

— BEETHOVEN 32 —

貝多芬

鋼琴奏鳴曲全集

The 32 Sonatas of Beethoven (1)

David Gwilt

I start almost every day by playing (and practising) a sonata by Haydn and one by Mozart, and then one by Beethoven. This exercise clearly shows the difference in technique required as time went by. Even the largest and most imposing of the Haydn works can be played within the same technique as the earlier ones. Mozart begins to ask for rather more skipping about on the keyboard, but when it comes to the music of the first and last movements of No 2 in A, the demands go far beyond the comfortable technical sphere in which Haydn's music lives.

And then the slow movement of the A major, too, brings a string-quartet-like texture which makes interesting demands on the fingers if one is to recreate the right effects. Both Haydn and Mozart tended to use three-part writing in



their keyboard music, but Beethoven immediately goes beyond this, and at the first big cadence in Op 2 No 1 there's an eight-part chord! The third sonata in the group, in C major, is even more virtuosic and needs a well organized technique in all three of the fast movements if they are to be mastered.

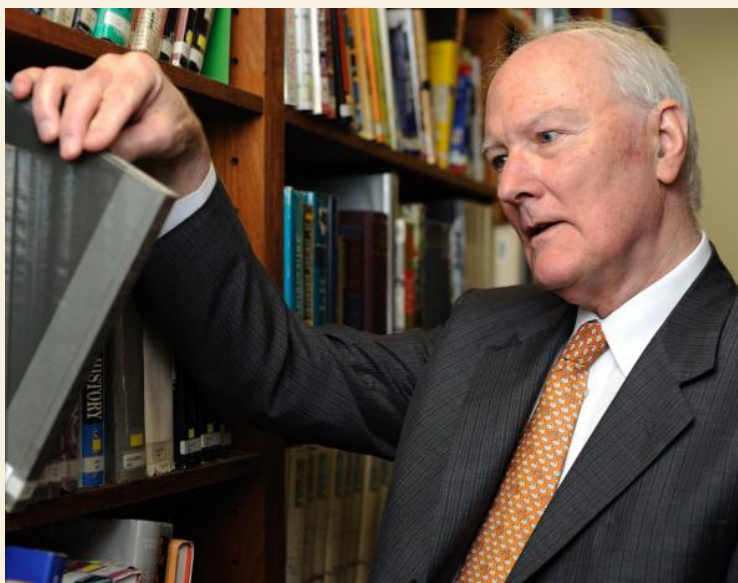
The world of the comedy of manners of Haydn and Mozart has already been left behind.

As the sonatas proceed the

element of sheer entertainment grows less, as that of lyricism expands and at the same time the music makes increasingly greater technical demands. Interestingly, though, one of the most popular and most moving of all the sonatas, the "Pathétique", while requiring nimble fingerwork, is otherwise not especially difficult, being in fact, a fairly early work – Op 13, from 1799, when the composer was 28. This is the second of the seven sonatas he called "Grand". The next Grand Sonata is Op 22 in B flat, with which Beethoven was very pleased, and said the equivalent of, "It hits the nail on the head." Some might think that this remark could be applied to all the sonatas from Op 7 onwards, each of which seems to as smooth as silk in its mechanism and say what it says without hindrance.

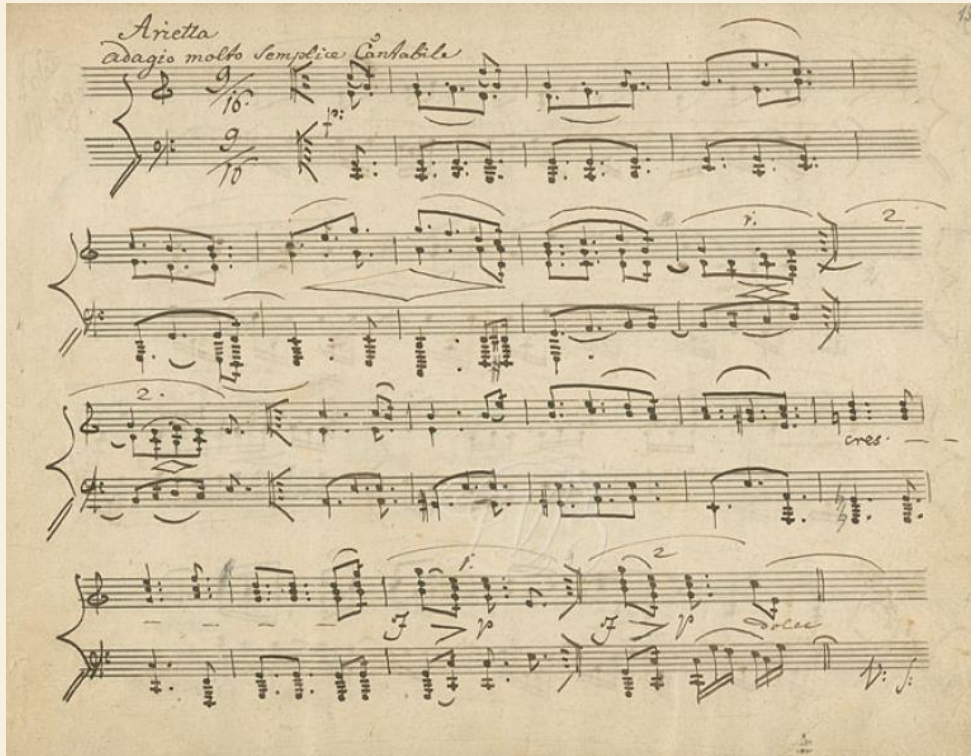
That the composer was beginning to experiment with formal matters and how to get the message across becomes evident from Op 26 from 1801 and in the next two sonatas – quasi una fantasia – in which the weight of the discourse shifts towards the end of the works, and the C sharp minor piece begins with one of the most extraordinary movements to have been written by that time. Nocturnes of John Field would appear in 1812 – eleven years later.

From the Op 31 sonatas Beethoven begins to follow the "new way" of which, according to Czerny, he said, "I am not satisfied with the works I have written so far. From now on I shall take a new way." In part this can be seen in the key relationships he now develops. Instead of the usual fourth or fifth relationship between first and second group, he now explores relationships at a third. In the G major sonata the second subject is in B major, and on the return, in E major.



Professor David Gwilt

This third relationship becomes the bedrock on which the whole of the “Hammerklavier” sonata rests. Another aspect of the new way is the great expansion in the length and depth of his works in sonata form, beginning with the “Waldstein” of 1804, completed shortly after the “Eroica” Symphony, and continuing with the “Appassionata” a year later. There follow between 1809 and 1816 five sonatas of more modest proportions before the “Hammerklavier” of 1818,



The second movement, Arietta, from Sonata No. 32

written more or less alongside the Diabelli Variations, the Missa Solemnis and the Ninth Symphony. This is a huge work containing his longest slow movement, and ending in a massive and extremely taxing fugue. The last three sonatas, from between 1820 and 1822, stress the lyrical note, the E major ending in a wonderful set of variations, the A flat finishing with another fugue, but this time relaxed and leading to exaltation, and the final sonata ending with some of the most visionary music the composer ever wrote. The pianos of the day must have been hard put to it to accommodate Beethoven’s demands, not only for sheer power, but perhaps more especially for beauty of sound in the quieter textures.