



IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES I
MONDAY, JULY 27, 2020

GERALD R. FORD AMPHITHEATER

LECTURE BY JAMES KELLER 11AM
CONCERT 12PM
POST CONCERT TALK WITH JAMES KELLER

Ida Kavafian, violin
Anne-Marie McDermott, piano

BEETHOVEN

Violin Sonata No. 1 in D major, Op. 12, No. 1 (22 minutes)
Allegro con brio
Theme and Variations: Andante con moto
Rondo: Allegro

BEETHOVEN

Violin Sonata No. 2 in A major, Op. 12, No. 2 (19 minutes)
Allegro vivace
Andante, più tosto Allegretto
Allegro piacevole

Intermission

BEETHOVEN

Violin Sonata No. 4 in A minor, Op. 23 (16 minutes)
Presto
Andante scherzoso, più Allegretto
Allegro molto

BEETHOVEN

Violin Sonata No. 3 in E-flat major, Op. 12, No. 3 (21 minutes)
Allegro con spirito
Adagio con molto espressione
Rondo: Allegro molt

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Violin Sonata No. 1 in D major, Op. 12, No. 1 (1798)

Violin Sonata No. 2 in A major, Op. 12, No. 2 (1798)

Violin Sonata No. 3 in E-flat major, Op. 12, No. 3 (1798)

Beethoven took some care during his first years after arriving in Vienna from his native Bonn in November 1792 to present himself as a composer in the day's more fashionable genres, one of which was the sonata for piano and violin. The Op. 12 Sonatas of 1798 are products of Beethoven's own practical experience as both pianist and violinist, an instrument he had learned while still in Bonn and on which he took lessons shortly after settling in Vienna.

An abundance of themes shared by the participants opens the D major Sonata: a heroic unison motive; quietly flowing scales in the piano supporting a striding phrase in the violin; and several related ideas in quicker rhythms. The second theme is a scalar melody gently urged on by syncopations. The *Andante* takes as its theme a tender melody presented by piano and violin. Four variations follow, the third of which is in a somber minor mode. The finale is a large, thematically rich rondo.

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The A major Sonata opens with a teasing, two-note motive that tumbles downward through the piano's range to constitute the first movement's main theme and set the playful mood (one of Beethoven's rarest emotions) for what follows. A melody buoyed upon a surprising harmonic excursion, emphasized by accented notes, provides the gateway to the second subject, a phrase of snappy descending, neighboring tones which is first cousin to the main theme. Transformations of all three themes occupy the development section. The recapitulation provides another hearing of the thematic material before the movement ends, almost in mid-thought, with an airy coda spun from the main theme. Jelly d'Aranyi (1893-1966), the distinguished Hungarian violinist who inspired Ravel's *Tzigane* in 1924, wrote, "The *Andante* has the most touching and wonderful dialogue. I can only imagine that St. Francis and St. Clara spoke of things like this when they met at Assisi, and which Beethoven alone could put into music, as he did so many conversations, each lovelier than the other." The finale is an elegant rondo whose expressive nature is indicated by its heading: *piacevole* — "*agreeable and pleasant*."

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The E-flat major Sonata (Op. 12, No. 3) opens with a spirited sonata-form movement whose thematic fecundity recalls the music of Mozart (dead just seven years when this piece was composed, and still fondly remembered in Vienna). The sweeping arpeggiated gesture from the piano that serves as the main theme is followed by several other melodic fragments; one containing a limpid rising chromatic scale serves as the formal second subject. The development section is full of energy and surprise. The *Adagio*, the expressive as well as the structural heart of the Sonata, is one of Beethoven's greatest early movements. Its broad thematic arches and majestic

demeanor created for the composer's biographer Frederick Niecks "a sublimity of feeling and a noble simplicity." The finale, a bustling rondo based on a theme of *opera buffa* jocularly, serves both as foil to the profound musical statement that preceded it and as a suitably lively close to this handsome Sonata.

Violin Sonata No. 4 in A minor, Op. 23 (1800-1801)

Among Beethoven's early patrons in Vienna was Count Moritz von Fries, proprietor of the prosperous Viennese banking firm of Fries & Co. and treasurer to the imperial court. Fries, seven years Beethoven's junior, was a man of excellent breeding and culture. A true disciple of the Enlightenment, Fries traveled widely (Goethe mentioned meeting him in Italy), and lived for a period in Paris, where he had himself and his family painted by François Gérard, court painter to Louis XVIII. Fries' palace in the Josefplatz was designed by one of the architects of Schönbrunn, the Emperor's suburban summer residence, and it housed an elegant private theater that was the site of frequent musical presentations. In April 1800, Fries hosted what developed into a vicious piano-playing competition between Beethoven and the visiting German virtuoso and composer Daniel Steibelt (1765-1823), which Beethoven won in a unanimous decision. Following that victory, Beethoven composed for Fries two Sonatas for Violin and Piano (Opp. 23 and 24) and the String Quintet, Op. 29, whose dedications the Count eagerly accepted.

The A minor Sonata, Op. 23 is one of Beethoven's most austere compositions, full of terse linear writing and frequent stretches of studied counterpoint. The principal theme of the first movement's sonata form is a restless melody balanced between scalar motion and leaping arpeggios. The subsidiary subject provides contrast with its limpid liquidity and even rhythmic flow. The development section concerns itself entirely with the main theme. A quietly held chord serves as the gateway to the recapitulation, which returns the earlier thematic material in appropriately adjusted tonalities. The playful second movement, also in sonata form, makes its first theme from the little two-note fragment initially proposed by the piano; the second subject comprises a tiny wobbling figure and a scale in tripping dotted rhythms. The brief development section has only room for a few hints of the main and imitative themes before the recapitulation amicably saunters in. The finale, a rondo, returns to the minor-mode sepia of the opening movement, though its mood is anxious rather than tragic.

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