

SEASON FINALE

# A Celebration of Beethoven & Butorac

May 4, 2024

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Sponsored by Merrill Lynch and Greenberg Traurig

Darko Butorac, Conductor  
Jon Kimura Parker, piano

Jean-Philippe Rameau  
(1683-1764)

Overture to *Naïs*

Ludwig van Beethoven  
(1770-1827)

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Minor, Op. 37  
Allegro con brio  
Largo  
Rondo: Allegro – Presto

## INTERMISSION

Ludwig van Beethoven

Symphony No. 3 in E Flat Major, Op. 55, "Eroica"  
Allegro con brio  
Marcia funebre: Adagio assai  
Scherzo  
Finale

*Jon Kimura Parker is represented exclusively by MKI Artists  
Soloist sponsored by Ms. Elfie Stamm*

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### Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764)

was born in Dijon, France. Little is known about his early years but he was a violinist and keyboard player who studied in Italy for a while and then moved to Paris. His first book of keyboard pieces, *Pièces de Clavecin*, was published in 1706. During Rameau's lifetime, the harpsichord was popular not only as a solo instrument but also because of its important role of providing continuo (bass line with harmony) for the orchestral compositions of the early Baroque. [The piano was invented by the Italian Cristofori around 1700-10 and it only gradually gained popularity over the harpsichord.] In 1709 Rameau returned to his hometown to succeed his father as organist at the main church in Dijon, where he wrote church music and more harpsichord works. It was in 1722 when he settled back in Paris that Rameau published one of the most influential books on Western music theory, *Treatise on Harmony*. It earned him an international reputation and is still influential 300 years later! When *A New Treatise on Music Theory*, followed four years later, his rational, scientifically-founded ideas earned him the occasional nickname "the Isaac Newton of Music."

Rameau loved vocal music and the drama of opera, but he never wrote an opera until he was fifty. From the 1733 production of *Hippolyte et Aricie* through Rameau's remaining thirty years, he concentrated on composing stage works. It is said that he had very high standards and was difficult to get along with; however, Louis de Cahusac was the librettist for quite a few of Rameau's operas, including *Nais*. *Nais*, the heroine in this pastoral héroïque, is wooed by the god Neptune in disguise as a mortal. Naturally there are other suitors to create conflict. *Nais* was written in 1748-9, commissioned by the director of the Opéra de Paris to celebrate the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle that ended the eight-year War of Austrian Succession. Rameau and Cahusac finished the opera quickly, perhaps

in as little as five weeks. The Overture that we hear tonight is wonderfully descriptive of "all is fair in love and war," which may also extend to represent the recent battles between Louis XV of France and King George II of Britain. Scurrying strings set the scene. Exciting music for the brass instruments is punctuated by the syncopated beat on the timpani. The "unflagging rhythm," a characteristic of Baroque music, is interrupted several times by Rameau's clever use of silence. It is a stirring opening for the opera (and tonight's concert).

Born in Bonn, Germany, **Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)** had hoped to study with Mozart in Vienna, but his plans changed when his mother's death and his father's alcoholism made him financially responsible for his family while still a teenager. At twenty-two, however, he moved to Vienna, studied with Haydn (Mozart had died the previous year), and remained there until his death. He was a virtuoso pianist before increasing deafness around the age of thirty made it difficult for him to perform. Scholars generally divide Beethoven's oeuvre into three stylistic periods. His early works include the first two symphonies, and piano sonatas up to and including the *Pathétique*. Compositions from this time generally incorporate more conventional harmonic progressions and traditional forms. In 1803 Beethoven wrote his famous Heiligenstadt Testament in which he revealed that he had considered suicide in his distress over increasing deafness. After this turning point, Beethoven's music often seems to portray a dramatic struggle that eventually ends in transcendence. This is certainly the case in the Eroica Symphony, and to a lesser extent in the concerto, the latter being a product of both Beethoven's first period and his second. Sketches of **Piano Concerto No. 3** date back to the late 1790s, with the first movement completed by April 1800, but the entire composition was not finished until its April

1803 premiere. The piano part had yet to be notated, but the pianist had all the music in his head, since the composer was also the soloist that evening. The **Allegro con brio** sneaks in with strings outlining a C minor chord, to which the winds reply. Beethoven's symphonies are rife with dialogue between different sections of the orchestra. As the primary theme is repeated, it changes character. Initially soft and tentative, it becomes quite insistent, punctuated by many sforzando (suddenly loud) chords, another characteristic of Beethoven's voice. This effectively prepares for the contrast of the lyrical secondary theme in the major mode, played by violins and clarinets. Meanwhile the soloist has to sit center stage and wait for his turn, which finally comes when the orchestra has finished the exposition. Beethoven provides a "warm up" for the pianist with his repetition of a one-octave scale passage before he plays the opening C minor theme in double octaves. (Piano students in the audience may be encouraged to know that there actually are pieces that incorporate those scales that they hate to practice.) Both themes are played by the pianist, and at the end of this double exposition, they are "developed," often fragmented, and they wander through various keys, with more sforzando accents. The cadenza in Beethoven's time was usually improvised by the soloist, but most performers today play the one that the composer wrote out well after the premiere. Other artists such as Clara Schumann, Franz Liszt, and Fazil Say have also written cadenzas for this concerto. After additional conversation between the piano and the orchestra, the solo part ends as it began, with ascending octave scales. (Let's all go practice them when we get home!)

**Largo** begins in quiet contrast to the energetic conclusion of the first movement. Reflective and soothing, there is polite conversation between the piano and the orchestra, and at

one special point bassoon and then flute are accompanied by the solo piano. A brief piano cadenza, some more quiet dialogue, and Beethoven ends with a sforzando chord. With almost no pause, the piano segues into the repetitive, playful "A" theme of the final **Rondo**. Rondo form involves the alternation of themes, and at one point the "A" theme returns as a fugue started by cellos, imitated by violas, then violins, and finally by the string basses. At the end of the movement, it appears that Beethoven has not yet done everything he wants with this theme, so it undergoes additional fragmentation, a change of rhythm, change of character, some more alternation between major and minor, and a few more signature sforzando chords, delightfully syncopated. Almost reluctantly, Beethoven ends the concerto in C major with a triumphant (transcendent?) blaze.

**Symphony No. 3** was completed in 1804 and nicknamed "Eroica" by the composer, who originally had written "Intitolata Bonaparte" on the manuscript; however, the inscription was crossed out after Napoleon declared himself emperor in May 1804. The text on the printed score of 1806 translates to a "heroic symphony [sinfonia eroica]. . . composed to celebrate the memory of a great man." Eroica illustrates Beethoven's expansion of traditional formal outlines; audiences of his time were sometimes puzzled by the length of his symphonies. Two statements of an E-flat major chord begin the **Allegro con brio** before the cellos play an energetic theme outlining that chord. Syncopation (accenting the offbeat) and multiple repetitions of chords create rhythmic interest as well as tension. After the customary contrasting secondary themes (and a repeat of the exposition), Beethoven surprises by introducing a new theme in E minor in the oboes during the development section. Much has been written about the novelty of the horns returning to the tonic key of E-flat before the

rest of the ensemble begins the recapitulation, creating momentary dissonance with the violins. Beethoven continued his innovations with an extensive coda in which there is even more development of themes.

Whether the **Adagio** references an actual or symbolic death of a hero, this funeral march commands attention with its dotted rhythm and distinctive figure in the basses. A central section in the major mode features a lyrical theme for oboe. When the march returns, it is treated fugally [strict imitation of the theme]. Eventually, in a musically symbolic gesture, the theme disintegrates into fragments and the march falls apart. Beethoven's placement of a **Scherzo** (Italian for "joke") following the funeral march caused much criticism. Mozart and Haydn generally used the courtly minuet-and-trio form in their third movements. This symphony was the first to substitute a scherzo, a practice that Beethoven continued in subsequent symphonies, including its unexpected position as a second movement in the Ninth ("Choral") Symphony. Eroica's Scherzo begins pianissimo and staccato and demonstrates Beethoven's fondness for tossing melodic fragments (dialoguing) between strings and winds. His dramatic contrasts in dynamics are also evident. The novelty of three horns is exploited with the hunting call in the middle section—a rare example of a symphonic trio actually being performed by a trio! After the scherzo is repeated, there is another lengthy coda before the **Finale**, in theme and variation form, begins with an extensive unfolding of the bass line. The bass is varied several times (e.g., fugal imitation, altered rhythms) before the primary melodic theme finally appears in the violins. The mood changes with each of Eroica's variations. Several involve fugato sections that create textural variety and tension; in another variation, a flute sweetly intones the theme with horns providing hymn-like accompaniment.

By the end, a musical transformation has taken place, and Eroica closes in transcendence (or is it heroism?).

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Dr. Akers has a Master of Music degree in Piano Performance from Indiana University and a Ph.D. in Historical Musicology from Florida State University.



*"Mr. Parker was an insightful, energetic soloist...the audience roared in approval!"*  
- *The New York Times*

Pianist **Jon Kimura Parker** is known for his charisma, infectious enthusiasm, and dynamic performances. A veteran of the international concert stage, he has performed regularly in the Berlin Philharmonie, Carnegie Hall, London's South Bank, the Sydney Opera House, and the Beijing Concert Hall. He was recently named Creative Partner for the Minnesota Orchestra's Summer at Orchestra Hall, he serves as the Artistic Director for the Honens International Piano Competition and Artistic Advisor for the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival, and is on the faculty of the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University.

Highlights of his 2023-24 season include performances with the Taiwan Philharmonic, Symphony Nova Scotia, and the Chamber Music Society of Palm Beach with Gary Hoffman and Arnaud Sussman.

A collaborator in a wide variety of styles, Jon Kimura Parker has performed with Doc Severinsen, Audra McDonald, Bobby McFerrin, Pablo Ziegler, and Sanjaya Malakar. As a founding member of Off the Score, he also performed with Stewart Copeland – the legendary drummer of The Police – for the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival's 20th An-

niversary Season, featuring his own arrangements of music by Prokofiev, Ravel, and Stravinsky. In addition, he performs widely throughout North America and Europe with the Montrose Trio (together with violinist Martin Beaver and cellist Clive Greensmith).

Parker's discography of a dozen albums features music ranging from Mozart and Chopin to Barber and Stravinsky. His most recent recording Fantasy, built around Schubert's "Wanderer" Fantasy, was described by Musical Toronto as giving "a big, clear picture window of a rich soul and great artistic depth." His YouTube channel features a series of Concerto Chat videos, which explore the piano concerto repertoire.

Jon Kimura Parker studied with Edward Parker and Keiko Parker, Lee Kum-Sing at the Vancouver Academy of Music and the University of British Columbia, Marek Jablonski at the Banff Centre, and Adele Marcus at The Juilliard School. After winning the Gold Medal at the 1984 Leeds International Piano Competition, Parker has gone on to become an Officer of the Order of Canada and to receive Honorary Doctorates from the University of British Columbia and the Royal Conservatory of Music, Toronto.

Known to friends as "Jackie," Parker is married to violinist/violist Aloysia Friedmann, and their daughter Sophie graduated from Rice University in 2021. For further information, please visit [www.jonkimuraparker.com](http://www.jonkimuraparker.com), [www.montrosetrio.com](http://www.montrosetrio.com), [www.offthescore.com](http://www.offthescore.com), [www.oicmf.org](http://www.oicmf.org), and [www.honens.com](http://www.honens.com).

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A Celebration of  
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