

*“Biss is a Beethoven specialist and foremost authority on the sonatas” – Bachtrack*

## **The Soraya Kicks Off Beethoven’s 250<sup>th</sup> Birthday with American Pianist Jonathan Biss Performing Two Nights**

### **Onstage Sessions Chamber Music Series**

**Tuesday, October 15 at 8PM**

**Wednesday, October 16 at 8PM**

(Los Angeles, CA) September 4, 2019—In the coming year, the classical music world celebrates the 250th anniversary of Ludwig van Beethoven’s birth. The Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts will explore the composer’s works, from his most iconic symphonies to the quieter piano solos with eight major performances slated throughout the 2019-20 Season. The Beethoven performances begin with Itzhak Perlman opening The Soraya season on Thursday, September 19 followed by pianist Jonathan Biss performing two evenings, Tuesday, October 15 and Wednesday, October 16.

“The 250<sup>th</sup> Beethoven celebration is a richly deserved global celebration,” said Thor Steingraber, The Soraya’s Executive Director. “This season we have programmed some of the greatest artists who define Beethoven’s brilliance—Itzhak Perlman, Jonathan Biss, Pinchas Zukerman with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Joshua Bell and Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, Christian Tetzlaff with Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and new music director Jamie Martín, and Lahav Shani conducting the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra. We invite our growing audience to join this memorable event.”

Pianist Jonathan Biss will grace the stage on two nights, each with different repertoire. In our intimate Onstage Sessions Chamber music format, Biss will share his sensitive, nuanced musicality through multiple Beethoven pieces. The first night at The Soraya, October 15, will include *Moonlight Sonata* and *Opus 28*, his *Pastoral*.

At 39, the American pianist has embarked on a nine-year project to record the complete cycle of Beethoven’s piano sonatas. Biss explains, “Playing Beethoven does not feel like a matter of choice. His concerns are so all-encompassing, his mastery so astonishing, his personality so combative, one cannot look away.”

Jonathan Biss is currently working through the Beethoven’s complete Piano Sonatas, recently releasing Volume 8 in April 2019. *Classical Review* said of his releases, “[The] Biss cycle is turning out to be treasurable, and listening with or without the score being quite a revealing experience. Good, close and intimate yet full and resonant recording quality, as in previous issues.” The ninth and final volume is expected to be released during the 250<sup>th</sup> year-long celebration.

In an interview with *The New York Times*, Biss explains, “I don’t think new music will ever be at the core of what I do. But I want to feel that what I do is always vibrant, that the pieces I love that are 100, 200

years old are also of the present. And I can't feel that if they don't in some way exist in conversation with the music that's being written now."

#### **Program for Tuesday, October 15**

Op. 28, D major "Pastoral"

Op. 49 no. 2, G major

Op. 27 no. 2, C-sharp minor "Moonlight"

INTERMISSION

Op. 90, E minor

Op. 101, A major

#### **Program for Wednesday, October 16**

Op. 10 no. 2, F major

Op. 14 no. 2, G major

Op. 31 no. 3, E-flat major

INTERMISSION

Op. 106, B-flat major "Hammerklavier"

Jonathan Biss performs on October 15 and 16 at 8PM, onstage at The Soraya. Single tickets starting at \$76 are now on sale at [thesoraya.org](http://thesoraya.org) or by calling 818-677-3000. These concerts are generously supported by Kathleen P. Martin and the Colburn Foundation.

#### **About Jonathan Biss**

Jonathan Biss is a world-renowned pianist who shares his deep curiosity with music lovers in the concert hall and beyond. He continues to expand his reputation as a teacher, musical thinker, and one of the great Beethoven interpreters of our time. He was recently named Co-artistic Director alongside Mitsuko Uchida at the Marlboro Music Festival, where he has spent twelve summers. In addition, he has written extensively about his relationships with the composers with whom he shares a stage. A member of the faculty of his alma mater the Curtis Institute of Music since 2010, Biss led the first massive open online course (MOOC) offered by a classical music conservatory, *Exploring Beethoven's Piano Sonatas*, which has reached more than 150,000 people in 185 countries.

As 2020, the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth, approaches, Biss continues to add lectures to his online course until he covers all of the sonatas in time for the anniversary year. At the same time, he progresses in his nine-year, nine-disc recording cycle of Beethoven's complete piano sonatas, which will also be completed in 2020. His bestselling eBook, *Beethoven's Shadow*, describing the process of recording the sonatas and published by RosettaBooks in 2011, was the first Kindle Single written by a classical musician. These projects represent Biss' complete approach to music-making and connecting his audience to his own passion for the music.

Biss completes his complete Beethoven piano sonata performance cycles at the Aspen and Ravinia festivals and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra this season. Audiences experienced all the piano sonatas in seven concerts over several years. In 2018-19 he performs with the Philadelphia and Philharmonia orchestras, the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, and the Dallas Symphony, among many others. He also continues his collaborations with the Elias, Doric, and Brentano string quartets. In honor of his teacher Leon Fleisher's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, he joins fellow pianists Yefim Bronfman and Katherine Jacobson, as well as Fleisher himself, for celebratory concerts at Carnegie Hall, Perelman Theater in Philadelphia, the Kennedy Center, and Herbst Theatre in San Francisco, performing Schubert, Ravel, Dvořák, Bach, and Kirchner. Biss also tours Finland and Germany with the Japan Philharmonic, Sweden with Musica Vitae, and the Netherlands with Liza Ferschtman, Marc Desmons, and Antoine Lederlin.

This season, as part of his *Beethoven/5* project, for which the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra is co-commissioning five composers to write piano concertos, each inspired by one of Beethoven's, Biss

premieres Caroline Shaw's new concerto alongside Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 at the Seattle Symphony. In the spring of its premiere alone, Shaw's piece will be performed by Biss and three additional ensembles: the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the North Carolina Symphony, and the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra. He is committed to making sure that the concertos become part of the repertoire, also performing previous commission *City Stanzas* by Sally Beamish three times over the course of the season. The other concertos which have already premiered are Timo Andres' *The Blind Banister*, a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Music, and Salvatore Sciarrino's *Il Sogno di Stradella*. Brett Dean will write the final concerto.

Previous projects that Biss conceived have included an exploration of composers' "Late Style" in various concert programs at Carnegie Hall, the Barbican Centre, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, and San Francisco Performances. He also gave masterclasses at Carnegie and published the Kindle Single *Coda* on the topic. Schumann: *Under the Influence* was a 30-concert exploration of the composer's role in musical history, for which Biss also recorded Schumann and Dvořák piano quintets with the Elias String Quartet and wrote *A Pianist Under the Influence*.

Throughout his career Biss has been an advocate for new music. Prior to the *Beethoven/5* project, he commissioned *Lunaire Variations* by David Ludwig, *Interlude II* by Leon Kirchner, *Wonderer* by Lewis Spratlan, and *Three Pieces for Piano* and a concerto by Bernard Rands, which he premiered with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He has also premiered a piano quintet by William Bolcom.

Biss represents the third generation in a family of professional musicians that includes his grandmother Raya Garbousova, one of the first well-known female cellists (for whom Samuel Barber composed his Cello Concerto), and his parents, violinist Miriam Fried and violist/violinist Paul Biss. Growing up surrounded by music, Biss began his piano studies at age six, and his first musical collaborations were with his mother and father. He studied at Indiana University with Evelyne Brancart and at the Curtis Institute of Music with Leon Fleisher.

Biss has been recognized with numerous honors, including the Leonard Bernstein Award presented at the 2005 Schleswig-Holstein Festival, Wolf Trap's Shouse Debut Artist Award, the Andrew Wolf Memorial Chamber Music Award, Lincoln Center's Martin E. Segal Award, an Avery Fisher Career Grant, the 2003 Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award, and the 2002 Gilmore Young Artist Award. His albums for EMI won Diapason d'Or de l'année and Edison awards. He was an artist-in-residence on American Public Media's *Performance Today* and was the first American chosen to participate in the BBC's New Generation Artist program.

### **Calendar Listing for Jonathan Biss, piano**

**Dates:** Tuesday, October 15 at 8PM  
Wednesday, October 16 at 8PM

**Programs:** Tuesday, October 15  
Op. 28, D major "Pastoral"  
Op. 49 no. 2, G major  
Op. 27 no. 2, C-sharp minor "Moonlight"  
INTERMISSION  
Op. 90, E minor  
Op. 101, A major

Wednesday, October 16  
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Op. 31 no. 3, E-flat major

INTERMISSION  
Op. 106, B-flat major “Hammerklavier”

**Venue:** Onstage at the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (The Soraya)  
18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330

**Tickets:**

**Prices:** Starting at \$76. Prices subject to change.

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Find The Soraya on their new social media pages:

Facebook: [Facebook.com/TheSorayaStage](https://www.facebook.com/TheSorayaStage)

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**About Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (The Soraya)**

The 2019-20 Season marks the ninth year for the award-winning Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts which has quickly become one of the cultural jewels of the greater Los Angeles region. Under the leadership of Executive Director Thor Steingraber, The Soraya continues to expand its programming and outstanding multidisciplinary performances. The Soraya presents a wide variety of performances that not only include new and original work from the Los Angeles region but also work from around the world appealing to all of LA's rich and diverse communities.

Located on the campus of California State University, Northridge, The Soraya's season offers a vibrant performance program of nearly 50 classical and popular music, dance, theater, family, and international events that have served to establish The Soraya as the intellectual and cultural heart of the San Fernando Valley, and further establish itself as one of the top arts companies in Southern California. The award-winning, 1,700-seat theatre was designed by HGA Architects and Engineers and was recently cited by the Los Angeles Times as “a growing hub for live music, dance, drama and other cultural events.”