LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

COMPLETE 35 PIANO SONATAS

TAMAMI HONMA, piano

Disc A

Sonata in E flat major 'Kurfürst', WoO 47 No. 1

1.	I.	*Allegro cantabile*	4:24
2.	II.	*Andante*	5:23
3.	III.	*Rondo vivace*	2:14

Sonata in F minor 'Kurfürst', WoO 47 No. 2

4.	I.	*Larghetto maestoso – Allegro assai*	5:45
5.	II.	*Andante*	7:23
6.	III.	*Presto*	2:59

Sonata in D major 'Kurfürst', WoO 47 No. 3

7.	I.	*Allegro*	6:48
8.	II.	*Menuetto sostenuto*	7:55
9.	III.	Scherzando: *Allegro ma non troppo*	4:35

Andante in F major 'Andante favori', WoO 57

10.		*Andante grazioso con moto*	8:54

Total playing time 57:00

Disc B

Sonata in F minor, Op. 2 No. 1

1.	I.	*Allegro*	4:00
2.	II.	*Adagio*	4:57
3.	III.	Menuetto: *Allegretto*	3:08
4.	IV.	*Prestissimo*	4:54

Sonata in A major, Op. 2 No. 2

5.	I.	*Allegro vivace*	10:21
6.	II.	*Largo appassionato*	6:32
7.	III.	Scherzo: *Allegretto*	3:36
8.	IV.	Rondo: *Grazioso*	6:54

Sonata in C major, Op. 2 No. 3

9.	I.	*Allegro con brio*	10:38
10.	II.	*Adagio*	7:38
11.	III.	Scherzo: *Allegro*	3:01
12.	IV.	*Allegro assai*	5:04

Total playing time 71:20

Disc C

Sonata in G major, Op. 49 No. 2

1.	I.	*Allegro ma non troppo*	4:26
2.	II.	*Tempo di menuetto*	3:37

Sonata in G minor, Op. 49 No. 1

3.	I.	*Andante*	5:24
4.	II.	Rondo: *Allegro*	2:53

Sonata in E flat major, Op. 7

5.	I.	*Allegro molto e con brio*	8:15
6.	II.	*Largo con gran espressione*	7:33
7.	III.	*Allegro*	6:08
8.	IV.	Rondo: *Poco allegretto e grazioso*	7:28

Sonata in C minor, Op. 10 No. 1

9.	I.	*Allegro molto e con brio*	5:27
10.	II.	*Adagio molto*	7:54
11.	III.	Finale: *Prestissimo*	4:39

Sonata in F major, Op. 10 No. 2

12.	I.	*Allegro*	8:49
13.	II.	*Allegretto*	5:23
14.	III.	*Presto*	3:34

Total playing time 82:17

Disc D

Sonata in D major, Op. 10 No. 3

1.	I.	*Presto*	6:58
2.	II.	*Largo e mesto*	8:59
3.	III.	Menuetto: *Allegro*	3:07
4.	IV.	Rondo: *Allegro*	4:53

Sonata in C minor 'Pathétique', Op. 13

5.	I.	*Grave – Allegro di molto e con brio*	8:44
6.	II.	*Adagio cantabile*	5:21
7.	III.	Rondo: *Allegro*	4:41

Sonata in E major, Op. 14 No. 1

8.	I.	*Allegro*	6:21
9.	II.	*Allegretto*	4:13
10.	III.	Rondo: *Allegro comodo*	3:01

Sonata in G major, Op. 14 No. 2

11.	I.	*Allegro*	6:45
12.	II.	*Andante*	4:40
13.	III.	Scherzo: *Allegro assai*	3:26

Total playing time 71:54

Disc E

Sonata in B flat major, Op. 22

1.	I.	*Allegro con brio*	7:44
2.	II.	*Adagio con molto espressione*	8:25
3.	III.	*Minuetto*	4:17
4.	IV.	Rondo: *Allegretto*	6:27

Sonata in A flat major, Op. 26

5.	I.	*Andante con variazioni*	7:28
6.	II.	Scherzo: *Allegro molto*	2:48

7.	III.	*Marcia funebre (sulla morte d'un Eroe)*	6:49
8.	IV.	*Allegro*	3:01

Sonata quasi una fantasia in E flat major, Op. 27 No. 1

9.	I.	*Andante – Allegro – Tempo I*	4:29
10.	II.	*Allegro molto e vivace*	2:04
11.	III.	*Adagio con espressione – Allegro vivace*	8:43

Sonata quasi una fantasia in C sharp minor, 'Moonlight', Op. 27 No. 2

12.	I.	*Adagio sostenuto*	6:31
13.	II.	*Allegretto*	1:58
14.	III.	*Presto*	7:10

Total playing time 78:37

Disc F

Sonata in D major, 'Pastoral', Op. 28

1.	I.	*Allegro*	10:42
2.	II.	*Andante*	5:39
3.	III.	Scherzo: *Allegro vivace*	2:10
4.	IV.	Rondo: *Allegro ma non troppo*	5:02

Sonata in G major, Op. 31 No. 1

5.	I.	*Allegro vivace*	6:34
6.	II.	*Adagio grazioso*	10:45
7.	III.	Rondo: *Allegretto*	6:59

Sonata in D minor, 'Tempest', Op. 31 No. 2

8.	I.	*Largo – Allegro*	7:43
9.	II.	*Adagio*	7:57
10.	III.	*Allegretto*	7:03

Total playing time 71:05

Disc G

Sonata in E flat major, Op. 31 No. 3

1.	I.	*Allegro*	8:42
2.	II.	Scherzo: *Allegretto vivace*	4:50
3.	III.	Menuetto: *Moderato e grazioso*	5:15
4.	IV.	*Presto con fuoco*	4:25

Sonata in C major 'Waldstein', Op. 53

5.	I.	*Allegro con brio*	11:01
6.	II.	Introduzione: *Adagio molto*	3:40
7.	III.	Rondo: *Allegretto moderato – Prestissimo*	9:41

Sonata in F major, Op. 54

8.	I.	*In Tempo d'un Menuetto*	5:50
9.	II.	*Allegretto – Più allegro*	5:39

Sonata in F minor, 'Appassionata', Op. 57

10.	I.	*Allegro assai*	9:54
11.	II.	*Andante con moto*	5:41
12.	III.	*Allegro ma non troppo – Presto*	7:41

Total playing time 83:00

Disc H

Sonata in F-sharp major, 'à Thérèse', Op. 78

1.	I	*Adagio cantabile – Allegro ma non troppo*	7:23
2.	II.	*Allegro vivace*	3:01

Sonata in G major, Op. 79

3.	I.	*Presto alla tedesca*	4:55
4.	II.	*Andante*	3:30
5.	III.	*Allegro vivace*	2:04

Sonata in E flat major, 'Les Adieux', Op. 81a

6.	I.	Das Lebewohl (The Farewell): *Adagio – Allegro*	6:59

7.	II.	Abwesenheit (Absence): *Andante espressivo*	4:06
8.	III.	Das Wiedersehn (The Return): *Vivacissimamente*	5:51

Sonata in E minor, Op. 90

9.	I.	Mit Lebhaftigkeit, und durchaus mit Empfindung und Ausdruck	5:59
10.	II.	Nicht zu geschwind und sehr singbar vorgetragen	8:12

Sonata in A major, Op. 101

11.	I.	Etwas lebhaft und mit der innigsten Empfindung (*Allegretto ma non troppo*)	4:11
12.	II.	Ziemlich lebhaft. Marschmässig (*Vivace alla marcia*)	6:26
13.	III.	Langsam und sehnsuchtsvoll (*Adagio ma non troppo, con affetto*)	2:48
14.	IV.	Geschwinde, doch nicht zu sehr und mit Entschlossenheit (*Allegro*)	7:59

Total playing time 74:15

Disc I

Sonata in B flat major, 'Hammerklavier', Op. 106

1.	I.	*Allegro*	11:21
2.	II.	Scherzo: *Assai vivace*	2:47
3.	III.	*Adagio sostenuto*	21:43
4.	IV.	*Largo – Allegro – Prestissimo – Allegro risoluto*	12:26

Sonata in E major, Op. 109

5.	I.	*Vivace ma non troppo - Adagio espressivo*	3:46
6.	II.	*Prestissimo*	2:25
7.	III.	Gesang mit innigster Empfindung (*Andante molto cantabile ed espressivo*)	13:12

Total playing time 67:53

Disc J

Sonata in A flat major, Op. 110

1.	I.	*Moderato cantabile molto espressivo*	5:56
2.	II.	*Allegro molto*	2:15
3.	III.	*Adagio ma non troppo* – Fuga: *Allegro ma non troppo*	10:46

Sonata in C minor, Op. 111

4.	I.	*Maestoso – Allegro con brio appassionato*	8:30
5.	II.	Arietta: *Adagio*	16:21

Total playing time 44:04

"*Music is ... a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy*"
Ludwig van Beethoven

Together with his nine symphonies, seven concertos, sixteen string quartets, the opera *Fidelio*, the *Missa Solemnis*, and numerous other works, both substantial and small, the complete thirty-five piano sonatas of Ludwig van Beethoven stand collectively as towering monuments in the world of classical music and, indeed, in the history of Western civilization. If one was to compare his achievements with those of, say, such great scientific luminaries as Newton and Einstein, it's an intriguing thought that had neither of those two scientists ever lived, other people would almost inevitably have unearthed the discoveries of these two men. In contrast, had Beethoven never lived, no-one else would have created his works and we would be permanently deprived of some of the greatest glories of classical music. Beethoven himself put a slightly different spin on this idea when talking with a member of the nobility he declared: "What you are, you are by accident of birth; what I am, I am by myself. There are and will be a thousand princes; there is only one Beethoven."

The writer and music critic Alex Ross observed in *The New Yorker*, that "Beethoven is a singularity in the history of art – a phenomenon of dazzling and disconcerting force" – a composer, he argued, who not only influenced all subsequent composers but also molded entire institutions including professional orchestras, the art of conducting, and the evolution of the modern piano. As Ross also noted, even 20th century recording technology was shaped by considerations of Beethoven's music, with the first commercial 33⅓ rpm LP in 1931 stamped with the Fifth Symphony, and the duration of first-generation compact disks fixed at seventy-five minutes, long enough to play the Ninth Symphony without interruption.

Given Beethoven's own exceptional facility as a virtuoso and improvisational pianist, the piano sonatas offer us perhaps the most direct and intimate communion we have with the mind of this singular force. Their beauty, power, intellectual heft, and expressiveness, communicate aspects of Beethoven's feelings and thoughts in ways that are inadequate for mere words to convey.

Written over the course of several decades, the piano sonatas were conceived at time points that chart almost the full course of Beethoven's life (1770-1827) – the first composed around 1783 when he was just 12 years of age , the last in 1822 when he was 51, five years before his death. The sonatas thus offer an unusually expansive window onto his progression as a composer. In this collection, the works have been organized in chronological order or very close to it, to facilitate an appreciation of his musical journey that was as epic as it was revolutionary.

With Beethoven, the order of opus numbers usually stands as a guide to the approximate date of the work's origin but there are some notable exceptions. Some works such as the two Opus 49 Sonatas were written many years earlier than their numerically neighboring compositions. The first three sonatas in this collection of 35 were written when Beethoven was only eleven or twelve. Although published in his name, these sonatas, like all of his early works composed in Bonn before he moved as a young man to Vienna in 1792, were not assigned opus numbers. In 1955 these early works along with other surviving fragments were assigned WoO numbers – *Werke ohne Opuszahl* or "works without opus" – in a catalogue prepared by two German scholars.

Historically, these early sonatas named "Kurfürst" (meaning "Elector" reflecting their dedication to the Elector Maximilian Friedrich) have been largely ignored in assembling "complete" collections of the sonatas both in recordings and in published

editions of the scores. Hence, previous collections and concert cycles have almost invariably included just the 32 sonatas that were assigned opus numbers. This tradition dates as far back to the 19th century, when the conductor and pianist Hans von Bülow was the first to perform the 32 sonatas in one concert cycle, calling them "The New Testament" of the piano literature with Johann Sebastian Bach's The Well-Tempered Clavier regarded as "The Old Testament." The tradition continued with Artur Schnabel's still revered renditions of the 32 sonatas made between 1932 and 1935, the first complete cycle ever to be recorded. More recently, in his book of essays "Music, Sense and Nonsense", Alfred Brendel confesses that his recordings of the complete piano works of Beethoven made between 1958 and 1964 were not entirely complete (and neither were his later recordings of the complete sonatas) but he qualifies this by saying that he had no regrets in having omitted pieces that were "devoid of any touch of Beethoven's mastery and originality" and were "merely of interest to the historian." Among the pieces in question, he references the *entire* output of Beethoven's Bonn period which would, of course, include the three early piano sonatas. Brendel does not mention these sonatas specifically but In expounding this critique, he argues that any number of Beethoven's contemporaries could have written these early works and that many of these early pieces were not actually intended for publication. He also seems to undermine his case by singling out the so-called Haibel variations WoO 68 describing them as 'deplorable.' These variations were composed in 1795 when Beethoven was 24 around the time of his Opus 2 piano sonatas and were thus not even part of his Bonn output.

Regardless, there's a good case to reconsider the almost universal practice of banishing the *Kurfürst* Sonatas (two notable exceptions here are fortepiano specialist Ronald Brautigam and Emil Gilels who recorded these sonatas but owing to an untimely death did not record all of the other Beethoven sonatas). Musicologist Professor Barry Cooper has argued strongly for their inclusion in his critical edition of the

complete 35 piano sonatas published by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) in the United Kingdom. He cites a number of compelling reasons. The sonatas are, first and foremost, complete works that were actually published by Beethoven (with the help of his teacher, Christian Neefe) so there is no denying they are part of his official oeuvre. Although they are obviously not as accomplished as Beethoven's mature sonatas, they are still fine works and astonishing for having been written by a young boy, barely a teenager. Cooper also points to the two Op. 49 sonatas which were composed when Beethoven was in his early twenties as studies for friends or students. It was only when his brother Carl, who for a time assisted Beethoven in his business dealings, took the opportunity to sell them to a publisher that Beethoven reluctantly agreed to have them officially released years after they had been composed. The early three sonatas are actually longer works, each having three movements instead of two, and as Cooper argues the distance between them and the Op. 49 Sonatas is far less than the distance between the Op. 49 Sonatas and the *Hammerklavier* Sonata Op. 106, one of the towering masterpieces of Beethoven's late period. Perhaps most importantly, by ignoring the *Kurfürst* Sonatas, we would exclude the opening chapter in Beethoven's development as a composer and yet in these early sonatas we can glimpse seeds of ideas that were to grow and flower in his mature works. So for all these reasons, this collection follows Cooper's lead and includes these early works. Indeed, if a set of Beethoven's Sonatas is to call itself "complete", it truly should be called the "Complete 35 Piano Sonatas."

At this point, it should also be mentioned that Ms. Honma has carefully followed the ABRSM edition in observing the many hundreds if not thousands of editorial corrections Cooper has contributed to the scores of the sonatas. Cooper has performed a remarkable service in his meticulous research comparing the best known sources for each sonata including original manuscripts where they are available, early printed editions, and numerous other historical sources. The corrections include not

only occasional note values but markings that describe articulation, dynamics, and the precise execution of ornaments in an historically appropriate style. Beethoven was unusually precise in his musical notation and, for example, often made a point of distinguishing between *staccato* articulation and *staccatissimo* – a difference between short and very short articulation – a distinction that has often been overlooked. Armed with the results of this research, Ms. Honma's performances offer a fresh and dazzling perspective on these extraordinary works.

Beethoven's style as a composer is invariably divided up into early, middle, and late periods – phases that Franz Liszt more poetically attributed to "The adolescent – the man – the god." The "early, middle, late" subdivision, simple though it is, endures for a reason. His early works hew more closely to classical models laid out by his predecessors, Mozart and Haydn while exhibiting plenty of youthful exuberance. The middle works, perhaps exemplified by the *Eroica* Symphony are often described as being more revolutionary and heroic in nature. While the late works took on a new level of concision and complexity that enabled them to transcend all known precedents in their visionary power and sublimation. The piano sonatas are fully represented in all three periods and thus offer as a whole, an exceptionally rich view of Beethoven's compositional powers as his style evolved.

Many listeners may be familiar with themes from the most famous sonatas including the *Moonlight* sonata, the *Pathétique*, and the *Appassionata*. Many of the unnamed sonatas, especially the earlier Viennese ones are not performed so often (the Bonn ones hardly ever) which is a pity as they are all magnificent works. As Brendel has commented, "Beethoven does not repeat himself in his sonatas; each work, each movement is a new organism." The early Viennese sonatas are thus especially insightful in trying to imagine the young Beethoven stunning audiences with his playing and his new compositions. As his hearing deteriorated and as he suffered many an emotional

onslaught in his personal life, his playing inevitably suffered but his compositional powers and extraordinary inventiveness seem only to have increased. Packed within the confines of these recordings, this Beethoven collection thus offers listeners an opportunity to hear the results of decades of concentrated mental labour by one of the greatest of all composers.

***Kurfürst* Piano Sonatas, WoO 47 1-3 (composed between 1782-3)**

From his earliest years the young Beethoven showed a precocious talent for music which his father, Johann van Beethoven, a professional singer and court musician in their home town of Bonn, quickly recognized. Mindful of the astonishing success Leopold Mozart had had in unveiling his son Wolfgang and daughter Nannerl as musical prodigies, Johann enforced a punishingly rigorous program of training and practice not only on the keyboard but also violin, one that would often leave the young Ludwig in tears. Nevertheless, his musical abilities shone through and an interest in composition seems to have grown out of a predilection for extemporization. By the age of 8, Beethoven had made so much progress his father was unable to teach him further, so they turned to other local teachers. Within a year or so, a new very capable musician, Christian Gottlob Neefe, arrived in Bonn appointed as court organist. Neefe soon took over Beethoven's instruction, becoming Beethoven's greatest early musical and cultural influence. Posterity certainly has much to thank him for, as Beethoven himself graciously recognized. In a letter he wrote to Neefe (published in 1793 but probably written several years earlier), he wrote: "I thank you for your advice which you so often gave me as I progressed in my divine art. If some day I become a great man, you too will have a share in it."

The first known complete work by Beethoven was a set of variations in C minor (WoO 63). Published in 1782 when Beethoven was just twelve, the variations were based on a funeral march. It's intriguing that even as a young boy he would choose

as his starting point a somber theme and in C minor, a key that became iconic for Beethoven. Although the march, by Ernst Christoph Dressler, provides a dark subject for Beethoven's youthful reworking, the final variation switches to C major in a blaze of virtuosic runs foreshadowing Beethoven's many later explorations of the heroic narrative in which turbulence and strife eventually leads to a glorious resolution (the Symphony No. 5 in C minor being the exemplar). The publication of the *Dressler* variations was arranged by Neefe. How much he helped Beethoven in their composition we do not know for sure, but as Barry Cooper remarks in his biography of Beethoven, the work, if it truly was his first complete composition, marks an extremely impressive beginning. Several more works emerged in the following year, 1783, but the most important of these were the three piano sonatas (WoO 47) dedicated to the Archbishop and Elector (Kurfürst) of Cologne, Maximilian Friedrich, for whom the young Beethoven and his father served in the Bonn court. Sonatas were recognized as the most important and elevated musical form of piano music and it was common to publish them in sets of three or six.

For people reading this not familiar with musicological terminology, it's useful to understand that the terms "Sonata" and "Sonata form" have different meanings. "Sonata form" refers to the structure adopted by many classical compositions within a *single* movement. The structure consists of three basic elements: exposition, development, and recapitulation. Here the idea is that the musical subject matter is stated, explored or expanded, and restated. A key aspect of sonata form that makes it so satisfying is the fact that you always return home and revisit the opening ideas after what can have been an immense musical journey. Sonata works, on the other hand, usually present one or more movements some of which may be in sonata form. Often the first movement is the one that is in sonata form although not always and sometimes other movements may adopt the form. Quite often in classical sonatas composers finish with a *Rondo* movement, a form that presents an opening idea

and then visits contrasting themes known as “episodes” creating patterns such as ABA, ABACA and ABACABA. As we progress through the sonatas, we will see how Beethoven’s use of these different forms became increasingly experimental over time. Another feature that becomes evident over his compositional life are his attempts to make his sonatas increasingly integrated so that divisions between movements are less obvious and there’s a feeling of the different parts growing from one structure (an idea that Jean Sibelius took almost to its limit in his symphonies).

Beethoven’s first forays in this genre, the *Kurfürst* Sonatas despite his youth and lack of experience, are fully fledged works, each in three movements and longer even than some of his later sonatas. In the absence of the original manuscripts, we cannot be sure about the order of composition, but it is thought most likely the published order reflects the order in which they were written especially as the last of the three, is the most assured in its construction.

Sonata in E flat major, WoO 47 No. 1

I. *Allegro cantabile*
II. *Andante*
III. *Rondo vivace*

The first of the three early sonatas is the most straightforward structurally and begins with a lively opening marked by offbeat accents, a hallmark of many of Beethoven’s later compositions:

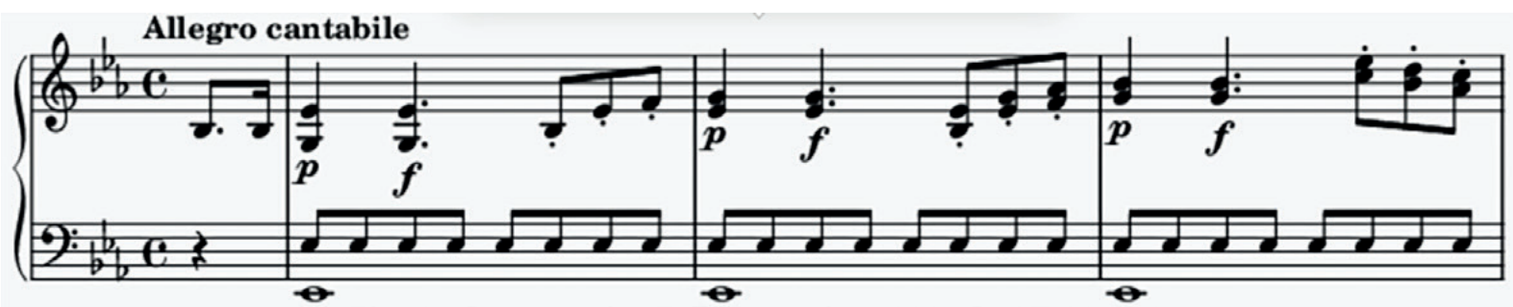

Fig 1. Sonata in E flat major, WoO 47 No. 1

One notable difference between these first sonatas and Beethoven's very first published work, the C minor *Dressler* Variations composed the previous year, is that the earlier work lacked dynamics and articulations, whereas in these sonatas the young Beethoven provided quite detailed markings (sometimes incomplete but sometimes to the point of excess). Here was evidence that Beethoven was committed to writing music for the *pianoforte* rather than the harpsichord, an instrument for which dramatic contrasts in volume are not feasible. Perhaps with the Elector in mind, the opening *Allegro cantabile* has a stately majestic air and is sprinkled with semiquaver (16th note) figurations that sound quite Mozartian. Interestingly, the *Andante*, although slower, reuses some of the thematic material of the first movement – an early sign, perhaps, of Beethoven's desire for some kind of unity across movements within sonatas. The final movement is a jaunty *Rondo*, made all the more lively by its *Vivace* marking.

Sonata in F minor, WoO 47 No. 2

I. *Larghetto maestoso. Allegro assai*
II. *Andante*
III. *Presto*

The second sonata in this set is widely regarded as the most forward looking, not least for its anticipation of structural and thematic elements of the *Pathétique* Sonata. The first movement, like the *Pathétique*, starts with a solemn slow introduction that alternates between loud single chords and soft answering phrases followed by a rising theme in octaves:

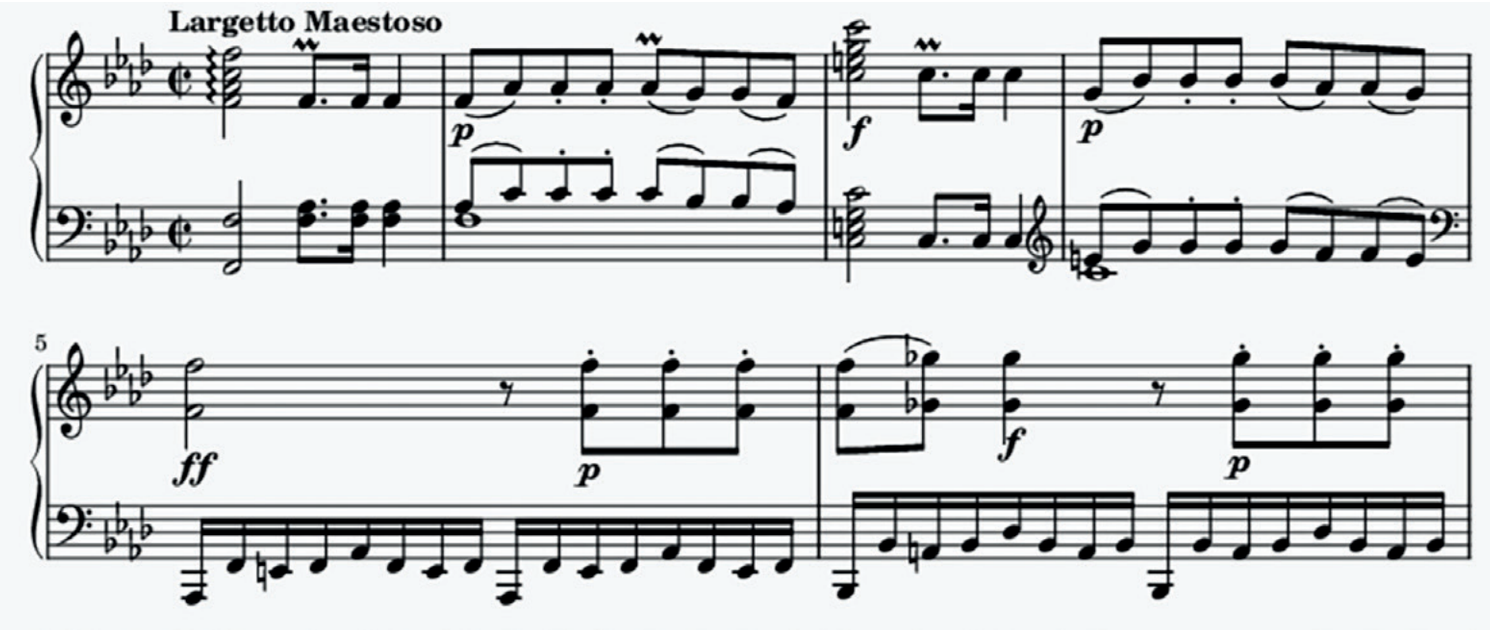

Fig 2. Sonata in F minor, WoO 47 No. 2

The driving energy of the opening bars of the ensuing *Allegro assai* also bears a remarkable similarity to the *Allegro* of the *Pathétique*. As one of Beethoven's modern day biographers, Jan Swafford, observes, "If the *furioso* first theme of the F minor Sonata did not soon collapse into bland octave passages, [the Sonata] might have approached the intensity of its descendant the *Pathétique*." Perhaps the biggest surprise is the return of the slow introduction just before the recapitulation of the *Allegro* theme. Using a slow introduction in sonatas was unusual but not unheard of. However, according to Barry Cooper, its return here in the subdominant was unprecedented. This same device of revisiting new versions of the slow introduction later in a movement was something Beethoven redeployed in later works, notably the *Pathétique* and in his late string quartets.

The slower *Andante* movement, while cast in A flat major, maintains a feeling of expressive solemnity, which, within its first two bars, contains in the left hand a kernel

of the fugue theme found in the late sonata Op. 110 written towards the end of Beethoven's life (also hinted at even more closely in the opening of his Sonata Op. 14 No 1 in E major). Were these later iterations a mere coincidence or a conscious nod by the older Beethoven in memory of his youth – Beethoven's "*Rosebud*" moment perhaps? The reflective mood is soon dispatched by an agitated *Presto* in the last movement, an early presentation of another of Beethoven's tendencies to strive for moments of almost shocking contrast.

Sonata in D major, WoO 47 No. 3

I. *Allegro*
II. *Menuetto sostenuto*
III. *Scherzando: Allegro ma non troppo*

Considered the most advanced and sophisticated (though not the most prophetic) of the three *Kurfürst* Sonatas, this work was most likely written after the other two. The two outer movements are bright and playful while the middle slower movement presents a stately *minuet* followed by a set of six variations. Having already made a start in the art of variation form with the *Dressler* variations, the set presented here is another opportunity to see Beethoven's early development in this genre, a form he would repeatedly return to over his life with ever growing panache culminating in the spectacular sets of variations in the Piano Sonata Op. 109, the *Arietta* in Op. 111, and in the *Diabelli* Variations Op. 120. In this early work, the variations do not depart greatly from the *minuet* theme although each of the first four variations gives the impression of moving faster, not through a change of tempo, but by subdividing notes first by four, then six, then eight. Beethoven employed this technique multiple times in later works, especially notably in the last variation of Op. 109 to profound explosive effect. The fourth variation in this sonata, the fastest in terms of subdivisions, does not reach those heady heights but it, nonetheless, presents formidable technical challenges with its extremely rapid runs of demisemiquavers (thirty-second notes).

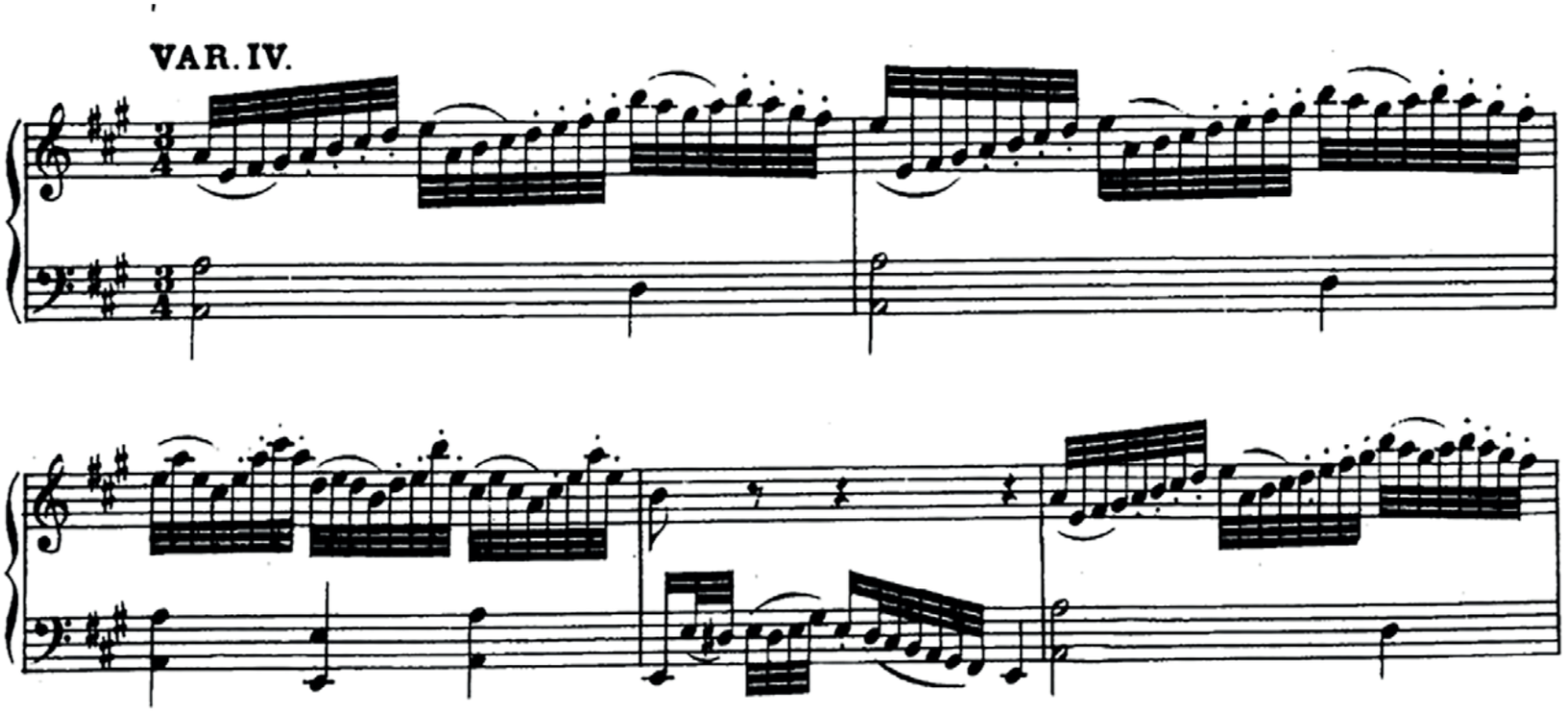

Fig 3. Variation 4 from the slow movement of Sonata in D major, WoO 47 No. 3

The last movement marked *Scherzando* begins with a catchy tune that already hints at Beethoven's ability to devise memorable melodies. While in sonata form, the movement departs from certain conventions during the recapitulation reverting closer to a *rondo*. As Barry Cooper notes "The sonata as a whole is very far from being a bland imitation of existing models, and displays great originality on several levels."

Andante in F major, 'Andante favori', WoO 57 (composed between 1803-4)
Andante grazioso con moto

Originally written as the slow movement to the middle period *Waldstein* Sonata Op. 53, Beethoven was much irked when a friend suggested this piece was too long and did not fit with the rest of the sonata. This development was recorded by Ferdinand Ries, Beethoven's student and secretary but, alas, he did not reveal who the friendly critic was. On reflection, though, Beethoven realized his friend had a point and he decided to axe the *Andante* from the sonata replacing it with a much shorter movement that serves as a brilliantly conceived introduction to the sonata's glorious finale. A parallel could be made with the famous *Grosse Fuge* Op. 133 that Beethoven originally wrote for the String Quartet in B flat Op. 130, but which the composer was asked to replace with a shorter finale by his publisher. Here, though, the decision to replace the movement was made more on commercial grounds rather than artistic merit. Indeed, some string quartet ensembles choose to play the *Grosse Fuge* as part of Op. 130 out of respect to Beethoven's original intentions. Few people would argue for restoring the *Andante favori* within the *Waldstein.* It's a much longer and more diffuse piece than its replacement and one that is more of a throwback in style compared with the striking advances Beethoven made within the outer movements of the *Waldstein*. Nevertheless, it is still a manifestly beautiful work and one, because of its popularity, Beethoven liked to play at soirées. He published it later under the name *Andante favori,* 'favored Andante', as a separate independent piece.

Structured in a kind of *rondo*, the work features a gracious theme that reappears in variation form after two intervening episodes, the first elegant and balletic and the second more agitated with runs of octaves. The thematic variations also include some soulful departures into minor keys that offer moments of solemnity and yearning including the final resolution with its resonating bass line and quiet fade out. (For

reasons of space, this work has been placed at the end of CD 1 making it one of the few to be out of order chronologically in this collection.)

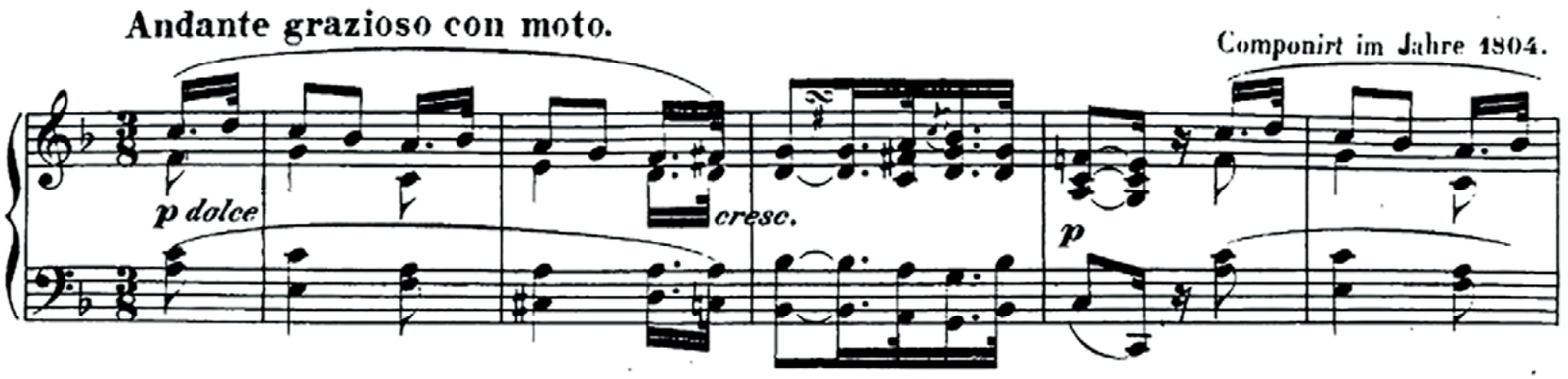

Fig 4. *Andante favori* WoO 57

Sonatas Op. 2 Nos 1-3 (composed between 1793-5)

When the composer moved from Bonn to Vienna, the plan had originally been for him to study with Mozart. He first made the journey to Vienna in 1787 and it's thought that he probably met Mozart there but after only a few weeks his mother, Maria, fell seriously ill with tuberculosis causing his father to write to Ludwig demanding his immediate return to Bonn. His mother's subsequent death at age of 40 greatly affected the young Beethoven, who described her as a kind and loving mother and his best friend (in contrast to his difficult relationship with his dictatorial and alcoholic father). Beethoven's eventually returned to Vienna in November 1792 just before his 22nd birthday but by this time, Mozart had died, his life too cut tragically short at the age of 35 by the scourge of another infectious disease outbreak – in this case thought to have been a streptococcal epidemic. So instead, Beethoven took up compositional studies with the now most famous living composer of the day, Joseph Haydn. Although the young Beethoven had been given six month official leave by the Elector in Bonn, he never returned and Vienna became his permanent new home. For his

first two years in Vienna, Beethoven embarked on a period of intense musical study that besides lessons with Haydn later included counterpoint studies with Johann Albrechtsberger and violin lessons with Ignaz Schuppanzigh. (In 1800 he also took up lessons in vocal composition with Antonio Salieri). Despite financial difficulties, Beethoven published little during this period. Indeed, he deliberately held back new compositions from publication until he felt he was ready to unveil a variety of works that he thought would make the most impact on Viennese audiences.

Finally in 1795, Beethoven chose for his first works published with opus number, three piano trios, each one exhibiting a different style: the first bright and witty, the second lyrical, and the third one stormy, characterized in particular by its C minor tonality. Following their success, six months later, he used a similar triptych approach for his Op. 2, but this time writing three piano sonatas and starting with one in the minor mode rather than major giving a sense of drama in the first, lyricism in the second, and witty brilliance in the third.

In recognition of his mentor, Beethoven dedicated the Op. 2 Piano Sonatas to Haydn but it has often been inferred their personal relationship was not very warm, in part, because Beethoven later remarked he learned nothing from the elder composer. Haydn did, nevertheless, help Beethoven by lending him money in his first years in Vienna when his student's finances were critically uncertain and it is clear Beethoven must have learned a great deal if only from reading Haydn's scores. As another sign of respect, Beethoven waited for Haydn's return from London before giving the première of the sonatas in August 1795 at the home of Prince Carl Lichnowsky, with Haydn in attendance.

The two year period of study clearly paid off as these first works with opus numbers were highly accomplished. As Alfred Brendel notes we should not take too literally

Liszt's label of "The Adolescent" for early Beethoven, as he was now 24 when he unveiled these works and the young man was by now already a great composer.

It would be fascinating to know exactly what Haydn had thought of these early offerings from Beethoven. Given his own hugely successful body of work including numerous symphonies, string quartets, piano sonatas, choral works, and his esteemed position as Vienna's leading composer, he probably had little inkling that he would be overshadowed by this brilliant new upstart. But he must surely have been impressed by these first Beethoven works. As an early indication of how seriously Beethoven took these early sonatas and how willing he was to break with tradition even at this early stage, the first four all follow a four movement scheme, a pattern that Haydn and Mozart had normally reserved for symphonies and string quartets.

Sonata in F minor, Op. 2 No. 1

I. *Allegro*
II. *Adagio*
III. *Menuetto: Allegretto*
IV. *Prestissimo*

This first of the three Op. 2 sonatas is the only one set in a minor key and opens with a rising motif (sometimes known as a "Mannheim rocket" after the musical invention of a school of composers in Mannheim) that is not unlike the shape of the theme that opens the final movement of Mozart's famous symphony No. 40 in G minor written in 1788.

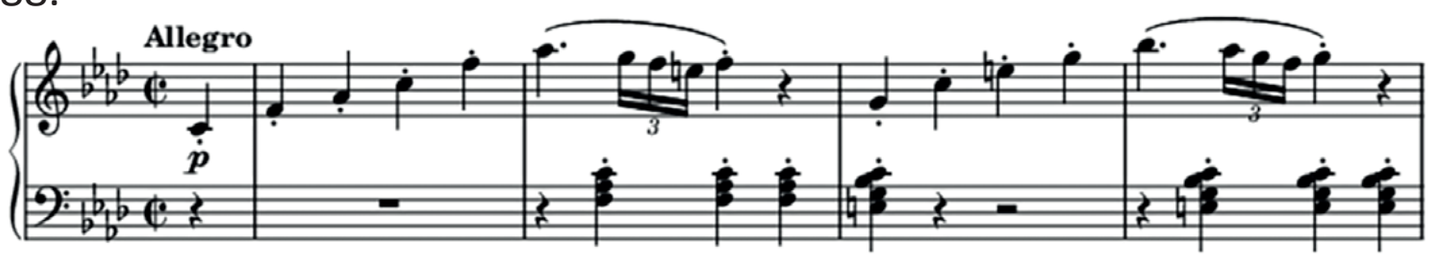

Fig 5. Beethoven's Sonata in F minor, Op. 2 No. 1.

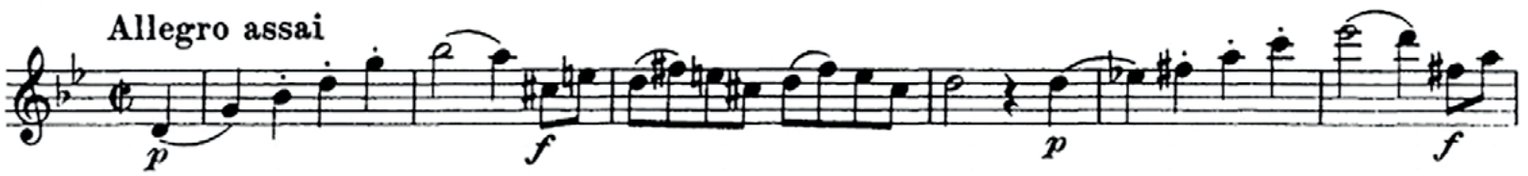

Fig 6. The finale of Mozart's Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550.

The second theme in Beethoven's first movement follows a contrasting downward direction using an unusually dissonant sonority adding to the movement's sense of agitation. The overall texture of the movement, though, is lean and quite Mozartian. The slow movement adagio while soulful is cast in F major and re-uses (with notable improvements) a theme he had originally presented in his early Piano Quartet (WoO 36 No. 3) from his Bonn days of 1785. The next movement, a *minuet*, returns to F minor although its contrasting *trio* section is in F major. With the last movement also in F minor, Beethoven chooses to maintain tonal continuity rather than switching to new keys but the contrast between major and minor sonorities is always striking, especially so in this minuet movement. Perhaps mindful of the fact that it is the inclusion of this minuet that elevates this work into a four movement sonata (and thereby pushing it beyond the usual smaller sonata templates of Haydn and Mozart), Beethoven reflects within it, aspects of the whole work in microcosm. However, compared with everything before, it's in the turbo-charged finale marked *Prestissimo* that Beethoven spreads his fully-fledged pianistic wings with an opening that features crashing chords carried forth by a hurtling *perpetuum mobile* accompaniment in the form of rapid triplets. Respite comes unexpectedly in the development section of the movement, often the place where we might expect increased tension. Instead, we glide into an enchanting moment of solace that mirrors the upward figure of the first movement but in a major key rather than minor and with a lyrical feeling rather than percussive. After this episode, though, we return to a recapitulation of the opening theme that terminates in a final downward plunge in F minor. It's as if the sonata's

opening rocket has, after an eventful journey, finally returned to Earth, plunging into the abyss.

Sonata in A major, Op. 2 No. 2

I. *Allegro vivace*
II. *Largo appassionato*
III. Scherzo: *Allegretto*
IV. Rondo: *Grazioso*

The second sonata, which is cast in the sunny key of A major, initially comes as a big contrast with the first sonata, with an opening that sounds almost naively optimistic. While the beginning of Op. 2 No.1 featured an uprising motif, here we have something that does the opposite: musical lines that skip downwards:

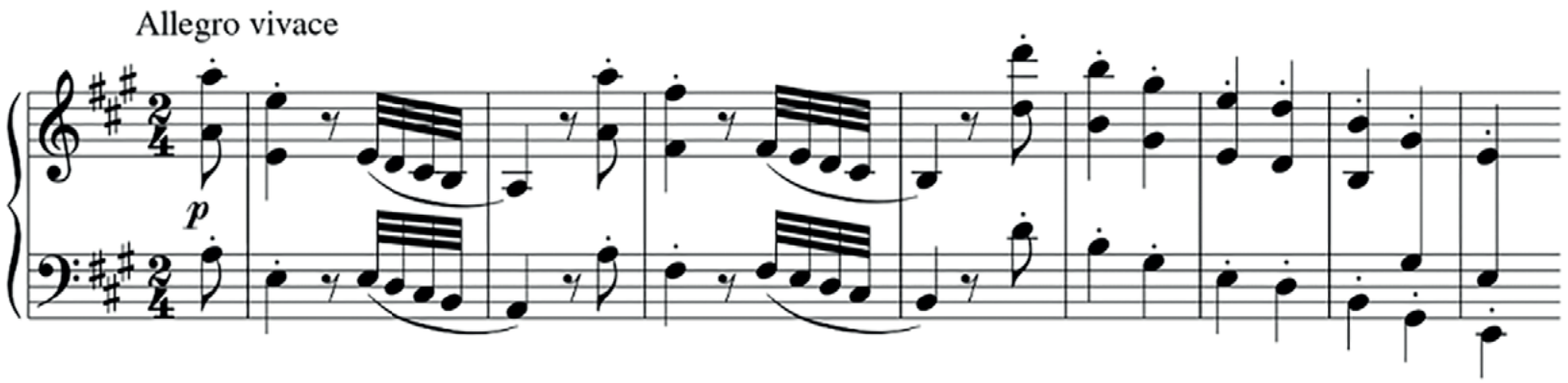

Fig 7. Sonata in A major, Op. 2 No. 2

In spite of the happy-go-lucky start, there are stark changes of mood ahead especially with the arrival of the much darker and dramatic second theme. Jan Swafford highlights the sonata's contradictions noting how its narrative is "marked by gaiety periodically interrupted by incipient anxiety or melancholy." The first movement also features many abrupt changes in dynamics and a dazzling piece of contrapuntal fireworks half way through its development.

Barry Cooper likens the highly contrasting second movement, which begins with a staccato pizzicato-style bass against a chorale of slowly changing chords, to a grand, solemn procession. Carl Czerny noted the movement as having a “religious character” and indeed there are climactic moments of rapture as well as one explosive outburst that might seem improbable from the sombre gait of the opening bars. For the careful observer, though, the emotive surprises are signposted by the *appassionato* marking of the movement. The third movement *scherzo*, that serves as a substitute for a *minuet*, features a sprinkled chord motif that one suspects Schubert must have taken much delight in given the presence of something strikingly similar in the *scherzo* of his great A major piano sonata D.959. Beethoven’s finale, a beautiful and lyrical *rondo*. begins with an arpeggio figure that re-appears in more elaborate form on each occasion. As in the first movement, though, contrasts and contradictions are never far away and the oasis of tranquillity is twice rudely interrupted by highly agitated episodes cast in a minor sonority. But the relaxed mood returns and we finish with an elegant coda.

Sonata in C major, Op. 2 No. 3

I. *Allegro con brio*
II. *Adagio*
III. Scherzo: *Allegro*
IV. *Allegro assai*

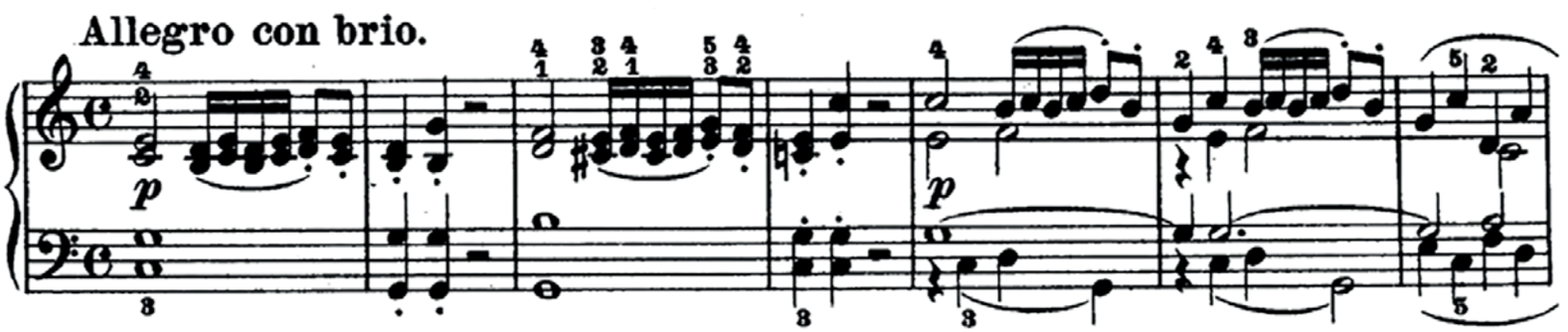

Fig 8. Sonata in C major, Op. 2 No. 3

Perhaps the best known of the three first sonatas, Op. 2 No. 3 displays a combination of wit and brilliance. It begins with a trill-like motif in double thirds that Arthur Rubinstein used as a test for pianos he was about to perform on (on a bad piano with slow action the motif is difficult if not impossible to play properly).

This wittily Haydn-esque opening leads into a passage that suddenly explodes into a fury of *fortissimo* broken octaves that are pure Beethoven. Soon after this, he introduces a new quieter theme derived from one of his teenage Piano Quartets (WoO 36 No. 3 in C major) - the same work that had provided the theme for the slow movement of Op. 2 No. 1. The whole movement is written in a virtuoso concerto style containing towards its conclusion a brief *cadenza*, a solo passage that is meant to sound improvised.

Written in four distinct voices, the second movement is both slow and expressive, while bearing the hallmark of Beethoven's soon to flourish interest in writing string quartets. The middle section in E minor provides a darkly textured contrast with its E major surroundings. After the relatively short fugal *scherzo* and lyrical *trio*, the concluding *Allegro assai* is a vibrant and virtuosic *rondo* with an increasingly brilliant figuration that eventually dissolves into a deceptive passage of soft trills and silences. This sudden unexpected turn in the coda foreshadows Beethoven's tendency to add humorous and playful surprises especially in his movement conclusions, a style he increasingly adopted in his later works. Just as we expect another fade to silence, he ends the work with a thunderous summation.

Sonatas Op. 49 Nos. 1 & 2

As mentioned in the introduction, the two sonatas of Op. 49 appear not to have been originally intended for publication. Written years earlier than their 1805 publication date, they are unusual for their opus number being out of sequence with their chronology. Both are short, relatively lightweight two movement works, and thought to have been written as pedagogical pieces for his students. It was one of Beethoven's brothers, Carl, who, most likely for financial expedience, decided to offer them for publication, much to the composer's consternation who presumably thought they were not worthy of his then current style. (Kaspar Anton Carl van Beethoven began using his middle name – also sometimes spelt Karl – when he moved to Vienna and not to be confused with Beethoven's nephew also called Karl.) Between 1800 and 1806, Carl worked part-time as his brother's secretary and managed his relations with publishers, a role in which he seems not to have distinguished himself. Publishers notably complained about his arrogance and lack of tact. The following letter from Carl mentioning these sonatas provides an amusing example:

Dear Sir:

We have received your letter asking for some of my brother's pieces, for which we thank you very much. At the moment we have nothing but a symphony and a grand piano concerto, each priced at 300 florins. If you should want three piano sonatas I shall have to have 900 florins for them, all in Viennese currency, and these you cannot have immediately, but one every five or six weeks, as my brother doesn't bother much any more with such trifles, but writes only oratorios, operas, etc.

[...]

We also have two adagios for violin with complete instrumental accompaniment which would cost 135 florins, and two little easy sonatas of two

movements each which are yours for 280 florins. Please give my best wishes to our friend Koch.

Your most humble
K. v. Beethoven

Carl allegedly came to blows with his brother over another decision he made in selling the completed set of Op. 31 piano sonatas to a publisher in Leipzig, when Beethoven had already promised them to a different publishing firm. It is therefore somewhat ironic, in view of his lack of ambassadorial skill, that we need to thank Carl for saving these small but fine works for posterity. Despite the composer's own doubts about the two Op. 49 sonatas, Charles Rosen describes the one in G minor as a "deeply affecting and distinguished work." The exact years of composition of these works remains somewhat uncertain though reasonable deductions can be made from surviving sketches. Extended drafts for Op. 49 No.2 are followed immediately by the aria *Ah! Perfido* which is known to have been composed while Beethoven was visiting Prague in early 1796. Furthermore, the first seven bars of Op. 49 No. 1 feature in an autograph score that also contains sketches for Beethoven's string trios Op. 9 which were finished by early 1798. So it's believed the sonatas were most likely composed in reverse order with No. 2 dating from around 1796 and No.1 dating from mid-1797, perhaps shortly after the sonata Op. 7. Following the probable order of composition, we present these two sonatas in this collection with Op. 49 No 2 first and, in line, with Barry Cooper's critical edition, we have placed the two little sonatas together so that Op. 7, which holds a special place in importance, comes after Op. 49 No. 1.

Although both Op. 49 sonatas were published with the subtitle "*Sonata facile*", the term was in indication that they were not full-scale sonatas of typical difficulty. While they are certainly more approachable to piano students than many of Beethoven's

other sonatas, they are still far from easy and contain elements of great subtlety that elevate them musically far above mere technical studies.

Sonata in G major, Op. 49 No. 2 *Sonata facile* (probably composed in 1796)

I. *Allegro ma non troppo*
II. *Tempo di Minuetto*

The sonata in G major is the more modest of these two *Leichte* Sonatas, but still nevertheless quite beautiful. In the absence of the original copy which Beethoven probably gave to the person for whom the sonata was written, the published version must have been based on an incomplete draft that had virtually no dynamic markings. This gives performers the freedom to take more liberties than is usual. It consists of two movements, the first a lyrical *Allegro* and the second a *minuet*. Unusually for Beethoven, he reused the theme from the second movement in the minuet of his Op. 20 Septet for wind and strings, further evidence perhaps that he had not intended to publish this sonata as Beethoven was generally averse to repeating himself in his published works.

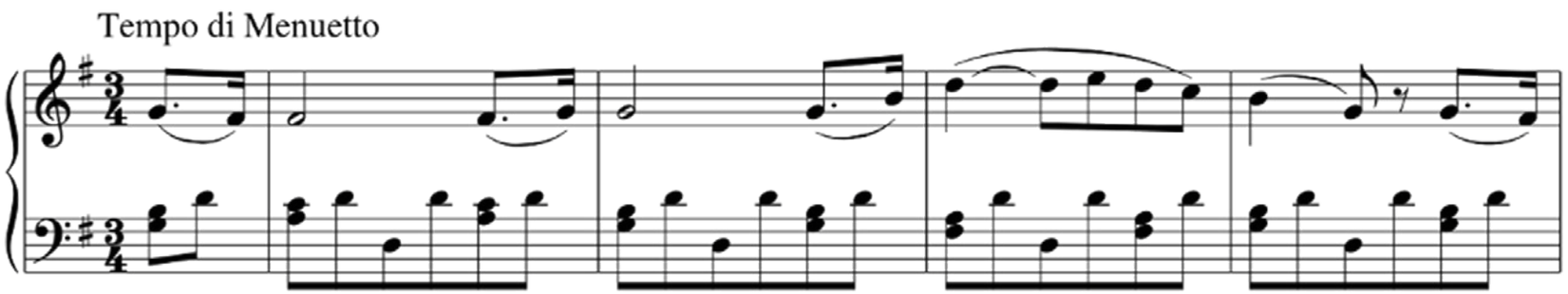

Fig 9. Second movement of Sonata in G major, Op. 49 No. 2

Sonata in G minor, Op. 49 No. 1 *Sonata facile* (probably composed in 1797)

I. *Andante*
II. Rondo: *Allegro*

The first movement of the G minor sonata begins with a slow melancholic melody that is thought to share some affinity with Haydn's piano sonata in the same key (Hob.XVI/44) composed many years earlier somewhere between 1771-3 though not published until 1788.

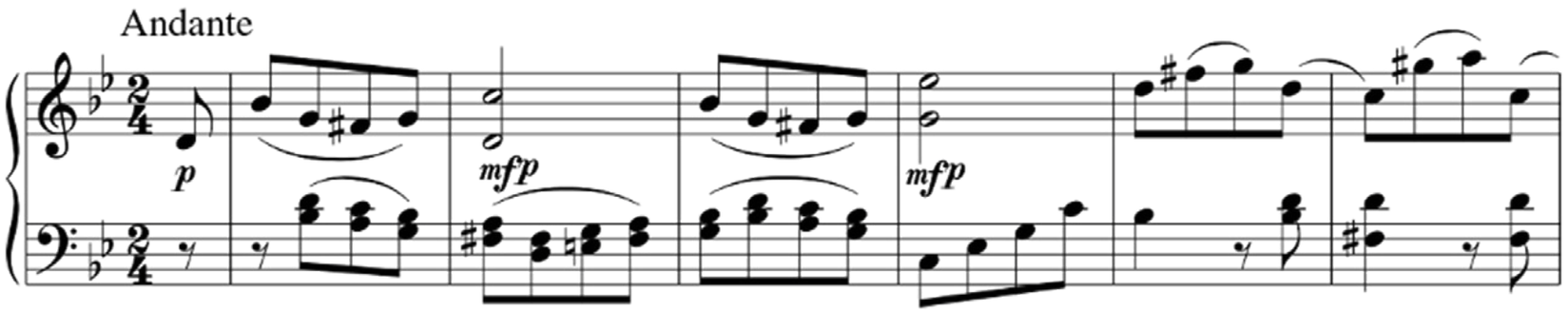

Fig 10. Beethoven's Sonata in G minor, Op. 49 No. 1

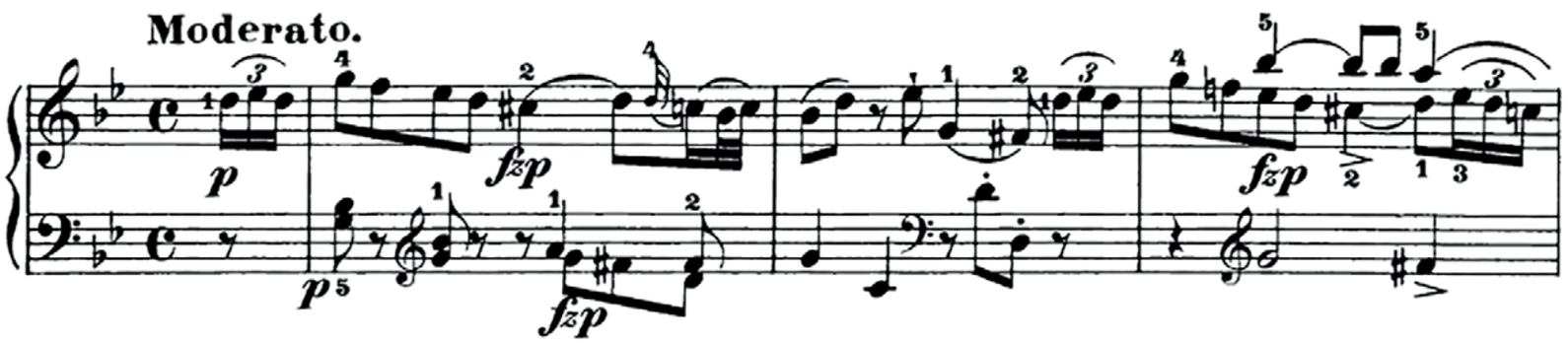

Fig 11. Haydn's Piano Sonata in G minor, Hob. XVI:44

Skipping the usual inclusion of a central slow movement, Beethoven takes us straight to a concluding movement that is both cheerful and comedic. Barry Cooper points

out in his notes on this movement, that although called a *Rondo* (which usually entails a main theme that alternates with one or more contrasting themes in the form of "digressions"), structurally it is quite deviant by taking on a more complex *ABCBAC + Coda* form.

Grand Sonata in E flat major, Op. 7 (composed in 1796)

I. *Allegro molto e con brio*
II. *Largo, con gran espressione*
III. *Allegro*
IV. *Rondo: Poco Allegretto e grazioso*

Considered by some commentators to have been almost as revolutionary as the *Eroica* was for the symphony, the Grand Sonata Op. 7 is also widely thought to be one of Beethoven's most challenging sonatas to play. Living up to its "Grand" title in every way, it is also one of the longest, second only to the colossal *Hammerklavier*, and was the first piano sonata Beethoven favored with its own individual opus number. It was written only a year or so after the three Op. 2 sonatas for one of his most gifted piano pupils, the teenage Countess Babette von Keglevics. She lived across the street from his apartment and in a letter to her nephew she reported that Beethoven, non-conformist as he was, would sometimes show up at her residence for morning lessons in his sleeping cap, nightgown and slippers. Given the hugely impressive nature of this work, some have speculated Beethoven may have been more than a little infatuated with his student. She was also the dedicatee of his first piano concerto (Op. 15) published in 1801 (though largely composed in 1795).

Cast on a symphonic scale in four movements, it abounds with energy and sonic power that demonstrate Beethoven's burgeoning desire to stretch the language and range of the piano far beyond what had already been achieved. The hugely expansive

first movement opens quietly with a repeated note motif that one could imagine played on a horn or timpani:

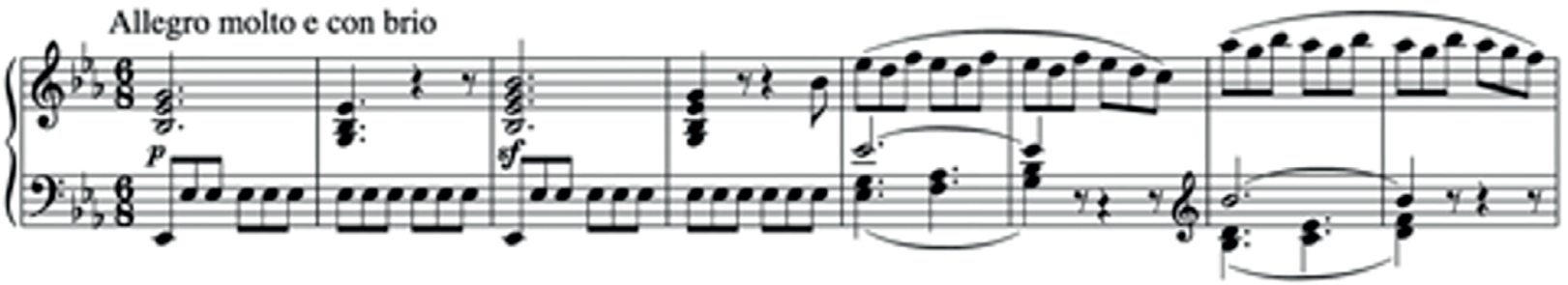

Fig 12. Grand Sonata in E flat major, Op. 7

The movement features many long *legato* lines, a style for which Beethoven became well known in his early days in Vienna when detached playing was the norm, interspersed with episodes of bravura brilliance. The deeply expressive slow movement almost has the feeling of late Beethoven by combining the rhetoric of an operatic recitative with that of a hymn, while achieving considerable grandeur not least by means of numerous meaningful silences. The third movement, which is in *scherzo* form, in many ways anticipates Schubert not only in the opening lyrical theme but in the darkly dramatic *trio* section that sounds uncannily like the opening of Schubert's *Klavierstücke* No 1 (a piece written some 30 years later). The finale, a *rondo*, features a beautiful *legato* melody that reappears in different variational forms interspersed by a stormy *fortissimo* episode. Interestingly, this episode is presaged by a simple piano octave chord marked *piano* but with a *crescendo* - something almost impossible to do on a piano. (Beethoven also calls for a similarly impossible *crescendo* in the slow movement). It seems Beethoven might have been writing for the imagination here rather than the mechanical constraints imposed by 18th century engineering. The end arrives via two surprising modulations from E flat to E major and

then back again to a coda that feels like a faint afterglow of the central stormy episode. Both are underpinned by rapid left hand notes but the moods are entirely different. As Barry Cooper aptly describes it, “it is as if the same scene has been encountered twice – once during a storm and once on a calm day.” After such a memorable journey, the becalmed coda makes for a heartwarming and tranquil homecoming.

Sonata in C minor, Op. 10 No. 1 (composed between 1796-98)

I. *Allegro molto e con brio*
II. *Adagio molto*
III. *Prestissimo*

Like the three sonatas of Op. 2, Beethoven returns to the triptych form for Op. 10 (after his excursion to a single sonata with Op. 7). The idea of publishing as a group of three was driven partly for marketing reasons as Beethoven’s success in selling his works depended heavily on a lively Viennese market of enthusiastic amateurs who would have been more attracted to a package deal of three sonatas, each offering a different musical character. The first two sonatas of Op. 10 are both relatively short, each featuring for the first time just three movements instead of the four movement symphonic template Beethoven had deployed in his first sonatas. Beethoven actually wrote two different *minuets* as possible extra movements for this sonata but in the end rejected them. Beethoven dedicated the set of three to Anna Margarete von Browne, the wife of a Russian diplomat in Vienna who had become an important patron of the composer.

The first sonata in the set is cast in the key of C minor, an iconic key for Beethoven associated with some of his stormiest works such as the *Pathétique* sonata and the Symphony No. 5. Although this sonata doesn’t quite scale the epic heights of those later works, it is still a very fine work and one that begins with fiery opening: a thick

chord followed by an ascending figure, a kind of Mannheim rocket similar to the one featured in the opening of the first Op. 2 sonata in F minor, although this time the angular dotted rhythm adds a new splash of energy. This motif is then followed by a quiet answering phrase.

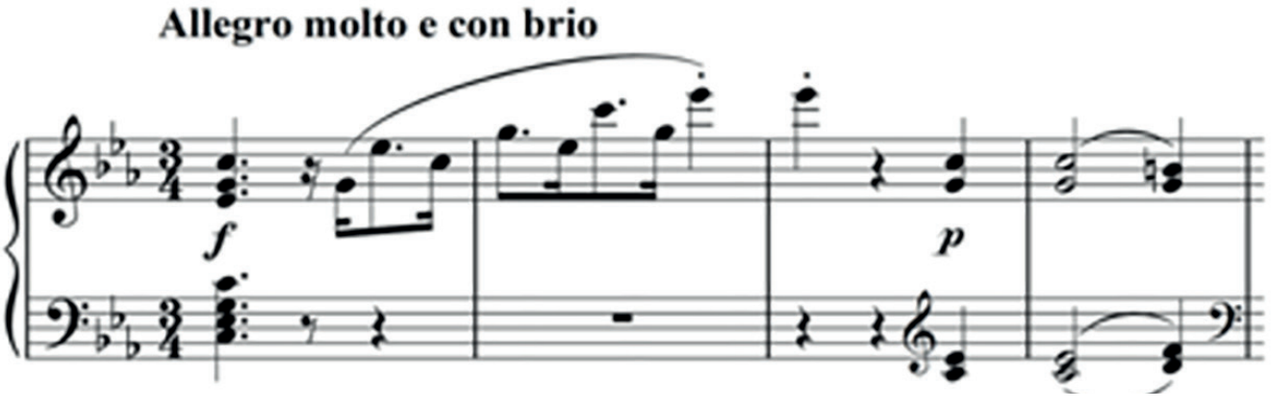

Fig 13. Sonata in C minor, Op. 10 No. 1

The anxious first theme is succeeded by a calmer pleading second theme, setting up a battle between the two moods that persists throughout the movement. The contrasting *Adagio* slow movement begins in tranquil mood and evolves in an almost improvisational way offering rhetorical flourishes and highly intricate ornamented figures. The last *prestissimo* movement recaptures the first movement's energy and agitation, and even features in its very brief development section an unmistakable foreshadow of the famous fate theme from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Belying expectations, the sonata finishes, like Op. 7, quietly but not without taking a devious turn via a coda that starts with a spooky sounding rolled chord marked *Adagio* before a *fortissimo* last gasp of the main theme.

Sonata in F major, Op. 10 No. 2 (composed between 1797-8)

I. *Allegro*
II. *Allegretto*
III. *Presto*

The second sonata of Op. 10 makes for a wonderfully witty and lyrical contrast with the first. It starts with a short bird-like motif followed by a longer expansive melody. The movement is full of jocular gestures with Beethoven playfully insisting on *sforzandi* in surprising places, introducing unexpected modulations and deploying comically syncopated rhythms. After the fun and games of the first movement, the second, a kind of *minuet* marked "Allegretto", takes a darker turn with a melancholic, mysterious opening theme initially played in bald octaves but then more richly harmonized. The central *trio* section offers a ray of sunshine with a solemn chorale but we soon return to the opening theme that Beethoven then offers in more complex variation form. There being no true slow movement, the finale returns to the jaunty mood of the first movement with a lively contrapuntal motif almost akin to a Bach fugue. The theme, shown below, sounds almost like a kind of rustic dance, which runs *moto perpetuo* until the work's cheerful conclusion.

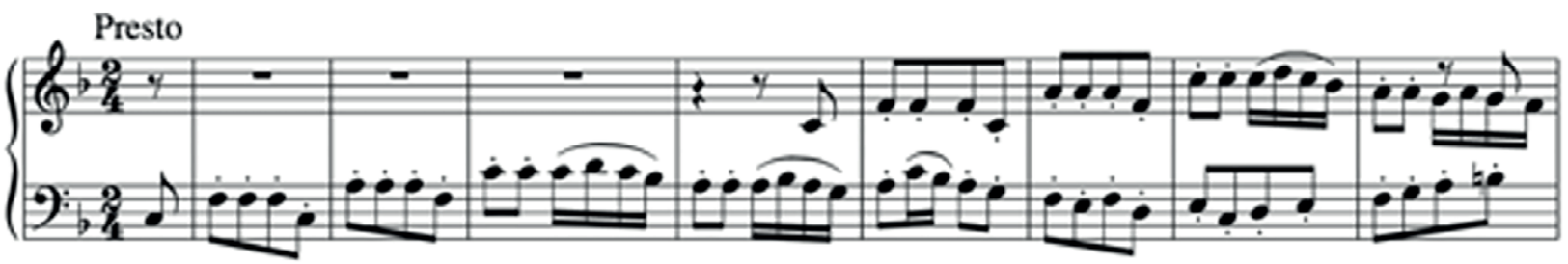

Fig 14. Last movement of Sonata in F major, Op. 10 No. 2

Sonata in D major, Op. 10 No. 3 (composed in 1798)

I. *Presto*
II. *Largo e mesto*
III. *Menuetto: Allegro*
IV. *Rondo: Allegro*

Widely admired as one of Beethoven's first early great masterpieces, this sonata (unlike the first two sonatas of Op. 10, which were in three movements) returns to the four movement format Beethoven used for his first piano sonatas. If the first sonata of Op. 10 was agitated, the second comedic, the third exhibits multiple faces - brilliant, tragic, and comedic. The first movement exemplifies the brilliant, while the slow movement cast in D minor, plunges depths of despair perhaps rivaled among the piano sonatas only by the *Hammerklavier.* The *minuet* that follows offers new hope after the tragedy before it. The revitalization continues with a slightly comedic twist in the finale which opens with a repeated three-note question, answered by a kind of ornamented echo. The whole question and answer phrase itself is repeated in a sequence of variations each of which never quite seems to find closure until we reach the final one, when a beautiful bridging passage presages our return home, in a final fading *pianissimo*.

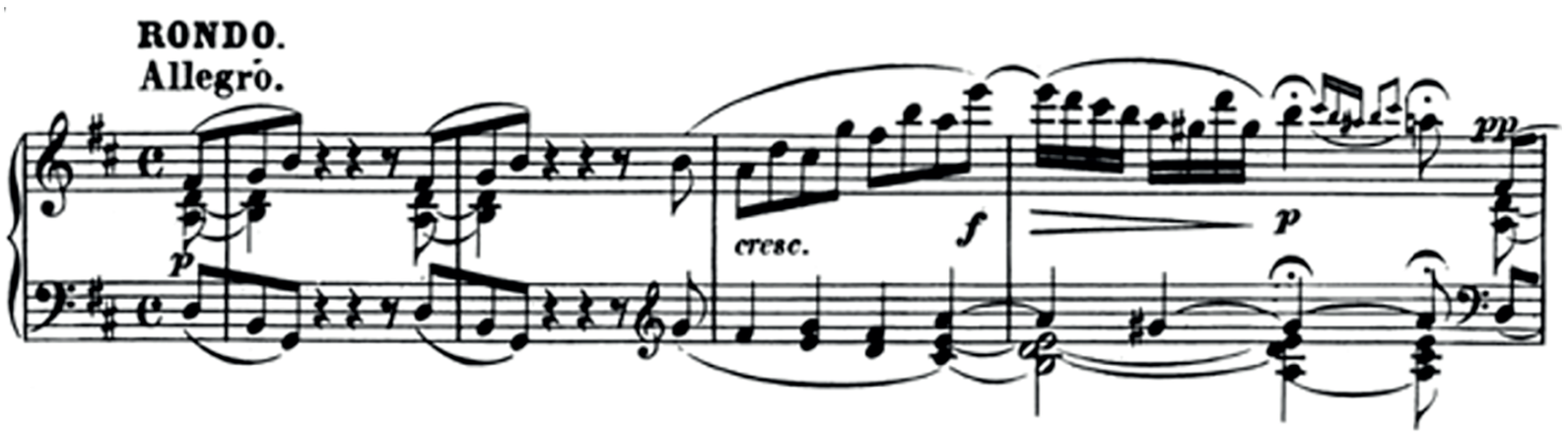

Fig 15. Last movement of Sonata in D major, Op. 10 No. 3

Beethoven was aged 28 when he wrote this sonata, living in the music capital of the world, Vienna, at the height of his performing powers and enjoying great success as both performer and composer. But it's thought he had already begun to experience some deafness and tinnitus so perhaps the tragedy of the slow movement was the first sign of the torment and desolation these would cause him for the rest of his life.

Grande Sonata in C minor, Op. 13 "Pathétique" (composed in 1798)

I. *Grave – Allegro di molto e con brio*
II. *Adagio cantabile*
III. *Rondo: Allegro*

Sometimes people jest that one reason some fine sonatas such as the previous one (Op. 10 No. 3) are not played so often is because they never acquired nicknames. It's thought the sonata Op. 13 was named "Pathétique" either by Beethoven or possibly by his publisher, who may have been impressed by the tragic sonorities of this sonata. Either way, the label met with Beethoven's approval. Branding and marketing were apparently just as important then as now and even a person of Beethoven's artistic temperament was astutely aware of the pressures of the marketplace. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to downplay the significance of this sonata. In Jan Swafford's biography of Beethoven, he writes that the sonata was the first work of Beethoven's to bid for the term "epochal": "From its glowering opening chords, the Pathétique paints pathos like no work before … the music seems not like a depiction of sorrow but sorrow itself."

Set in three movements, the opening of the first begins with a dark slow theme marked "Grave" that serves not as a mere introduction to the stormy *Allegro* that succeeds it, but an essential motivic idea that reappears twice more during the

movement – redeploying now to brilliant effect the pattern he had first unveiled in his second sonata composed when he was twelve.

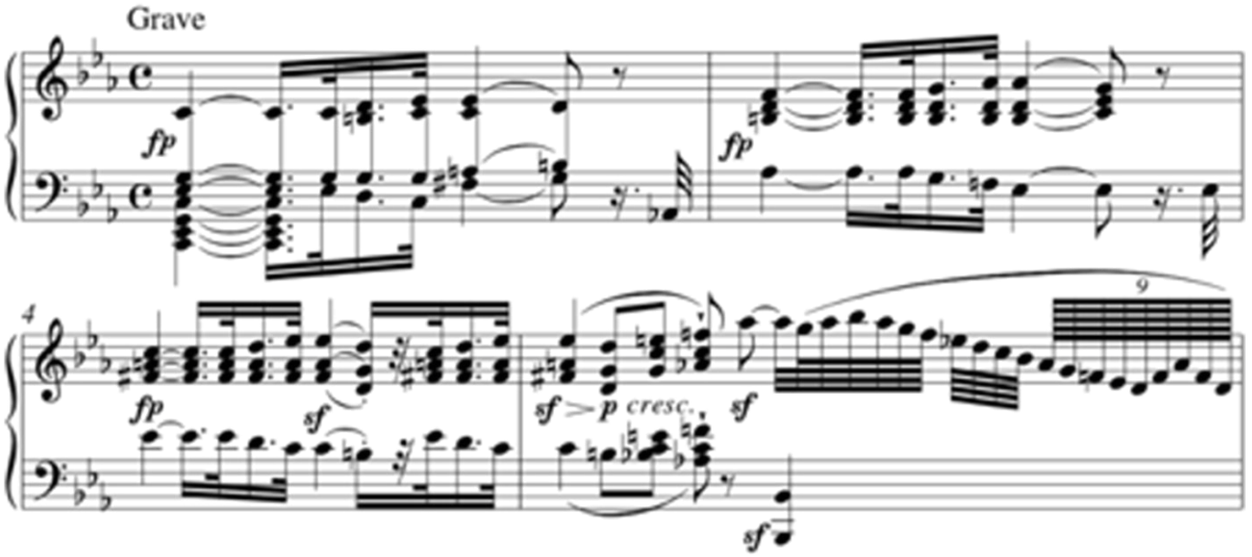

Fig 16. Sonata in C minor, Op. 13 “Pathétique”

The mood of this first movement exemplifies a recurring theme in Beethoven’s special relationship with the key of C minor. Many of his works in this key including the Piano Trio Op. 1 No. 3, the Fifth Symphony, the Violin Sonata No. 7, and, of course, this sonata all exhibit pathos and a stormy heroic quality in abundance. It is perhaps all the more poetic that this was the key for his very first published work the *Dressler* variations and for his very last piano sonata (Op. 111). Nevertheless, as Swafford points out, “[it’s] in the *Pathétique* the full force of Beethoven’s C minor mood is unleashed.”

After the tense drama of the first movement, the glorious song-like middle movement in A-flat major is as sweet as it is beautiful and no doubt an additional factor in contributing to the well-deserved fame of this work. The *cantabile* theme is interrupted by two new ideas before returning for its final appearance interwoven with a triplet figuration that was introduced in the second of those modulating

episodes. The final *Rondo* movement returns to C minor and makes use of a four note rising motif we heard in the first movement and later a modified version of the slow movement theme. One of the features of Beethoven's evolution as a composer we see here is his increasing effort to bring a powerful sense of unity to his works. This sonata was dedicated to Beethoven's great friend and patron, Prince Karl von Lichnowsky, and was immediately a great success on its publication in 1799.

Sonata in E major, Op. 14 No. 1 (composed in 1798)

I. *Allegro*
II. *Allegretto*
III. Rondo: *Allegro comodo*

The two Op. 14 sonatas were dedicated to Baroness Josefa von Braun, wife of the court theater director Baron Peter von Braun, who controlled two of the most important performance venues in Vienna. Beethoven had unsuccessfully sought to secure one of them, the Burgtheater, in the past, but presumably thanks to his savvy choice of dedication was finally able to put on a very successful performance of his First Symphony there in 1800.

The two sonatas occupy a very different ambience from that of their predecessor, the *Pathétique*. Charming and graceful, their avoidance of grand statements is replaced by something more nuanced and intimate. The first sonata in E major also has the distinction of being the only piano sonata that Beethoven rearranged for string quartet. In general he was not a fan of such rearrangements, as he commented in a letter to the music publisher Breitkopf & Härtel that the mania to transplant piano works to string instruments "should stop" as the instruments were "so opposite in every way." Nevertheless, it seems he decided to rearrange this sonata for quartet about two years after finishing the piano version because as he wrote "I was so urgently begged

to do so and I know for certain that nobody else could do it so easily." It's notable that Beethoven's piano scores often feature four-part writing that one can imagine working well among the distinct voices of a string quartet. And yet the transformation is not as simple as it might seem. According to Donald Tovey, the quartet arrangement is a particularly insightful document in that "he takes one of his smallest sonatas and shows that hardly a bar of pianoforte music can be turned into good quartet-writing without quantities of new material besides drastic transformation of the old." The quartet style is readily apparent in the opening of the first movement with a theme that Beethoven directly quotes in the fugue in Sonata Op. 110 (and that we saw previously hinted at in WoO 47 No. 2).

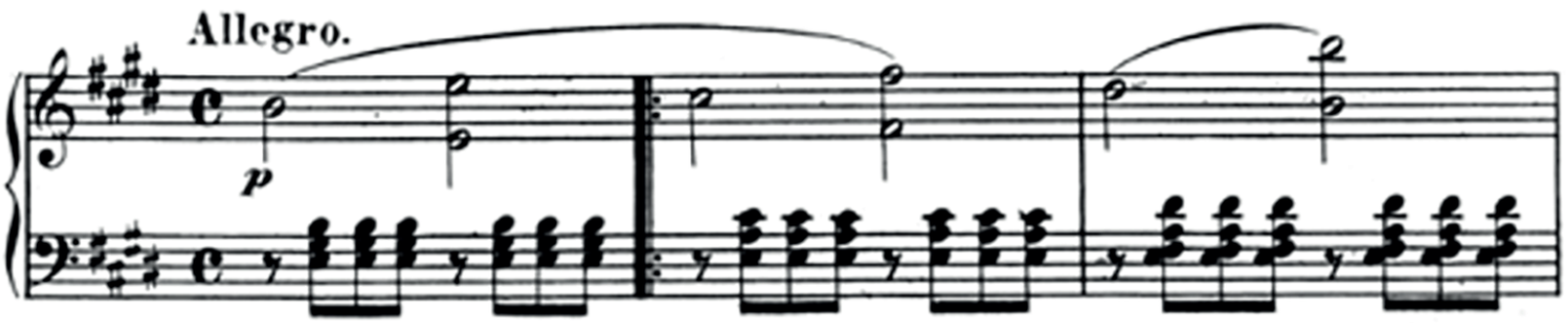

Fig 17. Sonata in E major, Op. 14 No. 1

The first movement's sunny sometimes dream-like quality is succeeded by something darker and more melancholy in the middle *Allegretto* movement cast in E minor. Featuring stabbing *sforzandi*, the movement also contains another of his near impossible crescendo markings on a single held note (we met the same idea in Op. 7). The final movement, a *rondo*, follows without break returning to the optimistic key of E major, this time with the relaxed radiance of the first movement replaced by a dash of brilliance.

Sonata in G major, Op. 14 No.2 (composed between 1798-9)

I. *Allegro*
II. *Andante*
III. Scherzo: *Allegro assai*

One of the shorter members of the set of 35 and scored in three movements, this sonata has been variously described as an “exquisite little work” (Donald Tovey) and “a glorious little comedy” (Steven Ledbetter). Relatively simple in construction and design, the sonata was the second of two dedicated to Baroness Josefine von Braun. The first movement starts with a flowing lyrical theme that is soon succeeded by a charming second theme that is like a lyrical duet for two sopranos singing in thirds - a precursor perhaps for the ever popular *Flower Duet* by Delibes composed in 1883.

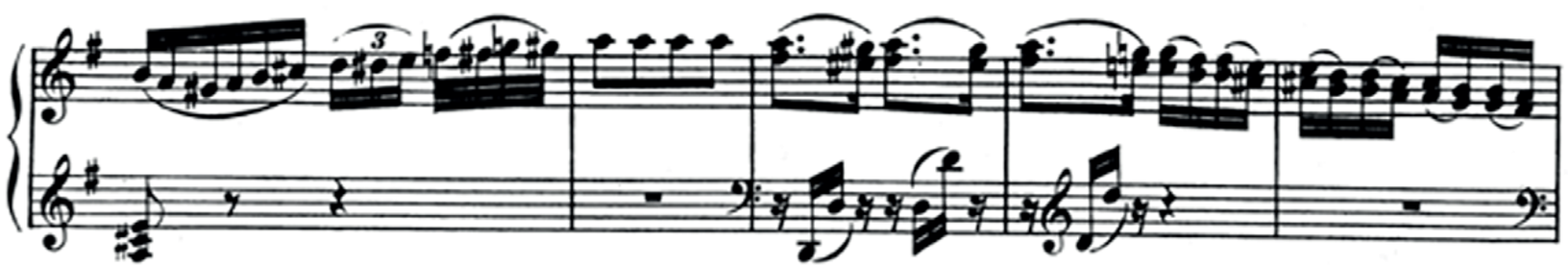

Fig 18. Start of the second theme from the first movement of
Sonata in G major, Op. 14 No. 2

The long development section of this first movement leads into a more dramatic section but overall the emphasis in this work shies away from the stark contrasts often exhibited in earlier sonatas and focuses instead on seamless evolutionary growth.

The second movement features for the first time in mature Beethoven’s piano sonatas (his third *Kurfürst* Sonata presented variations in the middle movement) a theme and variations of which there are three. The theme itself sounds somewhat

comical, consisting of short punctuated notes almost like a military march but these are soon contrasted against a lyrical legato passage. While the first variation eschews the comical short notes by enveloping the theme in a syncopated guise, they return in an even more pointed form in the second variation. They disappear again in the final variation which is marked *molto legato* but then Beethoven closes with a brief reprise of the stuttering march and then caps things off with his biggest laugh, an unexpectedly abrupt *fortissimo* C major chord.

The last movement marked "Scherzo" is actually a *rondo* in *ABA* form and maintains the comical feel of the second movement with an ambiguous rhythm that is marked three in a bar but often sounds like it is skipping along in two.

Grand Sonata in B flat major, Op. 22 (composed in 1800)

I. *Allegro con brio*
II. *Adagio con molto espressione*
III. *Menuetto*
IV. Rondo: *Allegretto*

The Sonata Op. 22 was the third sonata, after Op. 7 and Op. 13, Beethoven deemed worthy of the title "Grand" and, like the much later *Hammerklavier* Sonata Op. 106 also in B flat, it takes on a large scale not least by having four movements. While it has never been particularly popular, it was described by Donald Tovey as the crowning achievement of Beethoven's early "grand" piano sonatas and of all the early sonatas was the one that most pleased the composer himself. The work represents the culmination of Beethoven's classical approach to the piano sonatas modeled on the templates provided by Mozart and Haydn after which he turned to more experimental approaches.

Notwithstanding the classical design, this sonata features unusual tonalities and novel pianistic effects that render it both virtuosic and particularly difficult to play. The material in the first movement might seem somewhat unprepossessing. As Charles Rosen writes “[it]is not picturesque, and neither tragic nor humorous, and it lays no claim to lyricism. It is content simply to be masterly.” On repeated hearing, though, there’s something enormously compelling about the ideas in this movement. The second movement probably sounds more immediately promising, opening as it does with something that sounds a little like an operatic aria in the right hand hovering above a quietly pulsating left hand accompaniment.

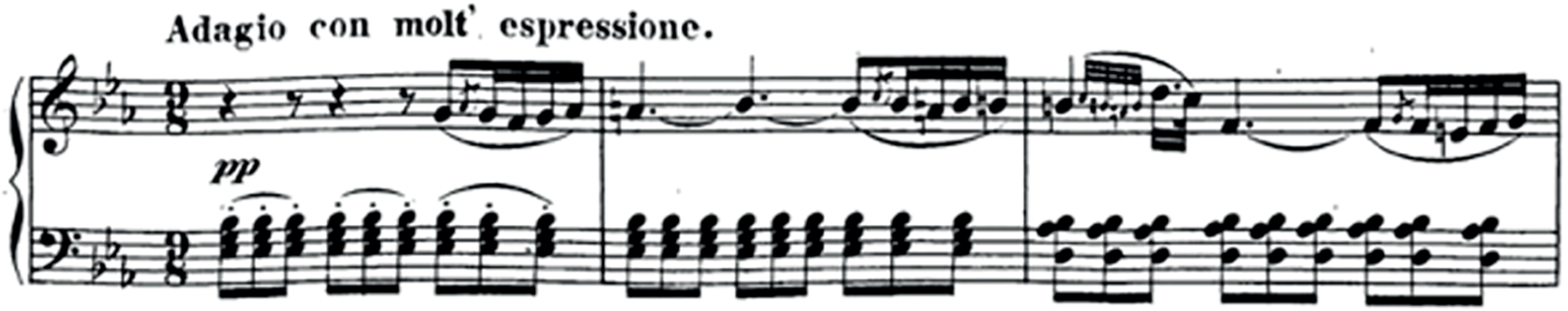

Fig 19. Second movement of the Grand Sonata in B-flat major, Op. 22

The third movement is that most classical of forms, a simple *minuet*, though Beethoven cannot resist spicing it up with some deliciously weird tremolandi effects. The last movement, a rondo *A-B-A-C-A-B-A* Coda form, begins with a delightfully relaxed and optimistic melody that sounds a little like the theme from the last movement of Beethoven’s famous “Spring” Sonata Op. 24 for violin and piano composed around the same time.

Grand Sonata in A flat major, Op.26 (composed between 1800–1801)

I. *Andante con variazioni*
II. *Scherzo, allegro molto*
III. *Marcia funebre (sulla morte d'un Eroe)*
IV. *Allegro*

This sonata, which marks the beginning of a new highly experimental phase in Beethoven's compositions, has an unusual structure adopting in its first movement a theme and variations in a relatively slow tempo. The stately theme is both beautiful and memorable. Schubert, who revered Beethoven clearly took a fancy to it using something that sounds quite similar in one his Impromptus (Op. 142 No. 2). Then in place of a slow second movement, we get a rapid scherzo which in one section, when it goes into A flat minor, foreshadows the extraordinary third movement: a slow funeral march that is titled as commemorating the death of a hero:

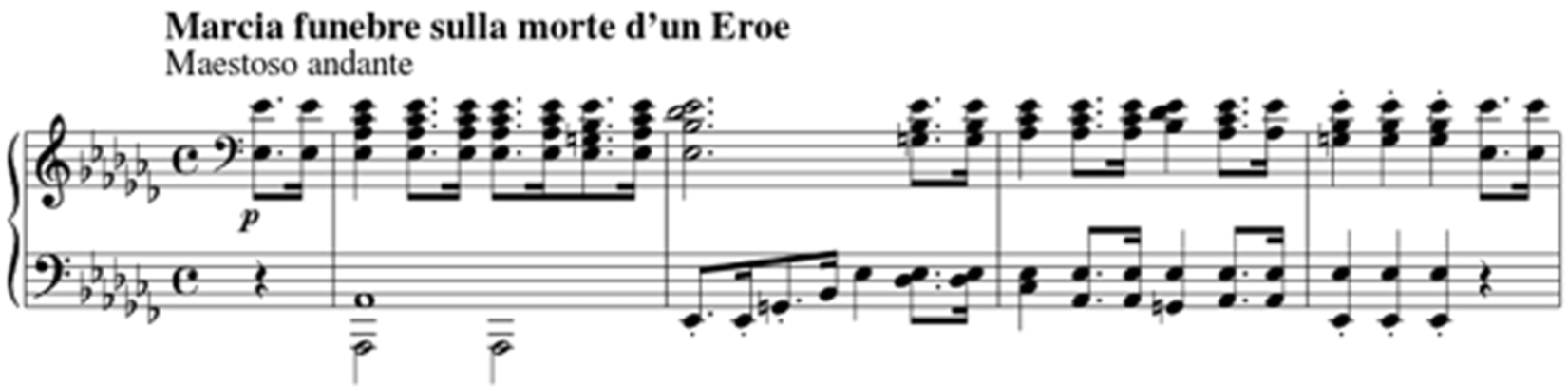

Fig 20. Start of the funeral march in the third movement of Sonata in A-flat major, Op. 26

The notion of a hero's death became a prime psychological component of Beethoven's musical vocabulary anticipating its appearance three years later in the groundbreaking *Eroica* Symphony and the start of Beethoven's heroic or middle period. Chopin, who

otherwise seems not to have taken to Beethoven's works particularly favorably, did admire this sonata and in essence copied the format of the last three movements in his second piano sonata in B minor which features his own funeral march that in modern times is perhaps more famous than Beethoven's. Nevertheless, the success of the A flat sonata was sufficient motivation for Beethoven to arrange his funeral march for orchestra, an arrangement that was played at his own funeral procession in 1827.

With the profound gravitas of the third movement making for a hard act to follow, a playful *rondo* might have seemed too jarring, while a stormy finale would have been too overbearing, so Beethoven penned instead a brief but thoughtful *perpetuum mobile* to round off this work.

Another unusual aspect of this work is that none of the movements are in sonata form and yet the work is still called a sonata. Beethoven clearly delighted in being able to flout convention and get away with it. Here he does so with wonderful aplomb.

Sonata quasi una fantasia in E flat major, Op. 27 No. 1 (composed in 1801)

I. *Andante – Allegro – Tempo I*
II. *Allegro molto e vivace*
III. *Adagio con espressione - Allegro vivace*

Beethoven's Op. 27 consists of two sonatas both entitled "Quasi una fantasia" and both written in 1801 when Beethoven was thirty years old. The first one in E flat major is played much less frequently than the second one in C sharp minor better known as the "Moonlight" sonata. While this first sonata is overshadowed in popularity by its uber-famous sister sonata, its various innovations and moments of great beauty make a good case for this sonata to be aired more often.

Both sonatas adopt structures that depart from the usual conventions of sonata form. The sonata in E flat is roughly in four sections (the third movement consists of a slow introduction to a faster main section) but as in a classical fantasy, there are no breaks between the movements and within each movement there are sometimes sudden speed and mood changes along with recurrences of themes we heard earlier. The first movement begins slowly and adopts an *ABA* structure akin to a *scherzo* and trio rather than the usual sonata form. The opening four bar phrase is immediately striking for its simplicity and grace.

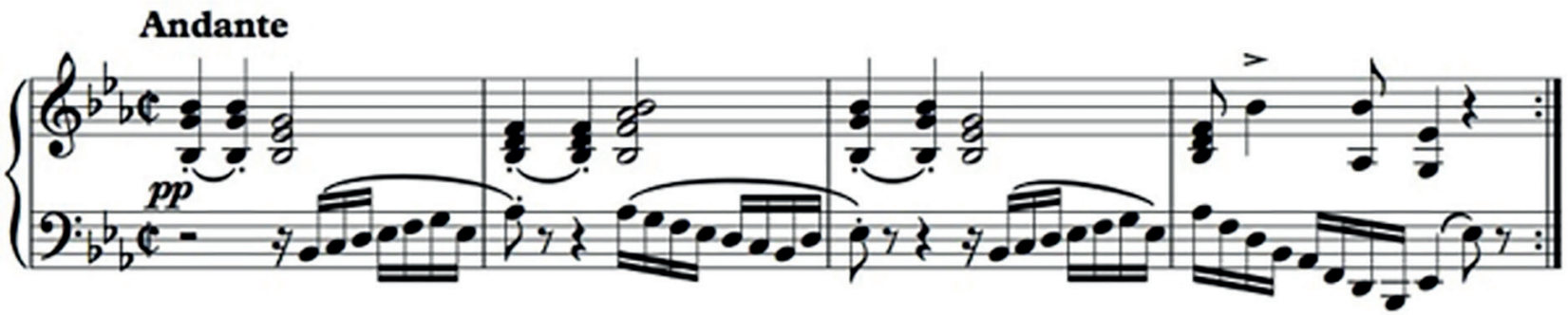

Fig 21. Sonata in E-flat major, Op. 27 No. 1

The first movement is interrupted by a faster, highly contrasting *Allegro* section. The second movement is a darkly tinged fast *scherzo* played largely in parallel octaves which when they return after the high syncopated central trio section, are offset by half a beat between the two hands creating a vibrant new texture as well as a discordant sense of conflict. The climax of the movement comes at the end with a fortissimo conclusion that takes a plunge downwards dramatically setting the stage for the final movement which begins with a hauntingly beautiful slow introduction and cadenza bridge into an extended *rondo*. In the coda, we hear a restatement of the theme from the introduction before the final brief but exhilarating *Presto.* With this remarkable work, in which none of the movements in this work are in sonata form,

we see Beethoven has finally fully broken away from the rigid classical templates of the past.

Sonata quasi una fantasia in C sharp minor, 'Moonlight', Op. 27 No. 2 (composed in 1801)

I. *Adagio sostenuto*
II. *Allegretto*
III. *Presto**

This, Beethoven's most famous sonata, was dedicated to one of his pupils, Countess Giulietta Guicciardi, better known as Julie Guicciardi, a young woman noted for her good looks. In the same year of composing this sonata, Beethoven wrote to a friend noting how much he was haunted by his loss of hearing and how he had been forced to withdraw from society. But now he reported his mood had been much improved: "this change was caused by a sweet, enchanting girl, who loves me and whom I love." It's thought this comment was about the Countess especially as he further admitted he was not in her social class and so could not contemplate marriage. It turns out that though she received the dedication, the sonata was not originally conceived for her. Indeed, the eerily atmospheric first movement has more of a funereal quality to it rather than a message of romantic love. It was the German poet Ludwig Rellsta, who in his 1824 novel *Theodor* likened the effect of the music to that of moonlight shining upon a lake. However, the adoption of the name "Moonlight" didn't happen until much later and was therefore unknown to Beethoven but it stuck even though many people have criticized the appellation. The pianist Edwin Fischer, for example, pointed out a similarity between the opening theme and the scene in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* when the Commendatore is killed. The notes almost seem like they are transposed from Mozart's original to C sharp minor. Seen in this light, the movement is indeed a funeral march albeit one of striking depth and beauty. The sonority is

enhanced by Beethoven's unusual instruction to keep the dampers on the piano lifted throughout. The movement was an immediate hit in Beethoven's day – so much so that the composer became exasperated by its popularity which he felt came at the expense of other works he considered to be better.

Like the previous work Op. 27 No 1, the opening slow movement makes for a surprising start to a sonata where the usual convention was to begin with something lively and expansive. After this moody opening, the second movement is a surprisingly cheerful *allegretto scherzo* that Liszt described as being like a "flower growing between two abysses." Which brings us to the stormy finale:

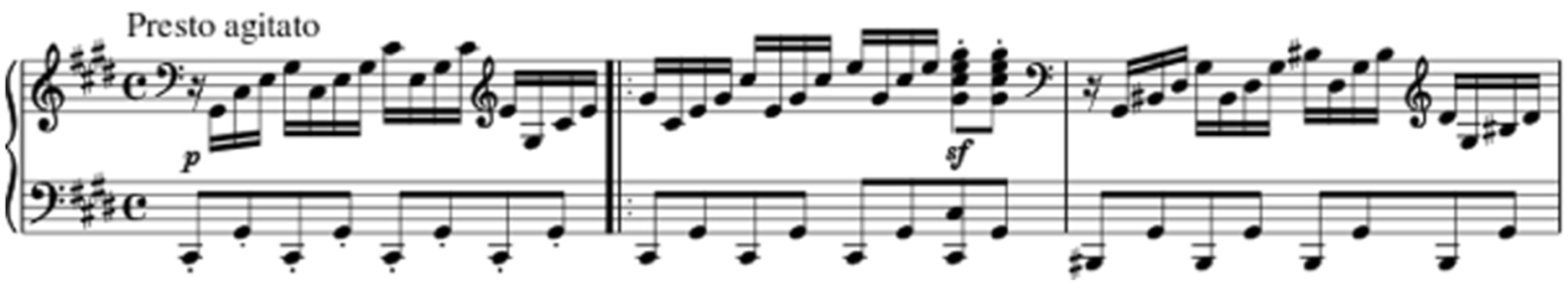

Fig 22. Last movement of Sonata in C sharp minor, Op. 27 No. 2 "Moonlight"

The weight of the first two movements is counterbalanced by this breathtaking last movement - a bravura creation full of virtuosic arpeggios and strongly accented notes. In both sonatas of Op. 27, Beethoven effectively shifted the center of gravity of the sonata from its usual place in the first movement to the last. Having conceived such a mesmerizing opening movement, it's a tribute to Beethoven's boundless creativity that he somehow managed to muster something more than satisfyingly powerful in the last, so much so that we are left feeling blown away by the sonata's conclusion.

*Note the tempo indication for the last movement is often marked *Presto agitato,*

but Barry Cooper's edition marks it simply as *Presto* with a separate marking in the opening bars indicating *agitato* because this is the way it is shown in Beethoven's autograph score.

Grand Sonata in D major, 'Pastoral', Op. 28 (composed in 1801)

I. *Allegro*
II. *Andante*
III. Scherzo: *Allegro vivace*
IV. Rondo: *Allegro ma non troppo*

After the spectacular but unrelenting drama of the previous sonata's devastating finale, the Grand Sonata Op. 28 in D comes as a welcome restorative. Unlike his Sixth Symphony, which the composer named "Pastoral" for its explicit programmatic content relating to nature and the elements, Beethoven's Op. 28 piano sonata, acquired its nickname from a London publisher. The label seems perfectly apt, though, because of the sonata's reverberating sense of reflective calm, particularly in the outer movements.

Set on a grand scale in four movements, the work harks back to the symphonic classical model Beethoven had established prior to the adventures he had taken in his previous two fantasy sonatas including the *Moonlight*. The *Pastoral* begins with a quietly repeating note in the bass rather like the effect of the timpani quietly announcing the opening of Beethoven's violin concerto.

Rising above the bass drone, a beautiful and serene melody emerges. The theme gradually develops and leads to a second equally beautiful and again very serene theme. It's not until the development section that we hear something more turbulent. But this eventually gives way to an interruption broken by silence that the

pianist Edwin Fischer likened to a child looking innocently into a room full of adults who suddenly stop talking. It's a lovely moment that brings us back to the opening serenity once more.

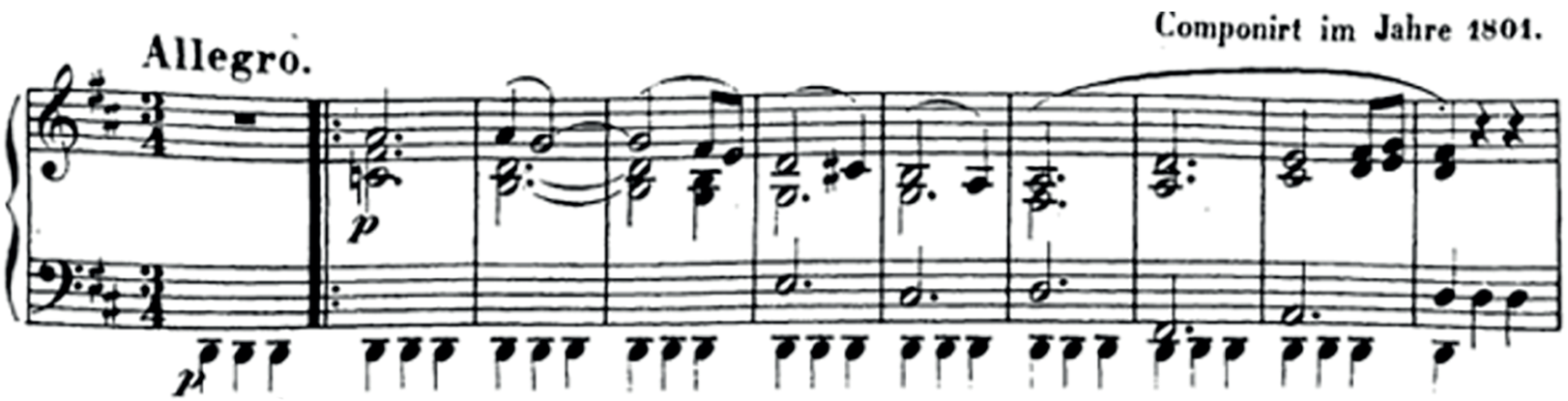

Fig 23. Sonata in D major, 'Pastoral', Op. 28

The second movement is like an *ABA* song form set in D minor and sounds distinctly darker with a staccato semiquaver bass accompanying a hauntingly sombre theme. The mood is cheered by a flyby through the tonic D major in the central section but we return to sombre-ville for the rest of the movement that finally finishes in the absence of the moving bass line. The *scherzo* is bright and playful by comparison, serving as a more optimistic bridge to the rustic charm of the last movement, which brings us back to the pastoral mood of the first. While this last movement carries us along with gentle lyricism again, the mood is buffeted at times by powerful headwinds and as a final flourish there's a faster moving coda marked *Piu allegro quasi presto* that makes for a dazzling ending.

Sonata in G major, Op. 31 No. 1 (composed in 1802)

I. *Allegro vivace*
II. *Adagio grazioso*
III. Rondo: *Allegretto*

This sonata comes just beyond the half-way point in our journey through the complete sonatas (exactly half-way if you only count the 32 sonatas with opus numbers). It also coincidentally represents something of a turning point in Beethoven's evolution as a composer. According to Carl Czerny, between the composition of the Sonata Op. 28, and the three sonatas of Op. 31 Beethoven told one of his friends: "I am not very well satisfied with the work I have thus far done. From this day on I shall take a new way."

What exactly was this new way? Beethoven had surely already made incredible strides in finding new ways in his earlier sonatas especially, for example, the fantasy sonatas of Op. 27. Musicologist William Kinderman writes that the remark about "a new way" needs to be interpreted cautiously because "close examination of the music reveals deep continuities with Beethoven's earlier and later works." According to Barry Cooper, it is possible that Beethoven's "new way" was actually referring not to these sonatas but to two contemporary sets of variations – Op. 34 and the *Eroica Variations* of Op. 35 – as he described these works as "entirely new." Kinderman also argues that Beethoven's remark may have been triggered by his irritation over the claim of a rival composer (and noted flautist) Anton Reicha to have found "a new method of writing fugues." Nevertheless, there is more than a sense in which the deeply impressive set of sonatas of Op. 31 can be seen to push boundaries.

The first work of Op. 31 has often been described as Beethoven's most comedic piano sonata. From its very opening the left hand is anticipated by the right by a semiquaver,

and repeated in the broken chords that follow, as if the composer were making fun of bad pianists who could not play both hands simultaneously.

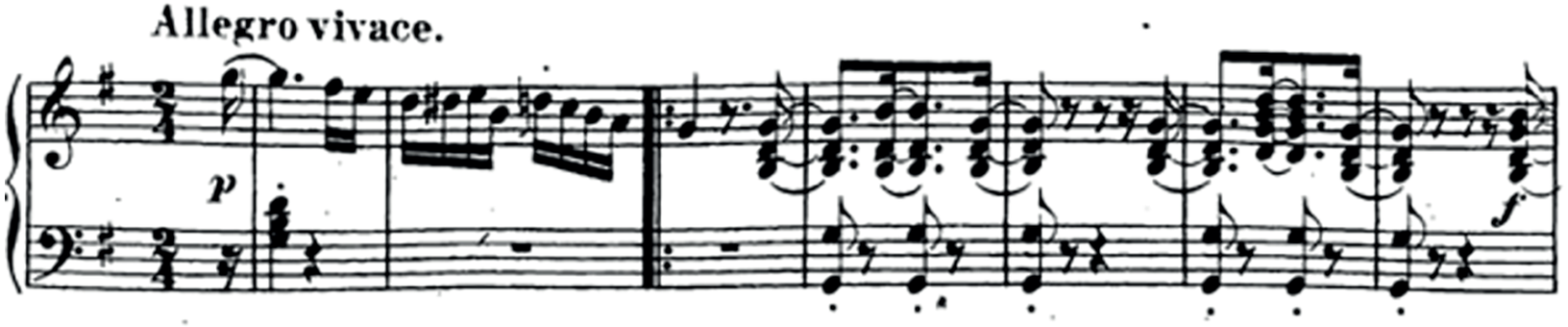

Fig 24. Sonata in G major, Op. 31 No. 1

Beethoven makes much use of this unsynchronized gesture while sometimes contrasting with chords that are fully synchronized, lest anyone doubt that the pianist was not truly on top of their game. Another delightful aspect of this first movement is the use of rapid switching between major and minor keys, a feature one came to see prominently in the music of Schubert, who was a great admirer of Beethoven.

The slow movement continues the joke with a parody of Italian opera - particularly *opera buffa.* Beethoven was much irked by the huge success of some Italian composers, particularly Rossini, and this movement, by being hugely overblown and heavily ornamented, was almost assuredly his satirical take on what he regarded as the bloviation of his contemporaries. The movement, though, is not without some profound Beethovenian moments that you would be hard pressed to find in comedic Italian opera. The last movement is a cheerful *Allegretto* rondo that starts off like a stately gavotte but finishes in a lively *presto*. The final laugh is from Beethoven as he has the two hands play, like at the beginning, out of sync only to arrive together on the very last chord.

Sonata in D minor, 'Tempest', Op. 31 No. 2 (composed in 1802)

I. *Largo – Allegro*
II. *Adagio*
III. *Allegretto*

When asked what the first movement of this sonata was about, Beethoven, according to his friend and assistant Anton Schindler, replied "read Shakespeare's *The Tempest*." Unfortunately, Schindler proved to be, at best, an unreliable witness who even went to the trouble of forging or erasing entries in Beethoven's conversation books to put both himself and Beethoven in a better light.

Certainly, the sonata does not reference the plot or the characters of the play in any obvious programmatic way. Some commentators have argued the work's mood and expressiveness may somehow resonate with Shakespeare's metaphysical themes but it's just as likely the appellation seemed appropriate simply because of the sonata's undeniably powerful and stormy atmosphere. On this point, Donald Tovey wrote "There is a mood common to both… With all the tragic power of its first movement, the D-minor Sonata is, like Prospero, almost as far beyond tragedy as it is beyond mere foul weather."

It is in this sonata that we perhaps find yet another answer to what Beethoven meant by finding "a new way", for the *Tempest* sonata is one of his truly great indisputable masterpieces. It starts with a short dreamy recitative, a slow introduction that is unusual for being set in a different key from the tonic of D minor. The quiet opening sets things up for the launch of a new faster episode that lands on a dissonant chord. We hear the quiet recitative again in a very different key and then again we're launched into the face of what turns out to be a full storm. By combining so many changes of

mood and tempi within such a short space of time, we see here what Beethoven may have been striving for: a new level of compression and shocking contrasts.

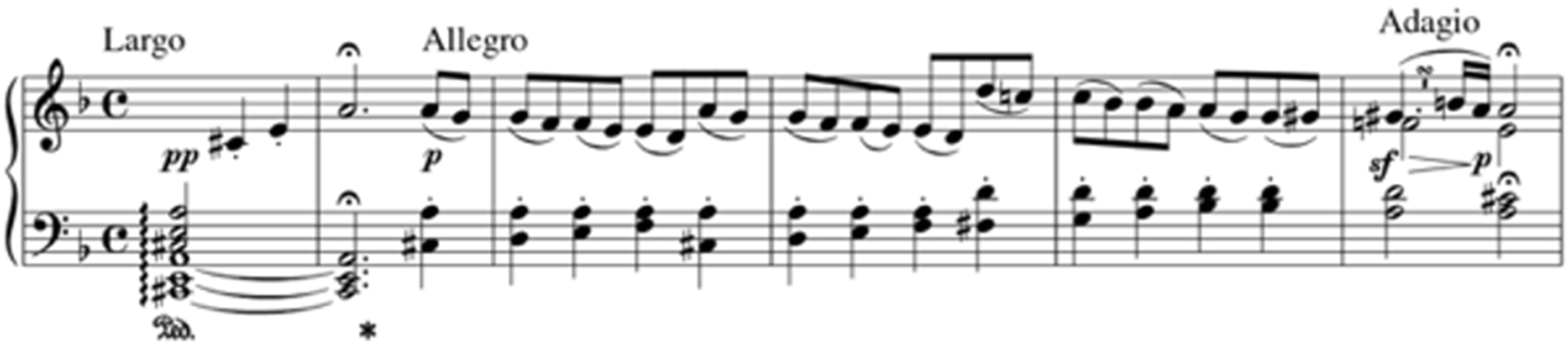

Fig 25. Sonata in D Minor, 'Tempest', Op. 31 No. 2

The conclusion of this powerhouse first movement includes another longer recitative that presages the final gasp of the tempest which once exhausted subsides into the lower registers with 'distant thunder' as Carl Czerny described it. The middle slow movement begins, like the first movement, with a quietly rolled chord but what follows comes as sunny relief. The becalmed mood is adorned by an exquisitely beautiful second theme, and yet continued distant thunder, now in the form of an occasional drum-like figure, hints at further troubles to come. And sure enough in the finale marked *Allegretto*, we get another dark and turbulent movement in the form of perpetual motion that irrepressibly brings us against the elements. The conclusion arrives in a moment of profound resignation as the music fades to black. If there's symbolism here, the human struggle against darker forces and the fragility and evanescence of our own existence come to mind, a point Shakespeare's Prospero also makes when he utters the immortal line "We are such stuff as dreams are made on."

Sonata in E flat major, Op. 31 No.3 (composed in 1802)

I. *Allegro*
II. Scherzo: *Allegretto vivace*
III. Menuett:. *Moderato e grazioso*
IV. *Presto con fuoco*

The third of the set of three Op. 31 sonatas is the E flat major sonata. After the comedy of the first and the drama of the second, the Sonata in E flat represents Beethoven in lyrical mode though with touches of comedy too. It's the only member of the set in four movements although the sonata contains no slow movement. Instead the inner two movements are in *scherzo* and *minuet* form.

The first movement opens with a harmonically intriguing and questioning three note motif that with multiple *ritardandos* and *fermatas* playfully avoids reaching its true home key until the seventeenth bar. This idea provides the seed from which the rest of the movement grows.

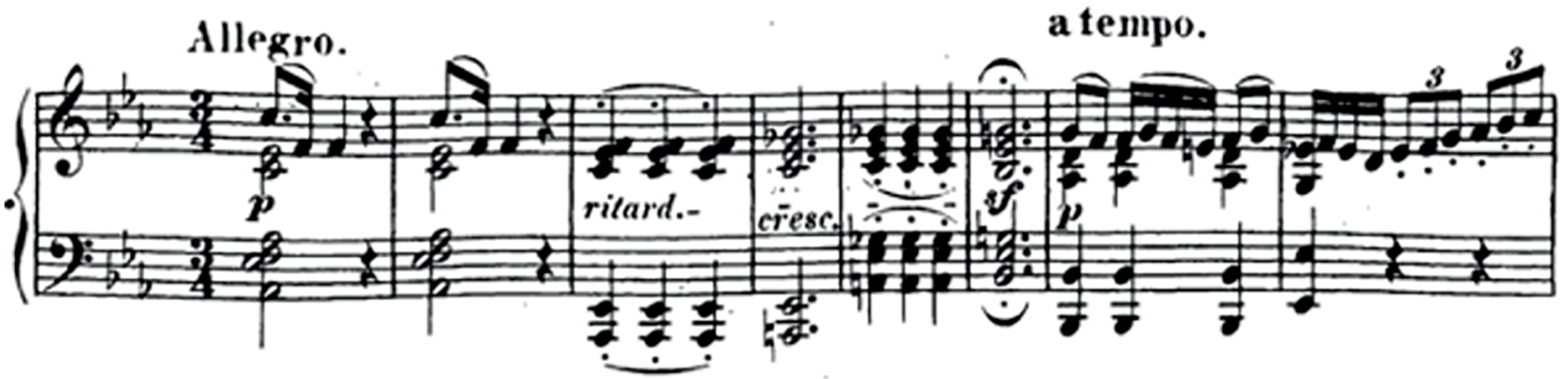

Fig 26. Sonata in E-flat major, Op. 31 No. 3

The second movement, a *scherzo*, begins with an amusing almost comical *staccato* bass underlining a chorale like theme in the right hand. After a quiet almost faltering

interlude, an abrupt pair of *fortissimo* chords announces a new direction before once again returning us to the main theme. Instead of following this with a slow movement, Beethoven chooses a short *minuet* movement that features a graciously elegant melody, and a trio section on which Saint-Saëns based a set of variations for two pianos.

The last *Presto* movement presents a lively gallop whose *con fuoco* energy and rhythm led the French to give it the nickname of "*La Chasse*." Like the last movement of the previous sonata in Op. 31, the movement takes the form of a *perpetuum mobile* in 6/8 time. The galloping effect is also reminiscent of the last movement of Schubert's great Piano Sonata in C minor D.958 which Beethoven's sonata may have inspired. But unlike the darkness evoked by both the *Tempest* Sonata and Schubert's Sonata, the mood here is one of unalloyed joy.

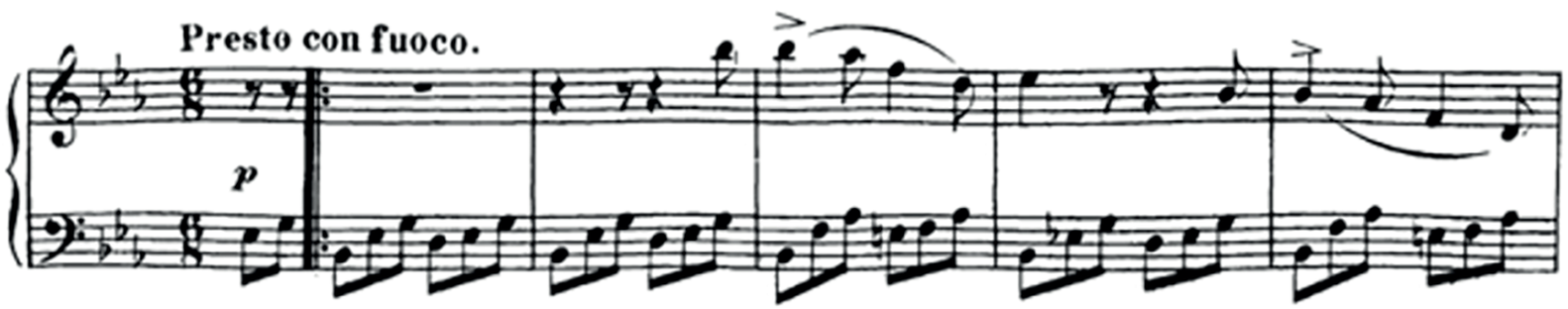

Fig 27. Beginning of the last movement of the Sonata in E-flat major, Op. 31 No. 3

Sonata in C major, Op. 53 'Waldstein' (composed in 1804)

I. *Allegro con brio*
II. Introduzione: *Adagio molto*
III. Rondo: *Allegretto moderato – Prestissimo*

Among the most famous piano sonatas from Beethoven's middle period, Op. 53 was dedicated to Count Ferdinand Ernst Gabriel von Waldstein, one of Beethoven's closest friends and patrons, and the man who helped the young Beethoven leave his hometown of Bonn in 1792 for the music capital of the world, Vienna. It was Waldstein, who, recognizing Beethoven's potential, wrote to Beethoven, "With the help of assiduous labour, you shall receive Mozart's spirit from Haydn's hands."

In writing this sonata, Beethoven took advantage of the new possibilities opened up by developments in piano technology. The year before he had taken delivery of a new Erard piano with a number of novel features including an additional half-octave keyboard range in the upper register. These improvements helped Beethoven create new sonorities and textures that stretched the potentialities of both instrument and technique to unprecedented limits.

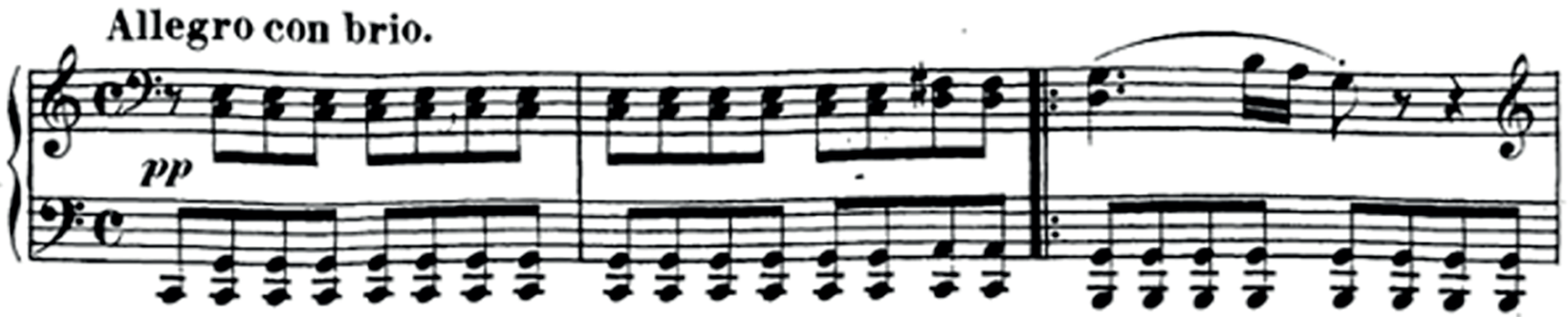

Fig 28. Sonata in C major, Op. 53 'Waldstein'

The *Waldstein* sonata begins distinctly with repeated chords followed by a brief rising and then descending figure. Beethoven then suddenly shifts the same passage down a tone from C major to B-flat major, a colorful innovation that he used again in other works.

Beethoven wrote the short middle movement entitled *Introduzione* as a replacement for a much longer piece, the *Andante favori* (See page 21). Despite its popularity, Beethoven's was advised that the *Andante* didn't really fit. Although much annoyed by the criticism, he went on to write a brilliantly conceived highly compressed short movement that serves as a far better bridge into the dazzling third movement, a *rondo* that contains one of Beethoven's more technically difficult passages: a three part spectacular featuring a continuous trill, with melody in the right hand accompanied by rapid scales in the left hand.

Sonata in F major, Op. 54, (composed in 1804)

I. *In Tempo d'un Menuetto*
II. *Allegretto - Più allegro*

Appearing between those two masterpieces, the *Waldstein* and the *Appassionata*, this sonata is a veritable oddity: "a valley between two mountains" as Barry Cooper calls it. One of his least known and perhaps least liked piano sonatas, Op. 54 was written at about the same time as Beethoven was composing his Symphony No. 5 yet it shares nothing of the sweeping grandeur and heroism of the latter work. Cast in just two short movements the sonata takes concision to a new level.

The opening movement presents a snippet of melody that halts after only four measures and then repeats itself. As the Canadian pianist Anton Kuerti, put it, "Perhaps Beethoven is mocking somebody who is trying to improvise but who gets stuck here and there, and this goes on until something new is desperately needed."

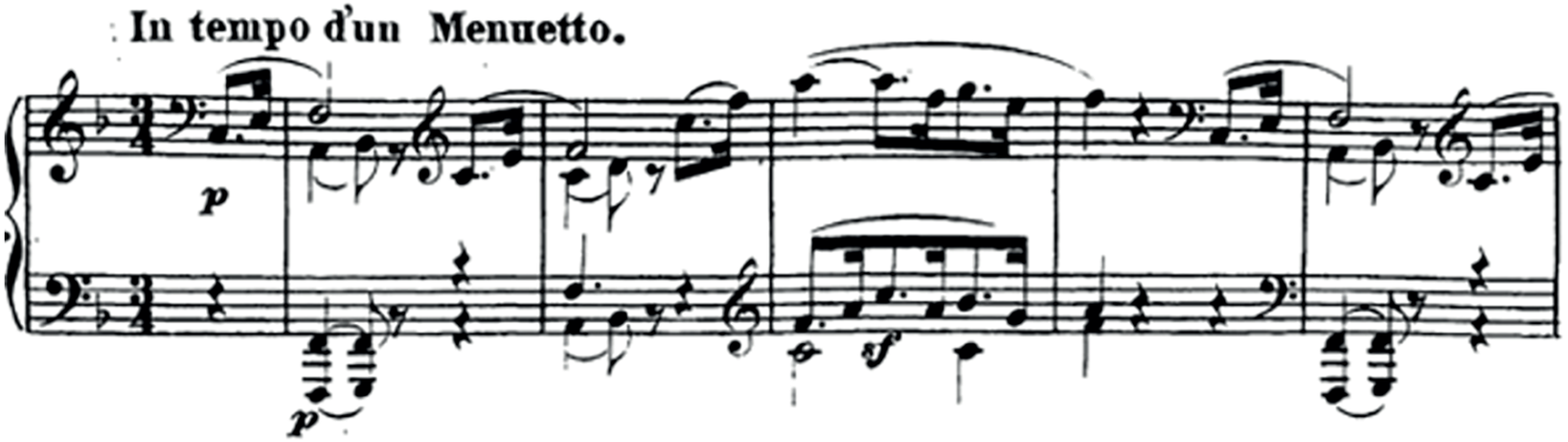

Fig 29. Sonata in F major, Op. 54

Although the movement is marked as being “in the tempo of a minuet”, it is less of a *minuet* than a *rondo* in *ABABA* form where the *A* section is the melodic snippet and its many variants and the *B* section consists of what could be mistaken as an energetic exercise in octaves. What to make of this strange alternating concoction? Despite the sonata’s critics, it has many eminent defenders who highlight its austere beauty and hidden poetry. The basic melody of the movement may be slender, but after multiple exposures to it in increasingly sophisticated and beautiful guises, the effect becomes quite entrancing. At the end of the movement, these variations build to something of a frenzy culminating in a highly dissonant *fortissimo* chord repeated many times as it fades away before the final pay off. Even in this relatively barren landscape, Beethoven knows how to plant a thrill.

The next movement makes for a notable contrast. As Kuerti noted, tongue in cheek: “while the first movement sounded stuttering and constipated, then the second is certainly suffering from the opposite disease.” Indeed, the movement is something of a *moto perpetuo* that Beethoven’s pupil Czerny likened to an *étude*. Again, defenders

of this work decry such characterizations as a fundamental misunderstanding: the relentless torrent of notes are not without their own beauty and shape that outline at times a chorale like theme while at other times abrupt modulations allow for surprising new directions. There's also something of a stylistic parallel with the last movement of the Grand Sonata in A-flat Op.26 almost as if that work had found its partner from the bizarro world. What exactly Beethoven was thinking of when he wrote this sonata is not well documented, but its iconoclastic nature suggests that the composer was by now sufficiently self-assured to no longer feel the need to be guided and constrained by the ghosts of the past.

Sonata in F Minor, Op. 57 "Appassionata" (composed in 1804-5)

I. *Allegro assai*
II. *Andante con moto*
III. *Allegro ma non troppo - Presto*

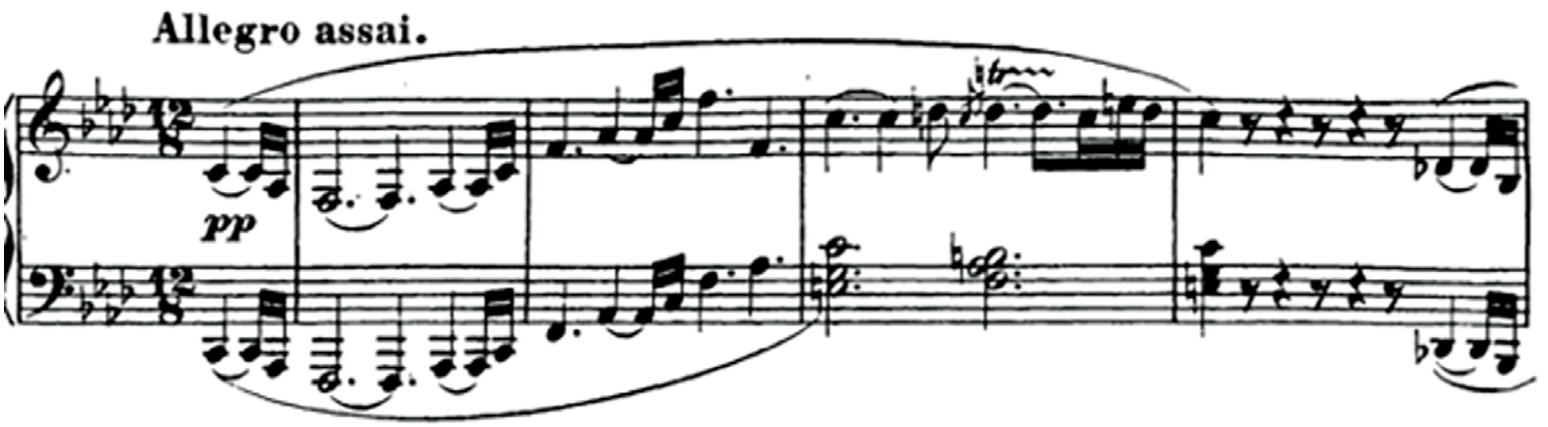

Fig 30. Sonata in F Minor, Op. 57 "Appassionata"

After the strange little sonata of Op. 54, came this earth-shattering work, one that might have been even more deserving of the nickname "Tempest" than the Sonata Op. 31 No. 2. In mood, it is the polar opposite of the *Waldstein* and the name

"Appassionata" was given years after the composer's death by one of his publishers. Beethoven wrote the sonata a year after recognizing the irreversibility of his progressively deteriorating hearing and in the aftermath of writing the *Eroica* and Fifth symphonies. As usual, he manages to deploy huge contrasts in dynamics, range, and articulation but with unprecedented impact. The *mysterioso* opening is a case in point (see figure 30 above).

The hushed *pianissimo* entrance, interspersed with a brief silence and then a sudden shift upwards in key by a semitone, sets things up for the explosive storm to come. The opening even contains hints of the fate theme from the Fifth Symphony (composed 1804-8), a motif that returns to haunt the whole movement. After several volcanic outbursts, we're led into the eye of the storm but even here, there are sudden moments of deceptive tranquillity when Beethoven brilliantly reworks the opening motif into a lovely second theme. But despite these moments of respite, the storm prevails with full force concluding in the final eruption of the movement's devastating coda where the main theme re-emerges in a new guise full of bleak portent.

After such an emotional onslaught, Beethoven provides a serene middle movement that features a beautiful theme and variations in D-flat major, a key much frequented in the first movement:

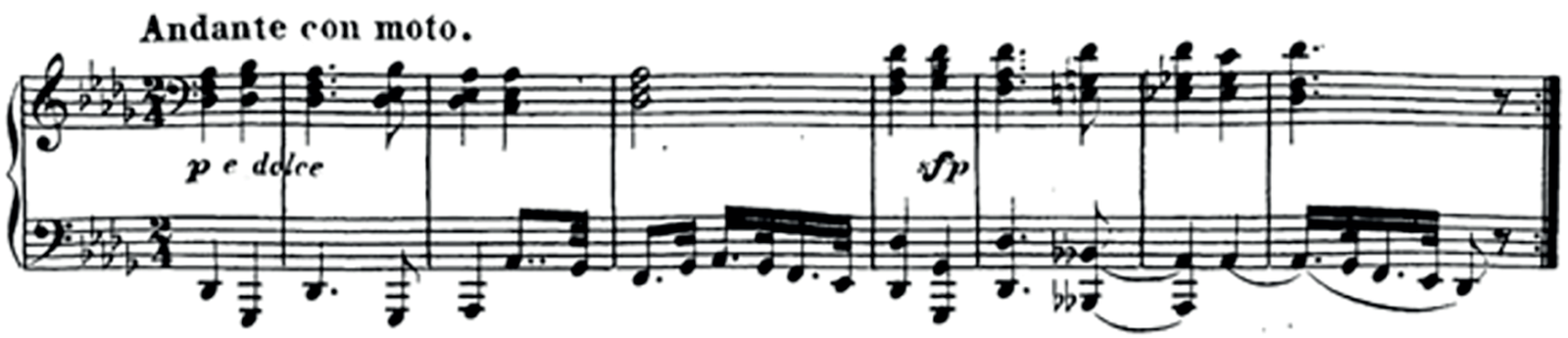

Fig 31. Theme from the slow movement of Sonata in F minor, Op. 57 "Appassionata"

The variations exhibit progressively shorter and higher note values that perhaps help to convey the impression of the sun beginning to come out. But towards the end of the final variation we return to fragments of the main theme finishing on a mysterious final chord. Without break, the last apocalyptic movement begins with the same chord struck out in a dotted rhythm that signposts the doom to which are now headed. A near *moto perpetuo*, the movement presents a terrifying vision that somehow tops all that we have heard before it. Carl Czerny commented that "Perhaps Beethoven (who was ever fond of representing natural scenes) imagined to himself the waves of the sea on a stormy night while cries of distress are heard from afar." The movement climaxes in a faster *Presto* section that begins with a new theme that András Schiff has described as a kind of demonic Hungarian dance akin to Listz's *Csárdás Macabre* (it's worth noting here Schiff is Hungarian himself). Donald Tovey noted that this sonata is one of only a handful of Beethoven's works in sonata form that end in tragedy. As such it represents one of his most famous and powerful works from the composer's middle period and can be seen as a crucial waypoint on the extraordinary odyssey that took him into his visionary late period.

Sonata in F-sharp major, 'à Thérèse', Op. 78 (composed in 1809)

I. *Adagio cantabile - Allegro ma non troppo*
II. *Allegro vivace*

After the *Appassionata*, a work Beethoven himself considered to be his greatest piano sonata to date, one wonders whether the composer suffered from a bad case of "what next?" After a break of nearly five years, the result was a sudden burst of creativity with three new sonatas including the famous *Les Adieux* Sonata along with this Op. 78 Sonata cast in the esoteric key of F sharp major. The sonata's dedication to one of Beethoven's pupils and a member of the Hungarian nobility, Countess Thérèse von Brunswick, has caused some scholars to speculate that she

was Beethoven's mysterious "Immortal Beloved", rather than her sister Josephine, to whom Beethoven wrote numerous love letters. Either way, the work eschews the tempestuous drama of the *Appassionata*, and while short, is very beautiful and joyful. Before the *Hammerklavier*, this sonata along with the *Appassionata* became Beethoven's favorites. Indeed, he complained to friends that his sonata in C sharp minor (later known as the 'Moonlight') rather than this one in F-sharp major enjoyed far greater popularity.

Cast in two movements, the first opens with a brief introduction followed by the beautiful main theme. The slow introduction is unusual in that we never hear it again. The second movement is a humorous *rondo* that features a thematic quote from Thomas Arne's "Rule, Britannia", on which Beethoven had already written a set of variations in 1803. The movement delights in sudden contrasts in dynamics, and major and minor modes, concluding in high spirits.

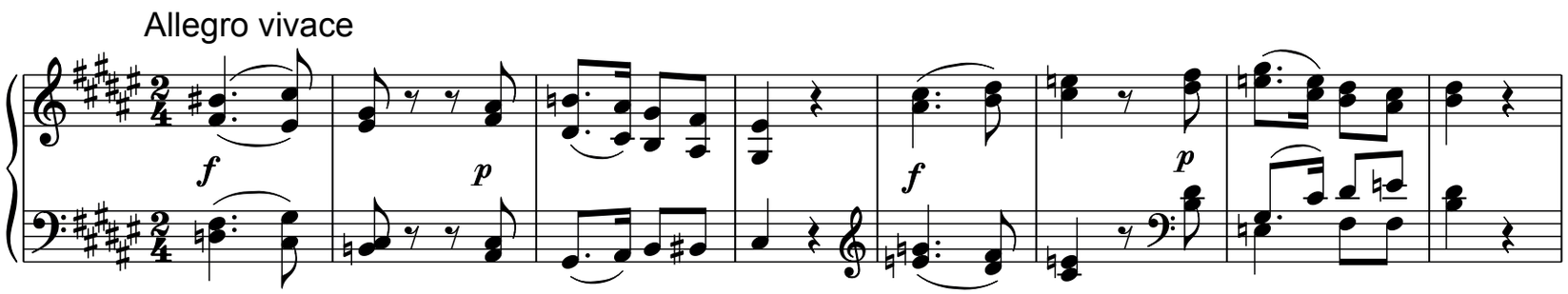

Fig 32. Second movement of Sonata in F-sharp major, Op. 78

Sonata in G major, Op. 79 (composed in 1809)

I. *Presto alla tedesca*
II. *Andante*
III. *Vivace*

Following the five year hiatus after the *Appassionata*, Beethoven's incentive to return to writing piano sonatas came in the form of a two-year-old commission from pianist and composer, Muzio Clementi, who made a deal to become Beethoven's English publisher. Beethoven started work in 1808 on three new works including the short sonata Op. 78, this sonata Op. 79, and the *Choral Fantasy* Op. 80. Op. 79 is one of Beethoven's shortest sonatas in three movements and being lighter than usual was published as "Sonatine" or "*Sonata facile*" at the composer's suggestion. While the work is much less substantial than his big sonatas and was clearly meant to be a relatively easy piece, the first movement of the work, which lasts only about 3 minutes if played without repeat, is still considered to be remarkably tricky to play. It starts exuberantly with a three note motif (*G - B - G*) that reappears throughout the movement.

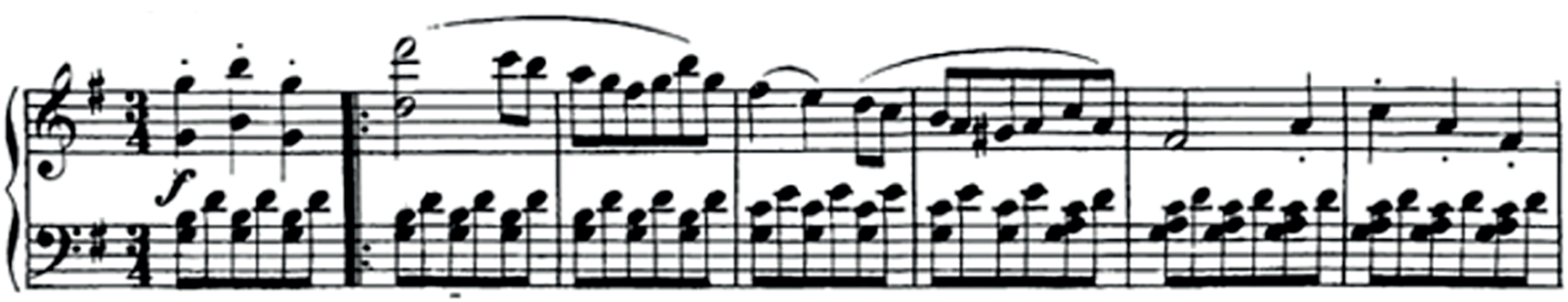

Fig 33. Sonata in G major, Op. 79

The first movement marking *Presto alla tedesca* implies a fast tempo in the style of a German peasant dance or *Ländler*, a kind of forerunner to the Viennese waltz. The *Andante* slow movement in G minor makes a tranquil contrast with the first, and, with its soulful melody and gently rocking accompaniment, may have provided inspiration for Mendelssohn when he wrote his Venetian songs without words. The last *rondo* movement returns to the light mood of the first beginning with a chord progression that Beethoven reused in a very different guise in the opening of his piano sonata Op. 109 in E major.

Sonata in E flat major, 'Les Adieux', Op. 81a (composed between 1809-10)

I. Das Lebewohl (Les Adieux - The Farewell): *Adagio - Allegro*
II. Abwesenheit (L'Absence - The Absence): *Andante espressivo (In gehender Bewegung, doch mit viel Ausdruck - In walking motion, but with much expression)*
III. Das Wiedersehen (Le Retour - The Return): *Vivacissimamente (Im lebhaftesten Zeitmaße - The liveliest time measurements)*

In 1809 Beethoven's home city, the Austrian capital, Vienna, came under siege by the forces of Napoléon Bonaparte. During the battle Beethoven famously sheltered in the cellar of his brother Carl's house with a pillow over his head to protect what remained of his already significantly impaired hearing. With the French proving victorious, Vienna came under French occupation for the second time in four years. One of Beethoven's greatest friends and patrons, the Archduke Rudolph was obliged to leave the city along with the rest of the nobility for their own safety. Beethoven wrote the first movement of this sonata and presented it to his friend before he left. The second and third movements he wrote in 1810 following the Archduke's return.

Unusually for the composer, then, this sonata follows an explicitly programmatic design with the three movements titled “Lebewohl,” “Abwesenheit,” and “Das Wiedersehen.’’ He then added the syllables “Le-be-wohl” - meaning “Farewell” - written over the first three melody notes. The Archduke was clearly someone Beethoven held in the highest regard, as he dedicated no less than 14 compositions to his friend including some of his greatest works: the *Archduke* Piano Trio, the *Hammerklavier* Sonata, the *Emperor* Concerto, and the *Missa Solemnis*.

Beethoven was much annoyed by the publisher’s title *“Les Adieux*” in part because it didn’t fit well with his scheme for the annotated opening but also no doubt because of anti-French sentiment understandably caused by Napoléon’s belligerence. He may also have thought the French title too impersonal, and thereby failed to convey the true depth of his affection for his friend. His publishers stuck with it anyway, believing the title to sound more appealing for an international market. Nevertheless, for the first time, and perhaps with a heightened sense of national indignation, Beethoven added German directions in addition to the usual Italian to describe his tempo markings. It’s also worth noting that this sonata incongruously shares the same opus number with a sextet for two horns and strings (Op. 81b) composed many years earlier. This happened because two different publishers happened to use the same opus number and modern writers need a way to distinguish the works.

The work begins with an *Adagio* introduction featuring the three note *Lebewohl* motif, written in two voices, imitating the call of a post horn which would signal the arrival or departure of a mail coach. The first movement picks up speed in its main *Allegro* section but echoes of this horn call leitmotif reappear many times especially in the development and extended coda of this movement.

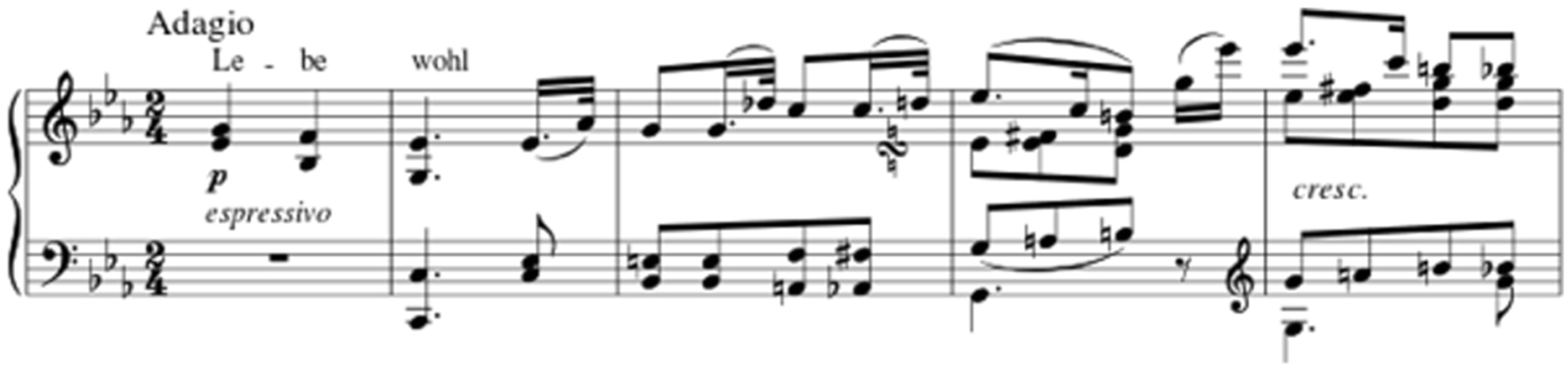

Fig 34. Sonata in E-flat major, 'Les Adieux', Op. 81a

The sorrowful slow movement titled "*Abwesenheit*" - "Absence" - clearly expresses the ebb and flow of Beethoven's innermost feelings pondering his missing friend as he vacillates between painful loneliness and fond memories. The exultant final movement "Das *Wiedersehen*" - "The Return" - emerges rapturously from the second movement in an arpeggiated fanfare flourish. The main theme that follows is tinged with something of the heroic quality of the famous theme used in the last movement of the *Eroica* Symphony, a work also notably in E flat. Ironically, the composer had originally inscribed (some five years prior) on the title page of that symphony the name "Bonaparte", the very man who was to become the cause of his anguish about being separated from the Archduke. In a fit of fury, Beethoven had famously torn that inscription from the manuscript upon learning that Napoléon had declared himself Emperor. Beethoven had once esteemed Napoléon as a champion of the people only to ultimately grasp he was no different from the monarchs he had displaced.

The programmatic nature of this sonata should be taken in the same vein as Beethoven's note about the Pastoral Symphony, which he described as being "more an expression of feeling than tone painting". Although this sonata comes closer to describing real world events, it's more of a reflection of Beethoven's own deepest

feelings ranging from pain and sorrow to ecstatic joy. As such, it encompasses a huge emotional canvas but often with the subtlest of shadings.

Sonata in E Minor, Op. 90 (composed in 1814)

I. Mit Lebhaftigkeit und durchaus mit Empfindung und Ausdruck *("With liveliness and with feeling and expression throughout")*

II. Nicht zu geschwind und sehr singbar vorgetragen *("Not too swiftly and conveyed in a singing manner")*

Dedicated to Prince Moritz von Lichnowsky, a friend and benefactor who was also the dedicatee of the famous *Eroica* Variations, this sonata came after another four year gap following the previous sonatas, opus 79, 80, and 81a "*Les Adieux*". The intervening years had been especially difficult for Beethoven as his hearing had deteriorated almost completely and he had become seriously ill in 1811, suffering from headaches and high fever. In 1812 his brother Carl contracted tuberculosis which eventually led to his death, an event that triggered an epic and tragic battle over the custody of his son, also called Karl (the father's full name was Kaspar Anton Carl van Beethoven). 1812 was also the year in which Beethoven wrote a despairing letter to his mysterious "Immortal Beloved". For the next several years Beethoven wrote few large-scale works. Nevertheless, this short but beautiful sonata was one of the products of his labors and represents an early glimpse of his late period style. Cast in only two movements, it packs in a lot of ideas within its short running time, a new level of concision that became a hallmark of his late period.

Beethoven's friend and biographer Anton Schindler claimed that the two movements of this sonata were to be titled "A Contest Between Head and Heart" and "Conversation

with the Beloved" respectively, and that the sonata as a whole referred to Prince Moritz' romance with a woman he was thinking of marrying. It makes for a seductive story but is strongly suspected of being an invention by Schindler who famously forged an entry in one of Beethoven's conversation books to back up his claim.

Nevertheless, as Schindler's anecdote implies, the two movements make a fascinating contrast. The first movement is mercurial in extreme - one second strident, the second tender, the third driving and passionate, the fourth urgent. Beethoven explores so much within just a few fleeting minutes yet the material flows absolutely seamlessly.

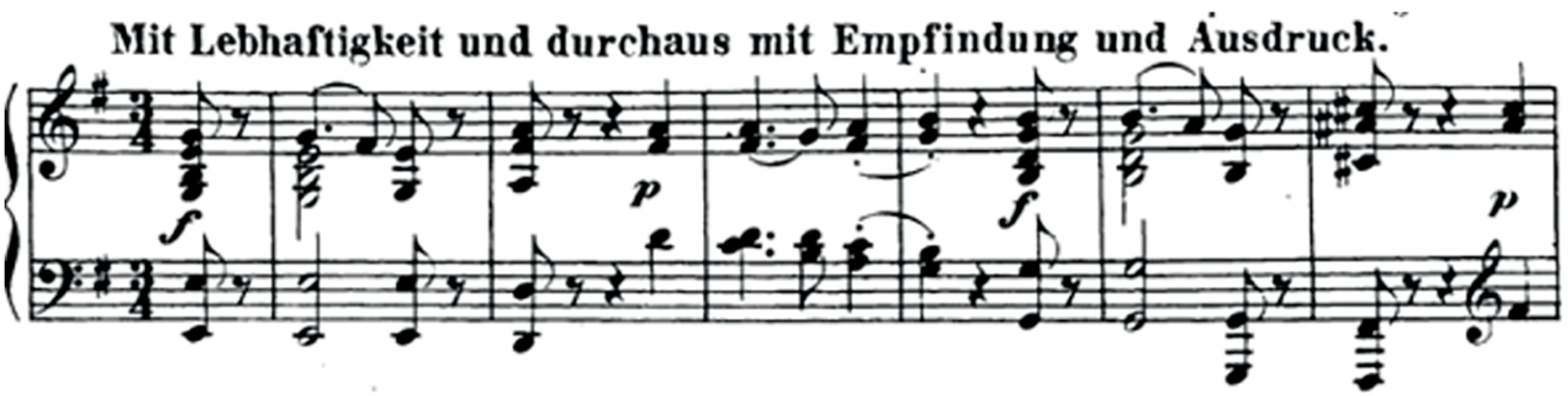

Fig 35. Sonata in E minor, Op. 90

The wealth of ideas in the first movement never quite finds resolution, as would befit a contest between head and heart, until we arrive at the second movement, which, as a kind of polar opposite substitutes constancy in place of the mercurial. A *rondo* movement cast in E major rather than E minor, it presents a beautiful melody that reappears in different guises. Here Beethoven anticipates the romanticism of Schubert and others who would come after him. The coda of the movement exits after a sudden little flourish that fades away in an intimate pianissimo conclusion, one designed more for the heart than for a rousing concert finish.

Sonata in A major, Op. 101 (composed between 1815-16)

I. Etwas lebhaft, und mit der innigsten Empfindung *(Allegretto ma non troppo)*
II. Lebhaft, marschmässig *(Vivace alla Marcia)*
III. Langsam und sehnsuchtsvoll *(Adagio ma non troppo, con affetto)*
IV. *Geschwind, doch nicht zu sehr und mit Entschlossenheit (Allegro)*

Op. 101 was written in 1816 and was dedicated to one of Beethoven's favorite pupils, Baroness Dorothea Ertmann who was regarded as one of the best interpreters of his music. Certainly, given the complexities and technical demands of this sonata, she must have been very accomplished. While Op. 101 exemplifies many facets of Beethoven's newly emerging late style, the form of this sonata is very experimental and exploits a similar template to one of his two cello sonatas (Op. 102) that he had already been working on. The first cello sonata of the pair, while in two movements, has a slow introduction in the first movement followed by a lively march. The second movement has a slow introduction which contains a quote from the first movement. This is then followed by a finale that contains a fugue. This piano sonata follows almost exactly the same pattern with the four sections divided into actual movements though they follow one another with virtually no break.

The poetic first movement begins calmly and dreamily. Nowhere in sight are the heroics of his middle period but in their place stands music of utmost beauty and tenderness. Perhaps Beethoven was smitten with the Baroness - it's even been suggested she might have been his Immortal Beloved although there are several other possibly stronger candidates. Richard Wagner saw within this first movement a perfect example of the "endless melody", a musical form he pioneered in his operas.

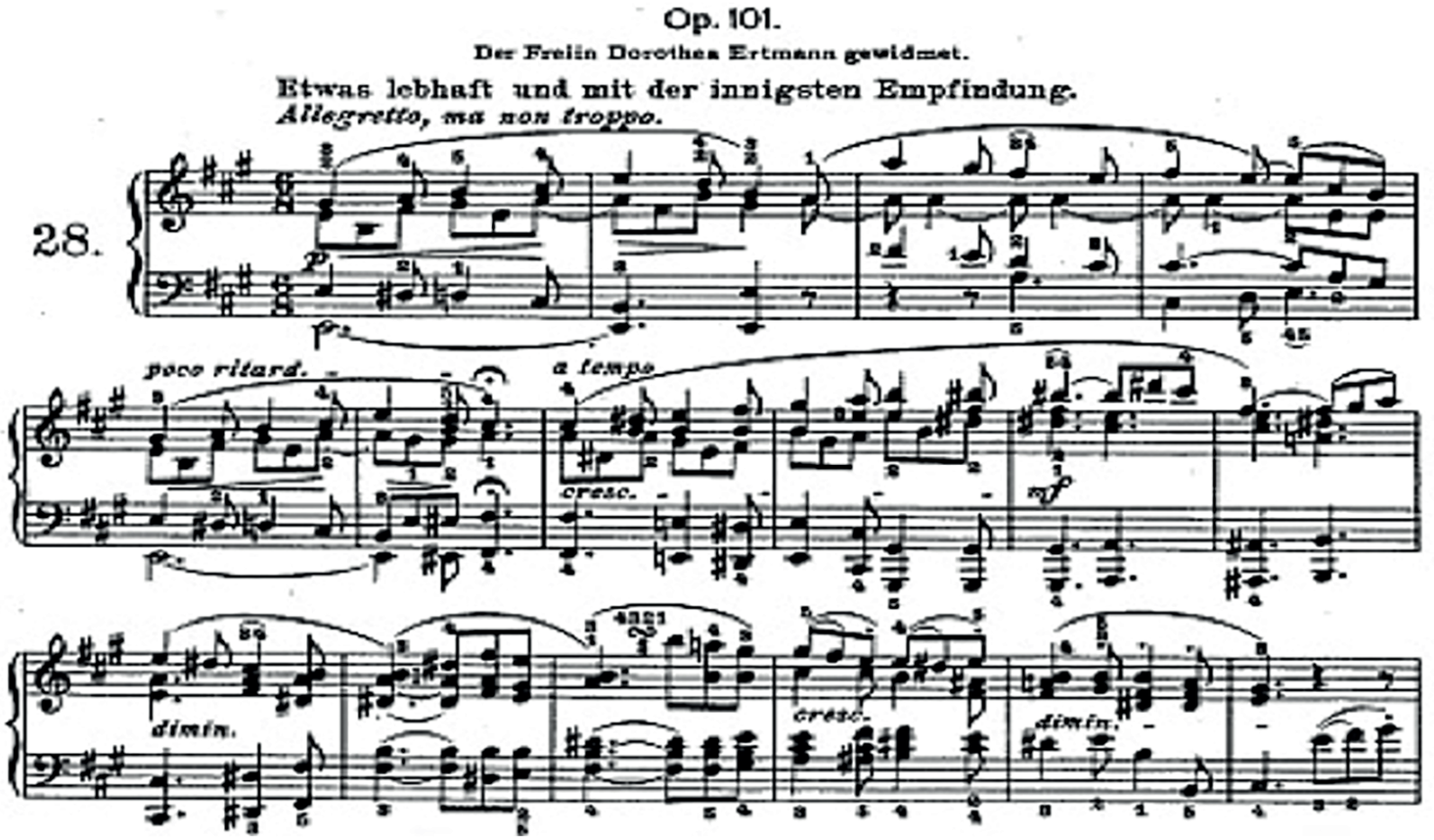

Fig 36. Sonata in A major, Op. 101

The *cantabile* lyricism of the first movement receives a dislocating jolt with the arrival of the second, a lively march that is harmonically spiced with discordant passing notes. Yet even the vibrancy of this march is tempered by powerful excursions in emotional texture. There's a spine-tingling *pianissimo* passage, for example, simultaneously played in both high and low registers that sounds mysteriously portentous before we return to the main march theme again. Structured like a *scherzo*, the second movement also includes a central episode akin to a trio section that includes a fugal element hinting at the big fugue to come in the last movement.

The slow third movement is more like an introduction to the last movement similar to the bridging movement used in the *Waldstein* sonata except in this sonata Beethoven includes a haunting déjà vu moment by re-quoting the opening of the sonata. The *Allegro* finale starts with a brilliant statement of its main theme which then undergoes multiple transformations that vary from the comical to the somewhat sinister. The central fugue begins quietly and in a minor key but builds into a huge climax that unleashes the restatement of the *Allegro's* opening theme in all its splendor. After what turns out to be a deceptive return of the fugue we are led into the final coda, which visits further versions of the movement's main ideas before turning a corner that leads to a short rousing end.

Grand Sonata in B flat major, 'Hammerklavier', Op. 106 (composed between 1817-8)

I. *Allegro*
II. Scherzo: *Assai vivace*
III. *Adagio sostenuto*
IV. *Largo - Allegro – Prestissimo - Allegro risoluto*

The *Hammerklavier* sonata is the Mount Everest of sonatas in a Himalayan landscape of gigantic peaks that represent Beethoven's entire oeuvre in this genre. Lasting some 45 minutes the work is widely considered to be Beethoven's most technically challenging piano composition and one of the most demanding solo works in the classical piano repertoire. Exemplifying all of the hallmarks of Beethoven's late period, the work represents one of the greatest sonatas ever written and one without intellectual rival. While greatly admired, however, it's not always been popular: the work was even described by the Canadian pianist Glenn Gould as "the longest, most inconsiderate, and probably least rewarding piece that Beethoven wrote for the piano."
The work came after a fallow period in Beethoven's compositional labors, caused

largely by ill health. The sonata gained its nickname from Beethoven's original inscription "Grosse Sonate für das Hammerklavier" which he gave using the German word for pianoforte rather than the usual Italian, a move consistent with his switch to providing German instructions as part of the movement tempo indications. It was a label he also applied to Op. 101, but the name only stuck with this sonata.

Structured in four extended movements, the sonata opens with a fanfare of *fortissimo* B-flat major chords that accord with the words "Vivat Vivat Rudolphus", an idea Beethoven had taken from a projected but unfinished choral work for one of his greatest friends and patrons, the Archduke Rudolph, to whom he dedicated this sonata:

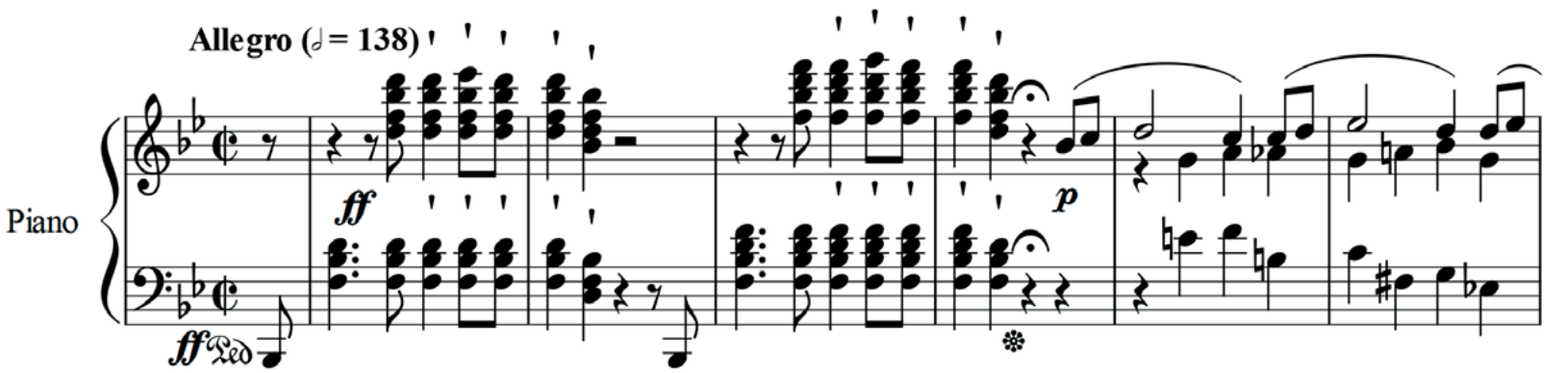

Fig 37. Sonata in B flat major, 'Hammerklavier', Op. 106

One of the motifs that binds much of the material together in this sonata comes from the falling interval of a third seen at the end of each of these opening phrases. Much is also made of the tension between B-flat major and B minor with the first representing light and the second representing darkness.

Another idea that Beethoven deploys in this sonata with gusto is the use of fugues, an older form that J.S.Bach had done so much to demonstrate in all its artful complexities.

In the huge first movement much time is spent on the complex interplay between the opening exclamatory theme and a contrasting lyrical second theme. These ideas are then reimagined in a central *fugato* section that takes us on a harmonic adventure of wondrous proportions. Beethoven's reverence for old masters such as Bach and Handel in particular found powerful new expression in these late period works.

The second movement, a *scherzo*, is by far the shortest. Yet what a wealth of material Beethoven packs into those few minutes it takes to play it. The main theme playfully reuses the motif of falling thirds heard in the opening of the first movement. A darker trio section cast in b flat minor also makes use of falling thirds and only returns to the main theme after a more intense *presto* section in 2/4 time that evaporates in a *prestissimo* upward rush followed by a dramatic little *tremolando*. The coda leads to an almost comical argument between B-flat and B natural octaves fighting it out for domination. The last laugh is given to a restatement of the opening theme in an insouciant gesture that seems almost cheeky after the previous hijinks.

The third slow movement is, in contrast to the *scherzo*, on an unprecedented scale and contains music of the utmost spiritual beauty and gravity. The 19th German writer Wilhelm von Lenz described it as a "mausoleum of collective sorrows", while 20th century German music critic Paul Bekker called it "the apotheosis of pain, of that deep sorrow for which there is no remedy, and which finds expression not in passionate outpourings, but in the immeasurable stillness of utter woe." The movement begins with a rising third motif in double octaves that Beethoven only added after completing the rest of the sonata as if the movement needed something to announce what was to come – as Jan Swafford notes in his biography on Beethoven, "the slow movement now begins with a simple gesture that is the distilled essence of the whole piece."

The final movement begins with an extraordinary introduction that has been called

"The Birth of Counterpoint" as if Beethoven were starting to compose music from the primordial dust. What follows is a fugue of epic proportions creating a movement that is one of Beethoven's most challenging for both performer and audience. Igor Stravinsky declared the fugue both inexhaustible and exhausting and placed it alongside the last movement of the Op. 110 Piano Sonata, the "*Et Vitam Venturi*" fugue in the *Missa solemnis*, Op. 123, and the Grosse Fuge, Op. 133, as Beethoven's most daring and extensive late explorations of the contrapuntal.

Sonata No. 30 in E major, Op. 109 (composed in 1820)

I. *Vivace ma non troppo – Adagio espressivo*
II. *Prestissimo*
III. *Gesangvoll, mit innigster Empfindung. Andante molto cantabile ed espressivo*

After the monumental *Hammerklavier* Sonata, it is somehow fitting Beethoven returned to writing three more piano sonatas as his final statement in this genre though this was more by accident than by design. His final triptych, representing the end of a huge journey he had taken since his opening three written when he was boy of twelve and his first three sonatas written in Vienna as Op. 2, was commissioned by the publisher Adolph Schlesinger of Berlin, who was also promised the *Missa Solemnis* (a dubious promise Beethoven eventually also made to four other publishers). It seems Beethoven worked on several of these pieces in parallel although he finished Op. 109 first. In fact, the first movement of Op. 109 was originally written as a completely independent work for his friend Friedrich Starke, who wanted a short piece for a piano tutor anthology he was assembling. When the commission came from Schlesinger, another of Beethoven's friends suggested repurposing this short work to get a head start on the new sonatas, an idea Beethoven seized on with alacrity. Beethoven's dealings with publishers were often complicated and duplicitous but he was savvy

enough to figure out how to take some shrewd shortcuts when he needed to. He dedicated this sonata to Maximilane Brentano, the daughter of Beethoven's friends Franz and Antonie Brentano.

The origin of the first movement may, in part, explain its unusual structure which is extremely compressed and features a new idea as early as bar 9 set at a completely different tempo. The opening theme is marked *Vivace ma non troppo*, but this then alternates with the second theme marked *Adagio espressivo,* a striking change of speed that somehow happens seamlessly. Musicologist and Beethoven biographer, William Kinderman argues that the structure of this movement suggests a bagatelle interrupted by two fantasy-like episodes reflecting the composer's "intense interest at this time with parenthetical structures that enclose musical passages within contrasting sections." The fantasy passages have an improvisational quality that adds to the mysterious feeling of this opening movement, which proceeds without break into the short second movement, a fiery *prestissimo* whose mood set in E minor sharply contrasts with the first. Written in three movements, the whole sonata may, nevertheless, have the feeling of being in two because of the way the first two movements, in effect, balance the weight of the last movement, a spectacular set of variations that span a universe of emotions.

Beethoven used a theme and variations for the finale of the *Eroica* Symphony and also in the Sonata for Violin and Piano in G minor, Op. 96 but this is the first time he used theme and variations in the finale of one his solo piano sonatas. In all three works the variations occur with no or little break between one another ensuring a strong sense of unity to these final movements. The *sarabande*-like theme is steady, elegiac, and exquisitely beautiful.

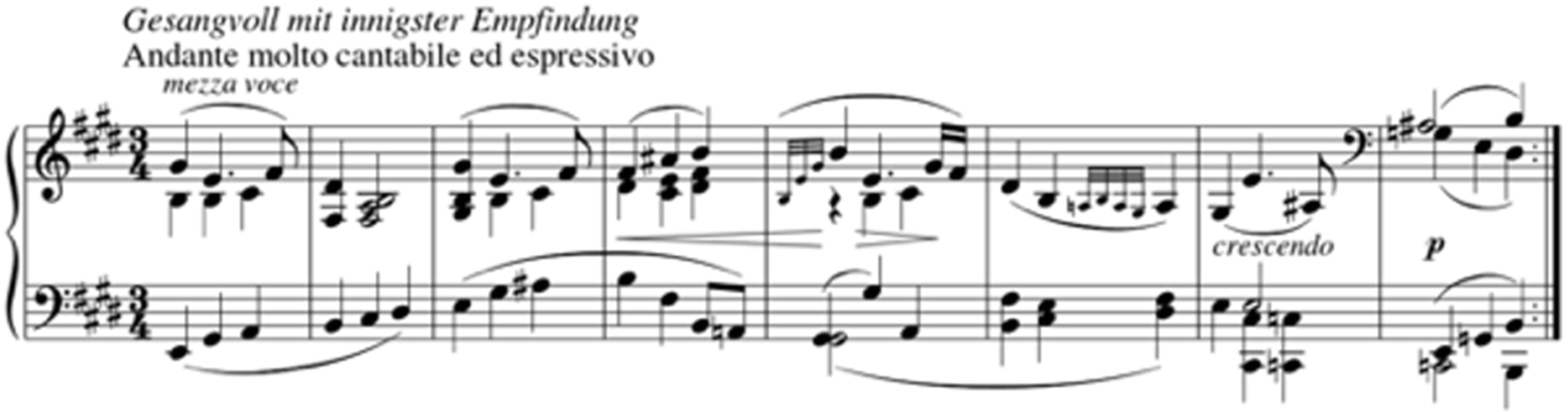

Fig 38. Last movement of Sonata in E major, Op. 109

The variations that follow are stunning in their transformational eloquence. The first variation reimagines the theme as something equally beautiful but more in the guise of Italian opera aria. The second variation reworks the theme in a pointillistic style where the harmonies are reconstructed from rapidly moving notes played *staccato* one at a time. This variation even has new variations for the repeats as the texture is alternated with haunting chord sequences. The virtuosic third variation is a rapid fire *Allegro* in the style of a two-part invention which soon leads into the magical fourth variation, a slow four-voiced texture infused with arabesque lines and scintillating new visions of the theme. The fifth variation is in the form of a Bach fugue full of complex and exhilarating counterpoint which leads us into the explosively ecstatic final variation. This starts with a kind of stripped down ethereal version of the opening theme played above a sustained trill that gradually gathers momentum until suddenly we are presented with a starburst of arpeggios and scales that climb to the heavens. The dying embers of the aftermath lead back, rather like in Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, to a simple restatement of the theme made all the more poignant by the profound psychological journey.

Sonata in A flat major, Op. 110 (composed in 1821)

I. *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo*
II. *Allegro molto*
III. *Adagio, ma non troppo* - Fuga: *Allegro ma non troppo*

Beethoven intended to dedicate this sonata to Antonie Brentano, the mother of Maximiliane Brentano (dedicatee of Op. 109) and a long standing friend but owing to some miscommunication with the publisher, Op.110 remained without dedication. Antonie used to be the leading candidate for Beethoven's mysterious "Immortal Beloved" although recent historical research has come close to refuting the idea.

Cast in three movements like Op.109, with the balance again being weighted towards the momentous last movement, the work begins with a lyrical opening movement full of delicate, arpeggiated figures that alternate with contemplative chord sequences. Beethoven asks the pianist to play *con amabilità* – with amiability. The mood turns darker after the opening exposition as if hinting at something more menacing over the horizon but such doubts are soon swept away by a return to the same calm sensibility of the opening.

The terse second movement, a fast *scherzo*, follows with virtually no break from the first. Although cast in a minor key, the scherzo has a humorous quality that contrasts strongly with the placid first movement. It has been often claimed that Beethoven made use of two folk songs, "*Unsa kätz häd kaz'ln g'hab*t" ("Our cat has had kittens") and "*Ich bin lüderlich, du bist lüderlich*" ("I'm a slob, you're a slob") in the main theme. Beethoven had written an accompaniment to the first song for the publisher Simrock and we can imagine how the idea of incorporating such lowly droll material into a sonata of such elevated sentiments would have appealed to Beethoven's sometimes wicked sense of humor. While the themes do bear some similarity to Beethoven's,

according to Barry Cooper the story is without merit and Beethoven's theme derives from ideas found elsewhere in the sonata.

If we are to regard the second movement in any way humorous, the change of mood presented by the almost transcendentally inspired last movement is all the more striking. The structure of the movement consists of a pairing of a deeply sorrowful lament, marked both *Klagender Gesang* and *Arioso dolente* ("tearful song"), with an upbeat fugue. The tragic theme of the *Arioso* has been compared to the melody "*Es is vollbracht*" ("It is fulfilled") spoken when Jesus is crucified in J.S.Bach's *St John Passion.* Was the *Arioso* Beethoven's own *Passion*? Others have pointed instead to Beethoven's struggle with severe bouts of illness which we see counterbalanced by the sense of revitalization injected by the fugue, a remarkable juxtaposition that has also been compared to the pairing of the sorrowful *Agnus Dei* and the brighter *Dona nobis pacem* in the *Missa Solemnis*.

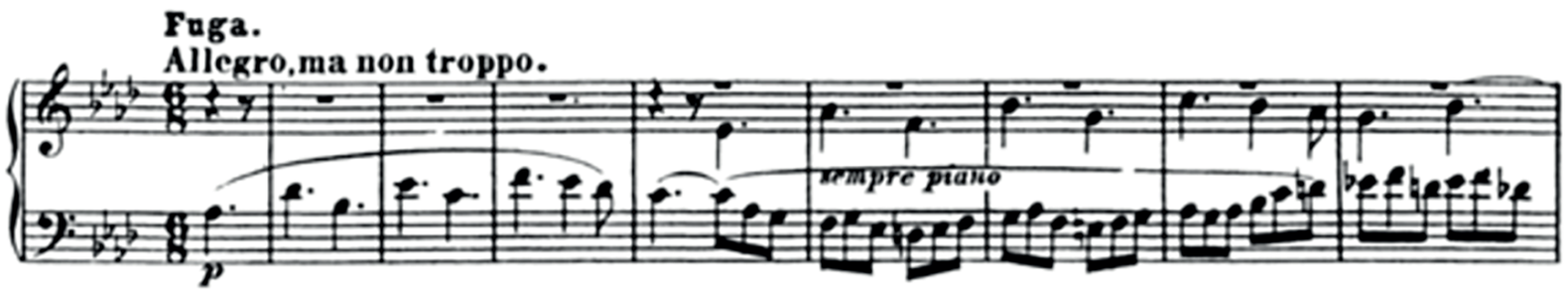

Fig 39. Fugue from the last movement of Sonata in A-flat major, Op. 110

The immense fugue builds to a climax but then losing power exhausts itself giving way again to a return of the lamenting *Arioso*. But again this leads via a miraculous sounding sequence of nine increasingly intense repetitions of a G major chord to a return of the fugue which this time reappears quietly in an inverted form like some

mirage on the horizon. Gradually, the fugue builds in speed and volume, and we hear a powerful restatement of the original un-inverted theme in the bass. The sense of arrival with the euphorically triumphant conclusion feels other-worldly as if our destination were truly in the realm of the celestial.

Sonata in C minor, Op. 111 (composed between 1821-2)

I. *Maestoso - Allegro con brio ed appassionato*
II. Arietta: *Adagio*

This piano sonata, the last Beethoven composed, though the *Diabelli Variations* and some *Bagatelles* were still to come, was originally dedicated to his great friend and patron, the Archduke Rudolph, a man on whom he bestowed multiple dedications that include many of his greatest works. Beethoven later requested the dedication to be made to Antonie Brentano, who had missed out on the dedication of Op. 110 but much to his irritation, his publisher, Adolph Schlesinger, once again fumbled the request and the Archduke remained the dedicatee on the final engraved printing. However, the work's publication in England declared Brentano as the dedicatee. In his ABRSM edition, Barry Cooper has therefore chosen to name both equally.

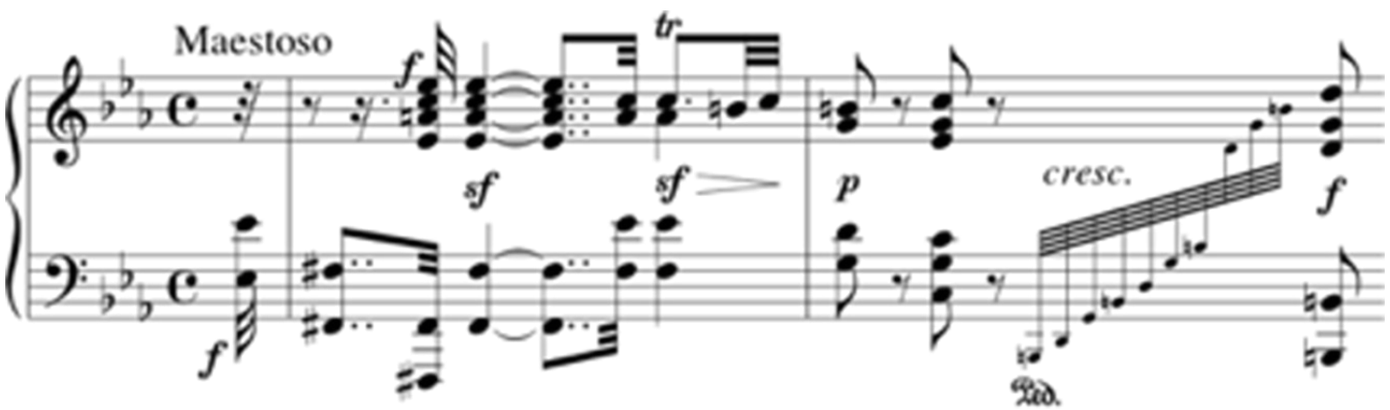

Fig 40. Sonata in C minor, Op. 111

Cast in C minor, an especially symbolic key for Beethoven that we associate with impassioned tempestuousness and a sense of deep struggle, the sonata's first movement does not disappoint. Right from the start we hear menacing sounding diminished seventh chords and tritone leaps.

The *Maestoso* introduction leads via an ominous sounding trill into the main *Allegro* that accentuates the stormy drama. Beethoven uses fugal passages to build yet more tension. A second more lyrical theme gives temporary respite from the tempest but it's short lived as we soon return to turbulence and darkness. After the first movement, comes the radiant *Arietta*, a theme and set of variations that is one of Beethoven's most profound creations. Unlike the variations of Op. 109 which took on a multitude of self-contained forms, these ones are more tightly woven together. After the hymn-like theme set in the unusual time signature of 9/16, we are presented with the first three variations, in which the basic pulse remains the same but the rapidity of the notes increases. The swingy rhythm of the third variation has led some commentators to hail it as Beethoven's anticipation of jazz and, specifically, boogie-woogie, but such comparisons have been scoffed at notably by András Schiff in his lecture series on Beethoven's piano sonatas. Clearly sensing how such a comparison might trivialize Beethoven's sublime creation, Schiff declared this work "nothing to do with jazz or anything of the sort."

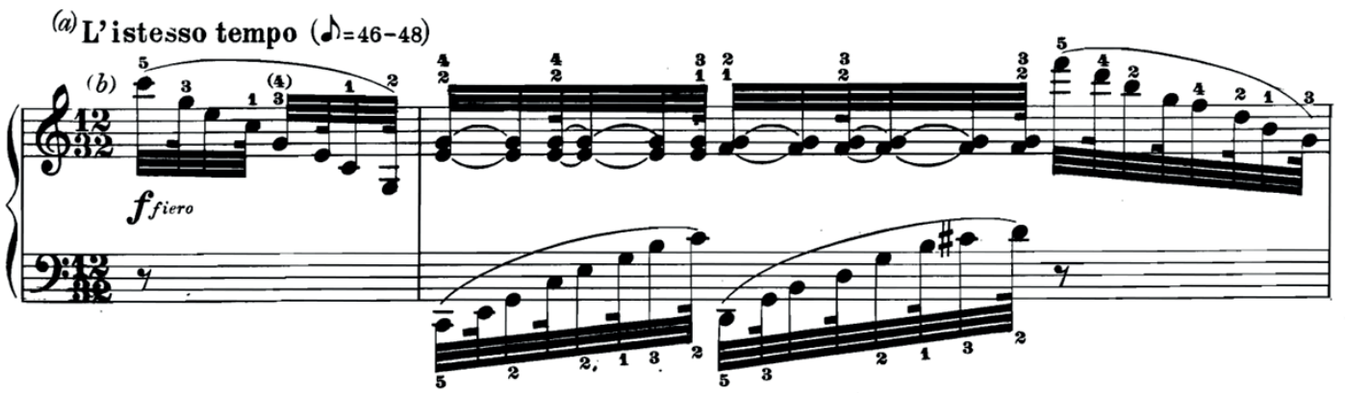

Fig 41. Variation 3 from the second movement of Sonata in C minor, Op. 111

In the next variation, Beethoven uses a simplified version of the theme alternating between low notes that remind us of earthly darkness and high notes that take us to the stars. The proceedings are eventually interrupted by a sequence of sustained trills which then lead us into the last variations whose sense of homecoming and celestial enlightenment are inexorable and inextinguishable.

The notion that this sonata was unfinished – because early sketches show Beethoven was working on three movements – is quickly dispatched by the realization that the two movements make almost perfect polar opposites. Thomas Mann wrote in his novel *Dr Faustus* about a fictional character who gives a lecture titled "Why Beethoven didn't write a third movement to Op. 111" providing an eloquent description of how the final form of this sonata would have been almost impossible to extend. The narrator sums up the lecturer's conclusion: "A new beginning after that farewell? A return after that parting? Impossible!" He then muses that this movement is the end to *all* sonatas and indeed it does seem, as the final bars fade away, there is something about this work and our odyssey in general that feels as though we have traveled to the stars and back. As our journey ends, we are reminded of Robert Louis Stevenson's aphorism: "To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive."

Julian Brown

Tamami Honma

Japanese-American pianist Tamami Honma consistently receives acclaim from reviewers and audiences for the expressiveness and spell-binding power of her performances. She has appeared in prestigious venues including Wigmore Hall, St John's Smith Square, and Carnegie Hall (both Weill Hall and Stern Auditorium), and at events such as the Aldeburgh Festival founded by Benjamin Britten in England, the Warsaw Autumn contemporary festival in Poland, and Recanati Hall in Tel Aviv. Her recordings have received five star accolades in *Gramophone* and the *BBC Music Magazine* and her recording of the two Chopin concertos with the Vilnius String Quartet was selected as *The Independent's* 'CD of the Week'. She has presented numerous solo, duo and chamber music programs and performed in Japan, Germany, Russia with the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra, and in major cities in Lithuania with the Lithuanian State Orchestra, National Filharmonija, Klaipeda Chamber Orchestra and St Cristoforos Chamber Orchestra.

As a piano performance educator, she joined the academic faculty upon graduation at the Royal Academy of Music, was on the faculty at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and was Distinguished Professor at the Community School of Music and Arts, the Bay Area's preeminent music and art education center. While her own private studio includes award-winning students, she is currently on the music faculty at Stanford University and at Santa Clara University as both collaborative pianist and piano instructor. Ms Honma adjudicates for international competitions and is regularly invited as a guest artist performing and giving masterclasses at universities and conservatories in the US and beyond.

Before studying with Byron Janis (one of the very few students of Vladimir Horowitz) she was already a recipient of grand and first prizes in many national and international

competitions. Janis was her formative teacher in New York City before she moved to London to continue studies with Christopher Elton. She has also participated in masterclasses for and has received lessons with Piers Lane, Hamish Milne, Christopher Hogwood, Alfred Brendel, Robert Levin, Andras Schiff, Sara Davis Beuchner, Abbey Simon and from the Juilliard School of Music - Jerome Lowenthal, Martin Canin and Herbert Stessin.

Composers including Anatolijus Senderovas, Sadie Harrison, John McCabe and Osvaldas Balauskas have composed works for her which she premiered at Carnegie Hall, Wigmore Hall and elsewhere to great acclaim. She gave the world premiere of the Piano Concerto written for her by Luis Andrei Cobo. The performance with the Cambrian Symphony was voted as 'Best of the Bay' by the San Francisco Classical Voice. She has performed over thirty piano concertos with orchestras, including the concerto by Ferruccio Busoni which is the largest of this genre ever written for any instrument, and a work that because of its length and extraordinary demands on the soloist has only been performed a handful of times since it was written in 1904.

She contributed the chapter on the complete piano solo works by John McCabe to the book "Landscapes of the Mind: The Music of John McCabe" (published by Routledge) and articles on Beethoven performance aesthetics in the journal *Arietta* (quarterly publication by the Beethoven Piano Society of Europe). She was appointed editor of the European Liszt Society Journal during her residence in London and has since contributed several articles for the Vantage Academy publication in Hong Kong.

In recognition of Ms Honma's social and cultural contributions, she was awarded the Medal of the Order of the Grand Duke Gediminas by the President of Lithuania and she was honored with Commendations by the City of Saratoga in California. Her bachelor's degree in piano performance is from Manhattan School of Music and Master's and honorary degrees (ARAM) are from the Royal Academy of Music.

Performed by Tamami Honma
Recording engineer: Julian Brown
Produced by Julian Brown and Tamami Honma
Recorded at: Cal Arte Studios, Saratoga, California (2019 - 2023)
Notes by Julian Brown with thanks to Dr Barry Cooper for invaluable comments
Artwork and design: James Cardell-Oliver, Divine Art

DIVINE ART RECORDINGS GROUP

divine art | diversions | métier | athene | historic sound

Over 700 titles, with full track details, reviews, artist profiles and audio samples, can be browsed on our website. Available at any good dealer or direct from our online store in CD, 24-bit HD, FLAC and MP3 digital download formats.

Divine Art Ltd. email: sales@divineartrecords.com

www.divineartrecords.com

find us on facebook, youtube, twitter & instagram


divine art
DDX 21001
809730100123
LC 12671
Tamami Honma