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BEETHOVEN'S SONATAS AND VARIATIONS FOR CELLO AND PIANO

Circumstances of the compositions, the creative processes, analytical appraisals, and famous historical cellists in Beethoven's circle

written by David Johnstone

Beethoven's Sonatas and Variations for Cello and Piano

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DAVID JOHNSTONE

The cello music of Beethoven provides an excellent insight into his career and development, because the five main sonatas and the three sets of variations came at regular, and very representative, periods of his life. It may well be said that he was the first important composer of cello sonatas, meaning in that a balanced DUO for cello and piano, rather than a work for cello with keyboard accompaniment such as his predecessors wrote. Beethoven was a guiding light for later composers, and so the great romantic duo of cello and piano came into being; at first hesitantly by artists readily accepted as 'good' composers in their day but little known today – such as Ferdinand Ries (various sonatas), Jean-Louis Duport (several works, of more 'modern' style than his brother), Bonifazio Asioli (Cello Sonata in C Major, c.1801), Vincenz Hauschka (Cello Sonatas Op.1 and Op.2, but the possible number of sonatas contained in each opus not known to editor of article), Joseph Wölfl (Grand Duo, Op.31, c.1805), and Helène Liebmann (Cello Sonata in B*b* Major, Op.11, 1806), just to mention the first examples. This newly tested, and apparently successful, 'format' then progressively interested composers of higher levels, such as Hummel (Sonata in A major, Op.104 – 1824, plus an earlier set of variations), Mendelssohn (Bb Major, 1838 – Op.45 and D Major, Op.58 -1843), Chopin (G minor, Op. - 1846) and Alkan (E Major, Op.47 – 1847), not forgetting other substantial duo pieces by George Onslow, Franz Xaver Mozart, Bernhard Romberg, Jacques Offenbach and Robert Schumann all before 1850. For the exact chronological order of these works, and more details on the titles, keys, and opus numbers, do consult with the *johnstone-music GENERAL CATALOGUE OF RECITAL WORKS FOR CELLO AND PIANO,* available to browse or download for free on the site www.johnstone-music.com

The longevity of Beethoven's interest in the cello is neatly explained by that he wrote for the cello before first attempting a violin sonata, and his last sonatas for cello come after he had terminated the larger violin sonata cycle, in all a process lasting nearly twenty years.

Beethoven wrote some five *original* sonatas:

Sonata in F major no. 1, op. 5 / No.1
Sonata in G minor no. 2, op. 5 / No.2
Sonata in A major no. 3, op. 69
Sonata in C major no. 4, op. 102 / No.1
Sonata in D major no. 5, op. 102 / No.2

However, a possible *'sixth'* exists, and even a *'seventh' and an 'eighth'*, depending on how one classifies these unusual, and little known works or versions …

Beethoven also wrote *three* sets of variations:

Variations on a theme of Mozart ('Bei Mannern, welche Liebe fuhlen' from the opera "The Magic Flute")
Variations on a theme of Mozart ('Ein Madchen oder Weibchen' from the opera "The Magic Flute")
Variations on a theme of Handel ("See the conqu'ring hero comes" from the oratorio "Judas Maccabeus")

Apart from Beethoven's unique output – one may ask why so few other classical or early romantic *<u>'duo'</u>* sonatas? Well, the answers are: firstly the lower notes of the cello tend to get easily covered by the lower and mid-register notes of the piano, this especially being true when referring to the new emerging 'pianoforte'. But, to the contrary, when playing on the older 'fortepiano' (at the height of its popularity when Beethoven wrote the Opus 5 sonatas) it was the *cellist* who had to be careful not to super-impose on top of the piano, especially in the A string *cantabile* passages. Surely for this reason we soon discover that the fifth (and last) sonata is the *only* sonata with a full-blown slow movement, although the other four works all do have lengthy slow introductions to faster movements. So the balance between the two instruments was always precarious, even from Beethoven's own day, and certainly continues to be so today (where Johnstone would personally advise cellists *not* to sit in the well of the piano where they soak up so much sound, but to sit as a violinist would in a piano trio). Then, in other chamber music of the classical era, such as in the trios of Haydn and Mozart for example, the role of the cello was largely that of helping support the left-hand of the piano, whose lower registers were weaker in the instruments of the time. Early string quartets were basically 'shows' for the first violinist, with occasional contributions from the 2nd violin and viola, and hardly ever from the cello.

The awakening of the 'independent' cello in chamber music took many years to establish, although undoubtedly a most important step was the cello writing by Mozart in the 'Prussian' quartets in such a way that the then first cellist of the court Jean-Pierre Duport was specially featured. Of the two famous cello-playing brothers, Jean-Pierre Duport arrived first at the court. One way of a composer arriving at the emperor's heart was to write something of real interest for the cello. If possible, these works would have been suitable not only for the virtuoso Duport brothers, but also within the possibilities of the emperor himself in trying to cope in playing them – a certain balancing act. Jean-Pierre was tutor to Friedrich Wilhelm from 1773, and blessed with this position was to become one of the most renowned cellists in Europe.

His younger brother arrived in 1789, with Europe in turmoil due to the French political situation, and was eventually to become even more influential than his brother. Jean-Louis recognizes the importance of his older brother in the introduction to his *"Essai sur le doigté et sur la conduit de l'archet"* later published in Paris.

At this time (around 1790) Vienna was the musical capital of the world, and Haydn and Mozart were its famed composers. When Beethoven arrived there in 1792, the initial idea was to have taken lessons with Haydn. After just a few sessions it became clear that Beethoven would not bide time (though he revered Haydn) and would impose himself on society – both as a virtuoso pianist and as a *brash* composer.

At first, he had to be bound by the limitations of society of the day and took the Haydn-Mozart models from which to produce his first 'goods' – this one can see in his Op.1 piano trios, the early violin sonatas, the Op.11 Clarinet Trio, and even in the Op.18 string quartets and the First Symphony. The first two cello sonatas, opus 5, fall into this category. Both works are of lighter character but still with a good deal of 'punch' – I believe their immediate popularity sprang from being very 'classical' but with the element of surprise (sudden dynamic changes and unforeseen accents) so therefore 'pleasantly' shocking the dignified audience of the time.

One has to always remember listening to, and playing, these sonatas that the now great accepted tradition of the Cello – piano sonata simply did not exist; neither Haydn nor Mozart had written for *solo* cello in chamber music, though Haydn, of course, penned several concertos with orchestra. It was true that in the later quartets of both masters the cello was becoming freer, but its part was still rather less important than others: a 'lesser' among equals. Therefore, on one hand, Beethoven accepts the classical base for his musical development, but at the same time is very open to new invention, and it will be seen that he is the 'creator' of the modern cello sonata as we know it today. Even so, it is almost unknown to create beauty from 'nothing', from a 'vacuum' without a single reference. It is impossible to now know what Beethoven might have heard prior to contemplating these sonatas, but it has been suggested (by Cowling in *'The Cello'*) that Chavalier de Leaumont's 'Duo Concertante' ('pour le clavecin ou le Forte Piano et Violoncelle') might have been a possible inspiration. This appeared in 1787.

We will almost immediately come to analyze Beethoven's cello compositions and their circumstances, but who were the important cellists of the day apart from the already mentioned Duport brothers – or more importantly, who of them had 'professional' association with Beethoven himself? Whilst Beethoven was still very much active, the two brothers died in quick succession - 1819 and 1819 - but other cellists were also collaborating with Beethoven from before the change of century. The most important of these were Romberg, Kraft, Dotzauer and Linke. Each one had some kind of hand in Beethoven's cello world, and these circumstances will be revealed in this article.

We shall now return to Beethoven's first compositions for the cello. These were his first two sonatas – opus 5 – which date from 1796. They were inspired by the pioneering cellist Pierre-Louis Duport, but presented as dedications to the Emperor of Prussia Friedrich Wilhelm II – the same royal amateur-playing cellist of decent competence who apart from the Mozart late three quartets, was also the recipient of many other solo and chamber works … by Haydn, Stamitz and Boccherini, to name just a few. The first performance of each was given to the Emperor's audience in the court, to great acclaim, and Duport himself was at the cello with the composer at piano. When Beethoven left the court, the king rewarded him for both the sonatas and their performances with a gold snuff box filled with Louis d'ors—not just an ordinary gold snuff box, Beethoven said, but those such as presented to high dignitaries. They were very soon published, in Vienna by Artaria, in February 1797.

Both works are titled sonatas 'for piano with obligatory cello', meaning that the piano had the principal interest of the writing. That would seem an obvious thing to do, for Beethoven himself was an important pianist and solo cellists of real virtuoso level were few and far between. The two early sonatas (and the variations) share certain textural characteristics; not only the predominance of writing more fully for the piano, but also a lack of fully formed slow movements. However, the extended slow introductions to both first movements of the Op.5 sonatas push the boundaries of the two–movement form toward three, as if preparing the ground for a true slow movement for the unknown combination of future piano and cello large-scale chamber music. Both works follow the first movement allegro in sonata-form movement with a concluding rondo.

The *Adagio sostenuto* opening the F Major sonata gives at once the feeling that this is more than a mere introduction. The cello does have a wonderful chance to play *cantabile* here. The main first movement is of considerable length for sonatas of that period, displaying a more than usual possibility of freedom in treating subsidiary themes. The first theme, though, is thoroughly pianistic and from it one can easily deduce the original titling *"Deux Grandes Sonates pour le Clavecin ou Piano-Forte avec un Violoncello obligé"*. The second theme has more sustaining quality, and better favours the cello, but then the remainder of the exposition is largely concerned with virtuoso piano writing. The development section dwells on the first two bar rhythm of the opening theme, and then later specifically of the rhythm of the second bar only. The regular recapitulation has some changes to the principal theme and in the distribution of the two instruments, but of even more interest is the Coda which includes a brief reference back to the initial Adagio. The finale is a rondo – an extended rondo – that again is prone towards bravura writing for the piano. The main theme is sprightly, scherzo-like, and lends itself perfectly to imitation effects. There is a secondary tune consisting of a succession of descending phrases which are shared between the players. There is also a Turkish-influenced episode, something very much in vogue in the 1790s, this being probably the most important episode.

The second sonata, in G Minor, follows largely the same formal structure of the first – two potent movements, of which the first is preceded by a slow introduction. In this sonata, however, the introduction is even longer, and surely comes very close to being considered a separate movement altogether. The descending scale-motive of the very first bar is the catalyst of the whole section, and is ideally suited to the voice of the cello – there are various interesting imitation moments between the instruments. The main allegro part is rather different from the first sonata – here the restlessness and impassioned nature comes much more to the fore. There is a great propulsion or drive lending real urgency to the musical conversation. The two main themes are rather more similar in spirit, and the development is built chiefly upon a rhythmic device built from the main theme. Although the recapitulation is more or less a repeat of the exposition, what is especially noteworthy is the exceptionally long Coda section, almost of symphonic proportions. The Rondo finale changes the anguish of the minor key into a bright open G major key signature, and here one can see the legacy of Haydn in Beethoven's mind. The piano once again has the lion's share of the writing, but in the C major main episode the cello has a chance to display a number of agile runs and arpeggio figures.

If one looks at the two works together one sees a progression from the first sonata in F Major to the second in G Minor. In the first sonata the instruments tend to present the themes alternately; but in the second sonata the instruments have more independent lines, which weave in and out, so the importance of each instrument becomes frequently 'intermingled'. The final rondo of the first sonata is elegant but plays 'safe'; in the second sonata it is rather more forceful, sprightly, and outwardly extrovert.

As an anecdote, Beethoven's friend Dragonetti showed the composer how certain passages of the second sonata sounded on double bass – to the great admiration of Beethoven who embraced both the instrument and performer with emotional hugs – and it has been suggested that the more virtuosic bass parts in the middle period symphonies (especially the 5th) stemmed not only from his impounding deafness and necessity to hear the '*grave*' notes, but more specifically from this very moment; that double basses could indeed join in the fun of boisterous music making!

Also from 1796 comes the Twelve Variations on *"See here the conqu'ring hero comes"* from Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus*, WoO 45. It is generally agreed that the three sets of variations are most delightful to hear, but they are not deemed of the same magnitude as the five sonatas. This is a shame, because really Beethoven was a master of the 'variation' whether titled so ('Diabelli' Variations) or whether implicit ('Eroica' Symphony). The basic process is that the composer needs to transform a simple melody or idea into an entertaining variety of styles, which whilst being innovative do not lose touch totally with the initial theme. This style of composition became fashionable and popular around the turn of the century; indeed a number of otherwise second-rate composers achieved brief popularity through this idiom. The difference is that the variations by Beethoven are of another level – the organic laying out of each variation follows a logical thought through process; the quasi-seriousness of the slow variations, the 'tongue-in-cheek' nature of many faster ones, unexpected harmonic or key changes etc. These elements make them great fun to perform. Beethoven also used opera then well-known melodies for variations in other works of the period; for example for the last movement of the trio Op. 11. Why did Beethoven chose the Handel theme for his first cello variations? The answer is surely that Beethoven adored him – the clarity of writing and harmonic exactness of Handel is not so far removed from Beethoven – it is rumored that Beethoven, whilst on his death bed, even named Handel as the single greatest composer in history!

Buoyed by the positive reception of the premiere of the sonatas, Beethoven played, and probably organized, a Vienna premiere in January 1797 together with the cellist Bernhard Romberg (1767 – 1841). Romberg had known Beethoven since childhood, and then had been working at one point in the Bonn Opera Orchestra. At first, Romberg seemed a cellist who was a good 'bet' for the future; being widely acknowledged as a figurehead for a new German cello school, a composer himself, and later on a famed teacher. Due to the position of Romberg and Dotzauer, Germany would not have to rely any more on the French 'Paris' School of cello playing, even though Romberg was later a specially invited foreigner at the Paris Conservatoire (something rather unusual in that day if one looks at the list of professors). However, although they probably remained cordial friends to the end, Beethoven could not have been at all happy at the lack of Romberg's approval at his own musical advancements (see next paragraph).

Upon Beethoven's return to Vienna, came his second set of variations, this time on Papageno's aria *"Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen"* from Mozart's "Die Zauberflöte." These were most likely intended for Romberg himself to play (but might have been 'another' for Duport); Romberg was making a visit from Bonn, and it is also worth mentioning that they occasionally played together in a string quartet (Beethoven on viola!). Romberg's fame today only remains with a few educational works, but in his day (following on from the previous paragraph) he was very well–respected as a performer and composer of virtuoso cello music, including some ten cello concertos. As with many of his contemporaries, however, his grasp of Beethoven's genius, was somewhat limited; Romberg is on record as having called the Op.18 quartets "absurd" and the "Rasumovsky" quartets "unplayable" – when trying the second Op. 59 quartet it is said that he took the cello part from the stand and threw it to the floor!

Undeterred by Romberg's reticence to Beethoven's compositional style even in his 'first' period, Beethoven tried his hand once again from the same opera of Mozart some five years later, this time plotting a duo work from the duet theme *"Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen"*. This probably stemmed from the occurrence that the opera was enjoying two new productions in Vienna. Beethoven – like many a composer – was not avert to taking advantage of easy opportunities for new glory, especially in his (up to that point unknown) role as a 'freelance' composer, as such not bound by state nor church for regular employment income. This last set of variations is of a higher level of writing than the first two sets, for one can see Beethoven's approval in giving both instruments an equal share of the writing. Perhaps this is testimony to the cello's growing stature. The role of Pamina is generally conveyed by the piano, whilst the cello is largely responsible for the character of Papageno. This work would seem to mark a kind of transition from the early sonatas to the middle period sonata, not only chronologically, but stylistically as well.

A year or so before Beethoven produced his last set of variations for cello, he was busy, in 1800, completing a set of six string quartets – his opus 18. Not only wrapped up in those time-consuming creations, he was extremely busy on many other fronts – making time for an aria for soprano and orchestra, the 1st Symphony, the 'Septimino' Op. 20, the 3rd Piano Concerto, and a Horn Sonata, Op.17. This last-mentioned sonata was written for the virtuoso horn player Giovanni Punto, an undisputed expert using 'stopped' tones on the natural horn. However, it seems to have been a composition carried out at the last minute – the concert gala was announced at short notice but at that precise moment Beethoven had not even started the work! Probably principally for this reason the structure and writing is somewhat straight-forward, though well-crafted. The interest to cellists is that it has another version in the form of cello and piano - this being undertaken by the composer, who saw fit to see it billed as a 'cello sonata'. It is worth reflecting on that this was considered playable on cello with the composer's workings himself, and not one of a number of contemporary arrangements made of his works (sometimes by reputable figures such as Ries). In fact, it's 'authenticity' is justified by that Beethoven's cello part was more elaborate than that of the horn, yet they appeared simultaneously. It is only occasionally played on horn, even less so on cello (a shame), and CD recordings are even scarcer. It is worth mentioning that Casals did give this work full respect, and often included it in his recitals. It has always remained in print, and one has the unquestionable sensation that you are playing 'real' Beethoven, all the while. So maybe we should talk of this being a real 'sixth' sonata!

And the *'seventh'* sonata? Well, there was also a version made for cello and piano (by Beethoven himself?) of the string trio, opus 3. This was published in 1807 and given the opus number 64. There is a copy of this work guarded in the Beethoven Archives in Bonn.

And the *'eighth'* sonata? Czerny, a great musician of Beethoven's day arranged the 'Kreutzer' sonata (the Violin sonata No.9 in A major) for cello and piano. This seems to have been done with Beethoven's blessing, but cellists should be warned that this transcription does not treat the cellist kindly, and the great technical difficulties presented have resulted in the work being virtually unplayable for all but the most virtuoso of cellists. Also, its acceptance was hampered by the fact that in the printed edition the piano part was not a piano-score part; only the piano part appeared (without the cello line above), making unnecessarily difficult the rehearsals.

As the 19th century began to unfold, the cello became increasingly recognized as a natural substitute for the violin, and at times even displacing it with its rich, dark tenor timbre. This continued all through the century; it might be worth pointing out that the famous Dresden teacher Grutzmacher made cello versions of both Romances for violin and orchestra (Op.40 and Op.50), apparently of high artistic level and workable too, but they have not been available in print for many a decade. These early years of the 19th century saw Beethoven firmly established as Vienna's leading composer, but increasing deafness exaggerated his eccentricities and was to signal the end of his performing career. The output of this "second period" includes many of his most famous masterpieces: the middle symphonies, Fidelio, the Violin Concerto, and the "Rasumovsky" string quartets.

One of the cellists taking advantage of the cello's newly found expression was Anton Kraft (1749 – 1820). He was a cherished performer of difficult classical works – and who Haydn almost surely had in mind when writing his great D Major concerto. Not only that, he was himself the composer of an even more virtuosic concerto for cello in about 1790. It is well possible that Beethoven heard Kraft play the afore-mentioned Haydn concerto in Vienna in 1804. Due to his prowess on the cello, when Beethoven was writing his 'Triple' concerto he remembered clearly the spectacular feats of Kraft, and it is for this reason that the cello part is by far the most difficult and impressive of the three solo instruments. For once the piano is subdued well beneath the importance of the presentations of the cellist! Kraft was also cellist of the Schuppanzigh string quartet which did much to enhance the early quartet works of Beethoven. However, and the reason is not clear why, it was actually Johann Friedrich Dotzauer and not Kraft who was to be the pioneering cellist in the premiere of the Triple concerto in May 1808. Dotzauer is acknowledged as the most important founder of the German (Dresden) school of cello playing, and his formation as a professional was at the hands of Krieg (himself a student a Jean-Louis Duport), but Dotzauer probably also had substantial contact with Romberg. This was thus affirmed in his Cello method (at least, as regards the c.1825 French translation anyway).

The Schuppanzigh string quartet seemed to become the Razumovsky Quartet, or at least with that title it was officially unveiled in 1808. Its cellist was Joseph Linke (1783 – 1837), a younger cellist who, far from being averse to new works, grew up much more readily to the sound of Beethoven. Probably the Schuppanzigh quartet changed name when the group became patronized by Count Razumovsky, but previous to that Linke had already replaced Anton Kraft as its cellist. This new quartet was famous specifically for their wonderful interpretations of the quartets of Beethoven. Beethoven trusted Linke perhaps more than any other cellist, and was called upon to try out new passages of the master – for example when he later was working on the two sonatas Op. 102 for cello and piano (see later). Linke was probably the cellist whom Beethoven maintained the longest period of close contact. Unfortunately not much is documented about his career or his life.

After some eleven years had passed since the initially so important tour to Berlin, and the Prussian court, resulting in the production of his first cello works, Beethoven again felt he needed to take up the challenge of a sonata for piano and cello again. So the Sonata in A major, Op.69 came into being. It was composed during 1807/08 (but perhaps was even toyed with from 1806 according to some estimates), and the work is therefore parallel with the 5th and 6th symphonies.

From the outset it should be made clear that the third sonata is of a different world to the first two sonatas. One should remember that when Beethoven worked on this sonata his deafness was acute, if not quite complete. It has been shown that earlier cello sonatas had been either types of cello solos with basic continuo accompaniment or, like Beethoven's first two, piano sonatas with an interesting cello obbligato; but now we arrive at Op. 69 with the most perfect duo for the two instruments of cello and piano - every theme is perfectly conceived for both instruments. Such high level writing for the two instruments has rarely been approached by composers in history since that date.

How did this glorious middle-period work actually come about? Although Beethoven was perhaps the *first* composer to write permanently for posterity (not looking merely for premiere after another premiere, such as were generally conceived the commissions from both church and court), but neither could he live in an ivory tower without relation to the world he inhabited. Times were often difficult, and money often low. He was by now highly respected by fellow musicians, but he had to cultivate political correctness, up to a point at least, out of sheer necessity. Apart from Beethoven's circle of professional cellists, he came to know well the Baron Gleichenstein, a talented amateur cellist. They had met in Vienna in 1797 and he quickly became one of the composer's most valued friends and supporters. He was the dedicatee (and maybe the pushing instigator!) of the work.

Of all the cello – piano compositions from Beethoven's pen, this was the one which he toiled on most, passing through numerous revisions to satisfactorily work out the division of material between the two instruments, amongst other things. Perhaps this attention to detail spoke of his very high regard for Gleichenstein. In fact, it is no coincidence he gave the baron "the first word" musically, as it were, for the cello begins the principal theme – alone! - but is quickly joined in its statement by the piano whilst the cellist then sustains a low pedal note.

Throughout the opening Allegro, Beethoven carefully exploits the lyric voice of both instruments. The initial theme is at once repeated, with the roles reversed. A strong transition leads to the second subject, containing scale-passages on the cello, and descending arpeggios on the piano. Once again the theme is presented twice, and again with reversed roles. The development is concerned almost exclusively with the first theme. The recapitulation is very mature Beethoven, allowing for rearrangements, expansions and diminutions – whilst the final Coda once again treats only the first theme.

The second movement is a lengthy and rhythmical scherzo in the minor key, with a gentler trio section in the major occurring twice.

The final movement opens with a most beautiful lyrical short slow introduction marked *Adagio cantabile*, perhaps so not to forget the slow introductions to the first sonatas, as if once again he toys with the concept of an independent slow movement. However, soon the music is jerking off into an exhilarating and well-spirited allegro. This main movement is in sonata form, and is even more brilliant in character than the first movement, though the very attractive second subject is of a gentler dialogue taking place between cello and piano. The development once again concentrates on the principal theme. In this sonata, in every moment one feels that the cello and the piano are equal recital partners. The sonata was first performed in 1812 by Czerny and Linke. By this time Beethoven had been in Vienna some twenty years. Despite growing acclaim, his relations with his fellow men were as always 'uneasy' and his expectations from women almost impossibly idealistic, so it is not surprising that his attention often turned from the human world to the world of nature. As mentioned, the sonata is contemporary with the Pastoral Symphony, and the opening of the first movement, the trios of the middle scherzo, and the introduction to the Finale are but three connections in this respect.

Nearly another eight years had passed since the 3rd Sonata in A Major, without hint of another work for cello solo; indeed his work generally was a little less prolific than at other moments in his life; it was as if he was preparing mentally for the famous so-called 'third' period. In this final period he was to give us insurmountable beauty, but also the most personal musical style ever known to humanity up to that period in history, and which even today require a good many hearings to become familiarized with this sound world. He combined the mastery of the strictest forms inherited from the past with a freedom of personal controlled emotion, and it could well be said that the new cello sonatas Op.102 were the gateway to this new world. They are at first rather difficult to grasp. Where once the musical 'accents', *'sforzandi'* and the such joyfully 'rubbed' his audience of the 1790s he now uncompromisingly 'hammers' them home.

Maybe we cannot guess from these sonatas the absolute master works which were about to be born – the final four piano sonatas, the 9th Symphony, the *Missa Solemnis*, the late quartets – but it is also true to say that he had also left behind him the world of the 7th and 8th symphonies, and was closing on into new powerful territories such as the "Hammerklavier" sonata, Op. 106.

These last two cello and piano sonatas, Op. 102 - Nos. 1 & 2, date from 1815, and both bear the same dedicatee: Countess Marie von Erdödy. The reason for this was that Beethoven withdrew or retired a small period, staying in the countryside estate of the countess, and these works surely would have been dedicated to her as a sign of gratitude. She was frail, yet beautiful, and Beethoven felt so close he called her his 'confessor'. She obviously had a noble heart, for when Rasumovsky's palace burned down, in 1815, and he had no option other than to disband 'his' quartet, Linke was taken in by the countess; therefore Beethoven, Linke and the countess spent a good deal of time together that summer. She was also able to evaluate Beethoven and offer advice; not only had she studied with him, but a trustworthy music critic of the time highly praised her interpretations of Beethoven's works. However, her name did not formally appear associated with the works until the Vienna published edition of 1819.

The two last sonatas are greatly valued by cellists, but perhaps have been since undervalued by members of the general public. One cannot speak highly enough of them, for they realize the transition towards the great string quartets, bringing great change in the field of structure, even when apparently in moments they may only appear to re-incorporate things of the baroque. Through the title given by Beethoven to the Sonata in C major op. 102, no. 1, *Freie Sonate* (the 'Free Sonata') he declares the freedom of expression in a deeply romantic sense. They were published in 1817 by Simrock in Bonn. Linke also had a crucial hand here, for not only was he tutor to the children of the countess, but surely they rehearsed together frequently. This would have been a joy to him, because previous accounts of his playing often mentioned his sympathy for the style of Beethoven. The composer even referred to him on occasion as "learned master".

The fourth sonata – in C Major – has a structure of Italian baroque influence: slow-fast-slow-fast. The two slower parts serve as introductions, and they are inter-related between themselves. The motives are simple, but very compact – the work only lasts some 16 minutes or so. The first movement – the fast part that is - is virtually monothematic as there is only a hint of a change to a second subject, and yet for all the 'monothematic' sense this is very unusual and irregular writing, compositionally speaking. In fact, both allegros have unexpected changes in tempo, and even styles within, yet the work flows wonderfully, attesting to the marvellous maturity of the composer. The development section has some considerable power. The second slow introduction is extremely beautiful and rhapsodic, with complex decorations, and shadows the profound slow movements of the late string quartets. Then the second fast part – the 'main' movement - starts somewhat hesitantly, but proceeds with rapid interjections from both instruments. Of great interest here is the unusual development section, consisting of a succession of bare fifths on the cello from which the piano starts to react, only for the cellist to 'deliberately' change tuning (frequently to a third lower); something which offers great harmonic variety and might be described as harmonic plate upsets in the direction of the structure. On a technical level, the fact that both allegros might be described as 'jagged' is something which does not come easily to the tools of cellists (who are taught throughout many years of study to make a nice warm rounded and gentle romantic sound!). Indeed a contemporary report stated "It is so original that no one can understand it on first hearing."

The fifth sonata – in D Major – is structured as a 'normal' romantic cello would be recognized: three movements in a fast-slow-fast order. It is the only one with a fully worked out slow movement, perhaps because by the time the piano was developing more into the sonorous instrument we know it today. In general terms, the final sonata in D major is more immediately accessible than its companion.

In the first movement, Beethoven takes a brisk phrase in the cello and extensively develops it in a most concise way, taking as a base the initial theme but treating it with real fantasy. It is also with an element of 'serious humour' involved too (for example, the false recapitulation). The commonly found tenor register writing for the cello is ideal for its new romantic voice expression, perfect planning as the nine-teenth century was opening up beyond Beethoven's eyes.

The second movement is a lengthy slow movement of the depth found in many other late period works, such as the already previously mentioned *"Hammerklavier"* sonata. It is in ternary form, with outer sections in D minor but has a central section in D Major which introduces a new theme. Elegance, eloquence and poetry truly reign throughout this outpouring. The last part of the movement is substantially modified and leads to a hushed conclusion. From this, the music leads without pause into the last movement.

The finale of the fifth sonata, comprising the last notes for cello (at least, as *soloist*) by Beethoven, is constructed as full and lengthy fugue. The actual fugue subject of the last movement is especially disarming, comprising nothing more than a simple scale, reminiscent of the halting opening of the finale of the First Symphony composed by the brash young man of many years past, or yet again to the scherzo of the 'Archduke' Trio. This fugue is indeed bristling, frequently conceived in four parts, and displays all the formal vigorousness of style of a true master. For example, about two-thirds of the way through the cello introduces a new idea in dotted minims (*dotted half notes*), and the piano quickly picks up on the idea, before this very idea is crushed, and the fugue subject re-asserts itself. Incidentally, probably this is the first work containing a fully worked out fugue for cello and piano ever written, unless someone knows different? And yet for all its sense of buoyancy - and it is of great aplomb to play - the fugue also conveys a strong sense of achievement, of defiant finality; Beethoven has finally emerged in heroic triumph and we can hear him exulting as he bids farewell to the cello sonata. The formidable ending to the movement provides a fitting climax to Beethoven's instrumental writing as viewed from the cello.

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