

Alfred Brendel, pianist

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IN PERFORMANCE

CLASSICAL MUSIC

A Power Point Presentation Of Form and Development

*Alfred Brendel, pianist
Carnegie Hall*

For his recital on Sunday night, Alfred Brendel hewed to the composers for whom he is justly acclaimed — Beethoven, Schubert and Mozart — but even within those parameters he chose a program that set the popular and the little known in sharp relief. Mr. Brendel opened with a selection of five Beethoven Bagatelles, brief and often breezy pieces that had the effect of sonic hors d'oeuvres, followed by two spirited Beethoven Rondos (Op. 51, Nos. 1 and 2) played with tenderness and levity.

Next came Mozart's famous Sonata in A (K. 331), whose final Rondo, "Alla Turca," has been used so often in commercials, elevators and shopping malls that it now floats freely as some generic signifier of civility and refinement. It was good then to hear it restored to its original context in Mr. Brendel's able hands. His phrasing and overall conception are so immaculately clear that his performances can sometimes feel like Power Point presentations of a work's form and development. In this case, when the "Turkish" theme finally arrived, it sounded fresh and reinvigorated for its vivid relationships to all that had preceded.

Turning away from the popular, Mr. Brendel then offered Schubert's seldom-played Sonata in C (D. 840), which was left incomplete at the composer's death. Its two contrasting movements were rendered with a gracious understatement, suggesting that not even Schubert's thick keyboard writing could mask the composer's inner Mozartian impulse. Beethoven's Sonata No. 11 (Op. 22) concluded the program, and Mr. Brendel was here at his most poetic, fusing architecture with emotion, fantasy with memory.

JEREMY EICHLER
