

BEETHOVEN SONATAS, VOL. 9  
GARRICK OHLSSON, PIANO

DISC A (69:16)

**Piano Sonata No. 5 in C minor, Op. 10, No. 1** (19:29)

- 1 I. Allegro molto e con brio (6:22)
- 2 II. Adagio molto (8:43)
- 3 III. Prestissimo (4:09)

**Piano Sonata No. 6 in F major, Op. 10, No. 2** (11:54)

- 4 I. Allegro (5:42)
- 5 II. Allegretto (3:50)
- 6 III. Presto (2:10)

**Piano Sonata No. 7 in D major, Op. 10, No. 3** (24:24)

- 7 I. Presto (6:54)
- 8 II. Largo e mesto (9:43)
- 9 III. Menuetto: Allegro (3:31)
- 10 IV. Rondo: Allegro (4:00)

**Piano Sonata No. 22 in F major, Op. 54** (13:05)

- 11 I. In tempo d'un Menuetto (6:15)
- 12 II. Allegretto (6:46)

DISC B (68:21)

**Piano Sonata No. 17 in D minor, Op. 31, No. 2** (24:12)

- 1 I. Largo – Allegro (8:58)
- 2 II. Adagio (8:23)
- 3 III. Allegretto (6:48)

**Piano Sonata No. 18 in E-flat major, Op. 31, No. 3** (20:47)

- 4 I. Allegro (8:39)
- 5 II. Scherzo: Allegro vivace (6:27)
- 6 III. Menuetto: Moderato e grazioso (5:29)
- 7 IV. Presto con fuoco (4:52)

**Sonata No. 19 in G minor, Op. 49, No. 1** (9:09)

- 8 I. Andante (5:20)
- 9 II. Rondo: Allegro (3:44)

**Sonata No. 20 in G major, Op. 49, No. 2** (8:54)

- 10 I. Allegro, ma non troppo (5:02)
- 11 II. Tempo di Menuetto (3:46)

## BEETHOVEN PIANO SONATAS

**Op 10, Nos. 1, 2, 3; Op 54**

**Op 31, Nos 2 & 3**

**Op 49, Nos. 1 & 2**

The eight piano sonatas on this programme are all, from one perspective, pre-*Eroica* conceptions. It has often been observed that Beethoven's first 20 piano sonatas were all written in the space of a mere eight years: 1794-1802, a period of rapid growth in compositional mastery from his initial enthusiastic synthesis of Mozart and Haydn's late music up to his emergence in sovereign maturity with the creation of the *Eroica* Symphony. The extent and confidence of his development over those few years was staggering, as the sonatas faithfully reflect. Yet that development was not linear or constant; there were side-paths, roads not subsequently taken, and doublings-back too. Sometimes he revisited earlier, even archaic styles – sometimes in nostalgia, and sometimes in parody. Several of the sonatas on this disc show these divergent tendencies, though they are all delightful and sometimes intriguing music.

The three sonatas that Beethoven published in 1798 as his opus 10 are believed to have occupied him at intervals over the preceding three years. All three bear a dedication to the Countess Anna Margarete von Browne, the wife of Count Johann Georg von Browne-Camus (1767-1827), a nobleman of Irish ancestry who had been a senior officer in the Russian Imperial army and had settled in Vienna in 1795. The Count was one of the most generous patrons of Beethoven's early years, and had already been rewarded with the dedication of the op. 9 String Trios. Beethoven had previously, and appropriately, dedicated his piano variations on a Russian dance (WoO 71) to the Countess, and according to legend this had prompted the Count to make him a gift of a fine horse (sometimes it is the dedication of op. 10 that is said to have occasioned the gift). Supposedly Beethoven promptly forgot about it until he was charged for the animal's fodder, and then discovered his servant had been hiring out the horse to other riders and pocketing the proceeds.

All four of Beethoven's previously published sonatas had been in four movements and on an increasingly large scale. The first two sonatas of op. 10 are three-movement designs, and comparatively

pithy and economical in their writing, as if looking back to an earlier period. Indeed, Beethoven may partly have modelled the first sonata of the op. 10 triptych, **Sonata No. 5 in C minor, op. 10 no. 1**, on Mozart's Sonata in the same key, K. 457. But all three sonatas were seen by contemporaries as rather angular and experimental, and they contain the seeds of many later developments. Two of the most striking qualities about op. 10 no.1 is Beethoven's power of organic construction and his freedom in handling tonality. The first subject of the *Allegro molto e con brio* first movement is not so much a defined theme as an assemblage of short motifs (notably the dramatic opening dotted-rhythm gesture and a rapid, almost muttering, subsidiary figure) while the ensuing transitional passage is practically a subject in its own right. After a pedal-note preparation, the true second subject appears in the relative major – E flat. The development begins with the return of the first subject, now in C major. In the recapitulation the second subject is first begun in F major, before reverting in full to the expected C minor.

The *Adagio molto* slow movement, in A flat, has the quality of calm contemplation that was already becoming a Beethoven hallmark

for such movements. Formally it is a truncated sonata form, without development, both its subjects being varied on their reappearance in supple and elegant decorative writing. A third appearance of the first theme marks the coda. There is no minuet or scherzo, but the *Prestissimo* finale is at once playful and full of nervous tension, with a highly rhythmic opening subject that seems to cast about in a veritable fever and a contrastingly lyrical second idea with a hint of a country-dance to it. Once again the movement is in sonata form, but the development section is very short – although, as has often been noticed, it introduces a threatening six-note figure that seems to anticipate the famous 'Fate' motif of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Before the coda, however, an unexpected excursion into the remote tonality of D flat adds tension and uncertainty; the motion slows to almost nothing before the swift but rather epigrammatic ending.

The next member of op. 10, the **Sonata No. 6 in F major, op. 10 no. 2**, is the shortest of the three, and ostensibly the lightest. Beethoven himself is known to have been very fond of it, though: he presumably relished its quirky humour. The very opening idea – two staccato chords followed by a kittenish turn-figure – immediately

invites imitation and expansion, moving to a busy yet graceful theme in C major and then a second group that uses the extremes of the keyboard with jaunty *buffo* exchanges between the hands, high and low. The central development turns the turn-figure into rippling, trilling figuration, and introduces new material, leading after an expectant pause to the reappearance of the first subject in the 'wrong' key of D major; further developments ensue before the recapitulation arrives and falls into the expected tonal relationships. Beethoven does not bother with a coda but allows the brilliance of the restated materials to create the necessary sense of closure.

In this sonata there is no slow movement, but rather a pensive, minuet-like *Allegretto* in F minor with a trio in D flat. The movement begins in a shadowy mood, the melody unfolding upwards from the lower depths of the keyboard. When the higher register is reached, the mood lightens somewhat and we are presented with a dance-like tune in canon. The music then subsides to the lower reaches again. The gentle, songful trio, with its independently-moving bass line, makes an effective contrast but maintains the crepuscular atmosphere; when the *Allegretto* returns it is elaborately

embellished. The brilliant finale, which in its key-scheme resembles another sonata-form movement, is virtually monothematic: it opens in fugal style, with a jovial, scurrying theme that is immediately put through athletic paces. Though there are some subsidiary ideas, we are principally aware of this theme in a multitude of protean guises as the musical narrative bubbles along, continually busy and continually inventive, to a clipped, emphatic close.

The last of the op.10 sonatas. **Sonata No. 7 in D major, op. 10 no. 3**, is on the largest scale of the three, and the only one of the set to have four movements. The first movement already shows a further freedom in the handling of sonata form, with two subject-groups that themselves consist of several different elements. For all that, the movement gives an impression of terseness and acute concentration of thought. Both subject-groups are busily active, with an irresistible forward momentum, and with a brief excursion between them into the minor mode (B minor) that has long-range structural implications. The development section sets off at an equally vigorous pace into quite far-flung regions, using the high and low extremes of the keyboard in wide leaps. In the recapitulation the minor-key

excursion now becomes a move onto the tonic minor (D minor) which proves to be the key of the slow movement.

This in turn reveals itself as a *Lento e mesto* of decided expressive power. The desolate funereal atmosphere of its opening bars is prophetic of some of Beethoven's most profound slow movements, and there are even hints later of the slow movement of the *Eroica* Symphony. A more lyrical contrasting section in F major does not really lighten the mood, for the tolling repeated notes, redolent of bells or drums, continue to hint at some sombre ceremony. The recapitulation intensifies the sense of practically unbearable pathos, and the movement evanesces in broken, eventually almost inaudible, fragments.

Beethoven calls the third movement a *Ménuetto*; it returns to D major, in more relaxed mood, and the formal patterning of its first idea forms a reassuring contrast to the far-flung expressive shores of the slow movement. Unusually, it has a strongly-differentiated second idea, with a single phrase in imitation moving through the piano's registers. The G major trio is faster, with hurrying figuration

against which the pianist is able to display some mock-impressive crossing of the hands. The finale is a rondo that begins in hesitant, questioning vein, before setting off in a fine display of keyboard velocity. The hesitations recur, teasingly, but they only serve to intensify the high-energy bravura of the intervening music. The rondo subject and the first episode are both much varied on their reappearances. Once again the ending, with its florid sweep up and down the keyboard, is economical to the point of terseness.

Ten sonatas, and about four years, lie between this work and the **Sonata No. 17 in D minor, op. 31 no. 2**. The sonatas of op. 31, all apparently productions of 1801-02, were the first example of Beethoven collecting three sonatas together under a single opus number since op. 10. Unlike some of the better-known sonatas of the intervening period, such as the *Pathétique* or the two sonatas 'quasi una fantasia' of op. 27, the op. 31 group is less concerned with proto-Romantic ideas of emotional pathos and compositional fantasy than with extending and enriching the classical line along the principles already embraced in op. 10. They were contemporary with some of the most difficult years in Beethoven's personal life, the

years of encroaching deafness and emotional turmoil that brought forth the anguished 'Heiligenstadt Testament'. But Sonata No. 17 – which is worth comparing with No. 7, in the same key – is the only one of the three that even hints at the darkness of his thoughts at this time.

The sonata is often referred to as the *Tempest* (*Der Sturm* in German), but on a fairly shaky basis. According to Beethoven's friend and factotum Anton Schindler, he once asked the composer to explain what his intentions were in op. 31 no. 2, to which Beethoven replied: 'Just read Shakespeare's *Tempest*'. Certainly Beethoven knew his Shakespeare very well – in translation – but the reply could as easily have been a way of fobbing Schindler off, while some later authorities have consigned the story to the category of things which Schindler might well have made up.

Nevertheless there is indeed something tempestuous about the sonata's first movement. Not at first, for the sonata opens *Largo*, with a soft arpeggiated chord, mysteriously floating, followed at once by a burst of nervously active music. After a repetition of the

arpeggio this latter element becomes the focus for the main part of the exposition, music of anxious, forceful, saturnine activity. The repeat of the exposition simply intensifies this unusual polarity of stasis against vigorous action, and when they next appear the arpeggios begin to take on the elemental quality of an Aeolian Harp. After the sinewy development the arpeggios return and develop into pathetic recitative-like figures. Here Beethoven directs that the sustaining pedal should be held down, creating, as Charles Rosen has remarked, 'a hollow and even cavernous quality like a voice from the tomb'.

All three of the sonata's movements are in some species of sonata form, though the succeeding *Adagio* (in D minor's relative major, B flat) lacks a development section. The harped chords, and the element of recitative, remain important in this movement, as is apparent from its opening bars. A kind of muffled drum-beat low in the left hand, alternating with a bird-like echo high in the right, accompanies a calm, sublimated funeral march. The dialogue of extreme registers is another way in which Beethoven creates polarized contrasts within this sonata. Altogether the movement is

almost operatic, suggesting both the presence of the human voice and the imminence of tragedy, though the closing bars project a mood of twilight calm.

The *Allegretto* finale returns to D minor and immediately transforms the first movement's arpeggio into the main subject of an obsessive sonata-rondo in *perpetuum mobile* style. While providing plenty of opportunities for bravura display, the movement projects a sense of mingled anxiety and defiance, and its ceaselessly repeating rhythmic figures give the impression of an endless ride through a haunted landscape. There is an extended central development section that arrives at a cadenza-like flourish for the pianist's right hand; this signals the onset of the recapitulation. The climax is a falling, almost wailing, chromatic scale, after which the movement comes to an end so tersely that it seems almost to stop in mid-stride.

None of the tensions that dominate that remarkable sonata seem to be present in its successor, **Sonata No. 18 in E flat major, op. 31 no. 3**, one of the sunniest of Beethoven's entire cycle, which occupies some region above the mists of *Sturm und Drang* in the clear sunlit

air of Classical perfection. The work is occasionally given the nickname 'The Hunt' (originally apparently in French, *La Chasse*), owing to the figure in the finale which resembles a hunting-horn, but this name never had any sanction from Beethoven. There are four movements, the third of them being the last Minuet to appear in any of Beethoven's sonatas. But there is no slow movement, for the second movement is a scherzo-like *Allegretto vivace*. This lack of slow music seems of a piece with the Sonata's generally ebullient mood, in which serious issues, if they are broached at all, are merely alluded to beneath the surface merriment.

The very opening, beginning with a prominent three-note motif in dotted rhythm, is whimsical, almost improvisatory, with several harmonic surprises and chromatic ambiguities: taken together the various gestures form an 18-bar introduction that recurs in different guises throughout the main movement. The first subject also sports the three-note motif, and leads to a rollicking second group. After a mock-emotional climax the development plays with harmonic light and shade, and a croaking bass figure adds to the humour of the piece. The materials are cheerfully embellished through the recapitulation.



The second-movement scherzo, in A flat, is in sonata form, without any formal trio, and in 2/4 rather than the traditional 3/4 time. Its busy jocularly is enhanced by the rapid staccato of the left-hand accompaniment, and the sudden, mock-dramatic dynamic contrasts of the second theme. The fun gets fast and furious with giddy glissando effects before the material is treated to a more or less orthodox repeat (less, because it begins in F instead of the tonic) and fades out with crisp delicacy.

In conventional four-movement sonatas the Minuet, being the dance movement, is usually the most lightweight, but in this sonata Beethoven inverts the emotional priorities: his exquisite Menuetto, marked *Moderato e grazioso*, enshrines probably the sublimest music of the work. It returns to the principal tonality of E flat, and the opening tune is decidedly archaic in its accents, but develops a piercing plangency in the modulations of its second half. The stiff, staccato chords and wide leaps of the Trio theme seem quite formal at first, but become quite stern as they swell out in a crescendo. After the minuet returns, a clipped coda combines elements of both themes.

*Presto con fuoco* is the marking over the finale, and 'fiery' it is, though in a flamboyant, fizzing, good-humoured way. A scurrying left-hand figure and an agile descending right-hand tune lead immediately to the 'horn-like' theme that gives the sonata its nickname. Playful and highly rhythmic, the music gallops and capers like an over-excited horse. Emphatic dotted rhythms provide the text for discussion in the headlong, hugely athletic development section. The momentum never flags, all the way through the recapitulation, until the brief coda, which stops and starts and then nonchalantly dismisses the proceedings with a simple cadence.

The grand forward sweep of Beethoven's development in the genre of the piano sonata receives a sudden setback in the two miniature sonatas of op. 49. Though published in 1805, they are believed to have been written around the same time as the op. 10 Sonatas, which they do not rival in polish or adventurousness. It was apparently Caspar von Beethoven, the composer's brother, who took it upon himself to get them into print, against Beethoven's wishes. They appeared as *Leichte Sonaten*, 'easy sonatas', which suggests they may have been written to function as teaching pieces. They could be



regarded as sonatinas, because they are very short and simply laid out. **Sonata No. 19 in G minor, op. 49 no. 1**, probably composed in 1797, has only two movements. The first is a serene *Andante*, almost Mozartian in accent, in a very concise sonata form. The second theme, livelier and brighter than the first, becomes the focus of the short development section. The second and final movement is a genially energetic rondo in G major, demanding rather more in the way of bravura playing for the performer and providing a satisfyingly carefree conclusion to an entirely unpretentious work.

**Sonata No. 20 in G major, op. 49 no. 2** is believed to be slightly earlier than No. 19, probably from around 1795-6, and is likewise cast in two movements, in this case an *Allegro ma non troppo* and a *Tempo di menuetto*. The cultured formality of the first movement's opening theme is redolent of the classicism of Mozart and Haydn. The cascading second theme is more playful, but both subjects receive only cursory development before being recapitulated, creating a very simple sonata form reminiscent of some of Mozart's early sonatas. The *Tempo di Minuetto* second movement is more like a country dance than an urban minuet, and its form is that of a

rondo rather than a minuet with trio. The main melody is varied in a number of different ways, and interspersed with contrasting ideas. (It also crops up in modified form in the Minuet of Beethoven's Septet, op. 20, composed in 1799-1800.)

We find the two-movement form again in the latest work in this collection, **Sonata No. 22 in F major, op. 54**, which dates from 1804. Its composition was sandwiched between two much mightier conceptions – the *Waldstein* and *Appassionata* sonatas. In this brief intervening sonata there seem to be elements of parody. Its two movements embody a whole range of expressive opposites. Thus the first movement is in triple time, and apparently relaxed, while the second is in duple time and continuously agitated. The first movement is improvisatory, using two distinct ideas, while the second is closely focussed and monothematic. In fact, while Sonatas 19 and 20 may have been intended as teaching material, No. 22 is like a satire of a teaching piece, at first apparently simple and straightforward but luring the unwary player into much more demanding territory.

The opening *In tempo d'un menuetto*, like the last movement of Sonata No. 20, is a kind of rondo rather than a formal minuet with trio. While the opening idea is ruminative and rather complacently classical in style, it is interrupted by a contrasting second group (*sempre forte e staccato*) that is little short of tumultuous in its furious display of double octaves for both hands. This angry music breaks off into a rumbling bass figure, from which the initial minuet-like idea arises again in more decorated form. The heavy staccato virtuosity of the second group comes round again, but is broken off this time before it can properly get started. The main theme is then heard in a varied form with copious repeated-note figures, eventually forming a coda that leads to a sententious cadence via dissonant, decorum-busting chording. The second movement is really a brilliant *moto perpetuo* in the style of a toccata, pursuing a relentless course and displaying strict two-part counterpoint that suggests it might be a homage to J.S. Bach – but any Baroque leanings are negated by the wide-ranging and unpredictable modulations from key to key. Its furious activity is redoubled in the final *Più allegro*, sweeping to the kind of bravura ending that justly deserves a storm of applause.

*Notes copyright Malcolm MacDonald*

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 Chopin exponents, 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 21<sup>st</sup> century-- and to date he has at his command some 80 concertos, which he regularly performs with the world's leading orchestras. A musician of commanding versatility, Mr. Ohlsson is also a consummate chamber pianist. He has collaborated with many of the leading chamber groups of our time, including the Cleveland, Emerson, Takács and Tokyo String Quartets, and 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 RCA Victor Red Seal, Angel, Bridge, BMG, Delos, Hänssler, Nonesuch, Telarc, and Virgin Classics labels. For Bridge Records, he has recorded the following: Bach Goldberg Variations, BWV 988; Handel: Suite No. 2, HWV 427; BRIDGE 9193; Beethoven Sonatas, Vol. 1: Op. 7, Op. 78, Op. 101; BRIDGE 9198; Beethoven Sonatas, Vol. 2: Op. 2, No. 2, Op. 81, Op. 111; BRIDGE 9201; Beethoven Sonatas, Vol. 3: Op. 2, No. 3, Op. 14, No. 1, Op. 14, No. 2, Op. 79; BRIDGE 9207; Beethoven Sonatas, Vol. 4: Op. 26, Op. 28, Op. 90; BRIDGE 9249; Beethoven Sonatas, Vol. 5: Op. 13, Op. 27, No. 2, Op. 53; BRIDGE 9250; Charles Wuorinen: Music for Violin and Piano (with Benjamin Hudson) BRIDGE 9008; Justin Dello Joio: Two Concert Etudes, Sonata BRIDGE 9220.

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 age 13 entered the Juilliard School. His musical development has been influenced 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 the 1968 Montréal Piano Competition, it was his 1970 triumph in the Chopin Competition in Warsaw, where he won the Gold Medal, that brought him worldwide recognition. Mr. Ohlsson was awarded Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Prize in 1994 and received the 1998 University Musical Society Distinguished Artist Award in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Most recently, Mr. Ohlsson won a 2008 Grammy Award in the "Best Solo Performance" category for his "Beethoven Sonatas, Vol. 3" (BRIDGE 9207). The present discs complete his Beethoven Sonata cycle.

Produced, recorded, edited, mixed and mastered by Adam Abeshouse

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