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PREVIEW
NOTES

Jonathan Biss, piano
Tuesday, January 25 – 8:00 PM
Perelman Theater

Background

Jonathan Biss began his piano studies at age six, first collaborating with his mother, violinist Miriam Fried, and his father, violist/violinist Paul Biss. At the age of 17, he went to the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied with Leon Fleisher. He made his New York recital debut at the 92nd Street Y in 2000 and has since given recitals throughout the country. Following four acclaimed recordings for EMI Classics, Biss's latest recording is an album of Schubert Sonatas—A Major, D. 959 and C Major, D. 840—and two short Kurtág pieces from *Játékok*.

Program

Sonata 1.X.1905, *From the Street*

Leos Janáček

Born: Jul. 3, 1854 in Hukvaldy, Czech Republic

Died: Aug. 12, 1928 in Moravská Ostrava, Czech.

Composed: 1905-06

Last PCMS performance: Radu Lupu in 2000

Duration: 13 minutes

This work represents Janáček's direct reaction to an event he witnessed: a peaceful demonstration calling for a new Czech university that left a worker stabbed to death by a bayonet. Janáček was deeply affected, and wrote this, his only piano sonata, on an impulse. The work is dramatic and original, having been written without any concern to make it properly pianistic. It is arguably one of the most concentrated and emotionally charged piano works of the century.

Three Pieces

Bernard Rands

Born: Mar. 2, 1934 in Sheffield, England

Composed: 2010

Last PCMS performance: Philadelphia premiere

Duration: 13 minutes

Written specifically for Jonathan Biss, these pieces were commissioned for Biss's Carnegie Hall debut on January 21. Among America's most prominent composers, Bernard Rands was the Philadelphia Orchestra's composer in residence from 1989-95. His most recent PCMS premiere was by the PRISM Quartet in 2008.

Sonata in F Minor, Op. 57, "Appassionata"

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: Dec. 16, 1770 in Bonn, Germany

Died: Mar. 26, 1827 in Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1804-05

Last PCMS performance: András Schiff in 2008

Duration: 25 minutes

Opening with a dark, enigmatic theme—one of the most striking curtain-raisers in any of Beethoven's sonatas—this pivotal work makes immediate, fearsome demands upon the pianist, calling both for percussive handfuls of chords and accompanimental figuration demanding the utmost delicacy.

Fantasy in C Major, Op. 17

Robert Schumann

Born: Jun. 8, 1810 in Zwickau, Germany

Died: Jul. 29, 1856 in Endenich, Germany

Composed: 1836-38

Last PCMS performance: Mitsuko Uchida in 2009

Duration: 31 minutes

One of Schumann's greatest keyboard works, the Fantasy in C Major is a completely original effort compelling in conception and design. The first movement is based on a motive from Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte* (1816) while the second, a March with Trio, is distinguished by the unremitting rhythmic drive of the principal section and odd cross rhythms that result in a passage of exceptional lyrical beauty.