A Portrait of Beethoven: 32 Sonatas for Piano

Musical Days Productions, Mari Kodama and Kent Nagano, October 9 and 10, 2021, San Francisco Jazz Center

Nine Concert Notes by William Meredith,

Founding director, Beethoven Center, San José State University (1985-2016)

I am grateful to Mari Kodama for the invitation to give five-minute introductions to each set of the sonatas. I have tried to touch on as many topics as possible over the entire set, which have been written both for regular music lovers and professionals. The notes are indebted to the work of many scholars. All information on the dates of the sketches is derived from the German thematic catalog. If you would like to learn more, I recommend these books.

On the historical meaning of the keys in the Classical period:

1. Paul Ellison. *The Key to Beethoven: Connecting Tonality and Meaning in His Music*. Pendragon Press, 2014. (Available in hardback and paperback both around $50.)
2. Rita Steblin. *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*. 2nd ed. University of Rochester Press. 1983, 2002. ($95)

On Beethoven:

1. Peter Clive. *Beethoven and His World: A Biographical Dictionary*. Oxford University Press, 2001. (New and used: expensive but worth it.)
2. *Thayer's Life of Beethoven*. Rev. ed. Ed. Elliot Forbes. Princeton University Press, 1967. (Out of print, but check abebooks.com)

3. *Beethoven's Conversation Books*. Trans. and ed. Theodore Albrecht. Boydell Press. Three volumes to date. ($69-80 a volume. Fantastic!)

If you have any questions or need citations, email me at:
william.meredith@sjsu.edu

Talk 1: Concert 1, part one: Saturday, October 9, 1:00 p.m.
"The Added Movement, the Added Virtuosity"

Opus 2/1-3 1794-95 Haydn (Gloriana Wolf, Markus Pawlik, Adam Golka)

When we launch into a cycle of the Beethoven sonatas, we are transported to a musical world that is far distant in time and also in customs from our world. Understanding the sonatas requires a knowledge of the critical distinction between public music and private music, between Beethoven's career as a fortepianist in his first decade in Vienna, and, perhaps most importantly, what he achieved in the publications of these works—particularly in these four-movement sonatas dedicated to his teacher Haydn, the most famous composer of the day.

First things first: the difference between public and private music. Two differences are most important. First, public music was performed in opera houses, university halls, and large spaces—and it was composed specifically for audiences in the hundreds, in part because, like now, composers wanted to make as much money as possible. One parallel to public music is the form of the novel, in which grand ideas and conflicts are brought to light over hundreds of pages and somehow resolved. In contrast, private music was performed in small music rooms in a house, in one of the many palaces with music spaces, or sometimes even in spaces like restaurants with medium sized spaces. Private music making existed in small social spaces, and its main purpose was to entertain music lovers without entrance fee.

Because the spaces were smaller, the audience was smaller. This meant that the music could be more intimate, and perhaps it is fair to compare it to the literary genre of the poem. Public music consisted of symphonies, concertos, overtures. What was expressed are grand ideas for a collective audience, the kinds we hear in good college graduation speeches. Private music consisted of solo sonatas, duets, trios, quartets, songs—and the subjects of the music could be intimate ones, especially tender emotions having to do with love.

So: what we are embarking on is a thirty-year excursion into the world of private music in Vienna from 1795 to 1825.

This is the world Beethoven walked into as a twenty-one-year very gifted virtuoso fortepianist when he arrived in early December 1792. With important introductions from the wealthy music-loving aristocracy of Bonn, the door to the salons of the wealthy and nobility swing open. And Beethoven surpassed every imagined expectation as a performer and especially as an improviser, his claim to fame. When it came time to publish his first set of sonatas, he decided to demonstrate on paper the strengths that had regularly enchanted audiences. This first set was an extraordinary step-out in terms of its dedication—to the most famous living composer, also Beethoven's teacher—but also in two other ways. First, each of the sonatas has four movements. While there had certainly been some four movement sonatas previously, the standard sonata was still in three movements: an allegro opening, a moderate or perhaps slow tempo middle movement, and a quick finale. But in this set Beethoven added one minuet and two scherzos between true slow movements and the finales. If you imagine these sonatas as three movements without the added movements, Beethoven's decision to add them makes ultimate musical sense: they just *have* to be there. But he was also doing something disobedient: he was adopting the four-movement form of the later symphonies of Haydn. Why? Because he was expanding what we might call the scale of the sonata and making them orchestral.

Even more importantly, he also wrote down some of his own extraordinary techniques. The famous Chapel Hill scholar of the history of the sonata, William S. Newman, once wrote an article comparing the piano music of Haydn, Schubert, Mozart, and Beethoven. He concluded that Beethoven's is the most technically challenging. Concerning the finale of the third sonata in Opus 2, for example, he wrote: "one can find challenges in (1) unprecedented finger speeds, (b) stretched chordal accompaniments, (c) fast left-hand octaves followed by fast skips into double-thirds, (d) mixed double notes, and (e) a trill that grows into a double- and then a triple-trill."[1] (p. 73)

Now, such virtuosity is a very bad idea if you are trying to write music to make a lot of money. But that was not the job of these sonatas. He simultaneously was stretching the genre in two ways as the same time as he was stretching the fingers of his unexpecting future pianists.

---

[1] William S. Newman, *Beethoven on Beethoven: Playing His Piano Music His Way* (New York: Norton, 1988), 73. See also especially Chapter 3: "Beethoven and the Piano: His Options, Preferences, Pianism, and Playing."

Talk 2: Concert 1, part two, Saturday, October 9, 1:00 p.m.
"Four Movements, Three Movements: Why?"

7 1796-97 Countess Anna Luise von Keglevics (Stephen Prutsman)
10/1-3 1795-98 Countess Anna Margarete von Browne-Camus (Markus Pawlik, Alexander Fang, Adam Golka)

Let me pick up where I left off. In the three sonatas in Opus 2, Beethoven expanded the size of the sonata to four movements, thereby *suggesting* an orchestral weight in a private genre. The last movement of the third sonata displays some of the techniques of the extraordinary virtuosity that had made him famous among the most passionate rich music lovers of the city. But I have to add that they were even more shocked at his ability to touch their *hearts* with his playing.

The sonata, Opus 7, continues the four-movement model of the first three. But it breaks with tradition in its own way, for it has *its own* opus number instead of being grouped with two other sonatas. This may have been a publishing matter of convenience, but it also suggests that this sonata had earned its own opus number. Once again there is a true slow movement, a "Largo, con gran espressione." It would be good not to make the common mistake to think that the late sonatas are more profound than the early ones. In fact, forget about the so-called three periods, if you can, because there are several serious problems with their history and unfortunate influence on our assessment and understanding of the early works in particular. This slow movement in C Major has much of the profundity of the second movement of the last sonata, also in C Major.

The sonata was dedicated to his pupil Countess Anna Luise von Keglevics. She was ten years younger than Beethoven and had started studying with him no later than 1797, the year this sonata was completed. Carl Czerny, another Beethoven student, told the great Beethoven biographer Alexander Thayer that Beethoven was in love with her and that the sonata should also have been called "the beloved." Whatever the depth of affection, she received four dedications in total, including the First Concerto and the remarkable variations, Opus 34. And this sonata is also remarkable, especially for the depth of the slow movement and the extraordinary grazioso finale that also contains a ferocious orchestral C Minor section.

In Opus 10 Beethoven again grouped three sonatas together under one opus number. The first two sonatas, the first nicknamed "The Little Pathétique," are in three movements and resemble the traditional private music sonata. The third sonata, however, is one of the grand ones, and this one in an exuberant D Major that reminds me of the D Major of the Second Symphony. The opening movement begins orchestrally with octaves in both hands, and the following material is developed orchestrally as well, taking full advantage of the three different colors of the fortepianos of the 1790s (one writer described the differences by saying that the bass should sound like a bassoon, the middle register a clarinet, and the top a flute—very useful ways to help us think about how to play Beethoven on the modern piano).

Why does the third sonata have an added movement, the menuetto? If you remove it from the sonata in your imagination, you will hear why. The second slow movement—marked "Largo e mesto" and in the tragic key of D minor—is indeed "mesto," that is dejected, sad, plaintive, chock full of sorrow. In one of the masterclasses given at the Beethoven Center in San José, one master teacher accurately remarked that "the whole movement is one big miserable incident." The fourth movement, on the other hand, begins with a sophisticated and witty musical joke about whether the beginning is a downbeat or a pickup. The added *minuetto* is therefore essential as it gently, *dolce (sweetly),* lightens the mood of the *Largo* and even prepares us for the rhythmic joke in the Trio of the *minuetto.*

Thus, the question of why some sonatas have four movements, some have three, and some will have more than four, and some have only two—this question has to be answered not as a purely formal question, nor as one related to the public versus private distinction. It can really *only be answered* by looking at the interplay of the meanings, of the affects, of each of the movements. Beethoven was not expanding and shrinking the size of the sonatas willy-nilly—it all has to do with meaning.

During the Classical period, the standard of the day was that each movement would have its own emotion, which they described as Affect. The Affects did not necessarily tell a story from beginning to end, but the order of emotions did have to be carefully considered. Over Beethoven's lifetime, this way of thinking about the connections of the movements changed in two important ways: first, some do tell a story or narrative that is continuous, and second, because they are telling a story, one movement may be connected to the next without a pause. Beethoven

inherited the notion of distinct emotions in each movement of a sonata, but as you can hear in these works, he already spent a great deal of time considering the order of the Affects. So: we have an additional movement, orchestral writing, the introduction of a new virtuosity, and a growing interest in *how* the meanings and character of each movement are related.

Talk 3: Concert 2, part one, Saturday, October 9, 7:00 p.m.
"Beethoven's Patrons in the First Viennese Decade"

13 1797-98 Prince Karl von Lichnowsky (Kenny Broburg)
14/1-2 1:1798, 2:? Freifrau Josephine von Braun (Nicholas Mathew, Shunsuke Kurakata)
22 1800 Reichsgraf Johann Georg von Browne-Camus (Daniel Hsu)

Let me switch from the topic of the *how* Beethoven set out to radically
transform the sonata to another equally important topic: how he used the dedications of his sonatas and other works to thank his patrons and curry favor from important figures in Vienna's musical life.

The "Pathétique," one of Beethoven's most dramatic early works, is dedicated to a prince named Karl von Lichnowsky, who benefitted the composer almost from the time of his arrival in Vienna in 1792 through 1808 in astonishing ways. Make no mistake about it, the relationship was rocky in its *last* two years, but let me start at its beginning.

What were the most important things the prince did for the hotheaded composer? He let him live in his guest house in 1794. He gave the premiere of the Trios, Opus 1, at a soiree in his palace in 1793 or 1794. He and his family bought 25 copies of the first edition, which is dedicated to the prince. He gave Beethoven a set of string quartet instruments, now at the Beethoven-Haus. From 1800 till 1806, he provided Beethoven with an amazing annual annuity of 600 florins to compose. The prince frequently visited the composer, but he went to pains not to interrupt Beethoven if he was composing. Beethoven repaid the prince's friendship and generosity with the dedications of Opus 1 mentioned above, two piano sonatas, the Second Symphony, and a set of piano variations.

A mysterious tragic incident in 1806 destroyed their friendship. There are conflicting stories about exactly what happened. The "unfortunate incident," as Beethoven later described it, happened when the composer was staying for six weeks or so at the prince's palace in Grätz in Prussia in September and October of 1806. One evening Lichnowsky asked Beethoven to perform for some visiting French officers—and Beethoven refused. Lichnowsky perhaps threatened Beethoven in some way, which infuriated him. According to one report, Count Oppersdorf even had to prevent Beethoven from striking the

prince. Beethoven rushed out and walked five miles that evening to a nearby village before returning to Vienna. Supposedly he smashed Lichnowsky's bust upon entering his apartment. When the prince died in 1814, Beethoven wrote his wife, "I have never forgotten what I owe to all of your family, even if an unfortunate incident gave rise to circumstances in which I could not show it as I would have wished."

Beethoven had somewhat better relations with the dedicatee of the first sonata in Opus 14, Baroness Josephine von Braun. She and her husband were both excellent pianists, and she also received the dedication of the Horn Sonata, Opus 17, and the arrangement of the sonata, Opus 14, no. 1, for string quartet. Her husband, Peter Anton von Braun, held extremely important positions in Vienna's music world. From 1794 through 1806 he managed the two court theaters, the famous Kärtnerthortheater and the Burgtheater. In 1804 he bought the Theater an der Wien. In 1802 Braun refused to let Beethoven use one of the theaters for a concert, which rankled the composer. However, Braun *did* allow Beethoven to use the Theater an der Wien for the public premiere of the *Eroica* Symphony in 1805, the premiere of the Violin Concerto in 1806, and the first two versions of *Fidelio* in 1805 and 1806. When the second version did not make as much money as Beethoven thought it should have, he complained to Braun about being cheated, Braun replied that the composer should have composed for the public in the gallery, and Beethoven famously replied, "I do not compose for the gallery."

A few short words about the dedicatee of the Sonata, Opus 22, Imperial Count Johann Georg von Browne-Camus. The very wealthy count and his wife were among Beethoven's earliest patrons in Vienna. When he dedicated the Trios, Opus 9, to Browne, he called him the "premiere Maecenas [patron] of my muse." Besides this sonata and the trios, Browne also received dedications for a set of variations for cello and piano and the six beautiful Gellert Songs. Browne's own tutor found him to be "one of the strangest of men"; on another occasion he called him "the most intelligent fool I have ever known." Part of his intelligence, surely, was recognizing the brilliance of the young Beethoven.

Talk 4: Concert 2, part two, Saturday, October 9, 7:00 p.m.
"Symbolism in the Extraordinary Sonata in C-sharp Minor"

26 1800-01 Prince Karl von Lichnowsky (Adam Golka)
27/1 1801 Princess Josephine Sophie von Liechtenstein (Richard Raymond)
27/2 1801 Countess Julie Guicciardi (Mari Kodama)
28 1801 Johann Edler von Sonnenfels (Xak Bjerken)

This extraordinary group of four sonatas were written within the span of just two years when Beethoven had a lot going on. First and foremost, by 1800 his deafness had been apparent for at least three, perhaps four years, according to his own dating of the onset. Embarrassed by his impending loss, he was trying his best to conceal it from everyone, only beginning to admit it to two close friends in 1801.

But his work continued unabated, and each of these four sonatas is an experiment in his continuing effort to re-imagine the genre of the sonata. The first, Opus 26 in A-flat Major, is another four-movement work but one with a startling sequence of movements. It opens with a mostly gracious variation set that sounds more like a traditional slower movement. A playful Scherzo follows, which does not prepare us for the programmatic and completely orchestral "Funeral March on the Death of a Hero" in the astonishing key of A-flat Minor. In 1796 the theorist Francesco Galeazzi frankly stated that "It is not use on account of its overwhelming difficulty." The key was associated with "wailing laments" and "difficult struggle," and Beethoven further signals that the subject is death—or rather thinking about a hero who has died—with the symbol of the famous dotted note pattern that will soon return in the first movement of the "Moonlight" Sonata. The finale acts like the normal fast closing, but it calls for especially showy virtuosic technique and finishes with an unexpected pianissimo ending.

The first sonata in the Opus 27 set has its own set of surprises. The biggest surprise is that Beethoven instructs the pianist to play all four movements *without a break*. This is an extremely important innovation, as it makes the sonata one unending piece of storytelling. The first movement is an ABA rondo. The A section is a gentle Andante in E-flat Major and the middle B section is a rollick in Allegro tempo. The return of the A is then conjoined to the C-minor minuet and trio movement that leads to a breathtaking slow movement marked "Slow with expression"

but which is only twenty-six measures long. That's not long enough, to be frank, but Beethoven often cuts these moments of untroubled beauty too short—as if to say, one cannot remain long in these moments of ideal grace. A trill and run connect to an ambitious and long sonata-rondo final movement. Near the end, the theme of the too short slow movement returns to remind us again of its utopian beauty before a Presto coda wittily ends this long adventure.

The "Moonlight" Sonata, of course, has its share of surprises too. The first movement is in a concealed sonata form. Several symbols tell us that the movement is a reverie for someone who has died. First, the rare key of C-sharp minor was used exclusively during the period to symbolize lamentation and despair (usually about a dead person). Second, the first theme uses the dotted-note rhythmic pattern of funeral marches. And third, Beethoven interjects sharp pangs of pain with the most dissonant intervals available on the piano. Once again Beethoven instructs the pianist to continue without pause to a lyrical, major-key minuet and trio that dispels the mood of sorrow. There is no direct connection to the furious finale, a full-blown sonata form movement that is marked Very Fast and Agitated. There are many unexpected loud accents. If the first theme of the finale is the agitated protest again loss, the second is a return to lamenting. The movement has a spectacular coda that sounds like Beethoven himself is improvising at the keyboard, and the movement ends unrelentingly in anger. The famous five stages of grief by Elisabeth Kubler Ross and David Kessler are not in order.

The last sonata of this set, Opus 28, is one of the composer's most sublime creations. Another large four movement sonata, this one imitates orchestral textures with great frequency. The opening, for example, starts with a single low D in the left hand marking out the quarter notes. During one of our master classes at the Beethoven Center, the famous teacher John Perry told a student, "Sometimes you must think orchestrally, this is a timpani." Another surprise is that the opening melody begins gently, *piano (soft),* with a C natural that it out-of-key that helps soften the mood. None of those three symbols are the norm, well at least for other composers. The second movement similarly opens with an orchestral texture—the score almost looks like a transcription. Here the left hand plays the part of the bassoon or pizzicato cello. The Scherzo features writing that fits the piano well, but the fantastic closing rondo also starts off with a bassoon lick in the left hand, and the right hand comes in with a line that is perfect for a flute. How extraordinary

that as his physical hearing was declining, Beethoven was embedding the sounds of the orchestra into his sonatas.

Talk 5: Concert 3, part one, Sunday, October 10, 10:00 a.m.
"Humor, Sorrow, and Play"

31/1-3 1802 No dedication (Cameron Akioka, Miri Yampolsky, Kenneth Broberg)

The three sonatas published as a set as Opus 31 were composed in June, July, and August of 1802, a summer that Beethoven spent in the beautiful small village of Heiligenstadt at the base of the Kahlenberg Mountain. The village is about an hour's walk from central Vienna—Beethoven, a famous walker, probably did it faster—but it only takes four minutes by train today. His doctor had sent him there to rest his ears, but it tourned out to be an emotionally trying summer in which Beethoven contemplated committing suicide.

In 1801 he had finally begun telling two best friends who lived far from Vienna that he was losing his hearing. On June 29 and November 1 he described his symptoms to his Bonn friend Dr. Franz Wegeler. In an emotional letter of July 1 he wrote to his beloved friend Karl Amenda that he had repeatedly cursed his creator for exposing his creatures to the slightest hazard and that his prized possession, his hearing, was greatly deteriorating. His detailed confession occurred in his famous Heiligenstadt Testament of October 6 and 10, 1802, a private will that was only found after his death in 1827.

I recently made a new translation, and I think it is worth reading a section of it before you hear the sonatas composed during this turmoil:

> "however what humiliation if someone stood near me and heard a flute in the distance and I heard nothing, or someone heard a shepherd singing, and I also heard nothing, such experiences brought me near to despair/desperation [Verzweiflung], **only a little [more] was missing,** and I would have ended my life—
> only art held me back, it restrained me, ah it seemed impossible to me, to leave the world before, until I had brought forth everything [hervorgebracht], for which I felt myself disposed/inclined [wozu ich mich aufgelegt fühle], and thus I prolonged this wretched life—"

Thus, Beethoven concluded that work, *composing,* was the anecdote to his hearing loss, and three products of that decision are these sonatas.

Looking at them as a set, the first two have three movements and the third four. The most traditional is the first, with a sonata-form first movement, a beautiful Andante middle movement, and a playful rondo

for a finale. This is the standard number of movements, the standard sequence of movements. The second, however, which bears a nickname "The Tempest" that Beethoven did not want printed on the music score, breaks real ground in the first movement when Beethoven evokes the human voice. The sonata is in D Minor, a key associated both with gentle melancholy and with active *Sturm and Drang* (the famous "Storm and Stress") rage. The first movement opens with a very soft rolled A major chord in a very slow tempo, but a fast descending minor phrase follows to contradict it. It's interrupted with another chord, as if to say, "Wait." This time it's a rolled C Major chord, but the furious fast notes are the answer. That's hardly the last innovation. In the middle of the movement Beethoven stops the drama with another rolled A Major chord that does NOT give way. Instead, a short *recitative*—a form from opera—follows at a slow speed and with "deep expression." It has to give way to the fast descending notes, but they are interrupted by the reappearance of the C major chord. A second recitative follows, this one *even more painful*. It too gives way to the fast passages.

What did Beethoven want us to hear in these recitatives, which are the "secret" key to the sonata? They remind us of the recitatives of another famous work in D minor, the Ninth Symphony. In that case we know Beethoven actually had real words in mind, because they are found under the sketches. It's probable he had real words in mind in these recitatives too, but he did not share them. The job of imagining them he assigns to you.

The last sonata in the set could not be more different in meaning. Darkness and frustration have been replaced with surprise, play, and good humor. Beethoven once again writes for the orchestra transcribed for piano. The second movement is another Scherzo that startles with its demands on the pianist. The minuet contains one of his finest melodies, and the trio plays a rhythmic game about accents. The finale is marked "Presto con fuoco" ("Fast with Fire"), but it's a fun rollicking fire with harmonic surprises, crossed hands, and a witty coda.

If we want to connect Beethoven's music to his biography, it might be most productive to think about it this way: these sonatas are the perfect example of the reason Beethoven decided not to commit suicide that summer. Instead of death, he set to work to compose everything his imagination could bring forth.

Talk 6: Concert 3, part two, Sunday, October 10, 10:00 a.m.
"The Easy Sonatas and the Passionate Ones"

49/1-2	1796-98	No dedication (Olivia Pham, Mari Kodama)
53	1803-04	Count Ernst von Waldstein (Daniel Hsu)
54	second mov. 1804	No dedication (Markus Pawlik)
57	1804-05	Count Franz Brunswick (Richard Raymond)

Beethoven did all the beginning pianists of the world a great favor with the two sonatas of Opus 49, which are described as "facile sonatas" on the French title page of the first edition. Indeed, many beginning pianists cut their teeth on these Beethoven sonatas. Each sonata has only two movements, and neither is technically challenging. In the second movement of the second sonata, Beethoven reused a melody from the minuet movement of the Septet, Opus 20, from 1798-99. There it is in E-flat Major, here it is transposed to G Major. The first sonata was composed at the end of 1797 or beginning of 1798. There is a mystery about why he wrote these sonatas, but Beethoven may have sent a manuscript copy of one of them to the sister of a man named Heinrich Mylich in 1800, because he heard that she played the piano very nicely. That manuscript, alas, is lost, so we don't know if it was indeed one of these two easy sonatas.

The next three sonatas are anything but easy. Technically and emotionally, they put new demands on the pianist and their audience. Sketches for the three-movement "Waldstein" Sonata—with the original slow movement, the "Andante favori'—date from December 1803 to January 1804. The sketches for the second movement of Opus 54 date from May and June 1804. The "Appassionata" was sketched in 1804 and 1805 but not fully worked out till 1806.

The story of the "Andante favori" is particularly interesting. It is the original slow movement for the "Waldstein," but one of Beethoven's friends told him that it was too long and thus that it made the entire sonata too long. Believe it or not, Beethoven agreed to take out the movement and replaced it with a short improvisatory replacement. Beethoven gave the autograph of the "Andante favori" to one of his former pupils, the beautiful Countess Josephine Deym, born into the Brunswick family. He called it "your—your Andante." Josephine's first husband died in January 1804, and Beethoven developed very strong feelings of affection and love for her in 1804.

In a very important love letter from early in 1805, Beethoven wrote to Josephine about his love and his continuing struggles over his deafness: “And for some time after the feeling of love began to stir in me, my adored J[osephine], this grief increased even more— [a portion is omitted] For a long period a certain event made me *ever despair of ever achieving any happiness during my life on this earth*—but now things are no longer so bad. I have won your heart. Oh, I certainly know what value I ought to attach to this. My activity will again increase and—here I give you a solemn promise that in a short time I shall stand before you more worthy of myself and of you—Oh, if only you could attach some value to this, I mean, to founding my happiness by means of your love—to increasing it—"

As many of you know, Beethoven wrote another famous love letter to an unnamed woman in 1812, now called the “Immortal Beloved,” though that one ends more or less with a rejection. A set of scholars has argued for decades that Beethoven’s love for Josephine did not end in 1807 or 1808 but that she is the Immortal Beloved of 1812. One bit of evidence they offer is the “Andante favori” of the “Waldstein,” which, as I mentioned, he described as “your—your Andante.” The famous melody of that Andante, these scholars offer, even encodes the rhythm of her name in the first melody (“Jo-se-phin-e”) with a rhythmic motive that he thereafter frequently used.

For our purposes, it does not matter whether she was or was not the Immortal Beloved. We know from this letter that once Beethoven fell in love, he promised to make himself worthy of her by composing a series of works that would demonstrate his love. It’s possible that all three of these sonatas were composed under the weight of that remarkable promise.

What we ended up with are three remarkable and challenging works. The “Waldstein” and “Appassionata” each have three movements—the classic 18th century pattern, but the Opus 54 sonata only has two movements, like the easy sonatas, though far from easy. Both the “Waldstein” and the “Appassionata” are public kinds of works, and the writing is orchestral in many ways. I think it is fair to say that both display a new kind of emotional power that helps explain their enduring popularity. Both require new forms of virtuosity that comes into being as part of the meaning of the sonatas. The endings of the outer movements of the “Waldstein” and the “Appassionata” burst the confinements of even the modern piano with their energy. Opus 54 is equally remarkable,

if not as unfettered. The first movement has two contrasting themes that could not be more distinct. In the old days, before we knew better, we might have characterized them as stereotypical feminine and masculine kinds of energies. The second movement is a perpetual motion movement that requires great skill so that we do not become overwhelmed and annoyed with the constant sixteenth notes.

If the sonatas of the summer of 1802 reflect Beethoven's promise to himself to compose himself out of his despair over his encroaching deafness, we can also see that it is possible to connect these three sonatas with Beethoven's own statement in his letter to Josephine that he had never imagined happiness in this world but that he would prove himself worthy *to her and to himself* with new works. Certainly they demonstrate a new kind of energy and strength.

Talk 7: Concert 4, part one, Sunday, October 10, 4:00 p.m.
"Three Two-Movement and One Three-Movement Sonatas"

78 1809 Countess Therese Brunswick (Momo Kodama)
79 1809 None (Richard Raymond)
81a 1809 Archduke Rudolph (Kenneth Broberg)
90 1814 Count Moritz von Lichnowsky (Nicholas Mathew)

Unlike the dedications I discussed in the first recital that were aimed at rewarding patrons and cultivating important people in Vienna's music establishment, three of the four sonatas in this set are dedicated to Beethoven's friends. The fourth sonata, Opus 79, was published without a dedication. Countess Therese von Brunswick, older sister of Josephine, received the dedication of Opus 78. Count Moritz von Lichnowsky, brother of Prince Lichnowsky (the prince whose bust was smashed by Beethoven), was given the dedication to Opus 90. The Archduke Rudolph, one of Beethoven's longtime composition pupils, a major patron, and also someone for whom he felt deep and genuine affection, received the dedication of Opus 81a, "The Farewell." What roles did these friends play in the composer's life?

In 1799 the twenty-four year old Therese Brunswick, her twenty-year-old sister Josephine, and their mother Countess Anna Brunswick visited Beethoven to see if he would agree to give the two young women piano lessons. Somewhat to their surprise, Beethoven not only agreed but came attentively every day to give the talented young women lessons for several hours. Over the years Therese stayed in close contact with Beethoven and observed his growing love for her sister in the years 1804 to 1808. Therese herself never married, and although she too has been proposed to be the Immortal Beloved of 1812, she has fallen completely out of favor as a candidate. In 1810 she sent Beethoven a copy of a portrait of her painted by Johann Lampi; that same year he dedicated the Sonata in F-sharp Major to her. In 1808 she became very impressed with the school of Johann Pestalozzi, and in the 1810s devoted her life to the care of children. In 1818 she established the first day nursery in Hungary.

The sonata dedicated to Therese is in an extremely unusual key for the classical period: F-sharp major, a key with six sharps that modulates to C-sharp major with seven sharps. This is an extremely rare key for Beethoven, and he seems to have selected it in part because of its rarity but also because the keys with four or more sharps he associated with

very rare emotional states. The first movement begins with a brief introduction that signals that its primary Affect or emotion is pleasure or happiness. The second movement, marked fast and lively, bustles about with many unexpected accents and dynamic levels.

The famous “Les Adieux” Sonata, Opus 81a, is dedicated to Beethoven’s only longterm composition student and friend Archduke Rudolph. He was the youngest son of Emperor Leopold II and Maria Ludovica. He inherited the Habsburg curse (epilepsy), was often in poor health, and died of a cerebral hemorrhage at the age of 43. Because of his ill health, he could not serve in the military and took minor vows in the church in 1805. He played the piano with “great skill, accuracy, and refinement.” Close contact between the two men began in 1808, and already in 1809, the year this sonata was composed, the Archduke had helped arrange the annuity which guaranteed him an income for life. Each of the three movements of the sonata has a programmatic title: farewell, absence, and return. Beethoven himself wrote on a draft of the first movement that it was finished on May 4 on the occasion of the departure of the Archduke from Vienna to avoid the French invasion of the city. Recent scholarship has questioned whether Beethoven was saying goodbye to the Archduke, as he sketched the work in the weeks before the Archduke left. I suggest not thinking of the Archduke as you listen, but rather of someone whom you have treasured in your life who has gone away and returned.

The sonata in E minor and E major is dedicated to Count Moritz Lichnowsky, brother of the famous prince who was the composer’s most important early patron. Anton Schindler described Moritz as “Beethoven’s ever supportive, lifelong companion.” Schindler is also responsible for the story about the sonata that gets deep into Moritz’s private life. Moritz married his first wife in 1797, and she lived until 1817. However, already in 1813 Moritz had fallen in love with a gifted singer named Josepha Stummer. Josepha bore him a daughter in 1814, but the two were not able to get married even after his wife died—because it was strongly against the family’s wishes—until 1820. Schindler, who was not in close contact with Beethoven in those years, says that the first movement can be described as a “Conflict between head and heart” and the second as “Conversation with the beloved.” The daughter was born in June 1814, and Beethoven sketched the work that summer and essentially finished it by August 16.

Wherever Schindler discovered this theory about the meaning of the sonata, the keys of the two movements fit the headings he suggested fairly well. The first movement is in E Minor, a key associated with lament and melancholy, and—for those of who are sonata form works—the second theme of the first movement is not in the expected major key but a minor key that is a turbulent section.

I think that conflict is a fair enough description of the movement, but is *not* between *head* and *heart*, but between *determination* and *pain*. The second movement is in E Major, a key that Beethoven reserved for expressions of idealized love (for instance, the deeply moving last movement of the sonata, Opus 109). It would not surprise me if Beethoven did not personally empathize with Moritz, whose family opposed his relationship and eventual marriage to Josepha. After all, his love for Josephine Brunswick von Deym had been thwarted by her family and the prohibition against a member of the nobility marrying a commoner.

So, in this set we see Beethoven rewarded his longtime student and friend Therese Brunswick with a sonata in F-sharp Major, a rarity; the Archduke Rudolph with a programmatic sonata about missing someone we have deep feelings for; and Moritz Lichnowsky with a sonata that depicts conflict and unhappiness that turns to joy and happiness.

Talk 8: Concert 4, part 2, Sunday, October 10, 4:00 p.m.
"Voice against Voice: Counterpoint as Solution"

101 1815-16 Freifrau Catharina Dorothea von Ertmann (Markus Pawlik)
106 1817-18 Archduke Rudolph (Mari Kodama)

The year after completing Moritz Lichnowsky's Sonata in E Minor and Major, which may or may not be related to his extramarital love for the gifted singer Josepha Stummer, Beethoven once again took up his pencil to create a new sonata, this one in A Major, a key associated with cheerfulness, brightness, declarations of innocent love. It is dedicated to his friend Baroness Dorothea von Ertmann. With this sonata Beethoven began to give significantly longer directions to the performer in the headings to each movement. He also—because he mistakenly believed the "Fake News" of the day—that the fortepiano was a German and not an Italian invention, gave these headings in both German and the standard Italian.

This is *very good* for us, because the German titles are more informative than the Italian ones and as such give us better clues to his intentions. The German direction for the first movement is "Somewhat lively and with heartfelt emotion." The Italian is only "A little fast but not too much." The German heading for the third movement is "Slow and full of longing"; the Italian is only "Slow, but not too much, with affection." The last movement similarly is better in German: "Quick, but not too much, and with determination." The Italian is only "Allegro," fast. Just from these headings alone, we know that the sonata's subjects are heartfelt, involve longing, affection, but also determination.

The composition of the sonata was very interrupted for some reason. He worked on it from the summer of 1815 off and on through the fall of 1816.

So, who was the Baroness Dorothea von Ertmann? Simply put, she was probably the finest performer of Beethoven's works for the piano during his lifetime. They met, according to the baroness, in 1803 at the music shop of Tobias Haslinger, where she was sight-reading his sonatas. Beethoven, impressed, began giving her lessons, but they were probably not on technique but expression. Her playing was renowned on many levels. In 1809 Reichardt wrote, after hearing her perform a sonata by

Beethoven, “Never have I encountered such power aligned to such exquisite delicacy, not even in the great virtuosi.”

Beethoven experimented in several ways in the sonata. The first movement gets rid of the standard repeat of the first section, the exposition. The sonata begins and continues for quite a while by avoiding a cadence on the home key. This gives the opening a special otherworldly effect. The avoidance of normal rhythmic accents heightens the affect. The second movement is a lively minuet and trio in the style of a march. In contrast to the first, the second movement is as solidly grounded on the home key as possible. The third movement, the deeply sentimental one, is set in the lamenting key of A minor, and it is yet another one of those beautiful movements that is too short at only twenty measures. The lament is interrupted by an eight-measure recall of the beautiful wistful happy theme of the first movement, and then the sonata concludes with a determined finale that relies on counterpoint to work itself out.
The word counterpoint arose in the 15th century and was used to teach composers about how to write one note (the points of counterpoint) against or after another. Baroque composers were especially interested in imitative counterpoint like canons and fugues. Although we know Beethoven studied counterpoint as a teenager (especially in the fugues of Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier)* and helped the Archduke study it in 1809, in his late works he frequently turned to it. In this sonata, for instance, instead of writing a dreamy melody with accompaniment (where the melody is clearly the boss) or a boisterous march with melody and accompaniment (again, the melody is most important), each voice in the texture top to bottom has a chance at the theme, and this equality of voices and the way they respond to each other is indeed determined.

This interest in counterpoint at the finale of a sonata is epitomized in the next sonata, the famous *Hammerklavier,* which is one of the most difficult sonatas ever written, especially if one follows Beethoven’s tempo markings. (One of its nicknames is the “Mount Everest of Piano Sonatas.”) I actually don’t advise trying to observe them on the modern piano; they only work on the fortepianos of the 1820s. The sonata has four movements: a sonata-form orchestral opening movement, a scherzo in second position, an intense “Appassionato” slow movement, and an absolutely stunning concluding fugue here marked “resolute.” In the score Beethoven described it as a fugue for 3 voices, with some licenses. This was probably aimed at heading off the whining of the academic “Karens” of the day and the future (and they indeed appeared!).

The free fugue is worthy of a great deal of analysis, but the most important thing to say is that it serves as an answer to the massive sad slow movement, which contains some of the most sorrowful as well as some of the most hopeful moments in all of Beethoven's music. How to move from the great sadness to the fugue presented Beethoven with a wonderful challenge.

He solved it brilliantly with an introduction in which he tries out different answers to sorrow before he lands on the fugue subject. It is very much the predecessor of the last movement of the Ninth Symphony, which tries out there the themes of the first movements and rejects them in favor of the "Ode to Joy." The answer he found here has something to do with his explanation in the Heiligenstadt Testament that he will find his way out of his despair by working.

Was Beethoven himself in despair in these years? It is widely agreed by Beethoven biographers that he fell into a depression in the aftermath of the failure of the Immortal Beloved relationship in the summer of 1812, a depression that was still gnawing at him five years later. Beethoven seemed to realize that it had been his last chance for the long-held dream of happiness he had written about to Josephine Brunswick in 1805. In 1815 his brother Carl died, which put Beethoven in the position of serving as co-guardian of his nephew with the boy's mother, whom he felt was immoral and a criminal. By 1817 to 1818, when this sonata was written, his deafness had advanced to the point that most people had to communicate in writing.

Facing the recognition of a life without a wife, especially when he had become the guardian of his nephew, and facing ever-deepening deafness that separated him from the world of sound, Beethoven responded by composing this monumental work.

Talk 9: Concert 4, part 3, Sunday, October 10, 4:00 p.m.
"The Schlesinger Sonatas"

109	1820	Maximiliane Brentano (Stephen Kovacevich)
110	1821	None (Stephen Kovacevich)
111	1821-22	Archduke Rudolph (Richard Raymond)

Along the way through this fantastic cycle of the 32 sonatas with opus numbers, I have talked about sonatas that were dedicated to patrons and influential businessmen in Vienna and dedications of sonatas to close friends, but the last three sonatas have a fascinating story behind their origin that I'd like to share. Simply put, they all came into being because of a plate of roast veal.

The story begins with a father and son in the music publishing business in Berlin. The father was Adolph Martin Schlesinger, and his son was Maurice. Beginning in 1795, the father had a store selling books, maps, and music. In 1811 the firm began printing its own music and published works by Carl Maria von Weber, Mendelssohn, Spontini, and others. As the firm prospered, it moved to the most famous grand boulevard of Berlin, Unter den Linden, a few blocks down from the famous Brandenburg Gate.

Son Maurice went on a a business trip to Dresden and Vienna, and stayed on in Vienna for several months to meet Beethoven and inquire about publishing new works. Maurice did the usual clever thing to meet Beethoven—he hung out at the music store of Steiner and Haslinger, which Beethoven often visited. Maurice himself told the following story to a biographer in the 1860s.

After the men met in the store, Beethoven invited Maurice to visit him in the nearby town of Mödling, where he was spending the summer. It is about eleven miles from Vienna. When Maurice arrived, Beethoven was enraged because he had gone to a local tavern and asked for veal, and none was available. Maurice and Beethoven spoke for two hours, Maurice using the conversation books to write his part of the conversation. When Maurice returned to Vienna in his carriage, he sent a covered dish of veal by carriage back to the composer, a trip that took roughly two hours.

According to Maurice, several days later Beethoven arrived in Vienna while Maurice was still in bed, kissed and embraced him, and said

that nothing had ever given him so much pleasure as the veal, coming as it did when he so greatly longed for it. Maurice also gave a dinner party while he was in Vienna that Beethoven attended. He must have been very happy, for he improvised at the piano for an hour on a theme picked out at random. When Maurice departed for Paris, which became his new home and where he launched an incredibly successful business, Beethoven gave him a manuscript dedication page of the canon "Belief and Hope." That manuscript is dated September 21, 1819.

The following March Beethoven wrote to Schlesinger, saying "I remember that you visited me in Mödling and wanted some of my works and if I understood correctly you wanted smaller rather than larger compositions." Maurice's father answered the letter and asked Beethoven if he would compose piano sonatas. In his reply of April 30 Beethoven wrote, "I will gladly let you have new sonatas—these however for no less than 40 florins each, therefore a work of three sonatas at 120 florins." Schlesinger countered with a fee of 90 ducats, which Beethoven accepted. But he added a telling rebuke, "I am used to making sacrifices, the composition of my works not proceeding solely in connection with the fees, but above all with the intention of creating something good for art."

When I was writing my dissertation about the origins of what became the first sonata, Opus 109, I discovered something fascinating. When Beethoven accepted the Berlin Schlesinger's commission, he actually *had not even begun* to sketch any of the sonatas—they were all only proposed projects. But when I lined up the letters with the conversation books, something jumped out at me. Before Schlesinger had asked Beethoven for sonatas, Beethoven had already composed what would become the first movement of Opus 109. It was written to satisfy a request from one of Beethoven's friends, Friedrich Starke, who was publishing a series of volumes called the *Vienna Piano-Forte School*. At the beginning of January Starke had asked for a "little piece of music for the second part" of the piano method book. It took Beethoven a while to get around to it, and subsequently one of his friends wrote, "Are you sending that to Starke as single piece?"

After Beethoven received the sonatas commission, he was discussing it with his close friend Franz Oliva, who wrote "and use the new little piece for a sonata for Schlesinger." Indeed, Beethoven, already slow to send the piece to Starke, instead used it as the opening of Opus 109. A piece originally conceived for a piano method thus became transformed

into a three-movement sonata. What makes this process especially astonishing to me is how the sonata unfolded: that improvisational short movement in a major key gives way to a presto agitated movement that then is transformed into one of his finest slow variation finales, one that justly has a metaphysical quality.

The other two sonatas in the series are equally remarkable in their own way. Opus 110 does not have a dedication, but it was written between September through December of 1821. The finale is a fantastic new form. It begins with an introduction in the dark key of B-flat Minor that leads to an ABAB structure. The first A section is titled “Lamenting Song”; the second “Exhausted, crying out.” The first A is set in the extreme key of A-flat Minor. Once again, Beethoven used extreme keys to express extreme emotions. The B sections are fugues. Several scholars have connected these laments to the death of the Josephine Brunswick, the only woman we know for a fact Beethoven loved, on March 31 of that year. This seems quite plausible to me.

The last of the Schlesinger sonatas is of course extraordinary in its own way. Just two movements again, but that is hardly new by now for Beethoven, though the publisher did wonder where the standard quick finale was. The first movement is set in C Minor, like the Fifth Symphony’s first movement, and the second in C Major, like the Fifth Symphony’s last movement. But where the Fifth ends assertively, victoriously, the sonata begins peacefully and thoughtfully, and then transverses a vast metaphysical distance.

So, a plate of veal led to all of this unbelievable creativity. Not to slight the violinists, but I am happy the Schlesingers did not commission violin sonatas. The piano was the instrument that was Beethoven’s natural voice, and in Schlesinger’s set he once again set himself to working out, as he said in the Heiligenstadt Testament of 1802, those ideas he was compelled to express.