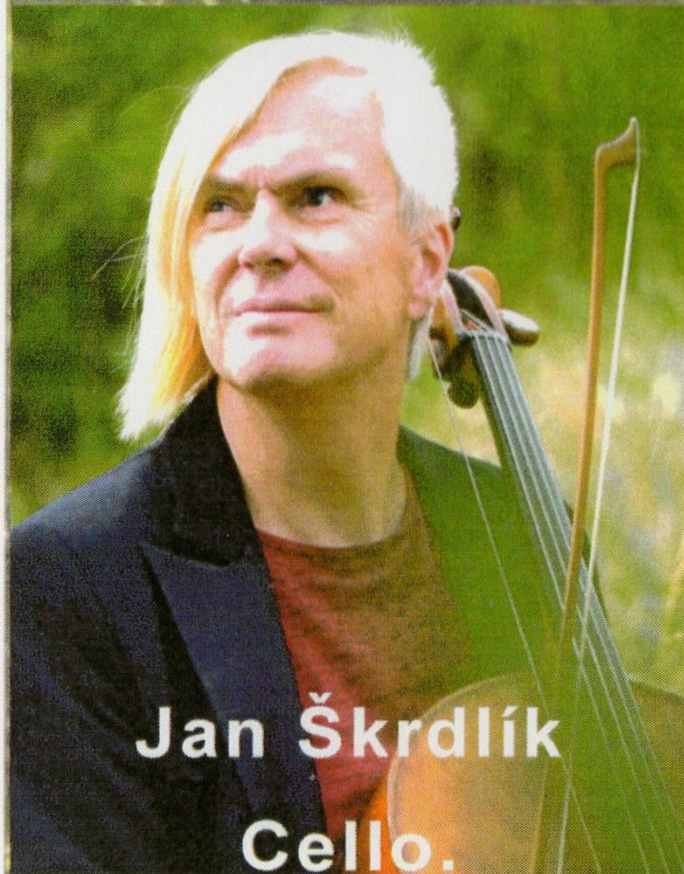


BEETHOVEN AMONG THE PAINTINGS



Petra Besa
Piano



Jan Škrdlík
Cello.

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 11th 2022

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 12th 2022

In the Great Hall of the Bishop's Palace, Hereford

At 7-30 p.m.



Friday 11 November 2022

12 Variations on 'See the Conquering Hero Comes' Wo045

from Handel's 'Judas Maccabaeus'

Beethoven (1770-1827)

The King of Prussia adored the music of Handel so that may have been in the forefront of Beethoven's mind when he decided in 1796 to compose Variations on this celebrated and lofty theme, also known to many as the hymn 'Thine be the Glory'. In this work, Beethoven has succeeded in creating a dramatic narrative while retaining sufficient aspects of the theme. It unfolds not only through the individual voices of the two

Instruments coming into prominence at different points and through conversational dialogue but also by means of changes in tempo and dynamics, varied texture and many changes of mood across the Variations. Indeed, some of the marked contrasts are within a particular Variation.

After the shapely, gently moving first Variation for piano alone, the cello enters in Variation 2, with accompanying triplets on the piano, the tone here slightly earnest; the cello then assumes a minor role in the bustling, piano-led third Variation before reasserting itself in the sad, minor key Variation 4; Variations 5 and 6 are both predominantly gentle, the former with the two instruments interacting, the cello responding to the piano, while in the latter the dialogue is imitative; virtuosity prevails in Variations 7 and 8 with rapid-fire piano triplets in the former and whirlwind piano scales in the latter, only briefly interrupted by a short hymnal passage; chords are also prominent in Variation 9, which keeps close to the theme as does the cello in Variation 10. The 11th Variation is an extended Adagio with its soulful outpouring from the cello and harp-like figurations on the piano. It is perhaps fitting that the joyful final Variation finishes with a Beethoven trademark, an extended trill on the piano.

Cello Sonata No 2 in G minor Op 5 No 2

Beethoven

Adagio sostenuto e espressivo - Allegro molto ph) tosto presto; Rondo: Allegro

Beethoven dedicated his two Op 5 Cello Sonatas of 1796 to the King of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm II, a keen amateur cellist. Outwardly, at least, Op 5 No 2 shares many of the characteristics of its companion (Op 5 No 1), most notably its two-movement form, its *Adagio* introduction leading into a full-blown *Allegro* and its *Rondo* finale.

However, Beethoven rarely repeated himself and different characteristics emerge even in the opening *Adagio* which is considerably more substantial in length than that of its predecessor. It is inexpressibly sad, austere and full of yearning. The very first bar introduces two features that pervade it: dotted rhythm and the descending scale. When it arrives, the *Allegro* overflows with ideas, two in each of the first and second theme groups and a new dancing theme in the development section. The chirpy *Rondo* finale is brimming with rhythmic vitality. The interludes, which are fully developed and ingeniously varied, do not seriously disturb the good-natured character of the movement which ends with a torrent of scales and arpeggios.

7 Variations on 'Bei Männern, welche Liebe fühlen'

Wo046

from Mozart's 'The Magic Flute'

Beethoven

'Bei Männern' has become one of the most loved duets in the history of opera. It comes at the end of Act I Scene II of Mozart's opera and in it Princess Pamina and the bird-catcher Papageno exalt the universal joy of love. It is perhaps unsurprising that Beethoven, in 1801, chose this as a starting point for a set of variations as *The Magic Flute* is reputed to have been his favourite opera. With his fecund imagination he has encapsulated within the work a beguiling variety of moods: playful, tender, reflective, soulful, determined, exuberant ... Within a straightforward structure and with much textural variety, Beethoven has created a most compelling work.

After the statement of the theme, there is an immediate injection of energy in a first Variation of punchy phrases and dotted rhythm: an engaging musical mosaic. A very light Variation 2 with forward momentum is succeeded by the rather more static Variation 3, underpinned by subtle chord changes. The middle Variation 4 in E flat minor, meditative and introspective, brings a total change of atmosphere and, after the entertaining 5th Variation, a more serious vein returns in Variation 6, a deeply felt and lavishly decorated Adagio. The most enchanting final Variation leads into a coda of some passion, the two instruments in wonderful harmony.

Cello Sonata No 4 in C Op 102 No 1

Beethoven

Andante - Allegro vivace; Adagio - Tempo d'Andante - Allegro vivace

This work and its companion piece Op 102 No 2, both dating from 1815, are generally regarded as the first works of Beethoven's 'late period', which encompasses some of the greatest works in the history of Western classical music: the final four piano sonatas, the Diabelli Variations, the last five string quartets, the Ninth Symphony and the *Missa Solemnis*. Certainly these two Op 102 Cello Sonatas embody much that was to come. The enigmatic opening of this C major work is but one of the features to be found in his later works: others are the stripping away of all that is inessential, so reducing the material to its bare minimum; unconventional form; transcendental moments; short punctuated statements; a new harmonic language; and the use of silence to create extraordinary tension.

The tender opening *Andante* is introduced by an elegiac theme and gives an early appearance of the stepwise descent of a 4th (the first four notes of the work) and the *stepwise ascent of a 4th* that recur throughout the *Sonata*. The *Allegro* announces itself in octaves in the most dramatic fashion. Beneath its bustle and urgency there is discernible *unrest*, in no way relieved by its *coda*, which ends most abruptly. The second movement, like the first, opens with a slow introduction. The two instruments trade phrases, then go their separate ways before coming together again with the return of the opening *Andante* theme. A long expressive trill leads to the concluding *Allegro vivace* in which the rising 4th motif appears in full flower and which brings to an end a taut work of utter profundity yet one which reaches our ears as if born of primordial simplicity.

Programme notes
by John Brain

With grateful thanks to
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Jan Škrdlík

Jan Škrdlík comes from a musical family. He studied under Jan Haliska at the Ostrava Conservatory, further under Beach Havlik at Janacek Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno, under Luis Claret in Barcelona and continues with his study even further, privately at Daniel Veis in Prague. He obtained reward of Czech Music Fund, awarded for his propagation of Czech artworks in abroad and many other awards. He is a member of Wolfinger Quartet. In 1997 until 2009 taught on the Brno Conservatory.

The artistic range of Jan Škrdlík begins from authentic period-faithful styles to traditional Czech romanticism and neo-romanticism expressive school. Reviews from different parts of Europe and America agreed about character of his play: Designated of very clear and confident creation of tone even in the most difficult parts of composition, he excel in sound picturesqueness and tone plasticity, genteel tone and quality technique preparedness. Among instruments with which Jan Škrdlík played on, belongs violoncello of Adam Emanuel Homolka made in 1842, which in 2007 became known in press, after someone stole it from artists atelier and based on report in television, instrument was returned by the thief after 2 days.

Petra Besa

Petra Besa has been playing on piano since her early childhood. After study at the *Brno Conservatory* in the class of M. Bialas, she continued with study at *Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts* under J. Skovajsa. She finished her studies at *Swiss Hochschule fur Musik and Theater* in Bern, in class of Bruno Canin, where she obtained prestigious *Solistendiplom* and degree "Diplomierte Musikerin MH". She enriched her musical fleshes with attendance on master's courses under R. Buchbinder, E. Indijic and others. She has many received awards: She is multiple laureate of international contest "Virtuosi per musica di pianoforte" where she was awarded four times. She is furthermore laureate of *Czech Radio* award, *Leos Janacek Foundation* award, etc.

She has appeared at festivals such as *Concentus Moraviae*, the *Kuks Music Summer*, *Hluboka nad Vltavou Festival*, *Janáček in Hukvaldy*, *La Schubertiade*, *Moravian Autumn*, *Murten Classics*, *Olten Classique* and *Via Francigena*. Several times she co-worked with *State Brno Philharmonic* and conductors such as Caspar Richter and Petr Altrichtr. Besides her classical concert repertoire, Petra Besa is intensively devoted to chamber music rehearsals. She has co-worked with artists such as Bohuslav Matousek, Igor arsko and Jiff Pospichal (violin), Alexander Besa (viola), Jan Skrdlfk and Vojtech Novak (cello), members of *Camerata Bern*, *Ensemble Kaleidoscope*, *Mere/ Quartet* and *Wolfinger Quartet*. Presently, Petra Besa lives in Lucern and works at *Music Academy* in the City of Basel.

Saturday 12 November 2022

Cello Sonata No 1 in F Op 5 No 1

Beethoven (1770-1827)

Adagio sostenuto - Allegro; Rondo: Allegro vivace.

This work, dating from 1796, is Beethoven's first essay in the medium of the cello sonata and it marks the first step in the cello's emergence as an equal partner in such works. It opens not with liveliness and confidence but with an exploratory, somewhat mysterious *Adagio*, its hesitancy only enhancing the impact of the sunny Mozartian main theme when it releases the tension with its geniality to introduce the expansive *Allegro*. A second theme starts in a more serious vein but as it evolves it develops a more carefree air. Throughout the movement one encounters the juxtaposition of music of strikingly divergent character and widely contrasting dynamics, virtuosic scales and grand chordal passages, the whole creating an emotionally charged atmosphere. A short languorous passage leads straight into an equally short whirlwind section: the main theme returns to end the movement. The jovial, playful *Rondo*, the music awash with sweeping arpeggios and broken chords on the piano, is based on a repeated-note motif. Contrast is afforded by two episodes, the first, in the minor key, dark yet with a gypsy feel; the second in which the drone on the cello provides the foundation for the piano's meanderings. The music winds down, its energy dissipated, before bursting briefly into life again to end the movement.

Cello Sonata No 3 in A Op 69 Beethoven

Allegro ma non tanto; Scherzo: Allegro molto; Adagio cantabile - Allegro vivace.

Surely Beethoven's Latin inscription "*inter lacrimas et luctum*" (amid tears and sorrow) on the autograph manuscript of his Op 69 Cello Sonata does not allude in any way to the character of the work itself, which has a rare nobility and radiance. It was written in 1807/8 and the wording, no doubt, reflects his own personal battles at the time, including the precariousness of his financial situation, as well as the growing tension in his home city of Vienna. Its germination was a lengthy process but the outcome is a work of controlled rhetoric, perfect equilibrium and poetic beauty.

Its tone is set by the tender exchange between the cello and piano at its outset, within which there is an early short cadenza-like passage for each instrument, and also by the generation of momentum immediately afterwards from the emergence of triplets. There is a wonderful tranquillity

to the second theme, a beautiful marriage of rising scales and falling arpeggios. The development section is, in turns, enigmatic, rhapsodic, tempestuous and ethereal. The coda reserves for the listener a trademark Beethoven surprise as the anticipated final chord proves to be the introduction to a fortissimo passage with octave chords preludeing a quieter concluding section. The *Allegro molto* is a *Scherzo* in the tonic minor key, (A minor) which appears three times, while the Trio, in the work's original major key, is played twice. There is so often a duality of emotions expressed in the music of great composers: while this movement has an undercurrent of humour in the syncopation of the *Scherzo* theme and the reverberation of the oscillating figure (first on piano, then on cello) which provides the background to the Trio, there is also a manic element to it. Unusually, the work has no slow movement as such but the Finale is introduced by a short and utterly sublime *Adagio cantabile* passage which serves both to dispel the mood of the *Scherzo* and to introduce an *Allegro vivace* which is ebullient but nonetheless finds room for moments of tender beauty, including a notable sighing gesture on the cello. This final movement has a bustling first theme; a more restrained second theme; a wilder development section; and a coda which ends in jubilation, so bringing to an end one of the jewels of Beethoven's so-called 'Heroic Period'

INTERVAL

12 Variations on 'Ein Madchen oder Weibchen' Op 66

from Mozart's 'The Magic Flute'

Beethoven

'Ein Madchen oder Weibchen' is a famous aria from Mozart's *The Magic Flute* in which the birdcatcher Papageno expresses his desire for 'a little maiden or a wife'. In 1796, it provided Beethoven with the basis to compose twelve short operatic duets. The first Variation, perky, is for piano alone. Features of the eight succeeding Variations are the fascinating piano harmonies in the cello-led Variation 2; the vivacious piano writing, with the cello murmuring in the background, in Variation 3; the gentle opening and question and answer motifs of Variation 4; the witty dialogue and arresting rhythm in Variation 5; the light, tripping nature of Variation 6; the short cello phrases supported by the piano's flowing semiquavers in Variation 7; the defiant march in Variation 8; and the restfulness and simplicity of Variation 9. The 10th Variation, a largely hushed and heartfelt *Adagio* with a lengthy piano introduction, brings a total change of mood and is rather unusually followed by another slow Variation in which the measured cello line is underpinned by rich, sonorous piano chords. A sunny finale brings to an end a work in which Beethoven has taken an operatic theme and created from it a mini musical drama.

Cello Sonata No 5 in D Op 102 No 2 Beethoven *Allegro con brio; Adagio con molto sentimento d'affetto; Allegro - Allegro fugato*

This final cello sonata of Beethoven, composed in 1815, dispenses with a slow introduction and opens with an *Allegro* which grabs the attention through its sheer dynamism. It is extraordinary how Beethoven has, throughout this first movement, so embedded the basic building blocks of scales and arpeggios into his new language that it unfolds with such drama. If any doubt persisted that he had now arrived at his 'late period', such doubt is dispelled in the central *Adagio*. Here, the music is mystical and other-worldly, its melody celestial and at times suggestive of a chorale, its mood by turns dark and light. If there are ominous undertones – deep rumblings on the piano reinforce such a feeling – there is no resolution of the resulting tension: instead Beethoven provides a compact and rigorous fugue constructed from an ascending scale. An extended trill prefaces the closing bars of a Sonata that demonstrates the composer's genius for expressing the most profound utterances in the most communicative language.

Prodigious is the sole word to paint his nature akin to that of the Greek hero Ulysses whose spirit Tennyson immortalised in the last line of his poem - "To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield" "Whether in laughing or loving, hating or moralising (to his relations), gracing society or rebelling against it, piano-playing or conducting, reading newspapers or great literature, Beethoven was avid and unfettered. Even for his favourite beverage, spring water, Schindler recounts how "in summer he drank well nigh inordinate quantities" According to Czerny, always merry, mischievous, full of witticisms and jokes, caring not a whit what people said of him.

Born son of a court musician, grandson of a striking one with Flemish ancestors, he thrived from living in Bonn, a town of 12,000, which had at least five first rate public pianos and hummed with concerts from dawn (many at 8am) to dusk. At 15, assistant organist and salaried, Beethoven progressed rapidly (due to loving and committed parents) at the keyboard. Cramer noted "no man in these days has heard extempore playing unless he has heard Beethoven". Distinguished too for "strict legato" and an ethereal cantabile tone, yet he could "tear along like a wild foaming cataract". So when at 21 he moved to Vienna, the hub of European music, it was natural that, among the many music-loving aristocrats, Prince Carl Lichnowsky a lifelong patron should spur him to his first published compositions in 1743; but whereas he walked and talked fast, in composing he developed late, wrote and rewrote slowly (though he did dash off his Horn sonata in a day). His contemporary Tomaschek, succinctly expressed Beethoven's attitude to composing: a lady asked him if he attended Mozart's operas –"I do not know them and do not care to hear the music of others lest I forfeit some of my originality" Hardly surprising therefore that Geliaek, after a piano contest with Beethoven, remarked "He played compositions of his own which are in the highest degree astonishing and grandiose and he displayed difficulties and effects beyond anything of which we might have-dreamed", which all the followers of the old Mozart - Haydn school

opposed with the most intense animosity. "Prepared to sacrifice everything for his art" as Haydn discerned, Beethoven through unceasing sketchbooks and study right into his mid-twenties under famed teachers like Albrechtsberger and Salieri perhaps evolved more from Opus 1 to Opus 135 than any other composer in Western musical history, in both language and depth of expression. It was as if he was a s o u n d i n g - b o a r d for Nature, which he loved: 'Ecstasy in the woods' he wrote. 'Every tree seems to say Holy, Holy', feelings which attained a peek in The Pastoral Symphony, the peasants merrymaking and thunderstorm being so evocative they inspired a whole century of pictorial compositions. This passage from an 1824 review of the last three piano sonatas must have delighted Beethoven; "So rich an Artistic life may, perhaps be best compared to a splendidly landscaped garden with paths which wind to often wonderful effect among woodland, meadows, valleys and rocky gorges.

Just how romantic a composer is Beethoven? E.T.A. Hoffman reviewing the 5th. Symphony in a legendary article saw "Music as an independent art." always meaning "instrumental music" and as "the most romantic of all the arts" with Beethoven "opening up to us the world of the immense and infinite". His sense of joy and suffering so communicated itself to the Viennese that over 30,000 thronged the streets for his funeral at which the poet Grillparzer ended his oration " Should you ever in times to come feel the overpowering might of his creations like an onrushing storm...the remember this hour and think "We were there when they buried him...when he died we wept." .To which Beethoven might have replied "We artists don't want tears, we want applause"

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