

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

Roman Rabinovich, piano
Thursday, November 19 – 6:00 PM

PREVIEW
NOTES

PROGRAM (Selection of Program Notes)

Sonata in E-flat Major, Hob. XVI:52

Franz Joseph Haydn

Born: March 31, 1732, Rohrau, Austria

Died: May 31, 1809, Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1794

Duration: 20 minutes

Unlike Mozart, Beethoven, Clementi, and a number of his other near-contemporaries, Haydn was not a virtuoso pianist. Haydn recognized this, once stating, "I was a wizard on no instrument, but I knew the strength and working of all." However, until Beethoven, the piano sonata was not composed primarily as a vehicle for virtuoso technique—that was the domain of the concerto—but as entertainment for amateurs in the privacy of their homes. Often, such pieces were directed toward women, who were expected to attain a moderate degree of accomplishment on a keyboard instrument in order to be eligible for marriage. Also, many such pieces were written for students, often as something of an exercise. The Piano Sonata in E-flat Major, Hob. XVI:52, is often described as Haydn's finest work in the genre. Forming more of a cohesive whole than either of its siblings, Haydn's E-flat Major sonata is exceptional in both size and scope and manipulation of tonal material.

Estampes

Claude Debussy

Born: August 22, 1862, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France

Died: March 25, 1918, Paris, France

Composed: 1903

Duration: 15 minutes

"When you don't have any money to go on holiday, you must make do by using your imagination," Debussy wrote, and the first two pieces in his triptych *Estampes* constitute an exotic travelog; the third piece is stay-at-home music, watching the rain. "Estampes" means print or engraving, and these three pieces are musical depictions of particular moments at particular locales. They also represent an interior journey of

sorts, a newly personal idiom for Debussy, who is now seemingly unconcerned with the conventions and expectations of the salon and the concert hall. "Pagodes" (Pagodas) manages to seem still and flowing at the same time. The stillness comes from the score's long pedal point, as well as from the harmonic restriction of the pentatonic scale, which is highly characteristic of Asian music. "Soirée dans Grenade" takes listeners to Spain, but again the tour guide is Ravel, whose *Habañera* covers much the same musical territory. The final movement, in the great French keyboard tradition, is a toccata, although Debussy gives it a more fanciful title, "Jardins sous la pluie" (Gardens in the Rain). The piece incorporates fragments of the French nursery songs "Do, do l'enfant do" and "Nous n'irons plus au bois," suggesting a child unable to go out and play but taking great interest in the rain, watching snug behind some window.

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

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: December 16, 1770, Bonn, Germany

Died: March 26, 1827, Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1804-06

Duration: 20 minutes

From the writing of his Heiligenstadt Testament in 1802 up to the composition of the "Appassionata" in 1804-1805, Beethoven produced some of his most pivotal works, music that foreshadows and heralds the arrival of what is commonly identified as the "second" period of his creativity. Beethoven, it seemed, had turned inward and begun to produce music only he could fully understand. If he had resigned himself to the futility of his cosmic anger, he also determined to thrust his immense genius in the face of God and Man alike, accepting no limitations upon the magnitude or trajectory of his creativity. It was the Beethoven of these works who unleashed the "Appassionata" Sonata.