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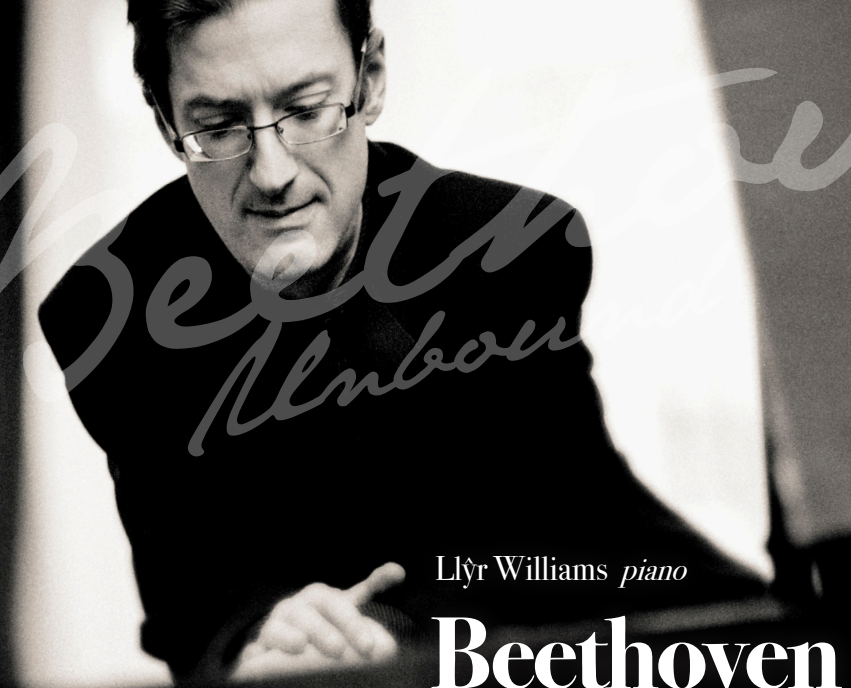
Beethoven Unbound

Llŷr Williams *piano*



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CD 1

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

[1]	I. Allegro	[3.54]
[2]	II. Adagio	[5.18]
[3]	III. Menuetto. Allegretto	[3.36]
[4]	IV. Prestissimo	[5.14]

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

[5]	I. Allegro vivace	[7.32]
[6]	II. Largo appassionato	[6.42]
[7]	III. Scherzo. Allegretto	[3.17]
[8]	IV. Rondo. Grazioso	[6.55]

Piano Sonata No. 3 in C Major, Op. 2 No. 3

[9]	I. Allegro con brio	[10.16]
[10]	II. Adagio	[8.54]
[11]	III. Scherzo. Allegro	[3.10]
[12]	IV. Allegro assai	[5.23]

CD2

Piano Sonata No. 23 in F Minor, Op. 57, "Appassionata"

[1]	I. Allegro assai	[10.50]
[2]	II. Andante con moto	[6.46]
[3]	III. Allegro ma non troppo – Presto	[8.10]
[4]	6 Variations on an Original Theme in F Major, Op. 34	[13.12]

Piano Sonata No. 9 in E Major, Op. 14, No. 1

[5]	I. Allegro	[6.51]
[6]	II. Allegretto	[3.56]
[7]	III. Rondo. Allegro comodo	[3.41]

Piano Sonata No. 10 in G Major, Op. 14, No. 2

[8]	I. Allegro	[7.20]
[9]	II. Andante	[5.56]
[10]	III. Scherzo. Allegro assai	[3.28]

CD3

Fantasia in G Minor, Op. 77
[1] Allegro – Allegretto [9.37]

Piano Sonata No. 13 in E-Flat Major, Op. 27, No. 1, "Quasi una fantasia"
[2] I. Andante. Allegro [5.42]
[3] II. Allegro molto e vivace [2.11]
[4] III. Adagio con espressione [3.13]
[5] IV. Allegro vivace [5.53]

Piano Sonata No. 14 in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 27, No. 2, "Moonlight"
[6] I. Adagio sostenuto [6.25]
[7] II. Allegretto [2.23]
[8] III. Presto agitato [7.31]

Piano Sonata No. 28 in A Major, Op. 101
[9] I. Etwas lebhaft und mit der innigsten Empfindung [4.56]
[10] II. Lebhaft. Marschmassig [6.44]
[11] III. Langsam und sehnsuchtsvoll – Zeitmaß des ersten Stückes – Geschwinde, doch nicht zu sehr, und mit Entschlossenheit [11.03]

Bagatelle in A Minor, WoO. 59, "Für Elise"
[12] Poco moto [3.17]

CD4

Piano Sonata No. 16 in G Major, Op. 31, No. 1
[1] I. Allegro vivace [6.51]
[2] II. Adagio grazioso [10.59]
[3] III. Rondo. Allegretto [6.45]

Piano Sonata No. 17 in D Minor, Op. 31, No. 2, "The Tempest"
[4] I. Largo – Allegro [8.50]
[5] II. Adagio [8.52]
[6] III. Allegretto [7.16]

Piano Sonata No. 18 in E-Flat Major, Op. 31, No. 3, "La Chasse"
[7] I. Allegro [8.52]
[8] II. Scherzo. Allegretto vivace [5.04]
[9] III. Menuetto. Moderato e grazioso [4.42]
[10] IV. Presto con fuoco [4.41]

CD5

Piano Sonata No. 11 in B-Flat Major, Op. 22
[1] I. Allegro con brio [7.51]
[2] II. Adagio con molto espressione [8.50]
[3] III. Minuetto [3.32]
[4] IV. Rondo. Allegretto [6.13]

Piano Sonata No. 22 in F Major, Op. 54
[5] I. In tempo d'un menuetto [6.23]
[6] II. Allegretto – Più allegro [6.34]

Piano Sonata No. 21 in C Major, Op. 53, "Waldstein"
[7] I. Allegro con brio [10.57]
[8] II. Introduzione. Adagio molto [4.44]
[9] III. Rondo. Allegretto moderato – Prestissimo [10.59]

Andante in F Major, WoO. 57, "Andante favori"
[10] Andante grazioso con moto [10.02]

CD6

[1] **15 Variations and a Fugue on an Original Theme in E-Flat Major, Op. 35, "Eroica Variations"** [24.56]

Piano Sonata No. 12 in A-Flat Major, Op. 26, "Funeral March"
[2] I. Andante con variazioni [8.10]
[3] II. Scherzo. Molto allegro [2.45]
[4] III. Marcia funebre sulla morte d'un eroe [6.25]
[5] IV. Allegro [3.09]

Piano Sonata No. 26 in E-Flat Major, Op. 81a, "Les adieux"
[6] I. Das Lebewohl. Adagio – Allegro [7.43]
[7] II. Abwesenheit. Andante espressivo [4.27]
[8] III. Das Wiedersehn. Vivacissimamente [6.07]

CD 7

Piano Sonata No. 8 in C Minor, Op. 13, "Pathétique"

[1] I. Grave – Allegro di molto e con brio [9.23]
[2] II. Adagio cantabile [5.19]
[3] III. Rondo. Allegro [5.06]

7 Bagatelles, Op. 33

[4] No. 1 in E-flat Major. Andante grazioso, quasi allegretto [4.05]
[5] No. 2 in C Major. Scherzo. Allegro [2.48]
[6] No. 3 in F Major. Allegretto [2.15]
[7] No. 4 in A Major. Andante [3.10]
[8] No. 5 in C Major. Allegro, ma non troppo [3.09]
[9] No. 6 in D Major. Allegretto quasi Andante [2.35]
[10] No. 7 in A-flat Major. Presto [2.06]

Piano Sonata No. 27 in E Minor, Op. 90

[11] I. Mit lebhaftigkeit und durchaus mit Empfindung und Ausdruck [6.18]
[12] II. Nicht zu geschwind und sehr singbar vorgetragen [8.21]

Piano Sonata No. 25 in G Major, Op. 79

[13] I. Presto alla tedesca [4.39]
[14] II. Andante [2.48]
[15] III. Vivace [2.13]

CD 8

Piano Sonata No. 29 in B-Flat Major, Op. 106, "Hammerklavier"

[1] I. Allegro [11.23]
[2] II. Scherzo. Assai vivace – Presto – Tempo I [2.40]
[3] III. Adagio sostenuto, appassionato e con molto sentimento [19.58]
[4] IV. Largo – Allegro risoluto [12.36]

6 Bagatelles, Op. 126

[5] No. 1 in G Major. Andante con moto [3.09]
[6] No. 2 in G Minor. Allegro [2.54]
[7] No. 3 in E-Flat Major. Andante [2.32]
[8] No. 4 in B Minor. Presto [3.57]
[9] No. 5 in G Major. Quasi allegretto [2.42]
[10] No. 6 in E-Flat Major. Presto – Andante amabile e con moto – Tempo I [4.13]

CD 9

Piano Sonata No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 10, No. 1

[1] I. Molto allegro e con brio [6.34]
[2] II. Adagio molto [9.26]
[3] III. Finale. Prestissimo [4.50]

Piano Sonata No. 6 in F Major, Op. 10, No. 2

[4] I. Allegro [6.10]
[5] II. Allegretto [4.34]
[6] III. Finale. Presto [3.52]

Piano Sonata No. 7 in D Major, Op. 10, No. 3

[7] I. Presto [7.01]
[8] II. Largo e mesto [10.56]
[9] III. Menuetto. Allegro [2.59]
[10] IV. Rondo. Allegro [4.16]

32 Variations in C Minor, WoO. 80

[11] Allegretto [10.57]

CD 10

Piano Sonata No. 19 in G Minor, Op. 49, No. 1

[1] I. Andante [4.40]
[2] II. Rondo. Allegro [3.34]

33 Variations on a Waltz by Diabelli, Op. 120

[3] Theme. Vivace [0.53]
[4] Variation 1. Alla Marcia, maestoso [2.02]
[5] Variation 2. Poco allegro [0.55]
[6] Variation 3. L'istesso tempo [1.18]
[7] Variation 4. Un poco più vivace [1.05]
[8] Variation 5. Allegro vivace [0.58]
[9] Variation 6. Allegro ma non troppo e serioso [1.43]
[10] Variation 7. Un poco più allegro [1.06]
[11] Variation 8. Poco vivace [1.15]
[12] Variation 9. Allegro pesante e risoluto [1.48]
[13] Variation 10. Presto [0.40]
[14] Variation 11. Allegretto [1.11]
[15] Variation 12. Un poco più mosso [0.55]
[16] Variation 13. Vivace [1.21]
[17] Variation 14. Grave e maestoso [4.08]
[18] Variation 15. Presto scherzando [0.42]
[19] Variation 16. Allegro [0.58]
[20] Variation 17. [Allegro] [1.03]

[21] Variation 18. Poco moderato [2.10]
[22] Variation 19. Presto [0.50]
[23] Variation 20. Andante [2.47]
[24] Variation 21. Allegro con brio [1.39]
[25] Variation 22. Allegro molto [0.50]
[26] Variation 23. Allegro assai [0.51]
[27] Variation 24. Fughetta. Andante [3.04]
[28] Variation 25. Allegro [0.48]
[29] Variation 26. [Piacevole] [0.57]
[30] Variation 27. Vivace [0.57]
[31] Variation 28. Allegro [1.01]
[32] Variation 29. Adagio ma non troppo [1.15]
[33] Variation 30. Andante, sempre cantabile [2.11]
[34] Variation 31. Largo, molto espressivo [5.07]
[35] Variation 32. Fuga – Allegro [3.03]
[36] Variation 33. Tempo di Menuetto, moderato [4.07]

Piano Sonata No. 20 in G Major, Op. 49, No. 2
[37] I. Allegro ma non troppo [4.41]
[38] II. Tempo di menuetto [3.56]

CD 11

Piano Sonata No. 4 in E-Flat Major, Op. 7
[1] I. Molto allegro [8.31]
[2] II. Largo con gran espressione [9.37]
[3] III. Allegro [5.24]
[4] IV. Rondo. Poco allegretto [7.47]

Piano Sonata No. 24 in F-Sharp Major, Op. 78
[5] I. Adagio cantabile – Allegro ma non troppo [7.24]
[6] II. Allegro vivace [3.13]

Piano Sonata No. 15 in D Major, Op. 28, "Pastoral"
[7] I. Allegro [11.53]
[8] II. Andante [8.06]
[9] III. Scherzo. Allegro vivace [2.38]
[10] IV. Rondo. Allegro ma non troppo [5.34]

CD 12

Piano Sonata No. 30 in E Major, Op. 109
[1] I. Vivace ma non troppo [3.54]
[2] II. Prestissimo [2.38]
[3] III. Gesangvoll, mit innigster Empfindung. [14.23]

Piano Sonata No. 31 in A-Flat Major, Op. 110
[4] I. Moderato cantabile molto espressivo [7.16]
[5] II. Allegro molto [2.19]
[6] III. Adagio ma non troppo – Fuga. Allegro ma non troppo [11.57]

Piano Sonata No. 32 in C Minor, Op. 111
[7] I. Maestoso – Allegro con brio ed appassionato [9.07]
[8] II. Arietta. Adagio molto semplice e cantabile [19.32]

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Llŷr Williams *writes*

Most of the recordings in this box started life as live performances given in 9 concerts spread over 3 seasons. I had given several complete Beethoven sonata cycles before, but Wigmore Hall's John Gilhooly specifically wanted 9 programmes. This meant a considerable amount of extra repertoire so I had to learn some of the shorter pieces and variation sets specifically for the project.

Rather than adopt the chronological approach, I have arranged roughly in the order that I played them in the concert, and each CD has been devised as a mini-recital programme. This has sometimes allowed for some creativity in putting the pieces together. For example, CD 3 can be regarded as the 'Fantasy-Album', starting off with Beethoven's most totally "bonkers" piano piece, the Fantasia Op. 77 and moving to the sonatas which are arranged along the fantasy principle with the most unpredictable order of movements, the two Op. 27s and Op. 101. Two works which have a very individual approach to variation form are at the heart of CD 6: the Op. 35 Variations present a vast expansion of the form not previously attempted in the piano literature, while the subsequent movements of the Op. 26 sonata can be heard as further elaborations and comments on the variations in the first movement. On CD 10, I really didn't want the Op. 49s back-to-back as they're too similar. Also the Rondo of Op. 49/1 is like a rococo-style 'upbeat' to Diabelli's waltz and the minuet in Op. 49/2 responds to the last of the variations.

Those of you who wish to hear Beethoven's original version of the Op. 53 sonata before he replaced the Andante Favori as the slow movement can programme tracks 7, 10 and 9 on CD 5. We decided that the original concert version of the Andante didn't have enough of a smile on its face so it was subsequently re-recorded in the empty Wigmore Hall. Likewise, as only the last of the Bagatelles Op. 33 featured as an encore in the concerts, the first six were added later to fill up CD 7.

Working with Judy on this project has been a joy and a privilege. It was sad to reach the end but at least we have Schubert to look forward to!

Judith Sherman *writes*

As most of you know, most records touted as "live" are nothing of the sort. But the recordings in this set are from live performances at Wigmore Hall with with inserts for the following:

1) Problems with the piano, piano bench or some exceptionally loud audience noise. We re-recorded a few inserts and used a program to remove many other noises.

2) Musical concerns. These concerts were originally to be presented online only, because it was certain that over 3 years' time Llŷr would change his mind about some performances. As it turned out, many times he would have a revelation ("the minor section needs a different colour") before that concert went to "press". Still at the end there were a few movements from early on that he said he could improve. I heard nothing wrong with the originals, but he was right. The new versions have more profile. I should add that re-recording a movement meant that he played through it again once. Well, sometimes twice.

The online versions were presented as complete concerts. Since most of those were too long for a CD, for this box Llŷr re-sequenced the pieces (described on the preceeding page).

Working with Llŷr on this project has been a joy and privilege. I'd be very sad right now that it's over except that now we're going on to Schubert.

BEETHOVEN AND THE PIANO SONATA

Misha Donat

In the last year of his life Beethoven complained that the piano was, and would always be, an unsatisfactory instrument. Already a decade earlier, with his colossal 'Hammerklavier' Sonata Op. 106, he had made unprecedented demands on the pianist's stamina and powers of concentration, as well as on the capability of the instrument itself to reproduce sonorities of orchestral weight and grandeur. Beethoven may have been dissatisfied, too, with the piano's lack of a true singing tone.

During Beethoven's lifetime the piano had nevertheless been undergoing continual development, both in terms of its sustaining power and the compass of the keyboard itself. Up to the time of the 'Waldstein' sonata Op. 53, of 1803-4, Beethoven had to content himself with the five-octave range that had been in use ever since the days of Haydn and Mozart. While the restricted keyboard compass did not seem to have been a compositional hindrance to Mozart, who never failed to find elegant solutions to its constraints, Beethoven's earlier sonatas constantly strain against the limitations at both ends of the keyboard, implying the necessity for notes that were not available. By the time Beethoven came to compose the 'Hammerklavier' sonata, the piano had acquired a range of just over six octaves, which seems finally to have satisfied him.

Beethoven's 32 piano sonatas form the richest body of such pieces ever created by a single composer. They are remarkable not only for the originality and profundity of their invention, but also for the variety of their form and character. That diversity was recognised as early as 1807, when a review of the Op. 22 piano sonata published in the *Zeitung für die elegante Welt* pointed out that "Beethoven's inexhaustible genius gives each of his works such an individual character, that it is not easy to compare any one with another." It is as though Beethoven were determined to show how many different facets of his creative persona he could display within the same genre. Even works written more or less simultaneously, and gathered together within a single opus number, are utterly unalike. Only the final triptych of sonatas, Opp.109, 110 and 111, with its preoccupation with variation and fugal procedures, finds Beethoven exploring common territory, though even here the outward shape of each successive sonata is wholly different.

By far the greater proportion of Beethoven's sonatas date from the earlier part of his life, before increasing deafness made the continuation of his career as a keyboard virtuoso impracticable. More than two-thirds of these works were, in fact, composed within the space of a decade, from the mid-1790s to 1805 – the year in which the 'Appassionata' Op. 57 was completed. Beethoven had made his first attempts at composing piano sonatas when he was only twelve years old, with three works dedicated to the Elector of Bonn. They were published in 1783, though they are clearly immature pieces and do not form part of the accepted canon. That canon is inaugurated with the three sonatas Op. 2, all of them grand works in four movements – a design also found in the composer's next sonata, Op. 7. But as the 18th century gave way to the 19th Beethoven became increasingly attracted to more condensed designs, and to notions of continuity between successive movements. The two sonatas Op. 27, of 1801 (the second of them is the famous 'Moonlight'), tread the borderline between sonata and fantasy, and the first of the pair is Beethoven's only work of its kind to play continuously from beginning to end. Its concluding page brings back a fragment of the earlier slow movement, thereby anticipating the new approaches to cyclic form found in some of the sonatas of Beethoven's final years.

When, towards the end of 1792, Beethoven left his home town of Bonn to commence his studies with Haydn in Vienna, he took with him an album in which Count Ferdinand Waldstein had written: "You are now travelling to Vienna in fulfilment of your wishes, so long frustrated. Mozart's spirit is still mourning, and lamenting the death of its ward. It found refuge but no fruition in the inexhaustible Haydn; through him it seeks to be united once again with another. Through continual application you will receive Mozart's spirit from Haydn's hands."

Mozart's shadow can be detected in Beethoven's Sonata Op. 10 No. 1, his first solo piano work in what was to remain his most characteristically defiant key of C minor. For all the music's strongly Beethovenian character, it unmistakably reveals the influence of Mozart's great C minor Sonata K.457. But Count Waldstein would have had much more difficulty in tracing Mozart's spirit in the sonata Beethoven dedicated to him some seven or eight years later. The 'Waldstein' sonata, like the 'Hammerklavier', is a work that seems at times to be conceived in orchestral terms, and one in which Beethoven makes the entire piano resonate with the aid of the sustaining pedal. The effects used in the concluding rondo of the 'Waldstein' are largely of a new kind, too: glissandos in octaves for both hands moving in opposite directions; and technically awkward trills played by the thumb and first finger of the right hand, while above them the remaining fingers play the sustained rondo theme, and the left hand rushes up and down the keyboard in rapid scales. The whole texture is one of shimmering virtuosity, and seemingly designed to thwart the efforts of amateur pianists.

CD 1

[1]-[4] Piano Sonata No. 1 in F Minor, Op. 2 No. 1
[5]-[8] Piano Sonata No. 2 in A Major, Op. 2 No. 2
[9]-[12] Piano Sonata No. 3 in C Major, Op. 2 No. 3

On 21 and 24 October 1795 the *Wiener Zeitung* carried an advertisement by the Viennese firm of Artaria, giving details of their recent publications. The announcement was largely occupied with the news of the availability of three eagerly-awaited string quartets by Haydn (Op. 71); but an appended list of items included Beethoven's three piano trios Op. 1, alongside works by Pleyel, Clementi, Süssmayer and Mozart (the vocal score of *La Clemenza di Tito*). By the following March, Beethoven's three piano sonatas Op. 2 were ready for publication. The Op. 1 trios had achieved such success in the intervening six months that Artaria felt justified in giving pride of place in his new advertisement to Beethoven:

> *'Since the previous work of this composer, the three Piano Trios Op. 1 that are already in the hands of the public, has been received with so much applause, one expects the same from the present works – the more so since besides the value of the composition, one can see from them not only the strength that Herr v. Beethoven possesses as a pianist, but also the sensitivity with which he knows how to handle this instrument.'*

It was Beethoven's pupil and early biographer Ferdinand Ries who reported that Haydn wanted him to print the words 'Pupil of Haydn' on the title page of all his early compositions. According to Ries, Beethoven refused, on the grounds that he had never learned anything from his former teacher. But for all the unsatisfactory nature of Beethoven's lessons with Haydn, who seems to have been too busy composing new symphonies in preparation for his forthcoming trip to England to pay sufficient attention to his headstrong young pupil, the entire basis of the dynamic, thrusting symphonic style Beethoven was to cultivate with such individuality owes an immeasurable debt to the older composer's example. In this, Beethoven stands much closer to Haydn than he does to Mozart.

If there had been a falling-out between Beethoven and Haydn in the early 1790s, their relationship appears sufficiently to have mended by the time Beethoven's first group of sonatas was published. Its title page bore, if not an actual acknowledgement of Beethoven's former status vis à vis Haydn, then at least a simple dedication to him. Like the Op. 1 trios, the sonatas were tailor-made for Beethoven to present his credentials to the Viennese public in the dual role of composer and virtuoso pianist.

On the occasions when Beethoven grouped three works together, one of them would almost invariably be a dramatic work in the minor. More often than not, the minor-mode work formed either the centrepiece of the group, as in the Op. 31 piano sonatas, the Op. 30 violin sonatas and the Op. 59 'Razumovsky' string quartets, or it was placed at the end, as a form of dramatic culmination (the Op. 1 piano trios, the Op. 9 string trios). In Beethoven's first two sets of piano sonatas, however, the work in the minor appears at the head. In both cases, the last sonata was clearly the grandest of the triptych; and of the three sonatas Op. 10, the second was in any case too compact and lightweight to carry the banner for the entire set. The sonata Op. 2 No. 1 is also conceived on a smaller scale than its companions, but its placing is justified by its dramatic weight. On stylistic grounds, this first work in the set would seem to be somewhat earlier than its two successors: in addition to its comparatively modest dimensions, its keyboard writing is considerably more simple. Nevertheless, the stark juxtaposition of violently contrasting dynamic extremes in its outer movements is nothing if not characteristic; and the finale is a fiery outburst of a kind pianists would not previously have encountered. The finale's tempo marking of 'prestissimo' is one Beethoven also used for the finale of his two other early works in the minor featuring the keyboard – the trio Op. 1 No. 3 and the sonata Op. 10 No. 1. Of his subsequent works, only the middle movement of the E major sonata Op. 109 has a similar marking.

One of the novel features of both the Op. 1 trios and the Op. 2 sonatas was their inclusion of a minuet or scherzo in the domain of what had traditionally been a three-movement form. In the case of the sonata Op. 2 No. 1, all four movements are in F minor or major, and even the minuet's trio does not seek to offer tonal contrast. Such homogeneity on a large scale was something of which Haydn was fond, though it had been largely shunned by Mozart. On the other hand, Beethoven's finale seems to borrow a structural procedure that stems directly from Mozart: its first stage is carried forward in a single thrust, with no room for any change in mood, and thematic contrast is reserved for the start of the central development section, where we at last find a relaxed theme in the major which in normal circumstances would have furnished the exposition's second subject. The melodic postponement is of a kind that Mozart had used on a few occasions (the 'Hunt' quartet K.458 and the piano trio K.502 provide familiar examples), but its use here is unique in Beethoven. His new theme occupies by far the greater portion of the development section, with the main subject's characteristic rhythm reappearing only shortly before the onset of the recapitulation.

The shadow of Mozart can also be detected in the 'rocketing' main subject of the first movement, which seems to recall the theme of the finale from the great G minor Symphony No. 40. Beethoven had, however, already used a similar theme for the opening Allegro of one in a series of three piano quartets he had composed at the age of fifteen, at the time when he was still living in Bonn. The sonata's slow movement is nostalgic enough for its entire

first stage to be based on the Adagio from another of those early piano quartets. (Material from the same work also found its way into the opening Allegro of the last of the Op. 2 sonatas.) This first slow movement of the set may lack the breadth and originality of the corresponding piece in the companion works, but it provides the ideal foil to the agitation of the movements that surround it.

None of the Op. 2 sonatas begins in a more disconcerting manner than the second work of the set, in A major. The irregular phrase-lengths and jagged rhythmic shape of its opening bars, and a determined refusal to carry any idea through to its natural conclusion before the next one comes tumbling in, are features that show Beethoven's early style at its most forward-looking. Even more audacious than the fragmentary opening theme is the developmental passage which immediately follows – an extraordinarily unstable moment for so early a stage in the piece. Here, a long rallentando presages an unexpected plunge into the minor, and an expressive melody that modulates continually. The new melody's off-beat accents, combined with a chromatically rising bass line, serve to wind up the tension until a climax is reached with the dramatic interjection of the main subject's rushing scale figure. The dissonant harmony of this climax is resolved only with the turn to the major for the closing subject – a cascading series of widely spaced arpeggios for the right hand. Beethoven provided his own fingering for this passage, designed not only for a large hand, but also with the narrower keys of the pianos of his day in mind. Nowadays, pianists who value cleanliness play this moment with strategic left-hand assistance.

Not for the faint-hearted, either, is the development section. As so often in Beethoven, it unfolds in two large waves. The first of them has the pianist's right hand keeping up a shimmering accompaniment in the middle register, as though in imitation of tremolando strings, with the left hand, continually crossing over it, playing fragments of the main theme; while the second wave is a notoriously tricky passage featuring another snatch of the theme in wide-skipping triple canon.

Beethoven's marking for the slow movement is 'Largo appassionato', and the adjective indicates the intensity with which the broad main subject is to be played. The theme is written in a four-part texture virtually throughout – almost as though it had been conceived for string quartet. The three upper parts, moreover, are played legato, above a staccato bottom part in imitation of a pizzicato cello. Beethoven was fond of simultaneous contrasting sonorities of this kind: similar textures are to be found in the slow movement of the Op. 7 Sonata, and of the 'Pastoral' Op. 28, among others. The music's passion is largely introverted, though a startling outburst near the close of the piece has the main theme played in full-blooded chords, fortissimo, in the minor. The moment is not dissimilar in effect to the sudden C major explosion in the Adagio of the Sonata Op. 2 No. 3.

The third movement is one of the most graceful of Beethoven's scherzos, though the *fortissimo* chords of its closing bars, written against the prevailing metre, convey the composer's gruff sense of humour. The finale is the first example of a type of elegant rondo that was to make an appearance in several of Beethoven's later sonatas, including the E flat major work Op. 7. Particularly enchanting is the way in which the initial decorative flourish of the rondo theme itself is varied on each return. The theme offers an early instance of Beethoven's mastery of long-range harmonic planning. Its second phrase moves 'sharpwards', with an emphasis on the note A sharp in the accompaniment. Much later in the piece, in the penultimate reprise of the theme, that same note is replaced by its aural equivalent, B flat, and the music passes effortlessly – and to magical effect – through the distant key of F major. In keeping with the largely intimate character of the movement, Beethoven allows it to die away to a *pianissimo* conclusion at the bottom of the keyboard.

The grandest and most brilliant of the Op. 2 sonatas is the last, in C major. It is a work whose outer movements seem at times to be conceived in orchestral terms, and it's not by chance that both pieces contain a written-out cadenza near the close. The opening Allegro's cadenza is on a large scale, and only once it has run its course does Beethoven reintroduce the figuration in 'broken' double octaves – perhaps the most overtly orchestral sonority of the piece – which had earlier rounded off the exposition.

Beethoven follows his dazzling opening bars with an expressive melody in the minor (its theme is borrowed from one of the youthful piano quartets of 1785), before he introduces the equally tender second subject in the major. Even taken together, however, these afford no more than brief respite before the pyrotechnics resume; and the first stage of the central development section, with its *fortissimo* broken chords sweeping up and down the keyboard, continues the predominantly forceful style.

For his slow movement, Beethoven turns to the radiant key of E major – a change that brings with it a sense of heightened expressiveness. The Adagio's theme is a distant cousin of the opening movement's principal subject, and the relationship between the two is highlighted towards the end of the slow movement, where the theme is given out in a dramatic *fortissimo* which revives the first movement's key of C major. But the main emphasis of the slow movement is placed on its episode in the minor, whose 'rocking' figuration turns out later to form an accompaniment to a wonderfully expressive idea with elongated appoggiaturas which has the pianist's hands constantly crossing over each other.

The scherzo, with its contrapuntal theme, and the fleeting arpeggios of its shadowy trio, has a sting in its tail, in the shape of a surprise coda taking its point of departure from the dropping octave of the scherzo's last bar. The coda ends with a composed fade-out which provides a

transition to the finale – a virtuoso rondo in whose closing bars Beethoven indulges in a witticism which was to become something of a hallmark in the works of his early maturity: the rondo theme suddenly appears as if from afar, and in the 'wrong' key, before the mistake is abruptly corrected in an explosive flurry of activity which brings the curtain down.

CD2

[1]-[3] Piano Sonata No. 23 in F Minor, Op. 57, "Appassionata"
[4] 6 Variations on an Original Theme in F Major, Op. 34
[5]-[7] Piano Sonata No. 9 in E Major, Op. 14, No. 1
[8]-[10] Piano Sonata No. 10 in G Major, Op. 14, No. 2

On 18 October 1802, barely a fortnight after had had penned his famous 'Heiligenstadt Testament', in which he confessed that his deafness had brought him to the brink of suicide, Beethoven wrote to the publishers Breitkopf & Härtel offering them two newly-composed sets of variations which were, he assured them, quite unlike any he had ever composed before. Both, he claimed, were written "in a quite new style and each in an entirely different way.… Each theme in them is treated independently and in a wholly different manner. As a rule I only hear of it from others when I have new ideas, since I never know it myself; but this time – I myself can assure you that in both works the style is quite new for me."

Beethoven's insistence on the novelty-value of the two variation-sets was no mere piece of salesmanship: both show a wilful determination to be original from the very outset. In the 'Eroica' set Op. 35 three variations on the skeletal bass-line of the theme run their course before the melody itself is heard at all, while the Op. 34 companion-piece throws most of the basic tenets of variation writing out of the window altogether: rather than maintain the same key and tempo for the successive variations, which is the normal procedure in works of the kind, Beethoven presents a series of character-pieces each of which unfolds in a different key, metre and tempo.

The overall plan of the Op. 34 Variations is highly schematic, with their keys describing a descending circle of thirds, from the F major theme itself, through the D major, G major, E flat major and C minor of the following variations. The last of these has a miniature coda which prepares the return of the home key for the concluding variation, before the work comes to an end with an intricately ornamented, and slower, reprise of the theme itself.

While the first variation is an Adagio of the kind we might have expected to hear only towards the end of a set of variations, Variation 2 presents the type of rhythmic transformation traditionally invoked for the coda of a work of the kind. The third variation 3, with its gently flowing quaver motion, presents a strong contrast to the sharply articulated rhythm of its predecessor; while Variation 4 is a gracious minuet. Variation 5 is a C minor funeral march, complete with explosive outbursts in orchestral style – a hint, perhaps, that the 'Eroica' Symphony was on the horizon; while the final variation transforms the theme into a good-natured melody of folk-like simplicity. The full-scale reprise of the theme that follows reaches a climax with a hint of a cadenza, before the elaborate flights of fancy are shrugged off with the simplest of conclusions.

The two sonatas Op. 14, written shortly after the 'Pathétique' Op. 13, were dedicated to Baroness Josephine von Braun, the wife of a prominent businessman and music-lover. Perhaps she was a pianist of no more than modest ability: at any rate, if we disregard the pair of sonatina-like pieces published as Beethoven's Op. 49, the two sonatas Beethoven inscribed to the Baroness are on a considerably smaller scale, and technically less demanding, than any of his previous works of the kind. But for all their unpretentious dimensions, Beethoven expended a good deal of effort on them, as we can see from the many pages of his sketchbooks devoted in particular to ideas for the first of the pair.

The opening theme of the E major Sonata Op. 14 No. 1 unfolds in long notes, punctuated by an accompaniment in 'chugging' chords. When the theme reappears at the start of the recapitulation, the repeated-chord accompaniment is replaced by rushing scales in the left hand. The melody itself is based on a chain of rising fourths – a favourite motif of Beethoven's, and one that was to find its full flowering in the fugue subject of his late sonata Op. 110.

In its overall design, this E major sonata echoes the second of the three sonatas Op. 10, which Beethoven completed shortly before embarking on the Op. 14 pair: three movements, all in the same tonality, with the middle one, in the minor, being a sombre minuet and trio. Following the reprise of the minuet, Beethoven adds a coda in the form of a nostalgic echo of the C major middle section.

The theme of the rondo finale derives much of its character from the dynamic surprise built into its third and fourth bars: a crescendo on a reiterated note, leading to a sudden *piano*. In the sonata's final moments, the surprise is turned back on itself: the theme appears first in a syncopated version, with the crescendo at last followed through to fortissimo; and then in an altogether smoother form which remains *pianissimo* throughout. After that, a final crescendo based on the rondo theme's rapid scale figure brings the work to an abrupt close.

Few of Beethoven's works begin in a more ingratiating manner than the second of the Op. 14 sonatas. The charm and elegance of its main theme are surpassed only by those of its second subject; and even the turn to the

minor at the start of the central development section presages nothing more untoward than a reappearance of the gently rippling second theme. After this, the tension increases, until the music erupts in a series of rushing scales in the right hand; but it isn't until the end of the second movement that Beethoven's innately subversive character makes itself unmistakably felt.

This middle movement is a set of variations on a theme whose wryly understated humour resides in the contrast between the articulation of its staccato first half, and the smooth opening bars of its second half. Following the three variations that make up the bulk of the piece, there is a coda which exaggerates the dryness of the staccato chords by elongating the pauses that separate them. As the chords die away to *pianissimo*, Beethoven shrugs the whole thing off with a single peremptory full-blooded chord, played fortissimo – a joke remembered from Haydn's 'Surprise' Symphony, and one which paves the way for the scherzo finale. It is a gesture that makes the whole house of cards collapse, and from this point onwards nothing can be taken at face-value – indeed, the misshapen phrase-lengths, abrupt silences and sudden twists in harmony of the finale all combine to ensure that the sonata ends in pure farce. In the very last bar, the music threatens to disappear off the bottom of the keyboard, with an unaccompanied phrase that ought by rights to be played by a double-bassoon.

According to Beethoven's pupil Carl Czerny, the composer regarded the F minor sonata Op. 57 as his greatest before the 'Hammerklavier' Op. 106. Czerny's assertion is not hard to believe: the music has an intensity and a dramatic sweep of a kind that were unprecedented. The nickname of 'Appassionata' is not authentic (it first appeared on the title page of a piano duet arrangement of the piece some ten years after Beethoven's death), and Czerny thought, reasonably enough, that it belittled the work's stature.

The mysterious *pianissimo* theme in bare octaves with which the sonata begins immediately establishes the atmosphere of subdued tension that runs through so much of the work. The theme is followed by a dramatic repeated-note rhythmic figure, very similar to the 'fate' motif from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony; but it is only much later, at the approach to the recapitulation, that the full force of its latent energy is unleashed. Here, rapid arpeggios sweep up and down the keyboard, their effect enhanced through a saturation in pedal (twice during the course of this passage, Beethoven urges the player to keep the pedal held), until they reach a low D flat. The bottom note is repeated over and over again, in the rhythm of the 'fate' motif, before it at last resolves down to C. The C is now tapped out, drum-like, and Beethoven introduces a masterstroke of breathtaking originality: the recapitulation of the main theme begins while this C in the bass is still being sounded. The note is dissonant to the theme which unfolds above it, so that rather than relax the tension at the start of the recapitulation, Beethoven is able to maintain the music's sense of restlessness and instability. The sweeping arpeggios return at the end of the recapitulation, and this time, following a long ritardando, the tempo accelerates for a coda in which the music reaches a point of maximum forcefulness. At the end, the piece sinks to an exhausted close, with the final bar containing a rare instance of a *ppp* marking in Beethoven's piano music.

Beethoven's concern to maintain the forward momentum of the sonata's opening movement led him to omit the customary exposition repeat. This was a time when he was experimenting with ways of altering the proportions of the various stages of the sonata design, and the finale again does without a repeat of its exposition. In the finale, however, the combined development and recapitulation are marked to be played twice, and a note in the score at the beginning of the second half of the piece leaves the player in no doubt that the composer's instruction is to be obeyed.

In its serenity and simplicity the slow movement forms an ideal interlude between the turbulence of the outer movements. Beethoven begins this set of variations on a simple, hymn-like theme in the sonorous low register of the keyboard, before progressing gradually upwards as the variations unfold. At its climax, the third and last variation moves in a single rushing scale from the very top of the piano back to the sonority in which the movement began, for a reprise of the theme itself. The resolution of the theme's final cadence is, however, thwarted by the intervention of a mysterious arpeggiated chord. The chord, repeated fortissimo, provides a link to the finale, which begins with the same reiterated harmony. Nor is that stridently dissonant chord finally resolved until the Allegro has been under way for fully twenty bars.

The finale itself unfolds in a continuous swirl of semiquaver motion. Unlike the opening movement, which contained a broad, if short-lived, second subject in the major based on the same rhythm as the main subject, the finale's use of the minor is unrelieved. Following the repeat of its second half, the music accelerates for a 'presto' coda in whose helter-skelter closing pages the main theme assumes a new degree of vehemence. This time, there is no fading away into the distance, as the music hurtles inexorably towards a conclusion of overwhelming force.

CD 3

[1] Fantasia in G Minor, Op. 77
[2]-[5] Piano Sonata No. 13 in E-Flat Major, Op. 27, No. 1, "Quasi una fantasia"
[6]-[8] Piano Sonata No. 14 in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 27, No. 2, "Moonlight"
[9]-[11] Piano Sonata No. 28 in A Major, Op. 101
[12] Bagatelle in A Minor, WoO. 59, "Für Elise"

During his earlier years, Beethoven's powers of improvisation were legendary. As Czerny later recalled: "His improvisation was most brilliant and striking. In whatever company he might chance to be, he knew how to produce such an effect upon every hearer that frequently not an eye remained dry, while many would break out into loud sobs; for there was something wonderful in his expression in addition to the beauty and originality of his ideas and his spirited style of rendering them. After ending an improvisation of this kind he would burst into loud laughter and mock his listeners for the emotion he had caused in them. 'You are fools!', he would say."

Beethoven's improvisatory style is reflected not only in the cadenzas he supplied for his own piano concertos and for Mozart's famous D minor Concerto K.466, but also in his free fantasias and smaller sets of variations. It was common practice in Beethoven's day – as it had been in Mozart's – for a composer skilled in the art of improvisation to include a demonstration of his powers when putting on a concert of his own music. On 22 December 1808 Beethoven presented a marathon programme in Vienna that contained not only the first performances of his Fifth and Sixth Symphonies and the Fourth Piano Concerto, but also a fantasia for piano solo, and – designed as the grand climax to the evening's entertainment – a Fantasy for piano, soloists, chorus and orchestra. The last of these items, the 'Choral' Fantasy Op. 80, itself began with a piano improvisation which Beethoven wrote down only after the event, when the piece was published; and perhaps he made use of the contents of the solo piano fantasia he had played earlier in the evening when he came to compose his Fantasy Op. 77 the following year.

No piece of Beethoven affords a more vivid picture of what his improvisations must have been like than this one. Its first half presents a bewildering succession of musical fragments in contrasting moods, punctuated by rushing scales or arpeggios – almost as though the individual pages of music were being violently torn off. One of those fragments consists of a series of 'sighing' two-note phrases forming an expressive melody that is broken off before it can establish itself; another, of a simple folk-like tune that likewise disintegrates before our ears; and a third, of a stormy episode in the minor. The Fantasy's latter half is a more orderly affair, consisting of a set of variations on a short theme in the luminous key of B major. The final variation introduces descending scale-fragments, so that the ensuing return of the scales from the Fantasy's beginning draws the various threads of the piece together.

The two sonatas Op. 27 appeared in 1801, with a title-page describing each of them as being 'quasi una fantasia'. The qualification indicates the freedom with which Beethoven was treating the traditional sonata design – freedom as regards not only the sequence of movements, but also their open-ended nature. In the first work of the pair each movement is joined to the next, so that the sonata plays continuously from start to finish. Moreover, like Beethoven's previous sonata, Op. 26, it contains no movement in sonata form. This is, indeed, one of the most experimental of the composer's middle-period works: not for a further 15 years, with the song cycle 'An die ferne Geliebte', the piano sonatas Opp. 101 and 110, and the C major cello sonata Op. 102 No. 1, was he to explore similar ideas of continuity and cyclic form again.

The sonata Op. 27 No. 1 begins in an atmosphere of childlike innocence, with a simple theme whose initial falling melodic interval is to assume considerable importance in the finale. Beethoven actually presents two successive themes in the home key, both of them cadencing obstinately into the tonic at the end of each half. Even the momentary turn to the luminous key of C major at the start of the second theme's latter half does little to prepare the listener for the violence of the contrast which occurs in the movement's C major central episode. The contrast is one of both tempo and metre: from a gentle Andante, the music explodes into a wholly unprepared Allegro; and here, at last, Beethoven presents a theme which lends the music a more 'open' character. The whole of this opening movement sounds as though it could have originated in an improvisation.

The second movement is a C minor scherzo, with a trio whose quiet staccato left hand chords seem to look forward to the orchestral palette of the 'Eroica' Symphony. As for the Adagio – the sonata's still centre – it shares the mood and key of the A flat major slow movement from the 'Pathétique' sonata Op. 13, to the point of similarly providing the reprise of its theme with an inner accompaniment in smooth semiquavers. The piece itself is too substantial to function as a mere transition between the scherzo and the rondo finale, but at the same time not sufficiently worked out to stand as a slow movement in its own right. The main weight of the work as a whole is, in fact, borne by the finale, whose central episode seizes on the rondo theme's initial falling interval, working it into a powerful development. The same melodic interval dominates the presto coda, too – though not before the slow movement's theme has made a brief return in its original tempo and, this time, in the sonata's home key.

It was the poet and music critic Ludwig Rellstab who described the famous opening

movement of the second Op. 27 sonata as evoking "a boat, visiting, by moonlight, the primitive landscapes of Lake Lucerne". Rellstab would no doubt have been happier to think that he owed his immortality not to the irrelevant nickname that has attached itself to this sonata ever since, but to the nine settings of his poems made by Schubert. (They include the first seven songs of the 'Schwanengesang' cycle.) All the same, for Czerny, writing before Rellstab had penned his ingenuous phrase, Beethoven's opening movement also suggested a nocturnal landscape. The piece, said Czerny, was a "night scene, in which the voice of a complaining spirit is heard at a distance".

The 'Moonlight' sonata gave rise to further Romantic associations during the 19th century through its dedication to Giulietta Guicciardi, who for some time was thought to have been Beethoven's 'Immortal Beloved'. She was his piano pupil around the time the Op. 27 sonatas were composed, and in a letter of November 1801 to his doctor friend Franz Wegeler, Beethoven revealed that the immense sense of loneliness his deafness had caused him was alleviated by "a dear fascinating girl who loves me and whom I love". This may well have been Guicciardi, who was then a girl of seventeen. However, two years later she married Count Gallenberg, and the couple went to live in Italy.

The design of a piano sonata consisting of slow movement, minuet and quick finale is one that Mozart had carried out on more than one occasion, but the single, sustained mood of Beethoven's first movement, almost entirely played *pianissimo*, is wholly original. The movement bears the direction, *Si deve suonare tutto questo pezzo delicatissimamente e senza sordino*. ("'The whole of this piece must be played extremely delicately and without dampers.") 'Senza sordino' was Beethoven's habitual marking at this stage for the use of the sustaining pedal, but there has been much speculation as to how liberally he wanted the player to raise the dampers in this piece. It is true that Beethoven relished the sound of blurred harmonies: we need only think of the notoriously nebulous sonorities in the rondo theme of the 'Waldstein' sonata, which was written after the composer had both simplified his pedal notation, and made it more accurate. At the time of the 'Moonlight' sonata, on the other hand, his cumbersome method would not have allowed him, even if he had wanted to do so, to indicate the type of 'down-up-down' pedalling, sometimes involving a change of pedal on each beat of the bar, that we find in the music of Chopin. It is possible, then, that the heading in the 'Moonlight' sonata's opening movement signifies simply that the pianist is to make liberal use of the pedal throughout, and that Czerny's advice, that "the prescribed pedal must be re-employed at each note in the bass", reflects Beethoven's intentions.

Liszt aptly described the sonata's minuet-like central interlude as "a flower between two abysses". The finale, indeed, is an abyss of terrifying depth – an unrelentingly dramatic and agitated piece, whose coda, with its 'strummed' chords sweeping up the keyboard, reaches new heights of turbulence. Not until the 'Apassionata' sonata did Beethoven write a finale of comparable tragic intensity.

None of Beethoven's sonatas exerted a stronger influence on later 19th-century composers of the romantic generation than Op. 101 in A major, with its cyclic form and its quiet opening bars which impart the effect of music beginning in midstream. Mendelssohn lovingly modelled his fine E major sonata Op. 6 on Beethoven's work; Wagner cited its opening movement as an ideal example of 'unending melody'; and Schumann was captivated by its march-like second movement – the prototype of the middle movement of his own Fantasy Op. 17, and of the finale of his Etudes symphoniques Op. 13.

The magical beginning of Beethoven's sonata, as though with the answer to some suppressed statement, is one that enables him later in the piece to allow the recapitulation to steal in unannounced, as part of a continuing musical sequence. So much *in medias res* does the work begin that the tonic chord of A major is not sounded at all until more than two-thirds of the way through the opening movement. Beethoven is able to capitalise on his off-tonic beginning much later in the sonata, at the point where the opening theme makes a return, to form a transition to the finale.

That later reprise of the sonata's opening bars follows a slow movement – a slow introduction to the finale would be a more accurate description – which is one of Beethoven's great tragic pages: an ornate, deeply felt aria in the key of A minor which culminates in a chain of world-weary, slowly descending chords which eventually resolves onto the chord of E major. The sound of E major is then prolonged by means of a cadenza which dissolves into the opening chord of the first movement's theme. The reminiscence is one that seems to come from afar: gone is the 'hairpin' crescendo and diminuendo of its opening phrase, and in its place stands the word 'dolce'. (The preceding slow introduction had been played *una corda* – i.e. with the soft pedal – and the pedal had been lifted gradually during the final notes of the cadenza. The Italian inscription over the start of the reprise of the first movement's theme reads, *tutto il Cembalo, ma piano*.) Moreover, the melody's phrases are now separated by silences, and its final falling phrase is repeated over and over again in a crescendo which provides a link to the exultant finale itself. Why this insistence on that tiny phrase? Its three descending notes clearly foreshadow the main theme of the finale itself; and so Beethoven unifies the entire sonata by using its opening theme as a pivot, glancing simultaneously back and forwards.

The finale's central development section is written in the style of a fugue. Its intricate writing reaches a powerful climax with the left hand firmly anchored on a bottom E. This note was lower than any Beethoven had previously used in his piano music, and in view of the large number of ledger-lines involved in its notation, he instructed the publisher, Tobias Haslinger,

to print the names of the notes next to the left-hand chords. Haslinger, however, went no further than to place the inscription 'Contra E' beneath the first chord. The passage presents a series of dissonant chords resolving onto a long E major arpeggio which ascends the whole length of the keyboard. It is out of this long-spun arpeggio that the recapitulation emerges.

The finale contains further elements which serve to unify the work as a whole. Its second subject is in the style of a march, complete with the sound of distant horns, which may already remind us of the sonata's middle movement; and in the coda Beethoven makes a momentary but startling plunge into F major – the second movement's key. That key, together with the full-blooded sonority of the march itself, had come as a profound shock in the second movement, following the radiant calm of the opening movement; while the much leaner texture of the march's trio, given out largely in canon, anticipated the contrapuntal style of the finale.

A mystery surrounds the title by which the most famous among Beethoven's smaller piano pieces has become known. At the time of her death in 1851, the autograph score of the A minor Bagatelle WoO. 59 was owned by Therese Malfatti, who at one stage had been romantically linked to Beethoven. However, when the writer on music Ludwig Nohl published the piece for the first time forty years after Beethoven's death, he maintained that the now lost manuscript bore the inscription "Für Elise am 27. April [1810] zur Erinnerung an L. v. Bthvn." ('As a memento of L. v. Bthvn.') Whether or not Nohl misread the name 'Therese' is not known, but it is likely that the piece was actually intended not for the unidentified Elise, but for Malfatti. Be that as it may, 'Für Elise' remains one of Beethoven's few compositions to have become widely known under the name of its dedicatee. (Besides the 'Waldstein' sonata the others include the 'Kreutzer' violin sonata, the 'Razumovsky' string quartets and the 'Archduke' piano trio.)

CD 4

[1]-[3] Piano Sonata No. 16 in G Major, Op. 31, No. 1
[4]-[6] Piano Sonata No. 17 in D Minor, Op. 31, No. 2, "The Tempest"
[7]-[10] Piano Sonata No. 18 in E-Flat Major, Op. 31, No. 3, "La Chasse"

The three sonatas Op. 31, composed in the latter half of 1802, were written for a series of keyboard works issued by the Zürich publisher Hans Georg Nägeli under the title of *Répertoire des Clavecinistes*. There seems to have been a misunderstanding between Nägeli and Kaspar Karl van Beethoven, who was managing his brother's financial affairs at the time, over the commissioning fee for the new sonatas: rather than gulden, as the publisher had assumed, the amount was to be calculated in ducats, whose value was considerably higher. Nägeli had already envisaged two volumes, or 'suites', of Beethoven sonatas in his collection, and so instead of requesting a reduction in fee he asked the composer to supply an additional work. Since, however, a fourth sonata was not forthcoming, Nägeli published the first two in April 1803, to form the fifth 'suite' of his series, and coupled the third with a reprint of the 'Pathétique' Op. 13 as the eleventh 'suite', in November 1804. By the latter date Nägeli had already sold Op. 31 No. 3 on to the London firm of Clementi, which was the first to publish it. In the event, Beethoven was so angered by the inaccuracy of Nägeli's edition of the first two sonatas that he instructed Ferdinand Ries to send a long list of misprints to the Bonn publisher Nikolaus Simrock, so that he could issue an 'Edition très correcte', which duly appeared in the autumn of 1803.

This was the last occasion on which Beethoven planned any of his piano sonatas as a single contrasted group, rather than for individual publication, and like his two previous sets of three sonatas, Op. 2 and Op. 10, it includes a turbulent work in the minor. The D minor middle work of the set, the so-called 'Tempest' sonata, has remained by far the most famous of the three, but the outer panels of the triptych, if conspicuously less dramatic, are no less original – indeed, beneath its almost flippant surface, the opening movement of the G major first sonata carries out an experiment that was to have far-reaching consequences on Beethoven's later style: its second subject is given out not in the traditional closely related key, but in a more distant B major, and the exposition thereafter wavers continually between B major and minor. The choice of such a key as a form of expressively enhanced substitute for a more orthodox scheme was one to which Beethoven was to return with increasing frequency in later years: the 'Waldstein' and 'Hammerklavier' Sonatas, the 'Archduke' Piano Trio and the Ninth Symphony offer familiar examples.

The wit of the first movement in the G major Sonata Op. 31 No. 1 lies in an apparent lack of synchronisation between the pianist's hands. The anticipation of the upper line by the bass, either for expressive purposes, or for emphasis, may have been a commonplace feature of performance practice, but in Op. 31 No. 1 Beethoven does the reverse, and has the left hand lagging unsettlingly behind the right. In order to throw the joke into relief, he has the jagged main subject followed by three poker-faced, perfectly synchronised chords, before restating the entire opening paragraph in F major. This striking shift of key downwards by a whole tone at a very early stage is one Beethoven was to invoke again in the 'Waldstein' sonata's first movement.

There is something decidedly humorous, too, in the obstinacy with which the main subject insists on appearing again and again, and always at the same pitch, during the course of the piece. It pops up not only in the bars leading to the second subject, but also at the

start of the central development section. This last occurrence means that if the player has observed the exposition repeat, the theme by this stage has already been heard in its original form no fewer than five times. The final bars descend into pure farce: after repeated attempts to bring the piece to a close, a fortissimo cadence at last provides as firm a conclusion as one could wish – except that Beethoven cannot resist adding a lamely apologetic post-echo in which no pianist should fail to have his audience smiling, if not actually laughing out loud.

Behind the slow movement lies the notion of an extravagantly elaborate operatic aria. But for all its lightness and grace, the piece is not without its serious side, and its central episode lends it genuinely symphonic weight and breadth. The final reprise applies its ornamentation not to the melody, which remains more or less at it was, but to the accompaniment. On the other hand, the brief cadenza which had earlier presaged the theme's first return is now replaced with a far more extravagant improvisatory flight of fancy.

The final rondo is a piece of considerable charm, and scored with exquisite transparency. Both its form and its keyboard textures exerted an influence on Schubert, who dressed them in new – and even more resplendent – clothes in the finale of his late A major Sonata D.959.

The nickname of 'The Tempest' attached to the second of the Op. 31 sonatas is only marginally less meaningless than that of 'Moonlight' associated with Op. 27 No. 2. It arose from a reminiscence by Beethoven's secretary Anton Felix Schindler, to the effect that when he asked the composer the 'meaning' of this work, and of the F minor Sonata Op. 57, the reply had been "Just read Shakespeare's 'Tempest'". By the time Schindler printed the anecdote in his Beethoven biography, more than thirty years after the composer's death, the Op. 57 sonata had already acquired the title of 'Apassionata', so the allusion to Shakespeare's play has been associated only with Op. 31 No. 2. Schindler's anecdote is almost certainly apocryphal, but D minor seems nevertheless to have been Beethoven's Shakespearean key. The slow movement of the string quartet Op. 18 No. 1 (inspired by the scene in the vault from *Romeo and Juliet*) is in D minor, as is the famous Largo of the 'Ghost' Trio Op. 70 No. 1, which was sketched alongside ideas for a projected opera on *Macbeth*.

Beethoven composed only two large-scale works in D minor: this piano sonata, and the Ninth Symphony. Despite being separated by more than two decades, they have one or two features in common. In particular both begin mysteriously, with the music not centred firmly in the home key. Moreover, two passages of recitative startlingly introduced in the recapitulation of the sonata's opening movement have distinct similarities with the famous moment of recitative with which the baritone soloist makes his first entry in the symphony's finale.

The notion of beginning a sonata with a fourfold alternation between diametrically opposed tempi – 'Largo' for the slowly rising arpeggio which presages an important theme still to come, and an agitated Allegro for the panting two-note phrases that immediately follow – was entirely novel. The opening paragraph ends with the music left hanging in mid-air, before Beethoven invokes a startling switch of key for the second 'Largo' passage. After this, the tension is built up gradually, enabling the main theme – an accelerated version of the rising arpeggio idea – to explode with force in the home key.

The two passages of recitative which punctuate the start of the recapitulation do more than introduce an additional air of theatricality to the proceedings – they bind together the two apparently disparate elements of the sonata's opening bars. Absorbed into the recitative's melodic contour is not only the rising arpeggio, but also the descending scale pattern of the Allegro's breathless two-note figure. The recitatives are bathed in sustaining pedal, making them sound as though they come from afar.

Much of the opening movement's intensity arises from the fact that virtually the entire piece unfolds in the minor: even the exposition's second half avoids the traditional contrast of a major key. The same plan is found in the finale; and according to Czerny the constant motion of the latter piece was suggested to the composer by the movement of a horse. "Beethoven", Czerny claimed, "extemporised the theme as he once saw a horseman gallop by his window. Many of his best works were produced under similar circumstances. With him, every sound, every motion was music and rhythm." Nevertheless, the idea of basing an entire piece on a continuous flow of semiquavers is one that is found again in the finale of the F major sonata Op. 54, and – more spectacularly – that of the 'Apassionata' Op. 57. Beethoven's tempo indication of a gentle 'Allegretto' for the finale of Op. 31 No. 2 seems in any case to belie Czerny's assertion that the piece was inspired by a galloping motion.

If the two outer movements are set entirely in the minor, the central Adagio maintains the use of the major throughout, resulting in a sandwich of 'black' and 'white' pieces of a kind Beethoven had already tried in the 'Moonlight' Sonata. The spread chord with which the slow movement begins seems deliberately to recall the opening of the first movement, and the main theme that follows eventually gives way to a suggestion of distantly menacing drums. The piece as a whole is nevertheless serene enough to provide the necessary repose between the agitated outer movements; and its ingratiatingly minuet-like second theme, although short, seems in itself to afford a resolution of the entire sonata's conflicts. At the end, the drum roll is elongated, to form a series of chiming notes underpinning the closing bars.

The last of the Op. 31 sonatas finds Beethoven making a rare return at this stage of his career to the concept of the grand sonata in four movements. Taken together, its two middle movements present one of his favourite conundrums: each invades the other's territory, to the extent that it becomes impossible to determine where the function of one ends, and that of the other begins. Thus, the second movement has both the key and the form that would be expected for the work's slow movement, while at the same time having the character of a scherzo. The third movement, on the other hand, is a minuet which is broad enough to afford the lyrical relaxation that would otherwise have been supplied by a slow movement. The minuet's trio, with its skipping chords, left a mark on later nineteenth-century composers: Saint-Saëns used it as the basis of a set of variations for two pianos, and Schumann incorporated a very similar passage into the opening movement of his *Faschingsschwank aus Wien*. The 'tripping' staccato texture of Beethoven's scherzo-like second movement, and the manner in which the music ultimately dissolves into thin air, make it a harbinger of the typically delicate scherzo style exploited by Mendelssohn.

Like its two companion works, the Sonata Op. 31 No. 3 has a beginning of utter individuality. Here is further proof, if any such be needed, that Beethoven seems always to have been determined to stamp his personality on his music from the very first note. The sonata is set in motion with a sighing phrase above a sustained discord – one that in jazz circles is known as an 'added sixth' chord. It is an unforgettable opening gesture and because the music begins away from the home key it later enables Beethoven to make the end of the development section overlap with the start of the recapitulation by means of a simple 'dissolve' using the same chord.

A further unusual feature of the opening movement – and one that is shared by the first movement of Sonata Op. 31 No. 1 – is that the development section begins with a further appearance of the main theme in the home key, as though the piece were starting all over again. It was only later, with the finale of the Second and Eighth Symphonies, and the opening movement of the F major 'Razumovsky' String Quartet Op. 59 No. 1 and the Ninth Symphony, that Beethoven carried this procedure to its logical conclusion by allowing the short return of the theme at this point to function as a substitute for the expected repeat of the exposition, which was consequently bypassed.

The finale is a whirlwind tarantella – a close relative of the original finale to the A major Violin Sonata Op. 30 No. 1, which was written around the same time. (Beethoven subsequently transferred the violin piece to his 'Kreutzer' Sonata Op. 47.) These two movements again had a strong influence on Schubert, who appropriated their galloping rhythm for the finale of his 'Death and the Maiden' string quartet, among other pieces.

CD 5

[1]-[4] Piano Sonata No. 11 in B-Flat Major, Op. 22
[5]-[6] Piano Sonata No. 22 in F Major, Op. 54
[7]-[9] Piano Sonata No. 21 in C Major, Op. 53, "Waldstein"
[10] Andante in F Major, WoO. 57, "Andante favori"

Posterity has not always judged the B flat sonata Op. 22 kindly. It is true that some of its material is uncharacteristically four-square, but we should be wary of undervaluing the work, particularly since Beethoven himself seems to have been particularly proud of it. "Die Sonate hat sich gewaschen", was the colloquialism he used to describe it – meaning that it was something new and first-rate.

Of the sonata's four movements, it is the finale that may strike us as the finest – one of those graceful rondos of the kind Beethoven had already cultivated in his A major sonata Op. 2 No. 2, and the lone sonata Op. 7. The chromatic shape of the rondo theme itself is woven into its accompaniment, too, and the whole opening paragraph is rounded off in logical fashion with a rapidly ascending chromatic scale. Through all the intricate elaborations of the theme that occur at each reprise, that scale remains invariable. The minor-mode central episode alternates moments of agitation with passages which develop a more static chordal idea, taken from an earlier stage in the piece, treating it in austere contrapuntal style.

The reiterated figure which begins the sonata in laconic style is like a toy version of the imposing fanfare that was to launch Beethoven's only other sonata in the key of B flat major, the 'Hammerklavier' Op. 106, some seventeen years later. There are further harbingers of the 'Hammerklavier' later in the movement: the chains of descending thirds that form an important subsidiary idea in the exposition's latter half; and the orchestrally-inclined use of powerful 'broken' octaves in the closing stages.

Unlike the first movement, where the reprise mirrors the opening stage of the piece almost exactly, the slow movement has an intricately ornamented recapitulation, and it offers a further striking, if short-lived, surprise in the shape of an excursion into the minor at the approach to the second subject. As in the deeply-felt Largo of the D major sonata Op. 10 No. 3, the development section sets in following a moment of silence, and with an unprepared shift of key. Here, the song-like main subject undergoes a transformation in mood, weighed down with pungent dissonances on the first beat of each successive bar.

Between the slow movement and finale, Beethoven writes a graceful minuet. Its trio, in the minor, casts darker shadows, but they are not of a serious kind. The melodic shape of its 'running' left-hand part is the inverted

form of a figure that runs through the minuet's first half, and at the same time it provides an anticipation of the elegant theme of the rondo to come.

The highly condensed sonata Op. 54, written in the wake of the 'Waldstein' Op. 53, is the most Haydnesque among Beethoven's piano sonatas. The form of the two-movement sonata itself was one Haydn exploited with obvious enthusiasm. In his case, the main weight of the work as a whole was placed firmly on the first movement, which was more often than not a complex fusion of sonata and variation forms. Beethoven followed Haydn's example in his first sonatas to be cast in only two movements, the cello sonatas Op. 5, by making the opening movement by far the more substantial of the two; but his later two-movement sonatas tend either to distribute the weight rather more evenly, as does the sonata Op. 54, or to shift it towards the finale (the late C minor sonata Op. 111).

The opening movement of the Op. 54 sonata juxtaposes two strongly opposing ideas ('Beauty and the Beast' has been one attempt at characterising their contrast): a graceful, minuet-like main theme, and a second subject in the style of a toccata, in powerful double octaves. In the first stage of the piece, it is the latter idea that dominates; though eventually the minuet theme returns, as if to suggest that a repeat of the exposition were about to unfold. The impression of an actual repeat is, however, short-lived, and the remainder of the movement turns out to be partly a variation of its first stage, and partly a further development of its material. At the end, the music sinks to a resigned close, with the rhythm of the toccata subsumed into the serenity of the minuet.

No less original in form is the finale – a two-part invention which unfolds in a continuous stream of semiquavers. The first stage of this sonata form is compressed into the space of a mere twenty bars, after which the piece is once again continually developmental. This time, both sections of the piece are repeated, and a coda in a quicker tempo brings this remarkable and comparatively neglected work to a close.

According to Franz Wegeler, co-author (with Ferdinand Ries) of the earliest biography of Beethoven, Count Waldstein was the first person fully to appreciate the composer's genius. "With Waldstein's help", Wegeler maintained, "the young artist developed the talent for extemporising and improvising variations on a given theme." Whether Beethoven retained undiminished gratitude to the Count during his Viennese years, as Wegeler went on to claim, is more difficult to verify. Waldstein's travels kept him away from the Austrian capital for several years, and there seems to have been little further contact between him and his former protégé.

The sonata which Beethoven dedicated to Waldstein is among the most dazzlingly brilliant of his middle-period works. It is one that exploits a full range of keyboard effects, and it finds Beethoven for the first time in his piano sonatas making use of a keyboard with an extended compass reaching higher than the five-octave range he had had to use thus far.

The 'Waldstein' sonata's opening movement is largely based on the opposition between a toccata-like main subject, characterised by rapid-fire staccato repeated chords, and a broad second theme in the style of a chorale. The juxtaposition is of a kind Beethoven had previously tried in his sonata Op. 7, though the 'Waldstein' brings into play a new element of contrast: the second subject occurs in the radiant, and comparatively distant, key of E major. The remoteness of the chorale theme's key lends it a breadth and expressive serenity it would not otherwise have achieved.

Beethoven first conceived the 'Waldstein' as a large-scale work in three separate movements; but he eventually removed the middle movement (it was issued separately in September 1805, some four months after the sonata, and became so popular that it earned itself the title of 'Andante favori'), and in its place wrote a much more concentrated and dramatic introduction to the finale. Beethoven may well have discarded the original Andante because it was stylistically more backward-looking than the remainder of the work; but the new plan heralded a general move on his part away from the concept of the three-movement sonata, and towards more concentrated designs in which movements tended to be linked together. Of the half-dozen sonatas that immediately followed the 'Waldstein', only the little 'Sonatine' Op. 79 has three self-contained movements. The remainder consist either of two movements only (Opp.54, 78 and 90), or of three movements telescoped into two (the 'Appassionata' Op. 57 and 'Les Adieux' Op. 81a, in both of which the slow movement is joined to the finale).

The introduction which prefaces the 'Waldstein' sonata's rondo ends with a sustained, accented note G – the pitch around which the rondo theme itself is to oscillate. Underpinning that theme is a low C in the left hand, so that the theme's top G is heard almost as an overtone of that bass note. Beethoven's interest in exploiting the piano's resonance is further shown by his pedal markings for the rondo's theme, which instruct the player to hold the sustaining pedal down not only through changes of harmony, but also through alternations between major and minor. Those markings need, perhaps, to be interpreted with some caution, particularly on a modern concert grand, but it is nevertheless clear that a certain degree of harmonic blurring was crucial to Beethoven's conception of the music.

An even more ethereal sonority seems to be indicated in the *prestissimo* coda, where similar pedal markings accompany an appearance of the theme shrouded in trills. And as if those trills were not enough, the coda brings an additional virtuoso device into play: *pianissimo* glissandos in octaves for the two hands moving in opposite directions. The effect would have been a good deal easier to bring off on the pianos of Beethoven's day, with

their narrower keys and shallower action. On a modern instrument, it is much harder to play the passage without a discreet redistribution of notes between the hands. In the final bars Beethoven sets the piano's strings in vibration one last time, with a triumphant series of fanfares. This time, there is no change of harmony, and the player can confidently leave the pedal down, as indicated, throughout the concluding fifteen bars.

The 'Waldstein' sonata was not the only occasion on which Beethoven radically altered the nature of an already completed work by replacing one of its movements: the finale of the A major violin sonata Op. 30 No. 1 was removed, and found a new home in the hastily-composed 'Kreutzer' Sonata Op. 47; and in the last year of his life, Beethoven yielded to a request from the publisher and original performers of his string quartet Op. 130, and supplied a new piece to replace the immensely demanding fugal finale. In the case of the 'Waldstein' sonata's original slow movement, Beethoven had it published separately in 1803, and it was after it was reissued two years later that it acquired the nickname of 'Andante favori'.

Besides its stylistic incongruousness, Beethoven may have been prompted to replace the 'Andante favori' because its inclusion would have resulted in two rondos placed side by side. A memorable feature of the Andante's theme is that it incorporates a composed fade-out which makes way for the sound of distant horns. In the various reprises of the theme during the course of the piece, the left-hand part becomes increasingly intricate – an idea that is counteracted in the abridged final return, where a moment of stasis ushers in an elaborate coda in which the music finds its rest over a long pedal-note deep in the bass, allowing the piano to resonate with the aid of the sustaining pedal – as it so often does in the sonata's finale. Of the rondo's two intervening episodes, the first is graceful and balletic, while the second, featuring 'running' octaves, is more energetic.

CD6

[1] 15 Variations and a Fugue on an Original Theme in E-Flat Major, Op. 35, "Eroica Variations"
[2]-[5] Piano Sonata No. 12 in A-Flat Major, Op. 26, "Funeral March"
[6]-[8] Piano Sonata No. 26 in E-Flat Major, Op. 81a, "Les adieux"

The works Beethoven composed in the years 1800-1801 find him determined to explore new approaches to the concept of the piano sonata. That determination is made explicit in the subtitle of the two sonatas Op. 27, which, as we have seen, qualifies the works as being 'quasi una fantasia'; but if the four discrete movements of the sonata Op. 26 seem to indicate a more orthodox design, closer inspection reveals that not one of those movements is actually in sonata form. The suggestion that the work consists of a succession of four character pieces is strengthened by the nature of the third movement – a funeral march 'on the death of a hero'. It is true that Mozart's sonata 'Alla Turca' K.331 eschews sonata form, and begins instead, like Beethoven's Op. 26 sonata, with a set of variations; but that is a work in three, rather than four movements. Its unusual design, consisting of slow movement, minuet and finale, is one that finds an echo not in Beethoven's Op. 26, but in the 'Moonlight' Op. 27 No. 2.

The opening variation theme of the Op. 26 sonata is in the same warm, intimate style we find in one or two of Beethoven's other A flat major movements in a moderate tempo. The closest relative of the sonata's theme is the Allegretto third movement from the piano trio Op. 70 No. 2, which begins with the same ascending melodic interval; but there is also the opening 'Moderato' of Beethoven's only remaining sonata in A flat major, Op. 110, where the ascending fourth is again prominent.

Chopin is known to have admired and played the Op. 26 sonata, and it is by no means unlikely that its third movement provided the inspiration for the more famous funeral march in his own B flat minor sonata. Beethoven's funeral march, with its middle section evoking the sound of drum rolls and trumpet fanfares, is plainly orchestral in conception, and some fifteen years later he included an orchestration of the piece in his incidental music to Friedrich Duncker's play 'Leonore Prohaska' – the only example we possess of a piano piece orchestrated by the composer. In an orchestral guise, the march was played at Beethoven's own funeral, on 19 March 1827.

Who is the hero whose death is commemorated in the sonata? According to Ferdinand Ries, the piece was written as a result of the praise Beethoven's friends had lavished on the funeral march in the Homeric *melodramma eroico* 'Achille' by the Italian composer Ferdinando Paer. However, Paer's opera was first performed at the Kärntnertor Theater in Vienna on 6 June 1801, some time after Beethoven had sketched his sonata, so doubt must be cast on Ries's anecdote. Beethoven included another funeral march, inspired this time by Napoleon, in his 'Eroica' Symphony.

Coming as it does between two slow movements, Beethoven's scherzo is appropriately enough the fastest piece of its kind he had written for piano up to this time: an 'Allegro molto' which, for all the comparative calm provided by its smoothly moving trio, goes by like the wind. The finale is an early example of a rondo based on a theme in constant semiquaver motion – a forerunner of the similar pieces to be found in the sonata Op. 54 and – more spectacularly – the 'Appassionata' Op. 57. The motion of Beethoven's piece may have exerted a distant influence on the continuous swirl of triplet

quavers in the finale of Chopin's 'Funeral March' Sonata, though the two pieces could otherwise hardly be more different.

The Variations and Fugue Op. 35 are intimately bound up with the genesis of the 'Eroica' Symphony, whose finale is based on the same theme. Beethoven had previously used the theme in the finale of his ballet score 'The Creatures of Prometheus', and he was to press it into service yet again for a set of orchestral Contredanses (WoO. 14).

Following a grandiosely sustained chord of E flat major (again, we may be reminded of the 'Eroica' Symphony, whose first movement is set in motion with two similarly spaced chords), Beethoven begins the Op. 35 variations in mysterious fashion, by thrusting the *pianissimo* bass line of the as yet unheard theme unceremoniously into the foreground. That bass line sounds comically incomplete – especially at the start of the putative theme's second half, where a sudden repeated-note fortissimo explosion is surrounded by silence.

Having presented his single-line opening, Beethoven gradually begins to piece his material together, writing first a two-stranded variation on the bass-line, then what he labels a three-part version (though only the repeated-note outburst actually brings three voices into play, rather than two) in which the bass-line is heard alternately below and above the accompanying part; and finally a four-part variation with the original bass-line transferred to the top of the texture. Thus it is that before the theme itself has been heard, no fewer than four variations have elapsed.

After so unconventional a beginning, the first few variations following the theme are relatively orderly affairs, but Variation 6 once again displays Beethoven's subversive sense of humour: the theme is presented at its original pitch, but is forced into the straitjacket of the key of C minor. Beethoven manages, nevertheless to join the variation seamlessly on to its successor – a gruff canon in the home key. No less deliberately harsh than the canon is the 13th variation, whose shrieking downbeats, each with its own acciaccaturas ('crushed' notes sounded more or less simultaneously with the main note), obstinately maintain the same pitch. The succeeding variation, in the minor, allows the theme's bass line to steal the limelight once again. Beethoven's intention, no doubt, is to refresh the listener's memory before the onset of the fugue, whose subject consists of the initial four notes of the same idea. But before the fugue arrives there is an elaborate Adagio – in reality, two variations rolled into one, since the quasi-repeat of each half is an intricate variation in itself. The Adagio has its own coda – a return to the earlier C minor harmonisation of the theme, but with the melody now transformed into a funeral march, as though in anticipation of the 'Eroica' symphony's slow movement.

The fugue unfolds in two distinct stages – the first using the four-note bass-line figure in its original form, and the second the same idea in inversion. Each ends with a non-contrapuntal passage presenting the fugue subject in chordal form. The inversion fugue leads to a return of the 'Prometheus' theme in a version of almost tongue-in-cheek simplicity – a winding-down of a kind we meet again in the 'Diabelli' variations, where the climactic fugue is followed by an elegant minuet. The coda presents in effect two further double variations followed by an epilogue in which the music gathers strength for a fortissimo conclusion.

On 10 April 1809, in the face of appalling weather conditions, the ill-organised Austrian army launched an offensive against France's ally Bavaria. Exactly a week later Napoleon himself arrived on the scene, with the clear objective of advancing towards Vienna. The imminent threat of an invasion of the city was all too clear, and already on 20 April Beethoven began a letter to the Leipzig publishers Breitkopf & Härtel with a reference to "the fatal moment that approaches us". Many among the Viennese aristocracy began to make plans to leave, and on 4 May the Empress, Maria Ludovica, departed for Hungary with her retinue. Among the members of the Imperial family accompanying her was Beethoven's most generous patron, Archduke Rudolph, the emperor's youngest brother. When the bombardment of Vienna began, on the night of 11th May, Beethoven took refuge in the cellar of his brother's house, with his head covered with pillows in order to protect his fragile hearing from the noise of cannon fire. The Imperial entourage was absent for the best part of a year, and Beethoven commemorated the occasion with a piano sonata to which he gave the title of 'The Farewell. Vienna, 4th May 1809. On the departure of His Imperial Highness the esteemed Archduke Rudolph.'

The French title of 'Les Adieux' by which Beethoven's sonata has become universally known was used much against his wishes. As he told Breitkopf & Härtel, "'Lebewohl' is something quite different from 'Les Adieux'. The first is said sincerely to one person alone, the latter to whole gatherings, whole towns." Semantics – not to mention unwanted political associations – apart, there was a purely musical reason why the French title was inappropriate: the horn call with which the sonata begins was designed to fit the three syllables of the word 'Lebewohl', and Beethoven wrote them above the opening bars in his autograph. His full title for the work was Lebewohl, Abwesenheit und Wiedersehen. ('Farewell, Absence and Reunion' – though the original French edition rendered the last movement inaccurately as 'Le retour'.) The nationalistic feelings the French invasion of Vienna had reawakened in Beethoven, moreover, led him in the sonata's last two movements to give tempo indications not only in the conventional Italian, but also in German. In his next sonata, Op. 90, composed some four years later, Beethoven did away with Italian indications altogether.

Like Bach, in his early piece called 'Capriccio

on the Departure of a Beloved Brother', the central musical metaphor Beethoven uses in the 'Les Adieux' sonata is the sound of a post-horn, evoking a departing carriage. The horn call which begins the sonata's slow introduction seems like a deep sigh of regret, and its sound is recalled in the following Allegro – most notably in the main second subject. It returns, too, in the coda, where overlapping horn calls which blur the harmony charmingly suggest the echoing sound of a coach receding into the distance.

The melancholy 'Abwesenheit' middle movement functions as an interlude, though the 'dragging' character of its main theme gives the impression of time passing slowly. The finale, which bursts in without a pause, is a piece whose exuberance confronts the pianist with technical difficulties if he wants to combine a feeling of carefree abandon with keyboard accuracy. Despite the speed at the which the music unfolds (*Vivacissimamente* is Beethoven's unusual marking), its concluding page still finds room to transform the main theme into a further nostalgic evocation of post-horn sounds.

This sonata was by no means the first work with which Beethoven indicated his warm feelings towards the most ardent of his aristocratic patrons. He had already dedicated the last two of his piano concertos to the Archduke; and in later years, the works inscribed to him included the 'Archduke' Piano Trio Op. 97, the 'Hammerklavier' Sonata Op. 106 and the C minor Op. 111, the last of Beethoven's ten violin sonatas, Op. 96, the *Missa solemnis* and the string quartet fugue Op. 133 (the original finale of the quartet Op. 130).

CD 7

[1]-[3] Piano Sonata No. 8 in C Minor, Op. 13, "Pathétique"
[4]-[10] 7 Bagatelles, Op. 33
[11]-[12] Piano Sonata No. 27 in E Minor, Op. 90
[13]-[15] Piano Sonata No. 25 in G Major, Op. 79

The famous C minor sonata Op. 13 appeared at the very end of the 18th century, with a title-page announcing it as a 'Grande Sonate Pathétique'. We cannot be sure that the title originated with Beethoven, but he may at least have approved it, and he referred to the sonata by its name in his correspondence on more than one occasion. The work bore a dedication to Beethoven's early patron Prince Karl Lichnowsky, at whose palace the composer's Op. 1 piano trios had first been performed. In 1800, the year after the 'Pathétique' appeared in print, the Prince granted Beethoven an annuity of 600 florins, and in gratitude Beethoven subsequently inscribed his Second Symphony as well as the piano sonata Op. 26 to him.

The 'Pathétique' is the first of Beethoven's piano sonatas to begin with a slow introduction. The introduction is built almost entirely around the rise and fall of its opening phrase, and it may not be purely by chance that the phrase was echoed nearly a hundred years later by Tchaikovsky, in the first movement of his 'Pathétique' Symphony. At the end of his introduction Beethoven ushers in a sweeping chromatic scale which leads seamlessly into the Allegro. The notion of bringing back the Adagio's material at its original slow tempo at crucial points during the course of the Allegro was something new to Beethoven's style, and it heralds the similarly integrated use of a slow introduction we find in the 'Les Adieux' Sonata Op. 81a, and in the composer's late string quartets.

Beethoven begins his Allegro with a staccato theme spiralling upwards above the sound of a pervasive drum roll. In order to maintain the tension for his contrasting second subject, he gives it out still in the minor, and the eventual turn to the major coincides with the arrival of restless 'rocking' figuration, which far from alleviating the music's atmosphere of agitation, serves only to heighten it. Following the abbreviated return of the slow introduction, the development section unfolds virtually throughout to the sound of the main Allegro subject's drum roll, either in the bass, or transferred to the right hand. From this point on, the entire discourse is set in the minor, with the music's continual agitation halted only by the final reappearance of the introduction's initial phrases, now shorn of their assertive initial chord so that they function as an exhausted echo of their former selves.

The sonority of the slow movement's opening bars, with their broad melody above a gently swaying inner voice, is one that was much admired by later composers, and the slow movement of Schubert's own C minor sonata (D.958) was surely modelled on Beethoven's: the two pieces have a similar atmosphere, and in both the reprise of the main theme unfolds over a 'rocking' accompaniment in semiquaver triplets

Sketches for the sonata's finale appear among Beethoven's ideas for his string trios Op. 9, and since those sketches are clearly conceived with the violin in mind, it is possible that the sonata's rondo theme was originally destined for the last of the trios, also in C minor. In the sonata, the central episode unfolds in the nature of a miniature series of variations. As so often with Beethoven, his sketches show him trying to hit on a suitably dramatic way of bringing the piece to a close. That close is effected both in the initial drafts and in the sonata itself by means of a gentle fragment of the rondo theme, followed by a peremptory final cadence.

Throughout his life Beethoven composed what he called 'Kleinigkeiten', or trifles. The collection of seven Bagatelles issued in 1803 as his Op. 33 includes music that goes right back to his early years in Bonn, and in attempting to pinpoint a date for the first piece in the series Beethoven somewhat optimistically assigned it to the year 1782. He would have been a boy of

eleven at the time, and he is unlikely to have sanctioned its publication twenty years later without at least having revised it thoroughly. Perhaps the intricate, improvisatory runs that embellish the main theme – they become more elaborate with each appearance – were a later addition. Certainly, the rushing scale fragments that herald each return of the theme mirror the abrupt style Beethoven cultivated in the mid-1790s.

Several of the Op. 33 Bagatelles are designed in the form of a scherzo, with the trio sometimes appearing twice, and with an elaborate coda rounding the piece off. The spasmodic rhythm of the C major No. 2, with its off-beat accents in the right hand, and timpani thuds in the left, is soon offset by a smooth and shadowy section in the minor, with fleeting left-hand triplets. This, however, turns out not to be the real trio, which, when it arrives, features staccato ascending scales in thirds.

The fifth Bagatelle, again in C major, has lightning-quick semiquaver triplets for both hands which are continued by the left hand beneath the broader melody of the minor-mode middle section. The last piece of the series is a dazzling 'presto' whose staccato repeated thirds in the left hand are contrasted with a passage in smooth arpeggios where Beethoven characteristically instructs the pianist to hold the sustaining pedal down through changes of harmony, creating a blurred effect. At the end, the repeated thirds of the opening bars are expanded into full-blooded chords hammered out in both hands.

The two jewels of the set are the more relaxed and lyrical fourth and sixth numbers. The melody in the first of them is inextricably woven into the two upper strands of the texture; but towards the end of the piece it moves down, first into the bass, and then into the tenor voice. Beethoven wanted the gentle melody of the sixth Bagatelle played with a speech-like quality. Following an embellished version of the melody - in essence a variation - the piece comes to a close with chains of slowly descending thirds above a syncopated pedal-note that moves progressively downwards by octaves, allowing the music to fade away into the distance in pastoral style.

When the Viennese firm of S.A. Steiner announced the publication of the Sonata Op. 90, in June 1815 (it was the first in a long series of the composer's works that was to be issued under their imprint), it did so with a newspaper advertisement claiming that "The appearance of this sonata will surely be most welcome to all connoisseurs and music lovers, since nothing for piano by L. van Beethoven has appeared for several years." Beethoven's previous sonata had in fact been 'Les Adieux', composed some six years earlier.

Like the 'Eroica' Variations Op. 35, the Op. 90 sonata was dedicated to Count Moritz Lichnowsky. According to the composer's one-time secretary, and early biographer, Anton Felix Schindler, the sonata portrayed the love-story of Lichnowsky and his wife, who was a singer. The opening movement, claimed Schindler, was a 'conflict between the head and the heart', and its finale as a 'conversation with the beloved'. Certainly, it would be difficult to imagine a juxtaposition of two more strongly contrasted pieces – the first, melodically fragmented and harmonically restless, and the second, in the major, pure song from beginning to end. That second movement is perhaps the most Schubertian piece Beethoven ever wrote, and it exerted a strong influence on the younger composer. Schubert took Beethoven's rondo as a model not only for the second movement of his own E minor Sonata D.566, of 1817, but also for the fine piano duet Rondo in A major (D.951) written in the last year of his life. In the latter piece, Schubert even preserved the manner in which Beethoven's melody is transferred on its final appearance to the tenor register, so that it may sing with increased warmth and ardour.

The opening movement of the Op. 90 sonata owes its intensity not only to its extreme concentration (despite the brevity of the piece, Beethoven does not ask for its first stage to be repeated), but also to its retention of the minor throughout. The latter feature is one Beethoven had tried on a few previous occasions – notably, as we have seen, in the outer movements of the 'Tempest' sonata Op. 31 No. 2 – but never quite so unsettlingly as here. One feature the opening Allegro does have in common with the concluding rondo is a ritardando a few bars before the close, followed by a laconic ending in the main tempo. In the rondo, the tempo revives only gradually following the ritardando, so that the original speed is not regained until the very last bar

The G major sonata Op. 79 is intimately bound up with Beethoven's dealings with the London-based composer and publisher Muzio Clementi, who, in 1807 travelled to Vienna in order to negotiate directly with the great composer. On 22 April Clementi was able to report back to his business associate Frederick William Collard:

> *'By a little management, and without committing myself, I have at last made a compleat conquest of that haughty beauty, Beethoven; who first began at public places to grin and coquet with me, which of course I took care not to discourage… In short, I agreed with him to take in M.S. three Quartetts, a Symphony, an overture, a concerto for the violin which is beautiful, and which, at my request, he will adapt for the pianoforte with and without additional keys; and a concerto for the Pianoforte: for all which we are to pay him two hundred pounds sterling… I have likewise engaged him to compose 2 sonatas and a Fantasia for the P[iano] Forte, which he is to deliver to our house for sixty pounds sterling (mind I have treated for Pounds, not Guineas).'*

Beethoven composed the two sonatas, Opp.78 & 79 and the Fantasia Op. 77 in the latter half of 1809, and they were published by Clementi on 31 August of the following year. Beethoven's preliminary sketches for the opening movement of Op. 79 are contained in the same book as his drafts for the 'Harp'

String Quartet Op. 74 and the 'Les Adieux' Piano Sonata Op. 81a – a fact which has helped to disprove the once-held notion that the sonata was a considerably earlier work than its publication date would suggest. Certainly, it is stylistically much simpler than the remainder of the music Beethoven composed around the same time, but it was clearly designed from the outset as a piece for beginners. The first sketch for its opening bars shows them in the key of C major, and with the inscription 'Sonate facile'. This was the title that had been used in 1806 for the first edition of Mozart's now famous C major Sonata K.545. The 'Presto alla tedesca' ('in the German style') designation of the Beethoven's first movement looks forward to the 'Alla danza tedesca' third movement, likewise in G major, of his string quartet Op. 130; and it is curious to note that the sonata's opening motif is an exact inversion of the theme in the quartet. Beethoven's sketch for the sonata's initial subject shows it in a dance-like form, consisting of eight bars. In its final version, the theme is more asymmetrical; but the composer appears not to have forgotten his simpler original idea, and he returns to it in the movement's coda, where the melody's regular four-bar phrases are shared between the two hands. Beethoven clearly enjoyed the notion of ending the movement with what sounds for all the world like a contredanse, and he even added acciaccaturas to the melody, as though in imitation of a village band. The central development section is mainly based on the main theme's 'cuckoo-call', involving some rapid crossed-hands gymnastics which belie the 'facile' of Beethoven's title for the sonata.

The middle movement is a melancholy barcarolle in Beethoven's rarely used key of G minor; and the sonata comes to a witty end with a rondo whose theme traces the same harmonic outline as the opening subject of the late sonata Op. 109. Following a central episode which is rather like some miniature 'Rage over a lost penny', Beethoven returns to the rondo theme in the middle of a continuing phrase, so that the listener can register the arrival of the reprise only once it is already under way. It is a witty touch, and one that is matched by the charming effect of the work's gently understated ending.

CD 8

[1]-[4] Piano Sonata No. 29 in B-Flat Major, Op. 106, "Hammerklavier"
[5]-[10] 6 Bagatelles, Op. 126

The 'Hammerklavier' Sonata was Beethoven's main creative preoccupation during the latter half of the year 1817 and the greater part of 1818. It is a work written on a scale such as to dwarf any pre-existing work of its kind, and it marks the start of a whole series of monumental compositions, each of which evolved over a number of years. The Ninth Symphony, the *Missa solemnis*, the 'Diabelli' Variations, the string quartets Opp.130-132 – all these works, composed at a time when Beethoven was profoundly deaf, are conceived on an unprecedentedly large canvas.

Beethoven composed the 'Hammerklavier' sonata in two distinct stages. (The nickname arose out of Beethoven's attempts to replace Italian musical terminology with German equivalents – 'Hammerklavier' being his substitution for 'pianoforte'.) The first two movements were written in 1817, and were intimately bound up with his intention to write a work for the name-day of Archduke Rudolph, which fell on 17 April. Among Beethoven's sketches is a version of the opening movement's main theme, setting the words "Vivat vivat Rudolphus!", together with a comment that it was first to be developed, and then assigned to a four-part chorus. This plan was never followed through, but in 1819 Beethoven wrote to Rudolph:

> *'Two more pieces have added themselves to the two I wrote for Your Imperial Highness's name-day, of which the last is a grand fugato. The whole thing thus makes a grand sonata, which will soon appear, and which has been intended from my heart for a long time for Y.I.H. For this, Y.I.H.'s latest event has been to a not inconsiderable degree responsible.'*

The event in Rudolph's life to which Beethoven refers was his elevation to the position of Archbishop of Olmütz. It was to mark the occasion that Beethoven composed his *Missa Solemnis*; and his remark that the 'Hammerklavier' Sonata had been composed from the heart may remind us of the famous inscription at the head of the 'Kyrie' of the Mass: "From the heart – may it in its turn reach out to hearts!".

Like the original version of the string quartet Op. 130, the 'Hammerklavier' sonata ends with a fugue of colossal proportions. Both pieces strain deliberately against the medium for which they are written, and both make extreme demands on their performers. In the case of the string quartet, Beethoven eventually replaced the fugue with a less difficult finale. Such a substitution would have been unthinkable in the altogether symphonically-conceived 'Hammerklavier' sonata, where the fugue itself is preceded by an introduction offering a gradual awakening from the profound stillness of the slow movement to the contrapuntal style of the finale itself. The juxtaposition of an extended slow movement and a slow introduction to the following movement was itself a highly unusual procedure (though it was one that had been carried out by Mozart in his G minor String Quintet K.516). Beethoven went so far as to suggest to his friend and former pupil Ferdinand Ries, who was living in London at the time, that for the forthcoming English edition of the sonata, which was to appear hard on the heels of its first Viennese publication, the introduction could be omitted, or the order of the two middle movements could be transposed – or even that the first three movements could be issued on their own, with the scherzo functioning as the work's finale (!). In the end, the London edition divided the

work into two separate parts. The first three movements, with the scherzo following the Adagio, were issued as a 'Grand Sonata'; and the finale as an 'Introduction and Fugue'.

While the sonata was at its final proof stage, Beethoven asked Ries to make a change to the slow movement, by adding a bar to its beginning – a slowly rising melodic interval of a third, pre-echoing the falling third with which the melancholy main theme begins. Ries was at first taken aback by the request (more so than by the wholesale butchery of the work that had been sanctioned by the composer?), but then acknowledged that it was a masterstroke, and one that transformed the entire character of the piece. What Ries may not have understood was the degree to which this rising and falling third reflected the melodic and harmonic conception of the work as a whole. If we look at Beethoven's preliminary sketches for the slow introduction to the finale, we see nothing other than a skeleton chain of descending thirds. In the final version, this outline is interrupted by a series of progressively accelerating passages paving the way for the arrival of the fugue; but if we were to remove those interruptions and to join up the series of sustained chords that punctuate them, we would find that they trace the same chain of thirds as shown in the original sketch: F, D flat, B flat, G flat, E flat, B, G sharp, E, C sharp, A. The final note is prolonged in a full-blooded 'prestissimo', until eventually it sinks down a further third, to F, and enables the long, winding fugue subject to enter in the sonata's home key of B flat. The fugue subject itself, moreover, traces the same outline of descending thirds.

Both the opening movement and the slow movement have a development section conceived as a gigantic chain of falling thirds; and as if the sonata's concluding movement were not enough, the first movement's development section treats its fanfare-like main subject as the basis of a fugue, generating a cumulative energy that is only dissipated by a reminiscence of the lyrical second subject, hovering between the distant keys of B major and minor. As for the slow movement, its harmonic structure does little to explain the music's profound calm and beauty. It is, indeed, the longest and surely the most sublime piece of its kind Beethoven ever wrote for piano. If we discount, as we should, the slow movement from one of his very early piano quartets (WoO. 36), it is also Beethoven's only piece in the key of F sharp minor. (Curiously enough, Mozart also wrote no more than a single movement in F sharp minor – the Adagio of the Piano Concerto K.488 – and in so doing likewise produced one of his most infinitely melancholy pieces.) Beethoven's slow movement bears the subheading of 'Appassionato' – a term he used only rarely (it is not to be found in the so-called 'Apassionata' sonata). The 'Hammerklavier' Sonata's Adagio is like some slow-moving, deeply tragic barcarolle; and when, in the recapitulation, Beethoven presents a transfigured version of the main theme replete with ornate filigree work for the right hand, the music seems to stretch its wings out into infinity.

The rising third which Beethoven instructed Ferdinand Ries to insert at the start of the slow movement actually echoes, as though in slow motion, the conclusion of the preceding scherzo. Furthermore, the scherzo itself is like a miniature parody of the sonata's first movement, whose main events it reproduces in drastically condensed form. One of those events is the shape of the fanfare-like 'Rudolphus' theme, with its rising and falling third; another is the conflict between the tonic note of B flat, and dark force of a 'foreign' B natural. In the scherzo's closing bars that foreign note invades the music with force – as though in caricature of the ending of the first movement's exposition, which plays on the same opposition between B flat and B natural. In the opening movement's first-time bars (i.e. the bars that lead back to the beginning, for the repeat), the music alights on the note B flat; but when the same moment is reached the second time, as a transition forwards into the development, the identical phrase culminates instead on B natural. Even more striking is the start of the recapitulation, where the main theme is suddenly catapulted into B minor, a key Beethoven thought of as 'black'.

Just as Beethoven described the string quartet Fugue Op. 133 – the original finale of Op. 130 – as 'Tantôt libre, tantôt recherchée' ('at times free, at times rigorous) so the finale of the 'Hammerklavier' carried its own disclaimer: 'Fuga a tre voci, con alcune licenze' ('three-part fugue with a few liberties'). Despite the admission that it departs occasionally from rigorous fugal style, the sonata's finale runs the whole gamut of contrapuntal techniques, including inversion and retrograde motion. Like the string quartet fugue, the piece is constructed as a series of fugal variations; and towards the end, as a moment of stasis welcome to performer and listeners alike, a calm new theme is introduced. The new theme, it turns out, can be contrapuntally combined with the main fugue subject; and from this point on the music gathers strength again, until it reaches a climax over a long-sustained trill deep in the bass – an expanded form of the trill contained at the start of the fugue subject itself.

In writing his Op. 106 Sonata, Beethoven was, he told Czerny, aiming to produce his greatest work of its kind – one that would, he said, "give pianists something to do" when it was played in 50 years' time. Czerny claimed to have played it through to the composer, but few in the 19th century apart from Hans von Bülow and Liszt (whose interpretation of the slow movement was likened to "an eyewitness of secrets of a world beyond the grave") ventured to perform it in public. Certainly, the work is one that still poses a challenge to both pianists and listeners, but its stature, grandeur and beauty have lost none of their power to overwhelm.

Beethoven's last series of bagatelles, Op. 126 – his farewell to the piano – stands

worlds apart from the grandeur of the 'Hammerklavier' sonata. "Bagatelles? Well, yes! But bagatelles by the Master Beethoven" was how the Leipzig *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* greeted their publication in 1826:

> *'They could perhaps be called significant sketches: inventions and products of a happy hour, casually written down and seemingly without doing more than necessary for their performance than to establish a means of indicating their ideas, and providing each piece with unity, character and thereby effectiveness. These six pieces of varying degrees of brevity contain more that is truly new and individual, whether in melody or harmony, whether in disposition or form, than many an act of an opera.'*

The Berlin *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, which had been founded in 1824 by the influential critic Adolf Bernhard Marx, took an altogether more fanciful view, assigning a specific poetic image to each of the six pieces. The first, for instance, was "an arietta which evokes the feeling that comes over us in spring, when we see an anxious pair of birds in their nest"; while No. 4 brought to mind "mountain dwellers of the Scottish Highlands who, in a powerful B minor dance, rather leap and galumph than dance".

Beethoven is unlikely to have had any truck with such whimsical nonsense. When he offered the pieces to the publishers Schott & Co., together with the 'Consecration of the House' Overture Op. 124, he described them as "Bagatelles or trifles for solo piano, some of which are rather more developed and probably the best pieces of this kind I have written." This is music that already belongs to the spiritual world of the late string quartets Beethoven began composing in its wake.

Unlike the composer's previous sets of Bagatelles, the six new pieces were clearly designed to form a unified cycle. They are alternately lyrical and introspective, and fast and dramatic, with the two threads drawn together in the final number; and their keys form another descending chain of thirds, beginning in G major and minor, and ending in E flat major. Throughout the set, Beethoven treats his material with extraordinary freedom, transforming it through intricate ornamentation, as in No. 3, or by altering its register – whether downwards into the bass (as in Nos.1 and 6), or upwards (No. 5). The final Bagatelle is framed by the same abrupt passage in 'presto' tempo, which serves with impeccable logic as both a beginning and an ending. Between that framework Beethoven unfolds a leisurely and expansive Andante which offers the strongest possible contrast, while at the same time beginning in the nature of a slow-motion account of the material that surrounds it. The reprise of the opening 'presto' seems to dismiss out of hand the profoundly expressive world of the music that has preceded it – a typically gruff gesture, and an altogether appropriate way for Beethoven to bow out as a composer of piano music.

CD 9

[1]-[3] Piano Sonata No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 10, No. 1
[4]-[6] Piano Sonata No. 6 in F Major, Op. 10, No. 2
[7]-[10] Piano Sonata No. 7 in D Major, Op. 10, No. 3
[11] 32 Variations in C Minor, WoO. 80

The three sonatas Op. 10 appeared in September 1798, with a dedication to Beethoven's friend Countess Anna Margarete von Browne. Around the same time as the sonatas, Beethoven inscribed his three string trios Op. 9 to her husband, who was one of his early patrons in Vienna. Among Beethoven's other works dedicated to the Count was the sonata Op. 22.

The first two works of the Op. 10 series find Beethoven departing from the notion of the grand piano sonata in four movements which he had established with the three sonatas of Op. 2 and the lone E flat major sonata Op. 7. Originally, the first of the Op. 10 sonatas was to have had a fourth movement, too – a C minor 'Presto' with trio which remained unpublished until some sixty years after Beethoven's death. He may well have discarded it because its tempo was too similar to that of the sonata's finale. An Allegretto with trio in the same key (WoO. 53) may have been a second attempt at providing an additional movement for the sonata, though this, too, was rejected.

The first of the Op. 10 sonatas is palpably influenced by Mozart's great sonata in the same key of C minor, K.457. Not only is its 'rocketing' main theme similar to Mozart's, but its central development section likewise begins with a plunge into the tonic major, bringing with it a dramatic transformation of the same subject. Beethoven, however, continues to develop his material during the course of the recapitulation, presenting his second subject in the key of F major, before it is heard again in the tonic minor. (We will meet a more drastic use of a 'wrong' key in the opening movement of Op. 10 No. 2.)

It is possible, too, that the inconclusive ending of Beethoven's finale was inspired by the mysterious closing bars of Mozart's first movement, though he had allowed both his previous C minor works – the piano trio Op. 1 No. 3 and the string trio Op. 9 No. 3 – to culminate in a similar fade-out in the major. If we want to find a direct model for this startlingly effective dramatic gesture, we should look not so much to Mozart, as to Haydn. Haydn's six string quartets Op. 20 were well known to Beethoven, who copied out movements from them for his own instruction. The G minor quartet Op. 20 No. 3 ultimately dies away in a manner strikingly similar to that of Beethoven's early C minor finales.

As in several of Beethoven's C minor works (the Fifth Symphony and 'Pathétique' sonata provide familiar instances), the turbulence of the outer movements is counterbalanced by

a serene slow movement in the key of A flat major. For all its profound sense of calm it is an intricately ornamented piece, and its moment of greatest repose is afforded by a coda through which runs a syncopated, throbbing inner voice. Like the Adagio of the 'Pathétique', the music eventually sinks to a close in the keyboard's lowest register.

The subdued tension of the finale's main theme is altogether characteristic of Beethoven's C minor manner. Even more typical are the explosive bars immediately preceding the recapitulation, which strikingly anticipate the 'fate' motif from the Fifth Symphony. Curiously enough, Czerny cited this movement, rather than the finale of either of the two companion works from Op. 10, as an example of the composer's 'fantastical humour'. Czerny may have been thinking of such moments as the unprepared switch of key between the first and second subjects, the explosive 'wrong' chord interpolated during the exposition's closing bars, or the lingering appearance of the second subject in a remote key during the coda.

Despite Czerny's observation, if we want to find evidence of Beethoven's sense of humour we should look not to the finale of the first work in the Op. 10 series, but to the middle sonata of the group, which is one of the most compact and wittiest of all the composer's works of the kind. As in the sonata Op. 14 No. 1, there is no room for a real slow movement, and the minor-mode Allegretto that takes the place of such a piece is written in the form of a minuet and trio. The trio itself is of great expressive beauty, and the da capo is unexpectedly expanded to allow for a new, syncopated version of the minuet.

The opening movement's first subject contains two strongly contrasted elements: two pairs of staccato chords punctuated by a halting turn-like figure, and a smooth, more lyrical idea. All the same, this first stage of the piece is so brief as to permit the much broader second group to appear after only eighteen bars. Beethoven humorously bases the greater part of the development section on the exposition's final three detached notes, conjuring up a mock storm or two on the way; but the most startling event in the piece is the start of the recapitulation. Here, Beethoven highlights the opposition between the principal subject's two components by presenting them in different keys: the initial idea appears in the 'wrong' key of D major, before its more relaxed second limb is heard again in the tonic. The sound of D major is recalled immediately before the recapitulation in the finale.

For all the first movement's brevity, it is on a much larger scale than the finale, whose entire sonata-form exposition occupies no more than 32 bars of two beats each. Its tiny main subject is written in mock fugal style; and as if to poke fun at the dry academic counterpoint of his former teacher Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, Beethoven gives the fugal entries in the wrong order: two in the tonic, followed by one in the dominant. (The normal procedure is to alternate tonic and dominant entries.) In compensation for the exposition's comical abruptness there is a considerably expanded recapitulation; but the piece as a whole remains essentially a light-hearted miniature, and the main weight of the Op. 10 sonatas is reserved for the last work in the series.

The sonata Op. 10 No. 3 is, indeed, on an altogether grander scale than its companions. Its main expressive weight is carried by its D minor slow movement – one of the great tragic utterances in Beethoven's earlier music. Its heading of *mesto* ('sad') is one that he was to use on only a single further occasion, and that again for a piece of infinite melancholy – the slow movement of the F major 'Razumovsky' string quartet Op. 59 No. 1. The sonata's slow movement also shares something of the mood of another D minor piece, the slow movement from the quartet Op. 18 No. 1. Both pieces rise to a climax of shattering intensity towards their close, before ultimately sinking with a sense of exhaustion to a resigned conclusion. In the sonata, the main theme unfolds over long-sustained chords deep in the bass, as though the melody were weighed down with grief. The reprise has the theme even more thickly scored, with the harmony more richly varied and the bass echoing the melodic line in dissonant canon. The coda shifts the melody's contour right down into the deepest register of the keyboard, while the right hand has rippling arpeggios, suggesting the sound of a funereal harp. In the final bars the texture thins out, until all that is left at the close is a pair of sighing two-note phrases for the right hand, answered from the depths of the abyss four octaves below by a single reiterated note in the left hand.

The gentle minuet in the major acts as a resolution of the slow movement's tragedy. The trio, with its accompaniment in a constant flow of triplets, is more agitated; but as if anxious to return to the calming influence of the minuet itself, Beethoven cuts the trio short, without presenting its expected second half.

The broad scope of the first movement – alongside the 'Presto alla Tedesca' of the little Op. 79 sonata of 1809, the only opening movement among Beethoven's piano sonatas to carry the tempo marking of 'presto' – is indicated early on by the interpolation of an expansive new melody beginning in the key of B minor. The main subject is given out in bare octaves, and the descending scale fragment formed by its initial four notes permeates the material of the entire piece. The theme's following three notes later form the springboard for the theme of the rondo finale. Once again, we meet with a striking example of Beethoven's wide-ranging harmonic planning: the turn to the minor at the start of the development section is followed by a dramatic plunge into the key of B flat major – a plunge that is echoed at the centre of the witty finale, in an episode whose five-beat phrases are disturbingly out of kilter with the obstinately symmetrical and conventionally shaped left-

hand accompaniment. Quite apart from their deliberate shock-value, moments such as these are Beethoven's means of introducing variety of key into a large-scale work having all four of its movements in D major or minor.

The unusually dramatic set of 32 Variations in C minor (WoO. 80) was composed in 1806 – the year of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto and Fourth Symphony, as well as the 'Razumovsky' string quartets and the Violin Concerto. The very short theme, with its stress on the second beat of the triple-time bar, is in the style of a chaconne with a chromatically descending bass-line, and the variations maintain the chaconne principle by being based strictly on the theme's harmonic outline. In reviewing the piece shortly after it appeared in print, in 1807, the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* likened it to Handel, though its overall design, with a group of variations in the major at their centre, may remind us rather of the famous chaconne from Bach's solo violin Partita in D minor.

The systematic manner in which problems of keyboard technique are explored in Beethoven's first three variations gives the impression that the work may have been intended for pedagogical use. Variation 1 features staccato arpeggios and repeated notes in the right hand; while the second variation transfers them to the left hand, and the third gives the figuration simultaneously to both hands, in contrary motion. Be that as it may, the work as whole is substantial enough to have impressed more than one great composer of a later generation: the theme itself provided the spark for the opening bars of Schubert's late sonata in the same key, D.958, and the cumulative effect of Beethoven's concluding variations clearly left its mark on Mendelssohn's once-popular 'Variations sérieuses'.

CD 10

[1]-[2] Piano Sonata No. 19 in G Minor, Op. 49, No. 1
[3]-[36] 33 Variations on a Waltz by Diabelli, Op. 120,
[37]-[38] Piano Sonata No. 20 in G Major, Op. 49, No. 2

The two miniature sonatas Op. 49 are much earlier than their opus number would suggest. Although they weren't published until 1805, Beethoven had composed them nearly a decade earlier, and a correct chronological sequence would place them between the group of three sonatas Op. 2 and the lone sonata Op. 7. Beethoven himself described the Op. 49 pair as 'easy' sonatas, and they are written in the same pedagogical spirit as Mozart's famous 'Sonate facile' K.545.

The finer of Beethoven's pair is the first, which shares its key with his cello sonata Op. 5 No. 2, composed around the same time. These are the composer's only works in G minor, and both are two-movement works with a finale in the major. (The Fantasy Op. 77, sometimes described as being in G minor may safely be discounted, as no more than its initial two bars are actually in that key. However, there is also the substantial slow introduction to the 'Kakadu' Variations Op. 121a for piano trio which is in a mock-tragic G minor.) The piano sonata's opening movement, an expressive Andante, is so condensed that the transition to the second subject actually begins before the short main theme has run its course. In the recapitulation the entire second subject unfolds in the minor, lending it an unexpectedly plangent character. The closing bars have the music disappearing into piano's bass, and bringing it to rest with the sound of G major.

Although the rondo, too, is in the major, its long first episode is itself a three-part design, with its outer sections in a turbulent G minor enclosing a more relaxed, but thematically related, idea in the major. At the end, the rondo theme is transformed into a lilting idea of rustic charm.

The second sonata is a curiously impersonal piece for Beethoven, with little to distinguish it stylistically from the sonatinas of such lesser composers as Clementi or Diabelli. Beethoven himself seems to have had scant regard for it – at any rate, he uncharacteristically left it almost entirely bereft of dynamic markings. The theme of its minuet-like second movement achieved fame when Beethoven used it again some two years later in his Septet Op. 20, and its brief C major episode fleetingly foreshadows the military style of the Septet's trio section. Beethoven managed to make the minuet's theme perkier in the later work, by sharpening up its 'dotted' rhythm and providing it with an entirely new second half.

The appearance of the 'Diabelli' Variations Op. 120 – Beethoven's last large-scale piano work – was announced in 1823 by its publisher, Anton Diabelli, in a newspaper advertisement which, for all its element of salesmanship, remains a remarkably astute comment on the piece:

> *'We present here to the world variations of no ordinary type, but a grand and important masterpiece. The most original structures and ideas, the boldest musical idioms and harmonies are here exhausted: every pianoforte effect based on a solid technique is employed, and this work is the more interesting through the fact that it is elicited from a theme which no one would otherwise have supposed capable of a working-out of that character in which our exalted Master stands alone among his contemporaries. The splendid fugues, Nos.24 and 32, will astonish all friends and connoisseurs of serious style, as will Nos.6, 16, 17, 23, etc. the brilliant pianists. Indeed all these variations, through the novelty of their ideas, care in working out, and beauty in the most artful of their transitions, will entitle the work to a place beside Sebastian Bach's famous masterpiece in the same form.'*

The masterpiece by Bach to which Diabelli alludes is the 'Goldberg' Variations – a work that was well known to Beethoven, who was a subscriber to the collected edition of Bach's keyboard music published in Leipzig by the firm of Hoffmeister & Kühnel. The 'Goldberg' Variations had appeared in that edition in 1803, though they had been in print ever since Bach himself published them as the fourth part of his *Clavierübung* in 1742. In addition to their sheer scale, there are features of the 'Diabelli' Variations that seem to draw inspiration from Bach's example. In particular, their expressive high-point is the tragic arioso of Variation 31 –- an intricately ornamented piece that recalls the famous minor-mode twenty-fifth variation from the 'Goldberg' set. That variation in the Beethoven is followed by a large-scale fugue – another glance over the shoulder to Bach; and just as Bach's work unexpectedly winds down following the progressive brilliance of what we might have expected to form its final group of variations – first with a witty 'Quodlibet', and then with a reprise of the aria-like initial theme – so the 'Diabelli' Variations offer a surprisingly calm conclusion after their fugue, with a graceful coda in the style of a minuet.

The origin of Beethoven's 'Diabelli' Variations was as mundane as it was curious. Early in 1819 the publisher and composer Anton Diabelli wrote to the fifty most prominent musicians in Austria, enclosing a simple waltz tune he had written, and asking each to contribute a variation on it to a collective work that would form a picture of contemporary musical life in the country – or what Diabelli called a "National Artists' Society". As a publicity stunt, the idea clearly had its value, though its artistic merit was more questionable. Be that as it may, the project took several years to come to fruition, and among the fifty composers who eventually responded were Schubert, with a characteristically melancholy variation in the minor; and, in 1822, the 11-year-old Liszt, who was studying in Vienna at the time.

Not surprisingly, Beethoven was among the first to be approached by Diabelli. Legend has it that the great composer was dismissive of Diabelli's waltz, and at first refused to have anything to do with it, but in fact he had always been attracted by the challenge of building large edifices out of seemingly inconsequential material, and he set to work almost immediately not just on the commissioned single variation, but on a work of much larger dimensions. Two-thirds of his own 'Diabelli' Variations were sketched out in 1819, before he laid the project aside in order to start work on his *Missa solemnis*. By the time he returned to the variations, towards the end of 1822, he had completed not only the Mass, but also his three last piano sonatas. The experience of the late sonatas clearly left its mark on those portions of the 'Diabelli' variations that came after them. But more than that, the journey from the trivial to the sublime may be shorter than we imagine, and Diabelli's innocuous little waltz tune, with the simple tonic-dominant harmony of its beginning, and its bass-line descending by the interval of a fourth, from C to G, and then a fifth, D to G, is first cousin to the wonderfully serene 'Arietta' on which the variation finale of Beethoven's last sonata, Op. 111, is based. It is not impossible, in other words, that Beethoven's own theme was sparked off, however subliminally, by Diabelli's. The fact that both pieces are sets of variations in C major creates a still greater rapprochement between them.

It has often been thought that Beethoven contemptuously described Diabelli's theme as a piece of "cobbler's patch", but from the letter in which he used the word "Schusterfleck" it is by no means clear that he intended it to refer to the theme itself. It was when, in 1825, Diabelli reminded him that he had promised to compose a piano duet sonata that Beethoven, who (unlike Schubert!) had never shown much interest in writing four-hands music, sent a wittily sarcastic response:

> *'Honoured Sir! Why should you want yet another sonata from me? You have a whole horde of composers who can do it far better than me. Give each of them a bar, and what a marvellous work can you not expect? Long live this, your Austrian Association which knows how to handle cobbler's patch in masterly fashion.'*

While it is true that in German the term "Schusterfleck" is sometimes used to denote a melody that is excessively reliant on sequential harmony, Beethoven seems to be referring here not to Diabelli's theme, which is in fact very well suited to its purpose, but to the whole process of composing by committee which the publisher's variation venture had represented, and in which Beethoven had so conspicuously refused to take part. It is hardly likely in any case that he would praise his lesser contemporaries, even in sarcastic terms, for their mastery in dealing with the theme when he had shown such incomparable mastery himself in so doing.

When Beethoven picked up the threads of his work in 1823, after a gap of more than three years, he did not simply continue where he had left off previously. Instead, he expanded the variations from within, radically altering both their large-scale design and their character. The interpolations were mainly of two types: variations which reflected Beethoven's interest in Baroque counterpoint, and parodies seemingly designed to increase the overall element of humour. The first of his insertions at this second stage of the work's genesis consisted of what now stand as Variations 1 and 2. The first of the pair is a forceful march whose stentorian rhythm – and considerably more original harmony – deflate Diabelli's waltz tune at a stroke. Just how deliberate Beethoven's gesture was is shown by the fact that his original first variation – Variation 3 in the finished composition – had been a graceful waltz.

According to Carl Czerny, it was Diabelli's pestering of the composer to complete his variations that prompted him to cast one of them (No. 22) as a reworking of Leporello's

'Notte e giorno faticar' ('Slaving away night and day') from *Don Giovanni*. Leporello's aria, with its comically repeated staccato melodic fourths and fifths, chimes in perfectly with Diabelli's less comically intended waltz-tune. Beethoven adds to the humour, first with an abrupt switch of key at the start of the variation's second half; and secondly with a downbeat ending in which the fourths are repeated as if in echo. This ending was an afterthought on Beethoven's part: he had originally allowed the variation to finish with a crescendo in widely-spaced octaves, culminating in a fortissimo note C, but the limp conclusion he added (since he had already written the following variation he had to squeeze it into his manuscript) makes the music much funnier.

Besides the Mozart parody, Beethoven amuses himself – and us – in such moments as Variation 9, where Diabelli's little upbeat phrase, with its strident acciaccatura, is mercilessly lampooned; and in Variation 13, with its grotesquely exaggerated dynamic and textural contrasts punctuated by long silences. For once it is not hard to believe the notoriously unreliable Anton Felix Schindler when he attests to the composer's unusually high spirits as he was working on the variations, which, Schindler reported, "amused him to a rare degree".

As his variations progress, we can only marvel at Beethoven's harmonic inventiveness. There are, indeed, scarcely two variations that approach the concluding cadence of each of the theme's halves from the same direction. Nos.5 and 14 (the latter of them the first slow variation) actually modulate to a distant key at their mid-point; while No. 15 – a scherzo in which Diabelli's theme appears to disappear in a puff of smoke – absently-mindedly finishes up back in the home key of C at the end of its first half. This variation was the next of the interpolations Beethoven made during the work's second creative stage. Also new was a group of four variations immediately following the Mozart parody; but by far the most significant of the later additions were the two variations surrounding the climactic fugue: the intricate Largo in the minor that seems to look back to Bach, and the transcendental minuet with which the music comes to a close. The minuet provides one of the most sublime endings Beethoven ever conceived, and in its delicate tracery at the top of the keyboard, we seem to hear a nostalgic recollection of the closing pages from the sonata Op. 111.

CD 11

[1]-[4] Piano Sonata No. 4 in E-Flat Major, Op. 7
[5]-[6] Piano Sonata No. 24 in F-Sharp Major, Op. 78
[7]-[10] Piano Sonata No. 15 in D Major, Op. 28, "Pastoral"

If any of Beethoven's sonatas deserved the nickname of 'Appassionata', Czerny declared, it was not the famous F minor Sonata Op. 57, but the E flat sonata Op. 7. The earlier work had, Czerny claimed, been written "in an impassioned frame of mind". Perhaps he was thinking of the unusual urgency of the sonata's opening movement – an impetuous 'Allegro molto e con brio' – and the grand design of the work as a whole. This was, in fact, the first sonata Beethoven published on its own, rather than as part of a series: it appeared in October 1797, with a title-page describing it as a 'Grande Sonate pour le Clavecin ou Pianoforte'. The sonata was dedicated to one of Beethoven's talented piano pupils, Babette von Keglevics, to whom he subsequently inscribed two further important works – the Piano Concerto No. 1 and the Variations Op. 34.

The Op. 7 Sonata begins with what is the most agitated and thrusting opening movement Beethoven had written thus far. Its initial bars are as 'neutral' as could be imagined: a series of sustained E flat major chords above a drum-like repeated-note accompaniment. As was to be the case in the opening movement of the more famous 'Waldstein' sonata, this first idea in toccata style is contrasted with a smooth second subject in the manner of a chorale; but there is also a closing subject which raises the stakes as far as virtuoso brilliance is concerned. It presents a dizzying cascade of semiquavers whose figuration seems to evoke the effect of a violinist bowing rapidly across the strings.

The new-found boldness of Beethoven's keyboard style is apparent throughout the central development section, too. The persistent, dissonant syncopation; the sudden plunge into the key of A minor (the most remote point from the home key) shortly before the recapitulation sets in – these are deliberately provocative gestures, seemingly calculated to offend Beethoven's contemporaries. No less characteristic is the fortissimo recapitulation of what had initially been a quiet opening theme – a harbinger of the similarly forceful reprise of the hushed main subject that is heard to such dramatic effect in such works as the Violin Concerto, the Triple Concerto and the Piano Concerto No. 4.

The serene C major slow movement is a piece in which the long silences punctuating the main theme speak as eloquently as the sighing phrases that surround them. The richly scored contrasting episode unfolds over an accompaniment in pizzicato style, and there is further keyboard writing of an orchestral nature in the bars leading to the reprise. Here, a crescendo on a sustained double octave is

an effect that can only be imagined by the pianist, though he can suggest something of Beethoven's seemingly impossible demand by the manner in which he attacks the following note. Towards the end of this strikingly beautiful piece, the theme of the contrasting episode is transferred to the tenor register, where it is played as though by divided cellos, beneath a gently rocking accompaniment.

The innocent-sounding minuet theme of the third movement meets its obverse side in the quasi-trio – a shadowy piece in the minor, all swirling quaver triplets. The trio had not always been designed in this way: Beethoven's sketches show that he originally wrote the passage in much less agitated regular crotchets, before opting to provide greater rhythmic contrast between the two sections of the piece.

The finale is not a virtuoso piece to mirror the brilliance of the opening movement, but a gentle Allegretto. Its central episode in C minor, however, is an outburst sufficiently agitated and dramatic as to call for a resolution of its conflicts at a later stage. Beethoven duly provides one in what is surely one of the most original and beautiful endings to any of his earlier works, with the turbulent figuration of the episode transformed into a gently rippling accompaniment which allows the sonata to die away in a haunting *pianissimo*. The masterstroke of this ending is preceded by another quite magical inspiration, taking its point of departure from the manner in which the central episode's new key had been approached. The B natural which had earlier acted as a note leading in to the key of C minor, is now prolonged, and treated as the springboard for an excursion into a much more distant E major; and it is in this radiant key that Beethoven interpolates an appearance of the rondo theme. It is perhaps the most striking instance of his youthful fondness for invoking a remote key at so late a stage – not in the form of a witticism, as is so often the case, but as a means of enhanced expression.

The key of F sharp major is one the intrepid Haydn used on occasion, above all in two radiant slow movements of the 1790s – the Adagio of the string quartet Op. 76 No. 5, and the middle movement of the piano trio in F sharp minor; but even Beethoven fought shy of invoking so awkward a key for music involving stringed instruments, and his Op. 78 piano sonata actually offers the only sustained appearance of F sharp major in his output. In view of the difficulty not only of its key, but also of the keyboard writing in its second movement, it is curious that it was this work, rather than the technically more straightforward sonata Op. 79 written immediately after it, that Beethoven chose to dedicate to his former piano pupil Therese von Brunsvik, who was in all likelihood a player of no more than modest ability. It was to Therese's brother Franz that Beethoven inscribed the 'Apassionata' sonata; while for Therese and her younger sister Josephine he composed a set of variations for piano duet on the song "Ich denke dein". Beethoven had clearly been deeply attached to the two sisters, and both have been put forward at various times as his 'Immortal Beloved'.

If we want to find the expressive heart of the Op. 78 sonata we need look no further than its opening four bars – a slow introduction that carries a poetic burden out of all proportion to its brief duration. While its melody attempts to take wing, a single repeated note in the bass anchors it firmly to the ground, until the music breaks off as though in mid-stream. The first movement proper continues the introduction's cantabile style; and Czerny described the whole piece as "calm, artless, tender and innocent".

The finale begins in startling fashion, away from the home key, and it is not until the introduction of the movement's characteristic semiquaver figuration in the twelfth bar that F sharp major is firmly re-established. For Czerny, this piece had a "humorous, merry and facetious" character. Certainly, it is among Beethoven's most sparkling finales, and one that provides the perfect foil to the lyrical character of the opening movement.

The nickname of 'Pastoral' attached to the D major sonata Op. 28 came into being shortly after it first appeared in print, and it is not inappropriate. Both its outer movements make prominent use of a rustic 'drone' bass, initially heard on its own, and in the case of the first movement, that bass part consists simply of a reiterated note D. The idea is one that may remind us of the famous repeated-note timpani solo that begins Beethoven's Violin Concerto. In the sonata, the regularly repeated D runs throughout the nearly forty bars occupied by the main theme, with Beethoven momentarily departing from it only at those points where the melodic line alights on the same note, with a strategically placed *sforzato*.

Following the reiterated unaccompanied bass note of its initial bar, the first harmony presented in the Op. 28 sonata is a discord leaning away from the tonic, as though the piece were starting in mid-stream. Beethoven reintroduces the drum-taps of his beginning in a coda which has them receding into the distance, to bring the piece to a *pianissimo* close with scraps of the main melody floating above the bass-line.

Beethoven's second subject is no less smooth and seamless than the first, and perhaps for this reason he also brings into play a more disjunct closing theme – a syncopated melodic line above a staccato accompaniment in imitation of horns. In view of the generally amiable nature of the exposition, the development section is altogether darker and more dramatic. It unfolds throughout in the minor, concentrating on a fragment of the principal subject with ever greater intensity, until eventually the music comes to rest on a long drawn out chord. At this point, Beethoven interpolates, as if from afar, and in a distant key, a fragmentary version of the closing subject, first in the major, and then – following a pause – in the minor.

The slow movement, in the minor, is like

some processional march. As he so often liked to do, Beethoven has its melody given out legato by the right hand, above a staccato accompaniment in the left. The theme's second half, featuring an obstinately repeated pungent dissonance, unfolds over a repeated pedal-note which recalls the reiterated bass of the opening movement. Following the more rustic-sounding middle section in the major, Beethoven writes his reprise in the form of a variation; but there is also a coda which reintroduces the middle section's sharply defined rhythm, while at the same time reaching a climax on the same dissonance featured in the second half of the movement's march-like opening theme. The closing bars introduce a sighing two-note figure surmounted by a deeply expressive turn-like phrase which brings the piece to an end in an atmosphere of deep nostalgia.

Following the scherzo, the final rondo returns to the pastoral charm of the sonata's opening movement. Not that Beethoven could ever write a large-scale piece of this kind entirely devoid of tension: its central episode is a piece of closely worked counterpoint based on a 'winding' chromatic subject, and it reaches a climax of considerable force before the rondo theme returns in all its innocent simplicity. Moreover, rather than allow the movement to sink to a resigned close, as he had done in the opening Allegro, Beethoven adds a 'presto' coda in the form of a variation on the rondo theme, to bring the sonata to a dizzying conclusion.

CD 12

[1]-[3] Piano Sonata No. 30 in E Major, Op. 109
[4]-[6] Piano Sonata No. 31 in A-Flat Major, Op. 110
[7]-[8] Piano Sonata No. 32 in C Minor, Op. 111

Beethoven composed his last three sonatas between 1820 and 1822, during the period when he was also working on his *Missa solemnis*. The three works are very different in character, though they share certain preoccupations. In particular, the first and last of them both end with a serene set of variations, and all three reflect Beethoven's late-found fascination with the notion of reviving the Baroque fugue. Although only the middle work of the triptych, Op. 110, contains a fully worked-out fugue, the influence of Bach and Handel is clearly discernible in the finale of Op. 109, as well as the opening movement of Op. 111. All three sonatas find Beethoven exploring radically new approaches to the sonata design, in which the main weight of the argument is placed firmly on the finale. In the first two works of the group, Opp.109 and 110, the shift in emphasis is ensured by casting the central movement as a scherzo, and by scaling down the dimensions of the opening movement. The form of the Op. 109 sonata, consisting as it does of two highly condensed movements followed by an extended slow movement, is so unusual that it comes as no great surprise to learn that its opening movement seems to have been conceived in the first place as an independent piano piece. Early in February 1820 the writer Josef Karl Bernard, a close friend of Beethoven, noted in one of the conversation books the composer used on account of his deafness:

> *'Starke would like to have a little piece of music for the second part of his 'Piano School'; he already has contributions from the first composers alongside short biographical notices.'*

The evidence for thinking that the first movement of the Op. 109 Sonata was originally intended as a contribution to Friedrich Starke's *Wiener- Pianoforte-Schule* is circumstantial but compelling: the fact that Beethoven jotted down the sonata's opening theme in his conversation book around the middle of April 1820, several days before he received a request for new sonatas from the Parisian publisher Moritz (or Maurice) Schlesinger; an entry in a slightly later conversation book by Beethoven's part-time secretary Franz Oliva, suggesting that the composer "use the new little piece for a sonata for Schlesinger"; and the absence among Beethoven's sketches for the remainder of the sonata of preliminary ideas for its first movement.

It seems possible, then, that Beethoven first conceived the Op. 109 sonata as a two-movement work in E minor with a lyrical finale in the major – a plan similar to that of his sonata Op. 90 – and that the idea of prefacing it with the pre-existing piece written for Starke came to him as an afterthought. Certainly, the opening movement is a highly unconventional way of beginning a sonata, even if it is possible to hear it as a compressed sonata form whose two contrasting subjects are given out in radically different tempi. On the other hand, the opening Vivace section is so short – a mere eight bars – and the ensuing Adagio has so much the effect of an interruption, that such a view is less than wholly convincing. When the initial quicker tempo is restored following the improvisatory Adagio, the music carries on from the point at which it previously broke off – so much so that the first two Vivace sections could easily be joined together to create a seamless musical argument.

The first movement's final E major chord is joined to the start of the E minor second movement, with Beethoven instructing the player to lift the sustaining pedal at the moment when he attacks the fortissimo beginning of the next piece. This 'Prestissimo' is not a scherzo, but a piece in a clear sonata form (a further pointer, perhaps, to the fact that Beethoven may initially have intended it as the work's opening movement), with a main theme whose treble and bass strands assume equal importance independently of each other as the piece progresses. The central development section uses the bass line exclusively, transferring it to the top of the texture. Gradually, the development fades into the distance, until it disappears altogether, with

its final chord left hanging in mid-air as the recapitulation bursts in impatiently.

Beethoven's three last sonatas all strive towards vocal expression. The variation finale of Op. 111 is based on a theme described as an 'Arietta'; while the latter half of Op. 110 consists of a lament – or 'Arioso dolente' – alternating with a fugue. The finale of the Op. 109 sonata is again a set of variations, this time on a sarabande-like theme which carries the heading, 'Gesangvoll, mit innigster Empfindung' ('Lyrically, with the most heartfelt expression'). Perhaps it was the nature of this theme that led Czerny to describe the entire movement as being in the style of Handel and Bach. Czerny must also have been prompted by the linear writing of the third variation, which unfolds in the manner of a fleeting two-part invention, and by the fugal nature of the fifth variation. Like the variations of Op. 111, the movement culminates in an extended trill which leaves the music as though suspended on some higher emotional plane. In Op. 109, the trill eventually subsides into a reprise of the original theme, now shorn of its repeats; and a final ritardando, not featured in the original theme itself, enhances the atmosphere of profound calm in which the sonata comes to a close. The notion of rounding off the variations is one that again appears to pay tribute to Bach's 'Goldberg' Variations.

Besides the Sonata Op. 110, only one of Beethoven's large-scale works is in the 'soft' key of A flat major – the 'Funeral March' sonata Op. 26. The variation theme with which that earlier piece begins is a not-so-distant relative of Op. 110's opening theme – a melody whose rising shape anticipates the fugue subject of the work's latter half.

This time, Beethoven begins with a fully-fledged sonata movement – albeit one that is conspicuously devoid of drama and tension, even in its development section. Its unruffled surface is Beethoven's means of ensuring that he does not detract from the intensity of what is to come later in the work. For all its apparent seriousness, the scherzo second movement quotes two humorous folk songs, one of which sets the words 'Ich bin lüderlich, du bist lüderlich' ('I'm a down-and-out, you're a down-and-out'). The invasion of sublime territory by such down-to-earth material is altogether typical of Beethoven's humour.

Unlike the scherzo itself, which falls into two almost exaggeratedly symmetrical repeated halves, the trio is through-composed. It presents a series of winding phrases for the right hand which come tumbling down from the topmost register of the keyboard at the same time that the left- hand accompaniment rises in syncopated gasps, so that the two voices are in continual danger of colliding at the point where they cross over each other. Following the reprise of the scherzo, the notion of syncopation is reawakened in a brief coda whose full-blooded chords seem to fall disturbingly off the beat. At the very last moment, the music quietly dissolves into the major, and in so doing provides a natural bridge to the start of the following movement.

The remainder of the sonata plays continuously, in what is in effect a highly original fusion of two distinct movements. One of those movements is a tragic slow aria, the other a fugue; and in alternating the two, Beethoven is careful to preserve a unity of mood – and, indeed, of pulse. At the final return of the fugue, following the second 'Arioso', he indicates that the music should revive only gradually. His intention is not so much to suggest that the tempo should progressively be increased, as to warn the player that the mood of the preceding slow section should be broken with care; but the notation of this passage nevertheless carries its own built-in element of acceleration. The fugue subject, now in inversion, is presented first in the note-values familiar from the first fugal section; but at the point where the subject reappears in its original shape, it does so in notes that are one-third of their previous value – in other words, the music now sounds three times as fast as hitherto. The process of diminution is continued in a passage which has the fugue subject appearing in notation six times as quick as it was at the outset, simultaneously with its inversion in the original note-values; but by this stage the accelerated form of the subject is so fast that Beethoven finds himself obliged to reduce the underlying tempo.

The 'Arioso dolente' (or Klagender Gesang – 'mournful song' – as Beethoven calls it) is preceded by a recitative which seeks to recreate the vibrato, or 'Bebung', technique associated with the clavichord, whose strings could be made to vibrate by a movement of the fingers on the keys. On the piano the effect is suggested by changing fingers on the same tied note. When the 'Arioso' returns following the first fugue, it does so in a weakened form. Its phrases are now broken up, as though the music were panting for breath, and the 'Bebung' effect is incorporated into the melody itself. It is out of this world-weary atmosphere that the fugue reappears, before the music gradually gropes its way back towards the light, and the home key, for the sonata's exultant closing pages.

If the first two works in Beethoven's final sonata triptych had begun in an atmosphere of radiant calm, his last sonata, Op. 111, opens in a mood of high drama. The brutal dissonances hurled forth in the very first bar of its introduction are no mere theatrical gesture: they anticipate the melodic interval that characterises the main subject of the Allegro to come. The Allegro, with its qualification 'con brio ed appassionato', is a piece of extraordinary intensity, and one that gives the illusion of having been composed at white heat. So determined is Beethoven to maintain the atmosphere of highly-strung tension that he curtails the consolatory second subject to a mere half-dozen bars, before a cascading arpeggio leads back to the turbulence of the main subject, whose transmutation from minor to major has done nothing to rob it of

its former violence. Beethoven had originally sketched the main theme some twenty years earlier as a fugue subject, and in the central development section he treats it in the form of a double fugue. At the end, the piece sinks to an exhausted close in the major, and the unexpectedly calm conclusion forms a natural transition to the serene set of variations that follows.

If the variations of Op. 109 invoke quite violent contrasts of tempi, those of Op. 111 unfold at the same basic pulse, though their progressively diminishing note-values give the impression of a gradual acceleration. At the same time, by decreasing the music's rate of harmonic change Beethoven is paradoxically able to create the effect of enhanced serenity. Eventually, the music dissolves into a long-sustained trill – stillness within motion exemplified – before the work comes to a close with a reminiscence of the theme's original rhythm. Although Beethoven does not provide a reprise of the theme itself (at one stage he did think of doing so), the closing bars seem to round the melody out, answering its 'open-ended' character with a gentle but firm conclusion.

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LLŶR WILLIAMS

Welsh pianist Llŷr Williams is widely admired for his profound musical intelligence and the expressive and communicative nature of his interpretations. He has worked with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Hallé Orchestra, Sinfonia Cymru, I Pomeriggi Musicali, Meininger Hofkapelle, Berner Kammerorchester, and the Mozarteum Orchestra in Salzburg. A regular performer in the Wigmore Hall's main piano series, he also appears at the BBC Proms in London, and has given many acclaimed performances at the Edinburgh International Festival. He is a regular performer at the East Neuk Festival in Scotland, Piano aux Jacobins in Toulouse, and has been artist in residence at Galeri Caernarfon and the Cowbridge Festival in Wales, and Artist in Association at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. In the US, Williams has appeared in recitals at Washington Performing Arts, Portland Piano International, Da Camera of Houston and the Gilmore International Keyboard Festival. His performance in Washington led the Washington Post to conclude that 'His infallible technique serves a keen musical intelligence, with every phrase supported, balanced and imbued with unequivocal meaning'.

Williams is an acclaimed performer of Beethoven with no less than four complete piano sonata cycles under his belt. Following a successful first cycle in Perth, Williams went on to perform the complete cycle in the form of an epic two-week marathon during the Edinburgh International Festival that subsequently won him the prestigious South Bank Show award. He later completed two cycles as a nine-recital project at the Wigmore Hall and the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama in Cardiff between 2014 and 2017. The Wigmore Hall recitals were recorded live, leading to the release of the present boxset. In addition, he completed a Beethoven piano concerto cycle with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. 2018 marks the start of a five-recital exploration of late Schubert works at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

Llŷr Williams' great love of lieder has led him to become one of the regular official accompanists at the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition; resulting in further partnerships with Jamie Barton in Edinburgh, baritone Quinn Kelsey, and Mongolian bass Amartuvshin Enkhbat.

Llŷr Williams' eclectic taste is reflected in his discography. His previous critically acclaimed CD, Wagner Without Words (Signum, August 2014) highlights Williams' intimate relationship with operatic music. Williams had previously recorded two solo albums for Signum, one with music by Mussorgsky, Debussy and Liszt and the second dedicated to works by Liszt.

Born in 1976 in Pentrebychan, North Wales, Llŷr Williams read music at The Queen's College, Oxford and went on to take up a postgraduate scholarship at the Royal Academy of Music where he won every available prize and award. He is also an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. He was an active member of the Live Music Now! scheme for several years, was selected for Young Concert Artists Trust in 2002. From 2003-2005 he was a BBC New Generation Artist and in 2004 received a Borletti-Buitoni Trust award.

All works recorded live at the Wigmore Hall, London, United Kingdom.

Produced by Judith Sherman
Engineered by Simon Vout
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Mastering Engineer: James Waterhouse

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October 3, 2014
Op. 2, Nos. 1-3; Op. 57

February 25, 2015
Op. 14, Nos. 1 & 2; Op. 34; Op. 27, Nos. 1 & 2; Op. 77; WoO. 59

May 30, 2015
Op. 31, Nos. 1-3; Op. 101

October 3, 2015
Op. 22; Op. 53; Op. 54; WoO. 57

January 13, 2016
Op. 13; Op. 26; Op. 33, No. 7; Op. 35; Op. 49, Nos. 1 & 2

April 19, 2016
Op. 26; Op. 79; Op. 90; Op. 106; Op. 126

October 11, 2016
Op. 10. Nos. 1-3; Op. 120

February 16, 2017
Op. 7; Op. 28; Op. 78; Op. 81a; WoO. 80

May 20, 2017
Op. 109; Op. 110; Op. 111

July 31, 2017
Op. 33, Nos. 1-6

Cover Image – © Benjamin Ealovega

Design – Mark@shoutconceptual.co.uk

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BEETHOVEN UNBOUND

Llŷr Williams *piano*

CD1

Sonata No. 1 in F Minor, Op. 2 No. 1
Sonata No. 2 in A Major, Op. 2 No. 2
Sonata No. 3 in C Major, Op. 2 No. 3

CD2

Sonata No. 23 in F Minor, Op. 57, "Appassionata"
6 Variations on an Original Theme in F Major, Op. 34
Sonata No. 9 in E Major, Op. 14, No. 1
Sonata No. 10 in G Major, Op. 14, No. 2

CD3

Fantasia in G Minor, Op. 77
Sonata No. 13 in E-Flat Major, Op. 27, No. 1,
"Quasi una fantasia"
Sonata No. 14 in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 27, No. 2, "Moonlight"
Sonata No. 28 in A Major, Op. 101
Für Elise, WoO 59

CD4

Sonata No. 16 in G Major, Op. 31, No. 1
Sonata No. 17 in D Minor, Op. 31, No. 2, "The Tempest"
Sonata No. 18 in E-Flat Major, Op. 31, No. 3, "La Chasse"

CD5

Sonata No. 11 in B-Flat Major, Op. 22
Sonata No. 22 in F Major, Op. 54
Sonata No. 21 in C Major, Op. 53, "Waldstein"
Andante favori, WoO. 57

CD6

Eroica Variations, Op. 35
Sonata No. 12 in A-Flat Major, Op. 26, "Funeral March"
Sonata No. 26 in E-Flat Major, Op. 81a, "Les adieux"

CD7

Sonata No. 8 in C Minor, Op. 13, "Pathétique"
7 Bagatelles, Op. 33
Sonata No. 27 in E Minor, Op. 90
Sonata No. 25 in G Major, Op. 79

CD8

Sonata No. 29 in B-Flat Major, Op. 106, "Hammerklavier"
6 Bagatelles, Op. 126

CD9

Sonata No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 10, No. 1
Sonata No. 6 in F Major, Op. 10, No. 2
Sonata No. 7 in D Major, Op. 10, No. 3
32 Variations in C Minor, WoO. 80

CD10

Sonata No. 19 in G Minor, Op. 49, No. 1
Diabelli Variations, Op. 120
Sonata No. 20 in G Major, Op. 49, No. 2

CD11

Sonata No. 4 in E-Flat Major, Op. 7
Sonata No. 24 in F-Sharp Major, Op. 78
Sonata No. 15 in D Major, Op. 28, "Pastoral"

CD12

Sonata No. 30 in E Major, Op. 109
Sonata No. 31 in A-Flat Major, Op. 110
Sonata No. 32 in C Minor, Op. 111

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