

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770 - 1827)

- 1** – **3** Sonata for Piano in f minor, Op. 57, *Appassionata* 25:09
Allegro assai (10:40)
Andante con moto (5:55)
Allegro ma non troppo (8:34)

*Performed on a fortepiano by Thomas and Barbara Wolf
after instruments by Nannette Streicher (ca. 1814-1820)*

- 4** – **6** Sonata for Piano in f minor, Op. 57, *Appassionata* 25:53
Allegro assai (10:58)
Andante con moto (6:06)
Allegro ma non troppo (8:49)

Performed on a Bösendorfer Imperial Concert Grand

- 7** – **9** Sonata for Piano in f minor, Op. 57, *Appassionata* 24:58
Allegro assai (10:35)
Andante con moto (5:47)
Allegro ma non troppo (8:36)

*Performed on a fortepiano by R.J. Regier
after Viennese instruments (ca. 1830)*

Lambert Orkis, piano

SONATA FOR PIANO IN F MINOR, OP. 57, APPASSIONATA

Ferdinand Ries, a noted 19th century pianist and composer who was a pupil of Beethoven, gives us a glimpse into the genesis of this famous work. Apparently, Ries was accompanying Beethoven on a walk prior to his piano lesson with the famous composer. During this walk, Beethoven kept humming and sometimes howling a pitchless musical line up and down for the duration of their excursion. When queried, Beethoven responded that he had found a theme for the last movement of his f minor sonata.

Upon returning to his residence, Beethoven immediately went to the piano and proceeded for the next hour to work vigorously on this sonata, totally forgetting about Ries and his piano lesson.

Carl Czerny, another famous pianist, composer, and pupil of Beethoven maintains in his "On The Proper Performance of All Beethoven's Works for the Piano" that at the time of the *Appassionata's* writing (1805), Beethoven considered it to be his finest piano sonata. Czerny points out that whatever considerable powers a pianist needed for Beethoven's sonatas prior to this composition, this work required the doubling of those abilities.

Czerny restricts himself to technical advice on the tumultuous first movement and moving second movement, allowing himself suggestions of a more poetic nature only for the last movement. Here he speculates that perhaps Beethoven was thinking of a stormy sea with a boat caught in the waves and the cries of people in distress.

Whatever Beethoven's emotional intent for the work might have been, one can certainly feel the sense of crisis that permeates the work with little letup except for the less stressful middle movement. Indeed, the middle movement,

which proceeds directly without break into the last movement, can be considered almost Shakespearean in its effect as it helps to relieve the tension created by the first movement.

The first movement's elevated emotional state is revisited in the last movement and the music is brought to an even higher level of tension. The fury of the ending does nothing to relieve the stress. The work ends with the crisis being unresolved. It is musical drama at its best.

THOUGHTS ON PLAYING THE PIANOS ON THIS RECORDING

When Beethoven composed the *Appassionata* sonata in 1805, a consensus regarding how a piano should sound had not been achieved. Indeed, the instrument was in the throes of a rapid evolutionary development. The range of the keyboard was expanding from five octaves, makers were trying to increase its volume of sound, and differing concepts of keyboard and pedal construction were being implemented.

As Vienna was a music capital, it also was a center for the design and construction of fine pianos. Indeed, piano makers in the Vienna region during the later 18th and early 19th centuries such as Johann Andreas Stein (much favored by Mozart), Wenzel Schantz (preferred by Haydn), Anton Walter (another favorite of Mozart as well as Beethoven), Nannette Streicher (admired by Beethoven), and Conrad Graf (known to both Beethoven and Schubert) found a market with the Viennese musical public.

Over time, concepts for piano construction changed, sometimes quite dramatically. The three instruments used in this recording are based upon Viennese piano building designs and represent three snapshots in time of Viennese

piano evolution.

In committing to this CD three performances of Beethoven's *Appassionata* sonata on three different pianos, I was not only attempting to demonstrate the sonic differences between the instruments, but also to show how the differing tonal qualities and varying responses of the keyboards would affect my playing of the piece.

Timings of the respective performances differed from what I anticipated. Though the two fortepianos were closer in design to each other than to the modern Bösendorfer, I had expected a greater variance in my performance timing between the two earlier instruments. In fact, because of its deeper sonority, more massive hammers, and somewhat heavier action, I expected that my performance timing on the Regier fortepiano, which represented later Viennese fortepiano design, would be longer. Though the differences are not large, my performances of the first two movements on the Regier fortepiano were in fact shorter in duration than on the Wolf fortepiano, an instrument of earlier design.

Because of its sustaining, singing tone, and a concept of piano building designed to sonically soar over the largest of orchestras and penetrate into the furthest recesses of the largest halls, I was not surprised that my performance on the Imperial Concert Grand Bösendorfer was the longest for every movement. But, the differences were not as much as I expected.

The effect of the pianos themselves on my interpretations was quite subtle. I found that it was my concept of the sonata that ultimately was the driving force in my renderings of the piece. In each case, I adjusted my approach to the instrument in order to realize how I heard the work in my inner ear.

I must say that I spent a considerable amount of time learning this work on fortepianos. Once I had in my mind the sound of the crisp articulation

Barbara Wolf and
Lambert Orkis



of a fortepiano as well as the rhythmic flexibility I felt I needed in order to compensate for the relative lack of sustaining power in the treble areas of these pianos, that sound became part of my interpretative vision which I then tried to achieve on any piano I played.

The Wolf fortepiano is closest in design to the pianos that were contemporary at the time Beethoven composed this work. Its incisive sound and light action lend themselves well to the swirling passagework and fiery temperament in this piece. The white keys are shorter and the black keys are narrower than those of a modern piano. These rather cramped keyboard dimen-

sions coupled with the very light action make neat and accurate playing a challenge, especially in the most dramatic moments. I must point out that I am considerably larger than the average early 19th century Viennese.

Nevertheless, playing the *Appassionata* on this instrument is a joy. What it lacks in volume is compensated for in its intimacy and suppleness. Though its sonic stage may be relatively small, the drama possible with it is indeed quite high. On the Wolf fortepiano, my playing of the sonata achieved a high degree of nervous tension. One can almost feel that Beethoven was trying to burst through the confines of the instrument. Quite simply, the piece

crackles with vitality.

An interesting feature of this piano and the Regier fortepiano is the pedal system. Both of these pianos have a true *una corda* pedal. This pedal, often called the soft pedal on a modern piano, shifts the hammers and keys so that the hammers strike only one string out of three. Over time this arrangement, though sonically interesting, proved to be mechanically troublesome. Consequently, with the approach of the modern era, the soft pedal system was modified so that today, most modern grands shift the hammers so that only two of the three strings are struck. Indeed, some of the newest instruments have modified the adjustment to the point that all three strings are struck, but a different and softer part of the hammer is used.

With these fortepianos, it is possible to achieve a variety of timbres depending upon whether I engage one, two or three strings. In addition, these pianos have a moderator pedal which modern pianos seldom have. This pedal inserts a piece of soft material between the hammer and string which can result in a rather gauzy sound. When combined with the shift pedal (soft pedal or *una corda* pedal), the effect can be quite ghostly indeed. Listen to the beginning of the *Appassionata* on each of the three instruments. Notice how distant the beginning sounds on both fortepianos and how comparatively "real" they sound on the modern Viennese instrument.

Because of the heavier action in the Regier fortepiano, I anticipated more difficulty recording this work on this instrument than was actually the case. This piano represents the kind of piano technology available to Beethoven later in his life. Its deeper sound and more massive sonority were not contemporary with the writing of this work. I found the slightly larger keyboard an asset in negotiating the complex passagework. My fingers appreciated the more

secure grip. As a result, I could play with more abandon which probably explains why my times were the fastest with this piano. It was also a lot of fun to revel in its sonic intensity. Forceful passages felt great. With this piano I felt as though I were playing on a design that reached its pinnacle of development. Additional design measures would be required to achieve something different with piano sound.

That difference came with metal and size. Watching the piano movers move the Imperial Concert Grand Bösendorfer into the recording venue through a torrential thunderstorm gave one pause. Its massiveness simply dwarfed its cousins. Even a concert grand Steinway which shared the room with the Bösendorfer looked delicate in comparison. Though on occasion I had played the Bösendorfer on the international concert stage, I had never recorded with it. In the United States, Bösendorfer instruments are relatively rare. In its home country, Austria, it is frequently found. Due to the sequence of the recording session, Wolf first, Regier second, Bösendorfer last, playing the Bösendorfer was initially quite a shock. Though I have had extensive experience with the *Appassionata* on modern pianos, my beginning takes in session felt heavy, sluggish, blurry, and loud. There was so much sound coming from the instrument and so much power available; I had to find ways of putting it all into perspective.

In the slow movement, its beautiful sustaining tone seduced me into adopting a slower tempo. I found myself just taking the time to savor the sound. Though the action of this piano was not heavy by modern standards, it certainly was much heavier than its older relatives. In addition, the innate smooth attack and singing quality of the instrument made me change my playing technique in order to capture some of the crispness and articulation variety I feel is

inherent in the work.

It felt good to play on modern keys again. And when the passion of the moment called for seemingly unlimited power, this piano could really deliver. And, despite the heavier and more massive action, its responsiveness was such that my recording times were only slighter longer than those of the fortepiano performances.

Throughout these sessions, I was very aware of the lineage of these instruments. Though the instruments sound very different from one another, one can feel a connection between them through the fingers. It is as though they were members of a closely related family. The differences between each of them and another family member may or may not be dramatic, but they are tangible, at least to those who know the specific individuals well.

I hope you enjoy listening to this great work through the "lens" of each of these instruments. Be assured that I had a great time playing them. They taught me a lot.

~ Lambert Orkis

Wolf-Streicher fortepiano



THE WOLF FORTEPIANO AFTER NANNETTE STREICHER

The influence of the Stein-Streicher family of piano makers spans more than a century and overlaps all of the important Austrian composers from Mozart to Brahms. Johann Andreas Stein (1728-1792), an organ builder by training, might have encountered the then-new fortepianos of Gottfried Silbermann during his *wanderjahr* (1749) as a young journeyman. In 1777 a youthful Mozart wrote to his father praising Stein's instruments. Stein's two children, Anna Maria "Nannette" (1769-1833) and Matthäus Andreas (1776-1842), became instrument makers as well. After their father's death in 1792 (just three months after Mozart's demise), they moved the family workshop to Vienna in 1794. The same year Nannette married Andreas Streicher, a composer, keyboardist, and confidant and friend of Beethoven and Schiller. In 1802 the siblings dissolved their partnership and operated separate workshops, both working closely with composers and musicians to develop the evolving piano toward expanded musical expression. Beethoven wrote in 1817 of his preference for instruments by Nannette Streicher. The Streicher legacy continued through their son Johann Baptiste (1796-1871), whose firm endured to the end of the 19th century, making a piano for Brahms in 1868.

Although not a replica in any way, the instrument by Thomas and Barbara Wolf used in this recording is patterned closely on the work of Nannette Streicher circa 1814-1820. Pianos of this period are made entirely of wood and predate the now universal cast iron plate first patented by Alpheus Babcock of Boston in 1825. To accommodate the stresses of six octaves and triple stringing, a stack-laminate frame was developed after 1808. Nannette Streicher was among the first to use this frame of overlapping layers of wood glued together

like an architectural truss. The musical resources of the piano include a range of six octaves, FF-f''''; triple stringing for all but the lowest seven notes; four pedals to operate (in order): the shift (*una, due, or tre corde*), a "bassoon" stop (a silk-covered roll of parchment lowered onto the bass and tenor strings to create a gentle buzz reminiscent of the bassoon), the moderator (a batten covered with leather or cloth which can be moved between the hammers and strings to produce a muted effect), and the damper pedal, which raises all of the dampers, sustaining the sound.

This instrument employs a "Viennese" action characterized by its light and responsive touch. The hammer shanks are pivoted in metal kapsels mounted on the tails of the keys. One end of the shank is a leather covered beak that directly engages an escapement lever attached to the key frame. The other end carries a small leather-covered wooden hammer head which strikes the strings from below when the beak escapes. With keyboard dimensions slightly smaller than those of modern pianos, the natural keys are covered in beef bone and the accidentals in ebony. The case is made mostly of spruce and veneered with pommele figured mahogany. A section of the bottom is removable (making the sound louder and brighter), a precursor to the open bottoms found on all grand pianos today.

~ *Thomas Wolf, Instrument Maker*



Regier fortepiano

THE REGIER FORTEPIANO AFTER VIENNESE INSTRUMENTS CA. 1830

The Regier fortepiano used in this recording is based on those made in Vienna around 1830, a period that witnessed the final flowering of the wooden framed fortepiano. Although composite wood/iron frames were common by that time, and action mechanisms based on Sebastian Erard's patent in 1821 for a double-escapement action were being developed, there remained a thriving interest in the more traditional Viennese instrument. Conrad Graf (whose firm built over 3000 grands during the time he operated his shop from 1811-1841) and contemporary builders like Josef Brodmann (fl. 1800-1828), Ignaz Bösendorfer (who took over Brodmann's shop in 1828), and Nannette Streicher, née Stein (d. 1833, with the firm continuing under her son, and later her grandson) redesigned their fortepianos in order to permit an increased dynamic range without sacrificing the characteristic tone color and touch of earlier Viennese instruments. Despite the nascent metal framed piano, the wooden framed instrument retained its prominence at the highest level of musical life; Beethoven, Chopin, Mendelssohn, Schubert, and Schumann all owned or played fortepianos built by Conrad Graf, for instance. Compared to their antecedents, these later fortepianos:

Were bigger (up to 8' long).

Had a larger compass: 6 1/2 octaves, from CC to either f^{'''} or g^{'''}.

Were strung with larger diameter strings for increased dynamic range.

Retained a Viennese action and leather covered hammers, but with component masses that were increased in proportion to the larger strings.

Were built with a substantially more robust wooden frame to resist the increased stress from more and larger strings.

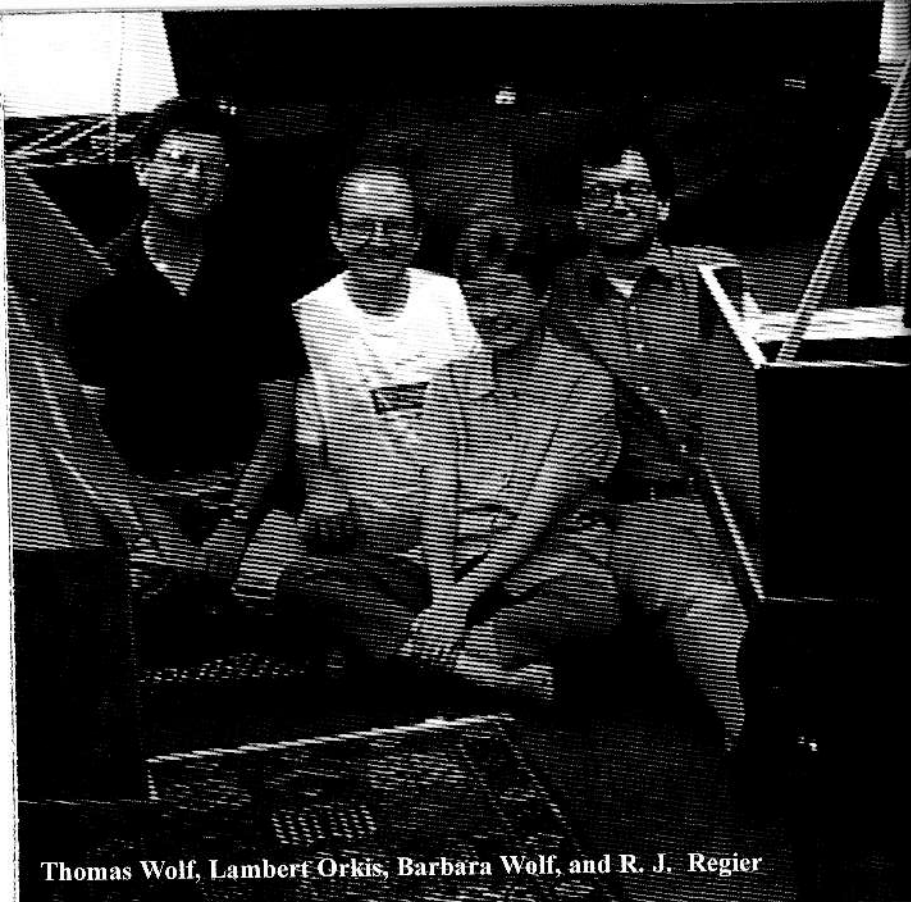
Were built without bottom planks for greater sound projection both to the audience and to any players or orchestra behind the fortepiano, where an open lid creates an acoustical shadow.

Had less compliant soundboards made with thicker cross sections, stiffened with numerous ribs or even laminations.

Were scaled with an obvious understanding of physical principles. Bridges were sometimes made with jogs where it was necessary to accommodate a framing member, but where it was unacceptable to interfere with a uniform pattern of string lengths and tensions. Bridges were also divided to accept denser, more flexible non-ferrous strings in the bass and stronger iron strings in the treble.

R. J. Regier built this fortepiano in Freeport, Maine, in 2000. Its design is not based on a single prototype, or even the work of a single maker. Instead, it incorporates fundamental attributes of several fortepianos by Graf, ca. 1830 (Smithsonian Institution; others owned privately), and one of the earliest instruments built with a Bösendorfer label, ca. 1828 (Yale University). Its compass is 6 1/2 octaves, CC - g^{'''}. There are four pedals: keyboard shift, moderator, bassoon, and damper.

~ R.J. Regier, Instrument Maker



Thomas Wolf, Lambert Orkis, Barbara Wolf, and R. J. Regier



Bösendorfer Imperial Concert Grand

THE BÖSENDORFER IMPERIAL CONCERT GRAND

Bösendorfer was responsible for the ending of the commercial viability of the Viennese action by discontinuing its use in 1909 and manufacturing solely the double escapement action. Today it is by appearance most similar to any other large concert grand piano. The modern Bösendorfer Imperial concert grand is a behemoth compared to any fortepiano. Weighing 1500 lbs with a polyester finish, 9' 6" long and 5' 9" wide, it is nearly the largest grand piano made in the world today. The case is made up of two rims. The inner, thick and below the edge of the soundboard, is laid up in brick fashion with spruce blocks. At points where the bracing under the soundboard meets the rim, a birch block is inserted for additional strength. The large structure of inner rim is shaped so the much thinner laminated spruce outer rim can be fastened to it. 85% of the wood in the instrument is spruce, a very light but strong wood. The massive iron plate makes up more than half the total weight of the piano. The plate needs to be heavier and stiffer to make up for the soft wood in the piano structure.

The instrument has hammers made of felt instead of leather. The compass of the keyboard goes well beyond any fortepiano, possessing 97 keys, 9 more than most modern pianos. With all these differences from the older instrument's form, it is hard to believe that there is any useful musical connection left to work with. However, it is my belief that one very important similarity does exist and that is the factor of tone. The first part of the different tone production resides in the bass section of strings. The copper wrapped strings happen to have some of the highest tension bass strings of any piano. This creates a lower amount of inharmonicity, which allows for playing closer harmony in the bass notes without the clashing of overtones common in most other

pianos. This smoother sounding tone in the bass is directly linked to the early wood framed fortepianos with their clear non-clashing harmonics. The other tonal factor that distinguishes Bösendorfer is the unique spruce wood rim structure as described in the top paragraph. (Contrast this with the Steinway concert grand made with a very hard and strong one piece laminated maple rim resulting in a piano weighing approximately 930 lbs.)

Bösendorfer achieved early fame by making instruments that Liszt couldn't destroy under his heavy-handed technique. The need to make musical instruments louder and stronger drove many of the changes in instrument making through the 19th century.

Bösendorfer was a leader early in the history of Viennese piano manufacturing and still is firmly entrenched in that tradition.

~ David Lamoreaux, Registered Piano Technician



Lambert Orkis has received international recognition as chamber musician, interpreter of contemporary music, and performer on period instruments. He has appeared world-wide in recital in the United States, Europe, and Asia with violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter since 1988 and with cellist Mstislav Rostropovich since 1983, and continues to perform with The Castle Trio, a period instrument ensemble in residence at Washington's Smithsonian Institution.

He has appeared with other distinguished artists including cellists Lynn Harrell and Han-Na Chang, violist Steven Dann, and violinist Julian Rachlin, including a return engagement with Mr. Rachlin to Vietnam and a benefit concert in Cambodia. Having been chosen as Honored Artist for the New Aspect International Arts Festival which was held in Taipei, Taiwan, he performed as soloist and chamber musician and conducted workshops and master classes. He has participated as performer and juror for the Trondheim (Norway) International Chamber Music Festival and Competition.

A multi-Grammy Award nominee, his wide discography comprises works of the Classical, Romantic, and Modern eras.

Solo recordings include a disc of Schubert on fortepiano for Virgin Classics, and a landmark CD of music by Louis Moreau Gottschalk on an original Chickering piano for the Smithsonian Collection of Recordings.

With Anne-Sophie Mutter, he has frequently recorded for Deutsche Grammophon, winning a Grammy Award for "Best Chamber Music Performance" for the complete cycle of Beethoven Piano and Violin Sonatas. He has also recorded works of Brahms, Schumann, and Chopin/Franck with Dutch cellist Anner Bylsma.

He has released recordings of works written for him by George Crumb, James Primosch, and Richard Wernick including Wernick's Piano Concerto which he premiered in The Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C. and at Carnegie Hall with The National Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Mstislav Rostropovich. Wernick's Piano Concerto was subsequently honored with a Friedheim Award. The European premiere took place in The Hague, Netherlands, with Het Residentie Orkest, Lambert Orkis at the piano, and the composer conducting. His most recent disc for Bridge Records entitled "Keys to the Future" includes Wernick's Second Piano Sonata and Primosch's Sonata-Fantasia for piano and synthesizer, one player.

Lambert Orkis holds the position of Principal Keyboard of Washington's National Symphony Orchestra and is a founding member of the Kennedy Center Chamber Players, the recently-formed chamber music ensemble consisting of principal players of the string and keyboard sections of the National Symphony which has been performing for enthusiastic audiences and to critical acclaim. He is Professor of Piano at Temple University's Esther Boyer College of Music, where he was honored with the university's Faculty Award for Creative Achievement and the Alumni Association's Certificate of Honor.

Pianos

Six-octave fortepiano by Thomas and Barbara Wolf, Washington, D.C., 1990, based on Viennese models (ca. 1814-1820)

Bösendorfer Imperial Concert Grand Piano

Six and one-half octave fortepiano by R. J. Regier, Freeport, Maine, 2000, patterned after instruments by Conrad Graf and Ignaz Bösendorfer, Vienna, (ca. 1830)

Piano Technicians:

Barbara Wolf for Wolf fortepiano; Regier fortepiano
David Lamoreaux for Bösendorfer Imperial Concert Grand Piano

Producer: Lambert Orkis

Recording Engineer: Daniel Shores, Sono Luminus

Editor: Daniel Shores

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Front Cover: Lambert Orkis playing Bösendorfer - Daniel Shores

Barbara Wolf & Lambert Orkis - Jan Orkis

Wolf-Streicher fortepiano - Tom Wolff

Regier fortepiano 7/8 view - Warren Roos

Thomas Wolf, Lambert Orkis, Barbara Wolf, R. J. Regier - Jan Orkis

Bösendorfer Imperial Concert Grand inside - Lambert Orkis

Lambert Orkis at piano - Philip Bermingham

Back Cover: Lambert Orkis - Rosalie O'Connor

Tray card: Wolf-Streicher fortepiano - Tom Wolff

Bösendorfer Imperial Concert Grand - Daniel Shores

Regier fortepiano 3/4 view - Warren Roos

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