



The Sixty-fifth Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,603rd Concert

Till Fellner, *pianist*

February 11, 2007
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

Program

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Sonata in F Major, op. 10, no. 2 (1797)

Allegro

Allegretto

Presto

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Fifteen Three-part Inventions, BWV 787–801 (1723)

No. 1 C Major

No. 2 C Minor

No. 3 D Major

No. 4 D Minor

No. 5 E-flat Major

No. 6 E Major

No. 7 E Minor

No. 8 F Major

No. 9 F Minor

No. 10 G Major

No. 11 G Minor

No. 12 A Major

No. 13 A Minor

No. 14 B-flat Major

No. 15 B Minor

INTERMISSION

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

Sonata in A Major, D 959 (1828)

Allegro

Andantino

Scherzo: Allegro vivace

Rondo: Allegretto

The Musician

Born in Vienna, Till Fellner studied with Helen Sado-Stadler before going on to study privately with Alfred Brendel, Meira Farkas, Oleg Maisenberg, and Claus-Christian Schuster. Fellner first gained international recognition in 1993 by winning first prize at the prestigious Clara Haskil International Piano Competition. He has performed with many orchestras, including the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Orchestre de Paris, and the Vienna Philharmonic. He has also worked with many of the world's most famous conductors, including Claudio Abbado, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Marek Janowski, Sir Charles Mackerras, Sir Neville Marriner, Kent Nagano, Leonard Slatkin, and Franz Welser-Möst. Fellner's career has taken him to musical centers throughout Australia, Europe, Japan, and North and South America, and he has appeared at the Edinburgh International Festival, Festival International de Piano de la Roque d'Anthéron, Festival de musique de Montreux-Vevey, the Klavier-Festival Ruhr, the Mostly Mozart Festival in New York, Mozartwoche Salzburg, the Salzburg Festival, the Schubertiade Schwarzenberg, the Tanglewood Music Festival, and the Wiener Festwochen.

Recent highlights of Fellner's career include a tour with London's Philharmonia Orchestra under Christoph von Dohnányi, a cycle of selected Mozart piano concerti with the Wiener Kammerphilharmonie, and performances of Schubert's last three piano sonatas in Amsterdam, Antwerp, London, Rotterdam, and Vienna, and at the Schubertiade Schwarzenberg. This season he will appear as soloist with many orchestras throughout Europe and will perform with cellist Heinrich Schiff in Europe and the United States. Fellner has recorded numerous CDs, including the first book of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, which was released by ECM Records in 2004.

Program Notes

When Ludwig van Beethoven arrived on the musical scene in the late eighteenth century, the piano sonata had only recently been perfected by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714–1788), Josef Haydn (1732–1809), and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791). This was the same period in which the piano replaced the harpsichord as the primary keyboard instrument, as composers and performers alike were drawn to the piano’s instant dynamic response and tonal gradation, singing quality, and carrying power, sufficient for the larger concert venues that became the norm in the nineteenth century.

Beethoven began his artistic career in Vienna as a virtuoso pianist. A report on his playing dating from the 1790s reads, “The great virtuosity of this attractive, lively-minded young man . . . is, apart from mere facility, more eloquent, significant, and expressive. . . . He is as good a player of adagios as he is of allegros.” In writing sonatas for his own performance, Beethoven exploited his pianistic ability to the fullest. The vigor and gaiety of the fast movements stand in contrast to the contemplation, tranquility, and melancholy of the slow movements. Even during his early years, Beethoven was aware of his own musical language, which he used to carry the sonata far beyond the accomplishments of his forebearers.

If Johann Sebastian Bach’s forty-eight preludes and fugues from *The Well-Tempered Clavier* are the pianist’s “Old Testament,” then the Beethoven sonatas are the “New Testament.” Beethoven’s thirty-two piano sonatas were written over a span of twenty-seven years—from his opus 2 published in 1796, to his opus 111 published in 1823—and constitute his great legacy for pianists. In July 1798 the Viennese publisher Joseph Eder announced, “Within six weeks, three very beautiful piano sonatas by Herr Ludwig van Beethoven will appear under my imprint.” Beethoven began work on the three sonatas of opus 10 in 1796 and dedicated them to Countess Anna Margarete Browne. The spirit of Haydn, with whom Beethoven studied briefly in 1792, dominates the *Sonata in F Major*, op. 10, no. 2. The relationship between the old master and his then twenty-two-year-old student was frosty. Ferdinand Ries (1784–1838), who studied piano with Beethoven,

collaborated with another of Beethoven's acquaintances to write *Beethoven Remembered: The Biographical Notes of Franz Wegeler and Ferdinand Ries*. Ries recalled that Beethoven, "although he had some instruction from Haydn, never learned anything from him."

Johann Sebastian Bach fathered twenty children, four of whom became significant composers in their own rights. For them and for his many students outside the family, Bach composed a large body of keyboard music for pedagogical purposes, frequently publishing pieces under the heading "Keyboard Exercises." For example, his inventions and sinfonias were intended to be practice material for his son Wilhelm Friedemann (1710–1784). These pieces are compiled in what is now known as the *Clavier-Büchlein* (Little Book for the Keyboard), which contains fifteen inventions in two voices and fifteen sinfonias in three voices. (It has become customary to apply the term "invention" to both genres.) In addition to notes, Bach provided fingerings and an explanatory preface, which expresses the hope that the book will provide "upright instructions, wherein lovers of the clavier, but especially those desirous of learning, will be shown a clear way, not only (1) to play clearly in two voices, but also, after further progress, (2) to deal correctly and well with three obbligato parts."

The Bach inventions are still the most widely used instructive finger exercises in the musical repertoire. Their unaffected grace has been imitated, but never surpassed, in subsequent collections of études by great composers, among them Bartók, Chopin, Rachmaninoff, and Shostakovich. Each set of fifteen pieces explores the full cycle of major and minor keys in existence before the advent of tempered tuning (i.e., keys that have three or fewer flats or sharps). Later in life, having been introduced to "well-tempered" tuning, Bach explored the full range of the twenty-four keys in his *Well-Tempered Clavier, Books I and II*.

One of the torchbearers at Beethoven's funeral was Franz Schubert, who admired the master but never knew him intimately. In an article on Schubert's piano sonatas that appeared in *The Musical Courier* in 1928, the centenary of Schubert's death, the great pianist Artur Schnabel (1882–1951) wrote, "Schubert's inspiration never needed the external stimulus of poetry. . . . To convince ourselves, we only need to look at . . . the second movement of the *Sonata in A Major*, in which he employs a wholly new kind of expression." Schnabel was one of the first pianists to champion the works of Schubert and often programmed the composer's last three sonatas in a single concert.

Schubert, justly famous as the creator of the lied, loved the piano's possibilities for intimate expression. His early lied *An mein Klavier* is a setting of a poem in praise of the piano by Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart (1739–1791). Schubert's piano music is almost entirely anchored in the melodic writing that infuses his lieder. In the case of the *Sonata in A Major*, D 959, the opening *Allegro* is a tribute to Beethoven that reflects many of his contributions to the sonata form, but it also reflects Schubert's unique melodic approach to the piano. The *Andantino* has a direct connection to the song *Pilgerreise*, which Schubert composed in 1823. The *Scherzo*, marked *Allegro vivace*, has an almost Mendelssohnian sparkle, and its trio breathes the same air as Schubert's great *String Quintet in C Major*, D 956, which he finished in September 1828, just two months before his death. The finale, a rondo marked *Allegretto*, similarly belies the composer's ill health and premonitions of the end of his life, as did his lengthy house concert on September 27, 1828, in which he performed his final three piano sonatas and accompanied a rendition of his final song cycle, *Schwanengesang*.

Program notes by Sorab Modi

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Presented in honor of

Jasper Johns: An Allegory of Painting, 1955–1965,
as part of the Sixty-second American Music Festival

February 18, 2007

Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm

East Building Auditorium

For the convenience of concertgoers
the Garden Café remains open until 6:00 pm.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the
performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones,
pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

Please note that late entry or reentry of
the West Building after 6:30 pm is not permitted.

Music Department
National Gallery of Art
Sixth Street and Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC

Mailing address
2000B South Club Drive
Landover, MD 20785

www.nga.gov