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Beethoven on the Bluff

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The 2013-2014 installment of David Allen Wehr’s now-famous On the Bluff series is *Beethoven on the Bluff: The Early Years*. As the name suggests, it is the first season of a two-year concert series presenting the major piano chamber works of Ludwig van Beethoven.

*The Early Years* will focus on the music Beethoven wrote between 1793 and 1801, when the composer was in his 20s. The series includes such popular works as the *Spring Sonata* for violin and piano and the *Septet* for strings and winds.

This isn’t the first time that Beethoven has made an appearance on our bluff. Artistic Director David Allen Wehr kicked off the *On the Bluff* series in 2002 with a two-year, eight-concert traversal of the 32 Beethoven piano sonatas. “Since then, the series has focused on different composers (Brahms, Chopin, Schumann and Dvořák) and national styles (French and Hungarian) in the manner of museum exhibits dedicated to particular artists,” Wehr said.

Performers in the *Beethoven on the Bluff* series include Mary Pappert School of Music faculty, members of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (PSO) and internationally celebrated guest artists. The series also marks the debut of the Duquesne Piano Trio, a group comprised of School of Music faculty members Wehr, Charles Stegeman and Adam Liu.

“We emphasize chamber music for piano, combined with other instruments,” Wehr said, “and make use of the deep pool of Duquesne faculty and PSO members who enjoy performing outside the confines of their orchestra positions.”

The series kicked off on Sunday, September 22, 2013 with *Septet/Piano Trios I*. The concert program featured the *Ghost* piano trio, a piece that is said to be inspired by the Witches Scene from William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, as well as its companion, the elegant *Piano Trio op. 70, no. 2*. The performance also included the *Septet in E-Flat Major*, one of Beethoven’s most popular works.

In addition to the Duquesne Piano Trio, *Septet/Piano Trios I* featured PSO and Duquesne faculty members Jeffrey Turner, Principal Bass; Ron Samuels, clarinet; Philip Pandolfi, bassoon; Zachary Smith, Assistant Principal Horn and guest artists (also PSO members) Randolph Kelly, Principal Viola, and David Premo, Associate Principal Cello.

*Piano/Trios II*, the second installment in the series, took place on October 14, and once again showcased the Duquesne Piano Trio, this time performing the three piano trios that comprise Beethoven’s *Opus I*. He had already written a great deal of music, but wanted to save this important designation for the music he considered his best work up to that time. The three trios show remarkable diversity, depth of emotion and many strokes of genius. The Duquesne Piano Trio presented them as a whole, the way Beethoven originally intended.

Upcoming performances in *The Early Years* series will include *Violin/Cello I* on Sunday, January 12, 2014, at 3 p.m., and *Violin/Cello II* on Sunday, February 16, 2014, at 3 p.m. featuring Wehr with guest artists Noah Bendix-Bagley, violin, Concertmaster, PSO and Anne Martindale Williams, Principal Cello, PSO.

“The series has attracted a strong, loyal following of Pittsburgh music lovers who eagerly anticipate each program and fill PNC Recital Hall on a regular basis,” Wehr said, “so come early for the best seats.”

All *Beethoven on the Bluff* concerts are held in the PNC Recital Hall with a donation of $10 suggested for admission. For more information on the *Beethoven on the Bluff* series, call 412.396.6083 or visit duq.edu/beethoven.