

WIGMORE HALL 125

Tuesday 30 September 2025
7.30pm

Richard Goode piano

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Piano Sonata No. 27 in E minor Op. 90 (1814)

I. Mit Lebhaftigkeit und durchaus mit Empfindung und Ausdruck • II. Nicht zu geschwind und sehr singbar vorgetragen

Piano Sonata No. 28 in A Op. 101 (1816)

I. Etwas lebhaft und mit der innigsten Empfindung. Allegretto ma non troppo • II. Lebhaft. Marschmässig. Vivace alla marcia • III. Langsam und sehnsuchtsvoll. Adagio ma non troppo, con affetto • IV. Geschwind, doch nicht zu sehr, und mit Entschlossenheit. Allegro

6 Bagatelles Op. 126 (1824)

No. 1 in G: Andante con moto • No. 2 In G minor: Allegro • No. 3 in E flat: Andante • No. 4 in B minor: Presto • No. 5 in G: Quasi allegretto • No. 6 in E flat: Presto – Andante amabile e con moto

Interval

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Dauidsbündlertänze Op. 6 (1837)

Lebhaft • Innig • Etwas hahnbüchen • Ungeduldig • Einfach • Sehr rasch • Nicht schnell • Frisch • Lebhaft • Balladenmässig. Sehr rasch • Einfach • Mit Humor • Wild und lustig • Zart und singend • Frisch • Mit gutem Humor • Wie aus der Ferne • Nicht schnell



Help us raise £125,000
for 125 years of music

To find out more visit wigmore-hall.org.uk/donate



Join & Support
Donations

Wigmore Hall is a no smoking venue. No recording or photographic equipment may be taken into the auditorium nor used in any other part of the Hall without the prior written permission of the management. In accordance with the requirements of City of Westminster persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any other gangways. If standing is permitted in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating, it shall be limited to the number indicated in the notices exhibited in those positions. Disabled Access and Facilities - full details from 020 7935 2141. Wigmore Hall is equipped with a loop to help hearing aid users receive clear sound without background noise. Patrons can use this facility by switching hearing aids to 'T'.



Please ensure that watch alarms, mobile phones and any other electrical devices which can become audible are switched off. Phones on a vibrate setting can still be heard, please switch off.

The Wigmore Hall Trust Registered Charity No. 1024838
36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP • [Wigmore-hall.org.uk](https://wigmore-hall.org.uk) • John Gilhooly Director

Wigmore Hall Royal Patron HRH The Duke of Kent, KG
Honorary Patrons Aubrey Adams OBE; André and Rosalie Hoffmann; Louise Kaye; Kohn Foundation; Mr and Mrs Paul Morgan

Beethoven's popularity soared to new heights in 1814. The final version of *Fidelio* was triumphantly produced at Vienna's Kärntnertortheater in May, while his Seventh Symphony and patriotic potboiler *Wellingtons Sieg* had proved sensationally successful at two lucrative benefit concerts. Amid these public triumphs Beethoven composed the beautiful two-movement sonata in E minor Op. 90. He dedicated it to Count Moritz von Lichnowsky, brother of his first Viennese patron Carl. According to Beethoven's factotum Anton Schindler, the composer had jokingly chided the Count over his qualms about marrying a woman from a lower social stratum (the Viennese aristocracy were always hyper-sensitive to class). The tense, restless first movement, he said, represented 'a struggle between heart and head', while the assuaging rondo finale resolved all conflict in a 'happy conversation with the beloved'.

Marked 'Animated, and with feeling and expression throughout', the first movement trades on extreme contrasts of vehemence and lyrical pathos. At the opening E minor is fleetingly established, then immediately contradicted; and throughout the movement new tonal centres are pounced on rather than prepared, with frequent shifts by semitone.

Sketches reveal that, as so often, the final form of the rondo theme was hard-won. 'Not too quickly, and to be played very songfully' was Beethoven's marking for a movement of surpassing tenderness and grace. The prevailing dynamics are soft, both in the theme and the equally lyrical episodes. On its final appearance the theme is sounded in the tenor register, a characteristic Romantic sonority. This exquisite music was a favourite of Mendelssohn's and, we might guess, of Schubert's too.

The intensely personal nature of Op. 90 is underlined by Beethoven's use of German, rather than Italian, tempo markings, a trait shared by his next sonata, Op. 101, from 1816. Like the C major Cello Sonata Op. 102 No. 1 of 1815, Op. 101 is at once retrospective and prophetic. It combines a Romantic, improvisatory waywardness, Baroque polyphonic textures and (with the reminiscence of the opening before the final Allegro) a suggestion of cyclic form shared with both the Cello Sonata and the contemporary song cycle *An die ferne Geliebte*.

Marked 'with the most intimate feeling', the first movement begins as if in mid-flow, and infuses a sonata-form structure with the spirit of a Song without Words. As a surrogate scherzo Beethoven writes an idiosyncratic march in F major, founded on irregular, faintly lopsided dotted rhythms. Textures are cussedly imitative, with quirky shifts of register. The following Adagio fuses an expressively ornamental style, reminiscent of Bach's more melancholy preludes, with an early Romantic sensibility, heightened by the continuous use of the *sordino* (i.e. mute) pedal.

After dissolving into a nostalgic recollection of the sonata's opening, a sustained trill kick-starts the finale, music of truculent energy that lives up to Beethoven's marking 'Mit Entschlossenheit' – 'decisively'. The main theme is immediately presented in canonic imitation, while the development crowns the sonata's contrapuntal tendencies by working the theme as a free fugue.

In the early 19th Century the rapid growth of the amateur domestic market fuelled a near-insatiable demand for short, 'characteristic' keyboard pieces. The most famous examples are Beethoven's three sets of Bagatelles, Op. 33, Op. 119 and Op. 126, and Schubert's impromptus and *Moments musicaux*.

Composed in 1824 and designed as a unified cycle, the Op. 126 Bagatelles are Beethoven's last music for piano. Despite their brevity, they are quintessential late Beethoven in their mingled inwardness, quirkiness and 'unbuttoned' humour. As ever, Beethoven has an unfailing knack of avoiding the predictable or obvious. Beginning with a tenderly songful *Andante con moto*, the six Bagatelles are by turns meditative (the mesmeric No. 3 and the ethereally floating No. 5) and boisterous. Summing up the contrasts of the whole cycle, the final Bagatelle frames a leisurely, faintly wayward *Andante* with two explosive *Presto* outbursts.

Robert Schumann was the most self-revealing and self-referential of composers. Like virtually all of his piano works from the 1830s, the 18 dances that make up his *Dauidsbündlertänze* are filled with quotations, several of which derive from his earlier works. As so often, Clara Wieck is a constant presence. She and Robert had become secretly engaged in August 1837, the month before her 18th birthday. Shortly afterwards Robert enthusiastically reviewed Clara's *Soirées musicales* in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, the music journal he had founded three years earlier. A mazurka from the *Soirées* provided the 'motto' that threads through the *Dauidsbündlertänze* he composed later that autumn, after Clara's implacable father Friedrich had banned the pair from meeting.

Schumann originally gave each of the dances the initials E or F, signifying the dreamy, introspective Eusebius and the extrovert Florestan in his own twin fictional personas. After finishing them he wrote to his fiancée: 'My Clara will understand all that is contained in the dances, for they are dedicated to her, and more emphatically than any of my other things. The whole story is a *Polterabend*...if ever I was happy at the piano it was when I was composing those.' (In German folk tradition a *Polterabend* is a rowdy pre-wedding party in which hobgoblins and sprites play practical jokes on the bride.)

Doubtless mindful of the obstacles placed in the way of their marriage by Friedrich Wieck, Schumann prefaced the *Dauidsbündlertänze* with an old rhyme: 'All along the way we go, Are mingled weal and woe.' Beginning with fragment of Clara's mazurka which Schumann inscribes 'Motto von C.W.', the dances typically alternate exuberance and intimate, sometimes sorrowful, reflection. No. 2 inverts the motto and puts it in the minor key, while No. 3 ('Mit Humor') quotes 'Promenade' from Schumann's *Carnaval*. In a process of free variation, other melodic ideas are woven into the mix, including a falling five-note figure symbolising his love for Clara. After the mysteriously tolling No. 17, marked 'Wie aus der Ferne' ('as if from afar'), No. 18 transforms the mazurka motto into a serene waltz. In the final bars the clock chimes midnight, deep in the bass, and the vision fades.

© Richard Wigmore 2025

Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.