University of Florida Performing Arts

presents

Murray Perahia, Piano

Thursday, October 25, 2007, 7:30 p.m.

Sponsored by the

ALAN AND CAROL SQUITIERI BEQUEST
MURRAY PERAHIA, Piano

BACH
(1685–1750)

Partita No. 4 in D major BWV 828
Ouverture
Allemande
Courante
Aria
Sarabande
Menuet
Gigue

BEETHOVEN
(1770-1827)

Piano Sonata No. 15 in D major Op. 28 “Pastoral”
Allegro
Andante
Scherzo: Allegro vivace
Rondo: Allegro, ma non troppo

INTERMISSION

BRAHMS
(1833-1897)

6 Piano Pieces, Op. 118
Intermezzo: Allegro non assai, ma molto appassionato
Intermezzo: Andante teneramente
Ballade: Allegro energico
Intermezzo: Allegretto un poco agitato
Romanze: Andante
Intermezzo: Andante, largo e mesto

CHOPIN
(1810-1849)

Etude No. 1 in A flat major, Op. 25 “Aeolian Harp”
Allegro sostenuto

Etude No. 4 in C sharp minor, Op. 10
Presto

CHOPIN
(1810-1849)

Polonaise No. 6 in A flat major, Op. 53 “Heroic”

Mr. Perahia appears by arrangement with IMG Artists,
Carnegie Hall Tower, 152 West 57th Street, 5th Floor
New York, NY 10019

Mr. Perahia records exclusively for Sony Classical.
Partita No. 4 in D major, BVW 828  
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Though we now regularly celebrate the life and work of German composer and keyboardist Johann Sebastian Bach, it has not always been so. Records indicate that little of J.S. Bach’s vast output of music was performed publicly in the years immediately following his death. The revival in interest in his music didn’t begin in earnest until 80 years later, led by German conductor and composer Felix Mendelssohn.

In our day, the revival continues unabated. A considerable wealth of music by J.S. Bach has joined the standard repertory: the huge number of keyboard works; the cello suites, the violin partitas; numerous cantatas; The Well Tempered Clavier; The Art of Fugue; various sacred works including the Mass in B minor, the St. Matthew Passion, and the St. John Passion; the Brandenburg Concertos; and numerous instrumental concertos, to mention only a few.

Bach’s keyboard works are significant for their intellectual rigor and their enduring appeal to performers and audiences alike. Like finely cut diamonds, they can be appreciated from across the room, or up close under the microscopic analysis of an expert.

The partitas were composed somewhere around 1730 and are among Bach’s first, self-published works: his self-proclaimed “Op. 1.” Partita No. 4 in D major, BVW 828, is typical of the partitas in many ways. It is a collection of short movements that are mostly based on dance forms such as the allemande, sarabande and gigue. It also is typical in that, even though it was probably written for harpsichord, it adapts splendidly for piano.

Piano Sonata No. 15 in D major, Op. 28  
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

The pianoforte (literally, “soft-loud” in Italian), for which German composer Ludwig van Beethoven wrote his many piano works, was a far different beast than the harpsichord, which could only play at one volume level. The pianoforte was the perfect instrument for Beethoven to explore his moods, which were many.

Many have suggested that Beethoven was in a lighter mood when he composed the Sonata No. 15 in 1801– hence the nickname “Pastorale” – though one can definitely hear other undercurrents in this work. Take the “pedal points” in the first movement. (Pedal points are insistent, repeated notes, usually in the bass. Listen carefully for these as the movement begins and ends, among other places.) Some feel that this technique in the Allegro movement is calming, but one can just as easily interpret these pedal points as portentous, always-present forces lurking in the background (Beethoven’s growing deafness was becoming clear to him when this work was composed, for example). Likewise, the dynamic range of the pianoforte, from the softest soft to sudden loud passages, can be heard in this movement, suggestive not of calm, but a rather up-and-down swing of mood. (Indeed, musicologists believe that Beethoven did suffer from enormous mood swings.)

The second movement, marked Andante, brings back a brief pedal point, contrasted with a chirpy middle section. Here again, Beethoven uses the dynamic capabilities of the piano to great effect. It is only occasionally suggestive of peace or calm.

The Scherzo is the most light and airy of the four movements, a typical warm up to the Finale.
The Finale has moments of light that are strangely captivating yet also unnerving. The swaying opening gesture in this rondo suggests galloping along on an afternoon hunt. Its upbeat nature seems almost too upbeat, though, and to this listener it suggests a composer trying hard to be cheerful in spite of it all.

**Six Piano Pieces, Op. 118**  
**Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)**

Like Beethoven, German composer Johannes Brahms’ primary performing instrument was the piano. He knew Beethoven’s works for the piano quite well and he admired the composer, whose likeness in a bust was watching over him while he composed. Brahms was also a devotee of Bach partitas for keyboard.

The pianos of Brahms’ day allowed for even greater possibilities for expression, with longer and lower bass strings, a bigger sound and an even greater dynamic range. Not surprisingly, Brahms wrote a number of important works for the instrument, with the late works, Op. 116-118 as durable as any.

The first *Intermezzo* of Op. 118 meanders between key areas, unsettling ears accustomed to the more clearly defined harmonies of Bach or Beethoven. The poignant second *Intermezzo* explores the opening three-note gesture in most every manifestation you can imagine, lengthening, shortening, inverting, and as melody, harmony and accompaniment. The *Ballade* jumps out at the listener from the get go, almost like a boisterous drinking song. The third *Intermezzo* is a more stately work, though with a deep, brooding middle section. Note how the low bass notes in this quieter section interact with the upper register. The *Romanze* begins almost like a spiritual, suggesting a processional before a church service or a musical remembrance. A brief middle section, in which filigreed trills become a motive themselves, is followed by a more insistent return of the opening. The final *Intermezzo* begins enigmatically, wallowing in an unsettled harmony, set against a repeating, four-note motive. Note again the piano’s deep resonant bass notes in the opening. The mood swings widely as this piece unfolds, brilliantly exploring the entire range of the piano. The opening motive becomes almost a chant and insistently brings the work to a close.

**Etude No. 1 in A flat major, Op. 25 (“Aeolian Harp”)**  
**Etude No. 4 in C sharp minor, Op. 10**  
**Polonaise No. 6 in A flat major, Op. 53 (“Heroic”)**  
**Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)**

Polish-born composer and pianist Frédéric Chopin quickly outgrew his hometown of Warsaw and felt the need to move abroad, ultimately settling in Paris in 1831 where he took the music-loving town by storm. He became the piano teacher of note for the Parisian upper class.

Chopin wrote almost exclusively for the piano and vastly extended the repertory for it. Under his hands, the instrument would sing, pulse, dance and swell, though interestingly, and much to the chagrin of some, he is said to have rarely made use of the piano’s most powerful (*forte*) dynamic, preferring the instrument’s more intimate *piano* and *mezzopiano* (medium soft) ranges.
Many of his hundreds of works, such as his two sets of 12 etudes, were introduced in Paris in “salons,” small concerts intended to show off his abilities and to help him gain private students. Nowadays, these masterful etudes are a right of passage for pianists.

Each etude explores a technical problem for the piano, as well as delving into unique compositional puzzles. Etude No. 1 in A flat major, Op. 25, the first of his second set published in 1837, is harp-like in its flowing harmonic explorations, a favorite of pianist Robert Schumann who is credited with giving it the “Aeolian Harp” nickname. Etude No. 4 in C sharp minor, Op. 10, from around 1830, is a spectacular non-stop romp, as the pianist’s fingers all but disappear in a blur.

The Polonaise No. 6 in A flat major, Op. 53, is a tour de force, among Chopin’s more popular and more demanding works. After a dramatic introduction, its jaunty main theme will be immediately recognizable to most listeners. In Poland, Op. 53 is legendary: it said to have been played through loudspeakers in the streets of Warsaw when that city was liberated at the end of WW II.

-Program notes written by Dave Kopplin