

Beethoven

Beethoven as Reflected in His Piano Music



Famous Quotes by Beethoven

**'Playing a wrong note is insignificant;
playing without passion is unforgivable.'**

**'Prince! What you are, you are by chance and birth, what I am,
I am by myself. There are princes and there will be thousands
more, there is only one Beethoven.'**

**'... I would be happy, perhaps one of the happiest people,
if the demon had not in my ears opened his residence.'**

**'I will take hold of fate by the throat,
it certainly shall not bend me down.'**

**'Music [is] higher revelation ...
than all wisdom and philosophy.'**



From a Child Prodigy at the Piano to a Musical Genius

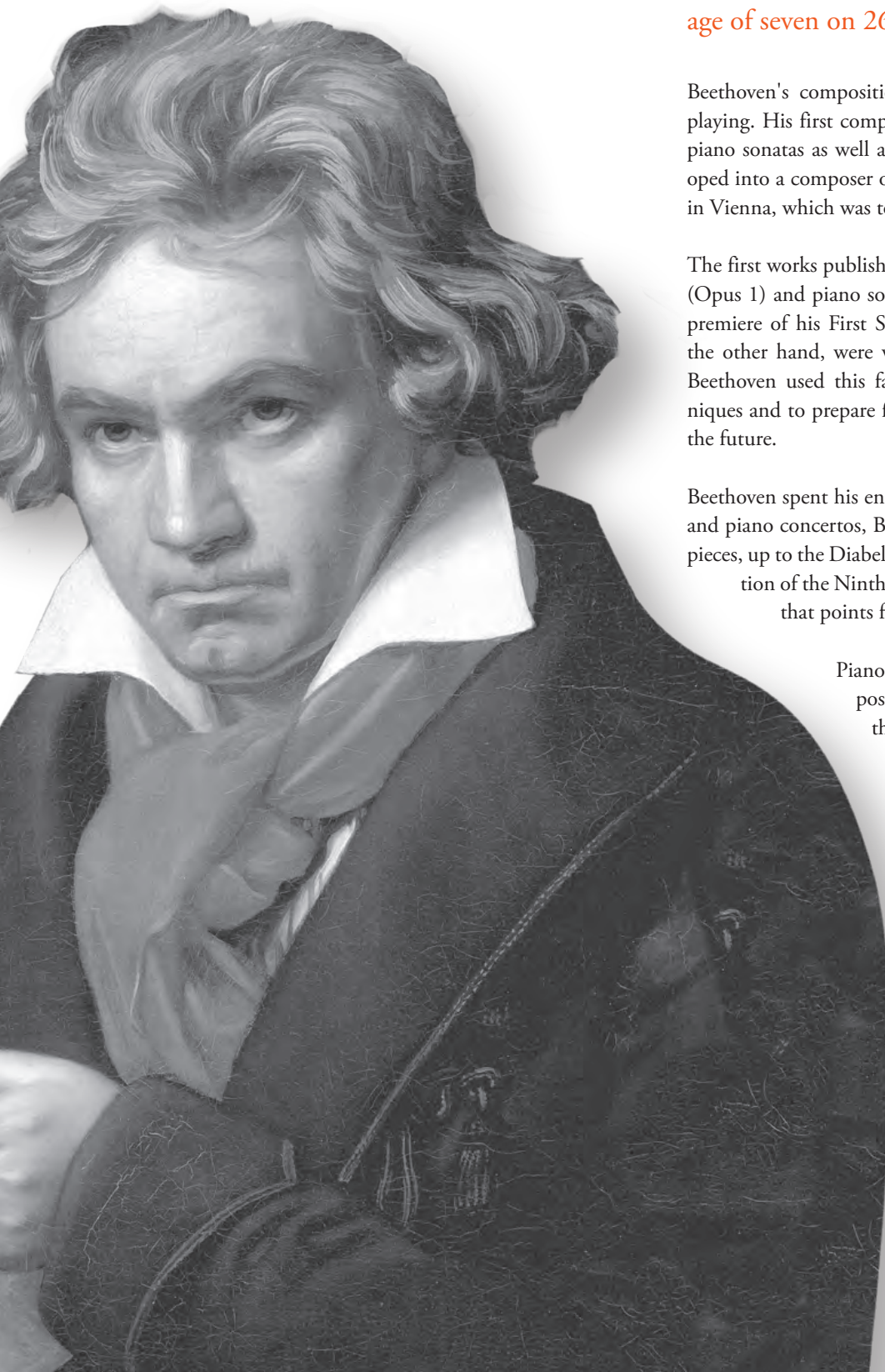
Ludwig van Beethoven was already considered a 'piano prodigy' at a young age. He became famous above all for the speed of his fingers and his improvisational skills. His first concert, which is documented, was given at the age of seven on 26 March 1778 in Cologne.

Beethoven's compositional beginnings were closely linked to his piano playing. His first compositions, written in Bonn, were piano quartets and piano sonatas as well as a virtuoso piano concerto. Beethoven only developed into a composer of symphonies, string quartets and other genres only in Vienna, which was to become his second home from 1792 on.

The first works published in Vienna with an opus number were piano trios (Opus 1) and piano sonatas (Opus 2). Eight years were to pass before the premiere of his First Symphony on 2 April 1800. His piano sonatas, on the other hand, were written close together, in his first years in Vienna. Beethoven used this familiar genre to test different compositional techniques and to prepare for the great orchestral and chamber music styles of the future.

Beethoven spent his entire life composing for piano. In addition to sonatas and piano concertos, Beethoven composed numerous variations and piano pieces, up to the Diabelli Variations Op. 120 and – shortly after the completion of the Ninth Symphony – the Six Bagatelles Op. 126, a late work that points far ahead into the 19th, even into the 20th century.

Piano music thus runs through almost the entire compositional oeuvre of Ludwig van Beethoven like a red thread, along which essential aspects of his artistic life line up.



Beginnings in Bonn

Ludwig van Beethoven, christened in Bonn on 17 December 1770, came from a musical family. His father was a tenorist and his grandfather a conductor at the Bonn court orchestra. From an early age he received music lessons. In 1782 Christian Gottlob Neefe became his teacher and first patron. He introduced the young prodigy to compositions by Johann Sebastian and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, including *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. Neefe was organist at the Bonn court, where he was able to give Beethoven the opportunity to play the organ at the age of 12.

At Neefe's instigation, Beethoven's first compositions were printed. Among them were three piano sonatas (WoO47) which the young composer dedicated, in 1783, to his employer, the Elector of Cologne and Archbishop Maximilian Friedrich Graf von Königsegg-Rothenfels. They became known as 'Kurfürstensonaten' ('Electoral Sonatas'). At the time of publication, Beethoven was 'eleven', according to the first edition, but actually almost 13 years old. Beethoven's father had deliberately pretended that his son was younger in order to attract more attention, and Beethoven himself thought for a long time that he was only born in 1772.

Musically, the three sonatas are characterised by Neefe's compositional style and the dynamically contrasting textures of Mannheim symphonies. In detail, however, they already cast a shadow over the early Viennese years up to the *Grande Sonate pathétique* Op. 13.



*Christian Gottlob Neefe.
Engraving by Gottlob August Liebe
after a drawing by
Johann Georg Rosenber.*



*Archbishop Maximilian Friedrich.
Painting by Joseph Anton Stratmann.*

*Three Sonatas for
Piano, WoO 47. First
print, beginning of
Sonata II.*



3 Piano Sonatas WoO 47 'Kurfürsten Sonatas'

Editor: Jochen Reutter
Fingerings and Notes on
interpretation: Nils Franke
UT 50426



Available
November 2019

Sonata WoO 47/3, Minuet and 1st Variation

Menuetto sostenuto

Musical notation for measures 1-8 of the Minuet. The piece is in 3/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The first system shows measures 1-8. The right hand features chords and a melodic line with trills and triplets. The left hand provides a steady bass accompaniment. Dynamics include piano (*p*) and forte (*f*). Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5. A trill (*tr*) is present in measure 8.

Musical notation for measures 9-16 of the Minuet. The right hand continues with chords and melodic fragments, including a trill in measure 16. The left hand has a rhythmic accompaniment. Dynamics range from forte (*f*) to piano (*p*). Fingerings are indicated throughout.

Musical notation for measures 17-20 of the first variation. The right hand features a complex, rapid sixteenth-note pattern. The left hand has a simple accompaniment. The dynamic is marked piano (*p*). Fingerings are indicated for the intricate right-hand passage.

Musical notation for measures 21-24 of the first variation. The right hand continues with the sixteenth-note pattern, featuring trills and slurs. The left hand accompaniment remains simple. The dynamic is marked forte (*f*). Fingerings are indicated.

Musical notation for measures 25-28 of the first variation. The right hand features more complex sixteenth-note patterns with triplets and slurs. The left hand accompaniment is consistent. The dynamic is marked forte (*f*). Fingerings are indicated.

Musical notation for measures 29-32 of the first variation. The right hand continues with sixteenth-note patterns, including a trill in measure 32. The left hand accompaniment is simple. Dynamics range from piano (*p*) to forte (*f*). Fingerings are indicated.

First Trip to Vienna and Return to Bonn

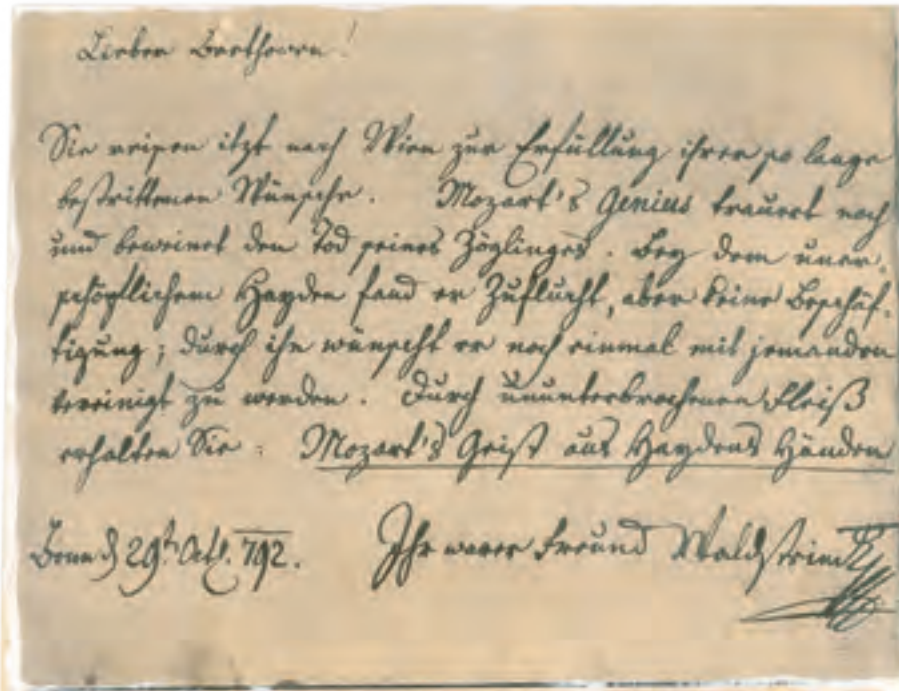
Neefe was of the opinion that the talent of his pupil was extraordinary, he would 'certainly become a second Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart if he progressed as he began'. These words impressed the Elector so much that he sent Beethoven to Vienna at the end of 1786 for a few weeks to take lessons with Mozart. But the short period from January to April 1787, during which Beethoven stayed in Vienna, was hardly enough time to learn from Mozart. A meeting with Mozart is not even documented, although it cannot be ruled out. On his way home, Beethoven learned that his mother was dying.

After Beethoven had returned to Bonn, Joseph Haydn visited there in 1790 and again in 1792, en-route to London. Beethoven was introduced to him. Mozart had died in the meantime, so Beethoven travelled to Vienna again to now take lessons with Haydn. During this time, Beethoven hoped to come close to Mozart's style of composition.



Joseph Haydn. Oil painting by Thomas Hardy, 1791.

'To Vienna for the Fulfillment of Your Long-desired Wishes.'



Waldstein's entry in Beethoven's family book.

Dear Beethoven!

You go to Vienna to realise your long-desired wishes: the genius of Mozart is still mourning and weeping for the death of its disciple. With the inexhaustible Haydn it found refuge, but no occupation; through him it once again wishes to be reunited with someone. By incessant application, you will receive Mozart's spirit from Haydn's hands.

Bonn 29 Oct. 1792.

Your true friend, Waldstein.



Ferdinand Ernst Gabriel Graf von Waldstein (1762–1823).
Unsigned silhouette from Beethoven's family book, perhaps by Joseph Neesen.

This is the famous note Ferdinand Ernst Graf von Waldstein wrote in Beethoven's family book, before the aspiring composer left for Vienna in 1792. Waldstein, Beethoven's first noble patron and friend, to whom he was to dedicate the Piano Sonata Op. 53, the so-called Waldstein Sonata, persuaded him to continue composing after his return from Vienna in 1787.

In November 1792, Beethoven left Bonn and travelled to Vienna for a second time. For a little over a year he became a pupil of Haydn there.

At that time Beethoven had not yet planned to leave Bonn for good. However, his return became impossible due to the occupation of the Rhineland by French troops in 1794. The court in Bonn had to flee, and Beethoven's employment at the court was thus also nullified. Vienna now became the place of his life and work.

'Mozart's Spirit from Haydn's Hands'

In the lessons with Haydn, Beethoven got to know his teacher's late style. Haydn also influenced the first Viennese Piano Sonatas Op. 2, which Beethoven dedicated to him.

Haydn's impact, for example, is very apparent in the second movement of the Sonata Op. 2 No. 1 (see pp. 8–11). Mozart largely left the ornamentation of his themes to his own improvisational

talent and had only rarely notated them in his autographs. Haydn, however, had already written them out in his later works. Finally, in the young Beethoven, these embellishments, which originate from the art of variation, become an integral, once and for all, fixed component of his compositions and thus form a piece of 'Mozart's spirit from Haydn's hands', in the truest sense of the phrase.



Three Sonatas Op. 2. First edition, Artaria, Vienna, 1796, title page with dedication to Joseph Haydn.

Piano Virtuoso in Vienna

Despite all of his compositional achievements, Beethoven was not initially perceived as a composer in Vienna, but as a great virtuoso at the piano. There was talk of a ‘giant among piano players’. The speed with which his fingers moved over the keys was admired, and above all his art of ‘fantasising’ at the piano. Viennese pianist Abbé Joseph Gelinek reported on a performance by Beethoven:

‘I have never heard anyone play like that! He improvised on a theme I gave him as I never heard even Mozart improvise. He then played compositions of his own that were marvellous and magnificent in the highest degree, and he can overcome difficulties and draw effects from the piano such as we couldn’t even allow ourselves to dream about.’

The first Viennese piano sonatas may also have been among the compositions mentioned by Gelinek. The Three Sonatas Op. 2 appeared in the spring of 1796 in the publishing house Artaria in Vienna, where Haydn and Mozart had already published a number of their works.

At the time of this publishing, Beethoven was on his great concert tour, which was to take him via Prague, Dresden and Leipzig to Berlin. Pre-release copies of the Sonatas Op. 2 may already have been in Beethoven’s luggage. He dedicated a copy, that is still preserved in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, to the Berlin Kapellmeister ‘Herr Fasch with special respect’.

View of ‘Kohlmarkt’ in Vienna with the publishing house Artaria around 1833.



Piano Sonatas, Vol. 1
Editors: Peter Hauschild, Jochen Reutter
UT 50427

Sonata Op. 2/1, 2nd Movement

Adagio

dolce

p

sf

pp

rinf.

[m.d.]

[m.d.]

*) Siehe Einzelanmerkungen / See Detailed Notes /
Voir Notes Détaillées

36

38

41

43

46

49

sf

51

pp *fp*

54

sf

56

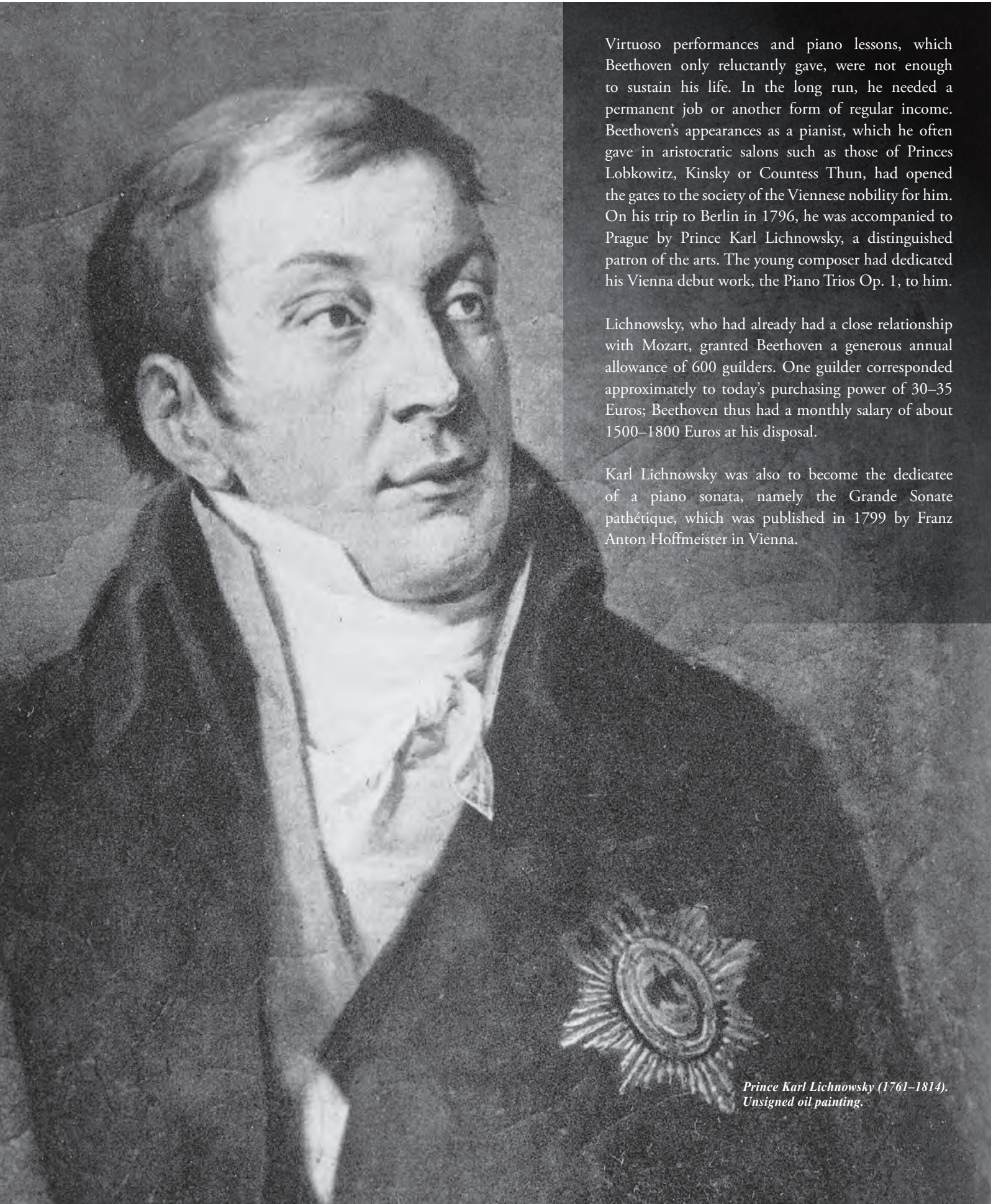
p *sf*

58

pp *sf* *pp*

*) Siche Einzelanmerkungen / See Detailed Notes /
Voir Notes Détaillées

Patrons



Virtuoso performances and piano lessons, which Beethoven only reluctantly gave, were not enough to sustain his life. In the long run, he needed a permanent job or another form of regular income. Beethoven's appearances as a pianist, which he often gave in aristocratic salons such as those of Princes Lobkowitz, Kinsky or Countess Thun, had opened the gates to the society of the Viennese nobility for him. On his trip to Berlin in 1796, he was accompanied to Prague by Prince Karl Lichnowsky, a distinguished patron of the arts. The young composer had dedicated his Vienna debut work, the Piano Trios Op. 1, to him.

Lichnowsky, who had already had a close relationship with Mozart, granted Beethoven a generous annual allowance of 600 guilders. One guilder corresponded approximately to today's purchasing power of 30–35 Euros; Beethoven thus had a monthly salary of about 1500–1800 Euros at his disposal.

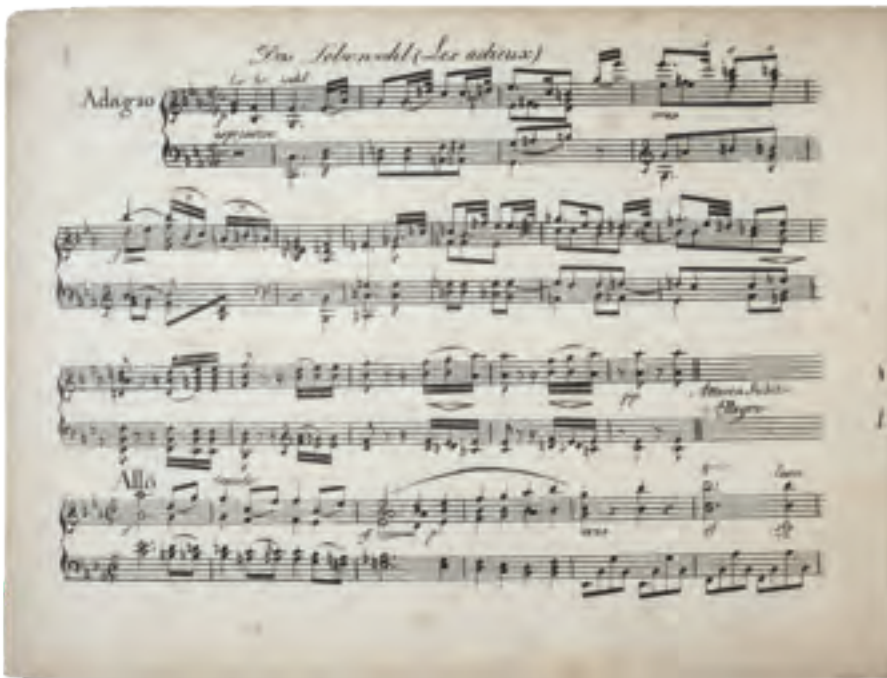
Karl Lichnowsky was also to become the dedicatee of a piano sonata, namely the *Grande Sonate pathétique*, which was published in 1799 by Franz Anton Hoffmeister in Vienna.

*Prince Karl Lichnowsky (1761–1814).
Unsigned oil painting.*

Disagreement with Lichnowsky – Archduke Rudolph

After a quarrel in 1806, Prince Lichnowsky withdrew Beethoven's allowance. Beethoven then thought of leaving Vienna and accepting a position at the court in Kassel. However, in 1809 Prince Lobkowitz, Prince Kinsky and Archduke Rudolph agreed to continue to secure Beethoven's livelihood with an annual stipend of 4000 guilders. The only condition was that he stayed in Vienna.

Archduke Rudolph, himself an outstanding pianist, was not only a patron of Beethoven, but also his pupil. For him Beethoven wrote the Piano Sonata Op. 81a, called 'Das Lebewohl' ('Les Adieux'), in 1809, when Rudolph had to flee from the French from Vienna with the imperial family.



Archduke Rudolph. Engraving by Blasius Höfel after a drawing by Adalbert Suchy.

Sonata Les Adieux, Op. 81a. Leipzig first edition, Breitkopf & Härtel, 1811, first page of music.

The Piano Sonatas Op. 106 and Op. 111 as well as a number of other works, such as the so-called Archduke Trio Op. 97 and the Missa Solemnis Op. 123, are also dedicated to the Archduke.

The state bankruptcy, caused by the Napoleonic wars, and the resulting depreciation of money quickly put the generous financial

support of Beethoven's patrons into relation. It was only in the latter years of his life that the composer was able to live quite carefree, due to double sales of his works.

Beethoven already sold the Les Adieux Sonata Op. 81a to two publishers, Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig and Clementi in London.

Piano Sonatas and Poetic Ideas

The title page of the London first edition of the Les Adieux Sonata Op. 81a calls the work ‘Sonate caractéristique’. This refers to the extra-musical programme or at least to a kind of poetic idea behind the sonata.

A number of Beethoven’s piano sonatas have sobriquets, only to a lesser extent do these “subtitles” go back to the composer himself, such as ‘Lebewohl’ (‘farewell’), which Beethoven had written as the

motto for the first chords of the Sonata Op. 81a, or the Grande Sonate pathétique Op. 13, whose sobriquet adorns the title page of the first edition and thus also goes back to Beethoven.

The Grande Sonate pathétique is in the “tragic” key of C minor, which is so important for Beethoven. With its slow introduction, it follows equally symphonic models as well as the tradition of the French overture. In the first movement of his last piano sonata, Opus 111, also in C minor, Beethoven was to use these stylistic devices again.



Pathétique Sonata Op. 13. First edition, Hoffmeister, Vienna, 1799, title page and first page of music.



However, the sobriquets of most other sonatas do not come from Beethoven himself. They usually go back to publishers and other music-loving contemporaries, such as the title ‘Sonata pastorale’, which is based on a reprint of the Sonata Op. 28 by London publisher Broderip & Wilkinson in 1805. In fact, this sonata is characterised by a predominantly lyrical tone as well as by bourdon tones and natural tone motifs associated with country life.

The sobriquet of perhaps Beethoven’s most famous piano sonata, the Moonlight Sonata, Op. 27 No. 2, dedicated to Countess Giulietta Guicciardi and published in 1802, does not come from the composer either. But he refers to poetic ideas that inspired the work. The term Moonlight Sonata is rooted in a remark by Ludwig Rellstab in his novella Theodor, which appeared in 1824 in several issues of the Berliner Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung. Rellstab

compares the first movement with ‘faint shimmer of the moon’. Wilhelm von Lenz describes this in more detail in his 1852 study *Beethoven et ses trois styles*:

‘Rellstab compares this work to a barque which visits by moonlight the wild stretches of Lake Lucerne in Switzerland. The sobriquet “Moonlight Sonata” ... has no other origin.’

Beethoven himself is said to have expressed that he had ‘improvised the Adagio in a room lined in black by the corpse of a friend’. He thus brings into play ideas of mourning and lamentation. Carl Czerny combines these two aspects by interpreting the movement as a ‘night scene in which the voice of a complaining spirit is heard at a distance’.



*Sonata Op. 27/2 ('Moonlight Sonata').
First edition, Cappi, Vienna, 1802, title page.*

Piano Sonatas, Vol. 2
Editors: Peter Hauschild,
Jochen Reutter
UT 50428



SONATE

Sonata quasi una fantasia

Opus 27 Nr. 2

Adagio sostenuto

Si deve suonare tutto questo pezzo delicatissimamente e senza sordino *)

Fingersatz: Boris Bloch

14

sempre *pp* e senza sordino

4

8

12

16

*) Man spiele dieses ganze Stück sehr zart und ohne Dämpfung, d. h. mit rechtem Pedal. / The whole piece must be played very softly and sustained throughout - i. e. with right pedal. / Jouer tout ce mouvement très délicatement et sans employer la sourdine, c'est-à-dire avec pédale.

20

Musical notation for measures 20-23. Treble clef with a melodic line of eighth and sixteenth notes. Bass clef with a bass line of eighth notes and chords. Measure 23 has a fermata over the final note.

24

Musical notation for measures 24-27. Treble clef with a melodic line. Bass clef with a bass line. Measure 25 has a *cresc.* marking. Measure 27 has a *decresc.* marking and a fermata.

28

Musical notation for measures 28-31. Treble clef with a melodic line. Bass clef with a bass line. Measure 28 has a *P* marking. Measure 31 has a fermata.

32

Musical notation for measures 32-35. Treble clef with a melodic line featuring fingerings (1 2 1 1 4, 4 2 5 1, 3 1 4 2 5, 1 2 4 #) and accents. Bass clef with a bass line. Measure 35 has a fermata.

36

Musical notation for measures 36-39. Treble clef with a melodic line featuring fingerings (5 5 3 4, 3 5 3 4, 3 2 2 4, 2 4 2). Bass clef with a bass line. Measure 39 has a fermata.

40

Musical notation for measures 40-43. Treble clef with a melodic line. Bass clef with a bass line. Measure 40 has a *decresc.* marking. Measure 42 has a *pp* marking.

44

Musical notation for measures 44-47. Treble clef with a melodic line. Bass clef with a bass line. Measure 47 has a fermata.

48

cresc. *p*

52

56

cresc.

59

p *pp*

62

65

decresc. *pp*

attacca subito il seguente

The Appassionata

The sobriquet 'Appassionata' of the Sonata in F minor Op. 57 was only discovered in 1838, a good decade after Beethoven's death. Beethoven worked on this composition, which he long regarded as his most important piano sonata, in the years 1805–06. Beethoven had the manuscript with him in August 1806 when he stayed at Grätz Castle near Troppau with Prince Lichnowsky, where the aforementioned quarrel with the patron arose.

On his hasty departure, Beethoven came out into a pouring rain, completely soaking the autograph. Another version of the story tells us that Beethoven had quarreled with the prince and ran away with the manuscript under his arm in the pouring rain. In any case, the manuscript shows clear water damage.

Back in Vienna, the French pianist Marie Bigot – as her husband Paul later reports – played the work from the wet manuscript pages, which were difficult to read due to numerous corrections. Beethoven was apparently so impressed by this that he left her the autograph as a gift after the engraving of the first edition. It is now in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.



*Sonata in F minor, Op. 57 ('Appassionata').
First page of the autograph.*

*Grätz Castle near Troppau, excerpt from
a painting by Friedrich Amerling.*



Deafness and Diseases, Withdrawal from Concert Life

In 1802, Beethoven's deafness became so noticeable for the first time that he felt compelled to write his so-called Heiligenstadt Testament.

The progressing deafness weighed heavily on Beethoven. It is worth noting that in this depressed state of mind during the first years of the 19th century he not only achieved his highest compositional productivity – between 1800 and 1805–06 he wrote 11 piano sonatas alone – but was also able to create works of completely contrary character, such as the cheerful, even humorous Piano Sonata in G major Op. 31 No. 1.

Beethoven's hearing problems eventually led to almost complete deafness. This forced him to stop public appearances as a concert pianist from about 1815. He could only conduct conversation in writing with the help of so-called conversation booklets. All of this was followed by a general decline in health.

In spite of the limitations of his hearing loss, it was a hardly imaginable achievement to compose purely from the “inner ear”. Among the piano sonatas he wrote while (almost) deaf are Opus 90, as well as the Sonatas Opp. 101, 106 and 109–111, among them the so-called Hammerklavier Sonata Op. 106 (1818), the most monumental of Beethoven's piano sonatas.



*Beethoven, 'Heiligenstadt Testament'.
First page of the autograph.*

*Beethoven, Conversation booklet from
February–March 1818, page 4–5.*



Freedom in Late Works

In his late works, Beethoven sought new ways on working with traditional forms and genre norms. Be it the condensing of the sonata movements, as in the first movement of the Sonata Op. 101; the removal of a movement in sonata form, as in the Sonata Op. 109; the enormous expansion of the form, as in the Hammerklavier Sonata Op. 106 or in the seven movement String Quartet in C sharp minor Op. 131; the inclusion of a fugue in a sonata, as in Opus 106 and Opus 110; or the integration of vocal parts in an instrumental genre, as in the Finale of the Ninth Symphony.

With the Sonata Op. 111 Beethoven wrote his last piano sonata. But this decision does not mean the end of his compositions for piano. Between 1819 and 1823 he composed the Variations on a Waltz by Anton Diabelli Op. 120. Diabelli, composer and music publisher, had written a waltz and asked the most important composers of his time to write variations on it, which he intended to publish in his publishing house. Most composers contributed one variation to this project. Beethoven, however, created a colossal work of 33 variations.



*Beethoven with the manuscript of Missa solennis.
Oil painting by Josef Karl Stieler, 1820.*

1159

The Bagatelles Op. 126 as a Forward-looking Legacy



The Six Bagatelles Op. 126 were written between April and June 1824 after the completion of the Ninth Symphony. The French word bagatelle was only established by Beethoven as a term for short, trivial piano pieces without a given form. The small pieces of Opus 126, however, are anything but “trivial”. They continue, as it were, what Beethoven had begun in the condensed first movement of the Sonata Op. 101, which resembles more a lyrical piano piece than a sonata movement. The composer himself bundled the individual bagatelles of his Opus 126 into a ‘cycle of trifles’. They point far ahead into the later 19th century, in which the piano sonata was replaced by the piano piece as the main genre of piano music, for example in the piano pieces and intermezzi by Johannes Brahms or in the piano cycles by Robert Schumann. In the early 20th century

they may have inspired cyclically bound miniatures such as the Six Little Piano Pieces Op. 19 by Arnold Schönberg.

This closes the gap between Beethoven, who had found his second home in Vienna, and Johannes Brahms, who had chosen Vienna as his home, and Arnold Schönberg and the so-called Second Viennese School. In the symphonic genre, Beethoven had set a touchstone for generations of composers with the almost magical number nine. In the genre of the piano sonata, his oeuvre after him remained unrivalled. Franz Schubert may have thought of such a thing when he, shocked by the death of the master, is said to have said: ‘Who can do anything after Beethoven?’

*Beethoven's living and music room in the so-called
'Schwarzschaner-Haus' in Vienna, 1827.
Photography by Atelier Sachsse after an etching by
Gustav Leybold after a drawing by Johann Nepomuk Hoechle.*

Piano Pieces New Edition

Editor: Jochen Reutter
UT 50295



Available
Spring 2020

Bagatelle Op. 126/5

Quasi Allegretto

5.

8

15

21

29

36

cresc. -

rinf.

dim.

*)

*) Der Haltebogen gilt nicht für die Wiederholung. / The tie does not apply to the repetition. / La liaison ne s'applique pas à la répétition.

Famous Quotes about Beethoven

‘During a ... walk ... he had hummed all the way for himself or sometimes howled, always up and down, without singing certain notes. When I asked him what it was, he said, “A theme for the last Allegro of the Sonata (in F minor Op. 57) came to my mind” ’.

Ferdinand Ries on a walk together with Beethoven

‘Never before have I seen an artist more focused, more energetic, more earnest. I understand quite well how he must stand curiously against the world.’

Johann Wolfgang v. Goethe

‘Beethoven’s music wields the lever of fear, awe, horror, and pain, and it awakens that eternal longing that is the essence of the romantic.’

E.T.A. Hoffmann

‘Beethoven understands the whole, round, all-encompassing, complexity of human nature. Never has a musician known and experienced more about the harmony of the spheres, the harmony of God’s nature, than Beethoven.’

Wilhelm Furtwängler

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Imprint

Compilation and texts: Julia Moser

Editor: Jochen Reutter

Assistants to the editor: Cordula Toppel and Dorothea Grabner

Layout: Maximilian Lacher / Illformation.net

Printed by Plöchl Druck GmbH, Freistadt

Beethoven's piano music as published by Wiener Urtext Edition

3 Piano Sonatas WoO 47 'Kurfürsten Sonatas'

Editor: Jochen Reutter

Fingerings and Notes on interpretation: Nils Franke
UT 50426

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IX / 2019