

Cleveland Chamber Music Society: pianist Richard Goode at Plymouth (March 8)

by Daniel Hathaway



In an era when most pianists memorize their recital repertoire, it was refreshing to see Richard Goode using scores for all of his insightful performances on Tuesday, March 8 on the Cleveland Chamber Music Society series at Plymouth Church in Shaker Heights. Rather than forming a barrier between pianist and audience, the presence of printed music seemed to reflect a deeper

immersion in each piece on the part of the artist.

Goode, who has been absent from the CCMS roster for several years, curated a substantial program of music by Johann Sebastian Bach, Arnold Schoenberg, Ludwig van Beethoven, and Franz Schubert. His opening work, Bach's *Partita No. 2 in c*, BWV 826 got the evening off to a splendid, varied start. Soft, dotted rhythms at the opening of the Prelude led to a meditative two-part interlude and a lively fugue featuring transparent textures, thoughtful articulations, and fine layering of voices.

Goode's reading of the Allemande was similarly thoughtful, the Courante brisk with clear fingerwork. He contrasted the ruminative Sarabande with a wry, spry Rondeaux (Bach's plural) and a jovial Capriccio.

At the point in the program where many chamber musicians tuck an audience-challenging work in between old favorites, Richard Goode introduced a 7-minute work by Arnold Schoenberg which behaved more like a palate-cleanser. The *Six Little Piano Pieces*, Op. 19 are epigrammatic and congenial, but pack a great deal

into their tiny houses. Goode played them with great concentration and a sense of evanescent import.

Then Goode moved on Beethoven's Op. 110 Sonata, much bigger in length and scale than the Schoenberg, but no less saturated with meaning. The pianist took Beethoven's first-movement directions quite literally ("moderately, singing, with much expression"), producing a dark tone for the *fortes*, and highly varied dynamics, each of which came with its own coloration.

Goode showed excellent control over touch and articulation in the mercurial Scherzo, and sang an eloquent recitative in the Adagio, making an amazing moment out of a repeated note that rose to a *forte* then back to *piano*. He began the fugue musingly, with the subject always in high profile, then brilliantly signalled its eventual reappearance.

After intermission, which found the recitalist himself charmingly touching up the tuning of the piano, Richard Goode ended his program with a dramatic, moody account of Schubert's great c-minor sonata. In his hands, the lengthy piece fairly sailed past. Was it time for the tarantella already? Goode's subtle transitions in the final movement — more lilting than frenetic — were marvelous. As an encore, he returned to Bach with the little two-part *Sinfonia in E-flat*.

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