



For Beethoven, Art Reveals the Man

By Brian Lauritzen

Orchestras and conductors have the nine symphonies. Pianists have the 32 sonatas. String quartets have the 16 quartets. So often, the music of Beethoven seems to lend itself to performances of complete cycles. No other composer seems to inspire such encyclopedic programming of concerts. When's the last time you heard a complete cycle of Mozart symphonies, for example? Or a full run of the Dvořák symphonies? It just doesn't happen all that often. But Beethoven cycles happen all the time. As the British cellist, Steven Isserlis, has said, "Beethoven is just there, and, if we are to understand anything about music, we have to attempt to come to terms with him."

That's because there's much to be revealed about Beethoven—the man and the artist—by immersing ourselves in his music. After all, he's one of the first to transcend what LA Opera music director James Conlon calls "artisan composers," to become a true "artist composer." Artisans make work to specification. Much like a patron (customer) would ask an artisan to build a table or a chair, the same would be asked of artisan composers: "I'd like a series of flute concertos, Herr Mozart," and so Mozart would write a few flute concertos.

Beethoven wrote music on pure artistic inspiration. If he were around today, he'd probably be making crowdfunding pitches on Kickstarter or Indiegogo... or he might have a Patreon page where fans could support his work, whatever that may be at the moment.

Even though there are only five sonatas and a couple of other non-sonata works for piano and cello, they still reveal Beethoven to us in much the same way as his symphonies, piano sonatas, and string quartets do. The five sonatas come from each of the three distinct periods of Beethoven's artistic output. The periods are known, creatively enough, as the Early, Middle, and Late periods. I know, I know: also, the sky is blue and the grass (especially this winter in California) is green. #BreakingNews.

The first two sonatas, Op.5, come from a period in Beethoven's life when he was just barely starting out and he was trying to make a name for himself as a pianist. He was 25 years old and, as yet, completely unaffected by the deafness which would transform his life and his art. The Op. 5 sonatas were written in Berlin, before Beethoven made the move to Vienna, for himself and the famous French cellist Jean-Pierre Duport to play together.

The Sonata No. 3, Op. 69, comes from the middle period of Beethoven's life. It was written between 1806 and 1808, exactly at the same time as he was composing his monumental Symphony No. 5. By this point in his life, the reality of his deafness was sinking in and while he hadn't lost his hearing completely at this point, he was coming to terms with the fact that he would eventually be fully deaf. That said, like so much of his work from this period in his life, we hear the most supreme joy, unbridled and almost blinding

optimism. Just four years earlier, he had contemplated suicide. But, as he wrote in his famous *Heiligenstadt Testament*, his music saved him. "It was only my art that held me back. Oh, it seemed to me impossible to leave the world until I had produced all that I felt was within me."

The final two sonatas, Op. 102, are perfect examples of music from Beethoven's late period. Music from this moment in Beethoven's life has this ethereal, otherworldly quality and often meditates on themes of transcendent spirituality. It's not until we reach the last of the five sonatas that we are finally given a proper slow movement. And what a slow movement it is: a stunning prayer that seems to stop time itself.

As programmed for these performances, it is possible to get a sense for the whole of the Beethoven piano-cello evolution in one evening: both programs feature an early sonata and both allow you to trace Beethoven's artistic trajectory. But for the complete experience, I highly recommend you make time for both performances. Because, like the nine symphonies, the 32 piano sonatas, and the 16 string quartets, this too, is a powerful and important journey.

Join Brian Lauritzen and other guest moderators for free pre-concert conversations in the Bram Goldsmith Theater with the artists prior to select classical music performances, along with a complimentary glass of wine provided by The Henry Wine Group.

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PRESENTS

BEETHOVEN

RALPH KIRSHBAUM, CELLO | SHAI WOSNER, PIANO

Thursday, March 9 Program

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

7 Variations in E-flat Major on Mozart's "Bei Männern" from *The Magic Flute*, WoO 46

Cello Sonata in G minor Op. 5, No. 2
Adagio sostenuto ed espressivo
Allegro molto più tosto presto
Rondo. Allegro

15 minute intermission

12 Variations in F Major on Mozart's "Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen" from *Die Zauberflöte*, Op. 66

Sonata No. 3 in A Major, Op. 69
Allegro, ma non tanto
Scherzo
Adagio cantabile – Allegro vivace

Friday, March 10 Program

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Cello Sonata in F, Op. 5, No. 1
Adagio sostenuto
Allegro
Allegro vivace

Cello Sonata in C, Op. 102, No. 1
Andante – Allegro vivace
Adagio – Allegro vivace

15 minute intermission

12 Variations on a Theme from Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus*, WoO. 45

Cello Sonata in D, Op. 102, No. 2
Allegro con brio
Adagio con molto sentimento d'affetto
Allegro

MARCH 9-10, 2017 AT 8PM

Bram Goldsmith Theater

Running Time: Both concerts run 1 hour and 45 minutes, including a 15 minute intermission.

Ralph Kirshbaum and Shai Wosner's concerts are made possible at The Wallis by generous support from Susan and Peter Strauss.



RALPH KIRSHBAUM (Cello) The distinguished career of Texas-born cellist Ralph Kirshbaum encompasses the worlds of solo performance, chamber music, recording and pedagogy and places him in the highest echelon of today's cellists. He enjoys the affection and respect not only of audiences worldwide, but also of his many eminent colleagues and students.

Ralph Kirshbaum has appeared with many of the world's great orchestras, including the Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, BBC and London Symphonies, Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Philharmonia, Zurich Tonhalle, Orchestre de Paris and Israel Philharmonic. He has collaborated with many of the great conductors of the time such as Herbert Blomstedt, Semyon Bychkov, Christoph von Dohnányi, Andrew Davis, the late Sir Colin Davis, James Levine, Kurt Masur, Zubin Mehta, Sir Antonio Pappano, André Previn, Sir Simon Rattle, Leonard Slatkin and the late Sir Georg Solti. Mr. Kirshbaum has appeared frequently at such prominent international festivals as Edinburgh, Bath, Verbier, Lucerne, Aspen, La Jolla, Santa Fe, Music@Menlo, Ravinia and New York's Mostly Mozart.

Having enjoyed a thirty-year collaboration with pianist Peter Frankl and violinist Gyorgy Pauk, he has in recent years frequently appeared with Pinchas Zukerman, Robert McDuffie, Lawrence Dutton, Peter Jablonski and Shai Vosner. Other recent collaborators have included Leif Ove Andsnes, Joshua Bell, Yefim Bronfman, Midori, Lang Lang, Vadim Repin, Pepe Romero, and the Emerson and Takács String Quartets.

Last season Mr. Kirshbaum performed Beethoven cycles with pianist Shai Vosner in the U.S. and Great Britain, highlighted by a performance of the complete cycle in London's Wigmore Hall, in celebration of Mr. Kirshbaum's 70th birthday. In November 2016, recording with Shai Vosner of the complete sonatas and variations of Beethoven was released on the Onyx Classics label. Mr. Kirshbaum continues to perform Beethoven's cello works in the 2016/17 season. In October, the duo performed at the Phillips Collection in Washington DC; a performance at Chamber Music Sedona in Arizona immediately follows their Beethoven cycle here at The Wallis.

Kirshbaum founded the RNCM Manchester International Cello Festival in 1988 as a

celebration of the cello, its music and musicians. The final Festival, which took place in 2007, was awarded the celebrated Royal Philharmonic Society's Music Award for Concert Series and Festivals. In 2012, Kirshbaum inaugurated the highly successful Piatigorsky International Cello Festival in Los Angeles, centered at the University of Southern California - Thornton School of Music. The Festival returned to Los Angeles in May 2016 and was attended by some of the world's foremost cellists, rising young artists and concertgoers, receiving international acclaim for its concerts, masterclasses, lectures, and workshops. Mr. Kirshbaum launched the 2016 Festival with a performance of Bloch's *Schelomo* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, under the baton of Leonard Slatkin.

A renowned pedagogue, he served on the faculty of the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester for 38 years. In 2008, he accepted the Gregor Piatigorsky Chair in Violoncello at the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music, where he recently assumed the role of Chair of the Strings Department. In July 2016 he received an Honorary Doctorate of Music from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Glasgow. He continues to serve as Artistic Advisor of IMS Prussia Cove and is Founder/Honorary President of the Pierre Fournier Award, as well as Honorary President of the London Cello Society. He recently served a five-year term on the United States President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.

Ralph Kirshbaum's extensive discography includes recordings on the EMI/Virgin Classics, Altara Music, Hyperion, BMG Classics, Onyx Classics, and Virgin Classics labels among others, including notable recordings of the Bach Cello Suites, Brahms Double and Beethoven Triple Concertos with Pinchas Zukerman, the Schubert Quintet with the Takács Quartet, and the complete cello sonatas and variations of Beethoven with Shai Vosner. The rare Montagnana Cello that Ralph Kirshbaum plays once belonged to the 19th-century virtuoso Alfredo Piatti.

North American Representation for Ralph Kirshbaum:
Kirshbaum Associates, Inc.
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Mr. Kirshbaum's recordings are available on the EMI, Virgin, Philips, Chandos and BMG Classics/RCA Victor Red Seal labels.



SHAI WOSNER (Piano) has attracted international recognition for his exceptional artistry, musical integrity, and creative insight. His performances of a broad range of repertoire—from Beethoven and Schubert to Ligeti and the music of today—reflect a degree of virtuosity and intellectual curiosity that has made him a favorite among audiences and critics, who note his "keen musical mind and deep musical soul" (NPR's *All Things Considered*).

In the 2016-17 season, Mr. Vosner launches a new solo recital series, *Schubert: The Great Sonatas*, which continues his critically acclaimed engagement with the composer's music. Described as a "Schubertian of unflinching authority and character" by *Gramophone*, Mr. Vosner performs Schubert's last six piano sonatas over two concert programs, comparing the pieces to "six thick novels, rich with insight about the human condition." He performs the series this season in Israel, with performances in the U.S. and Japan scheduled for the 2017-18 season.

Beyond Schubert, Mr. Vosner has also been praised for inventive pairings of classical and modern masters. His latest recording, featuring concertos and solo works by Haydn and Ligeti with the Danish National Symphony conducted by Nicholas Collon, was released in June on the Onyx label to wide acclaim and was named *Concerto Choice* (September 2016) by *BBC Music Magazine*, which wrote: "Vosner's notes describe these composers' use of humor as 'like two distant relatives sharing an old family joke'. With nevertheless rubs shoulders effortlessly with intensity and even moments of terror – that Ligeti slow movement involves sounds that resemble a siren and a police whistle. It's the intelligence, perception and dazzling energy of Vosner's playing that makes all this possible and vivid." His earlier Onyx releases have also explored links between stylistically contrasting composers, including an album of solo works by Brahms and Schoenberg and an album of works by Schubert and Missy Mazzoli.

Such juxtaposition is also a central feature in Mr. Vosner's joint program with the Aurora Orchestra and Nicholas Collon in London, in which he performs concertos by Ligeti and Mozart and solo works by Chopin, Glass, Hindemith, and Nancarrow. Other concerto appearances in the 2016-17 season include Mr. Vosner's return to the Berkeley, Columbus, Fresno, Jacksonville,

North Carolina, and Jerusalem symphonies, as well as a performance of the Berg Chamber Concerto in Germany with violinist Veronika Eberle and the Kammerakademie Potsdam.

The music of Beethoven is also a major focus for Mr. Vosner this year in recital, chamber, and concerto performances. In addition to performing the composer's last three piano concertos with various orchestras in the U.S., he continues two Beethoven collaborations: *Bridge to Beethoven* – a recital series with violinist Jennifer Koh seen here at The Wallis last season – and the complete works for cello and piano with Ralph Kirshbaum. Among the *Bridge to Beethoven* performances this season is a program in Philadelphia featuring the local premiere of Vijay Iyer's *Bridgetower Fantasy*. In New York, Mr. Vosner and Ms. Koh also perform a recital of works by Beethoven, Debussy, Fauré, and contemporary composers György Kurtág and Kaija Saariaho. Mr. Vosner and Mr. Kirshbaum's 2016-17 performances of Beethoven's complete works for cello and piano include concerts here at The Wallis, The Phillips Collection in Washington, DC, and in Sedona, AZ. Last season, the duo performed the series at London's Wigmore Hall, which was recorded for fall 2016 release on Onyx Classics.

In addition to his Onyx releases, Mr. Vosner's discography includes a duo recording with Ms. Koh, titled *Signs, Games + Messages*, on the Cedille label. Weaving traditional Central European folk music with 20th-century modernism, the recording features works by Bartók, Janáček, and Kurtág, including the latter's duet piece for which the album was named.

Mr. Vosner is a recipient of Lincoln Center's Martin E. Segal Award, an Avery Fisher Career Grant, and a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award—a prize he used to commission Michael Hersch's concerto *Along the Ravines*, which he performed with the Seattle Symphony and Deutsche Radio Philharmonie in its world and European premieres. He was in residence with the BBC as a New Generation Artist, during which he appeared frequently with the BBC orchestras, including conducting Mozart concertos from the keyboard with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. He returned to the BBC Scottish Symphony in both subscription concerts and Proms performances with Donald Runnicles and appeared with the BBC Philharmonic in a live broadcast from Manchester's Bridgewater Hall. As a concerto soloist in the U.S., Mr. Vosner has appeared with the orchestras of Atlanta, Baltimore, Berkeley, Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Indianapolis, Los

Angeles, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and San Francisco, among others. In addition to the BBC orchestras, he has performed abroad with the Barcelona Symphony, Bournemouth Symphony, Frankfurt Radio Symphony, Gothenburg Symphony, LSO St. Luke's, National Arts Centre Orchestra, Nieuw Sinfonietta Amsterdam, Orchestre National de Belgique, Staatskapelle Berlin, and the Vienna Philharmonic, among others. Mr. Vosner has also appeared with the Orpheus, St. Paul, and Los Angeles Chamber Orchestras, having conducted the latter from the keyboard in a 2010 concert that was broadcast on American Public Radio.

Mr. Vosner has worked with such conductors as Daniel Barenboim, Jiří Bělohlávek, James Conlon, Alan Gilbert, Gunther Herbig, James Judd, Zubin Mehta, Peter Oundjian, Donald Runnicles, Leonard Slatkin, Jeffrey Tate, and Yan Pascal Tortelier, and has performed at summer festivals including the Bowdoin International Music Festival, Bravo! Vail festival, Grand Teton Music Festival, Mainly Mozart Festival in San Diego, Mostly Mozart Festival at Lincoln Center, and Ravinia Festival. For several consecutive summers, he was involved in the West-Eastern Divan Workshop led by Mr. Barenboim and toured as soloist with the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra.

Widely sought after by colleagues for his versatility and spirit of partnership, Mr. Vosner has collaborated as a chamber musician with numerous artists, including Martin Fröst, Lynn Harrell, Dietrich Henschel, Cho-Liang Lin, Christian Tetzlaff, and Pinchas Zukerman. He has also collaborated with leading chamber ensembles, including the Grammy Award-winning Parker Quartet in *The Schubert Effect* recital series. Mr. Vosner is a former member of Lincoln Center's Chamber Music Society Two and performs regularly at various chamber music festivals, including Chamber Music Northwest in Portland, the Jerusalem Chamber Music Festival, the Oregon Bach Festival, the Piano Aux Jacobins festival in France, and the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival. Recent chamber music engagements include collaborations with the Pro Musica Society at the Maison Symphonique de Montreal and the Le Club Musical de Quebec at le Palais Montcalm in Canada; performances of works by Brahms, Schumann, and Takemitsu with the Friends of Chamber Music in Denver, Colorado; and appearances at the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Laguna Beach Music Festival, and the Ravinia Festival. Among his recent solo recitals, he performed a program of Gershwin and Dvořák at The Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C.

Born in Israel, Mr. Vosner enjoyed a broad musical education from a very early age, studying piano with Emanuel Krasovsky as well as composition, theory, and improvisation with André Hajdu. He later studied at The Juilliard School with Emanuel Ax. Mr. Vosner is on the faculty at the Longy School of Music in Boston. He resides in New York with his wife and two children.

For more information on Mr. Vosner, please visit his fan page on Facebook and go to shaiwosner.com.