

## SONATA IN C MINOR, Op.13 (Pathétique)

BEETHOVEN  
(1770-1827)

*Grave – Allegro di molto e con brio*  
*Adagio cantabile*  
*Rondo: Allegro*

Beethoven wrote the *Pathétique* Sonata in 1799, about the same time that he was embarking on his first symphony. It was dedicated to Prince Carl von Lichnowsky, one of the wealthy Viennese aristocrats who supported Beethoven so well throughout his career. The title *Grande Sonate Pathétique* was one of the few titles chosen by Beethoven himself. Beethoven intended the title to mean “with emotion” rather than “with pathos”.

The dawn of a new century marked a significant phase in the development of the piano. Invented as recently as 1710 by Bartolomeo Cristofori in Florence, it became the main keyboard instrument in the 1760s: the piano of that time was light in touch, well suited to the delicate ornamentation and deft fingerwork required by Haydn and Mozart. By 1800 piano makers such as John Broadwood in England were producing larger and stronger pianos with iron frames, pedals and a wider compass. The powerful opening chords of the *Pathétique* Sonata reflect the greater sonority now available.

The first movement of the sonata adopts the usual sonata form structure of exposition, development and recapitulation, with one significant addition. The sombre chords of the *Grave* introduction explore the dark lower reaches of the piano and are referred to again in the movement - as a link between exposition and development and again between recapitulation and coda. The main part of the movement (*Allegro di molto e con brio*) contrasts two themes, the first built on a rising scale, the second involving crossing of hands and delicate ornamentation.

The *Andante cantabile* moves to the major key and offers one of Beethoven’s loveliest and best-known themes – a simple progression of chords linked by semiquavers. The second theme is an ornamented melody over repeated left hand chords and, after the return of the first theme, a passage of greater intensity and drama ensues before the final appearance of the opening theme,

now with triplet accompaniment. A gentle and sensitive coda completes the movement.

The final movement is a Rondo (*Allegro*) with the lively main theme contrasted with two gentler themes to give a plan of ABACABA + Coda. There are again some striking contrasts of dynamics and intensity as Beethoven continues his exploration of the possibilities of the ever-developing piano.

## **EROICA VARIATIONS, Op.35**

## **BEETHOVEN**

Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony (No.3 in E flat major) had its first performance in 1803. The *Eroica Variations* for piano were written a year earlier and published as *Variations and Fugue for piano in E flat major*. The theme on which the Variations are based was a favourite of Beethoven's – he had already used it in the finale of the ballet music he composed for *The Creatures of Prometheus* (1801) and it was to reappear in the last movement of the *Eroica* Symphony, again as a set of variations, but a different set from the piano version.

Both the theme itself and its bass part are significant. In a departure from the usual theme and variations style, Beethoven opens the work not with the main theme, but with the bass line to the main theme. Three variations of this bass theme follow before finally the main theme appears. There are fifteen variations in all, culminating in a final fugue.

Theme and bass part of the *Eroica Variations*:  
(A music extract will be printed in the concert programme)

## SIX BAGATELLES, Op.126

BEETHOVEN

1. *Andante con moto, Cantabile e compiacevole*. G major – 3/4 time.
2. *Allegro*. G minor - 2/4.
3. *Andante, Cantabile e grazioso*. E flat major – 3/4.
4. *Presto*. B minor – 4/4.
5. *Quasi allegretto*. G major – 6/8.
6. *Presto – Andante amabile e con moto*. E flat major – 3/8.

The first two works in Martin Roscoe's programme came from Beethoven's early years, when he was pursuing a career as a concert pianist; the final two works come from the last few years of his life, which were clouded by deafness and increasing ill health – the period of the last three piano sonatas, the last six string quartets and his final symphony (*Choral*).

The term “bagatelle” in music generally indicates a short piece of a light, humorous or whimsical character. Beethoven wrote three sets of Bagatelles, a total of 26 Bagatelles in all. This was the final set. Although generally associated with the piano, as with Bartok's well-known set of 14 Bagatelles, some 20th century composers have extended the instrumentation – Anton Webern's Six Bagatelles were written for string quartet, Ligeti's Five Bagatelles for wind quintet, and Gerald Finzi's Five Bagatelles for clarinet and piano.

## SONATA IN A FLAT, Op.110

BEETHOVEN

*Moderato cantabile molto espressivo*

*Allegro molto*

*Adagio ma non troppo – Allegro ma non troppo*

Beethoven's last three piano sonatas were written between 1820 and 1822. The sonatas were commissioned by Adolf Martin Schlesinger, from the Schlesinger firm of music publishers in Berlin. Beethoven met Schlesinger's son Maurice and it was agreed that the publishers would purchase three sonatas at the price of 90 ducats. The original intention of having them written within three months was thwarted by Beethoven's ill health at the time and his preoccupation with completing work on the *Missa solemnis*. The sonata was published

simultaneously in Paris and Berlin in the summer of 1822. It has no dedication but it is believed that Beethoven intended it to be dedicated to Antonie Brentano, an arts patron and close friend of his, to whom he dedicated the *Diabelli Variations*. The Ab sonata is the middle one of the three and is the penultimate of his 32 sonatas.

The opening movement is marked ***Moderato cantabile molto espressivo*** (at a moderate speed, in a singing style, very expressively). The gentle opening theme (described by Charles Rosen as “Haydnesque”) and a further *cantabile* theme are prominent in the movement, which is written in the usual sonata form structure and is marked by decorative arpeggio textures and a lightness of touch - totally dissimilar to the turbulence of the opening movement of the *Pathétique* Sonata.

The second movement, marked ***Allegro molto***, is a scherzo in the relative minor key (F minor). Terse, and with a humorous touch, its main theme consists of four bars of *piano* writing answered by four bars marked *forte*. This contrast of dynamics and syncopated rhythms dominates the movement. The central Trio section is in D flat major and presents right hand quaver sequences over a leaping bass part,

In the early years of the piano sonata the last movement was frequently a light-hearted rondo, but Beethoven saw it as something substantial and the final movement here, marked ***Adagio ma non troppo – Allegro ma non troppo***, is the most extended movement of the work. The structure alternates two slow *arioso* sections with two faster fugues. The opening *Adagio* begins in B flat minor and offers a recitative passage leading to the lovely *arioso* theme, which Beethoven marks *Arioso dolente*. A three -part fugue ensues, leading to the return of the *arioso* theme, much embellished. A second fugue then appears, its theme being an inversion of the first. This gradually increases in intensity as Beethoven works his way back to the home key of A flat major.

The key system of the movement is ingenious and shows how adventurous Beethoven was in his approach to tonality in his final years: *Adagio* – B flat minor, *Arioso 1* – A flat minor, *Fugue 1* – A flat major, *Arioso 2* - G minor, *Fugue 2* – G major, Coda – A flat major.