Western Music
Don Wright Faculty of Music

STUDENT **RECITAL**

April 15, 2025
6 p.m., von Kuster Hall
Jiazhi Sun, *piano*

Sonata in E Major Hob. XVI: 31, No. 46 (1774–1776) — Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)

Moderato

Allegretto

Finale: Presto

Piano Concerto No. 5 in E–flat Major, Op. 73 (1809–1811) — Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Allegro

Adagio un poco mosso

Rondo: Allegro

Orchestral Reduction: Yixuan Ran

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts in Performance degree.

Program Note

--------Veritas Virtus

If nature itself contains an inherent "purposiveness" (Zweckmäßigkeit), then music represents the highest embodiment of this idea in the realm of the senses. The beauty of music does not lie merely in sensory pleasure but in the fusion of sensibility and reason—a delicate balance where structural necessity evokes an experience of freedom. It was thanks to his student Köppel's suggestion that Bach composed the Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I, this collection is not only the pinnacle of musical genius but also a philosophical turning point. The innovation of well-tempered tuning liberated music from the constraints of limited modulation, creating a universal order akin to Newton's physical laws: a harmony that weaves complexity into simplicity, reason into form.

In 1773, as the Baroque twilight of Esterházy Palace still bathed the Danube in Rococo sweetness, Haydn's Sonata No. 46 in E–major was quietly born—a work forged in an atmosphere steeped in truth, refined art, and centuries of noble legacy. This gilded palace, a sublime creation of Prince Nikolaus II (Nicklaus II) of the illustrious Esterházy family—whose storied lineage stretches back to the venerable days of Esterházy Pál, the sagacious first prince and Palatine of late 17th-century Hungary—stands as a testament to the enduring power of exquisite craftsmanship and cultured patronage.

The Esterházy family, having ascended from humble regional nobility to become key figures on the grand stage of the Holy Roman Empire through bold acts—such as the historic bestowal of the ancient Hungarian crown upon Emperor Joseph I in a bitter winter of 1687—amassed vast treasures over the ensuing centuries. Their legacy is preserved in the treasures accumulated from the Renaissance and Baroque eras: from intricately wrought silver and gilded ivory sculptures to rare jewels set in delicate filigree, each piece embodying the painstaking handcraft and artistic genius of its time. Notably, the palace itself—constructed in 1770 in Fertöd, Hungary—boasts 126 rooms lavishly adorned with Rococo gilt decorations, a resplendent opera house, and a music hall (Haydn Hall) whose sublime acoustics have long enchanted musicians and connoisseurs alike.

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In this opulent setting of noble grandeur and painstakingly wrought elegance, Haydn's music unfolds with a quiet majesty. The opening three-voice trio, marked by its deliberate clarity and echoes of Bach's ideals, gently introduces a principal theme in E major—a theme that flows in graceful, undulating lines, much like the ornate Rococo flourishes that adorn the palace's halls. Here, delicate ornamental figures, crafted with the precision of master artisans, transform the elaborate rhetoric of the Baroque into a crystalline expression of the Enlightenment's quest for truth. Every right-hand curve and every precisely articulated Alberti bass, echoing the eternal pursuit of realism, demands the reasoning veracity of reflection—a harmony between refined structural beauty and intellectual clarity. Haydn's approach deepens the form's capacity to convey the process of inquiry and the unity of opposites. By bridging the noble traditions of the past with the rational spirit of his age, Haydn reveals to future composers the profound potential of the sonata form as a vehicle for purposeful and meaningful semantic explorations.

In the brisk allegro of the second movement in E minor, Haydn introduces a nuanced interplay of voices. The central melodic line, with its gentle lyricism, reflects the maturity of his later sonatas. Meanwhile, the recurring use of diminished seventh chords and the dynamic tightening of the melodic line intertwine to create a metaphorical dialogue, embodying an infinite search for truth. Compared to Bach, Haydn's bolder choices in harmonic rhythm, rapid chromatic modulation, and striking contrasts of harmonic color extend the syntactic rhetoric built upon Bach's foundation, illuminating the path toward a more rational and truth-seeking expression of musical art. This approach, rooted in the ideals of the Enlightenment, elevates the sonata form to new heights of intellectual and artistic achievement.

The final movement, composed as theme and variations, bursts forth with the buoyant spirit of folk dance—a vibrant echo of the human experience celebrated within these storied walls. The opening E-major theme, with its deliberately spacious accompaniment, seems to capture the light and unburdened steps of a noble dance, while a sudden shift into E-minor imbues the passage with an emotive, almost dialectical tone: from interrogative questions to an in-depth discussion and reasoning explanation of the unity of opposing ideals. Under the "Presto" marking, the variations transform the graceful art of Baroque ornamentation into an enduring celebration of Veritas-seeking excellence and human ingenuity, as if every delicate musical detail were courageous souls confronting questions within a grand symphony of enlightened ideas.

When the movement finally resolves in the tonic E–major key, Haydn's reworking of the dance motifs does more than simply bring the piece to a close—it immortalizes an Enlightenment spirit, weaving a dialectical tone into the folk dance. This becomes a musical talisman, connecting centuries of Bach's legacy and symbolizing an ongoing exploration of meaning. It is a true embodiment of absolute artistic brilliance! While some may view Esterházy Palace as a relic of feudal opulence—from its intricately crafted silver and delicate Rococo furnishings to the majestic Haydn Hall—it remains a beacon of the future's luminous promise. In truth, it stands as a living testament to Artistic Veritas.

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In 1831, Robert Schumann published a review of Chopin's *Variations on "Là ci darem la mano," Op. 2* in the *General Music Journal*, famously exclaiming through his invented character, Florestan: *"Hut ab, ihr Herren, ein Genie!"* ("Hats off, gentlemen, a genius!"). Shortly after, the review reached Chopin, who confided to a friend that he had received a ten-page review from an enthusiastic German critic.

Schumann structured his critique as a conversation between his two alter egos, Eusebius and Florestan, discussing each variation with vivid, imaginative scenes. He envisioned *Don Giovanni* frolicking with *Leporello* in the second variation, kissing *Zerlina* while *Massetto*'s anger simmered in the left hand in the third, and, in the fifth bar of the Adagio, *Don Giovanni* kissing *Zerlina* on the D-flat. Schumann concluded: *"These private feelings are perhaps to be praised, although they are somewhat subjective; but I also bow my head before Chopin—such genius, such aspiration, such mastery."*

Amused, Chopin remarked, "I could die of laughing at this German's imagination." Perhaps every musicologist who recalls Chopin's words can imagine the sting Schumann might have felt. Yet this didn't hinder Clara and Robert Schumann from becoming kindred spirits with Chopin. From the time he fell ill until his death, the Schumanns remained steadfast in their care for him. In fact, at age 12, Clara Schumann heard Chopin's *Op. 2* during a recital in Paris and resolved to learn it. Despite her father's claim that the Germans in 1830 considered the piece unplayable, Clara, at just 12 years old, mastered it in eight days.

By grounding criticism in documented historical context, one can avoid imposing unintended structural or programmatic meanings on composers like Chopin or Brahms—both of whom actively rejected referentialism—Thanks to collective musicological research, modern criticism no longer relies on excessive subjective or psychological interpretations to understand a work. One may embracing referentialism if they are supported by composer themselves or based on historical evidence.

The year 1809 was a defining moment for Ludwig van Beethoven, a collision of personal struggle, political upheaval, and creative triumph. As Napoleon's forces besieged Vienna, Beethoven faced an ironic decision he made two months ago: he accepted the position with Napoleon's younger brother Jerome, the newly created King of Westphalia, only to find Napoleon's army two months later at the gates of the city.

Trapped in a crumbling Vienna, Beethoven endured the physical and psychological toll of war. He sheltered in his brother's cellar, pillows clutched to his ears to muffle cannon fire, a poignant image of an artist grappling with encroaching deafness

amid literal and metaphorical noise. The city's fall brought economic collapse: shortages of food, ink, and paper strained Beethoven's productivity. Moreover French-imposed reparations and later censorship laws suffocated Viennese cultural life. Between 1810 and 1814, Napoleon's formal censorship—implemented primarily for non-periodic publications—curbed the formerly all-powerful police supervision over public expression. The imperial decree of February 5, 1810, which established the Direction Générale, sparked a bitter struggle between the Ministries of Police and the Interior, with figures like Fouche and Savary resenting the loss of police jurisdiction. Although the Emperor detested censorship for fear it might stifle free thought, he could not do without it.

Beethoven as he published this concerto in 1811 has to suppress all his anger to the strict Reality of censorship. This evidenced including deleted quotation in drafted sketches of a soldier's song alongside Heinrich von Collin's patriotic poem *Österreich über alles* (Austria Above All) at the beginning of second movment, a text so incendiary its author was hunted by French authorities— "Battle, Hymn of Jubilation, Attack ... Victory" and the handwritten annotations "to alert the defence of the Fatherland."

A marginal note later deleted in the autograph score—"May Austria give Napoleon His due !"— meaning that Austria should retaliate Napoleon for his misdeeds also appears at the second movement's opening. It was also the first and only time he titled his piano sonata by himself, with the same dedication and same key to Archduke Rudolph—who fled Vienna ahead of Napoleon's 1809 invasion. The concerto parallels Beethoven's "Les Adieux" Sonata No.26 in many ways. This was the first time he wrote down personal narrative for his instrumental work: the beginning of Sonata 26 (G–F–E♭), with particular wording of German underneath: Le-be-wohl ——often translated as the meaning of a heartfelt or permanent goodbye also mirrors the concerto's "chain of 'teardrop' notes" (C–B♭, A♭–G to G–F, E♭–D) Both works connect the second movement to the finale without a defined cadence, as if to whisper that sorrow and solace are fleeting—mere footnotes in history—while the enduring forces of victory and hope rise eternal.

Yet here we stand in 2025, the world still trembling under the scalpel of division, humanity still tracing the raw nerve of separation's ache. Maps or mirages, whispers that bloom into thunder-there is solace in the symbolic imagery. In the mere act of voicing the unspeakable, there is hope: may not a purposiveness, but a pulse.

When the piano tears through the orchestral curtain of the first movement with cascading arpeggios, every suppressed lament—stifled by imperial censorship—finds an outlet. The agonized emotions, poured into the surging arpeggiated figures, crest and then spiral back, unfolding from Eb major to the second bombardment of an Ab major chord. In that moment, deafness became almost a "blessing." Even Beethoven himself, left with a mere 26% of his hearing, recorded in his diary that the cannon's fury was unbearable. The piano's reply seemed a cry of astonishment: its spiraling right-hand legato evoked the gasps of citizens ascending air-raid shelter steps; the pulsating rhythm of a people racked by conflict; its descending left-hand scale recalled the sulfurous spray stirred by shells and bullets plunging into the Danube.

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At the third collision of a dominant–seventh chord, the piano soars to a climactic A♭, its texture rising in a torrent of sixteenth notes before abruptly halting. That trembling rhythm resembled a mother's final, desperate lift of her child amid raging flames. Soon after, parallel intervals in both hands tumble precipitously from an otherwise empty harmonic field; those mercurial semitonal shifts not only foretell the future genius of Wagner's inspiration but also unveil Beethoven's deepest wounds from war. Thus is born a chain of four "teardrop" notes—blood droplets, as if rolled from an amputation saw in a field hospital, crystallize upon the staff: germinating from a fragile B♭ and returning ultimately to the home E♭ chord. At this juncture, the heroic theme of the orchestra is no triumphal proclamation. The second theme—its rhythm of pounding hooves not the iron cavalry of Napoleon's Guard but the relentless strikes of Vienna's coachmen dismantling carriage axles overnight to fashion spears for barricade fighting—reveals a heroism that, through repeated shifts in dynamics, instrumental color, and tonality, portends the uncertainty of war. Each connecting passage exposes the genuine terror of the people with stark individuality.

In its second presentation, the orchestra introduces even more specific variations and meditations; the woodwinds are deliberately placed in awkward registers, emitting a mechanical, uneasy interrogative. They guide the piano into its statement of the first theme, as if to answer: How shall humanity face its endless struggle? When the piano reimagines that theme with a maternal, tender canticle, its chromatic harmonies—like jagged scars tearing through the steel strings—reveal Beethoven's most intimate wounds of warfare, as if transporting him back to childhood moments spent with his mother. And then the precipitous dotted rhythms rapidly transform into brutal triplet chords that drag us back to reality. The second theme enters amid a shifting, syncopated tonal ambiguity as the piano's rational accompaniment soars above the orchestra, finally manifesting a profound, introspective critique of the justifiability of war through its capricious tonal wanderings.

The development section unfolds as one of the most ferocious class dialogues in music history. The orchestra opens with a military F–major march, and the piano responds with a restrained, broken arpeggio. An outburst of uncontainable emotion severs the original second theme with staccato triplets in the left hand. This fractured pulse repeatedly questions the necessity of war—its very cadence echoing the rhythm of a baker swinging tongs. The disjointed interplay between the right-hand octaves and the Czerny–like streams in the left resembles the anguished shouts of a people rising against oppression. The cut rhythms of the clarinet and bassoon become a coded exchange—like washerwomen and gunsmiths swapping resistance signals on a street corner.

Soon after, the contrapuntal lines of clarinet and flute cease to be mere ornamental courtly chants; they transform into the metallic coughs of lead type colliding with rollers in an underground printing press as revolutionary pamphlets are laid out by university students. The orchestra's third theme, presented in B♭–major, further intensifies the tonal dislocation, prompting an even deeper inquiry into the rationale of war. The woodwind section—small but resolute—reappears, while the piano glides, stepwise by semitone, into a fragile, serene G–major. Here, through expansive variations based on the second theme, Beethoven displays an almost mystical mastery over the color and register of the woodwind phrases. What seems at first to be mere accompaniment—a staggered dialogue between piano and woodwinds—reveals itself as a calm, almost philosophical questioning of the legitimacy of power and war. The mounting tension eventually shifts back, uncontrollably, into a Czerny–like broken chord, propelling the development into its third part—a passage that, by all accounts, has left an indelible mark on musical history and cemented the piano's status as the "king of instruments."

In this section, three successive responses in the ambiguous bC eventually give way, in a fourth outburst of indignation, to a constructed canon wherein the piano's left- and right-hand octaves, playing semitonal scales, repeat five times in an elusive, unresolvable tonality. The orchestra's response, meanwhile, falls into a seemingly indifferent, conventional tonality. In terms of structure and the seamless connection of textures, this is neither an outpouring of raw emotion nor a mere technical exploration; rather, it is an alchemical act—a symbolic transformation wherein a symbol of aristocratic heraldry is melted down and recast as an insignia of the common people.

Beethoven, with his unceasing octaves, charts the ruins wrought by war and the contorted lives of the oppressed. In the face of absolute, violent power, the shattering of peaceful existence becomes a silent indictment—a series of sharp yet helpless screams that expose the indifferent motives behind a foreign aggression. Within the development section, the piano answers the orchestra's second theme time and again, eventually transforming its reply into a prayer that dissipates into the high registers, paving the way for a second, dazzling cadenza leap that then ushers in the recapitulation.

After an intense, almost tearing-out-loud outpouring, the recapitulation emerges like the calm dawn following the ravages of battle—a dawn imbued with hope reassembled from shattered memories. In the third brilliant cadenza passage—where Beethoven famously remarked not to insert a separate cadenza but to continue seamlessly—the second themed figure is displayed in its fullest measure. In the recapitulation section, every ounce of unyielding grievance and pain borne from war is completely unleashed again in Eb.

After the tumult of the first movement fades into the distance, the second movement unfurls like a dreamlike canvas of serene tranquility. The strings open softly in a muted tone, like stars gently glimmering in the night sky, intoning a mysterious prelude that carries the weight of distant, unsullied prayers. The texture seems to bear the burden of an escape from worldly clamor, gradually ushering the listener into an inner sanctuary woven from tenderness and contemplation.

Before long, the piano enters with a gentle, luminous solo—as if a devout chanter were silently recounting tales of loss and hope in the stillness of night. The delicate tremolos and the dreaming phrases evoke memories whispered by time, while also hinting at the enduring ember of warmth within the heart. Each tender keystroke is like a soft breeze rippling across a placid lake, transforming the scars of warfare into quiet murmurs of the soul. The dialogue between the piano, woodwinds, and the strings—sometimes rising gently like the first light of dawn, at other moments descending suddenly like the last trace of twilight's melancholy—serves as both a renewal of hope and a wistful elegy. The light, illuminating even the most hidden recesses of Beethoven's inner world, a meditation on freedom and love.

Beethoven's innovative of piano's tone color shines as he conceived the second movement as a seemingly endless dream, from which the third movement awakens. At its outset, the piano, speaking in hushed, intimate tones, offers an echo of a familiar, light motif—like a distant clarion call that heralds the imminent eruption of grandeur. Gradually, the orchestra gathers: the low, resonant strings and the warm voices of the woodwinds coalesce to create a sacred, solemn backdrop for the arrival of the main theme.

The third movement of Beethoven's Fifth Piano Concerto unfolds with a grandeur and emotional depth that evoke a vivid natural landscape. The sudden eruption of the repetition of Eb tonic brings us to Niagara Falls, its unstoppable force sweeping away all obstacles. The dialogue between the piano and orchestra mirrors the collision of waves against rocks—at times tender and delicate, like a gentle stream caressing the shore; at others, fierce and tempestuous, like crashing waves in a storm. Each reiteration of the theme strikes with the depth and power of tidal surges, resonating profoundly within the Austrian's heart. With every repetition, new layers of emotion emerge, revealing an ever-evolving inner strength.

The entire movement unfolds like a grand, mythic dialogue: the almost feverish solo of the piano is counterbalanced by the collective, resounding outcry of the orchestra. Each return of the rondo theme brings with it a new emotional nuance—sometimes a burst of exultant joy akin to flames leaping skyward, sometimes a reflective calm borne of struggle. In this continuous cycle of repetition and transformation, Beethoven not only redefines the traditional rondo form but also imparts a deep philosophical message—that through relentless recurrence, one ultimately achieves an inner unity that transcends discord.

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Each sudden change in tonality, every surge in dynamic intensity, testifies to a steadfast belief: even amid the raging storm, the undying light of hope and freedom continues to burn. In the final moments, the movement subsides into a majestic wave—a final echo, a once-roaring blaze farewell:

Red, White, 1809.

Cannonfire.

Quill-scratched in E♭—

A scalpel slicing censorship's veil.

2025: Red, White, Black, Green;

Yellow, Blue.

Needles darn the sky's torn flesh.

Virtue silencing other side's stance.

Flame licks shadow,

Humanity's bruise,

A chance of growth.

All reunion begins in Temporal Collapse!

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