



School of
Music
College of Arts and Sciences
WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY



Allegro Concert Series

presents

Last Words, Last Works: The Final Solo Piano Pieces of Beethoven, Brahms, and Schubert

Victor Rosenbaum, piano

October 13, 2026

7:30pm

Kimbrough Concert Hall

*The Allegro Concert Series is brought to you by Allegro,
the Student Association for Music Advocacy.*

Allegro Logo by Clare Sullivan

What is Allegro?

Allegro is an umbrella Registered Student Organization that represents all music student organizations at Washington State University. We aim to excite and inspire all students on the WSU campus with and through music. By partnering with student organizations, we provide funding to bring world-renowned guest artists to perform and work one-on-one with WSU students. In addition, Allegro offers travel scholarships to exceptional students and organizations traveling to competitions, festivals, conferences, and other music-related activities. Allegro receives generous funding from the Associated Students of Washington State University. All RSOs are welcome to apply for Allegro funding. Applications are available in the Kimbrough Music Building office.

Six Bagatelles, Opus 126 (1823-24)

Ludvig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

No. 1 in G Major (Andante con moto)

No. 2 in G Minor (Allegro)

No. 3 in E-flat Major (Andante, cantabile e grazioso)

No. 4 in B Minor (Presto)

No. 5 in G Major (Quasi allegretto)

No. 6 in E-flat Major (Presto- Andante amabile e con moto)

Piano Pieces, Opus 119 (1893)

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Intermezzo in B Minor (Adagio)

Intermezzo in E Minor (Andantino un poco agitato)

Intermezzo in C Major (Grazioso e giocoso)

Rhapsody in E-flat Major (Allegro risoluto)

Intermission

Sonata in B-flat Major, D. 960 (1828)

Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)

Molto moderato

Andante sostenuto

Scherzo: Allegro vivace con delicatezza

Allegro, ma non troppo

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Some words about these “Last Words”

The music on tonight’s program as been with me most of my adult life. But now, as I enter my 85th birthday year, it seemed a natural time to explore the pieces that three of the composers I most love wrote as their final works for piano.

Composers over the centuries have often turned to the short piano piece for especially personal statements. Such works (like the Chopin Preludes, for instance) often serve also as experiments in composition, similar to a sketch or pen and ink drawing for a painter. Beethoven’s *Six Bagatelles Opus 126*, offer a good example. Here was a master of the long form (he had just completed the Ninth Symphony) returning to the piano well after his 32 sonatas and his monumental “*Diabelli*” *Variations* to compose a “cycle of little trifles”, as he called them, to be his last compositions for piano. They are somewhat improvisational and alternately simple, tender, grand, folk music-inspired, even “jazzy”, and, almost throughout, experimental and quirky. They include explorations of the extreme ranges of the piano, and coloristic use of the pedal. Beethoven was fond of these pieces, writing to his publisher that they were “probably the best pieces of this kind I have written”.

Similarly, Brahms, another master of symphonic and other large-scale works, expressed some of his most intimate musical thoughts through the short piano piece. In fact, in the early 1890’s he announced his intention to retire from composing and began a group of piano pieces (ultimately 20 that became Opus 116, 117, 118 and 119) that he intended as his farewell to composition. (It didn’t quite turn out that way, since he met a clarinetist who inspired four works which kept him composing a bit longer than planned). So these works were deeply important to him, like journal entries, and, as with the Bagatelles, forged new ground compositionally. Since he was working on the pieces that became Opus 118 and Opus 119 in the summer of 1893, we cannot be entirely certain which is the very last *composed* piece. What we do know, however, is that the pieces that became Opus 119 were the ones he decided to *publish* as his last music for piano. While the final Rhapsody ends in a grand flourish (albeit in a minor key, a bit unusual for a piece mostly in major), the first piece, the Intermezzo in B Minor, is one of Brahms’s most introspective and wistful — full of the nostalgia and heartache that one might expect late in life. It’s interesting that Brahms was well aware of the forward-looking language of that first intermezzo, sending it to Clara Schumann with a note that reads almost like a warning, describing it as “swarming with dissonance”. His message continued: “to say very slow is not enough; every measure, even every note, must be played *ritardando* as if trying to suck melancholy from each and every tone”. Considering the polytriadic nature of the harmony, something we associate with Impressionism in music, it is worth noting that this moody “impressionistic” piece was written *after* some of Debussy’s early works, including one of his most famous, *Claire de Lune*.

Ironically, Schubert, arguably the ultimate master of the short form (think of his more than 600 songs), became expansive in his later works on a scale that Schumann described as “heavenly length”. The works from his last year include three large scale

piano sonatas, finished just weeks before his death at the age of 31. The last of these three sonatas, the B-flat Major Sonata, a work lasting 45 minutes or so, seems to chronicle an entire life. Although it feels very much like a 'final statement' (signaled by the chorale-textured hymn-like opening punctuated by an ominous low, rumbling trill), the range of emotions is enormous, marked in spots by Schubert's dance-like optimism. Yet even in those lighter moments one feels what the great American pianist Leon Fleisher described as "smiling through tears". The dark C-sharp minor tonality that begins the Development section of the first movement (the "Moonlight" Sonata key) returns as the home tonality of the deeply sad and anguished second movement. A relatively light-hearted Scherzo, with an eccentric minor-key Trio section, is followed by a last movement of considerable vitality that keeps shifting moods with mercurial ease. However, it is far from the "happy" movement that it is often thought to be — even starting in the tragic key of C minor, and having moments of outburst that can only be described as rage. But its ultimately exuberant ending seems to be looking toward a future which, for the still young Schubert, was not to be.

Victor Rosenbaum

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Artist Bio:

Internationally known pianist and teacher, **Victor Rosenbaum**, who this year celebrates his 85th birthday, has received critical acclaim since his first Boston debut recital after joining the New England Conservatory faculty in 1967 when the Boston Globe wrote: Rosenbaum *“makes up for all the drudgery the habitual concert-goer has to endure in the hope of finding the occasional real, right thing”*. His critical praise continues to this day. Describing his 2020 CD, “Brahms: The Last Piano Pieces” (Bridge), Glyn Pursglove of MusicWeb International said: *“Rosenbaum’s account of these pieces seems to me impeccable. The whole disc is magisterial; a mature pianist bringing deep thought and empathy to a series of mature pieces which stand revealed, as clearly as I have heard, as masterpieces. This will be the disc I turn to when I next want to hear any of these remarkable pieces”*. Since leaving New England Conservatory in 2020 after 53 consecutive years of teaching, Rosenbaum has had guest teaching and performing residencies in Puerto Rico, Israel, Japan, Korea, Austria, Bulgaria, and Taiwan, where he served as Visiting Professor of Piano and Chamber Music at National Taiwan Normal University from 2022 to 2025, as well as at conservatories and universities across the United States. He is also an Affiliated Artist on the faculty of MIT.

Over more than sixty years, Rosenbaum has concertized widely as soloist and chamber musician in the United States, Europe, Israel, Brazil, Russia, Japan, China and Taiwan, appearing in such prestigious halls as Tully Hall in New York and the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, Russia. As a chamber music performer, he has collaborated with major artists of the 20th and 21st centuries, such as Leonard Rose, Paul Katz, Laurence Lesser, Arnold Steinhardt, Robert Mann, Joseph Silverstein, James Buswell, Malcolm Lowe, Walter Trampler, Leslie Parnas, Kim Kashkashian and the Brentano, Borromeo, and Cleveland String Quartets, and was a member of two trios: The Wheaton Trio and The Figaro Trio. Rosenbaum has played and/or taught at many summer festivals, among them Tanglewood, the Rockport Chamber Music Festival, Kfar Blum and Tel Hai (in Israel), Yellow Barn, Kneisel Hall (Blue Hill), Musicorda, Masters de Pontlevoy (France), the Heifetz Institute, the International Keyboard Institute and Festival in New York, the International Music Seminar in Vienna, the Bowdoin International Music Festival, the Festival at Walnut Hill School, the Puerto Rico International Piano Festival, The Art of the Piano Festival in Cincinnati, the Atlantic Music Festival, Piano Texas, the Adamant Music School, the Lancaster International Piano Festival, the Prima Music Foundation Summer Academy, and the Eastern Music Festival, where he headed the piano department for five years.

Recital appearances have brought him to Chicago, Minneapolis, Tokyo, Taipei, Vienna, Beijing, St. Petersburg (Russia), Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and New York, among others. In addition to his absorption in the music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (in particular Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, and Brahms), Rosenbaum has performed and given premieres of works by many 20th and 21st Century composers, including John Harbison, John Heiss, Peter Westergaard, Norman Dinerstein, Arlene Zallman, Donald Harris, Daniel Pinkham, Miriam Gideon, Stephen Albert, and many others. A musician of diverse talents, Rosenbaum is also a composer and has frequently conducted in the Boston area and beyond.

Rosenbaum, who studied with Elizabeth Brock and Martin Marks while growing up in Indianapolis, and went on to study with Rosina Lhevinne at the Aspen Festival and Leonard Shure in New York (while earning degrees at Brandeis University and Princeton), has become a renowned teacher himself. Rosenbaum's students have established teaching and performing careers in the US and abroad, and have won top competition prizes including, most recently, Aristo Sham's Gold Medal in the 2025 Van Cliburn Competition, and in such competitions as the Young Concerts Artists, Charles Wadsworth International Competition, New Orleans International Competition, Casagrande International Piano Competition, Gina Bachauer Competition, and the New York International Competition, among others. During his long tenure on the faculty of New England Conservatory, he chaired its piano department for more than a decade, and was also Chair of Chamber Music. On the faculty of Mannes School of Music in New York from 2003-2017, he has also been Visiting Professor of Piano at the Eastman School of Music, a guest teacher at Juilliard, and presents lectures, workshops, and master classes for teachers' groups and schools both in the U. S. and abroad, including at London's Royal Academy of Music, Royal College of Music, and Guildhall

School, the conservatories of St. Petersburg and Moscow, Beijing Central Conservatory, Shanghai Conservatory, the Toho School in Tokyo, Tokyo Ondai, Seoul National University, most major schools in Taiwan, and other institutions such as the Menuhin School near London, and the Jerusalem Music Center. Rosenbaum's sixteen years as Director and President of the Longy School of Music (1985-2001) in Cambridge, Massachusetts, transformed the school into a full-fledged degree granting conservatory as well as a thriving community music school.

In addition to his Brahms disc, Rosenbaum's recordings on the Bridge and Fleur de Son labels include a Mozart CD, three Schubert discs, one of which was described as "a poignant record of human experience", and two recordings of Beethoven, one of which the American Record Guide named as among the top classical recordings of 2020. The New York Times put it succinctly after his performance at Tully Hall: Rosenbaum "**could not have been better**". And a review in the Boston Globe summed up the appeal of Rosenbaum's playing: "**Fervor and Gentleness Combined**".