

## BEETHOVEN

### Sonata in D Major op10 no 3

This is the largest and grandest of the opus 10 sonatas. Some of the keyboard patterns can be traced to the influence of Clementi, whose new pianistic style was known in Bonn before Beethoven left there, but the architectural certainty and economy are Beethoven's own from start to finish. Who else could have extracted such meaning from the first four notes of the unison opening subject? Clever analysts have even found the finale theme hidden in the *and* three notes. But intentional allusions between, as opposed to within, movements were rare in Beethoven, and it would be hard to find a piece that avoided touching such a motive in passing. The downward half-scale is quite another matter, as a glance at the score shows it turning up continually in various guises, blossoming into long paragraphs, combining, unifying, and, when form demands it, beckoning back the whole subject. The slow movement (it almost goes without saying by this time) makes the sonata a great one. Even those sceptical of the power of absolute music to convey specific emotions must sense the grief-laden atmosphere, the quiet heaviness of the chords that pull the theme earthwards, the anguished outbursts, the final extinction of hope. Or we may look at it another way, as a study in deep sonorities and changes of register, as a sonata-form movement in slow six-eight time with a new theme instead of a development (F major) and a massive coda in which the home key wins on all dynamic levels (D minor). Beethoven marked it *largo e mesto*, and 'mesto' means sad or gloomy. Was it written from a general observation of life, or as an expression of personal grief, an unhappy love-affair, the memory of his mother's death, or a premonition of his own deafness? The craft of composition alone cannot account for the overtones, any more than it can explain the pathos of Mozart's minor-key *andante* and *adagio*. This *largo* strikes deeper than anything Beethoven had composed up to that time.

The D major Sonata has four movements. Perhaps Beethoven had already conceived ideas for the capricious *condo* before the *largo* had developed such overwhelming significance. Something else was needed to bridge the gap: a minuet of classical cast, lyrical in feeling and owing a debt to the 'compassionate' second subject in Mozart's D minor Concerto, a work Beethoven loved to the extent of writing cadenzas for it. The trio is witty and full of quick repartee, but by now we have adjusted to the world of daylight and are ready to enjoy the Haydnish humour of the *condo*-finale, with its ubiquitous, questioning three-note motive.

## LISZT

### Concert Study "La Leggerezza"

This concert study *deedsly* reveals Liszt as an exceptional keyboard virtuoso whom his contemporaries inevitably hailed as the Paganini of the piano. "*La Leggerezza*" was written in about 1849.

## BRAHMS

### Four Piano Pieces op 119

The set of four piano pieces, op 119, is Brahms's last piano work. The first three pieces in the set are all Intermezzi, and are miniatures; wiled and almost improvisatorial, whilst the group ends with a powerful and heroic rhapsody, reminiscent of the youthful Brahms.

## TCHAIKOVSKY

### "JUNE" (Barcarolle from "THE SEASONS" Opus 37b)

In 1876 Tchaikovsky was asked by the proprietor of a musical magazine to compose twelve short pieces, each depicting a different month of the year. Tchaikovsky was slightly worried about the commission and told his publisher to have no hesitation in requesting revisions, if he thought that any of the pieces were unsuited to the talents of his readers. But he needn't have worried for 'The Seasons' was to become his most popular piano work. He represented 'JUNE' as a Barcarolle and gave it the epigraph:—

"Let us go to the riverbank

There the waves will kiss our feet

and the stars will shine on us

with secret grief."

## PROKOFIEV

### Sonata No.3 in A minor, op28 ("From Old Notebooks")

Composed in 1917 and bearing the sub-title "From Old Notebooks", this sonata germinated from some sketches made while studying composition at the Moscow Conservatory some ten years earlier. However "scholastic" its origins, it is a work that has proved to be a steady favourite with both pianists and audiences ever since Prokofiev introduced it on April 15th 1918, at a recital in Petrograd. In its one movement, it combines steely brilliance (as in the opening Allegro *tempestoso*) with tender moments of lyricism (subordinate theme, *Moderato*).

Programme notes by Peter Bradley-Fulgoni