



Beethoven

Piano Sonatas

Nos. 3, 4 & 27

Sviatoslav
Richter

alto

Ludwig van Beethoven

Piano Sonata No. 3 in C Major, Op. 2 No. 3

[1]	I. Allegro con brio	10:25
[2]	II. Adagio	7:37
[3]	III. Scherzo. Allegro	3:29
[4]	IV. Assai allegro	5:03

Piano Sonata No. 4 in E-Flat Major, Op. 7

[5]	I. Allegro molto e con brio	8:30
[6]	II. Largo, con grand' espressione	7:57
[7]	III. Allegro – Minore	5:35
[8]	IV. Rondo. Poco allegro e grazioso	5:56

Piano Sonata No. 27 in E Minor, Op. 90

[9]	I. Con vivacità e sempre con sentimento ed espressione	5:21
[10]	II. Non troppo presto e molto cantabile	6:31

Sviatoslav Richter, *piano*

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven had composed his *Piano Sonata No. 3 in C major* (Op. 2 No. 3) by the end of 1795 and it was published together with two other early Beethoven sonatas by the Viennese firm of Artaria in March 1796. That summer he completed his thrice weekly studies with Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, Head of Music at St Stephen's Cathedral, which had begun in January 1794 following his previous teacher Haydn's departure to London. Beethoven dedicated all three sonatas that comprise Opus 2 to Haydn, and they were performed in front of the dedicatee at one of Prince Karl Lichnovsky's concerts in September or October 1795, shortly after Haydn's return to Vienna. There is however a belief that Beethoven intentionally slighted Haydn when he refused to inscribe the dedication as 'Pupil of Haydn' for it seems that Beethoven was less than impressed at the standard of teaching offered by the older composer.

The powerful first movement of this sonata uses material taken from a *Piano Quartet* (WoO 36 No. 3), from which he had previously borrowed material to form the slow movement of his *Piano Sonata in F Minor* (Op. 2 No. 1). The melody of the *Adagio* movement makes use of a tune that is still occasionally sung as a hymn whilst the gracefully comical scherzo movement, a battle between major and minor, is not finally resolved until the Coda. The delightfully busy final movement fizzles with ideas and brings to a close a work that shows the pupil shrugging off the mantle of his teachers and looking to the future with confidence.

Between the *Third Piano Sonata* and the *Piano Sonata No 4 in E-flat Major* (Op. 7) came two other sonatas composed between 1795 and 1797. These were the two Opus 49 Sonatas (Nos 19 and 20) which were then published as late as 1805 (hence the later Opus number). The *Sonata in E-flat* was composed during 1796 and 1797 and was published by Artaria in the latter year. This was the first of Beethoven's sonatas both to be published singly and to be labelled 'Grande Sonate'; and no wonder, for after the '*Hammerklavier*' *Sonata* it is Beethoven's lengthiest essay in this form. From the very opening bars the listener expects something of greater depth than previously experienced in this form but one has to wait until the slow movement before Beethoven gives a glimpse of his later profundity. The other three movements are predominantly light-hearted which apparently belies Beethoven's mood at the time of composition: we have it on the authority of Carl Czerny that Beethoven was 'impassioned' whilst at work on this sonata either from concern at Napoleon's advance towards Vienna or from tender feelings towards the sonata's dedicatee, Countess Keglivics, one of Beethoven's students.

For the last work in this collection we jump ahead a number of years. From the *Sonata No. 23 in F Minor 'Appassionata'* (Op. 57) onwards, Beethoven's works for solo piano only appeared at sporadic intervals, there being a gap of four years between the *Sonata No. 26 in E-flat Major 'Les Adieux'* (Op. 81a) and the *Sonata No. 27 in E Minor* (Op 90) which was composed in 1814 and published the following year. The publishers made great play of the

lengthy gap between the *E Minor Sonata* and its predecessor, claiming that 'All connoisseurs and lovers of music will surely welcome the appearance of this sonata, since nothing by L Van Beethoven has appeared for several years'. An early reviewer of the work agreed with the publishers, stating that 'With much pleasure the reviewer calls attention to this new sonata. It is one of the most simple, melodious, expressive, intelligible, and mild among all the sonatas for which we are indebted to Beethoven'.

The Op. 90 sonata has been viewed as a transitional work. It was composed between June and August 1814 and dedicated to Count Moritz Lichnowsky (1771 - 1837), whose elder brother Karl had been one of Beethoven's principal patrons after his arrival in Vienna and who had died in April 1814. It has been said that Beethoven depicted in the two movements the dedicatee's courtship of his wife (somewhat stormy if the first movement is anything to go by): the first movement, labelled 'Lively but also with feeling and expression throughout', was originally marked 'Struggle 'twixt head and heart' whilst the second movement, at first jokingly called 'Conversing with the beloved' became instead 'Not too hasty and in a very singing manner'. Beethoven was sometimes known to work on two pieces simultaneously; at this time he was involved in closely supervising Ignaz Moscheles' (1794 - 1870) work on the vocal score of the final version of *Fidelio*.

NOTES ON THE ARTIST

Sviatoslav Richter (1915-97) gave his first public recital in Odessa in 1934 and was taught by Heinrich Neuhaus at the Moscow Conservatory. Having played Prokofiev's Fifth Piano Concerto under the composer's direction, Richter gained a formidable reputation in the USSR and played in the West for the first time in 1960. Each subsequent visit was eagerly awaited, however Richter became highly selective in his choice of venue, (always preferring smaller venues and following an extensive tour of the USA in 1970, he chose not to return to that country; Aldeburgh and selected sites in France and Italy became his preferred venues outside Russia). In 1986 Richter gave ninety- one concerts over a four-month period during a massive tour by car from Leningrad to Vladivostok and then back to Moscow. In addition to numerous solo concerts Richter often played alongside friends such as Britten, Rostropovich, Fischer-Dieskau, Schreier, Oistrakh and Fournier.

Richter, whose repertoire was vast, was nevertheless often highly selective in his choice of works, disregarding those he felt disinclined to play. On one occasion he was criticised by the composer Shostakovich for choosing to play only some of the Preludes and Fugues. Richter's reply was to say 'There was no reason for him to feel offended: I played the ones that I liked, why should I play the ones that I didn't?' (*Sviatoslav Richter: Notebooks and Conversations*, Faber 2001).

The recording of the Piano Sonata No 27, made by Sviatoslav Richter at the Schloss Klessheim in Salzburg (allegedly in a room once used as an office by Hitler) in September 1971 was rated by the soloist as 'entirely professional and...a success' From Richter this was high praise. He generally disliked the recording process, hence the number of 'live' recordings in his discography. The other two sonatas were recorded by Richter in 1975.

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Alto ALC1158 5055354411588

Ⓛ-Ⓢ recorded September 1971, Schloss Klessheim, Salzburg, Austria

Producer: **Fritz Ganss**

Engineer: **Horst Lindner**

ⓖ-Ⓣ recorded 3-14 April 1975, Baumgartner Kasino, Vienna, Austria

Producer: **Oskar Waldeck**

Engineer: **Horst Lindner**

Mastered for alto by **Paul Arden-Taylor**

Reissue producer: **Robin Vaughan**

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