

Buchbinder at Eighty: Haydn, Beethoven, Schumann

Tuesday, December 1, 2026 · 19:30 · Musikverein
Rudolf Buchbinder, conductor · Rudolf Buchbinder, piano

TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME		MIN
1	HAYDN 1732–1809 <i>Keyboard Concerto in D major, Hob. XVIII:11</i>	20'
2	BEETHOVEN 1770–1827 <i>Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37</i>	33'
3	SCHUMANN 1810–1856 <i>Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 54</i>	31'
TOTAL MUSIC		84'

Joseph Haydn

1732–1809

Keyboard Concerto in D major, Hob. XVIII:11

20 minutes

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

I. Vivace. The orchestra opens with a bright, clipped theme built from short repeated notes. When the piano enters it takes up the same idea, and the whole movement grows out of that opening figure, passed between the soloist and different sections of the orchestra. Listen for the way the piano sometimes leads and sometimes decorates what the strings are playing, and for the cadenza near the end, the moment the orchestra falls silent and the soloist improvises (or seems to) on the movement's themes.

II. Un poco adagio. The slow movement moves to A major and slows the pace right down. The strings introduce a lyrical melody, and the piano answers by ornamenting it: trills, turns and running figures that spin out a single, song-like idea rather than introduce new ones. It is laid out in three parts, the opening music returning after a contrasting middle section.

III. Rondo all'Ungarese: Allegro assai. This is the movement that made the concerto famous. The piano launches a quick, stamping tune, the orchestra answers, and the ball is thrown back and forth at speed. "All'Ungarese" means "in the Hungarian style", and Haydn signals it with offbeat accents, snapping rhythms and a switch into the minor for the first episode. The main tune keeps coming back between the episodes, each time with fresh energy, and the movement ends abruptly, with a flick rather than a flourish.

Ludwig van Beethoven

33 minutes

1770–1827

Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

I. Allegro con brio. A long orchestral introduction lays out the main themes: a quiet, marching C minor figure in the strings, answered by the winds, and a gentler second theme that arrives in the major. When the piano finally enters, it does so with a flurry of rising scales, and from then on soloist and orchestra argue over the same material. Keep an ear on the short rhythmic motif of the opening theme; Beethoven hammers it home throughout. After the cadenza, instead of the expected orchestral full stop, the piano prolongs its final trill and keeps going with rippling arpeggios before the orchestra returns and the movement closes resolutely in C minor.

II. Largo. The piano opens alone in E major, playing a slow, hymn-like melody with detailed pedal markings that let the chords blur and resonate. The orchestra, with muted strings, answers in the same hushed tone, and as the movement unfolds the piano's arpeggios curl around the melody when the orchestra takes it up.

III. Rondo: Allegro. The piano sets off alone with an agitated, off-balance tune back in C minor, and the orchestra takes it up with force. The rondo alternates this theme with contrasting episodes, some full of humour, others blunt and dramatic. At the very end the music shakes off the minor key: a quick coda, marked Presto, turns the main theme into a cheerful C major romp.

Robert Schumann

1810–1856

Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 54

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

I. Allegro affettuoso. The concerto opens with a single sharp stroke from the orchestra, and the piano answers with a cascade of loud chords tumbling downward. Then the mood switches at once: the oboe sings the gentle main theme, and the piano repeats it. Almost everything in the movement grows from that melody. Listen for it speeded up and agitated, for a slow, dreamy version in a distant key in the middle of the movement, and for the passages where a solo clarinet takes the lead and the piano becomes its accompanist. The large written-out cadenza near the end is followed by a fast coda built, once again, on the main theme.

II. Intermezzo: Andantino grazioso. A short, intimate movement in F major. The piano and strings exchange a delicate little figure, almost a dialogue of polite remarks, and in the middle section the cellos take over with a broad, warm melody while the piano accompanies. At the end, the winds recall the first movement's main theme, and without a break the music slides straight into the finale.

III. Allegro vivace. The finale bursts in, in a bright A major, with a vigorous, waltz-like theme. Schumann plays tricks with the rhythm here: in places the music seems to switch into slower, broader beats that cut across the written time, and a good performance lets you feel the ground shift. The movement is long and exuberant, and it builds to an extended coda that ends in unambiguous celebration.



CONCERT PROGRAMS

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