

A D E L A I D E F E S T I V A L 2026

Image credit: ©OutiTörmälä

AF26 DIGITAL DAYBILL

The Beethoven Sonatas

Olli Mustonen piano

CONCERT 1 – Appassionata

Saturday 28 February 2026, 11:00am

CONCERT 2 – Les Adieux

Saturday 28 February 2026, 2:30pm

CONCERT 3 – Moonlight

Sunday 1 March 2026, 2:30pm



UKARIA
Cultural Centre

Principal Donor – Ulrike Klein AO

Introduction

Across three recitals, Olli Mustonen traces Beethoven's extraordinary journey as a composer and revolutionary, charting the transformation of the piano sonata across nearly three decades. Emerging from the Classical traditions of Haydn and Mozart, Beethoven rapidly expanded the sonata's expressive range and structural ambition, reshaping it in parallel with the social and political upheavals of his time.

The series moves from the poised brilliance and wit of the early sonatas, through the bold experimentation of the *quasi una fantasia* works and the dramatic power of the middle period, to the profound introspection and radiance of the late masterpieces. Along the way, works such as the *Appassionata*, *Les Adieux*, and the A flat major Sonata, Op. 110, reveal a composer in constant transformation, restless, searching, and boldly imaginative.

Heard together, these programs present the sonatas not as isolated works, but as chapters in a single, evolving artistic vision. Mustonen's probing and deeply personal interpretations illuminate Beethoven's sonatas as an intimate musical selfportrait, unfolding with extraordinary invention and expressive daring.

Olli Mustonen writes:

"Of all the great composers, it feels that in Beethoven's case his music has the closest and the most intimate connection with the personality of the composer – I have always felt that when you know his music, you know him. Although, for unfortunate but very natural reasons, I have never had the opportunity to meet him in what we tend to call real life, as I have had the privilege to spend such a large portion of my life very close to his music, it almost feels that I have known him all my life also as a person, as a fellow human being. His influence on my own life has been tremendous, and I can certainly say that without his music I wouldn't be the same person I am now.

"In Beethoven's case it is particularly fascinating to see how his music evolves throughout his life. Every note in this sonata cycle, from the first note of the first sonata to the last note of the last sonata, is of course unmistakably Beethoven and couldn't had been written by anybody but him, but it is fascinating to see how certain kinds of ideas and features, which one can see budding in those Haydn- and Mozart-influenced youthful sonatas, develop into full and such unusual bloom in the later sonatas."

The Beethoven Sonatas

Olli Mustonen piano

CONCERT 1 – *Appassionata*

Saturday 28 February 2026, 11:00am
UKARIA Cultural Centre
Duration: 1hr 50mins, including interval

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Piano Sonata No. 1 in F minor, Op. 2 No. 1

- i. Allegro
- ii. Adagio
- iii. Menuetto: Allegretto
- iv. Prestissimo

Piano Sonata No. 2 in A major, Op. 2 No. 2

- i. Allegro vivace
- ii. Largo appassionato
- iii. Scherzo: Allegretto
- iv. Rondo: Grazioso

Interval

Piano Sonata No. 22 in F major, Op. 54

- i. In tempo d'un Menuetto
- ii. Allegretto

Piano Sonata No. 23 in F minor, Op. 57 *Appassionata*

- i. Allegro assai
- ii. Andante con moto
- iii. Allegro ma non troppo – Presto

The opening concert of Olli Mustonen's ***The Beethoven Sonatas*** traces Beethoven's extraordinary artistic evolution through four sonatas composed across nearly ten years of creative transformation. The two youthful Op. 2 sonatas, composed in 1795 and dedicated to Haydn, already show Beethoven stepping boldly into his own voice. Piano Sonata No.1 in F minor, Op. 2 No. 1 bristles with dramatic contrast and restless energy, revealing the composer's defiant spirit, while Sonata No.2 in A major, Op.2 No.2, radiates wit, clarity, and luminous invention, its apparent ease masking formidable craftsmanship.

A leap forward takes us to the compact yet exploratory Sonata No.22 in F major, Op.54, whose twomovements juxtapose courtly elegance with a whirlwind *perpetuum mobile*, and Beethoven at his most playful, surprising and unpredictable.

The program culminates in the towering Sonata No. 23 in F minor, Op.57, the *Appassionata*, composed in 1804-05 and one of Beethoven's most gripping and turbulent works. Written as he grappled with the reality of his hearing loss, it is a work of staggering technical demands. Its volcanic intensity, structural daring, and relentless momentum mark a pinnacle of the composer's middle period and is a defining statement of Romantic virtuosity.

Olli Mustonen

Pianist / Conductor / Composer

Olli Mustonen is not only one of the most interesting musicians in Finland, he is also someone who creates surprises, intensities and amazements which are anything but commonplace in the music business.

Süddeutsche Zeitung

Olli Mustonen is a pianist, composer and conductor. For him, it's all one thing: he is quite simply a musician. It therefore makes no sense for him to separate these functions – and so he excels in all three disciplines, playing an extraordinary role in today's musical world. With boundless energy and a creative and highly reflective approach to music, he is one of the few pianists whose signature style is instantly recognisable. Known for the expressiveness and intensity of his playing and his crystal-clear, almost percussive touch, his interpretations are characterised by the interplay between explosive outbursts and sensitive restraint.

During an illustrious career, Olli Mustonen has brought his extraordinary musical insight to many of the world's most significant orchestras, including the Berliner Philharmoniker, the New York and Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestras, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Royal Concertgebouw Orkest, the Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra, the Orchestre de Paris, the Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich, and all the London orchestras. He has strong relationships with orchestras across Finland, including the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Helsinki Philharmonic and Sinfonia Lahti, with whom he released an album of Rautavaara and Martinu's Third Piano Concertos conducted by Dalia Stasevska in 2023. At the beginning of 2023, he took over the position of Principal Guest Conductor with the Lapland Chamber Orchestra. As a recitalist, Olli Mustonen has appeared at Carnegie Hall, Symphony Center Chicago, Diaghilev Festival Perm, Dresden Festival, Lockenhaus Festival, New York Zankel Hall and Sydney Opera House. With Steven Isserlis, he has performed as a duo for more than thirty years. 2019 saw the release of their album of Russian works for cello and piano on the Hyperion label.

Olli Mustonen kicked off the 2025/26 season with Kremerata Baltica at Paliesius Manor in Lithuania and at the Helsinki Festival. He can be seen in all three roles – pianist, composer and conductor – in numerous concerts in his native Finland. In his three solo recitals at the Adelaide Festival, he focuses on Beethoven's piano sonatas. In 2026 he will also perform chamber music at the Konvergencie Festival in Bratislava, the Big Little Music Festival at De Bijloke Gent, the String Quartet Biennale Amsterdam, the Stifffestival in the Netherlands, the Norwegian FESTIVALTA, in Sydney, the Klavier-Festival Ruhr and in Denmark with flutist Janne Thomsen.

Recipient of the 2019 Hindemith Prize of the City of Hanau, Olli Mustonen's life as a composer is at the heart of his piano playing and conducting. Frequently bringing his own works to the chamber music stage, the world premiere of his work Taivaanvalot (Heavenly Lights) for Tenor, Cello and Piano was performed at Het Muziekgebouw, Amsterdam by Olli Mustonen himself, alongside Ian Bostridge and Steven Isserlis. Additional performances took place at London's Wigmore Hall and in Hong Kong. His string sextet, commissioned by the Beethovenfest Bonn, was premiered there in 2020. In 2022, Apotheosis, in memoriam Pablo Casals was premiered at the opening gala of the Casals Forum in Kronberg and the Sinfonia No. 3 Taivaanvalot with the Turku Philharmonic and tenor soloist Ian Bostridge, the latter was published in 2023 by Ondine together with his 2nd Symphony. The flute concerto Sadunkertoja (Storyteller) was premiered by Janne Thomsen and the PKF Prague Philharmonia under Olli Mustonen at the Concentus Moraviae Festival in the Czech Republic; the Finnish premiere will take place with the Jyväskylä Sinfonia in November 2025. His violin concerto was premiered in Finland by Elina Vähälä and the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra under Nicholas Collon on 6 December 2024, Finland's Independence Day.

Born in Helsinki, Olli Mustonen began his studies in piano, harpsichord, and composition at the age of five. Initially learning with Ralf Gothoni, he subsequently studied piano with Eero Heinonen and composition with Einojuhani Rautavaara.

Olli Mustonen also performs

Wed 4 Mar, 12:30pm, Elder Hall – Marwood and Mustonen – Two extraordinary artists, Anthony Marwood and Olli Mustonen, come together in this rare duo event. A Festival highlight and a thrilling finale to their individual Adelaide Festival residencies.