

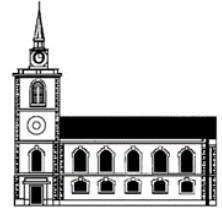
St James's Church, Piccadilly
Lunchtime Recital Series
Monday 26th October 2020: 1:10-2pm

Ariel Lanyi, piano

Mark Viner, piano

Konstantin Lapshin, piano

Beethoven Piano Society of Europe series



Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) Piano Sonata No.6 in F, Op.10 No.2

Allegro

Menuetto. Allegretto

Presto

Performed by Ariel Lanyi

The second of Beethoven's Op.10 trilogy is the lightest and most genial of the three, as is usual in his early sets (Op. 2 and the Op.12 Violin Sonatas). The somewhat whimsical opening Allegro evokes so strongly Beethoven's already fully developed independent spirit: not one bar could be mistaken for another composer, for all that this sonata is sometimes referred to as Haydnesque. Beethoven balances the somewhat episodic nature of his exposition, built up from many short contrasted motifs, with a flowing development section in longer phrase units.

Already in Op.7 Beethoven had developed the traditional minuet into a more through-composed vehicle for deep expression. He does so again in the second movement of this sonata, contrasting a rather troubled F minor main section with a consoling Trio in D flat major with a singing line and some beautiful harmonic detail. The Presto finale is often described as fugal, though the fugal writing is fairly rudimentary. We can be sure that Beethoven could have written a solid fugue if he had wanted to, but here his intention is surely to liven up and give ballast to a basically homophonic movement in an unmistakable if rather free sonata form. The presto momentum is unstoppable and the movement ends most effectively and without the slightest let up.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) Piano Sonata No.27 in E minor, Op.90 (1814)

Mit Lebhaftigkeit und durchaus mit Empfindung und Ausdruck

Nicht zu geschwind und sehr singbar vorgetragen

Performed by Mark Viner

One of a number of important transitional works between Beethoven's middle and late period style, along with the Op.96 Violin Sonata and the song cycle *An die ferne Geliebte*, the E minor sonata shows the composer loosening the joints of classical sonata form in pursuit of an ever more fluid, seamless texture. Of an extreme subtlety, Artur Schnabel once said it was the Beethoven sonata he had least often played to his own satisfaction. It is also one of the select group of sonatas to have only two, strongly contrasted movements.

The key word in Beethoven's expressive marking for the first movement is 'Empfindung' (Beethoven is using the German language, as he does in the other great 'transitional' sonata, Op.101), denoting sympathy or personal feeling. The movement is extremely concentrated, yet despite its brevity Beethoven dispenses with the customary exposition repeat: as in Op.101, he is working towards a continuously unfolding musical narrative - Wagner's 'endless melody'. The minor key is pervasive, yielding only to the major for short passages. According to Beethoven's secretary Schindler - who probably embroidered the story in his customary way - the sonata represents the love life of its dedicatee Count Lichnowsky who wished to marry an opera singer, hence beneath his social standing. The impassioned first movement represents 'Struggle between the Head and the Heart' and the second 'Conversation with the Beloved'. The songful second movement is in the major key almost throughout. A formally old-fashioned rondo, its musical language is of an extreme refinement, with magical harmonic perspectives that recall Mozart rather than Haydn or indeed most earlier Beethoven. Schubert's beautiful late Rondo for piano duet (D.951) is clearly influenced by this wonderful movement.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) Piano Sonata No.31 in A flat, Op.110

Moderato cantabile molto espressivo

Allegro molto

Adagio ma non troppo – Allegro ma non troppo

Performed by Konstantin Lapshin

Strangely this sonata, the second in the final trilogy, carries no dedication. Perhaps Beethoven felt it was too personal - dealing with a 'near death' experience in the last movement - to feel comfortable dedicating it either to a patron or a favourite pupil as was his normal practice.

It is interesting to note that as the sonatas progress the principal weight shifts from the first movement to the finale. This is the case with all the major sonatas from the *Waldstein*. Beethoven seems to have conceived his main works more and more as journeys towards a resolution, whether tragic, triumphant or transcendental. This inevitably gives them a greater stature, equivalent to the great novels or works of dramatic literature.

Thus the first two movements of Op.110, wonderful as they are, are short, simple in structure, and merely set the scene for the great and complex finale. The richly singing *Moderato cantabile molto espressivo* opening movement, after a sarabande-like opening - Bach is never far from late Beethoven- opens to a long cantilena. Varied material follows, in a clear sonata form with an extraordinarily calm development section consisting merely of six repetitions of the same quiet phrase, wandering through different keys. The brief, grotesque *Allegro molto*, doing duty as a scherzo in duple time, has an even odder trio. The long finale alternates passages of recitative, a lament (Klagender Gesang) recalling Bach's *Es ist vollbracht* from the *St John Passion* and a fully worked fugue. The lament returns, this time pathetic and broken, marked 'losing force, grieving'. At the last moment ten major-key chords appear, crescendo, indicating a renewal of strength and hope. The fugue returns, in inversion and sprouting diminutions and a plethora of minute detail, like new shoots. The fugal theme finally becomes a tune, harmonised with rich pianistic figuration: there is a huge crescendo, and the sonata ends in *fortissimo* victory.

BIOGRAPHIES

Ariel Lanyi began piano lessons with Lea Agmon before his fifth birthday and made his debut at the age of 7. He has performed in London, Paris and Brussels among many other places, has appeared with orchestras in the UK and in Israel, including the CBSO, and with leading members of the Prague Philharmonia and the Concertgebouw Amsterdam. In 2017, Ariel was awarded first prize at the Dudley International Piano Competition. Ariel studied at the Conservatory of the Jerusalem Academy of Music, with Yuval Cohen. Currently, he studies at the Royal Academy of Music with Hamish Milne and Ian Fountain.

'There are many reasons as to why I love playing Beethoven as much as I do, but I think that what particularly draws me to his music is his unique sense of humor. Beethoven is, in my view, the quintessential humorist, rather than just a composer who had a sense of humour. This sonata is characterised not only by humour, but also by the variety of textures heard, changing sometimes seamlessly and sometimes abruptly, culminating in a fugal last movement, a genre that would acquire even more meaning for Beethoven in his later years.' — Ariel Lanyi

Described by International Piano Magazine as 'one of the most gifted pianists of his generation', **Mark Viner** is steadily gaining a reputation as one of Britain's leading concert pianists. Born in 1989, he began playing at age 11 and two years later was awarded a scholarship to enter the Purcell School of Music where he studied with Tessa Nicholson for the next five years. Another scholarship then took him to the Royal College of Music where he studied with Niel Immelman for six years, graduating with distinction in MPerf in 2013. He is also a published composer and writer. His advocacy for the music Alkan and Liszt has led to his election as Chairman of both composers' societies. His recordings of Thalberg, Liszt, Alkan and Chaminade have garnered exceptional critical acclaim. His most important project to date is a survey of the complete piano music of Alkan, the first of its kind and is expected to run to some 17 CDs in length.

'Op.90 represents a turning point in the composer's output where he departs from his middle period to his late and most visionary one. For me, its two movement form and shorter length contains an entire world and the so-called "head and heart" allegory postulated by Beethoven's friend and biographer, Schindler, I find most endearing albeit apocryphal.' — Mark Viner

A prizewinner in more than 15 International competitions, **Konstantin Lapshin** is a distinguished London-based Russian pianist. 'An impressive technique, and the impulsive, Romantic expression that has been a hallmark of so many Russian pianists, including Rachmaninov and Horowitz' - Fanfare Magazine (USA). His recent performances have included the Royal Albert Hall, Wigmore Hall, Purcell Room at the Southbank Centre, Cadogan Hall, Fairfield's Hall, Bridgewater Hall in Manchester, the Salle Cortot in Paris, Christophori Salon in Berlin and Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatoire. Konstantin completed his MMus and Art. Dip at the RCM in 2010, studying with Vanessa Latache. During his studies, Konstantin won the Chappell Gold Medal and the Queen Elisabeth Rose bowl, the RCM's highest award, and subsequently played for HRH Prince of Wales. Konstantin has also received his Doctoral degree from the RCM. He now teaches at the RCM Junior Department.

'The sonata Op.110 is definitely one of the greatest late Beethoven's masterpieces, both musically and spiritually. As in the other sonatas of that period, there are a few innovations here, which inspired so many composers of the post-Beethoven's period. First, a tendency to destroy the borders within and between the movements (here, instead of a Finale, there is a sophisticated structure of a "Recitativo, Arioso Dolente and Fugue" - a link to Liszt's sonatas). Second, an enormous stylistic contrast between majestic Romantic seriousness of the first movement and rough, peasant-like humour of the second (a link to Mahler's Symphonies); third, a use of polyphony, which will become a hallmark of, for example, Hindemith and Shostakovich.' — Konstantin Lapshin



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