

THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC, THEATRE, AND DANCE PRESENTS

VIRTUOSO SERIES CONCERT:

HYEJI SEO, PIANO

*Timeless
Voices:*

HAYDN, BEETHOVEN, AND BACH-BUSONI AT THE PIANO

MONDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2025 | 7:30 P.M.

ORGAN RECITAL HALL



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HYEJI SEO, PIANO | VIRTUOSO SERIES CONCERT
OCT 27, 2025 | 7:30 P.M. | ORGAN RECITAL HALL

Piano Sonata No. 48 in C Major, Hob. XVI

Franz Joseph Haydn

Andante con espressione
Rondo Presto

Piano Sonata No. 30 in E Major, op.109

Ludwig van Beethoven

Vivace, Ma non troppo
Prestissimo
Gesangvoll, mit innigster Empfindung. Andante molto cantabile ed espressivo

INTERMISSION

Chaconne in D minor, BWV 1004

Johann Sebastian Bach
arr. Ferruccio Busoni

PROGRAM NOTES

These program notes were written by CSU students Reynaldi Raharja, Bradley Irwin, and SeungHyuk Yeom under Dr. Dawn Grapes as part of their class project. I am thankful for their support and for helping make this recital meaningful.

Piano Sonata No. 48 in C Major, Hob. XVI

Franz Joseph Haydn

In 1766, Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) became full *Kapellmeister* (music director) of the Esterházy court, allowing him to compose large-scale vocal works that promoted his international reputation. Unauthorized editions of his music began to appear in numerous countries and big international hubs such as London and Paris, prompting Haydn to seek out printers and publishers who would work with him to circulate and market his works. When Haydn's employer Prince Nikolaus began to lose interest in instrumental music and gave Haydn independence to manage the sales of his non-vocal works, Haydn learned to maximize his profits, targeting different markets and even setting up subscription services among wealthier patrons—unscrupulous tactics he later taught Beethoven. This piano sonata, written in 1789, was one such publication, possibly Haydn's first commissioned work from Germany and dedicated to Leipzig publisher Breitkopf, who initially announced that patrons would receive exclusive access to this piece. Of course, it is apparent that the two-movement sonata was written with more than just financial viability in mind.

A big part of Haydn's success was that he tailored his compositions for his audiences as well as performers. A number of the simple early keyboard sonatas were composed for his students. For an extraordinary pianist-performer such as Therese Jansen, Haydn composed technically demanding, extroverted sonatas, in contrast to intimate, expressive, and contemplative sonatas written for friends or perhaps love interests such as Maria Anna von Genzinger or Rebecca Schroeter. What remained a constant was that Haydn's keyboard sonatas were designed primarily for private performances, allowing the individual at the keyboard to naturally express the sentiment in the music.

Haydn's intimate approach towards his **Sonata in C Major** led him to adopt an improvisatory style. From the late 1780s, Haydn composed almost exclusively for the fortepiano, as is supported by indications of frequently contrasting dynamics in the piece. These musical considerations fit perfectly in both movements, the first a fantasy-like variation that is stately and exploratory and the second a witty and lively bright rondo. Although both the

intentionality of the dynamic markings and Haydn's interests in variations might be ascribed to C.P.E. Bach, whose sonatas were a source of great inspiration, it is worth noting that this sonata was composed in Vienna; Haydn greatly enjoyed his visits to the city, partly because he loved socializing with musicians and artists, including Madame Genzinger, a talented amateur pianist and the wife of an important physician whose clients included Prince Nikolaus Esterházy. The exact date of their acquaintance is uncertain, although the Sonata in E-Flat, Hob. XVI: 49 of June 1790 is dedicated to Genzinger. A letter from Genzinger addressed to Haydn dated June 1789, indicates that it is highly likely Haydn had met her earlier, possibly before the Sonata in C Major was composed. Given the passionate and intimate nature of Haydn's letters and interactions with Genzinger, Haydn may have had her in mind when composing this sonata.

Another Viennese influence on this composition may have been Mozart. Regardless of the nature of the friendship between the two composers, there is no doubt that they admired each other, acknowledging the other as peer while meaningfully influencing each other's music. Mozart's late keyboard sonatas, in turn, are of a much deeper and introspective nature, displaying serious lyricism in his slow movements; these qualities are reflected in the first movement of Haydn's piece. Aside from these influences, Haydn's originality shines throughout.

Pianist Ariel Lanyi remarks that through both movements, Haydn uses nonconventional phrasing structures, incorporating extra measures to lengthen phrases. For example, an eight-bar structure containing a four-bar question and a four-bar answer may have two extra measures inserted in the middle, serving as an extension or a "question to the question itself." Using such a simple device, Haydn is able to incorporate many twists and turns in the middle of otherwise simpler passages. Haydn's propensity to do away with the symmetry so highly valued in Classical style in favor of his rhetorical devices and cunning is well known, and it works wonderfully in this piece. The resulting variations in the first movement are exciting and eventful while also humorous and tense. In the second movement, the rondo finale, Haydn's mastery of orchestral writing is evident in the different textures and virtuosic lines present, with multiple voices evoking different instruments, working in concert to convey brilliance while still being light-hearted.

Despite the shorter duration of the work, Haydn's unique and deceptively simple style leaves plenty of space for performers to carry the audience where they want to go, to engage in the music together, and to have fun. This adaptability is a hallmark of Haydn's genius, his ability to create works that are approachable yet profound and playful yet deeply expressive. The interplay between structure and spontaneity in his music encourages not only the performer but also the audience to find their own paths within the piece, discovering new layers of

meaning with each encounter. In this way, Haydn's music becomes a shared experience, breaking down the barrier between stage and audience and ensuring the sonata remains intensely personal. It invites us all to be active participants in the unfolding journey and reminds us why Haydn's music remains as captivating and popular today as it was in his own time.

— note by Reynaldi Raharja

Piano Sonata No. 30 in E Major, op.109

Ludwig van Beethoven

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) was born into a musical family in Bonn, Germany. Tragically, Beethoven's early life was marked by significant losses. Only two of his seven siblings survived childhood, and his mother died in 1787. As a result, he often wrote his music to express his heartbreak, especially later in life. Beethoven moved to Vienna to find work and financial support, experiencing great success in the new city. However, a new problem began to emerge: hearing loss.

By 1818, Beethoven's hearing in both ears had significantly reduced and he began using "conversation books" to communicate with guests and family at his house. Beethoven would talk and other people would write their responses in the book to facilitate communication. These books provide unique insights into the composer's life and a glimpse into his compositional process. In fact, they show the origins of the **Piano Sonata in E Major, op. 109**. In a conversation book written between the 22nd and 24th of April 1820, Beethoven and some friends discussed how he had composed a "little piece" for a piano teacher in Germany, Friedrich Starke. This short piece was originally intended to be used in a method book Starke was writing. Beethoven, however, received a letter from his publisher in Berlin, asking for three new piano sonatas in three months. Beethoven gladly obliged but did not complete the third sonata until two years later due to health issues. These three sonatas were the last he composed for the genre.

In all likelihood, the first movement of the Sonata in E Major was originally intended to stand alone as a short piece for Starke. The opening appears finished in one of Beethoven's sketchbooks dated April 12 or 13, 1820, and the later movements are composed in a different sketchbook in June, after he received the letter from his publisher. It is unusual that Beethoven repurposed such a short piece for a larger sonata without modifying it. He abandoned the classical notion of a masterfully constructed, overarching form for the piece and began taking compositional risks. Beethoven was much more concerned about creating music with value and deeply personal musical meaning than adhering to strict rules.

Beethoven's health took a turn for the worse in the early months of 1820 after losing a long-fought custody battle over his nephew, Karl. Beethoven cared for Karl and treated him like his own son, helping his brother to raise him after his death. Along with the death of his parents and six of his seven siblings, this devastated Beethoven. He expressed his emotions through music in the *Hammerklavier* and this op. 109 Sonata. Beethoven was also composing his mass, *Missa Solemnis*, during this time, another work with particularly dramatic and heart-wrenching moments.

Beethoven's Piano Sonata in E Major, op. 109 is the composer's third to last piano sonata, composed in 1820 and published in 1821. The first movement has two primary themes and is dramatic and flowing in nature, similar to a fantasy. The movement alternates vivace sections of quick alternating leaps in both hands with slower adagio sections that use sweeping arpeggios and soaring melodic lines to emphasize a fantasy feeling.

The second movement functions like a fiery minuet, almost manic at times. The movement itself is about two minutes in length, which is unusual for Beethoven sonatas. Although the composer follows a strict sonata form in the movement, he was not concerned with traditional length and structure as a whole. This departure marks a trend towards intense emotional expression at the start of the Romantic period.

The third movement is a theme and variations that begins with a simple yet stunningly beautiful chorale. Beethoven clears the air after the unruly second movement, slowing the tempo and decreasing the density of notes significantly. Rising and falling thirds permeate every variation, provide the harmonic basis for the work, and harken back to the leaps in the vivace sections of the first movement. Beethoven was a true master of counterpoint and demonstrates that skill especially well in the fifth variation with a complex fugue, but cyclically returns to the calm nature of the original theme in the final variation.

Like Beethoven's life at the time this piece was composed, opus 109 is deeply emotional and complex. Constantly struck by tragedy, the composer wrote music expressing the emotions he felt: simplicity and beauty in the first movement, rage in the second, tension in the variations, and an ultimate return to beauty at the end. By capturing these emotional elements, Beethoven imbued his music with a sense of life. The living and breathing notes leap off the page and into the hearts of today's audiences.

— note by Bradley Irwin

Chaconne in D minor, BWV 1004

Johann Sebastian Bach,

arr. Ferruccio Busoni

Opening with a forceful D minor chord, this work is Ferruccio Busoni's (1866–1924) transcription of Johann Sebastian Bach's (1685–1750) "**Chaconne in D minor**" from the Partita No. 2 for Unaccompanied Violin. Busoni was an outstanding pianist, and Bach's *Chaconne* held a special fascination for him. In order to perform this work on the piano, Busoni sought to remain as faithful as possible to the original while adapting the music to the technical possibilities of the instrument. He even considered orchestrating the *Chaconne*, but ultimately chose not to pursue this idea. Instead, he decided to preserve a pianistic color that evokes orchestral grandeur.

Busoni's arrangement expands Bach's original harmonies with balance and imagination, widening the range of sonorities and distributing musical figures between both hands. Musically, Busoni remained loyal to Bach's structural design while adding subtle piano-oriented melodic lines. He reinterpreted some of Bach's original harmonies and, at times, redistributed thematic connections and bass lines in new ways. The original violin line mainly consists of a single melody, but Busoni distributed it between both hands on the piano, enriching the harmonic texture and overall resonance. At times, he shifted the bass or exchanged the roles of melody and accompaniment to create a fuller and more dramatic effect.

In 1720, Bach composed his *Chaconne* during his tenure as *Kapellmeister* (1717–1723) at the court of Köthen, a town in Germany. His patron, Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen, deeply valued Bach's artistry and granted him the freedom to compose secular instrumental music. As Köthen was a Calvinist court, vocal music was largely restricted in church contexts, allowing Bach to focus almost exclusively on instrumental works. On a personal level, 1720 also marked a tragic turning point in Bach's life: his first wife died unexpectedly while he was away. He returned home to find that her funeral had already taken place. Many scholars believe that the profound emotional depth of Bach's *Chaconne* reflects this loss, interpreting the piece as a Requiem-like memorial to Maria Barbara Bach.

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, a partita referred to a set of variations, often based on a traditional harmonic pattern such as the *romanesca* or *passamezzo*. Bach continued this idea in his *Chorale Partitas*, in which a hymn tune served as the basis for a series of inventive variations. During the late Baroque period, the term came to denote a suite, a collection of stylized dances. In this sense, Bach's partitas are among the finest and most well-known examples.

In Bach's *Chaconne*, the composer drew on international traditions like the virtuosic solo and variation styles found in the music of composers such as Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber and Marin Marais. Bach's monumental work in turn became a profound source of inspiration for future generations of composers. Felix Mendelssohn, Robert Schumann, and Johannes Brahms, as well as Busoni, each reimagined the movement through their own adaptations, while Max Reger, Béla Bartók, and William Walton drew upon its spirit and style to create new works.

In Busoni's version of *Chaconne*, he does more than arrange Bach's notes; he enters a quiet conversation with Bach's sorrow and his own inner voice. The result bridged Baroque affections and Romantic passions—music that feels at once monumental and deeply human. Across time, whether through Bach's bow or Busoni's hands, the *Chaconne* continues to speak of loss, faith, and transformation.

This work opens with a powerful statement, followed by a series of intricate variations that reveal Busoni's profound insight into and deep feeling for Bach's music. Dotted rhythms, expressive dissonances, short rhythmic motives, and flowing scale passages captivate the listener's ear throughout. The use of dramatic dynamics—characteristic of the Romantic era—adds emotional breadth and intensity, moving the audience with the music's sweeping contrasts and expressive power. The *Chaconne* simply invites us to listen.

— note by SeungHyuk Yeom

DR. HYEJI SEO is an accomplished pianist, collaborative/chamber musician, and educator. She has enjoyed performing and presenting lectures internationally and working with diverse groups of students in various musical settings. Her performances span a diverse range of musical genres and styles. Her musical journey has taken her to prestigious venues across the United States, Europe, and Korea.

In 2016, Dr. Seo made her debut at the Carnegie Weill Recital Hall in New York, setting the stage for a prolific career. Her performances have graced stages across continents, including the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels, Belgium, where she was invited as the first-place winner of the International Music Competition 'Brussels' Grand Prize Virtuoso. She has also been a featured guest artist at events such as the Gala Concert at the Kimmel Art Center in Philadelphia, the Triumph Music Festival, and the EOULIM Concert Series at the Cheongju Art Center in Korea.

Throughout her career, Dr. Seo has won prizes in several international competitions, including the Ise-Shima International Piano Competition in Japan, the Bradshaw & Buono International Piano Competition in the USA, and the American Protégé International Piano and String Competition, among others. She has performed in prestigious venues such as Carnegie Weill Hall, Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, Jacopone da Todi Hall, Kimmel Art Center, Kumho Art Center, Youngsan Art Hall, and Cheongju Art Center, among others.

As a concerto competition winner, Dr. Seo has performed with orchestras, including Seoul National University, Sookmyung Women's University, and Western Illinois University. She has also been invited to perform at events like the Piano Gala Concert for the 110th anniversary of the founding of Sookmyung Women's University and the Young Artist Debut Concert sponsored by Music Education News in Seoul.

Beyond her performance career, Dr. Seo is a dedicated educator with a passion for teaching a diverse range of students in various settings. She has conducted guest coaching sessions in the United States and Korea and has served as an adjudicator at the MTNA Colorado Piano Competition. Her teaching experience spans institutions like Colorado State University, Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul, Michigan State University, Western Illinois University, St. Pius X School, and Expressions Music Academy, Michigan. Her commitment to piano pedagogy is further demonstrated through her presentation on the research of piano pedagogy with young musicians on the autism spectrum at the MTNA Collegiate Chapters in 2018.

In addition to her performance and teaching endeavors, she is dedicated to promoting new and underrepresented music, particularly works by lesser-known composers from diverse backgrounds. Her current concert series, 'The Music We Write' focuses on music from Asian, female, and culturally diverse composers, presenting their unique identities and cultures. She also enjoys collaborating with other forms of art, such as visual and media arts, to create interdisciplinary performances.

Dr. Seo is a dynamic and sought-after pianist and chamber musician. Her extensive experience spans a wide spectrum of instrumental, vocal, choral, symphonic, chamber, and opera production, collaborating with professional musicians and guest artists alike. She has served as a collaborative pianist and coach at Michigan State University, Western Illinois University, and Centro Studi Carlo Della Giacoma Encore Series in Italy. She has also made meaningful contributions to sacred music as an organist and interim music director in various places, including St. Jude, St. Pius X, St. Andrew Kim, and St. Martha in Michigan.

Her primary piano studies were with Kyungmi Kim, Hyesoo Jeon, Tammie Walker, Zhihua Tang, and Deborah Moriarty. She has furthered her education through additional studies with Hae Sun Paik, Alan Chow, Zhe Tang, Robert Roux, Michael Lewin, Klaus Schilde, Sontraud Speidel, Aviram Reichert, and Laurent Cabasso. Her educational achievements include a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Piano Performance, a master's degree in Collaborative Piano from Michigan State University, and bachelor's and master's degrees from Sookmyung Women's University and Western Illinois University, respectively. During her studies, she has been fully supported by the Graduate Assistantship, Ralph Votapek Scholarship, and Dixon Collaborative Pianist Award.

In 2018, Dr. Seo joined the faculty at Colorado State University as an instructor of collaborative piano, where she continues to share her love for music and performance with students and audiences alike. Her dedication to music education and her passion for the piano remains at the core of her artistic journey.

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