Misha Dichter
Concert Pianist

Saturday, February 2, 2013
2:00 PM
Bethel United Methodist Church Hall, Lewes DE

PROGRAM

Six Bagatelles, Op. 126       Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
Andante con moto -- Cantabile e con piacevole
Allegro
Andante -- Cantabile e grazioso
Presto
Quasi allegretto
Presto -- Andante amabile e con moto

Sonata No. 32 in C Minor, Op. 111    Ludwig van Beethoven

Maestoso -- Allegro con brio ed appassionato
Arietta: Adagio molto, semplice e cantabile

INTERMISSION

Two Études         Alexander Scriabin (1872–1915)
F-sharp Major, Op. 42, No. 4
B-flat Minor, Op. 8, No. 11


Molto moderato
Andante sostenuto
Scherzo: Allegro vivace con delicatezza -- Trio
Allegro, ma non troppo – Presto

Steinway piano selected from Jacobs Music Company.
Misha Dichter

Now in the fifth decade of an illustrious international career, Misha Dichter traces his musical heritage to the two great pianistic traditions of the twentieth century: the Russian Romantic School as personified by Rosina Lhévinne, his mentor at The Juilliard School, and the German Classical style that was passed on to him by Aube Tzerko, a pupil of Artur Schnabel.

Mr. Dichter reveals this dual legacy in his solo recitals and appearances with virtually all of the world's major orchestras, performing the grand virtuoso compositions of Liszt, Rachmaninoff, and Tchaikovsky, as well as music from the central German-Viennese repertoire -- works by Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and Brahms -- which embody more introspective qualities.

Mr. Dichter's acclaimed recordings for Philips, RCA, MusicMasters, and Koch Classics further illustrate his musical interests. They include the Brahms piano concerti with Kurt Masur and the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Brahms solo works including the Handel Variations, Beethoven piano sonatas, the complete Liszt Hungarian Rhapsodies, the Liszt Piano Concerti with André Previn and the Pittsburgh Symphony, and Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* with Neville Marriner and the Philharmonia Orchestra, as well as music of Chopin, Mussorgsky, Schubert, Schumann, Stravinsky, and Tchaikovsky.

*Fanfare* called Mr. Dichter's recording of Stravinsky's Piano Concerto conducted by Robert Craft "one of the few really important Stravinsky discs to come out in recent years." A noted exponent of Liszt's piano works and a champion of the composer's forward-looking contributions to the development of music, Mr. Dichter was honored in 1998 with the "Grand Prix International du Disque Liszt," presented for his Phillips recording of Liszt piano transcriptions.

PentaTone Classics has reissued on SACD two albums of previously recorded music by Mr. Dichter. Beethoven's "Pathetique" Sonata and Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 83 comprise the first, and released
in March 2009 is a recording of Beethoven's "Moonlight" sonata and Brahms's First Concerto, a performance said by *Audiophile Audition* "that ranks among the best, and that means the versions by Rubinstein (and Reiner), Serkin (and Szell), and Arrau (and Haitink)."

Mr. Dichter's first recording with Cipa Dichter [*his wife*] is a three-CD album of Mozart's complete piano works for four hands on the Musical Heritage Society label. *American Record Guide* called the recording "an unmitigated delight," and Music Web International named the album a 2005 "Record of the Year."

Also an active chamber musician, Mr. Dichter has collaborated with most of the world's finest string players, and frequently performs with Cipa Dichter in duo-piano recitals and concerto performances throughout North America and in Europe, as well as top summer music festivals in the United States such as Ravinia, Caramoor, Mostly Mozart, and Aspen. They have brought to the concert stage many previously neglected works of the two-piano and piano-four-hand repertoires, including the world premiere of Robert Starer’s Concerto for Two Pianos and, most recently, the world premiere of the first movement of Shostakovich's two-piano version of Symphony No. 13 (Babi Yar). Mr. Dichter's master classes are widely attended at both festivals and leading conservatories.

Mr. Dichter was born in Shanghai in 1945, his Polish parents having fled that country at the outbreak of World War II. The family moved to Los Angeles when Misha was two, and he began piano lessons four years later. In addition to keyboard studies with Aube Tzerko, which established his continuing concentrated practice regimen and intensive approach to musical analysis, Mr. Dichter studied with Leonard Stein, a disciple of Arnold Schoenberg.

At the age of twenty, while enrolled at Juilliard, he entered the 1966 Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow where his stunning triumph launched his international career. Shortly thereafter he performed Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 at Tanglewood with Erich Leinsdorf and the Boston Symphony, broadcast on NBC and recorded for RCA.

In 1968, Mr. Dichter made his debut with Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic, soon followed by appearances with leading European
ensembles including the Berlin Philharmonic, the Concertgebouw of Amsterdam, the principal orchestras of London, as well as performances with major American orchestras. Mr. Dichter has appeared with the Baltimore, Chicago, Indianapolis, National, and Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestras, and has made a fourteen-city North American tour with the Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra.

An accomplished writer, Mr. Dichter has contributed many articles to leading publications. He has been seen frequently on national television, and was also the subject of a one-hour European documentary. A talented sketch artist, Mr. Dichter's drawings, which serve as a sort of visual diary, have been exhibited in New York galleries. His most recent publication, in 2012, is an e-book titled *A Pianist's World in Drawings*.

**Program Notes**

**BEETHOVEN**

*Six Bagatelles, Op. 126*

Beethoven's *Six Bagatelles, Opus 126*, were dedicated to his brother, Johann. They were published late in Beethoven's career, and were his final work for piano. (A bagatelle is a kind of brief character piece.)

There are three sets of bagatelles for piano by Beethoven: the seven in *Opus 33* (1801-1802), the eleven in *Opus 119* (1820-1822), and the six in *Opus 126* (1824), as well as three scattered bagatelles without opus numbers from his early years. Many of these works have roots predating the years specified--some of the earlier ones are actually traceable to 1783, when the composer was only thirteen years old. Still, he reworked his material before publication, so the bagatelles in the last two sets can be considered products of his final period.

The six bagatelles in *Opus 126*, unlike the previous ones which have a light character, offer the listener more artistic substance. The self-critical Beethoven expressed a favorable view of them, writing to his publisher that these bagatelles "are probably the best I've written." In his edition of these works, Otto von Irmer notes that Beethoven meant the Six Bagatelles to be played in order as a single work, as inferred from a marginal annotation Beethoven made in the manuscript: "*Ciclus von Kleinigkeiten*" ("cycle of little pieces"). Lewis Lockwood suggests another reason to regard the work as a unity rather than a collection: starting with the second Bagatelle, the keys of the pieces fall in a regular
succession of descending major thirds.

Maurice J. E. Brown says of the Bagatelles that they "are thoroughly typical of their composer and show affinities with the greater instrumental works written at the same time." Possible affinities are that Number 1 shares the terse, elliptical expression of the first movement of the Piano Sonata Opus 101; Number 3 shares the style of high-register elaboration of a slow melody in triple time, seen in the slow movement of the “Hammerklavier” Sonata Opus 106; and the final Bagatelle opens with a chaotic passage reminiscent of the finale of the Ninth Symphony.

**Sonata No. 32 in C Minor, Op. 111**

This is the last of Beethoven's piano sonatas. Along with his 33 Variations on a Waltz by Anton Diabelli, Opus 120 (1823) and his final two collections of bagatelles, this was one of Beethoven's last compositions of any kind for piano. The sonata was mostly written between 1821 and 1822. The first movement, like many other compositions by Beethoven in C Minor, is stormy and impassioned. It abounds in diminished seventh chords, for instance, in the first full bar of its introduction.

The second movement, in C Major, is a set of variations on a 16-bar theme, with a brief modulating interlude and final coda. The last two bars are famous for introducing small notes which constantly divide the bars. Beethoven eventually introduces a trill which gives the impression of a further step (that is, dividing each bar into 81 parts), although this is extremely difficult technically without slowing down to half-tempo.

Beethoven's markings indicate that he wished variations two through four to be played to the same basic pulse as the theme, first variation, and subsequent sections (using the direction "L'istesso tempo" at each change of time signature). However, performance practice today often makes the theme and first variation slower, with wide spaces between the chords, and lets the third variation, which has a powerful, stomping, dance-like character with falling 32-part notes, come out much faster and with heavy syncopation. Pianist Mitsuko Uchida has remarked that this variation, to a modern ear, has a striking resemblance to a cheerful boogie-woogie; the closeness of it to jazz and ragtime, which were still eighty years in the future in Beethoven's day, has often been pointed out.

The work is one of the most famous compositions of the composer's late period, and is widely performed and recorded. Pianist Robert Taub has called it "a work of unmatched drama and transcendence ... the triumph of order over chaos, of optimism over anguish." Pianist Alfred Brendel commented of the second movement that "what is to be
expressed here is distilled experience" and "perhaps nowhere else in piano literature does mystical experience feel so immediately close at hand."

Beethoven conceived of the plan for his final three piano sonatas (Opus numbers 109, 110, and 111) during the summer of 1820, while working on Missa Solemnis, although the first theme of the allegro ed appassionato was found in a draft book dating from 1801–1802, contemporary to his Second Symphony. Study of these draft books implies that Beethoven initially had plans for a sonata in three movements, quite different from that which we know. It is only thereafter that the initial theme of the first movement became that of his String Quartet Number 13, and what should have been used as the theme with the adagio — a slow melody in A-flat Major — was abandoned. Only the motif planned for the third movement, the famous theme mentioned above, was preserved to become that of the first movement of the present sonata.

The Arietta, too, offers considerable research on its themes. The drafts found for this movement seem to indicate that as the second movement took form, Beethoven gave up the idea of a third movement because the sonata finally appeared to him ideal. Asked by biographer Anton Schindler about the work's having only two movements, unusual for a classical sonata but not unique in Beethoven's compositions for piano, the composer is said to have replied: "I didn't have the time to write a third movement." This may have been the composer's prickly personality shining through, since the balance between the two movements is so perfect as to obviate the need for a third.

SCRIABIN
Two Études: F-sharp Major, Op. 42, No. 4; B-flat Minor, Op.8, No.11

Born in Moscow, Scriabin studied piano from an early age. His lessons began with Nikolay Zverev, who was teaching Sergei Rachmaninoff at the same time. Scriabin later studied at the Moscow Conservatory with Anton Arensky, Sergey Taneyev, and Vasili Safonov. He became a noted pianist despite having hands with a span of barely over an octave.

Scriabin's early piano compositions resemble those of Frédéric Chopin and include musical forms that Chopin employed, such as the étude, the prelude, and the mazurka. Later works by Scriabin are strikingly original, however, featuring unusual harmonies and textures.

An étude is an instrumental composition, usually short and considerably difficult, and often designed to help improve a particular technical skill. The tradition of writing études emerged in the early nineteenth century with the rapidly growing popularity of the piano. Of the
vast number of études from that era, some are still used as teaching material, and a few have achieved a place in today's concert repertoire.

Scriabin's études are his Opus numbers 8, 42, and 65; as well as Opus 2, Number 1; Opus 49, Number 1; and Opus 56, Number 4. They come from all phases of his composing career and are technically very demanding. However, Scriabin was not so much concerned with the development and display of specific aspects of technique, as with exploring a range of moods and colors. Many of his works are considered to have been influenced by his interest in synesthesia, in which one sense (sight or color) is experienced in response to stimulus of another sense (sound).

SCHUBERT
Sonata in B-flat Major
Franz Schubert's last three piano sonatas, numbered 958, 959 and 960 in Deutch's catalogue of Schubert's complete works, are the composer's last major compositions for the piano. They were written in 1828 during the last months of his life, but were not published until about ten years after his death. Like Schubert's other piano sonatas, they were mostly neglected at the time as being structurally and dramatically inferior to the sonatas of Beethoven, whom Schubert greatly admired.

Schubert's last sonatas are now praised by musicologists for their mature, individual style, manifested in unique features such as cyclical form and tonal design, chamber-music textures, and a rare depth of emotional expression. Considered among the most important of the composer's mature masterpieces, they are part of the core piano repertoire, appearing regularly on concert programs and in recordings.

The compositional process of these sonatas can be studied in detail from their surviving manuscripts, which indicate that the pieces were written in two stages: a preliminary sketch (the first draft) and a full, mature final version. In the sketches, passages from different movements, or even different sonatas, sometimes appear on the same manuscript page, suggesting that they were composed in parallel. In the B-flat sonata, Schubert sketched the finale before completing the first movement, unlike his usual practice in which finales were conceived later.

A study of Schubert's notations in the final versions yields many contrasting insights from the earlier sketches. Pianist Alfred Brendel has said that Schubert is revealed as "highly self-critical ... the 'heavenly lengths' of the sonatas were actually a later addition, not conceived from the start ... proportions are rectified, details start to tell, fermatas suspend time. Rests clarify the structure, allowing breathing space, holding the breath or listening into silence."
The slow movement of the B-flat sonata is one of Schubert's most experimental works. It is as if he has distilled the process of music-making. He takes a harmonic progression, explores it, changes a single note, explores it again. He breaks down a simple melody until only the bones are left and the music is suspended. The result is a play of pure sound.

That Schubert could have produced within his thirty-one years innumerable transcendent masterpieces, overflowing with uncanny beauty, terrifying anger and irresistible charm, is an inexplicable phenomenon of humanity. From his mid-twenties, when he learned that he most certainly would suffer an early death, his music acquired an almost unbearable poignancy. But the tragedy is redeemed by the heavenly beauty of his works. In the final months of his life, Schubert expanded his vision of what music could do.