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CONCERT
SEASON

ROMAN RABINOVICH

PIANO

Sunday, November 3
Raven's Cry Theatre, Sechelt



This concert sponsored by Flemming & Sombrowski Law Office

Artist Bio

The eloquent pianist Roman Rabinovich, winner of the Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Master Competition in 2008, performs as a soloist throughout Europe, Asia and the USA.

He has won critical acclaim for interpretations of the music of Haydn and curated a three-concert Haydn Day at Wigmore Hall in 2022. He has also released two albums of Haydn Sonatas on First Hand Records to great critical acclaim, with *BBC Music Magazine* noting "the elegance and liveliness of Rabinovich's keyboard style are, indeed, a joy to listen to, and his unfailing musicality and inventiveness allow him to penetrate to the expressive heart of Haydn's world."

He has appeared with orchestras all over the world, including the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Prague Symphony and all the major Israeli orchestras, and has collaborated with conductors such as Sir Roger Norrington, Zubin Mehta, Ludovic Morlot, Kristjan Järvi, Christoph Koenig and Gerard Schwarz. He has garnered critical acclaim for performances of concertos of all periods, ranging from Bach to Lutoslawski.

Dubbed 'a true polymath', Rabinovich is also a composer and visual artist.

This season he returns to Wigmore Hall for a series of three recitals, as well as to the Lammermuir Festival in Scotland and the Liszt Academy Chamber Music Festival in Budapest, and makes his concerto debut with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. Roman Rabinovich also returns to Israel for a recital tour and concerto performances with the Haifa Symphony.

The 2024-25 season also has a particular focus on JS Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, with a number of performances scheduled, including in London (Wigmore Hall) and Vienna (Bösendorfer-Zyklus), to coincide with a planned recording release in May 2025.

Roman Rabinovich made his Israel Philharmonic debut under Zubin Mehta at age 10, having immigrated to Israel a year before from Tashkent, Uzbekistan. A graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, he went on to earn his masters degree at the Juilliard School. He was one of the first pianists to be mentored by Sir András Schiff as part of his "Building Bridges" series, a program to promote the careers of young artists. Together with his wife, violinist Diana Cohen, he is co-director of the ChamberFest Cleveland and ChamberFest West Festival in Calgary, where Rabinovich makes his home.



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The program

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN

Born in Rohrau, Austria, March 31, 1732; died in Vienna, May 31, 1809

PIANO SONATA IN F MAJOR, Hob XVI:29

I. Moderato

II. Adagio

III. Tempo di minuet

Haydn's role in the development of the symphony and string quartet is secure in the minds of many people, but it's often forgotten just how important the genre of the piano sonata was to this composer. Haydn wrote about sixty of them over forty years, from the 1750s to the 1790s.

The F-major Sonata dates from 1774 and was published privately in manuscript two years later. Don't look for any pretty tunes in the first movement. Haydn is a master at holding your attention without them. The opening subject might well accompany a procession of toy soldiers – mock heroism, sudden pauses, all gesture and no melody. The second subject takes off with a succession of elegant, feather-light flourishes. The exposition is repeated, followed by a development section entirely in the minor mode: the first subject in C minor, then the second in D minor. The recapitulation includes more development material, some of it harmonically quite adventurous. A gentle Adagio movement is followed by a finale "in the tempo of a minuet" consisting of a sprightly theme and three variations, the first of them in the minor mode.

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Born in Saint-Germain-en-Laye (near Paris), August 22, 1862; died in Paris, March 25, 1918

ESTAMPES

Pagodes (Modérément – Animé)

Soirée dans Grenade (Mouvement de Habanera)

Jardins sous la pluie (Net et vif)

Debussy wrote the three pieces that make up *Estampes* (images printed from engraved copper or wood plates) in 1903. Biographer Oscar Thompson has called this music "among the most diversely colored of Debussy's piano works, and, in a sense, among the most descriptive." It is therefore hardly surprising to find other composers, including André Caplet and Percy Grainger, orchestrating these pieces. The first performance was given by Ricardo Viñes in Paris on January 9, 1904.

In "Pagodes," Debussy evokes the world of Oriental temples and trancelike serenity through the use of bell and gong-like effects,

rhythmic stasis, a shimmering surface and pentatonic (five-note) scales which he heard in performances of Javanese gamelan music at the Paris Exposition in 1889. Likewise, in "Soirée dans Grenade" (An Evening in Granada), the composer distills the sensuous atmosphere of a sultry Mediterranean city – street sounds, a strumming guitar, and the pervasive, languid rhythm of the habanera. The third *Estampe* is unmistakably French. Segments of two popular French nursery rhymes are incorporated into this piece, whose torrents of notes so vividly conjure up watery torrents as well. In addition to using four different kinds of scale patterns (major, minor, whole tone and chromatic), Debussy demonstrates his extraordinary ability to suggest lighting effects, from dark rain clouds to brilliant sunshine.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born in Bonn, December 16, 1770; died in Vienna, March 26, 1827

PIANO SONATA NO. 31 IN A-FLAT MAJOR, OP. 110

I. Moderato cantabile molto espressivo

II. Allegro molto

III. Adagio, ma non troppo; Fuga: Allegro, ma non troppo

In artistic expression, emotional intensity, structural ingenuity and technical range, there are few works in the pianist's repertory to compare with Beethoven's late piano sonatas (Op. 110 is the penultimate work in the genre). Each is a composition *sui generis*, one that "obeys only rules drawn up for its own purpose," in Eric Blom's words. Sonata form, scherzo, variations and fugue are all integrated to the point where Beethoven is not so much constructing music according to pre-existing forms as he is thinking in pure sound.

Op. 110 was written in 1821. Beethoven completed no other compositions in that year, although he was also working on the *Missa solemnis*. It's infused with all the serenity, subtlety and introspection we associate with the composer's late-period style. Pianist Charles Rosen calls it "the most gracious and the most accessible of Beethoven's late piano works." Freedom of form, control of contrasts, emotional intensity and sublime artistic expression fuse in a masterpiece of sustained intellectual development and tonal poetry.

The first movement is almost a free fantasia, consisting of several highly contrasting elements woven into a musical tapestry of radiant, ineffable beauty. The central development section is based solely on transformations of the opening phrase. A mood of autumnal warmth and serenity pervades the music.

The second movement is brief and mercurial, featuring rapid and frequent alternations of loud and soft, abrupt and lyrical, angry

The program

and playful passages. Numerous also are the celebrated Beethoven sforzandos (sharp accents) on weak beats.

A strange, recitative-like passage leads to the *Arioso dolente* in the extremely rare key of A-flat minor (seven flats!). Over a throbbing accompaniment figure we hear “a tragic song that is very likely the most piercing expression of despair in the literature of the piano,” writes Robert Offergeld. “Inconsolably lonely, it describes a grief too bleak to be borne, let alone surmounted, by any spirit less virile than Beethoven’s.” That grief is overcome by the final fugue, which, despite one more intrusion of the grief-crazed subject, combines intellectual mastery with a radiant affirmation of life in a better world.

INTERMISSION

ROBERT SCHUMANN

Born in Zwickau, June 8, 1810; died in Endenich (near Bonn), July 29, 1856

SYMPHONIC ETUDES, OP. 13

Theme

Etude I (Var.1)

Anhang.1

Etude II (Var.2)

Etude III

Etude IV (Var.3)

Etude V (Var.4)

Etude VI (Var.5)

Anhang 4

Anhang 5

Anhang 3

Etude VII (Var.6)

Etude VIII (Var.7)

Etude IX

Anhang 2

Etude X (Var.8)

Etude XI (Var.9)

Etude XII (Finale)

The *Symphonic Etudes* are intimately connected to the composer's personal life. Out of his romantically fertile imagination, Schumann created a gallery of fictional characters known as the *Davidsbund* (band of David), two of whom are opposing facets of Schumann's alter ego: Florestan, representing his extroverted, exuberant side; Eusebius his quiet, meditative side. Members of the *Davidsbund* were the proud musical pioneers who went forth to do battle (with pens and notes, not swords and slingshots) against philistines and ultra-conservative composers of the day. Florestan and Eusebius both inhabit the world of the *Symphonic Etudes*.

The opening gesture, a full-fledged theme, forms an integral part of the composition and serves as the basis of a series of variations. The number of variations, the title of the set, and their ordering went through numerous changes in the course of the nineteenth century, extending to well after the composer's death. In the form most commonly encountered today, there are twelve numbers following the presentation of the dirge-like theme in C-sharp minor. Originally Schumann wrote six more as well, but withdrew them, mostly due to difficulties in arranging a proper sequence of so many variations in the same key and, for the most part, of similar character. Five of these “extra” variations were salvaged by Brahms and published as a supplement in 1873. They are known today as the “posthumous etudes” (or *Anhang*) and are occasionally performed as a separate group or interspersed in whole (as Roman Rabinovich does) or in part with the twelve standard etudes.

The “symphonic” aspect of this music refers to the organic growth and extensive working out of the theme as well as to the orchestral textures, colors, sonorities and effects suggested or realized. As a single example, consider the third variation, for which the listener may easily imagine violins playing the uppermost line spiccato (bouncing the bow lightly on the strings), violas singing the lyrical inner voice and cellos and basses providing the harmonic support.

Most of the *Etudes* (or studies) are also variations, although very freely fashioned out of the original theme. Variations 3 and 9 of the set are not derived from the C-sharp minor theme at all, but rather serve to introduce new material. The majestic, triumphant Finale almost cries out for orchestral treatment. It too introduces new thematic material.

Program notes: Robert Markow

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