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University of Washington
THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Presents a Faculty Recital:

CRAIG SHEPPARD, PIANO

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN
(1770-1827)
A Journey (Part III)

May 21, 2003

7:30 PM

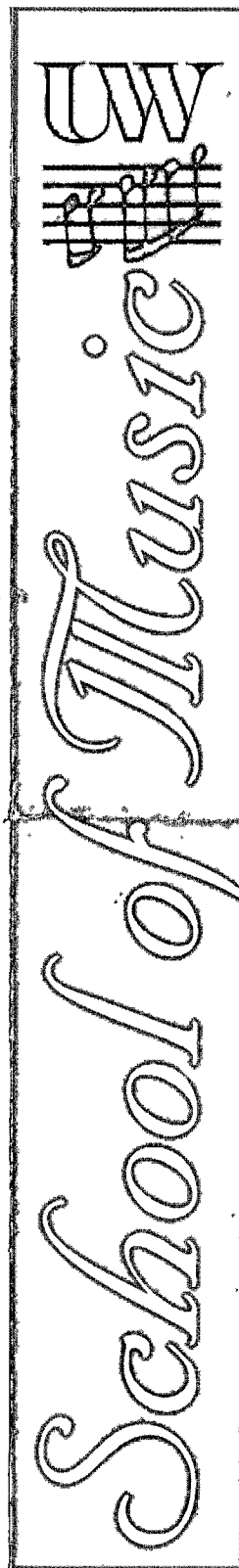
Meany Theater

CD#14,418

PROGRAM

- 1 SONATA IN E MAJOR, OPUS 14, #1 (1798/99)
Allegro
Alléretto
Rondo: Allegro comodo
(dedicated to the Baroness Josefa von Baun)
- 2 SONATA IN G MAJOR, OPUS 14, #2 (1798/99)
Allegro
Andante
Scherzo: Allegro assai
(dedicated to the Baroness Josefa von Baun)
- 3 SONATA IN B^b MAJOR, OPUS 22 (1799/1800)
Allegro con brio
Adagio con molta espressione
Minuetto
Rondo: Allegretto
(dedicated to Count Johann Georg von Braun)

INTERMISSION



Opus 27 #1 is, for me at least, the unsung hero of the group, the jewel in the crown. It, and its successor, the famous *Moonlight* Sonata, Opus 27 #2 (so-called due to a publisher's hubris, rather than Beethoven's own wishes), are both given the designation *Sonata quasi una fantasia*. This appellation is certainly more apropos to the first than the second (perhaps Beethoven needed to add this to the *Moonlight* because it, too, like Opus 26 and Opus 27 #1, starts with a slow movement). Opus 27 #1 is a series of short movements strung together without pause. The first movement, as with Opus 26, is a set of variations based more on a subdued sense of harmonic color rather than any particular melodic element, abruptly interrupted by a quasi-Development in the key of C (this key has been already announced in one of the earlier opening phrases). Likewise, the key of C (in the minor mode) becomes the basis for the second movement *Scherzo*, leading to a short *Adagio* interlude in the subdominant before breaking out into a spirited *Rondo*, the only full-scale movement in the work. This is turn is interrupted once more by the *Adagio* (this time in the tonic key) and a very quick and humorous coda brings the sonata to a close.

The *Moonlight* Sonata, with its instantly recognizable triplets in the right hand and its descending, brooding left-hand, was perhaps (as has been postulated by others) the work that transcended the gap from the optimism of the eighteenth century to the pessimism of the nineteenth, coming as it did in 1801, shortly before Beethoven's wrenching acknowledgement of his insidious deafness. The first and third movements show unity of style at every turn—melodically, harmonically, and structurally. The charming second movement, a quick *Minuet*, is noted for a persistent delay of the tonic by the repeated A flat dominant—a stroke of compositional genius. The full-blown fury of the last movement surely serves to underline Beethoven's dislike (and the inappropriateness) of the publisher's title.

This evening's program brings to an end those sonatas associated with Beethoven's so-called early period. Many artists today, both young and old, are inclined to play the more mature sonatas from his later periods—for whatever reasons—and often neglect these delectable masterpieces. It is my fervent hope that my first three programs, played chronologically in order to show Beethoven's unique development, will help to change this.

Program notes © Craig Sheppard, 2003.

Tonight's piano technician is Susan Willanger Cady.

BEETHOVEN: A JOURNEY

- Part IV: October 14, 2003
- Part V: January 6, 2004
- Part VI: March 16, 2004
- Part VII: May 18, 2004

- 1 SONATA IN A^b MAJOR, OPUS 26, FUNERAL MARCH (1800/01)
Andante con variazioni
Scherzo: Allegro molto
 (Marcia Funebre sulla morte d'un Eroe)
Allegro
 (dedicated to Prince Carl von Lichnowsky)

- 2 SONATA IN E^b MAJOR, OPUS 27, #1, SONATA QUASI UNA FANTASIA (1800/01)
Andante—Allegro
Allegro molto e vivace
Adagio con espressione
Allegro vivace—Adagio—Presto
 (dedicated to Princess Josephine von Liechtenstein)

- 3 SONATA IN C[#] MINOR, OPUS 27, #2, MOONLIGHT (1801)
Adagio sostenuto
Allegretto
Presto agitato
 (dedicated to Countess Giulietta Guicciardi)

Reflections on a Program

Under the patronage of the Emperor Franz, the Vienna of the 1790s into which Beethoven thrust himself at the age of 22 was a hotbed of political and social intrigue, bent on preserving the status quo and the privilege of the upper classes. It is all the more ironic, given our conceptions of Beethoven as a man of the people and a great humanitarian, that he both fostered the idea of a noble birth by adding 'van' to his name, and openly courted the patronage and friendship of the lesser nobility of that city. Such behavior belies the first concept—blatantly so, in fact. His music, on the other hand, as evidenced by the sonatas we are going to hear this evening, showed an ever-increasing ability to reach out at all levels to a common humanity.

All of tonight's sonatas were written during a three-year period, from 1798 to 1801, when Beethoven was at the height of his social powers and reaping the first major successes of his career in composition. It must be remembered that during his early years in Vienna, starting in 1792, he was known primarily as a keyboard virtuoso. His first sonatas of 1795 showed an indelible fingerprint. These first three Opus 2 sonatas, although dedicated to his teacher Haydn, were to prove anything but Haydn-esque in their scope and their emotional ardor. Beethoven was here, and he was here to stay! The next group of sonatas, including Opus 10 and 13, showed a slight backing away from the gravity and magnitude of the first four sonatas. Tonight's group all evince signs of experimentation, both in form and in content, that were to become trademarks of Beethoven's work in the future.

The first thing one notices about the writing in Opus 14 #1 is that it resembles the four-part writing of a string quartet. And that is exactly what Beethoven did with this work, in a transcription (his only one in this genre) that puts many details from the piano version in a completely new light. One of the paradoxes pianists face today in performing Beethoven involves the myriad questions that arise over this or that in his scores, things left unsaid, even unfinished—not to mention all the problems caused by the many original manuscripts that have gone missing over the years. Many of these questions are broached and even answered in the string quartet version of Opus 14 #1 (numerous crescendi where the piano score marks just the opposite, many tiny differences in dynamics) all pointing to interesting, if perplexing, interpretative challenges for the performer. This sonata is the only one on tonight's program to contain the "normal" fast-slow-fast relationship of sonata movements.

Likewise, Opus 14 #2, while gentle and touching on the surface (particularly in the first movement), gives us a new view of Beethoven *the Experimenter*. The opening theme, if not balanced and weighted properly, sounds off-kilter, as if all the accents are in the wrong place, an anomaly reflected in the opening of the *Scherzo* as well. Of course, Beethoven *the Architect* resolves this rhythmic ambivalence in the *codas* of both movements. The slow movement is a delightful and witty set of variations, each variation building on an element or elements introduced in the preceding one. The last movement is a *Scherzo*, and not a *Rondo* or a sonata-form movement that one would normally expect. It is full of wit and dash.

Opus 22 shows Beethoven once again in his virtuoso mood. The first movement is built, moreover, on a sequence of abrupt beginnings and endings. As one might expect, there is no need, when composing in such a frame of mind, for a coda at the end of the movement. It finishes as suddenly as the Exposition earlier on, excepting this time in the tonic instead of the dominant, and that's that! The *Adagio* is one of Beethoven's most beautiful slow movements—simple, sincere, and affecting. The charming *Minuetto*, built on ideas from the beginning of the sonata, is followed by what appears at first to be a subdued *Rondo*. Very quickly, though, it becomes apparent that Beethoven is providing a symmetry with the abruptness of ideas originally sown in the first movement. But whereas in the first movement Beethoven discards his ideas quickly and humorously, in the last movement he holds on to them, and this feeling is not easily undone, even by the forward thrust of the fugal-sounding middle section.

Opus 26 is an anomaly in Beethoven's output. The first movement is a theme and variations (not the first time this has happened in keyboard history (the first movement of Mozart's K.331 is a well-known antecedent), but the first time in which Beethoven allows himself the freedom of composing a piano sonata without the "requisite" sonata-form to start. Here, the operative word is color, and Beethoven exploits this in the five variations. A lively *Scherzo* is followed by a *Marche funèbre*, written in Beethoven's words, "on the death of a Hero", whom subsequent history has never managed to identify! The last movement is a perpetuum mobile of lightness, contrast and color, the latter very much mirroring those elements in the first movement.