



**BUTLER UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
BEETHOVEN @ BUTLER 2020
SERIES**

presents

**The Complete Piano Sonatas
Concert #1**

**Eidson-Duckwall Recital Hall
Sunday, September 13, 2020 • 7:00 P.M.**

PROGRAM

Sonata No. 1 in F Minor, op. 2, no. 1
Allegro
Adagio
Menuetto: Allegretto
Prestissimo

Ludwig van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Robert Satterlee, Bowling Green State University

Sonata No. 2 in A Major, op. 2, no. 2
Allegro vivace
Largo appassionato
Scherzo: Allegretto
Rondo: Grazioso

Kent Cook, Illinois Wesleyan University

Sonata No. 21 in C Major, op. 53 ("Waldstein")
Allegro con brio
Introduzione: Adagio molto
Rondo: Allegretto moderato

Shuai Wang, Cleveland Institute of Music

BIOS

ROBERT SATTERLEE

Pianist Robert Satterlee has developed a reputation as an accomplished and versatile solo recitalist and chamber musician, playing regularly throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia. He teaches a studio of students from all over the United States and abroad in his position as Professor of Piano at Bowling Green State University. A recent CD of his was selected by the *New York Times* as one of the outstanding classical recordings of 2014.



KENT COOK

R. Kent Cook is Professor Emeritus at Illinois Wesleyan University, where he was Head of the Piano Department until his retirement in 2020. A Fulbright Scholar, he has been active as performer, teacher, and adjudicator throughout the United States. He has also appeared in many European venues, with performances in Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, England, and Italy. Kent Cook studied biology and piano performance at Baylor University before earning both Master of Music and Doctor of Music degrees with distinction at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. He is happy to be retiring in Indianapolis and becoming more involved in the musical life of the city.

SHUAI WANG

Dr. Shuai Wang is recognized as an accomplished soloist, recitalist, and chamber musician, and has performed at Lincoln Center, Merkin Hall, Symphony Space, Kennedy Center, Dame Myra Hess Concert Series, Gardner Museum, and Detroit Chamber Music Society. She has soloed with the Tianjin Symphony Orchestra, Suburban Symphony Orchestra, and Cleveland Philharmonic Orchestra. She frequently travels to China and Europe to give concerts and master classes. Dr. Wang is the founder and artistic director of the *Ars Futura Ensemble*, a mixed contemporary chamber ensemble, and is currently a faculty member at Cleveland Institute of Music, Interlochen Arts Camp, and InterHarmony International Music Festival.



PROGRAM NOTES

by Thomas May

Thomas May is a writer, critic, educator, and translator. Along with essays regularly commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony, the Juilliard School, and other leading institutions, he contributes to the *New York Times* and *Musical America* and blogs about the arts at www.memeteria.com.

AN INTRODUCTION

When we consider Ludwig van Beethoven's artistic persona overall, the role played by the piano can hardly be exaggerated. Often regarded as a vehicle or even a ready-made laboratory for the composer, the instrument also served as a kind of alter ego. It provided not only a tool but a place apart that encouraged Beethoven to confide his boldest, wildest intuitions and creative aspirations.

Recalling the spell Beethoven cast when performing at the keyboard, his prodigy student Carl Czerny wrote: "His improvisation was most brilliant and striking. In whatever company he might chance to be, he knew how to produce such an effect upon every hearer that frequently not an eye remained dry, while many would break into loud sobs; for there was something wonderful in his expression in addition to the beauty and originality of his ideas and his spirited style of rendering them." Czerny adds that, "after an improvisation of this kind, [Beethoven] would burst into loud laughter and banter his hearers on the emotion he had caused in them. 'You are fools!' he would say"—cultivating a contrarian image was part of the persona Beethoven presented to his aristocratic admirers.

The 32 published piano sonatas tally roughly a half-million individual notes. Those notes chart one of the most extraordinary trajectories in Western music, encoding the epic of an artistic adventurer who persistently challenged the boundaries of what music itself can express. Culminating in the visionary extremes of Beethoven's late style, these works span nearly his entire career (and even reach back to his adolescence in Bonn, if we include the three unpublished sonatas he wrote at age 12).

Beethoven produced a greater number of piano sonatas than he did of works in any other genre: 32 remains the canonical number (though in his edition, by admitting into the canon the aforementioned three from his teenage years, the musicologist Barry Cooper has attempted to extend the total to 35). At the same time, the piano sonatas resisted being categorized and dated according to the conventional three-period model of Beethoven's development—early, middle, and late (or, in Franz Liszt's unforgettable phrase: "l'adolescent, l'homme, le dieu").

The afterlives of these works have assumed countless forms and continue to set expectations: for composers, performers, music lovers. And just as they chart the development of Beethoven's genius, each encounter reflects a new stage in our understanding of what music, at its most challenging and under the pressure of that genius, can convey. As Jonathan Biss writes in *Beethoven's Shadow*, his behind-the-scenes account of the odyssey of performing and recording the sonatas, "composing gave his life an order and meaning that were otherwise unavailable to him." The challenges that the piano sonatas embody from Beethoven's own life and experience are transferred on to the performer (and listener), but the result "addresses and consoles the spirit in a way that no other creative artist has managed. [Beethoven] is simultaneously superhuman and intensely, painfully human."

TODAY'S PROGRAM

Piano Sonata No. 1 in F Minor, op. 2, no. 1

Ludwig van Beethoven published his first set of sonatas as Op. 2 (a set of three) in 1796—he was 25 at the time—with a dedication to Joseph Haydn, whose student he had been. We know that he played these three sonatas for Haydn at a private concert held by one of his patrons in the fall of 1795. By this point, he deemed what he had created of sufficient quality to be officially acknowledged as his first published statements in the genre.

Each of the three Op. 2 sonatas is ambitiously cast in four movements, and the fact that Beethoven decided to launch the set with a work in the minor is noteworthy. (Compare this with other significant Beethovenian

genres: his First Symphony, First String Quartet, and First Piano Concerto are all in major keys.) The opening Allegro theme of this F minor sonata clearly echoes the finale of the K. 550 Symphony in G minor of Mozart (1788)—whose Piano Concerto in C minor also left an indelible mark on young Beethoven.

Shaped as a dynamic, rising arpeggio, the gesture later is turned in the opposite, descending direction to provide the second theme. Also of interest is the use of a fermata pause (i.e., an improvisatory break that brings the tense action of the opening to an abrupt, suspenseful halt). This gesture of silence is what gives the opening motto of the Fifth Symphony, for example, much of its power.

Beethoven grants a respite between the agitated emotions of the first and third movements with a comparatively conventional, song-form Adagio in F major as the slow movement. The ensuing Minuet, by contrast, boldly plays with dynamic contrasts in a way that will become a stylistic signature. Lauded for his thrilling manner with impetuous tempi, Beethoven draws on this facet of his keyboard personality for the restless and stormy Prestissimo finale. Within the framework of its breakneck speed, a middle section of exquisite lyrical poise offers a welcome brief oasis. A fortissimo descent concludes the sonata.

Piano Sonata No. 2 in A Major, op. 2, no. 2

Beethoven obviously intended to make a bold statement with his first official batch of piano sonatas. Or, rather, a series of bold statements: a powerful, dramatic sonata in the minor to open the set (the Sonata in F minor), a brilliant, at times almost symphonic closer (the Sonata in C major), and this vividly inventive, animated work.

This Sonata in A major begins with a straightforward, call-to-attention octave statement in both hands. But the directions this Allegro vivace then takes are anything but straightforward. Notice especially the harmonic stealth with which the composer introduces the second theme. Our images of the rebellious young Beethoven notwithstanding, the young artist worked hard to learn the art of counterpoint, which is proudly on display here. As we experience so often in the later sonatas, his acclaimed virtuosity at the keyboard is allied to spellbinding wit and imagination.

There follows a prayerful song-form Largo appassionato (what a curious descriptive for a slow movement!), accompanied by a kind of walking bass line beneath slow-moving hymn chords. A dramatically extended coda suggests an operatic farewell. The Allegretto Scherzo recalls something of the sparkling, elegant dynamism of the opening movement, with a swerve to a minor for the trio. Marked Grazioso, the finale integrates an ingratiating arpeggio sweep into its cheerful theme. Another return to A minor spices the central episode with chromatic drama—but how quickly Beethoven dispels the clouds, freeing the way for a deliciously subtle ending.

Piano Sonata No. 21 in C Major, op. 53 (“Waldstein”)

Beethoven’s sketches for this landmark sonata can be found in the same notebook he used to work out ideas for the contemporaneous *Eroica* Symphony; he completed both works in 1804. The composer dedicated Op. 53 to count Ferdinand Ernst Gabriel von Waldstein—the nobleman who was among his earliest supporters when he first set off for Vienna (hence the well-known nickname). This music is animated by the surge of renewed creativity following Beethoven’s Heiligenstadt Testament—in which he confided overcoming his thoughts of suicide and resolving to accept the fate of his worsening deafness.

Here, Beethoven transcends the High classical style with a quasi-symphonic approach to the keyboard. The *Waldstein* Sonata was in fact partially inspired by the gift of a new, state-of-the-art instrument Beethoven received from the Parisian piano makers at Erard. The paradox is that the music manages at once to sound symphonic *and* quintessentially pianistic.

Steadily pulsing chords at the outset of the Allegro con brio (the same marking as the first movement of the Fifth Symphony) signal the dynamism of Beethoven’s thinking. They establish an electrifying current of seemingly endlessly renewable energy (compare this with the similar pulsation at the start of the *Eroica*). A dramatic pause brings the forward motion to an abrupt stop at the end of the first full statement. Beethoven’s harmonic planning and dramatic use of extreme contrasts of range and volume shape the first movement’s magnificent architecture.

Initially, Beethoven planned a substantial Andante to correspond to the proportions of the outer movements, but later he replaced this with the “Introduzione”—a quasi-operatic intermezzo that bridges the outer movements and raises the curtain on the massive finale. Like the Allegro con brio, the final movement opens almost surreptitiously before swelling with immense energy. Beethoven brings it all to a close with a coda of dizzying speed—in the process redefining the piano’s powers.

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JCA LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT STATEMENT

We acknowledge that we gather here at Butler University on the traditional land of indigenous peoples including the Potawatomi, Miami, Delaware, and Shawnee. We honor with gratitude the land itself and the indigenous peoples past and present who have stewarded it throughout the generations. This calls us to commit to continuing to learn how to be better stewards of the land we inhabit, while also acknowledging that some were brought to this land not by choice.

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