

PHILADELPHIA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY

a life more beautiful

PREVIEW
NOTES

Jonathan Biss, piano
Thursday, March 19 – 7:30 PM
Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center

PROGRAM

Sonata in C Minor, Op. 10, No. 1

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: December 16, 1770, in Bonn, Electorate of Cologne

Died: March 26, 1827, in Vienna, Austria

Composed: 1795-1797

Duration: 18 minutes

Beethoven began the other two sonatas comprising the Op. 10 group in 1796, but may have started this work toward the end of 1795. Marked *Allegro molto e con brio* the first movement opens with a probing theme, based on a C minor chord, which introduces a questing, questioning mood, not unlike the opening of the "Pathétique" Sonata. Here, however, the initial tempo is brisk and the initial utterance appears more direct. However, as the musical discourse unfolds, the straightforward beginning yields to unexpected developments.

Sonata in E Major, Op. 14, No. 1

Ludwig van Beethoven

Composed: 1798

Duration: 31 minutes

By the time Beethoven wrote this sonata, his ninth, he was already displaying a strongly individual voice in his piano works and would shortly embark on his First Symphony (1800) and other large works. Perhaps less compelling than its predecessor, the celebrated "Pathétique," this Sonata is still an immensely interesting work, containing many subtle turns, surprises, and fresh ideas. Cast in three movements -- *Allegro*, *Allegretto*, *Rondo (Allegro comodo)* -- this composition begins with a lively, optimistic theme, against repeated chords in the left hand which accompany, and goad, the main narrative line. Initially a harbinger of light and joy, the main theme introduces some tension when repeated, and the mood begins to darken.

Sonata in G Major, Op. 14, No. 2

Ludwig van Beethoven

Composed: 1799

Duration: 16 minutes

This work has an unusual structure in its three movements: *Allegro*, *Andante*, and *Scherzo (Allegro assai)*. A *Scherzo*, of course, is usually an inner movement, but Beethoven was never one to follow convention. He makes the pattern work well here and the piece sounds perfectly logical even at first hearing. The sonata begins with an invigorating burst of fresh air -- springtime country air, in this case. It should be mentioned here that the composer may have started this work in late 1798, even though its mood would suggest at least late winter, if not spring, of the following year as its gestating point.

Sonata in B-flat Major, Op. 106, Hammerklavier

Ludwig van Beethoven

Composed: 1817-1818

Duration: 44 minutes

To English speakers, the term "Hammerklavier" suggests pounding at the keyboard. Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata may have its percussive moments, but this title is simply the German word for pianoforte. In other words, the composer was simply specifying that this work absolutely had to be played on the modern keyboard with hammered strings, and that the old plucked-string harpsichord was not an option. In fact, Beethoven's last five piano sonatas all had this designation, but it became the nickname only for the mighty Op. 106.