

PROGRAM NOTES

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 Bonn - 1827 Vienna)



Image credit: Hadi Karimi

Beethoven Sonata for Piano and Violin in D Major, op.12, no.1 (1798)

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Tema con variazioni. Andante con moto
- III. Rondo. Allegro

Beethoven's sonatas alone provide a clear picture of the realignment of balances. With the notable exception of Mozart's sonatas, most if not all Classical sonatas did place the keyboard to the forefront. Beethoven's first essays in the genre, the Op. 12 set, are indeed entitled "Three Sonatas for harpsichord or fortepiano, with a violin." The title belies the relationship, for in Beethoven's mind, the instruments collaborate and complement each other, striving toward an equality. He did finally achieve this in his ninth and penultimate sonata – and most famous – the *Krueztzer* (Op. 47) which, though still labelled "Sonata for piano and *obbligato* violin," he described as "*molto concertante quasi come d'un concerto* – very concerted like a concerto." Concerted as in togetherness; concerto as in competition of equals.

The Opus 12 set of three were probably composed between 1797 and 1798, just after Beethoven began sketching his first string quartets. They are dedicated to Antonio Salieri, teacher, composer and powerbroker. Beethoven was twenty-six and had been trying to make his way in the Viennese musical world since arriving there in 1792.

The sonata begins with a declamatory statement by both instruments in unison before each pursues his own line, sometimes in support of, in answer to, or even independent of the other.

The second movement is a reflective theme with four variations, each instrument alternating in the accompanist's role as the other explores the theme in the first pair of variations, followed by two duos, the first in brisk Hungarian style.

The final movement is a *rondo* built on a jaunty piano tune answered by the violin, alternating with slightly more serious passages led by the violin as if to furrow the brow of the sun with the piano chiming in to disperse the clouds.

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