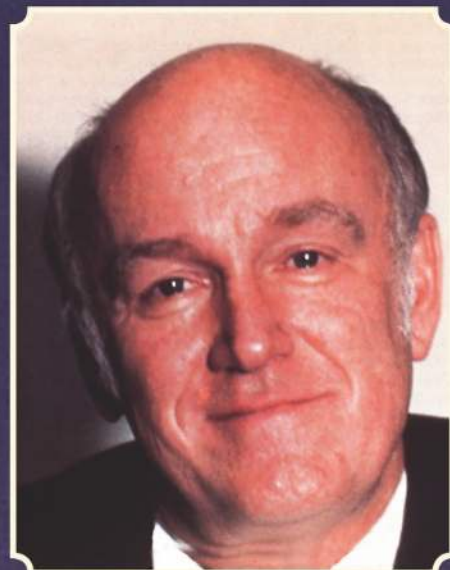


Beethoven

**Variations on Prometheus Theme
(‘Eroica’ Variations Op.35)**

Six Variations Op.34 & Op.76



Schumann:

Noveletten Nos. 2,4,8

alto

Sviatoslav Richter



Ludwig van Beethoven

1 ***Six Variations in F major, Op. 34*** 13:18

Thema: Adagio – Variation I – Variation II: Allegro ma non troppo – Variation III: Allegretto – Variation IV: Tempo di menuetto – Variation V: Marcia. Allegretto – Variation IV: Allegretto – Adagio molto

2 ***Six Variations in D Major, Op. 76*** 5:52

Thema: Allegro risoluto – Variation I-V – Variation VI: Presto – Tempo I

“Eroica” Variations and Fugue, Op. 35

on a Theme from “The Creatures of Prometheus” in E-flat Major

3 Introduzione col basso del tema.

Allegretto vivace – a due – a tre – a quattro – Tema 3:58

4 Variation I 0:34

5 Variation II 0:38

6 Variation III 0:42

7 Variation IV 0:39

8 Variation V 0:49

9 Variation VI 0:34

10 Variation VII. Canone alla ottava 0:35

11 Variation VIII 0:48

12 Variation IX 0:41

13 Variation X 0:38

14 Variation XI 0:43

15 Variation XII 0:42

16 Variation XIII 0:38

17 Variation XIV. Minore 1:14

18 Variation XV. Maggiore. Largo 4:54

19 Finale. Alla fuga – Allegro con brio – Andante con moto 4:36

Robert Schumann

Novelletten from Op. 21

20 No. 2 in D Major 5:56

21 No. 4 in D Major 3:27

22 No. 8 in f-sharp minor 11:37

Sviatoslav Richter, *piano*

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

It is thought that **Ludwig van Beethoven** must have composed the sketches of his *Second Symphony* at the time of the arrival in Vienna of an old friend from his youth in Bonn, Anton Reicha, in early 1802. In addition to working on the *Second Symphony* at this time Beethoven was also awaiting publication of his *Piano Sonatas Opp. 22, 26, & 27*. However running counter to the pleasure of his reunion with Reicha and that of his recent publications (his *First Symphony* and *Second Piano Concerto*) ran the steadily increasing problem of his deafness.

To combat growing discomfort over the past six years, Beethoven had visited a number of doctors who had recommended various treatments such as hot and cold baths, almond oil and ear infusion, some of which had helped his other ailments but none of which could halt the onset of deafness. Initially Beethoven had kept his growing disability to himself, but in June and July 1801 he consulted two friends Wegeler and Amenda. In his letter to Wegeler he put forward the theory that his deafness stemmed from ‘the condition of my abdomen’. Now he was to take the advice of Doctor Johann Schmidt who suggested that he spend some time in the countryside away from the hustle and bustle of Vienna. Accordingly in April 1802 he travelled to rural Heiligenstadt for several months. There he worked on his *Piano Sonata Op. 31* and in May began sketching the two sets of ***Variations Opp. 34 and 35***.

Just before leaving Heiligenstadt to return to Vienna in October 1802, Beethoven wrote letters to his brothers Carl and Johann. These letters, now referred to as the Heiligenstadt Testament, act both as a Will and also (perhaps principally) as an honest and uncompromising assessment of his deafness. If the overriding emotion in the Testament is that of

someone understandably depressed at his misfortune, there is also a determination to surmount his problems: 'I will seize Fate by the throat; it shall certainly not bend and crush me completely'.

Immediately on his return to Vienna he completed both sets of variations, on 18 October writing to publishers Breitkopf & Härtel 'Both sets are worked out in quite a new manner, and each in a separate and different way'. Beethoven dedicated **Six Variations on an Original Theme, Op. 34** to one of his pupils Princess Barbara Odessalchi. The Princess must have been an accomplished performer since this set presents a formidable challenge to the average student. Beethoven was surely correct in claiming to have developed the variations in a 'new manner'; occasionally (in variations 2 and 4) the theme itself seems to be of secondary importance. About this set of variations another pupil, Ferdinand Ries, later wrote revealingly about Beethoven, saying that the composer had shown him enormous patience, making him play the last Adagio variation no less ALC 1188 Booklet.indd 4-6 than 17 times, even though Ries considered that he had played it every bit as well as Beethoven. As a result the lesson overran but Beethoven was desperately keen for his pupil to play with the correct expression. If this was lacking, it was the result of 'inadequate knowledge, feeling, or attention'. Wrong notes could be presumed as accidents.

The more formal **15 Variations and Fugue in E-flat Major, Op. 35** (also known as the **Prometheus** or **Eroica Variations**) were dedicated to Count Moritz Lichnovsky (1771-1837), younger brother of Prince Karl Lichnovsky, an important patron of Beethoven's. *Opus 35* begins with a short introduction in which a bass line is introduced which subsequently returns in the fugue introducing the final section, a device similarly used by Beethoven in the *Diabelli*

Variations. The theme, on which *Op. 35* was based, was much employed by Beethoven. It appeared first in *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus* (hence Beethoven's label for the piece) and in the *Twelve Contredanses, WoO 14*. Beethoven later made use of the theme during the final movement of the *Third Symphony "Eroica"*. Researchers have claimed that since Beethoven began sketching the "*Eroica*" soon after completion of the sketches for the *Op. 35 Variations*, it is no coincidence that both works contain this and other similarities. The link with the *Third Symphony* has led to this piano work being subtitled "*Eroica*" but since Beethoven himself preferred the work to be linked to "*Prometheus*" one should perhaps rather respect his wishes.

In January and February 1809 both Archduke Rudolph and Prince Lobkowitz negotiated a substantial pension for Beethoven enabling him to remain in Vienna. On the night of 11 May the city suffered serious bombardment by Napoleon's forces, the noise forcing Beethoven to seek shelter in his brother Carl's cellar where he covered his head with a pillow. Prior to the bombardment and capture of Vienna Archduke Rudolph Rudolph and many of Beethoven's friends had left the city leading Beethoven to compose his *Piano Sonata, Op. 81a*, known as "*Les Adieux*" (Farewell). The composer spent a lonely summer in their absence, spending much of the time occupied in copying the writings of various composers including Albrechtsberger and C P E Bach for a manual he intended to give the Archduke on his return to Vienna. He also began the *Op. 76 Variations, String Quartet Op. 74 "Harp"* and the *Piano Sonata, Op. 79*.

The original theme around which the **Six Variations in D Major, Op. 76** were composed in 1809 came later to be used as the Turkish March in *The Ruins of Athens* (1811). The variations were dedicated to a recent friend, Franz Oliva who

was a clerk for the Viennese firm Offenheimer and Herz. Although not a professional musician, his diaries and letters have become a valuable source for musicologists studying early 19th century performance practice.

Robert Schumann composed his *8 Novelletten, Op. 21* in 1838 at the time when he had become engaged to the young pianist Clara Wieck against her father's wishes. That year he wrote a number of outstanding piano works including *Kinderszenen, Op. 15, Kreisleriana, Op. 16, Fantasie, Op. 17* and the *Arabesque, Op. 18*. There are many clues in these works to show that Clara was central to his thoughts at this time, one example being a quotation from one of Clara's recent compositions, a Nocturne, in the final Novellette. But elsewhere in these works he took his inspiration from literary sources: the *Novellette in D Major* (No 3) was originally accompanied by the words of the witches in Macbeth 'When shall we three meet again?' In comparison with the contemporary *Kreisleriana*, Schumann went to the trouble of composing music of a lighter texture (Clara had taken him to task for writing music in *Kreisleriana* that was difficult to comprehend) and he wrote to her that he had 'composed a shocking amount for you: jests, Egmont stories, domestic scenes with fathers, a wedding - and called it *Novelletten*'.

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. Richter gained a formidable reputation in the USSR and played in the West for the first time in 1960. Each subsequent visit to the West was eagerly awaited; however Richter became very selective over where he played (he always preferred smaller venues) and following an extensive tour of the USA in 1970 he chose not to return to that country. Outside Russia he performed frequently at Aldeburgh and at selected sites in France and Italy. In 1996 he undertook a massive 91-concert tour of Russia travelling 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 very particular about his choice of works, disregarding those he felt disinclined to play. On one occasion he was criticised by Shostakovich for playing 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 I liked, why should I play the ones that I didn't?' (Sviatoslav Richter: Notebooks and Conversations Faber 2001). He was equally selective about Schumann's *Novelletten*, only ever playing four of the eight pieces in public (he played them first in 1952); Beethoven's three sets of Variations entered his repertoire in 1949 / 50.

© 2005, [James Murray](#)

Alto ALC1188

5055354411885

Variations recorded July 1970, Salzburg

Producer: **Fritz Ganss**

Engineer uncredited

Noveletten recorded March 1979, Koseinenkin Kaikan Hall, Tokyo

Producer: **Tomoo Nojima**

Engineer: **Fumio Hattori**

Mastered for alto by **Paul Arden-Taylor** (dinmore-records)

Cover image: "Prometheus Bound" (1847) by **Thomas Cole**, courtesy WikiCommons

Design produced by [Imergent Images Ltd](#)

Project co-ordinator: [Robin Vaughan](#)

©&© 2012, Musical Concepts.

Digital edition ©&© 2025, Musical Concepts.

No part of this sound recording and its component audio, text, or graphics files may be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, or shared electronically in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, file sharing, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permission requests, contact the publisher, using the subject line "Attention: Permissions Coordinator," at the address below.

Musical Concepts
c/o ALTO Distribution
Magnus House
8 Ashfield Rd
Cheadle SK81BB, UK

alto