

Senior Artist-in-Residence in Piano at the University of Washington School of Music, **CRAIG SHEPPARD** was born and raised in Philadelphia. His teachers included Rudolf Serkin and Sir Clifford Curzon, and he graduated from both the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, and The Juilliard School in New York City. Following a highly successful New York debut at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1972, he won the silver medal that year at the Leeds International Pianoforte Competition in England (the same year Murray Perahia won the gold.) Moving to England the following year, he quickly established himself through recording and frequent appearances on BBC radio and television as one of the preeminent pianists of his generation, giving cycles of Bach's *Klavierübung* and the complete solo works of Brahms in London and other centers. While in England, he also taught at both the Yehudi Menuhin School and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He has performed with all the major orchestras in Great Britain as well as those of Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Atlanta and Dallas amongst others, and with such conductors as Sir Georg Solti, James Levine, Leonard Slatkin, Michael Tilson Thomas, Lord Yehudi Menuhin, and Erich Leinsdorf. His work with singers (amongst whom are Victoria de los Angeles, José Carreras, and Irina Arkhipova), musicians such as trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, and such ensembles as the Cleveland and Bartok string quartets has also played a significant role in his musical development. Sheppard is also known for his broad academic interests, particularly foreign languages. He has had a high profile in recent summers with the Seattle Chamber Music Festival. In addition to recent performances in London and Malta, he was the featured soloist in the opening concerts of The Seattle Symphony's 1996-97 season. His recordings can be heard on the EMI, Polygram (Philips), Sony, Chandos, and Cirrus labels.

University of Washington
THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

S 476
1997
10-29

DATE 13,099
CLASS 13,100

presents a faculty recital:

Craig Sheppard, piano

October 29, 1997 8:00 PM Meany Theater

PROGRAM

School

of

Music

University

of

Washington

CD 2

CD 1

CD 1

CD 1

CD 1

CD 1

CD 1

CD 1

CD 1

CD 1

CD 1

CD DATE 102 Barcarolle, Opus 60..... 8'43 Frederic Chopin
(1810-1849)

CD DATE 103 Impromptu in G flat, Opus 51 6'00

CD DATE 104 Polonaise Fantaisie, Opus 61 12'05

CD DATE 105 Allegro de concert, Opus 46 12'48

INTERMISSION CASS SIDE A
SIDE B

CD DATE 106 Sonata in B flat, Opus 106..... Ludwig van Beethoven
"Hammerklavier" 45'52 (1770-1827)

Allegro

Scherzo: Assai vivace

Adagio sostenuto

Largo

Allegro risoluto

Reflections on a Program

Tonight's program contrasts some of the greatest pieces Chopin ever wrote with one of the 'Everests' of all piano music, Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata.

The *Barcarolle* and the *Polonaise Fantaisie*, Opuses 60 and 61 respectively, date from the mid-1840's. They are both intensely heroic pieces. This of itself is hardly surprising, given the source. Though Chopin was a man of weak physical constitution, he possessed a will of iron. And it is no small coincidence that the town just outside Warsaw in which he was born, Zelazowa Wola, means 'iron will!' Yet what remains amazing is the touching simplicity of certain sections of each of these two works, all the more remarkable when one thinks of the increasing affects of the tuberculosis that was eventually to take Chopin's life in 1849. This "touching simplicity" is also the byword for the third *Impromptu in G flat*, Opus 51, one of my very favorite pieces.

The *Allegro de concert*, Opus 46, is a work of a completely different sort. It was originally conceived between 1829 and 1831, though its revision and publication in 1841 are the reasons for its relatively high opus number. What immediately strikes the listener is the feeling of being in the midst of a Bellini opera. Chopin had been exposed in great measure to the *bel canto* school of singing in the 1820's while still living in Warsaw. What is not known, however, is whether he had ever heard a work of Bellini prior to moving to Paris in 1830. The two composers, in fact, didn't meet in that city until the year before Bellini's death in 1835. So, the tantalizing thought remains, which came first, the cart or the horse. Music history and scholarship would be stood on its hind legs were it possible to prove that it was Chopin who had influenced Bellini, and not vice versa! Perhaps because of its diffuse and episodic nature, the *Allegro de concert* is not played more often by the world's pianists. What a pity! In spite of what is often cited as "structural difficulties," it is undoubtedly one of Chopin's masterpieces. It offers an unmistakable source for much of his subsequent piano writing, and it is extremely challenging and fun to play.

The *Hammerklavier* Sonata is rightly considered one of the cornerstones of the piano literature. It is the longest sonata Beethoven ever wrote, lasting approximately forty-five minutes. The *Adagio*, the third movement and arguably the greatest slow movement Beethoven ever wrote (admittedly a difficult call when one thinks of the slow movements of the late quartets), takes a disproportionate amount of the work, twenty-odd minutes worth, in fact. So why is it that pianists find this work so intriguing, yet so enigmatic? Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that the autograph copy of the work is no longer extant, which is not the case for the majority of the sonatas. As we are not even sure if Beethoven had the last word in the supervision of the original

editions, it is highly probable that some of the material presented is erroneous. For example, the opening tempo marking, an impossibly fast 138 to a half note (or 132 as given by Beethoven's great pupil, Czerny), would surely sound wrong at half that speed, something which has been suggested recently by a very distinguished colleague. What does one do with the harmonic progression leading into the recapitulation of the first movement? What about the tempo of the *Adagio*, again presented as impossibly fast? Or a number of important voice leadings and modulations sprinkled throughout the entire work, where a raised or lowered accidental carries enormous implications for the structure of the work?

What is certain, however, is that this sonata is Beethoven at his most autobiographical. The outer movements contain much that is manic, a temperament in potential disarray but for the structure imposed on it by the work at hand—a Promethean struggle. Perhaps this is why the slow movement is so moving—the pathos, the futility, the hope act as a necessary balance to the surrounding unrest. Surely the final moments in the *Adagio* are the summation of this great composer's struggle with the human condition, the acceptance of human frailty. The ensuing fragments before the final *Fugue* act as a bridge back to the "real" world. And the *Fugue*, divided into three distinct sections, is a technical, emotional and intellectual tour de force that ultimately triumphs over its own limitations.

This is only a fraction of what could and should be said about this mammoth opus. But there is, as always, a humorous side to things. Many years ago, I was sitting on the back steps of the dining hall at the Marlboro Festival in Vermont, having a heart-to-heart talk with Rudolf Serkin, himself a great Beethovenian, about the late sonatas. The conversation ran something like this:

"And what do you think of the Opus 109, Mr. Serkin?"

"Oh! Very difficult!"

"And how about the 110?"

"Oh, that's difficult, too."

"And the 111?"

"What a glorious statement! And that's difficult as well."

"And the *Hammerklavier*?"

"Craig what a stupid question—the *Hammerklavier* isn't difficult. It's impossible!!!"

[Program notes by Craig Sheppard, © 1997.]