



presents...

RICHARD GOODE | Piano

Friday, April 10, 2026 | 7:30pm

Herbst Theatre

BEETHOVEN

Variations on a Waltz by Diabelli, Opus 120

Tema: Vivace

1. *Alla marcia maestoso*

2. *Poco allegro*

3. *L'istesso tempo*

4. *Un poco più vivace*

5. *Allegro vivace*

6. *Allegro ma non troppo e serio*

7. *Un poco più allegro*

8. *Poco vivace*

9. *Allegro pesante e risoluto*

10. *Presto*

11. *Allegretto*

12. *Un poco più moto*

13. *Vivace*

14. *Grave e maestoso*

15. *Presto scherzando*

16. *Allegro*

17. *Allegro*

18. *Poco moderato*

19. *Presto*

20. *Andante*

21. *Allegro con brio; Meno allegro; Tempo primo*

22. *Allegro molto, alla 'Notte e giorno faticar' di Mozart*

23. *Allegro assai*

24. *Fughetta: Andante*

25. *Allegro*

26. *Piacevole*

27. *Vivace*

28. *Allegro*

29. *Adagio ma non troppo*

30. *Andante, sempre cantabile*

31. *Largo, molto espressivo*

32. *Fuga: Allegro*

33. *Tempo di Menuetto moderato*

INTERMISSION

SCHUBERT

Piano Sonata in B-Flat Major, D. 960

Molto moderato

Andante sostenuto

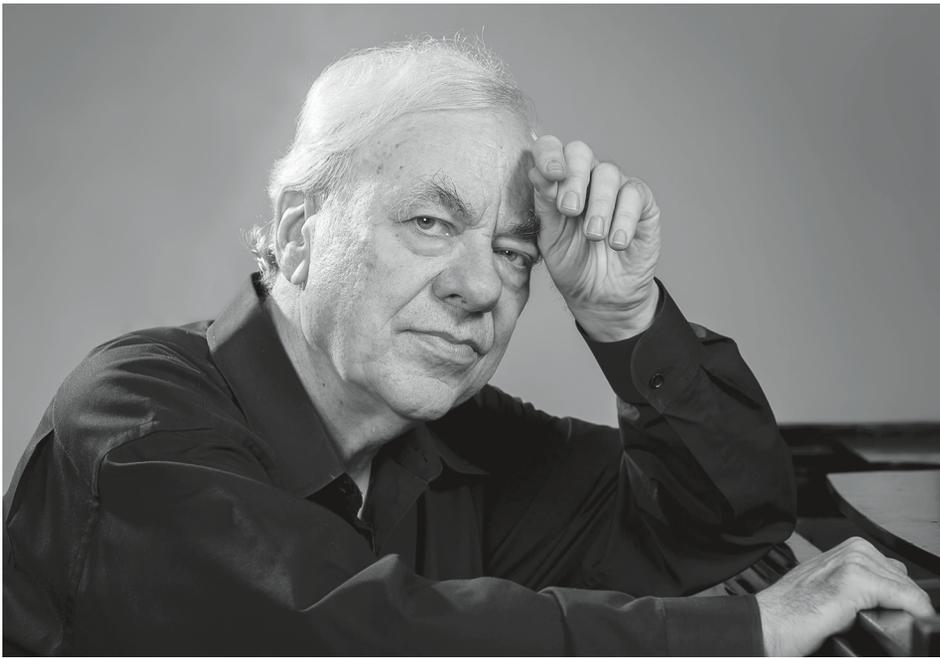
Scherzo: Allegro vivace con delicatezza

Allegro, ma non troppo

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Neil O'Donnell and Chris Motley.**

Richard Goode is represented by Frank Salomon Associates
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Steinway Model D, Pro Piano, San Francisco.



ARTIST PROFILES

San Francisco Performances presents Richard Goode for the 18th time. He first performed in October 1985.

Richard Goode has been hailed for music-making of tremendous emotional power, depth and expressiveness, and has been acknowledged worldwide as one of today's leading interpreters of Classical and Romantic music. In regular performances with the major orchestras, recitals in the world's music capitals, masterclasses in person or online, and through his extensive and acclaimed Nonesuch recordings, he has won a large and devoted following.

An exclusive Nonesuch recording artist, Goode has made more than two dozen recordings over the years, ranging from solo and chamber works to lieder and concertos. His 10-CD set of the complete Beethoven sonatas cycle, the first-ever by an American-born pianist, was nominated for a Grammy® and has been ranked among the most distinguished recordings of this repertoire. Other recording highlights include Mozart piano concerti with Orpheus, with whom he launched the 2021 season at New York's 92nd St Y.

A native of New York, Richard Goode studied at the Mannes College of Music and the Curtis Institute. His numerous prizes over the years include the Young Concert Artists Award, First Prize in the Clara Haskil Competition, the Avery Fisher Prize, and a Grammy® award for the Brahms Sonatas recorded with clarinetist Richard Stoltzman.

Mr. Goode served, together with Mitsuko Uchida, as co-Artistic Director of the Marlboro Music School and Festival in Marlboro, Vermont from 1999 through 2013. Participating initially at the age of 14, at what the *New Yorker* magazine recently described as "the classical world's most coveted retreat," he made a notable contribution to this unique community over the 28 summers he spent there. In Fall 2021, Mr. Goode joined the Peabody Conservatory as Distinguished Artist Faculty. For the 2025–26 season, Mr. Goode joins The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra as its newest Artistic Partner.

He is married to the violinist Marcia Weinfeld, and, when the Goodes are not on tour, they and their collection of some 5,000 volumes live in New York City.

PROGRAM NOTES

Variations on a Waltz by Diabelli, Opus 120

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
(1770–1827)

In March 1819 the Viennese music publisher Anton Diabelli invited fifty Austrian composers to write one variation on a little dance tune Diabelli had written himself. He planned to publish this theme and the set of fifty variations in a volume he grandly called "*Väterlandischer Künstlerverein, Variations for Pianoforte on a Given Theme*, composed by the foremost Tone-poets and Virtuosi of Vienna and the Austrian

States." Diabelli's motives were to some extent nationalistic—he intended this "patriotic anthology" as a demonstration of what Austrian composers could accomplish—but the project rested on a sound business sense as well: such a volume would be attractive to the growing number of amateur pianists in Vienna, who would be drawn by the names of so many famous composers and pianists. Most of the fifty are today forgotten, though some of the names remain familiar: Czerny, Moscheles, and Kalkbrenner all contributed variations, as did the 22-year-old Schubert and the 11-year-old Liszt (his first publication). The names of several other contributors also survive, but not for their composing: these include the Archduke Rudolph and Simon Sechter, remembered as the theory teacher of Schubert and—much later—Bruckner.

Diabelli of course invited the most famous composer in Vienna to contribute a variation, but Beethoven, then 48 and completely deaf, was not interested. He found Diabelli's theme unappealing, dismissing it as a *Schusterfleck*: literally, "cobblers patch," but in music a term that implies aimless repetition of certain notes. At another point, Beethoven described Diabelli's theme simply as a *Deutsche*—a German dance. But as he looked at this seemingly innocuous little tune, Beethoven began to see possibilities. He paused in his work on the *Missa Solemnis* and very quickly wrote not one variation on the theme but twenty and then set the project aside in May 1819. Not until three years later, in the fall of 1822, did Beethoven return to these variations, and then he gave them his full attention. He worked through the winter and completed his set of thirty-three variations on Diabelli's theme in April 1823, just before he set to work on the *Ninth Symphony*. Diabelli brought out the variations on his theme in two volumes: the first was Beethoven's set of variations (his last composition for piano, and one of his greatest works), the second was the collection of variations by the fifty other composers (which immediately dropped into darkest obscurity).

At what point did Beethoven pass from his initial disdain for Diabelli's theme—a bland little waltz tune in C major in two sixteen-bar phrases—and move on to fascination with it? That cannot be known, but what we can understand is what Beethoven did with that theme: he broke it down into its component parts—melody, rhythm, harmony—and began to explore the possibilities locked beneath the theme's placid surface. The thirty-three variations of the *Diabelli*

Variations, as the work has come to be called, are not decorative variations in which the theme is progressively embellished but remains present even as it grows more ornate. Instead, listeners will find that in the *Diabelli Variations* the original theme often seems to disappear entirely as Beethoven seizes on a detail of rhythm or turn of phrase and makes that the basis for variation.

Some of these variations dash past in a matter of seconds, but others are extended and the thirty-three variations extend over the generous span of around fifty minutes, making the *Diabelli Variations* about as long as the *Eroica*. Such a length is remarkable, for variation form would seem to do nothing but simply circle around the original theme, but one of the successes of the *Diabelli Variations* lies in Beethoven's arrangement of his variations so that the listener makes a musical (and emotional) journey across the lengthy span of this music. Many of the opening variations are light and of the same emotional cast, and until Variation 29 all but one remain in C major. Diabelli's original theme is transformed along the way: Beethoven treats it in both triple and duple meters, and his variations are by turn declarative, wistful, dancing, exciting, powerful.

There are some surprises: Variation 22 incorporates the theme of Leporello's aria *Notte e giorno faticar* from the beginning of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (here it fits neatly within the pattern of the variations), and Variation 24 is a slow fughetta. Beethoven progresses to the "climax" of this sequence of variations: Nos. 29–31 adopt a slower tempo and move into C minor; the last of these is an aching and ornate extension of the theme in 9/8. And out of this explodes Variation 31, a furiously energetic fugue. Its dazzling energy and sudden leap into bright E-flat major would seem to signal the destination Beethoven has been working toward all along, but this is not the case. The fugue comes to a close, and now Beethoven moves back to C major for the concluding variation, which comes as a complete surprise: it is a polished and poised minuet that—rather than plunging into new territory—seems instead to evoke the music of the previous century. On this elegant minuet, the *Diabelli Variations* moves to its surprisingly subdued close. After some of the fury that has preceded it, this ending seems strange. And yet it rounds off the work perfectly.

Diabelli was astonished with what Beethoven had done with his theme, and he published this set of variations in June

1823, barely two months after Beethoven had finished it. On that occasion, he drafted a florid advertising puff calculated to increase sales, but his description of this music reveals not only his own understanding of what Beethoven had achieved, but also his amazement at what had happened to his own theme. Diabelli's description reads in part: "The most original structures and ideas; the boldest musical idioms and harmonies are here exhausted; every piano-forte effect based on a solid technique is employed, and this work is the more interesting from the fact that it is elicited from a theme which no one would otherwise have supposed capable of such a working-out."

Piano Sonata in B-flat Major, D.960

FRANZ SCHUBERT
(1797–1828)

Schubert's final year was dreadful. Ill for years, he went into steady decline in 1828 and died in November at 31. Yet from those last months came a steady stream of masterpieces, and few of the achievements of that miraculous, agonizing year seem more remarkable than the composition of three large-scale piano sonatas in the month of September, barely eight weeks before his death. In the years following Schubert's death, many of the works from this final year were recognized as the masterpieces they are, but the three piano sonatas made their way much more slowly. When they appeared in 1838, a decade after Schubert's death, the publisher dedicated them to Schumann, one of Schubert's greatest admirers, but even Schumann confessed mystification, noting with a kind of dismayed condescension that "Always musical and rich in songlike themes, these pieces ripple on, page after page..." Even as late as 1949, Schubert's adoring biographer Robert Haven Schaufly could rate them "considerably below the level of the last symphonies and quartets, the *String Quintet*, and the best songs." It took Artur Schnabel's championing these sonatas to rescue them from obscurity, and today the last of them, the *Sonata in B-flat Major*, has become one of the best-loved of all piano sonatas.

It is dangerous to assume that a composer's final works must be haunted—as were Mahler's and Shostakovich's—by premonitions of death. And in fact, Schubert's final works do not agonize in the way the Mahler *Tenth* or Shostakovich *Fourteenth*

Symphonies do. But it remains true that as Schubert's condition worsened across the span of that final year, his music took on a depth and poignance rare in his works. And it is hard not to hear in the beginning of the *Sonata in B-flat Major* a direct premonition of mortality. The *Molto moderato* begins simply with a flowing chordal melody of unusual expressiveness. But in the eighth measure comes a discordant trill deep in the left hand, and the music glides to a complete stop. The silence that follows—Schubert marks it with a fermata to be sure that it is prolonged—is one of the few genuinely terrifying moments in music. It is as if a moment of freezing terror has crept into this flow of gentle song. Out of the silence the theme resumes. Again the deep trill intrudes, but this time the music rides over it and continues. Claudio Arrau has spoken of this movement as one written "in the proximity of death," and while this music is never tortured, it is some of the most expressive Schubert ever wrote. This is a long movement, full of the harmonic freedom that marks Schubert's best music; it ends quietly in B-flat major with a chorale-like restatement of the main theme.

The *Andante sostenuto* is as moving as the first movement. The somber opening melody, in the unexpected key of C-sharp minor, proceeds darkly in the right hand, while the left hand offers an unusual accompaniment that skips—almost dances—through a four-octave range, reaching up above the right hand's melody. The middle section is of a nobility that might almost be called Brahmsian, were that not absurd; perhaps it suggests why, a half-century later, Brahms admired Schubert's music so much. By contrast, the quicksilver *Scherzo* flashes across the keyboard with a main theme that moves easily between the pianist's hands; at times the rhythms and easy flow make this seem more like a waltz than a scherzo. Schubert specifies that it should be played *con delicatezza*, and certainly its smooth modulations between A major and B-flat major are accomplished most delicately; the brief trio is enlivened by off-the-beat accents. The finale—*Allegro, ma non troppo*—dances along its two main ideas. The writing is brilliant and once again full of harmonic surprises, but in the midst of all this sparkle one hears a wistfulness, an expressive depth that stays to haunt the mind long after the music has ended.

—Program notes by Eric Bromberger