexity to pure, sparse harmonic dimensions. On its return, in the cantabile that closes the Sonata's journey, the theme appears to us, according to Roman Vlad, as "shrouded in a sublime transfiguring light."

PROGRAM NOTES

Piano Sonata No. 31 in A-flat Major, Op. 110

In the late summer of 1821, Beethoven faced a period of severe illness due to an acute case of jaundice. The weakness due to this complicated circumstance forcibly stopped the tumultuous writing of the *Missa Solemnis* and the *Ninth Symphony*, as well as delayed the delivery of the *Sonatas, Op. 110* and *111* to Schlesinger. Beethoven wrote directly to him: "My health is still shaky and should probably remain so until I can take the bath prescribed by the doctor." On September 7, 1821, he was finally able to travel to Baden bei Wien to take the thermal baths prescribed by his physician Dr. Jakob Staudenheim.

These biographical events have, over time, given voice to many theories to answer one of the many mysteries surrounding the Beethoven's figure: so attentive to the relationship management behind the dedication of a work, he left without a dedicatee the *Sonata, Op. 110*. On the contrary, he wrote on the first page of the manuscript the date "Dec. 25, 1821," Christmas Day. What could be a concealed dedication to Jesus Christ for the healing of illness turns into a possible programmatic impulse: the Sonata would thus become a picture of birth, suffering, and rebirth. Despite this, other commentators such as Charles Rosen acknowledge that "There is a scenario to *Op. 110*, but whether it refers to any real event or literary inspiration we do not know." We can only guess, and I humbly leave to the reader the decision on what to listen for in this Sonata.

The idea of natality, and thus the tenderness with which a human being looks at the birth of a baby, seems to find evidence in its favor at the beginning of the *Moderato cantabile, molto espressivo,* where Beethoven uses the rare indication *"con amabilità,"* with gentleness, sweetness. The musical element seems to imply a pre-existing space as if it begins after its beginning. From this opening, the entire movement possesses a vocal, lieder-like texture and style that alternates with episodes of keyboard fantasy that are never aggressive or virtuosic. This balance creates a sonata form with simplicity and formal coherence, which becomes the space in which clarity of expression is expressed within which a latent complexity is hidden.

The setting changes dramatically in the *Allegro molto,* with an unpretentious folksong mood full of surprising metrical shifts taking over. According to Cybinski, Beethoven builds the musical framework from two quotations from folksongs: *"Unsa Kätz' häd Katz'ln g'habt"* (Our cat has had kittens) and *"Ich bin lüderlich, du bist lüderlich"* (I'm debauchery, you're debauchery). The structure of the *Scherzo con Trio* allows Beethoven to explore two faces of this plebeian dimension: on the one hand, the profane chorale that is mixed with band effects, and on the other, an episode of pure piano juggling that seems injected with an unexpected and surprising comedy.

The influence of the great work on the *Missa Solemnis, Op. 123* on Beethovenian piano writing reaches its peak in the long final episode of the *Sonata, Op. 110*. Beethoven recreates an actual *opera seria* scene at the piano, drawing inspiration from the reformed opera of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The *Adagio ma non troppo opens* with a full-fledged recitative, in which the tempo management and interplay between accompaniment and speech are free and closely related to the dramatic meaning of the episode. The transition between recitative and aria occurs after the imploring and desperate climax of the high A repeated over and over again. A restrained and dramatic chordal passage thus unfolds the episode of the vocal aria, "*Arioso dolente*," which has the most intimate character and is pre-eminently one of uncertain and desperate prayer. In a musical gesture of religious significance, from the exact reprise of the last held note of the prayer the Fugue unfolds. In the succession of the various contrapuntal modes by which the thematic braid of the Fugue is gradually created, Beethoven seems to be searching for a form of sacred vocal counterpoint on the piano, until it results in a new episode of the prayer, which seems even more exhausted and desperate. "*Perdendo le forze, dolente*," Beethoven writes, literally "losing strength, sorely." The prayer closes in a minor mode, softly, immediately countered by a startling crescendo of the same chord but in a major mode. It is the beginning of rebirth, an act of musical resurrection that evolves into the inversion of the previous fugue. To use Beethoven's own words, "*poi a poi di nuovo vivente*," that is "little by little back to life," until it explodes triumphantly in the masterful final ascension.

Piano Sonata No. 32 in C Minor, Op. 111

"In Beethoven's music, subjectivity […] acts not so much by breaking through form, as rather, more fundamentally, by creating it." With these words, Theodor W. Adorno introduced his thoughts on the late style in Beethoven. In the musical expression of his late years, for Adorno the objective and subjective merge: "Objective is the fractured landscape, subjective the light in which - alone - it glows into life. He does not bring about their harmonious synthesis. As the power of dissociation, he tears them apart in time, in order, perhaps, to preserve them for the eternal. In the history of art late works are the catastrophes." While Adorno's thought moves from philosophical categories that may seem far from an ordinary perception, he was also a proponent of the most famous poetic and literary interpretation of the Sonata, Op. 111, which has influenced performers and listeners alike. Indeed, he was Thomas Mann's advisor and musicological guide in the writing of *Doktor Faustus,* published in 1947. In the pages of this novel, the city organist and music teacher Wendell Kretschmar discusses the two-movement structure of *Op. 111*: "A third movement? A new approach? A return after this parting – impossible! It had happened that the sonata had come, in the second,

enormous movement, to an end, an end without any return. And when he said 'the sonata,' he meant not only this one in C Minor, but the sonata in general, as a species, as traditional art-form; it itself was here at an end, brought to its end, it had fulfilled its destiny, resolved itself, it took leave – the gesture of farewell of the D G G motif, consoled by the C-sharp, was a leave-taking in this sense too, great as the whole piece itself, the farewell of the sonata form."

As much as this thought may be influenced by a spontaneous historiography that takes place in the head of the listener who knows that this is Beethoven's last Sonata and with this work comes the end of a tumultuous journey, Barry Cooper confirms that Beethoven himself probably intended this work as the closing of his experience with the piano Sonata genre. Despite the fact that he was only in his early 50s, Cooper states that "Beethoven did not start planning any further piano sonatas, as far as is known. With hindsight it is easy to imagine that he intended *Op. 111* to be his last sonata and his farewell to the genre, and its ethereal finale can therefore be interpreted as portraying a foretaste of Heaven."
The catalyzing balance of *Op. 111* is the paradoxical coexistence of a sonata form and a theme with variations, which, in their union, form the work. As Harry Halbreich argues, these are "the fundamental forms with which the older Beethoven was concerned above all. It seems as though he wanted to formulate his last thoughts in both of them at once." To this consideration, Fischer poetically adds: "The two movements symbolize this world and the world to come." The first movement is a large-scale architecture that, once again, attempts to fuse contrapuntal and sonata styles. To confirm Fischer, it opens with a concrete, dramatic and unpredictable *Maestoso,* with sharp, fast gestures. As was the case with the first left-hand gesture in the *Sonata, Op. 106,* again the work begins with a left-hand leap, but this time descending. The risk and tension of this first episode flow into the *Allegro con brio e appassionato,* where the actual theme is presented, treated as the subject of a fugue, isolated and played in the octave by the two hands. Only after the exposition does Beethoven offer in the development the fugato episode on this subject, which again is deconstructed and reconstructed throughout the entire structure of the piece, until it ethereally disappears in the concluding coda.

The C major chord, the endpoint of the first movement, opens the *Arietta,* clearly connecting the two movements. However, this new episode enters the realm of contemplation, of a light that compensates for the radical darkness of the *Allegro.* From a pure theme, based entirely on the tonic dominant relationship, Beethoven builds a cycle of variations that once again have as their focal point the rarefaction, the transfiguring deconstruction of the theme. Eventually, at the maximum ethereal intangibility of the structure, the theme is modified by the addition of a C and a C-sharp, appearing new, lived-in. We go back again to the quote by

Thomas Mann, who describes this transition: "This added C-sharp is the most moving, most consoling, most melancholy, and conciliatory act that can be given. It is like a painfully loving caress on the hair, on a cheek, a last look into the eyes, quiet and deep. It is the blessing of the object, it is the terribly chased and humanized phrase so that it overwhelms and descends into the heart of the listener like a farewell, a goodbye forever, so sweet that the eyes fill with tears."

We have come to the end. It should have become clear by now that
Beethoven possessed within himself the creative power of nature herself.
Tremendously subjective though he was, he raised the personal
to the level of the typical and the universal and gave us an example
of how it is possible in spite of material and human limitations
to reveal the eternal in the temporal.
(Edwin Fischer)

— Federico Ercoli

We acknowledge with respect the Seneca Nation, known as the "Great Hill People" and "Keepers of the Western Door" of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. We take this opportunity to thank the people whose ancestral lands the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester currently occupies in Rochester, New York.

MEET THE ARTIST

Gold medal winner of the 2005 Van Cliburn Piano Competition, distinguished pianist, **Alexander Kobrin**, has received wide acclaim for his emotional, technically inspired performances, placing him at the forefront of today's performing musicians.

Mr. Kobrin is an active guest soloist with the world's leading orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, Tokyo Philharmonic, Orchestra Verdi, Russian National Orchestra, Belgrade Philharmonic, English Chamber Orchestra, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Dallas Symphony, Berliner Symphony, Swedish Radio Symphony, Birmingham Symphony, Warsaw Philharmonic, and the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

He has collaborated with such conductors as Mikhail Pletnev, Mikhail Jurovsky, Sir Mark Elder, Vassiliy Sinaisky, James Conlon, Claus Peter Flor, Vassiliy Petrenko and Bramwell Tovey.

He appears in recitals at major halls worldwide, including Carnegie Zankel Hall and Avery Fisher Hall in New York, the Kennedy Centre in Washington, Albert Hall and Wigmore Hall in London, Louvre Auditorium, Salle Gaveau and Salle Cortot in Paris, Munich Herkulesaal and Berliner Filarmonia Hall in Germany, the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatoire, Sheung Wan Civic Centre in Hong Kong, as well as Sala Verdi in Milan and many others. Other past performances have included recitals at Bass Hall for the Cliburn Series, the Washington Performing Arts Society, La Roque d'Antheron, the Ravinia Festival, the Beethoven Easter Festival, Busoni Festival, the renowned Klavier-Festival Ruhr, the Festival Musique dans le Grésivaudan, the International Keyboard Institute & Festival, annual concert tours in Japan, China, and Taiwan.

Mr. Kobrin has recordings on the Harmonia Mundi, Quartz, and Centaur labels, covering a wide swath of the piano literature, which have received rave reviews. Gramophone Magazine raved about his Cliburn Competition release on Harmonia Mundi, writing that "in [Rachmaninoff's] Second Sonata (played in the 1931 revision), despite fire-storms of virtuosity, there is always room for everything to tell and Kobrin achieves a hypnotic sense of the music's dark necromancy."

In addition to the Van Cliburn, Mr. Kobrin has garnered top prizes from numerous international piano competitions including the Busoni

International Piano Competition (First Prize), Hamamatsu International Piano Competition (Top Prize), Scottish International Piano Competition in Glasgow (First Prize).

Mr. Kobrin frequently serves as a jury member for many international piano competitions, most recently, the First International Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli Competition in Brescia. Other competitions include the Van Cliburn in Fort Worth, TX, Busoni International Piano Competition in Bolzano, Hamamatsu International Piano Competition, the Blüthner International Piano Competition in Vienna, E-Competition in Fairbanks, AK, and the Neuhaus International Piano Festival in Moscow.

Mr. Kobrin is a dedicated teacher and is passionate about his contributions to education both in the U.S. and abroad. In September 2023, he will join the faculty of the Conservatorio Svizzera Italiana in Switzerland as a visiting professor. Since 2017, Mr. Kobrin has served on the faculty of the renowned Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY. From 2003 to 2010 he served on the faculty of the Russian State Gnessin's Academy of Music. In 2010 Alexander Kobrin was named the L. Rexford Distinguished Chair in Piano at the Schwob School of Music at Columbus State University, and from 2013 until 2017, he was a member of the celebrated Artist Faculty of New York University's Steinhardt School. Mr. Kobrin has also given masterclasses in Europe and Asia, the International Piano Series, and at the Conservatories of Japan and China. In 2020, he became co-director of Hiiumaa Homecoming Festival in Estonia.

Upcoming highlights include the Complete Beethoven Sonatas Project for Centaur Records and live performances at the Eastman School of Music during the 2023-2024 season.

Mr. Kobrin was born in 1980 in Moscow. At the age of five, he was enrolled in the world-famous Gnessin Special School of Music after which he attended the prestigious Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatoire. His teachers have included renowned professors Tatiana Zelikman and Lev Naumov.

Mr. Kobrin immigrated to the United States in 2010 and became its citizen in 2015. He currently resides in Rochester, NY with his family.

Mr. Kobrin is a Shigeru Kawai artist.

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