

**LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN**

**SONATAS, OP. 10, NOS. 1-3**

**SONATA, OP. 13, "PATHETIQUE"**

**ANDREW RANGELL, PIANO**

**SONATA NO. 5 IN C MINOR, OP. 10, NO. 1 (18:34)**

- 1 ALLEGRO MOLTO E CON BRIO (6:54)
- 2 ADAGIO MOLTO (7:10)
- 3 FINALE: PRESTISSIMO (4:26)

**SONATA NO. 6 IN F MAJOR, OP. 10, NO. 2 (16:41)**

- 4 ALLEGRO (9:07)
- 5 ALLEGRETTO (3:43)
- 6 PRESTO (3:49)

**SONATA NO. 7 IN D MAJOR, OP. 10, NO. 3 (23:36)**

- 7 PRESTO (6:44)
- 8 LARGO E MESTO (9:46)
- 9 MENUETTO: ALLEGRO (2:58)
- 10 RONDO: ALLEGRO (4:07)

**SONATA NO. 8 IN C MINOR, OP. 13 ("PATHETIQUE") (19:02)**

- 11 GRAVE-ALLEGRO DI MOLTO E CON BRIO (8:44)
- 12 ADAGIO CANTABILE (5:32)
- 13 RONDO: ALLEGRO (4:45)

## Piano Sonatas Op. 10 and Op. 13

It has been well noted that Beethoven's thirty-two published piano sonatas form perhaps the closest record we have of the composer's development – his continual exploration and experimentation with forms (both single-movement and composite), with new strategies of emphasis and articulation, and with enlarging the expressive range of the piano itself. In the six year period from 1796 to 1802, no less than 20 sonatas were created, no surprise in that Beethoven was very much at his peak as a performer. The first four sonatas (Op. 2, Nos. 1-3; and Op. 7) come on the scene like gangbusters – extravagant in size (four movements each), virtuosity, sentiment, color, and invention. The next four – those offered here – present a somewhat different picture, Beethoven taking a new tack (as he was to do repeatedly over the next two decades). Concision and economy mark these next sonatas – as well as a higher quotient of humor and wit, new alloys in Beethoven's dramatizations. Published as Op. 10, the C minor, F major, and D major sonatas, a most dynamic trilogy, appeared in 1798. The first two revert to the more customary three-movement arrangement, in which a fast opening movement and a faster closing movement enclose a slower one. In this case the slower movements contrast greatly (an Adagio in the C minor, an Allegretto in the F major) due to the striking differences in character and tonality in these works as a whole.

## Sonata in C minor, Op. 10 No. 1

The C minor sonata, bold and stormy (and resembling, in some ways, Beethoven's very first, F minor, sonata), is the earliest illustration in the piano sonatas of Beethoven's much-noted "C minor mood" – a defiant, highly dramatic mode embodied by half a dozen famous examples, most conspicuously the Fifth Symphony, but most proximately the "Pathétique" sonata, to which Op. 10 No. 1 bears fascinating comparison. The terseness of both outer movements is at a maximum, which is why the relief of an expansive, and, in this case, placid, interruption seems indicated. The opening movement begins with an explosion of fragments, dramatically setting forth primary motifs: a jagged ascending broken chord in dotted rhythm; repeated notes, with a falling semi-tone, in answer. Within some thirty measures (and not many seconds), these elements are mixed, developed, intensified, and brought to a conclusive cadence. Dramatic silences and the technique of extension by fragmentation (foreshortening, if you prefer) create, together with brusque changes of texture, an unmistakably Beethovenian gambit. Add to this that the tonality of C minor, to this point, has never strayed from the simplest tonic/dominant axis. Countering this insistent vehemence is an abrupt shift to a more muted and non-directional transition section, finally resolving into the flowing second theme. Primary motifs appear again significantly in both these

sections, and, indeed, even more conspicuously in the closing themes of the exposition. The ensuing development, also terse, is likewise motivically concentrated. The recapitulation begins and ends, like the movement itself, with an explosion. This is music at high pressure. The extremes of this movement (which I think exceed its true emotional scope) are a beginning for Beethoven: successful in their own terms, they are a foothold of sorts – upon which he will build more fully only a year later, in the “Pathétique.”

In a decorous, ornamental Adagio – quite spacious, quite gracious – Beethoven provides a breather of fairly undemanding grace and simplicity (undemanding, that is, for the listener: the player’s task is in fact difficult). Here the structure is a simple sonata form without development; the movement’s harmonic journey is highly circumscribed, a fact which is not unrelated to its emotional limitations. Interestingly, the second theme group presents a variation of the repeated-note and falling semi-tone from the first movement. A leisurely coda nicely varies and rounds out the principal theme to end things quietly.

And out of this quiet, the bare, questioning octaves of the Prestissimo emerge, restating, in a new form, the main motives of movement one. The opening section of this highly compressed sonata-form moves directly, without transition, to the second-theme area (in E flat) in

which we soon encounter a good-humored variation of the opening theme, and then a frankly comic closing theme (enlivened by a teasing C-flat augmented-sixth chord) before the exposition’s scampering close. The development section is Beethoven’s shortest, at a length of eleven measures (or twelve, fermata added). Its most arresting feature is the cascade of three-note repetitions which augur the Fifth Symphony. Noteworthy at movement’s end is a brief lingering reprise of the second theme, now in D flat, followed by the plunge into a tiny coda. In these final few bars, themes one and two are fused together (in reverse order) before the music closes in an ironic whisper.

### **Sonata in F major, Op. 10 No. 2**

Mischievous high spirits pervade the F major sonata, whose first movement, like the C minor, has stops, starts, pauses, retakes. Three strident, slightly pompous octaves (mock-taves?) punctuate the end of the exposition (and the movement, later on) but this three-note cadential rhythm has been, in fact, already present – from the outset of the (abruptly appearing) second theme. Now it becomes the exclusive subject of a manic development section which cleverly invites, at its end, a relaxed – and false – recapitulation (in D major), an “error” quickly corrected, with adorable commentary by the theme’s little repeated triplet figure.

Neither a minuet nor a scherzo, the serious F minor Allegretto, with its D flat major Ländler as trio, provides a passing region of lyricism and gentle flow. And a lovely, straightforward narrative. A madcap romp is what follows, suggesting, to me, a memorable John Adams title: "A Short Ride in a Fast Machine." The machine, fueled by a jumpy opening canon, combines two- and three-part counterpoint throughout an ingenious sonata-rondo construction which relentlessly develops the opening material. As in the first movement, Beethoven's indicated repeat of the second section (development plus recap) is both a joke and a dare, which, however, lengthens the short ride into a true compositional tour de force.

### **Sonata in D major, Op. 10 No. 3**

And yet, inevitably, and unfairly, both the C minor and F minor sonatas must suffer comparison to the astonishing D major, which is widely and properly regarded as a real pinnacle among Beethoven's early achievements. It is a creation of tremendous strength, scope, and emotional breadth, closely unified at the level of basic motivic building blocks. All of its four movements are in the tonic key of D – and the shattering slow movement is Beethoven's first in the minor mode, and can even be seen as prophetic of the great F sharp minor Adagio of the much later "Hammerklavier" sonata. The initial descending fourth

(D-A) and particularly the first two notes (D-C sharp) form a thematic motto for the first movement, with further implications for all other movements as well. In the sweeping Presto boundaries are blurred. As in the C minor sonata, the advent of the second theme is less dramatic than that of an earlier transitional section (in this case, the one in B minor). An extended coda, again featuring the four-note idea, and traversing many registers, dramatically extends, then concludes, the movement.

There could be no greater contrast in substance than that between the tragic second movement of this sonata and the pretty Adagio from Op. 10 No. 1. The D minor Largo e Mesto probes the many layers of loss and melancholy, beginning with stark recitative-like single notes, and moving through shifting regions of lyrical intensity, of agitation, anger, calm, hope – and finally resignation (again, in single notes). In effect, Beethoven's response requires two movements. In the delicate Menuetto, hope (and even jollity, in the trio) returns tentatively and poignantly. The triumph of the concluding Rondo is an affirmation not of assertion but of breathless hide-and-seek. Indeed, there may be something of Haydn (pun intended) in this unusually compact finale, so deft, delicate, deceptive, and delicious. The dynamic of this movement – one of continual ambiguity, fracture, and surprise – is a new strategy for such a finale, a move away from the spacious, structured rondos

of the earlier A major (Op. 2) and E flat (Op. 7) sonatas, and the more overtly brilliant rondos of the C major (Op. 2) and F major (Op. 10) sonatas. Here even the theme itself is in doubt, more a question than a statement, and in fragments at that. Its progress is filled with pauses (the short movement has nine fermatas!), false starts, deceptive cadences, and a well-varied flotilla of different-sized events, including a short “hymn” of gently rocking chords (imitating the opening rhythm) just preceding the final amazing vanishing act. All’s well that ends well in this wonderful journey.

### **Sonata in C minor, Op. 13**

Following hard on the heels of the D major sonata is the “Pathétique,” from its inception an object of enduring popular appeal. Less deep, less subtle, than Op. 10 No.3, the “Pathétique” has most certainly earned its celebrity and really is, as the saying goes, “a masterpiece, though everybody thinks so.” The introduction, brief and filled with portent, uses, to great effect, silence, register, texture, and (of course) diminished harmonies – to create an atmosphere laden with uncertainty and internal conflict. This music will briefly and dramatically materialize (like an imperious ghost) in the movement’s development and coda. The exposition possesses extraordinary sweep and power, magnified further in the repeat. (I am not among those who believe

in extending the first movement repeat to include the introduction.) Arresting figuration, sustained textures, expansive phrase structures – all promote the headlong momentum of the exposition, as does the preservation of the minor mode (E flat minor, here) for the opening of the second theme. Thus the surprise reprise of the Grave at exposition’s end comes also as a respite of sorts. But it is very brief – and the turbulence continues unabated until the coda, gathering along the way some creatively novel piano sounds. This is a movement of abundant invention and of obvious effects – but also of iron logic.

As in Op. 10 No.1, the slow movement is in A flat, and in this case takes a very simple rondo form. In truth it is a song, and one of the most soulful and beautiful that Beethoven ever wrote. Marked as an Adagio, the movement has a quiet flow and intimacy from beginning to end – and a main tune that goes straight to the heart. Its supporting cast – two short episodes and coda, all unfailingly lyrical and also motivically interrelated – provides the perfect organic framework for our thrice-stated theme. The rondo Finale is a tamer, more scaled-down drama than that of the opening movement – but a strong and appealing one on its own merits, and a wise calculation of effect on Beethoven’s part. The overall structure is sturdy and symmetrical (ABA-C-ABA, coda), and, in a word, orderly. The theme, reminiscent of the second theme of the first movement, is, like that theme, lyrical but anxious. Charm and

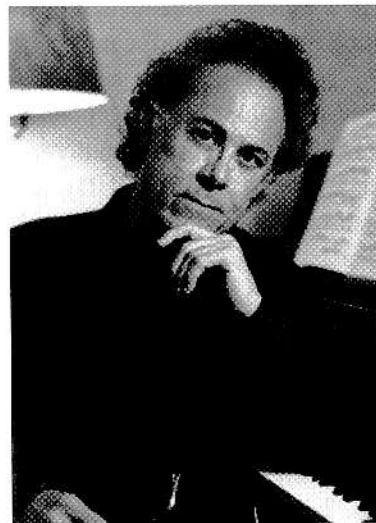
dash both figure strongly in the first two episodes but menace grows, in each case, into a terrifying downward scale, arriving at the same G7 chord. Near the end of a stormy coda (busily affirming the tonic key of C minor), another such downward scale seems to be offering escape to the tranquil region of A flat. Seconds later, the scale provides a blazing concluding C minor cadence.

After “Pathetique” Beethoven would pursue the three-movement format – with subtle but far less extroverted rhetoric – in his following Op. 14 sonatas. And presently, in 1802, the “Tempest” (Op. 31, No.2) would extend, refine, and deepen certain dramatic innovations and other defining features of the “Pathetique.”

*Andrew Rangell  
February 2009*



Born in Chicago and raised in Colorado, **Andrew Rangell** is a graduate of the Juilliard School, earning a doctoral degree in piano under Beveridge Webster. Mr. Rangell made his New York debut as winner of the Malraux Award of the Concert Artists Guild and has since performed throughout the United States, and in Europe and Israel. He



has also lectured extensively, and taught on the faculties of Dartmouth, Middlebury, and Tufts University. His many New York recitals have included an unusually wide range of repertoire, from Gibbons, Sweelinck, and Froberger to Berio, Nielsen, Schoenberg, Enescu, and the two epic sonatas of Charles Ives. Mr. Rangell’s gifts as an extraordinary interpreter of Beethoven received high acclaim during three successive seasons (1986-89) devoted to the performance, in a seven-concert sequence, of the thirty-two Beethoven piano sonatas.

This period saw ten traversals of the complete cycle (including Boston presentations at both Sanders Theater and Jordan Hall, and at New York’s 92nd Street Y) as well as a debut at Lincoln Center’s Mostly Mozart Festival and the award of an Avery Fisher Career Grant. Of Mr. Rangell’s most recent New York recital, Charles Michener of the New York Observer wrote: “For me, the great discovery of the series has been Andrew Rangell . . . Mr. Rangell is an individualist. And such was

his intensity—like the late Glenn Gould, he seemed to be propelled by an irresistible force—that the listener’s attention was riveted to the music.”

Andrew Rangell’s extensive discography on the Dorian label includes Bach’s Goldberg Variations, Beethoven’s final five sonatas, two diverse collections entitled “A Recital of Intimate Works” (Vol. I & II), and a pairing of Beethoven’s Diabelli Variations and Ravel’s Gaspard de la Nuit. A two-disc set of Bach’s six Partitas released in November, 2001 was cited in both The Boston Globe and Boston Phoenix as one of the ‘Best recordings of 2001.’ Mr. Rangell’s performances of the complete Chopin Mazurkas joined the Dorian catalogue in 2003 and were characterized, in Gramophone, as “taking the humble mazurka to new heights of variety and sophistication.” 1998-99 marked Andrew Rangell’s first active concert season following a long hiatus due to a serious hand injury. Since that time he has steadily reclaimed and expanded his performance and recording career. He was honored to perform a solo recital (which featured Ives’ “Concord” sonata) in the Venice “Biennale,” Italy’s foremost contemporary music festival. In Spring of 2008 Andrew Rangell was Artist-In-Residence of the Philadelphia Bach Festival.

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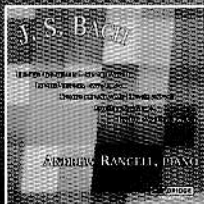
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