



JOANNA MACGREGOR CBE
Piano

Beethoven Day 2020

Sunday 13 December 2020
2pm, 5pm, and 8pm UK Time

Welcome

Our final livestream of 2020 marks the anniversary of a giant of classical music - 250 years since the birth of Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) - and is, fittingly, our most ambitious online undertaking yet. Across three concerts in a single day Joanna MacGregor CBE presents a personal selection of nine of Beethoven's 32 piano sonatas, a cycle which in classical music history remains one of the most defining sets of works for the instrument.

Whether you join us for one, two, or all three recitals I hope you gain new insights into this iconic composer from an artist who is renowned for her ability to communicate with audiences whether in concert, through her numerous recordings, or, in this new world, via the livestream broadcast.

I'm most grateful to Joanna for creating the programme for the day, and for providing notes for the works in the spotlight. And as we conclude our online events for 2020 thank you for your support of our programme through the year. Further events from Turner Sims are planned for 2021 so do let us know about your audience experience - and of course what you would like to see. For now though sit back and enjoy Beethoven Day 2020 with us.

KEVIN APPLEBY

Concert Hall Manager, Turner Sims

Joanna MacGregor CBE

Beethoven Day 2020

Sunday 13 December 2020

1400 - CONCERT 1 LIVESTREAM

Piano Sonata No 3 in C, Op 2 No 3 (1795)

Piano Sonata No 8 in C minor, Op 13 *Pathétique* (1798)

Piano Sonata No 12 in A flat, Op 26 *Funeral March* (1801)

1700 - CONCERT 2 LIVESTREAM

Piano Sonata No 14 in C sharp minor, Op 27 No 2 *Moonlight* (1801)

Piano Sonata No 18 in E flat, Op 31 No 3 *The Hunt* (1802)

Piano Sonata No 23 in F minor, Op 57 *Appassionata* (1805)

2000 - CONCERT 3 LIVESTREAM

Piano Sonata No 27 in E minor, Op 90 (1814)

Piano Sonata No 31 in A flat, Op 110 (1821)

Piano Sonata No 32 in C minor, Op 111 (1822)

CONCERT 1 - 1400

Piano Sonata No 3 in C, Op 2 No 3 (1795)

I Allegro con brio
II Adagio
III Scherzo: Allegro
IV Allegro assai

Beethoven's own piano playing was muscular, brilliant, and inventive; he loved broken octaves, double thirds and double trills. His penchant for technical challenge is apparent in this youthful sonata, which exudes confidence and swagger, as well as a great deal of rhythmic panache. Following a concerto-style cadenza at the end of the first movement, Beethoven moves up a third to E major for a spacious, ruminative Adagio. C major – E major was a favourite dramatic combination; it returns significantly in the Op 14 No 1, the *Waldstein*, and Op.90. The final two movements are high wire acts, requiring daredevil leaps and good humour.

Piano Sonata No 8 in C minor, Op 13 *Pathétique* (1798)

I Grave – Allegro di molto e con brio
II Adagio cantabile
III Rondo: Allegro

Seen as an important milestone not only in Beethoven's sonatas, but also in the development of the keyboard sonata, the *Pathétique* was immediately popular: it was published seventeen times during Beethoven's lifetime, and arranged for other small groups of instruments. Its dramatic and emotional power was compellingly original, establishing C minor as a powerful and important key for Beethoven. Two tragic Grave sections contrast with a sweep of left hand broken octaves, breathless chromaticism, and hand-crossing. The Adagio in A flat major (as in the lovely A flat Adagio of Op 10 No 1) is one of Beethoven's most serene and loved melodies, with majestic depth and warmth. The Rondo is full of character, wit and surprise; it's considerably lighter in texture, although becomes very fiery - and yes, surprisingly Latin American! - towards the end. I remember giving a very over-excited performance of this for my Grade 7 exam; the examiner would have preferred

more discipline. I still get excited by the final page.

Piano Sonata No 12 in A flat, Op 26 *Funeral March* (1801)

I Andante con variazioni
II Scherzo: Allegro molto
III Maestoso andante: marcia funebre sulla morte d'un eroe
IV Rondo: Allegro

This sonata opens with a short set of variations, based on a Schubertian theme in 3/8. Chopin wasn't fond of Beethoven's style – he found it too rough and startling – but admired this sonata for its elegance and veiled textures. He may, too, have been inspired by Beethoven's magnificent funeral march in the third movement to write his own.

The concept of the fallen hero is important in Beethoven's music, and to his psychopathology. It's present in the *Eroica* symphony (also with a funeral march as its slow movement), and in his music to Goethe's play *Egmont*; it's crucial to the *Appassionata*. His was the age of the French Revolution and Napoleon, and its moral turmoil. We don't know who originally inspired Op 26's funeral march; but Beethoven turned this movement into an orchestral piece for Johann Duncker's play *Leonore Prohaska*, about a young German woman who disguised herself as a soldier to fight for the Prussian army against Napoleon. She died in battle at the age of 28.

This same funeral march, with its tremolandos representing a gunfire salute at the graveside, was played at Beethoven's own funeral in 1827. One of the torchbearers was Schubert, who shyly idolised Beethoven; eighteen thousand people lined the streets of Vienna.

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CONCERT 2 - 1700

Piano Sonata No 14 in C sharp minor, Op 27 No 2 *Moonlight* (1801)

I Adagio sostenuto
II Allegretto and Trio
III Presto agitato

The Op 27 sonatas both carry the indication *Sonata quasi una fantasia*, and both in their own ways are experimental, as if Beethoven was trying to shift the form. Op 27 No 2 is the sonata that virtually – and singlehandedly - invented romanticism. Nobody had ever written an opening keyboard movement of a single mood throughout, and its Impressionism was considered wildly modern. Paul Lewis thinks this movement is Beethoven grappling with death, during one of Beethoven's deep depressions. I find a quality of stillness in it, and peaceful contemplation; something that will return in the Arietta of Op 111 (which forms part of Concert 3). The choice of C sharp minor (a key that would be so important to Chopin) is mysterious and evocative, and very unusual for the time. Beethoven directs *si deve suonare tutto questo pezzo delicatissimamente e senza sordini* ('must be played as delicately as possible and without the dampers,') ie with a wash of pedal. The final presto is the longest of the three movements, with rapid rising arpeggios, and forceful dynamics. Agonisingly emotional and agitated, it draws this brilliant sonata to a close.

Piano Sonata No 18 in E flat, Op 31 No 3 *The Hunt* (1802)

I Allegro
II Scherzo: Allegretto vivace
III Menuetto and Trio: Moderato e grazioso
IV Presto con fuoco

The marvellous Austrian-Hungarian pianist Edith Vogel liked to joke about her surname and the birdcalls in the lovely, varied opening movement – once realised, the music is overflowing with birdsong, trills and cross rhythms. Beethoven follows it with an outrageously cool scherzo, and a leisurely menuetto, taking the place of a slow movement. Did Beethoven ever go galloping? The sensational last movement is the reason for this sonata's nickname, and is a mixture of horse jumps, Rossini opera, and a Gilbert and Sullivan patter song.

Piano Sonata No 23 in F minor, Op 57 *Appassionata* (1805)

I Allegro assai
II Andante con moto
III Allegro ma non troppo – presto

Czerny called Beethoven's Op 57 'the most perfect carrying-out of a mighty and colossal plan,' and the first movement is woven onto an orchestral-sized canvas, with ferocious climaxes and - often - shocking dynamics. The huge weight of the Allegro implies an epic, romantic journeying, as if Beethoven is writing his own *Odyssey*; yet like all heroic narratives, there's psychological complexity and a constant undercurrent of anxiety. (Artur Schnabel, in his Beethoven edition, goes to some lengths to create different fingerings for the difficult triplet figures, depending on the level of anxiety being presented). Tragedy permeates the third movement too, an obsessive circling of notes, until a wild *presto* unleashes a sudden, furious ending. Unfinished too, is the middle *Andante*; hardly a slow movement, but a short set of variations on a warm hymn theme. A dramatic interruption slashes into the atmosphere, and the - rather contemporary - anxiety of the finale unfolds.

Often the most valuable insights into composers are left by the memoirs of their students, and sketches. We know that Chopin valued a refined, singing tone, fastidiousness, and - importantly - rhythmic freedom. Beethoven's pupil Ferdinand Ries tells us that Beethoven wasn't made angry by wrong notes (he actually preferred those), but hated anyone ignoring his *sforzandos*, *crescendos*, and expression marks. Beethoven's powerful markings in this final movement are structural: they emerge on unusual beats and create sharp, unexpected shifts. His pedal instructions are daring, often deliberately blurring harmonies and creating ghostly textures. All we can do is go back to the text, over and over again, and marvel at the heroism.

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CONCERT 3 - 2000

Piano Sonata No 27 in E minor, Op 90 (1814)

I Mit Lebhaftigkeit und durchaus mit Empfindung und Ausdruck *With liveliness and with feeling and expression throughout*
II Nicht zu geschwind und sehr singbar vorgetragen *Not too swiftly and conveyed in a singing manner*

With this sonata, Beethoven has abandoned ordinary titles for his movements, and starts writing longer descriptions. This short, two-movement work is romantic and haunting, and had a profound effect on 19th century composers; you will hear slivers of Janáček and Sibelius. The amazing transition back to the recapitulation sounds like something Ligeti might have written in his *Musica ricercata*. The sorrow and pain of the first movement melts into the consolation of the second, a beautifully melodic rondo in E major. The Beethoven scholar Barry Cooper tells a story of Beethoven – in most ways hopelessly unsocialised – visiting a female friend who had been bereaved, and wordlessly, quietly improvising for her. This movement has that tenderness.

Piano Sonata No 31 in A flat, Op 110 (1821)

I Moderato cantabile molto espressivo
II Allegro molto
III Adagio ma non troppo – Fuga – L'istesso tempo di Arioso – L'istesso tempo della fuga, poi a poi di nuovo vivente

What were Beethoven's religious beliefs? Beethoven was not well educated like Mozart, nor literary like Schumann and Liszt, but he had a keen sense of divinity, transcendence, and the ineffable. He kept a quote from Schiller's philosophical tale *Die Sendung Moses* (Moses' Mission) on his desk: 'I am that which is. I am all that is, that was and will be. No mortal man has raised my veil. He is solely from himself, and all things owe their being to Him alone.'

Beethoven seemed to have little use for institutional religion, or Christian doctrine, but he felt there was a mystery at the root of human and cosmic existence, and wrote to his friend and patron Archduke Rudolph that it was his mission to 'disseminate divine rays amongst

mankind.' Both his diaries and music confirm a belief in nature; and humility before an omnipotent and personal God, a father in whom all men are brothers (the Ninth Symphony and *Choral Fantasy*), but who is never wholly knowable or comprehensible.

Many of Beethoven's late works offer thanks for surviving illness, either for himself or close friends. In early 1821 when he was writing his final piano sonatas, Beethoven was seriously ill with rheumatic fever and then jaundice, which was mismanaged and undertreated. Cirrhosis eventually killed him in 1827. Beethoven came from a background of violence and alcoholism; his closest confidants insisted he hardly drank, although he occasionally enjoyed heavy, unadulterated Hungarian wines. He suffered terribly from stomach pain, constantly self-medicating, and became increasingly unkempt and eccentric on his long walks round Vienna, while composing in his head. He had violent arguments (often physical) with his brother. One night in 1820 he was arrested and locked up as a vagrant.

And yet Op 110 glows with a deep inner peace. He qualifies the opening bars *con amabilità* adding in brackets *sanft*, suggesting tenderness and gracefulness. Beautiful chords give way to a cloud of delicate arpeggios; the character is intimate and intense. Beethoven contracts his development to one page, melting back into the recapitulation. The coda is hushed, with six bars of quiet stillness, capturing the music's lyrical essence. The second movement is based on two ridiculous songs, sent to Beethoven by friends: *Unsa kätz häd kaz'in g'habt* (Our cat has had kittens, three six and nine; One of them has a mark on its head – that'll be mine!) and *Ich bin lüderlich, du bist lüderlich* (I'm in the gutter, you're in the gutter!). I always think of the Quodlibet at the end of the *Goldberg Variations*, celebrating cabbages and beetroots.

The third movement is utterly personal. It begins with a recitative, suggesting Baroque opera; the first *Arioso dolente* in A flat minor is translated by Beethoven as *Klagender Gesang* (Song of Lamentation), with an anguished, falling soprano voice accompanied by rich, pulsing harmonies and long sustaining pedals. It's balanced by a spacious fugue of rising fourths, before returning to an even more painful arioso (named *ermattet, klagend* – exhausted, plaintive) a semitone lower in G minor: a fragmented, sighing version of the soprano voice, under the extreme stress of grief

and physical exhaustion. It ends with ten remarkable chords on G major, each getting louder. A stretto fugue, with an inversion of the original subject, leads to a joyful, exhilarating coda. Beethoven, one of Goethe's 'tireless strugglers,' is lifted in a dramatic peroration.

Piano Sonata No 32 in C minor, Op 111 (1822)

I Maestoso – Allegro con brio ed appassionato

II Arietta: Adagio molto semplice e cantabile

Beethoven's final sonata broke all the rules; the hero of Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* thought it represented 'the farewell of the sonata form.' It certainly changed the game entirely. Sonatas continued to be written, but in new ways, as Liszt exemplified with his heroic Sonata in B minor. As with the *32 Variations on an original theme*, Beethoven wrestles with the keys of C minor and C major. The taut emotional turmoil of the first movement gives way to a

floating spirituality in the second: 'a final testimony of his sonatas, as well a prelude to silence,' according to Alfred Brendel. Beethoven closes the mighty book of his sonatas with organic variations, that flow like a river.

The Arietta's slow motion turning defies explanation, but embodies a series of constellations, expanding gently. (The metrical relationship between each variation is still hair-raising to look at.) Pianists all talk about the 'jazz variation', where Beethoven's *sforzandos* on the second and fourth beats invent a kind of wild swing before swing was even thought of, before melting away again into the far horizon, using a high trill to float away. Despite calling the piano an unsatisfactory instrument, Beethoven 'gently placed us on the edge of eternity,' as Brendel says: 'simplicity as a result of complexity – distilled experience.'

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Joanna MacGregor CBE

Joanna MacGregor CBE is one of the world's most innovative musicians. As a solo pianist she has appeared with the world's leading orchestras, performing in over eighty countries, with eminent conductors Pierre Boulez, Colin Davis, Valery Gergiev, Simon Rattle and Michael Tilson Thomas. Joanna has premiered many landmark works alongside exploration of the classical tradition, and is a regular broadcaster, making numerous appearances at the BBC Proms.

Joanna is Head of Piano at the Royal Academy of Music and runs two annual piano festivals for young musicians. She has been the Artistic Director of Dartington International Summer School and Festival, of Bath International Festival, and *Deloitte Ignite* at the Royal Opera House. She has released over forty solo recordings - many of them on her own award-winning record label SoundCircus - ranging from Chopin and Piazzolla to Bach and John Cage. Her collaborative projects encompass jazz, film, visual art, contemporary dance and electronica. Since 2015 she has chaired the Paul Hamlyn Composers Awards, and was a 2019 Booker Prize Judge. Joanna has just been appointed Principal Conductor and Music Director of Brighton Philharmonic, as it approaches its centenary.



Joanna MacGregor image © Pål Hansen

TURNER SIMS Southampton

After an unprecedented and unforeseeable year, we are thrilled to welcome you back to Turner Sims in time for Christmas! We are ready to invite you back to our auditorium, and we have all possible measures in place to make sure you can safely enjoy inspiring music in our venue once again. Take your pick from fabulous festive Folk or joyful Jazz - or both - but hurry as safe social distancing means that we have a smaller number of tickets available than normal. We can't wait to see your (masked) faces in the building again.

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