University of Florida Performing Arts

presents

Beethoven Orchestra
Bonn
Stefan Blunier, Music Director and Conductor
Louis Lortie, Piano

Saturday, March 23, 2013, 7:30 p.m.

Phillips Center
Beethoven Orchestra Bonn
2013 U.S. Tour

Stefan Blunier, Music Director and Conductor
Louis Lortie, Piano Soloist

Program

Overture from The Ruins of Athens in G Major, Op. 113
Ludwig van Beethoven

Piano Concerto, No. 4 in G Major, Op. 58,
Allegro moderato
Andante con moto
Rondo (Vivace)

INTERMISSION

Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92
Beethoven

Poco sostenuto — Vivace
Allegretto
Presto — Assai meno presto (trio)
Allegro con brio

Tour Direction:
Tim Fox and Alison Ahart Williams
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Program Notes

Overture from *The Ruins of Athens* in G Major, Op. 113
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

“Prompted by envy, Minerva refuses to defend Socrates against his judges and, as a result, is put to sleep by Zeus for two thousand years. The play begins as her period of punishment comes to an end and a chorus of Invisible Spirits rouses her from sleep. Mercury takes her back to Athens, where she is aghast to see her beloved city in ruins and ruled by the Turks. Rome, too, she is told, has sunk into barbarism. Mercury informs her that the Muses have fled to Pest, whither both now set off in order to attend humanity’s celebrations in honour of the Muses and gods. Pest is hailed as a latterday Athens.”

The overture *The Ruins of Athens* was written in 1811-12 for a production of August von Kotzebue’s stage play of the same name that opened the new Hungarian Theatre in Pest on February 10, 1812. Beethoven himself described the rarely performed overture as a “little work that can be performed […] as a refreshment.” The complete incidental music, with its pseudo-Turkish exoticism, comprises a chorus of *Invisible Spirits*, a duet for Minerva and Mercury, a chorus of Dervishes notable for its graphic tone-painting, a Marcia alla Turca, a speech for a Venerable Old Man in Pest and, finally, a Solemn March. Beethoven seems to have felt a certain attachment to this music, since he included the sixth, seventh and eighth numbers in the program of his benefit concert in Vienna on January 2, 1814 (the program also included his Wellingtons Sieg), insisting that the curtain should rise at a particular moment to reveal a portrait of the emperor — an example of his desire that his message be put across with the greatest possible clarity.

— © Andreas Richter, translation by Stewart Spencer

Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, Op. 58
Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Beethoven’s G major concerto was the last which he, in his earlier role of virtuoso, ever played in public. Written sometime between 1804 and 1806, it was premiered on December 22, 1808, in the legendary concert at the Theater an der Wien at which, in addition to the Fourth Concerto, the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies and the *Choral Fantasia* were premiered. It should be noted that the work received its actual “premiere,” however, at a private subscription concert at the house of Prince Lobkowitz in March, 1807. Beethoven was also the soloist at this performance.

The first movement, *Allegro moderato*, opens differently than any previous concerti. It is unorthodox in that the solo piano, in the key of G major, gently presents the principal theme, and then the orchestral exposition follows in the highly unrelated key of B major. When the piano re-enters, this gives way to the long dialogue between orchestra and soloist that remains prominent throughout the movement, which then proceeds in the usual sonata allegro form.

The second movement, *Andante con moto*, is in the parallel minor key of E, and is highly distinctive in its scoring, as Beethoven uses the strings in addition to the piano. A brilliant dialogue takes place in this movement. It begins with a harsh, dramatic, unison statement from the strings, to which the piano replies in a soft reflective manner, only to hear the strong, almost ignorant strength of the orchestra once again. This continues, with little compromise, until the fierce proclamations of the strings are gradually subdued by the very tenderness of the piano’s entreaties. Eventually the piano stands alone in a short solo section. With some agitation the piano then leads the ensemble into a peaceful conclusion, as a tenuous pianissimo in the strings underscores the piano’s final and gentle suspension.
The final rondo, *Vivace*, arrives without a pause, and is full of lively ideas and short variations for the soloist. It opens as the orchestra presents the principal theme at a pianissimo dynamic level; this is answered by the piano in a more florid and elaborated version of the theme. The second subject, one full of lyricism, is first heard on the piano. A bold third theme in the orchestra and a fourth in the piano are presented, the trumpets and tympani are added to enliven the spirit, and the piano nimbly moves from one theme to the next. An impressively long coda quickens the tempo to Presto and ends the movement in reckless joy.

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**Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92**

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

“I am Bacchus incarnate, to give humanity wine to drown its sorrow ... He who divines the secret of my music is delivered from the misery that haunts the world.”

— Beethoven

While Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony has no subtitle or program, many musicians, musicologists and critics have attempted to find an appellative or running story to this work. Composers Robert Schumann and Hector Berlioz both said that its music evoked “the spirit of a rustic wedding.” Richard Wagner went so far as to call it “The Apotheosis of the Dance.” This last view is the most popular one among those who have attempted to define the emotional content of this work. Evidently the great Isadora Duncan agreed with this perception; she danced to all but the first movement, and the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo has presented a dance version of the entire work. French composer Vincent D’Indy, however, disagreed, saying, “Nothing less than a pastoral symphony! The rhythm of the piece has nothing of the dance about it.” As for the composer himself, if he had any extra-musical concepts in mind, he never divulged his intentions; all we know is that he was very pleased with this work and called it “a grand symphony in A, one of my best works.”

Beethoven’s Symphony No. 7 in A major, Op. 92 was written in 1812, at the time when the Napoleonic War was raging. (This fact has led some commentators to espouse the far-fetched theory that this event had some influence in the conceptual content of the work.) The work was premiered in Vienna the following year. The occasion was a benefit concert for disabled Austrian and Bavarian soldiers who tried to cut off Napoleon’s retreat but were defeated at Hanau. Beethoven himself conducted the performance, “hardly, perhaps,” says Grove, “to its advantage, considering the symbolical gestures described by [Ludwig] Spohr, since he was by then very deaf, and heard what was going on around him with great difficulty.” Spohr’s account of the event is interesting:

“At this concert, I first saw Beethoven conduct. Often as I had heard of it, it surprised me extremely. He was accustomed to conveying the marks of expression by the most peculiar motions of his body. Thus at a *sforzando* he tore his arms, which were before crossed on his breast, violently apart. At a *piano* he crouched down, bending lower the softer the tone. At a *crescendo* he raised himself by degrees until at the *forte* he sprang up to his full height; and, without knowing it, would often at the time shout aloud.”

The first performance was a resounding success given the audience’s enthusiastic response to the work — three of the four movements had to be encored; nevertheless, the critics of the time remained baffled by this “incomprehensible” symphony. The composer, and sometimes music writer, Carl Maria von Weber dismissed it as the work of a madman. A London critic called it “a composition
in which the author has indulged in a great deal of disagreeable eccentricity. Often as we now have heard it performed, we cannot yet discover any design in it; neither can we trace any connection in its parts. Altogether it seems to have been intended as a kind of enigma — we almost said a hoax.” Making issue of the composer’s deafness, another critic would write: “… his compositions have partaken of the most incomprehensible wildness. His imagination seems to have fed upon the ruins of his sensitive organs.” Incomprehensible perhaps might be the best word to describe the perceptions of the music critics of that day, as the work is now recognized as one of Beethoven’s finest achievements in the symphonic realm.

Marked *Poco sostenuto*, the introduction to the first movement is of striking beauty, yet based simply on the major scale, setting the stage for a movement of tremendous force and energy. The main body of the movement is marked *Vivace* and is built upon a sonata form. The main theme is ushered in on the pitch of E, exchanged from one instrument to another 61 times before finally opening up to its full development. The movement concludes with an elaborate coda in which fragments of the main theme are heard with its characteristic rhythm, steadily growing from a *pianissimo* to a powerful *fortissimo* at the close.

The march-like *Allegretto*, again with a steady rhythm, provides a major contrast. Originally Beethoven had intended this movement for the third “Rasumovsky” String Quartet, but rightly expanded it for this symphony. Following the development of several counter-melodies, the clarinet announces a new melody that dispels the somber mood preceding it. The opening theme returns as the movement concludes.

The third movement, a *Scherzo* marked *Presto*, is a charming example of lightness and grace. The main theme is full of humor and receives buoyant development. In the *Trio* (Assai meno presto) the violins hold a high pitch against a pleasant melody said to be an old pilgrim chant of Southern Austria. The first part of the scherzo is repeated, as is the hymn, leading to the coda and joyful conclusion of the movement.

In the *Finale* the symphony reaches its peak with an unceasing pulse and sense of ecstatic joy. Both the first and second themes are truly frenzied and contagious, forcefully driving to a remarkable coda of inimitable invention. It is an exuberant climax to a work of great power, beauty and charm.

It is ironic that this joyful, sunny and impetuous whirl of motion, which many after Wagner have called “The Apotheosis of the Dance,” was written during one of the darkest and most difficult periods in the composer’s life.

— © 1997 Columbia Artists Management Inc.
Since its foundation more than 100 years ago, the Beethoven Orchestra Bonn has become a key pillar of cultural life in Bonn and the surrounding region. Its concerts, operas, music classes for adults and children, CD recordings, domestic and international tours and its wide-ranging commitment to social causes have become fixtures in the cultural spectrum. The 106-piece orchestra has also evolved into one of the very best orchestras of its kind in Germany. The man with the job of overseeing the entire orchestra (until at least 2016) is the general music director, Stefan Blunier. The Beethoven Orchestra Bonn has won four outstanding ECHO Klassik music awards for its recordings of Christus by Franz Liszt (2007), Der Golem by Eugen d’Albert (2011), Irrelohe by Franz Schreker (2012) and for its Bobbys Klassik educational program (2009 and 2011).

As a result of its close cooperation with many different institutions in Bonn, the orchestra is regularly involved in holding high-profile international events. It enjoys a high standing and is widely liked among locals thanks to its connections with various children’s, youth and adult choirs from the city and surrounding region, as well as its popular open-air events in Bonn’s Marktplatz and its active participation in Bonn’s carnival celebrations. The orchestra complements its local concerts with regular tours and CD releases, as well as numerous guest performances both at home and abroad. In addition, the orchestra has also been involved in numerous productions in the Bonn Opera, various chamber music seasons and a host of other activities. The Beethoven Orchestra Bonn also has the pleasure of regularly working with internationally renowned soloists, conductors and choirs. The orchestra has played tour dates and guest performances in some of the world's greatest concert halls, from Carnegie Hall in New York to Suntory Hall in Tokyo, and at Salzburg's Grosses Festspielhaus.

The concert Master Mikhail Ovrutsky was born in Moscow and began violin lessons at the age of only 5. At 11 he moved to America with his family, where he studied at the Manhattan School of Music and at the New York Juilliard School. He has won an astonishing number of prizes in international competitions, including the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, the Pablo de Sarasate Competition, the International Liana Issakadze Competition in St. Petersburg and the renowned Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels. Anne-Sophie Mutter accepted him into her foundation for young and highly talented soloists in 2004. In addition she nominated him for the European award from the “Pro Europa Foundation.” Mikhail Ovrutsky plays a violin made by Gioffredo Cappa in Turin, c. 1700.

**Stefan Blunier**

Conductor Stefan Blunier was born in 1964 in Bern, Germany, and studied piano, bugle, composition and conducting both in his hometown and at Folkwang College, Essen. After spells in Mainz, Augsburg and Mannheim, he served as the general musical director at Darmstadt’s State Theatre until 2008. On August 1, 2008, Blunier became the general musical director of the Beethoven Orchestra Bonn, in Beethoven’s native city. Blunier has appeared as a guest in more than 90 symphony orchestras across Europe and Asia. As a guest conductor
he has appeared in opera houses in London, Munich, Hamburg, Leipzig, Stuttgart and Berlin as well as Montpellier, Oslo and Bern.

His concert arrangements have impressed audiences in past seasons. Under his charismatic leadership, both Bonn’s orchestra and its audience established a new musical awareness. The success of the conductor together with the Beethoven Orchestra Bonn attracted musical interest far beyond the region of Bonn.

Blunier also produces CD’s for Sony, CPO and MDG. His CD recordings with the Beethoven Orchestra Bonn (Arnold Schönberg, Franz Schmidt, Eugen d’Albert, Anton Bruckner et al.) showcased musical rarities and gained high praise from the press. Performed together with the Beethoven Orchestra Bonn, his recording of the operas Golem by Eugen d’Albert and Irrelohe by Franz Schreker both won the Echo music award.

At the beginning of the 2010-11 Season, Blunier was appointed “Premier Chef Invité” of the Orchestre National de Belgique in Brussels. Around the turn of the year, general musical director Blunier travelled to China together with the Beethoven Orchestra Bonn and gave highly-praised concerts in major cities including Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing. In 2011, Blunier’s contract as chief musical director was extended to the close of the 2015-16 Season.

Louis Lortie
French-Canadian pianist Louis Lortie has attracted critical acclaim throughout Europe, Asia and the U.S. He has extended his interpretative voice across a broad range of repertoire rather than choosing to specialize in one particular style. The London Times, describing his playing as “ever immaculate, ever imaginative,” has identified the artist’s “combination of total spontaneity and meditated ripeness that only great pianists have.”

Lortie has performed complete Beethoven sonata cycles at London’s Wigmore Hall, Berlin’s Philharmonie and the Sala Grande del Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi in Milan. Die Welt described his Berlin performances as “possibly the finest Beethoven since the time of Wilhelm Kempff.” As both pianist and conductor with the Montreal Symphony, he has performed all five Beethoven concertos and all of the Mozart concertos. Lortie has also won widespread acclaim for his interpretation of Ravel and Chopin. He performed the complete works of Ravel in London and Montreal for the BBC and CBC, and is renowned all over the world for his performances of the complete Chopin études.

In 2011, Lortie celebrated the bicentenary of Liszt’s birth by performing the complete Années de pèlerinage at international music capitals and festivals. The Los Angeles Times said of his performance there, “The day was glorious, both for spectacular virtuosic playing and for spectacular music that revolutionized the piano repertoire ... the audience got their money’s worth along with bragging rights of having heard Lortie’s staggering first complete transversal in concert here of these works.”

Other engagements last season included playing and conducting with the Slovenian Philharmonic, Sydney Symphony and Quebec Symphony; concerts with
the symphony orchestras of Toronto, Philadelphia, Bournemouth and St. Louis; a tour of Italy with the Kremerata Baltica; and a performance of the Brahms Piano Concerto No. 2 at the Brahms Festival in Brussels.

In 2012-13 he performs Gershwin in Sao Paulo with Tortelier; Liszt with NHK Tokyo and Dutoit; Chopin with the Cleveland Orchestra; Van Zweden, Schubert and Liszt with Krivine in Utrecht; and Mozart with the Royal Philharmonic and Dutoit. He will tour with the La Scala Orchestra playing Brahms 2 and with the Beethoven Orchestra Bonn playing Beethoven 4 and 5. He returns to Chicago’s Orchestra Hall and other important venues to perform a recital program of opera transcriptions called *Lortie goes to the Opera (Mostly with Wagner)*. Other recitals include Copenhagen, Osaka, Cremona and Dresden.

Lortie has performed with the world’s leading conductors, including Riccardo Chailly, Lorin Maazel, Kurt Masur, Seiji Ozawa, Charles Dutoit, Kurt Sanderling, Neeme Järvi, Sir Andrew Davis, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Sir Mark Elder and Osmo Vänskä. He has also been involved in many chamber-music projects with such musicians as Frank Peter Zimmermann, Leonidas Kavakos, Renaud and Gautier Capuçon, Jan Vogler, Augustin Dumay, the Takács Quartet and Gidon Kremer. His regular piano-duo partner is fellow Canadian Hélène Mercier.

He has made more than 30 recordings for the Chandos label, covering repertoire from Mozart to Stravinsky, including a set of the complete Beethoven sonatas and the complete Liszt’s *Années de pèlerinage*. His recording of the Lutosławski Piano Concerto and Paganini Variations with Edward Gardner and the BBC Symphony was released earlier this year. Future recording projects include a disc of Liszt’s transcriptions.

Lortie’s recording of Beethoven’s Eroica Variations earned him an Edison Award. His disc of works by Schumann and Brahms was named one of the best CDs of the year by *BBC Music Magazine*, which also named his disc of Chopin etudes one of “50 Recordings by Superlative Pianists.” His interpretation of Liszt’s complete works for piano and orchestra with the Residentie Orchestra of The Hague was a Gramophone Editor’s Choice. For the Canadian label ATMA Classique, he has recorded Mendelssohn concertos with the Orchestre symphonique de Quebec and, as conductor, Mendelssohn’s “Reformation” Symphony.

Lortie studied in Montreal with Yvonne Hubert (a pupil of the legendary Alfred Cortot), in Vienna with Beethoven specialist Dieter Weber, and subsequently with Schnabel disciple Leon Fleisher. He made his debut with the Montreal Symphony at the age of 13; three years later, his first appearance with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra led to an historic tour of the People’s Republic of China and Japan. In 1984, he won First Prize in the Busoni Competition and was also prizewinner at the Leeds Competition. In 1992, he was named Officer of the Order of Canada, and received both the Order of Quebec and an honorary doctorate from Université Laval. He has lived in Berlin since 1997 and also has homes in Canada and Italy.
Beethoven Orchestra Bonn
Stefan Blunier, Music Director and Conductor

Orchestra Roster

**First Violins**
Mikhail Ovrutsky*
Liviu Casleanu*
Artur Chermonov*
Daniele Di Renzo
Mugurel Markos
Harald Kulik
Veronica Wehling
Irina Rohde
Sonja Wiedebusch
Alexander Liflend
Theresia Veale
Sung-Hi Koh
Bernd von Scheel
Wolfram Lehnert
Carla Spannbauer
Horia Tudor
Wolfgang Gurland

**Second Violins**
Dietmar Paul Roehrig*
Maria Geißler*
Melanie Torres-Meißner
Keunah Park
Beate Ochs
Mechthild Bozzetti
Vivien Wald
Astrida Steinate
Kristina Nukii
Thomas Leupold
Stephan Gröschel
Virgil Moldovan
Robert Ransburg
Stefanie Brewing
Mareike Neumann

**Cellos**
Grigory Alumyan*
Geoffrey Winter*
Sergey Kurochkin*
Markus Rundel
Lena Ovrutsky-Wignjosaputro
Markus Fassbender
Johannes Rapp
Benjamin Hönle-Marttunen
Ines Altman
Carltonie Steiner
Ulrich Havenith

**Basses**
Róbert Grondžel*
Ingo Klatt*
Maren Rabien
Andreas Marner
Peter Cender
Max Dommers
Geuer Frank
Harry Anderwaldt

**Flutes**
Günter Valléry*
Mariska van der Sande*
Michael von Bühler
Ursula Grote

**Oboes**
Gunde Hamraths*
Keita Yamamoto*
Klaus Reiet
Susanne van Zoelen Lucke
Volker Kriegsmann

**Clarinets**
Diethelm Adorf*
Hans-Joachim Büsching*
Henry Paulus
Florian Gyßling
Matthias Schuler

**Bassoons**
Emmanuel Klos*
Thomas Ludes*
Henning Groscurth
Raymund Otten

**Horns**
Volker Grewel*
Geoffrey Winter*
Charles Putnam
Thomas Klett
Rohan Richards
Dietmar Krentz

**Trumpets**
Gregor Leczkowski*
Bernd Fritz*
Ludwig Geiger
Alfred Spliesgar
Stephen Williams

**Trombones**
Oliver Meißner*
Hans-Peter Bausch*
Gerhard Lederer
Rudolf Wedel
Nándor Németi

**Tuba**
Christoph Schneider*

**Harp**
Johanna Reithmayer*

**Timpani**
Hermann-Josef Tillmann*
Stephan Möller*

**Percussion**
Camillo Anderwaldt*
Peter Hänsch

*Concert Master/Principal