

## Richard Goode displays piano mastery at Society of Four Arts

By KEN KEATON, Special to the Daily News

The Society of the Four Arts was the host Wednesday night of a remarkable piano recital by Richard Goode. If a star is a performer who has — in his mind — become more important than art, then Goode is no star. He is an artist.

Wednesday's program was unusual and fascinating: two preludes and fugues from Bach's *Well-Tempered Klavier*, Book 2; three Haydn sonatas, and Schumann's *Kreisleriana*.

**Contrasting Bach.** Bach's masterly piece is one of the largest — and most important — bodies of keyboard music ever composed. Goode picked two dramatically contrasting sets, in sharp minor and G major. The minor key prelude and its triple fugue were deeply tragic, fateful. The major pair was all lightness, playful and nimble. Goode elicited a variety of tones from the keyboard that didn't just separate the voices but made them sound as if they were played on different instruments.

**Haydn full of surprise.** There are more than 50 sonatas by Haydn, and if they are neglected in comparison to Mozart's and Beethoven's, that's to our loss. Goode performed three dramatically different works, and each was a revelation.

Haydn's sonatas are full of surprises. While he never achieved Mozart's sublime melodic gifts, was more adventurous in his harmonies, forms and rhythms. The C major sonata was all jaunty dotted rhythms, innovative modulations, with an **improvisational spontaneity that was delightful**. The C minor was the earliest work, from Haydn's *Sturm und Drang* (*Storm and Stress*) period, a far more profound and tragic work, though no less inventive. The later G major was Haydn the joker, filled with surprises, false endings, unexpected sforzandi, wild modulations. **Goode's notes (wonderfully literate and illuminating) likened the style to that of Chico Marx, and he was right!**

Through all of the first half, Goode was especially impressive in his control of tone, chord voicing and contrapuntal balance. One rarely hears such variety of sounds from the supposedly monochromatic piano. Occasionally other sounds were heard: Goode, like Glenn Gould and Pablo Casals, likes to sing along with his playing (though unlike either of those masters, Goode is actually close to the appropriate pitch). That tone control extended to a deliberate limiting of the sound range, appropriate to his program. Both the Bach and the Haydn were restricted — infinitely variable, but never strong enough to overwhelm the Baroque or Classic sound world.

**Schumann sublime.** Then came the Schumann. His music is possibly the trickiest to interpret of all the Romantics — the successful interpreter must be something of a combination priest and libertine. Goode may not have been absolutely ideal (too much priest, not enough libertine), but one rarely hears such control of voicing, such an orchestral timbral palate, such perfect timing and pacing. In particular, Goode's realization of Schumann's complex rhythms and polyrhythms was the finest ever experienced. Perhaps a Horowitz or an Argerich might have delivered a more purely passionate performance, but Goode's *Kreisleriana* made one feel like was being heard for the first time.

The concert was complete. It was sublime, satisfying, glorious. Goode had the taste, the courage, to end it while it was perfect, though the audience called for an encore. For that, he deserves our thanks.