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BUCHBINDER PLAYS BEETHOVEN'S PIANO CONCERTOS 2, 3 & 4

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Programme

Buchbinder Plays Beethoven's Piano Concertos 2, 3 & 4

Katara Cultural Village, Opera House

Thursday, 29 January 2026

8:00pm

Rudolf Buchbinder, conductor & piano

Program

Ludwig van Beethoven:
(1770-1827)

Piano Concerto No. 2 in B Flat Major, Op. 19

Allegro con brio
Adagio
Rondo molto allegro

Ludwig van Beethoven:

Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, Op. 58

Allegro moderato
Andante con moto
Rondo: Vivace

Intermission

Ludwig van Beethoven:

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

Allegro con brio
Largo
Rondo. Allegro

Out of respect for the musicians and fellow audience members please silence your mobile phones. Applause between movements is not customary. Please also refrain from flash photography. Seating begins 30 minutes before performances. Latecomers cannot be seated during the concert. Children 6 and over are welcome at Philharmonic concerts. The Philharmonic retains the right to expel anyone disturbing others. Food and beverages can be consumed in the lobby only.

Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra Narrative

The Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra (QPO) is a pioneering cultural institution that proudly represents Qatar on the world stage. Founded in 2007 by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, the orchestra brings together 78 world class musicians from 28 countries, many of whom have performed with the world's leading ensembles such as the New York Philharmonic, Frankfurt Opera, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Tonhalle Zürich, Teatro Colón, and NDR Radiophilharmonie.

Known for its innovative programming and unique sound, QPO blends Western symphonic traditions with the rich musical heritage of the Arab world, creating performances that are globally resonant and deeply rooted in the region's cultural legacy.

With more than 500 performances to date, QPO has graced prestigious stages around the world, including La Scala (Milan), Konzerthaus Wien (Vienna), Théâtre des Champs-Élysées (Paris), Santa Cecilia (Rome), the Kennedy Center (Washington D.C.), and the Royal Albert Hall (London).

QPO is a source of national pride and a symbol of Qatar's commitment to cultural excellence. Driven by a mission to make music accessible to all, QPO continues to break barriers, inspire new generations, and lead the way in shaping a vibrant musical future for Qatar and the region.

Composers and Program Notes



Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Ludwig van Beethoven was the last big figure of Viennese Classicism after Gluck, Haydn and Mozart. He also prepared the evolution towards musical Romanticism. His influence was tremendous on all occidental music genres and lasted for a long period of the nineteenth century. By the end of the eighteenth century, Vienna was the incontestable musical center; it is from there that the emerging young musician started his career, first as a virtuoso pianist admired in particular for his brilliant improvisational skills before he forged himself a name as a composer.

The end of the 1790s saw the birth of his first masterpieces based on Classic-period models: his First Piano Concerto (1798), the first six string quartets (1798-1800), the Septet in E-flat major (1799-1800) and two compositions that exposed clearly the nascent character of the composer: the *Grand Sonata* (1798-1799) and his First Symphony (1800). Influenced by Greek Classical thought, Shakespeare and the *Sturm und Drang* philosophers such as Goethe and Schiller, Beethoven's oeuvre was to reflect durably the idealistic sense of a musician who was also conquered by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution ideas that were spreading in Europe then. And thus, Beethoven's oeuvre carried permanently the expression of an unfailing faith in the human being and a conscious optimism that perceives music as an act of freedom and not as a simple distraction. This is one of the senses in which Beethoven's contribution made of him one of the most striking figures in the history of music.

Soon after in 1798—and later through all of his life—Beethoven was going to need all his positive power and philosophy to overcome a rising peril: an incipient deafness that he kept secret, suffering in silence, and that forced him to isolate himself from the world increasingly, earning him the reputation of a misanthrope. Fortunately, his creative force was not diminished. After the tender *Spring Sonata* (1800) and the famous *Moonlight Sonata* No. 14 (1801), he wrote while torn interiorly the joyful Second Symphony (1801-1802) and the dark Third Piano Concerto (1800-1802) where the personality of the composer rises distinctly in its C Minor tonality.

The two pieces were favorably received but in Beethoven's life a leaf fell: henceforth incapable to live from his performing talent, he consecrated his life to composing. Despite a life punctuated by difficulties, Beethoven always found an additional stock of courage to overcome by will power the hardship of financial precarity, familial complications and unhappy romances. His music rose always higher to celebrate the triumph of heroism and of joy over the misery of his destiny and his compositions carried the expression of this triumph. After the 1802 crisis, the triumphant Third Symphony inaugurated—not only by its heroism and expressive power but also by its unusual length—a series of revolutionary compositions that expanded the vocabulary of music: the Fifth Symphony with its famous four-note motif, the *Coriolan* Overture (also written in C Minor) and the atypical, descriptive *Pastoral* Symphony—a tribute to nature—that truly announced the rise of Romanticism in music. The years 1809-1810 saw the creation of the brilliant, virtuosic Fifth Piano Concerto and of the Tenth String Quartet—*The Harp*.

In 1811-1812 Beethoven attained undoubtedly the apogee of his creative life in the *Archduke* Trio and the Seventh and Eighth symphonies. Beethoven's other noteworthy compositions include a few masterpieces from his complete-deafness years: the Cello Sonatas No. 4 and 5 (1815), the Piano Sonata No. 28 (1816), the poignant lieder cycle *An die ferne Geliebte* (*To The Distant Beloved*, 1815-1816), and the *Hammerklavier* Sonata (1717-1718). After three last piano sonatas (Nos. 30 to 32) and the colossal *Missa Solemnis*, came the time for the Ninth Symphony. By its memorable *finale* where Beethoven introduced choir singing and by the innovation of its symphonic language, the Ninth rose to the magnitude of a universal call, the ultimate musical rendering of the triumph of joy and of fraternity over despair.

Piano Concerto No. 2 in B Flat Major, Op. 19

The Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat major, Op. 19, composed by Ludwig van Beethoven, was primarily created between 1787 and 1789. However, it was not finalized in the version that was published until 1795.

The concerto lasts around 28 minutes. It is even shorter than the First Piano Concerto of Beethoven's. Similarly, it starts with a powerful *allegro con brio*. From its beginning, the first movement lays the ground for the structural rhythmic figures of Beethoven's future production, although they still interact here with floating melodies: the piano converses smoothly with the orchestra, deploying very beautiful dialogues with the strings.

For his second movement, Beethoven opts for a passionate *adagio*. The soloist shares with the orchestra intense moments of lyricism but without excess. No emotional abyss is brought up.

The highly virtuosic finale is a bouncing *rondo*. Its gaiety knows no shade, reflecting Beethoven's extraordinary optimism. Both the orchestra and the piano prance under the composer's virtuosic writing, with an ardour that no one can bring to halt. New promising roads open before the hopes of the young Beethoven—only a careless joy governs, that of appearing in the Vienna of dreams, of hopes not shaded yet by history or destiny. With Beethoven's extraordinary spurt in the spirited dance of the finale, where the displaced accents trifle with rhythmic continuity, Beethoven's impetuosity is set free from the obligation to solicit admiration. The piano, unaccompanied by the orchestra, engages with it, rearing up to face life.

Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major, Op.58

Among the five concertos that Beethoven wrote for the piano, the fourth one stands alone. Written in 1806, it does not follow in the gallant path of the First and the Second, nor does it share the flurry of the Third or the haughtiness of the Fifth and last. Surprisingly, the Concerto No. 4 in G major comes relieved from any struggle or pathos. Completely turned to inner depth, it is filled with lyricism, like a glade against the tumult of the outer world. For once, Beethoven allows perhaps his most poetic self to soar, allowing the themes to blossom tenderly, free and pacified.

We are overtaken by this clement softness from the moment the piano opens the *Allegro moderato*, alone and peaceful. In complete orchestral silence it introduces the theme that will circulate through the piece. The strings then resume the theme dreamily and the concerto develops in simplicity. The piano keeps a sort of blessed quietude, as if in a state of grace, with a pacified improvisation with the orchestra.

The second movement is a beautiful illustration of this soft dialogue with its significant silences and its serene gravity that the Concerto for Violin in D major will carry on. The orchestra is loud, staccato, in stark octaves. The piano is then soft, legato, singing and richly harmonized. The slow *Andante* evolves, expressive and very melodic. It is immediately followed by the Finale. The usual Rondo begins quietly; it is scored for full orchestra, in opposition to the two former movements. Playing a delicate game with the implacable compact orchestra, the piano preserves its tenderness, sunlit until it concludes this most subtle and suggestive of Beethoven's concertos.

The piece is surprising in that it puts considerations of its own wandering path above the dictatorship of formal perfection or interior meanders, dripping its tenderness and its magical sonorities all the way. In the circle of metamorphosis of the entirety of Beethoven's works, the Piano Concerto No. 4 in G Major is an important stone, a small, miraculous reprieve of refined dialogue where the sap of the world flows without any tension.

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

The Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Minor, Op. 37, is the only one in minor mode among the five piano concertos Beethoven has written. It is the first grand concerto of Beethoven's. Contemporary with his Third Symphony (1803 - 1804), it corresponds to the composer's first maturity, offering an example of balance in form, and a new dimension in allying the soloist's virtuosity to the density of the orchestra. Today, the concerto holds a great place in the pianistic repertoire. It has been interpreted by numerous soloists since its first creation in 1803 by the composer himself at the Theater an der Wien.

The Third Piano Concerto sticks to a classic three-movement structure. The first movement is an allegro con brio in sonata form, the second is a largo that feels like a song, and the third combines rondo and sonata forms (something Beethoven often did). This piece is among the first of Beethoven's works to show pre-romantic traits. Both the first and last movements are in the tragic C minor key, packed with intensity and a dramatic flair that wasn't present in his earlier concertos.

The first movement of Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto, which lasts about 15 minutes, is frequently likened to the opening movement of Mozart's 24th Piano Concerto due to the similarity in their C Minor themes. While you can still sense Mozart's influence in various parts of the concerto, the bold harmonies and fierce melodies are distinctly Beethoven's, showcasing a fiery temperament that's uniquely his. The allegro con brio kicks off with a balanced, classical vibe, but it quickly transforms the C-minor foundation into a wild journey led by the piano, creating an atmosphere filled with pure Beethovenian drama.

The E major largo kicks off with just the piano, beautifully resonating in a peaceful setting. Its creative orchestration features a whimsical exchange between the spreading, soft arpeggios of the piano and the flute and bassoon, set against a gentle backdrop of muted strings. After a short cadenza, the movement fades into a soft pianissimo that echoes its earlier themes. However, Beethoven catches his audience off guard by throwing in a powerful fortissimo chord at the very end.

The final movement starts with a piano solo, bringing us back to the home key. The finale unfolds like a rondo, bursting with energy, interspersed with contrasting moments of bright character.

Following a quick cadenza, a triumphant C major coda shifts the rhythm, and the rondo theme gets deconstructed and transformed into a carefree melody that wraps everything up on a joyful note.



Rudolf Buchbinder

conductor & piano

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Rudolf Buchbinder is one of the legendary performers of our time. The authority of a career spanning more than 60 years is uniquely combined with esprit and spontaneity in his piano playing. Tradition and innovation, faithfulness and freedom, authenticity and open-mindedness merge in his reading of the great piano literature.

His interpretations of the works of Ludwig van Beethoven in particular are regarded as setting standards. He has performed the 32 piano sonatas in cycles all over the world more than 60 times to date and has continued to develop the history of interpretation of these works over the decades.

With the edition BUCHBINDER:BEETHOVEN, Deutsche Grammophon presents a complete recording of the 32 piano sonatas and the five piano concertos in the run-up to Buchbinder's 75th birthday in December 2021, thus creating a sounding monument to two outstanding Buchbinder-Beethoven cycles of recent times. Buchbinder was the first pianist to play all of Ludwig van Beethoven's piano sonatas within one festival summer at the 2014 Salzburg Festival. The Salzburg cycle was recorded live for DVD (Unitel) and is now also available on nine CDs.

The sensational cycle of Ludwig van Beethoven's five piano concertos came about during the 2019/20 concert season at the Vienna Musikverein. In celebration of its 150th anniversary, the Vienna Musikverein, for the first time in its history, gave a single pianist, Rudolf Buchbinder, the honor of performing all five piano concertos by Ludwig van Beethoven in a specially created series. Buchbinder's partners in this unprecedented constellation were the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra under Gewandhauskapellmeister Andris Nelsons, the Vienna Philharmonic under Riccardo Muti and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Munich Philharmonic and the Sächsische Staatskapelle Dresden under their principal conductors Mariss Jansons, Valery Gergiev and Christian Thielemann. All concerts were recorded live. The Musikverein cycle, released on three CDs in September 2021 on Deutsche Grammophon, is a historic document of these artistic summits and a tribute to Buchbinder as one of the most profound Beethoven interpreters of our time.

On his new album *Soirée de Vienne*, released by Deutsche Grammophon in November 2022, Rudolf Buchbinder recreates a Viennese evening party and brings together composers who are intimately connected with Vienna - like himself. "The freedom to savor a moment, the luxury of intelligent naivety and the curiosity in an instant - all this is what makes music come alive," says Rudolf Buchbinder. The album is an attitude to life poured into sound.

As a contribution to the celebrations marking the 250th anniversary of Ludwig van Beethoven's birth, Rudolf Buchbinder initiated a cycle of new Diabelli Variations. Following the genesis of Beethoven's epochal Diabelli Variations op. 120, Buchbinder succeeded in enlisting eleven leading contemporary composers of different generations

and origins - Lera Auerbach, Brett Dean, Toshio Hosokawa, Christian Jost, Brad Lubman, Philippe Manoury, Max Richter, Rodion Schtschedrin, Johannes Maria Staud, Tan Dun and Jörg Widmann - to write their personal variations on the same waltz theme as Beethoven once did. The New Diabelli Variations were commissioned by eleven concert promoters worldwide with the support of the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation and received their world premiere by Rudolf Buchbinder at the Vienna Musikverein before becoming a part of his touring programs in Europe, Asia and the United States. The project reflects Beethoven's work into the 21st century and impressively underlines the universality of his language across all borders.

Under the title "The Diabelli Project", Deutsche Grammophon released the world premiere recording of the New Diabelli Variations in March 2020 alongside a new reading of Beethoven's Diabelli Variations, which Buchbinder last recorded before in 1976. The double album marked the beginning of his exclusive partnership with Deutsche Grammophon. Also in 2020, a live recording of Beethoven's 1st Piano Concerto with Christian Thielemann and the Berlin Philharmonic followed.

Rudolf Buchbinder is an honorary member of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien, the Wiener Konzerthausgesellschaft, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra and the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. He is the first soloist to be awarded the Golden Badge of Honor by the Staatskapelle Dresden.

Buchbinder attaches great importance to source research. His private collection of sheet music includes 39 different editions of Beethoven's complete piano sonatas as well as an extensive archive of first printings, original editions and copies of the autograph piano parts of both piano concertos by Johannes Brahms.

As Artistic Director, he is responsible for the Grafenegg Festival, which has been one of the most influential orchestral festivals in Europe since its founding 15 years ago.

Rudolf Buchbinder has published an autobiography entitled "Da Capo" as well as the book "My Beethoven - Life with the Master." His latest book, "The Last Waltz," was published to coincide with the premiere of the New Diabelli Variations in March 2020 and tells 33 stories about Beethoven, Diabelli and piano playing.

Upcoming Concerts

Buchbinder Plays Beethoven's Piano Concertos 1 & 5

Katara Cultural Village, Opera House
Saturday, 31 January 2026
7:30 pm

Rudolf Buchbinder, piano

Close the cycle with Beethoven at his most triumphant. In the second concert of our two-part series, the legendary Rudolf Buchbinder returns to perform Beethoven's bright Piano Concerto No. 1 and the commanding "Emperor" Concerto No. 5.

Following the first program of Concerto Nos. 2, 4, and 3, this evening completes our live traversal of five Beethoven concertos.

Program

Ludwig van Beethoven:

Piano Concerto No. 1 in C Major, Op. 15

Intermission

Ludwig van Beethoven:

Piano Concerto No. 5 in E Flat, Op. 73, "Emperor Concert"

Musicians



LIONEL SCHMIT



JOO YOUNG OH



VITALII PERVUSHYN



LORENA MANESCU



DMITRI TORCHINSKY



TOBIAS GETTE



MICHAELA LINSBAUER



TAEHYUN KIM



ANNEMARIAINOMAE



DINA LEINI



PAVLO DOVHAN



RALUCA GETTE



ANA MARIA RUSU



FULVIO FURLANUT



ROLANDA GINKUTE



MAIAS ALYAMANI



REEM KHOURY



GEORGES YAMMINE



ISLAM EL HEFNAWY



SHAZA OWEDA



JULIA KORODI



ANNE-CATHRIN EHRLICH



MOHAMED OWEDA



EGLE VALUTE



GIOVANNI PASINI



ANCA BOLD



ANDREA MEREAUTA

Musicians



VICTOR SUMENKOV



MERVE BULUN



INES WEIN



ISLAM ABDELAZIZ



KAHRAMAN SEREF



KIRILL BOGATYREV



HASSAN EL MOLLA



ANTON PAVLOVSKY



CHRISTOPH SCHMITZ



HARALD GEORGI



NICOLAS ROJANSKI



GENNADY KRUTIKOV



SANDOR ONODI



MATTEO GASPARI



RADOVAN HETSCH



SERGIY KONYAKHYN



ALEKSANDR HASKIN



JIHOON SHIN



EUNHYE LEE



GERMAN DIAZ BLANCO



MOHAMED IBRAHIM SALEH



CLAIRE GLAGO



RONY MOSER



THOMAS GNAUSCH



SIMONE ZANACCHI



DANIEL HRINDA



YOSHIKO KOYAMA

Musicians



MIROSLAV STOYANOV



PETER DAVID



GIDEON SEIDENBERG



ATTILLA SZUCS



ZSOLT PETER



LASZLO FROSCHL



JORIS LAENEN



DANIEL EDELHOFF



PHILIPP REBMANN



TOMOKI KIRITA



DIMO PICTHYALOV



SEBASTIAN ZULUAGA



RICHARD ALBERTO DIAZ



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