

WIENER PHILHARMONIKER

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

ABOUT THE WORK

Haydn wrote a number of keyboard concertos (some of the works once published under his name are now thought to be by others), and most of them are heard only occasionally today. The Concerto in D major, Hob. XVIII:11, is the exception. It was his last keyboard concerto, composed in the early 1780s and published in 1784, and it became the most popular of the set, both in his lifetime and since. Today it is, for most listeners, simply “the Haydn piano concerto”.

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

1770–1827

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

33 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto sits on a threshold. Sketched from about 1800 and first played in 1803, it is the work in which his concertos stop sounding like brilliant continuations of Mozart and start sounding like Beethoven. It is in C minor, and its outer movements are stormy and restless.

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

31 minutes

ABOUT THE WORK

Schumann's Piano Concerto began life as something else. In May 1841, in the first year of his marriage to Clara Wieck, he wrote a single-movement Fantasy in A minor for piano and orchestra. Clara, one of the great pianists of the age, tried it out with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra that August, but no

publisher wanted a one-movement piece of that kind and it went into a drawer. Four years later, in the summer of 1845, Schumann revised the Fantasy and added two more movements, an Intermezzo and a finale. Clara was the soloist at the premiere of the full concerto in Dresden on 4 December 1845, with Ferdinand Hiller, the work's dedicatee, conducting. It was performed in Leipzig on New Year's Day 1846, and it has been one of the most loved concertos in the repertoire ever since.

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.

Tonight's artists

Rudolf Buchbinder *piano*

Rudolf Buchbinder turns 80 on 1 December 2026, the date of the first of these two concerts, and he marks it with the Vienna Philharmonic, an orchestra that has made him an honorary member, in the Musikverein's Golden Hall. He both plays and directs from the keyboard. The programme traces a line through the repertoire he has lived with longest: Haydn, whose piano sonatas and other keyboard works he recorded complete; Beethoven, whose five concertos he has recorded more than once, including with this orchestra; and Schumann's A minor Concerto, the most Romantic of the three and the one written most openly as a conversation between soloist and orchestra.

Rudolf Buchbinder, born in 1946 in Litoměřice (then Czechoslovakia) and raised in Vienna, is one of the senior statesmen of Austrian pianism and a fixture of the city's musical life for more than half a century. He entered the Vienna Academy of Music at the age of five, its youngest-ever student, and has long been regarded as a leading interpreter of the Viennese Classical repertoire, above all Beethoven, whose complete piano sonatas and concertos he has performed and recorded many times over, and whose music he has championed in marathon cycles around the world. A scholar as well as a player, Buchbinder owns a large collection of historical editions and writings on the works he plays, and brings to them a combination of structural clarity, unfussy directness, and deep

idiomatic authority. He appears regularly with the Vienna Philharmonic and the great orchestras of Europe and is closely associated with the Musikverein, where Viennese audiences have followed his playing across generations.

CONCERT PROGRAMS

<https://concertprograms.eu/concerts/wp-2026-12-01-buchbinder>

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