



BEETHOVEN SONATAS VOLUME 3

Piano Sonata No. 3 in C Major, Op. 2, No. 3 **29:16**

1	I Allegro con brio	10:09
2	II Adagio	9:47
3	III Scherzo: Allegro	3:33
4	IV Assai allegro	5:22

Piano Sonata No. 9 in E Major, Op. 14, No. 1 **15:05**

5	I Allegro	6:55
6	II Allegretto	4:34
7	III Rondo: Allegro comodo	3:28

Piano Sonata No. 10 in G Major, Op. 14, No. 2 **18:11**

8	I Allegro	7:46
9	II Andante	6:25
10	III Scherzo: Allegro assai	3:51

Piano Sonata No. 25 in G Major, Op. 79 **10:36**

11	I Presto alla tedesca	5:04
12	II Andante	3:22
13	III Vivace	2:00

Garrick Ohlsson, piano

When the twenty-two-year-old Beethoven arrived in Vienna, he lost little time in making his presence known with three Piano Trios, Op. 1 and three Sonatas for piano, Op. 2. It must be emphasized, however, that these compositions were no fledgling efforts: Armchair music lovers are fond of facile assignment of Beethoven's masterpieces into three chronological categories, "Early," "Middle," and "Late," but closer analysis shows that there is quite a bit of intriguing stylistic overlap between the three supposed periods. For example, this annotator once noted that some of the detail in the Scherzo third movement of the "early" Quartet in F, Op. 18, No. 1 closely resembles the quintessential "late" style of filigree in the Scherzo second movement of the Quartet in B-flat, Op. 130. It should also be mentioned that the young Beethoven had composed quite a bit of music before he had departed his native Bonn, including one little-known but bonafide masterpiece, the *Cantata on the Death of the Emperor Joseph* (which, in its eloquent *stürm und drang* style, could easily pass for a "middle period" sibling of the *C Major Mass*, Op. 86 or the oratorio *Christ on the Mount of Olives*), and three Quartets for Piano and Strings, WoO 36.

The Quartets, sporadically charming, are no masterpieces, and show that Beethoven was not quite so precocious as Mozart had been, or that Schubert, Mendelssohn and the tragically shortlived Spanish genius Arriaga would subsequently be. But these Piano Quartets are particularly germane to a discussion of the Op. 2 Sonatas for a very good reason: Beethoven, it so happens, cannibalized some of their thematic ideas in composing his later, "official" works. One he reused as the main theme for the Adagio of Op. 2, No. 1; and another reappears as a bridge passage in the first movement of the Op. 2 No. 3 Sonata under discussion.

So, although the three Op. 2 Sonatas are very characteristically "Early" Beethoven, they are at the same time thoroughly mature masterpieces, in no way to be disparaged. In fact, one gathers a vivid impression of how greatly the young composer had matured over the decade that separates the juvenile quartets from the masterful sonatas by comparing the ineffectual usage of his earlier ideas with the far more succinct, dramatically directed later incarnations in the Sonatas.

Each of the three Op. 2 Sonatas has its own persona, and the one in C major (No. 3) thus contrasts strikingly with the Haydnesque Op. 2, No. 1 and the vernal, unbuttoned scamper and exuberant *style gallante* that characterize Op. 2, No. 2 (and also, by the way, the Second String Quartet, Op. 18, No. 2.). In composing the C Major Sonata, Beethoven chose to display a more public, bravura mode of address. To be sure, there is plenty of virtuosic *stürm und drang* in the Finale of Op. 2, No. 1, and as much technical fingerwork in Op. 2, No. 2, but for all that, a certain brilliance, weight and monumentality comes to the fore in this Third Sonata, very much the same kind of "C major" use of chords and passagework that similarly characterizes the later "Waldstein" Sonata, Op. 53.

The opening Allegro con brio immediately confronts its performers with a "moral" problem: Should one try to play the double thirds in the right hand as written? Or is it permissible to "cheat" by helping out with the left hand (which can easily take the lower notes in the right hand by using the sustaining pedal to hold its own bass notes down)? After presenting his first subject (an unusually self-contained one in twelve bars), Beethoven tears into his bridge section, which was built around a C major arpeggio and downward scalar passages in broken octaves with the left hand supporting from a third below. This

leads to the aforementioned thematic idea cribbed from the earlier Piano Quartet and then to the more lyric second subject heard, of course, in the dominant G Major. A revival of the broken-octave-and-thirds bridge device, this time punctuated with arpeggios instead of scales, leads to the closing idea, a derivation of the Sonata's opening phrase embellished with trills, and a plummeting roulade of broken octaves.

Development, so to speak, works backwards—beginning with the trills of the closing theme and then plunging into rotary broken notes (but sixths, not octaves!). The opening figure is heard, too, but except for its first developmental reappearance, its double thirds are reduced to single sixteenth notes. In this “working out” this first idea alternates with the syncopated suspensions that originally led to the closing theme. After the recapitulation (pretty conventional overall, but of course altered so that the second subject can reappear in the tonic C Major), there is a coda that, for its length and sojourn into a quasi-cadenza at one point, almost amounts to a second development. The movement ends, quite appropriately, with another burst of double broken octaves.

The Adagio is a very conscious effort on Beethoven's part to write in a “noble” style. It needs a performer capable of sustaining a long arching line with a very considerable grasp of amplitude, tonal nuance and time span.

The Scherzo, with its imitations and stringed-instrument-like writing, is one of those Beethoven movements very sensitive to variations in tempo. Played a little fast, as Artur Schnabel did it, it becomes mischievous, explosive and rollicking; played more sedately, it becomes more formal and even-tempered (as in Kempff's elegant reading). The athletic central Trio is an essay in right hand arpeggios while the left supports in the bass with octaves. A da capo of the Scherzo proper is rounded out by a short coda (derived from the scherzo's primary material).

Garrick Ohlsson's reading combines Kempff's sobriety with an almost Klemperer-like rugged virtuosity.

The concluding Allegro assai is a boisterous Rondo set forth in brilliant staccato chords, swirling passagework and broken rotary arpeggios in the left hand. There is a chorale-like F major episode in the middle, but the most telling moment of brilliance comes near the end when the staccato chords of the Rondo theme are suddenly transferred to the left hand while the right hand burrs like an alarm clock. A shocker: Beethoven mischievously gets into the “wrong” key (A Major of the previous Sonata). Gingerly, he works his way out of the dilemma by backtracking into A Minor...and, boom, with octaves in both hands—upward in the left; downward in the right—he hammers out a triumphant fortissimo conclusion.

The Sonata No. 9 in E Major, Op. 14, No. 1—published in 1799 and probably composed earlier; sketches for it are found interspersed with those of the B-flat Concerto completed in 1795—is to the early sonatas roughly what Op. 90 is to the later ones; a dimensionally “little” piece, but with a great deal of strength behind its essential lyricism, and a touch of latent Romanticism and adventurousness too. Unlike its companion piece in G Major—a “little” sonata without any hidden significance between the lines—the E Major Sonata is decidedly complex in character and understandably loved by many performers. (Beethoven himself thought well enough of it to transpose and rework it for String Quartet.)

The first movement, Allegro, begins gently with a melody set against vamping chords. Its upward outline—particularly its conclusion at measure 4—is developed further by its secondary clause, a series of overlapping rising broken thirds. The second subject, too, is closely related since its opening phrase

features a descending four-note scale figure which is immediately followed by a rising chromatic scale (the two ingredients are combined in the restatement). A third idea, too, uses the four-note rising scale motif as part of its melodic framework, as does a fourth (where the upward scale fragment is transformed into an abrasive repeated forte interjection in the bass). Development, surprisingly, largely avoids the scale device in favor of the vamping chords and melodic neighbor notes (found respectively in the opening theme and in the inner voice of the fourth idea—e.g., at bars 46 et seq.). Recapitulation begins somewhat dramatically with the bypassed scales reaffirming their important position in a vastly expanded two-octave form.

The central Allegretto is, likewise, constructed around lower neighbor notes and upward scale elements. The C major trio provides a moment of contrast (it reminds this writer of the second movement theme from Mozart's Piano Concerto, K. 459). Performers have habitually diverged on the proper tempo for this movement with some like Sviatoslav Richter striving to make it take the place of the absent slow movement and others (like Gulda) opting for a hard-nosed, business-like approach equally at odds with the implicit fragile nostalgia of a version like Schnabel's. The scurrying Allegro comodo makes fair use of our old friend, the scale passages once more. It is also interesting to note that when Beethoven fashioned his F major arrangement for string quartet, he changed the accompanimental triplets to duplet syncopes. Evidently he felt that the intended effect could be better served that way when the protagonists were stringed instruments.

Like its emotionally more complex companion, the Sonata No. 10 in G Major, Op. 14, No. 2, published in 1799, is dedicated to Baroness von Braun. The lady must have been a superior pianist, and one who also had the honor of

being the dedicatee of Haydn's sublime F Minor Andante and Variations six years earlier.

The first movement, Allegro, is a blithe affair whose first theme, a bit rhythmically ambiguous, tumbles all over itself in overflowing high spirits. The ambiguity is accomplished largely by Beethoven's delaying the accompaniment a half-beat so that the metric accent appears to fall in the "wrong" place. This opening idea is immediately followed by a bridge idea that belatedly establishes a sense of sturdy rhythmic order. This, too, tends to spin like a top. A closing theme, made up of syncopes and a dialogue between a melody in the lower treble (continuing the double thirds of the aforementioned second subject) and an answering bass voice, brings the exposition to a close. The development commences with a deceptive simplicity that suddenly explodes in a welter of activity, rapidly modulating from G Minor, to B-flat Major, to A-flat Major (where the activity is really stepped up by way of juxtaposing the first subject's patterns against whirling triplet sixteenth notes.) A "false" recapitulation, in the "wrong" tonality of E-flat Major, is tantalizingly set before the unsuspecting listener but the genuine article doesn't occur for another 27 bars. The restatement of the movement's opening material is without further untoward incident, and the movement ends with a succinct, quiet close.

The central Andante is a Theme with Variations. The Tema is a staccato march, whose basically orderly demeanor is upset by two factors: 1) a violation of expected symmetry caused by having the theme's second strain repeated but not its first; and 2) by a series of offbeat sforzando accents near the end of the second strain. Variation 1 transforms the march into a flowing *sempre legato* in the left hand against a right hand in syncopes. The aforementioned sforzandos at the end are restored to the expected downbeats.

Variation II keeps the syncopated rhythm and restores the bounciness of the theme itself, setting the thematic material in off-beat piano chords on a trampoline-like bass line. A brief transitional passage leads directly into Variation III, whose single left hand line would seem melodic but is actually purely harmonic in character (the actual melody is concealed in the right hand's flowing sixteenth notes). The sforzandos, bypassed in the second variation, are with us once again (but on the conventional downbeats). A witty coda ostensibly returns to the theme in its original form but then—after a series of pianissimo chords—plays cat and mouse, ending with one totally unexpected fortissimo pounce.

Beethoven marks the Sonata's Finale Scherzo but that describes its jocular mood rather than its form. In actuality, the movement is a highspirited Rondo, whose principal theme is built on a swift, upward scale followed by a tugging little turn of direction. As in the first movement, there is an element of rhythmic deception here. Much of this dizzy sounding movement's effect is caused by Beethoven's use of a two-beat pattern set against a three-beat meter (the movement is in 3/8 time).

Unlike the little G Major Sonata in this collection, Sonata No. 25 in G Major, Op. 79's miniaturization boasts an altogether sophisticated, cameo-like imprimatur. Composed in 1809 and published the following year under the title *Sonata facile ou Sonatine*, this work belongs to a group (Opp. 78, 81A, and 90 are the others) where Beethoven was experimenting with the terse concision later found in the opening sonata-allegro first movements of Op. 101, and Op. 109. Op. 79's first movement, Presto alla tedesca, has a rollicking even roguish boisterousness quite appropriate to the German folk dance element alluded to in the tempo directive. "Facile" it certainly isn't! The rhythmic exactitude and

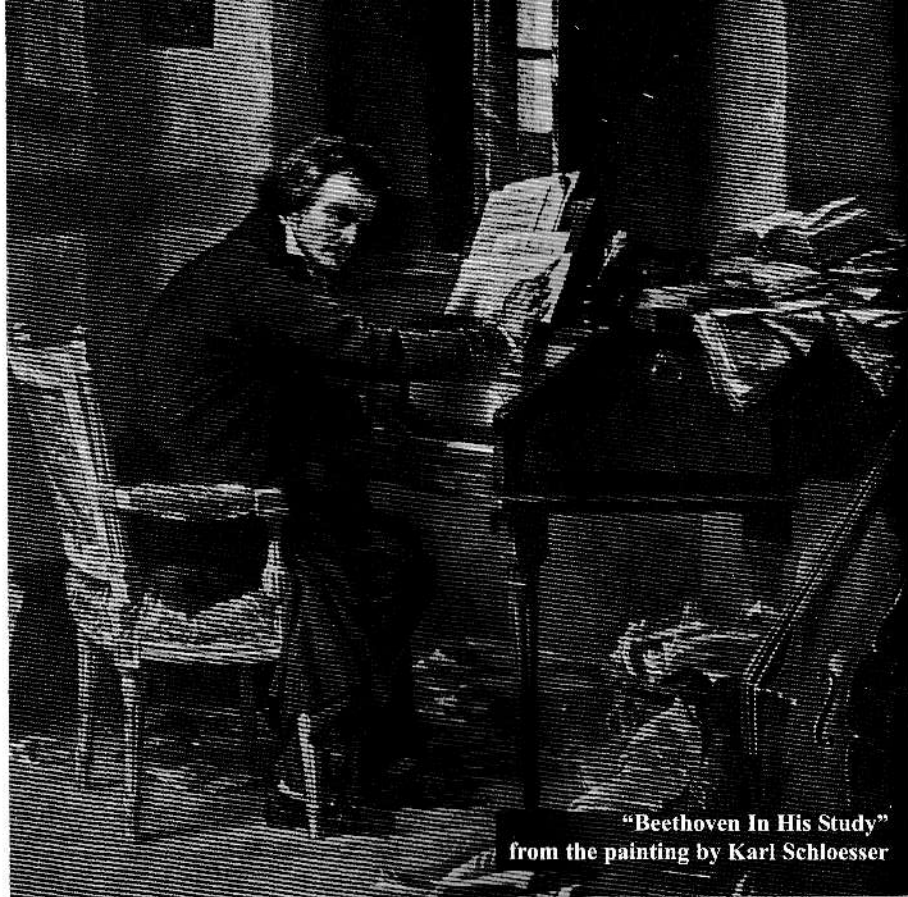
tricky dynamic placements (or rather, displacements—the subito pianos, more often than not, occur just where one doesn't expect them!) can give even experienced pianists a difficult time. So can the treacherous cross hand passages.

The central Andante is a poignant little barcarolle in the parallel minor, with a middle episode in the key of E-flat Major. A short coda follows the *da capo* of the first part.

The Vivace third movement is a witty Rondo whose principal theme scurries about with a delicious sense of diabolerie. There are two contrasting sections, in E Minor and C Major respectively, and on its final time around, the rondo theme is thinly disguised with broken triplets. A brief coda comprised of ingredients from the main idea brings the engaging little work to an appropriate summation.

—Harris Goldsmith

Harris Goldsmith is a pianist, author critic and a musicologist. He teaches at the Mannes College of Music in New York.



"Beethoven In His Study"
from the painting by Karl Schloesser

Since his triumph as winner of the 1970 Chopin International Piano Competition, pianist **Garrick Ohlsson** has established himself worldwide as a musician of magisterial interpretive and technical prowess. Although he has long been regarded as one of the world's leading exponents of the music of Frédéric Chopin, Mr. Ohlsson commands an enormous repertoire, which ranges over the entire piano literature. A student of the late Claudio Arrau, Mr. Ohlsson has come to be noted for his masterly performances of the works of Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert, as well as the Romantic repertoire. His concerto repertoire alone is unusually wide and eclectic – ranging from Haydn and Mozart to works of the 21st century – and to date he has at his command some 80 concertos. A musician of commanding versatility, Mr. Ohlsson is a consummate chamber pianist who performs regularly with the world's leading chamber groups.

Mr. Ohlsson's performance in North America with symphony orchestras of Cleveland, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Houston, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, Seattle, Washington, D.C., and Berkeley; and the National Arts Centre, St. Paul Chamber, and the London Philharmonic at Lincoln Center. Special projects include a tour with the Takács Quartet and appearances at the Bonn Beethovenfest. Mr. Ohlsson will appear in recital at venues including Avery Fisher Hall, Skidmore and Muhlenberg colleges, SUNY Purchase, University of California at Davis, and in Fresno, Denver, and Baton Rouge.

Highlights of Mr. Ohlsson's recent seasons included performances with Orpheus at Carnegie Hall and with the Emerson String Quartet at Zankel Hall and a tour with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra in North America. Mr. Ohlsson has performed recital series devoted to the original music and transcriptions of Liszt, Rachmaninoff and Busoni; he has also commissioned

and premiered a new work for solo piano, *American Berserk*, by John Adams and a piano concerto by the noted young composer Michael Hersch. In the summer of 2005, he presented the complete cycle of Beethoven piano sonatas for the first time at the Verbier Festival in Switzerland, a project that he repeated in summer of 2006 at both Tanglewood and Ravinia.

Mr. Ohlsson is an avid chamber musician and has collaborated with the Cleveland, Emerson, Takács and Tokyo string quartets, among other ensembles. Together with violinist Jorja Fleezanis and cellist Michael Grebanier, he is a founding member of the San Francisco-based FOG Trio.

A prolific recording artist, Mr. Ohlsson can be heard on the Arabesque, RCA Victor Red Seal, Angel, Bridge, BMG, Delos, Hänssler, Nonesuch, Telarc and Virgin Classics labels. For Arabesque he has recorded the complete solo works of Chopin and four volumes of Beethoven sonatas.

A native of White Plains, N.Y., Mr. Ohlsson began his piano studies at the age of 8. He attended the Westchester Conservatory of Music and at 13 entered The Juilliard School in New York City. His musical development has been influenced in completely different ways by a succession of distinguished teachers, most notably Claudio Arrau, Olga Barabini, Tom Lishman, Sascha Gorodnitzki, Rosina Lhévinne and Irma Wolpe. Although he won First Prizes at the 1966 Busoni Competition in Italy and 1968 Montréal Piano Competition, it was his 1970 triumph at the Chopin Competition in Warsaw, where he won the Gold Medal, that brought him worldwide recognition as one of the finest pianists of his generation. Since then he has made nearly a dozen tours of Poland, where he retains immense personal popularity. Mr. Ohlsson was awarded the Avery Fisher Prize in 1994 and received the 1998 University Musical Society Distinguished Artist Award in Ann Arbor, Mich. He makes his home in San Francisco.

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