

**JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH (1685-1750), arr. Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924)**  
*Adagio from the Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C, BWV 564 (c1712/1900)*

**WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)**

*Sonata in E-flat, K. 282 (1775)*

*Adagio*

*Menuetto I, II*

*Allegro*

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN 1770-1827**

*Piano Sonata No. 26, in E-flat, Op. 81a (Das Lebewohl/Les adieux) (1809-10)*

*Das Lebewohl (The Farewell): Adagio - Allegro*

*Abwesenheit (Absence): Andante espressivo*

*Das Wiedersehen (The Reunion): Vivacissimamente*

**FRANÇOIS MOREL (1926-2018)**

*Deux Études de sonorité (1952/4)*

**INTERMISSION**

**FRANZ SCHUBERT (1797-1828)**

*Piano Sonata in B-flat, D. 960, Op. posth. (1828)*

*Molto moderato*

*Andante sostenuto*

*Scherzo: Allegro vivace con delicatezza*

*Allegro ma non troppo*

### **JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH**

Born in Eisenach, Germany, March 21, 1685; died in Leipzig, Germany, July 28, 1750

### **FERRUCCIO BUSONI**

Born in Empoli, Italy, April 1, 1866; died in Berlin, July 27, 1924

*Adagio from the Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C, BWV 564 (c1712/1900)*

Bach wrote more music for organ than for any other single instrument. This short, majestic Adagio is the middle movement of his *Toccata, Adagio and Fugue, BWV 564*, an organ piece he wrote early on in his career while working as court organist and chamber musician at the ducal chapel in Weimar. It's in the style of a three-movement, fast-slow-fast, Italian concerto, with a singularly attractive, highly Italianate slow movement. This Adagio movement has an ornamented, rhythmically dotted-note (long-short) melody over a restrained accompaniment and pizzicato-like bass line. While the entire work is believed to have been first published long after Bach's death in 1845, this arrangement of the stately Adagio comes from Busoni's arrangement under the title *Prelude, Intermezzo and Fugue*, "arranged for concert use on the piano, 1900."

### **WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART**

Born in Salzburg, Austria, January 27, 1756; died in Vienna, December 5, 1791

*Sonata in E-flat, K. 282 (1775)*

Mozart acquired his keyboard technique early on and, in his 18 piano sonatas, virtuoso display was less important than taste and feeling. The purely technical demands of the sonatas vary little from the earliest to the latest. He wrote some of his sonatas for pupils or for the daughters of influential men whose help he needed. Others were initially for his personal use, rather than being published – and that appears to be the case with the E-flat Sonata to be played tonight. It comes from his earliest set of six that he completed at the beginning of 1775, while in Munich, seeing to the production of his new comic opera *La finta giardiniera*. The handwriting and ink in Mozart's composing score has led scholars to believe that the six sonatas were written down as a set, in one fell swoop. He played these sonatas in Munich and on later trips to Paris, Augsburg and Mannheim. K. 282 is the fourth of the set and the only one to begin with a movement in a slower tempo. Reflective rather than profound, its sombre opening theme is complemented by a brighter second theme within a traditional sonata first movement structure. A pair of minuets, the first sprightly and upbeat, the second more gracefully flowing, leads to the finale. This is a buoyant, forward-moving Allegro, carefully and precisely shaped, with not a note too many.

### **LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN**

Born in Bonn, Germany, baptised December 17, 1770; died in Vienna, Austria, March 26, 1827

*Piano Sonata No. 26, in E-flat, Op. 81a (Das Lebewohl/Les adieux) (1809-10)*

Beethoven portrays feelings rather than narrative in his 1810 sonata, often known today by its French title *Les adieux*. The French title has stubbornly stuck ever since Beethoven's publisher, Breitkopf & Härtel, issued the work in both French and German editions. The German title *Das Lebewohl* is the more evocative since that is the word ('Le-be-wohl') that Beethoven writes over the three slow hunting horn calls that open the work. The word means 'Farewell' and the movement marks the departure and temporary exile of a friend and patron, the Archduke Rudolph, from war-torn Vienna, then under siege by Napoleon. The word '*Lebewohl*' means something quite different from '*Les adieux*,' Beethoven informed his publisher. "The first is said in a warm-hearted manner to one person, the other to a whole group of people, or to a town," he added. The Archduke, a fine pianist and diligent student of composition, had been Beethoven's pupil since 1804, when he was 15 or 16. Under Beethoven's direction he completed some 25 compositions, making him Beethoven's only serious composition student. The two men were to have a close friendship throughout the

composer's life. Immediately before Beethoven wrote this 'Farewell' sonata for him, Rudolph had banded together with princes Kinsky and Joseph Lobkowitz to pay Beethoven a yearly stipend of 4,000 florins to ensure he remained in Vienna rather than accept work in another city. Beginning with the 'Farewell' sonata, Rudolph was to receive more dedications than any other patron – including the *Missa solemnis*, Fourth and Fifth Piano Concertos, the *Hammerklavier* and Op. 111 Piano Sonatas, the Violin Sonata Op. 96, Trio Op. 97, and *Grosse Fuge*.

Although the sonata clearly has a descriptive program, Beethoven steers clear of portraying bombardment or armies in the streets. The sonata deals in human terms with (as the movement headings indicate) the departure of, absence from and reunion with a friend. It's 'more feeling than painting,' as Beethoven said of the program to his *Pastoral* Symphony. Many of the themes of the three movements spring from the lamenting opening horn call and the rising figure that immediately follows. The distantly echoing horn calls in the closing measures of the first movement suggest a picture of the young Archduke's coach and horses receding into the distance as the royal household flees Vienna for Buda in Hungary. 'Absence' and 'The Reunion' lead Beethoven to the minor and then major keys, the latter bursting out of the restless, shifting harmonies of the slow movement as a shout of joy, its melody now recalling the opening horn-call 'Farewell' motif.

### **FRANÇOIS MOREL**

Born in Montreal, March 14, 1926; died in Québec City, January 14, 2018

*Deux Études de sonorité (1952/4)*

Quebec composer François Morel's earliest success came when Stokowski gave the première of his short orchestral piece, *Antiphonie*, at Carnegie Hall in 1953. Unlike many of his contemporaries, particularly those in the class of Claude Champagne at the Conservatoire in Montreal, Morel did not study abroad. Instead, he progressively worked his way through the music of 20<sup>th</sup> century composers, drawing inspiration from a variety of traditions, from Debussy, Ravel and Messiaen to Stravinsky, Bartók, Varèse, Boulez, Berio, Carter, Dutilleux, and Takemitsu – to mention just those composers that Morel himself singled out. "Their music has influenced me greatly throughout my career," he said. "Dare I suggest that this is the way in which we perpetuate tradition?"

Although it is just one of two solo piano works from Morel's pen, the *Deux Études de sonorité*, written in 1952 and 1954 respectively, has become a Canadian classic. The two studies frequently appear at competitions (including a prize-winning performance at the 1978 Tchaikovsky competition by André Laplante) and are in the repertoire of many pianists. Both Debussy and Messiaen come to mind in the shifting tonal colours, the modal inflections and rhythmic transpositions of this vibrant music. The first performance was given by the composer himself in one of a series of pioneering concerts at the Conservatoire.

### **FRANZ SCHUBERT**

Born in Vienna, Austria, January 31, 1797; died in Vienna, November 19, 1828

*Piano Sonata in B-flat, D. 960, Op. posth. (1828)*

Franz Schubert was no lion of the keyboard, although he lived just as the rapidly developing piano began to produce a generation of virtuoso pianists. Shy, modest, quite without the charisma to propel him onto a concert platform, Schubert was an innocent when it came to concert – or career – planning. Surprisingly little is known about Schubert the pianist. Even his role as pianist at the 'Schubertiads,' those evenings of music-making, conversation and conviviality among friends, is unreliably documented. His school friend Albert Stadler commended Schubert's 'beautiful touch, quiet hand, clear, neat playing,' and found it 'full of insight and feeling.' Another friend, Anselm Hüttenbrenner, found Schubert 'safe and very fluent' rather than elegant at the keyboard. But even

though his personal charisma at the keyboard failed to impress all, in 1828, the final year of his life, Schubert composed three towering piano sonatas. They were only published eleven years later with the rather ominous looking 'opus posthumous' designation. They progress from the tragic and brooding C minor (D. 958) to the emotionally wide-ranging A major (D. 959) and to the meditative and peaceful B-flat (D. 960). Schubert worked on all three simultaneously, sketching, revising and composing hurriedly in ink on different sizes of manuscript paper, clearly in a feverish state of mental exhilaration.

The first movement of the vast B-flat sonata refuses to be hurried. Its opening theme starts serenely, questioningly, with no suggestion of urgency, punctuated by a low, rumbling trill. Themes abound and a new one is introduced late in the sonata at a point where we might normally expect development. A feeling of foreboding occurs whenever the low, mysterious trill appears. This foreboding turns to grim desolation in the slow movement, in C-sharp minor. The pathos underlining this serenely pulsing music, with its hypnotically recurring accompanying figure, is reminiscent of the slow movement of the great C major Quintet, another work from Schubert's last year. The ethereal lightness of the Scherzo, with its unusual marking *con delicatezza*, seems removed from the everyday world. It throws into contrast the ambiguity of the finale which begins – in a Beethovenian gesture – in the 'wrong' key of C minor, rather than B-flat. Schubert brings back the idea each time the main theme recurs, much as he used the low rumbling trill throughout the opening movement. With its subtle interplay of forward-driving momentum, poignant lyricism and a serenity that cannot be put into words, the movement caps the greatest contribution to the genre of the piano sonata since Beethoven.

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