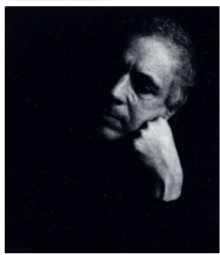
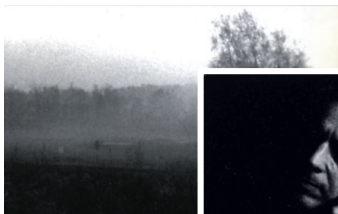


Disc 1

- Sonata N° 10 in G, Op. 14, No. 2 (?1799)
1. Allegro 7:17
 2. Andante 5:12
 3. Scherzo: Allegro assai 3:50
- Sonata N° 13 in E flat, Op. 27, No. 1 (1800-01)
4. Andante — Allegro — Andante 5:18
 5. Allegro molto e vivace 2:01
 6. Adagio con espressione 3:16
 7. Allegro vivace 5:51
- Sonata N° 14 in c sharp, Op. 27, No. 2
("Moonlight") (1801)
8. Adagio sostenuto 5:59
 9. Allegretto 2:04
 10. Presto agitato 7:44
- Sonata N° 26 in E flat, Op. 81a ("Les Adieux")
(1809-10)
11. Das Lebewohl (Les Adieux) —
Adagio — Allegro 6:43
 12. Abwesenheit (L'Absence) — Andante
espressivo (In gehender Bewegung,
doch mit viel Ausdruck) 3:54
 13. Das Wiedersehn (Le Retour) —
Vivacissimamente (Im lebhaftesten
Zeitmaße) 6:07

Disc 2

- Sonata N° 5 in c, Op. 10, No. 1 (?1795-7)
1. Allegro molto e con brio 6:01
 2. Adagio molto 8:04
 3. Finale: Prestissimo 4:31
- Sonata N° 11 in B flat, Op. 22 (1800)
4. Allegro con brio 7:44
 5. Adagio con molto espressione 9:27
 6. Menuetto 3:22
 7. Rondo: Allegretto 6:20
- Sonata N° 18 in E flat, Op. 31, No. 3 (1802)
8. Allegro 8:48
 9. Scherzo: Allegretto vivace 4:41
 10. Menuetto: Moderato e grazioso 4:08
 11. Presto con fuoco 4:43



Producer: Gunther Schuller
Production Director: Marc Lambert

Project Coordinator: Nancy Merrill
Production Assistance: Kathy Clark

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by Joel Gordon

Design: Tama Hochbaum, High Tree Design
Photography: Tama Hochbaum (landscapes),
Robert Klein (Sherman), Christopher Harting
(Schuller, inside)

Editing by David Locke
Mastering by Joel Gordon
Piano by Steinway

Preface

The motivation for making yet another recording of the complete cycle of Beethoven Piano Sonatas raises implications that are awkward to confront. Logically there are only two possible reasons: vanity; or the conviction that one may contribute unprecedented insights and discoveries — which is vanity squared. To plunge ahead requires a certain measure of deafness unbecoming to a musician: deaf to history, to one's own limitations, to the cycles previously recorded by great pianists, and to the over-saturation of recorded artifacts.

That Beethoven became deaf offers no consolation. But that Beethoven is indefinable and ineffable affords, however, a small opening. For the proposition that Beethoven can never be both fully assimilated and executed seems no less realistic than the notorious ‘uncertainty principle.’ When touched, when infringed, complex visions must lose their innocence and amplitude. Yet the danger of such reasoning is the suggestion that every performance of Beethoven, however inadequate, may then be justified, in that some particular predilection of the music will inevitably be exposed. Such faith may be too optimistic.

Nevertheless, the variables of complex visions, both independently and in combination, may be so specialized and so volatile as to warrant further investigation. In fact, endless and endlessly intriguing investigation — if only because it never comes out the same way twice. I would speculate that the same sonata recorded thirty-two times by a sympathetic artist might make for a more interesting document than a single recording of each sonata. Nor is this aleatoric music, to be improvised. Rather improvisation, in the sense of gestural grace, is the only means available to coordinate a field so dynamic in its tension and play.

Specifically, the inherent tension between order and disorder, anomaly and stasis, event and field, is at its most refined and researched in Beethoven, whether the consequences are bloody or evanescent. Such music cannot be mastered, only addressed — which conviction allows me to take leave of my senses, to try vainly, to give some inadequate testimony of my teacher’s legacy, to wrestle in the great sandbox of child and heaven with the ultimate Sumo soldier-of-humanity, however many times I get flattened.

As a modest symbol of the comprehensiveness of the sonata cycle, each CD will offer an early, middle, and late representative. The dialogue and overlap among all the sonatas, not to mention with the sonatas that come before and after Beethoven, deserve to be accounted for in the recording sequence so that chemistry and display may work in parallel.

As for program notes, in deference to the thousands of books, articles, analyses, and liner notes already available on these sonatas, I have confined myself to mentioning examples from each work that are characteristic of its entirety. Since the major and moral purpose of great art is to render indivisible the detail and the whole, paradigmatic samples may conceivably illuminate the mind and make-up of each sonata. A further goal would be to weave the various samples into a more complete picture of the compositional and imaginative process demonstrable throughout the cycle.

A Performer's Note

Sonata Op. 14, N^o 2 in G Major

Beethoven, unmarried and an expert in unrequited love, addresses here the feminine *mystique*. The first movement of this serenely enchanting sonata, a primer in domestic wit and charm, coils around a (putative) dialogue with the beloved. The principal theme serves as the main vehicle for this conversation, and the rhythmic displacement which constitutes the distinguishing feature

of this theme becomes a marvelous revelation of the subtle and indirect power of Woman.

The implied duet juxtaposes a simple broken triad in the bass to the undulating appeal of the treble figure. By all statistical and acoustical odds, the first note of this reply in the bass should coincide with the downbeat of the bar. But, in fact, it is offset by an eighth-note rest. However, reassuring the basic content of this theme, the improbable syncopation adds exactly that right context of uncertainty and unpredictability which encourages the relationship to thrive. For without this mysterious but gentle disorder, deadly habit would set in. (But which is which? Do the conventional treble=female and bass=male roles apply? Yet in the way that Beethoven delineates the circular charm of the conversation — also a function of the rhythmic displacement — it really doesn't matter.)

Needless to say, the rest of the movement amounts to an elegant dissertation on the debts and blessings of the original mutation. The subsequent materials and elaborations engage in continuous commentary on the missing (deferred) downbeat by strategies of compensation, rebuttal, and affirmation. The reckoning and recovery from this first trauma are transformed into a parable of unfolding life and supple loving.

The very squareness of the childlike, hymnal tune which is the theme for the second movement variations seems to be the suitable antidote for the tender dislocations of the first movement. This middle movement makes its point with a dogged determination in both phrasing structure and choice of harmony; but however inexorable, it is, strangely, no less amiable nor gracious than its surrounding movements.

That the concluding movement should be designated a *Scherzo*, an extremely unlikely case, contributes to the *Midsummer Night's Dream* fantasy which pervades the entire Sonata. Beethoven is no less playful than Shakespeare, but there is one startling difference, for Shakespeare would consider wholly unremarkable the family values that Beethoven preaches. But what values! Full of mischief, inventiveness, and (thereby) eternal intimacy.

Sonata Op. 27, N^o 1 in E^b Major

Both of the Op. 27 Sonatas bear the caption of *Sonata quasi una Fantasia*, therefore suggesting a kind of improvisation. But, as always, there is method to the composer's madness, for the extremes of feeling and form portrayed in each work are no less integrated than the materials found in the usual sonata arrangement. As in the Op. 27, No. 2 ("Moonlight") Sonata, the first movement of Op. 27, No.1 is relatively quiet and slow, although, by contrast, it features a vigorous middle episode. The mysterious, veiled aura which imbues the principal section of this movement, and which is the characteristic seed of the entire Sonata, issues from a striking but subtle rhythmic paradox. Namely, the simple rune and structures of the main theme are held hostage to an acoustically anomalous barring notation. The first two (and presumably upbeat) quarter notes lead into a weightier half note which, to our ears and expectations, should fall on the downbeat but, instead, occupies the third, middle, and less significant beat in the bar. This requires, as a matter of common law and execution, less emphasis upon the subtly but clearly deposed half note. Abetted by a fluctuating motivic pattern, the resulting rhythmic ambivalence contributes to, indeed contrives a

kind of see-saw limbo which eloquently testifies to the mystical nature of this movement and, more than that, to a special, almost cubist mosaic of thought which is typical both of this work and of many of the lace compositions of Beethoven.

A rather destabilizing *scherzo* ensues, consisting in its primary material of two voices which are stated together at first but then, in the recapitulation, pursue each other in frantic syncopation. Like two heated filaments, these voices flicker in some feverish, possessed dance which inevitably shreds the lullaby of the first movement. This *scherzo* is then followed by a noble *Adagio*, truncated to permit the happy intrusion of a whimsical, boisterous finale which, in turn, is sufficiently gracious to recall the *Adagio* near the close of the movement and the Sonata. This cyclical gesture somehow restores the balance between the concepts of fantasia and sonata which both adorn the title page.

A final word for serious students and listeners: in his *Companion to Beethoven's Pianoforte Sonatas*, Donald Tovey offers a pungent and witty exegesis that explains much about this Sonata and provides further evidence of Tovey's general insight, humor, and range.

Sonata Op. 27, N^o 2 in C# Minor ("Moonlight")

The "Moonlight" and "Appassionata" Sonatas may have more in common besides their fantastical nicknames. A plausible case can be made for viewing the "Moonlight" as a spectral predecessor (or, to use one of Tovey's favorite expressions, an adumbration) of the "Appassionata". Each Sonata has a prophetic first movement featuring an insistent dotted rhythm, then moves on to an idyllic

middle movement in Db major, and concludes with an apocalyptic scourge finishing off both the work and the listener.

The difference, of course, is one of scale. But the barren, concentrated unipolarity of the "Moonlight's" first movement is a worthy counterpart to the tragic sweep of the "Appassionata". One is condensed, the other expansive, yet both share the fatalistic character: Whether the raven knocking at the door or the gods of war, whether epigram or epic, it's all the same when your number is up. Nor should one overlook the fact that, despite different time signatures, the individual bars of each first movement contain four triplet patterns comprising twelve eighth-notes, a rhythmic property common to only these two of the thirty-two Sonatas. And, as well, the exploitation of the pandemic diminished seventh chord — clear symbol of incipient disaster — is shared by both. Nevertheless, the more Gothic cast of the "Moonlight" is curiously consoling in some fathomless way.

In Op. 27, No. 2, the enharmonic siblings of C# minor (first and third movements) and Db major (second movement) share the same root tone. This quasi-illegitimate relationship, where but one parent is the same, connects yet isolates the undeterred affability of the Minuet, protecting it from the ghosts and devils to either side. But, to be excessively unoriginal, opposites attract. Meanwhile, the cross-accents in the Trio of the Minuet are a giddy reminder of the frailty of the immune system.

Writing these notes after the actual recording has been made, I am bemused to realize that the *Presto agitato* of the last movement is not in cut time, contrary to one's instincts. The drama lies in the obsessiveness, not the speed — an injunction I will contemplate for the next occasion.

Sonata Op. 81a in Eb Major (“Les Adieux”)

The Sonata Op. 81a, known as “Les Adieux” or “The Farewell” (after the departure of Beethoven’s patron, Archduke Rudolf), has always struck me as resembling a brilliant piano transcription of a lively orchestral score which features horns, post-horns, and more horns. Considering the subject matter, presumed despair over the friend’s absence, it is rather the absence of pathos which seems notable and somewhat surprising. Aside from the slender middle movement, in which the sighs of regret are genuine but formal, a general mood of festive merriment prevails. Furthermore, in this sonata more than most, the problems of interpretation tend to coincide with the difficulties and subtleties of execution. Of course, the standards of musicianship are always the same and are always implacable, but the artistry required for this work does not depend so much upon the arrows or extremes of imagination. The *Masque* is all, outweighing the private flights and speculations.

Of extremes, they particularly abound in the registration of the first movement’s coda. Overlapping horn calls and weaving figurations create a kaleidoscope of shifting, disorienting textures which shake the confidence and slide into the stanzaic mournfulness of the slow movement. As mentioned, the “absence” is neither overly extended nor overly devastating, but it does have the charming echo of a Medieval song of lament. A punishing eleventh chord six bars from the end offers the penultimate gasp, out of which the primary motive flutters, dissipates, and lands with a bang on the opening fanfare of the Return.

Perhaps the most distinctive detail of the Finale is its tempo indication,

Vivacissimamente, a term unique in the Beethoven lexicon. It is clear that jugglers, jesters, and acrobats participate in these festivities. After all, the Archduke is a very important person, and a perfect pretext for the robust, chortling laughter which is one of Beethoven’s many trademarks. Nevertheless, as the well scripted structure suggests, all has been staged with awareness of the inherent pomp and circumstances. The laughter may be heady, but it is on cue.

Sonata Op. 10 N^o 1 in C Minor

In Beethoven, the volatile tensions inherent to the key of C minor are so dynamic as to require a forcible, Braque-like outline surrounding the individual sections to prevent harmful slippage and crashes. As in the *Third Piano Concerto* or the *Fifth Symphony*, there is a tight rein and boundary on the highly profiled materials, without which the collision of such affective themes would produce a feeling of caricature and an unstable form. In the first movement of Op. 10, No. I, the durations of the first and second theme areas are of approximately the same duration. What provokes interest, however, are the comparable lengths of both the bridge theme (between the first and second subjects, bars 32-55) and the coda (bars 86-105). What is more, the bridge theme is strikingly self-sufficient, with a high gloss of counterpoint, harmony, and texture. The coda is equally vivid, while making use of fragments from the principal theme. Thus, the exposition of this movement contains four distinctly articulated zones of similar duration, lined up like chess pieces or regiments or columns. This methodical, almost primitive arrangement seems necessary in order to keep a handle on the explosive and murderous tendencies. (Consult Alfred Brendel’s

fanciful poem identifying Beethoven as the true assassin of Mozart, motivated by the desire to gain “full possession of the key of C minor”!)

After the first twelve bars of the development section, a brand new tune is introduced which survives in leisurely, elaborating fashion for forty-one bars, thereby providing a zone of digression and reflection in contrast to the stark characters within the exposition. The nearly literal recapitulation somehow enhances the strategy of segregated entities which are schematically deployed.

The majestic *Adagio* is no less symmetrical, as evidenced by its Spartan structure: sonata-form without development. However, its florid content, demanding a “beautiful touch and strict *legato*” according to Czerny, is anything but Spartan. The last movement is wickedly fast (*Prestissimo* in cut time) and suggests a rather grotesque *danse macabre*. Speaking of family patterns, the material at the end of its cryptic development section almost cries out for the opening bars of the *Fifth Symphony* in response. If this is merely a coincidence, then Beethoven’s lust for C minor is but a casual accident of birth.

General proposition and question: does not each of the keys contain their own genetic and emotive markers?

Sonata Op. 22 in Bb Major

Beethoven took great pride in Op. 22, describing it by a German idiom which may be loosely translated as “this one really takes the cake”. Indeed, it is tasty, sumptuous, regal, and funny; and it is lined and flavored with Beethoven’s special gift: friendliness. Or call it brotherhood, or tenderness, or

amiability — yes, that area which is at the intersection of loyalty, goodness, Eros, mischief, and respect for all living things. Each movement is dipped into this solution, reflecting different aspects of the genial brew. For Beethoven’s ideal and Utopia, of all composers, is the most suitable for pursuing life’s arrangements and politics.

The exposition of the first movement boasts seven distinct and attractive tunes. A similar number is to be found in the exposition of the first movement in Mozart’s *Piano Sonata in f*, K. 332. This sheer abundance of nicely aligned themes, in contrast to the presumably more dynamic process of developing and transforming an economy of motives, may partly explain why Op. 22 is generally considered “neo-Classical”, to use Brendel’s term. But as my beloved teacher, Eduard Steuermann, might say, yes and no. The outward forms are certainly conservative, symmetrical, and unadventurous. But spirit, mystery, and inspiration come in many guises, of which some may be quite traditional, even archaic — which is why many regret that the Catholic Mass is no longer celebrated in Latin.

Dynamic structure also comes in many guises — for instance, in the nature of acoustical phenomena. The incidence and coincidence of certain sonorities and textures cannot be charted as graphically as, for instance, counting the number of times a particular word or idiom can be found in Shakespeare or by the frequency with which a specific motive is used and elaborated in a musical composition. It is merely an intuitive speculation, but I would suggest that a certain set of characteristic sounds and textures is indigenously co Op. 22, littered throughout the entire work in a manner that rein-

forces formal and structural values. I would mention three such devices: the interval of a third and its superimpositions (the succession or building up of thirds); the sinuous, undulating figurations which dot the landscape; and, not least, the allure of the low bass register for certain passages at key points, in particular the development sections of the first and second movements, and, to a lesser extent, at the corresponding places in the third and fourth movements. The transcendent sunniness is well matched by the excursions below.

There are many ways of integrating a piece and of rivaling the strategies of evolution. Additive schemes and more dynamic schemes can go hand in hand, for they may be differently allocated throughout the various dimensions of a work. But while all of this may be debatable, the indisputable fact of Op. 22 is nicely paraphrased by an aphorism of Malcolm de Chazal: “The heart is either a *grand seigneur* or a nobody”.

Sonata Op. 31. N° 3, in Eb Major

I am indebted to my colleague, Robert Cogan of the New England Conservatory, for demonstrating most clearly the role of purely acoustical properties in parsing the first forty-five bars of this Sonata. Simply put, if Beethoven had squeezed all of the given musical contents into the same register and octave, the artistic effect would be inane. It is only through deflecting the sequence of these contents by apportioning some of them to different registers that we may arrive at Czerny’s eloquent description of this opening as having a “certain indeterminate cast, both in time and expression”. Schnabel, ever the most thoughtful and faithful servant of Beethoven, may

have followed this advice too conscientiously. His Beethoven edition offers the ensuing metronome scheme for these forty-five bars: b.1, ♩=116; b.7, ♩=126; b.8, ♩=138; b.10, ♩=116; b.16, ♩=138; b.17, ♩=144; b.25, ♩=160; b.33, ♩=126; b.35, ♩=160; b.43, ♩=138. And yet, this “indeterminate” array is not at all incompatible with the expressive task of defining a certain rhetorical quandary, or, more specifically, a map of love’s sublime ambiguity and precarious doubt. She loves me, she loves me not...

How appropriate, then, is the initial harmony, a subdominant chord with added sixth, perfect image of the yawning abyss and/or levitating dream of amorous desire. (Or does this chord simply describe an angelic child begging for ice cream?) But when this chord comes in the minor, b. 33, the pain is palpable (sorry, no ice cream today) and even begins to stir up resonances with the identical chord found in the opening phrase of Bruckner’s *Fourth* (“Romantic”) *Symphony*. But the fact that a Classical sonata could even begin in this way is a sign that the Romantics are on the way.

No slow movement! Instead we have a droll, roguish *Scherzo* in 2/4 time succeeded by a Minuet whose melodic line is conspicuously opulent and flowing, providing a very pleasant surrogate for the absent meditations. The Trio of the Minuet yields another, even more astonishing example of the potent effect of registral displacement. Without the constant octave shift in its melodic line, the result would be borderline absurd. But as it stands, we have a direct and elegant analogy to the same procedure in the first movement. In similar fashion, the striking Neapolitan chord in the Coda of the Minuet bears strong family resemblance to that harmony (in its minor mode) which was the

killer chord in the first movement. Sometimes cousins are the closest relations.


The last movement is a hunting-song. It is difficult, jolly, irrepressible, and should be played by a bloodhound.

— *Russell Sherman*

A Producer's Note

When I was about eleven, my father who was a violinist (and second pianist) in the New York Philharmonic, decided it was high time little Gunther should learn to play the piano. But having no physical talent for the instrument — mainly because I could not master independence of the hands — I gave up on the piano after about a year, frustrated by my inability to coordinate divergent rhythmic figurations. I went back to composing and took up the French horn instead.

I mention this personal anecdote because, while I was struggling with the easiest of the Beethoven piano sonatas (Op. 49, No. 2) — along with scales, arpeggio exercises, Cramer and Clementi studies — I began to explore some of the master's other keyboard works, more as a budding composer than a failed pianist. Of all the wonders I discovered therein none fascinated me more than those daring, dense, crashing, low-register chords I found scattered throughout

Beethoven's pianistic oeuvre — in its primal form chords such as 

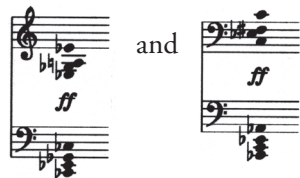
As a composer whose interests from the beginning gravitated towards the dimensions of harmony and sonority (instrumental colors), I was stunned by the very sound these chords produced. They seemed unique to me, isolated phenomena, strange abstracts, quite removed from the prevailing tonal palette of not only Beethoven's works but of early Classical music altogether. And to my ears they still do so today.

I realized not long afterwards that those low-register, almost cluster-like chordal formations constituted a singular acoustic/sonoric phenomenon, not replicable on any other instrument or group of instruments, not even in the middle and upper range of the piano. It had to do with such ontologies as the world of overtones, the thickness of low-pitched piano strings, the increased hardness and massiveness of piano hammers, in short, the very construction of keyboard instruments as they ultimately developed in the high Classical period.

What led Beethoven to feature these dark, ominous, unfriendly sounds? (Mozart and Haydn hardly ever used such four-part, close-voiced, low-register chords; rare exceptions occur in the final bars of Mozart's *Piano Sonatas*, K. 331, D major and K. 330, C major; but these are not even in the bass range, located more in the baritone register, just a little below middle C.) Was it Beethoven's fascination with their powerful, radical, never-before-heard expressivity? Or was he inspired to use these virtually pitch-obscuring, quite unharmonious tone combinations as a result of playing on some of the new species of pianos that were, during Beethoven's early lifetime, replacing the previous keyboard instruments in rapid succession? Probably both factors cast their spell on Beethoven's muse.

Although these ‘monster’ chords are scattered all throughout Beethoven’s pianistic oeuvre — they can be found as early as in Op. 2, No. 3 (end of the first movement’s exposition and in the development section’s mm. 97-108) — they occur, quite by chance, especially frequently in the current Volume IV of seven sonatas. Consider the final closing chords of the first movement of Op. 10, No. 1: these below-the-staff four-part chords seem to sound even darker and more crashing in Beethoven’s favorite signature key of C minor. (The best example of the dramatic impact these C minor chords can produce occurs in the opening of Beethoven’s Op. 13 *Sonata Pathétique* (coming in Volume V of

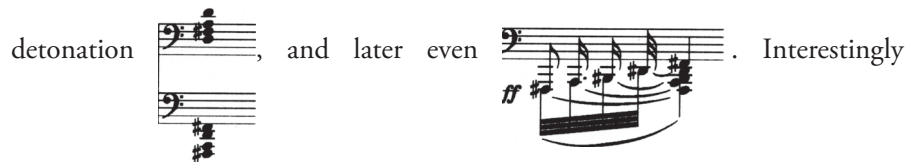
our series). Or hear the following shattering chords



and

in the Finale of Op. 10, No. 1.

Even the “Moonlight” Sonata, with its famous gentle, soulful first movement, nonetheless features in the turbulent *Presto Agitato* Finale the following




Beethoven excludes the low minor third E in the closing chords of the first

movement, presumably feeling that its inclusion would make the final sounds too dark and dense.

In regard to the “Moonlight” Sonata’s first movement, it is worth recounting Romain Rolland’s most appropriate words, capturing the essence of Beethoven’s supreme art. Having spoken earlier of Beethoven’s consistent avoidance of sentimentality, always expressing instead “virile emotion,” Rolland points to the sketches for the “Moonlight” Sonata, which “show the rigorous way Beethoven worked at his ideas. It is clear that a great artist, even when carried away by his heart, knows how to control it, how to hold in the disordered bears of it with a firm discipline. What I wish to bring out is the fact that the laws he thus imposes on himself are not exterior to the emotion: they are the natural laws of feeling, released by the mind.”

While the lower range of the piano extended to F1 even in the earliest pianofortes, obviously carried over from the harpsichord, the upper range was extended from f3 only later and very gradually. Thus we see Beethoven constantly

stopping at , no matter what key the sonata is in. These upper-range

limitations persisted for the first twenty of Beethoven’s Sonatas, and it is not until the Op. 53 “Appassionata” (from 1805) that he can stretch beyond f3 to g’s and a’s. In the *Scherzo* of Op. 31, No. 3 Beethoven clearly wanted to go to high A flat (m. 54), but couldn’t because it was not yet available on the instrument. Thus he was forced in the octave-higher repetition of the sprightly motive




to rearrange the notes to the much less interesting

While recording these works, I was struck by the transcendent melodic beauty and Bellini-like simplicity of several of the slow movements' themes: the *Adagio* of Op. 22, the third phrase in the *Andante* of Op. 27, No. I, and even the first four bars of the *Adagio molto* of Op. 10, No. I. I don't mean to imply that Beethoven learned some *bel canto* lessons from Bellini — as one conductor at the Met years ago tried to persuade us orchestra musicians when preparing *Norma*. Bellini belonged, of course, to a later generation than Beethoven, who in any case never heard any of Bellini's operas. Yet the melodic affinity is at times quite striking and puzzling, since to the best of our collective knowledge Bellini never heard any Beethoven in his hometown of Catania (Sicily), being tutored almost entirely in Mozart's and Haydn's music. Obviously, in the history of the arts and sciences various ideas, concepts and imaginings are often "in the air" in totally unrelated places. We cannot otherwise explain why, for example, both Ives and Scriabin, without knowing each other or ever having heard each other's music, conceived their monumental "Universal" symphonies at the very same time, 5000 miles apart.

By contrast, it is no surprise that the conjunct, step-wise motion of Beethoven's theme-melody in the Op. 22 *Adagio* breaks out after a few measures


into a much wider range and a dramatic two-octave leap. Similarly, the placid harmonic accompaniment of the second theme (m.13) erupts into plangent, nearly Wagnerian harmonies that presage in their rich chromaticism the atonal excursions of a Reger or Schönberg one hundred years later.

Even more powerful and intense are the downright 'painful' bitonal clashes

in mm. 32 and 33, . And who but Beethoven would


dare to pit a G natural against a G flat, combining simultaneously an F *minor* ninth and F *major* ninth (m. 22 in the *Menuetto* movement)? The same notes clash again in m. 92 of the *Rondo*, a passage in contrary-motion thirds, clearly foreshadowing similar moments in Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge*.

As an ex-hornplayer I cannot resist commenting on the extraordinary things Beethoven does with the so-called 'horn fifths' with which Op. 81a ("Das

Lebewohl") begins: . This pattern, used thousands of times in

the Classical and Romantic periods, derives from notes readily available on the 18th century 'natural' horn; somehow it acquired the name 'horn fifths', even though there is only one fifth in the three-note passage, the other two intervals obviously being a third and a sixth. Beethoven subjects this ultimate horn cliché to an astonishing variety of alterations. Even its initial statement moves untypi-

cally to C minor, rather than the expected E flat. Beethoven is immediately putting us on notice in bar 2 that he isn't interested in conforming to the predictable, but rather in avoiding it to explore and exploit the familiar motto in new and previously unheard ways. In m. 7 his three-note motive is trans

formed into . In the development section, already filled with

highly chromatic and abrupt twists and turns, Beethoven slims the horn


motive down to two single whole notes , immediately recycled

in three other pitch mutations. The playful game is taken up again nearly one hundred bars later

 etc.

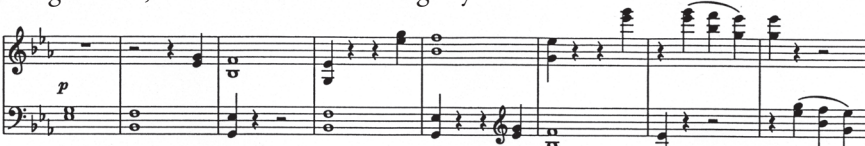
— as bare and elemental as a Mondriaan canvas.

The final round is played when, after repeatedly intoning the horn fifths motto in its usual stance, Beethoven pares it down, at first to single pitches,

 etc.


followed by the original double-stop

configuration, and then in accelerating rhythmic diminution:



not only causing a constant clash between the two keys (B flat and E flat) but also evoking fifths in bassoons, clarinets and even two piccolos.

Beethoven's final trump card is played in the last thirteen measures, when the horn motive undergoes its most outrageous permutation and elaboration:

 etc. (two contrabassoons?), the minor

second in m. 244 being a sound that, I am sure, had never been envisioned before in the history of music, let alone played and heard.

At a time when the programming of Beethoven's thirty-two Piano Sonatas is limited to half a dozen — the “Appassionata”, the “Waldstein”, the “Tempest”, the last three of course — even the ‘Moonlight’ is heard relatively rarely nowadays — it is well to remind ourselves (and these performances are striking evidence in this regard) that *all* of the Sonatas, except perhaps the two Op. 49s, are studded with every kind of musical delight and daring invention — for which we mortals can only invoke the six-letter word: GENIUS! This is especially true of the seven Sonatas presented herein, as remarkable, as original, as wide-ranging in their emotional/intellectual reach as any of the famous and ubiquitous ones.

— *Gunther Schuller*

ABOUT THE ARTIST

An eloquent communicator both on and off the concert stage, pianist Russell Sherman continues to garner accolades from critics and audiences alike for his grace, style and poetry. As author of the highly acclaimed book *Piano Pieces* (a rhapsodic compilation of vignettes and personal anecdotes from Mr. Sherman's experiences as a performer and teacher), published in April 1996 by Farrar, Straus & Giroux, he has been praised as both ingenious virtuoso and insightful master.

In 1996, 1997 and 1998, GM recordings released the first three double-CD sets of Beethoven piano sonatas (GM2050/2053/2057) in what will be a complete collection of all thirty-two sonatas recorded by Mr. Sherman and produced by Gunther Schuller. Each of these recordings were selected by Richard Dyer of *The Boston Globe* as top ten classical recordings of their respective year.

Included among Russell Sherman's major orchestral engagements are the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, The Orchestra of St. Luke's (with whom he performed the five Beethoven concerti) and the San Francisco Symphony. Abroad, he has performed in the major cities of England, France, Russia, Korea, Germany, Austria, Italy, the Czech Republic, Canada and South America. Engagements have included concerts in London's Queen Elizabeth and Moscow's Tchaikovsky Halls. He has performed and recorded all five Beethoven concerti

with the Czech Philharmonic.

Mr. Sherman has appeared in recital on the "Distinguished Artists" series at New York's Tisch Center for the Arts at the 92nd Street Y, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, on Boston's "BankBoston Celebrity Series" and at Chicago's Orchestra Hall. In addition, he has appeared on Carnegie Hall's "Keyboard Virtuosos Series," California's "Ambassador Foundation Series," at the Ravinia Festival, the Hollywood Bowl and the Mosely Mozart Festival.

Early in his career, Mr. Sherman established a reputation as one of the finest exponents of the contemporary piano literature. He was previously featured on GM Recordings GM2033CD, with violinist Rudolf Kolisch, on a recording of Alban Berg's Chamber Concerto with the New England Conservatory Orchestra, Gunther Schuller conducting.

Born and educated in New York, Mr. Sherman began studying piano at age six. At eleven he became a student of his major teacher, Eduard Steuermann, pupil and friend of Ferruccio Busoni and Arnold Schoenberg. While still in his teens he graduated from Columbia University with a degree in the Humanities. In 1990 he joined the faculty of Harvard University as a Visiting Professor, and is currently a Distinguished Artist-in-Residence at the New England Conservatory.